**Walking in the Light**

*1 John 1*

**Introduction**

1. John wrote his gospel to provoke in the hearts of his readers belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God that they would have life (**cf. John 20:30-31).**
2. John wrote his first epistle that these same believers, and others, would have a confidence of their standing with God, that they could continue in that state – **1 John 5:13**.
3. **The first chapter of this epistle stands as a foundation for knowledge of one’s fellowship with God, or lack thereof, and for one’s knowledge of maintaining their fellowship with God.**
4. We should have a proper understanding of this vital passage of scripture.
5. Walking in the Light – 1 John 1 in Context
6. Preface – The Trouble Among John’s Readers (Gnostic heresy)
   1. Among John’s readers were ***“false prophets” (4:1)***. **Internal evidence evinces that these were possibly of those who called themselves “Gnostics:”**
   2. Some things which the “Gnostics,” specifically those of John’s epistle, believed:
      1. **“Gnostic”** – from *gnosis* (knowledge) – **claimed a greater, surpassing knowledge than others who were the uninitiated** (**cf. 2:20-21** – don’t let them fool you, you have knowledge – gospel truth.).
      2. **Some of which their knowledge boasted:**
         1. **Flesh is inherently impure/immoral** – **cf. 3:7-9** (Claim that their sin/immorality did not affect standing with God, and was inevitable, thus, inconsequential – **cf. 2 Peter 2:18-19**). (*Their transcendent knowledge, they claimed, made themselves transcendent above sinful flesh.*)
         2. **Jesus Christ was not a man** – *i.e. did not truly inhabit flesh, for flesh, they say, is inherently evil* – **cf. 2:22-23** (This they deny, but John says it must be believed to have God – **cf. 4:2-3**).
   3. **Thus, John began his epistle with the most fundamental truths of God, and Christianity to combat the trouble among his readers 🡪**
7. That Which Was Witnessed and Declared **(vv. 1-4)**
   1. Word of life witnessed with senses **(vv. 1-2a).**
      1. John alludes to that which he alluded to in his gospel – **John 1:1-5**.
         1. Word = God – possesses ***“Life”*** given through ***“light.”***
         2. **(vv. 6-7)** – John the Baptist bore witness of the ***“Light”*** that men would believe, and become sons of God **(v. 12).**
         3. **How would they believe?** – **(vv. 14-18)** – **As they witnessed the Word manifested in flesh.**
      2. **“Gnostic” doctrine contradicts the fundamental plan of God to manifest Himself to the world to give life to men:**
         1. He sent His Son – the Word – **in the flesh to manifest the Father** – to bring men into fellowship with Him, thus with the Father.
         2. **Thus, in order to know God one must know the *“Word of life”* that *“became flesh.” 🡪***
   2. Word of life declared to those not present to witness themselves **(vv. 2b-4).**
      1. ***“we declare to you”*** – Just as God had intended; thus, Jesus had intended:
         1. **John 15:26-27** – With the aid of the Helper, the apostles would testify of Jesus to the world since they themselves had witnessed Him.
         2. ***“when the Holy Spirit has come upon you…you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).***
         3. Luke noted their work – **cf. Luke 1:1-2.**
      2. **Motive of the declaration:**
         1. **Fellowship with *“us”*** – apostles, i.e. other believers.
         2. **Fellowship with the Father and Son** – the primary aim, on which the fellowship with each other rests.
         3. **Full joy** – with the knowledge of fellowship with God, and believers, ***thus, spiritual life.***
   3. **With this fundamental truth in mind, John sets forth the essential message declared from the Word of life, and notes some implications of that truth 🡪**
8. The Message Heard, and Implications from Such **(vv. 5-7)**
   1. Message Heard **(v. 5)**:
      1. What was the message heard from ***“the Word of life”*** – the Son of God, Jesus – concerning God?
      2. **(v. 5b)** – God is morally pure, righteous, without fellowship with sin – NO DARKNESS AT ALL.
      3. **This is that which *“the Word of life”* declared concerning God:**
         1. **Cf. John 14:9-11** – Jesus declared the Father in word and action.
         2. Beheld Jesus as one ***“full of grace and truth” (John 1:14):***
            1. **Grace** – graciousness of character – nothing unfavorable, but, as Paul said, that which was ***“true…noble…just…pure…lovely…of good report…[of] virtue…praiseworthy” (Philippians 4:8).*** *(Moral)*
            2. **Truth** – truth from God, from heaven, about God and salvation. (contrasted with error) *(Doctrinal)*
            3. Jesus ***“was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15)***.
         3. **This was the God that Jesus declared, the God that He was united with eternally.**
   2. **Implications from the Message Heard (vv. 6-7):**
      1. If God is light, with no darkness at all, then:
      2. **(v. 6)** – One is a liar who claims fellowship with God while in darkness:
         1. **Truth** – God is light, and entirely without darkness, **thus, to have fellowship with Him you must be the same.**
         2. **Cf. 3:10** – does not practice righteousness, i.e. practices unrighteousness (in darkness) is not of God.
      3. **(v. 7)** – One who walks in light has fellowship with God, and those who do likewise, and receives the cleansing blood of Christ.
         1. **Walk in light as He is in light** – might as well add, ***and has “no darkness at all.”*** (FOR THAT IS WHAT THE LIGHT OF GOD IS)
         2. **Fell. With God, thus, fell. with all who have such with God.**
         3. **Blood of Jesus cleanses from ALL sin** – why? – *because you’ve come to the light for cleansing.*
            1. Some do not want to come to the light – **cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4.**
            2. Others come to the light to be released from sin, or cleansed by Christ’s blood – **cf. Romans 8:2**.
            3. ***“For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them” (Matthew 13:15*** – Come to the light of Christ’s word to receive healing/cleansing).
      4. **Conclusion:** Implication from **v. 5** is that if you are in darkness (sin) you have not God, but if you are in light (no sin/righteousness) you have God.
   3. **What about when one who has God falls short? 🡪**
9. Implications from Message Heard when Sin is Present **(vv. 8-10)**
   1. **NOTE: cf. 2:1-2** – The purpose of such words of chapter 1 is that they will not sin.
      1. **Why?** – If you sin, you cut off your fellowship with God – in whom is NO DARKNESS AT ALL.
      2. **So, don’t sin!**
      3. **However, if you fail, falling short of God’s glory again, and sin, we have an Advocate in Jesus.**
      4. *How do we, through Jesus, receive cleansing again, thus, fellowship with God? 🡪*
   2. **(v. 8)** – Don’t say, “I have NO sin.”
      1. Not the same as **v. 10**.
      2. ***“No sin”* in the sense that the actions labeled as sin do not affect my relationship with God – i.e. NO DARKNESS despite my actions.**
      3. **Gnostic belief** – Body is merely an envelope for the soul, and the actions in the body do not affect the soul.
      4. ***“The soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20a***) – sin is that which affects the soul primarily, but is something which is done with the body.
      5. **One who says “I have no sin” deceives himself** – because sin DOES place you in darkness.
      6. **Truth not in him – truth about God – no darkness at all.**
   3. **(v. 9)** – Instead, confess your sins and ask for forgiveness, BECAUSE YOU NEED IT.
      1. **NOTE: *“cleanse us from all unrighteousness”*** – **v. 7b** – confession (implied repentance), and request for forgiveness brings one back in contact with cleansing blood of Christ.
      2. **Faithful** – to His promise to do so.
      3. **Just** – in His doing so. (Blood is propitiation for sins.)
   4. **(v. 10)** – Don’t say, “I have NOT sinned.”
      1. Not same as **v. 8.**
      2. Not simply in the sense that the action of sin had no effect on the soul by bringing one into darkness…
      3. **Rather, that the action in itself was NOT ACTUALLY SIN.**
      4. **Example:**
         1. *Gnostics thought hating their brethren wasn’t sinful.*
         2. In fact, they thought it necessary **(cf. 2:19** – separated themselves from them).
         3. However, God’s word clearly says in order to be in fellowship with Him **you must love the brethren (cf. 2:9-11).**
      5. ***“Make Him a liar”*** – because you say something is not sin which He clearly said WAS SIN.
         1. ***“word is not in us”*** – ***“I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’” (Romans 7:7)***
         2. The word defines sin, and ***“Your word is truth” (John 17:17).***
      6. So, instead of contradicting the word, accept the truth, and confess your sins **(v. 9).**
10. **These were simple, fundamental truths which the Gnostics rejected, but the brethren needed to know in order to have confidence regarding their relationship with God.**

***In approaching this text, it is vital that we understand it as it was written with the fundamental message of God in mind (v. 5). We must be careful not to twist the text. 🡪***

1. Error, and a Harmful Inconsistent Approach
2. Error of Continual Cleansing **(v. 7)**
   1. **The Doctrine** – The word ***“cleanses”*** in **verse 7** denotes a continual process. Therefore, for one walking in the light, the blood of Christ cleanses him “even as he sins.” (*This without any conditions of repentance, confession, and a request for forgiveness*.)
   2. **(v. 7)** – John uses the word ***“cleanses.”***
      1. **This could denote a continual process, but it does not necessarily have to.** (*Instead of perpetual cleansing,* ***it could simply be stating a fact, that the blood of Christ cleanses – one who has come to the light.)***
      2. It is not necessary to delve deep into the Greek to discover what is being taught. One only needs to consider the context.
   3. **NOTE, the reason for the doctrine:**
      1. **It is propagated in support of the concept of “unity in diversity.”**
      2. **Unity in diversity** – fellowship **despite diverse beliefs and practices** which either group may consider as violating the scriptures, i.e. sinful.
         1. EX: Maintaining fellowship with those who believe and practice instrumental music in worship, institutionalism, false views on MDR, etc.
         2. **It is not that some would claim these were not sinful doctrines and activities, but that because “the blood of Christ continually cleanses even as one sins” they can have fellowship with them.**
      3. **How is unity achieved?**
         1. **Doctrinal agreement** – **cf. Ephesians 4:3, 11-13** (*Spirit – revealed truth by HS*); **2 John 9-11** (*Does not have the doctrine? Does not have God – don’t receive him.)*
         2. **Mutual fellowship with God** – **1 John 1:3, 5-7** (*Both walk in light AS GOD IS IN LIGHT, NO DARKNESS AT ALL*)
            1. What is walking in light?
            2. It is walking in God’s sphere **(v. 5).**
            3. **God’s sphere is revealed in His word** – **cf. 1 Corinthians 2:10-12.**
            4. **Ergo, doing something which His word condemns as sin, or does not authorize IS NOT WALKING IN THE LIGHT.**
   4. **We must not forget the context:**
      1. **Verse 7** must be taken with **verse 9** – For Christ’s blood to cleanse one who is found in sin, **that individual must confess (repentance implied) and ask for forgiveness.**
         1. **Illustration for consideration –** *My laundry detergent cleanses my dirty clothes. Is it continuously cleansing my clothes? No, only as I place my clothes which have become dirty (which cannot be possible if they are continuously cleansed) into the washer with the detergent, which will then cleanse them.*
         2. **Same with the Christian who has sinned, and is cleansed from his sins – must meet the conditions, i.e. come to Him in penitence, confession, and seeking forgiveness.**
         3. **God cannot forgive the sinner who has not repented, confessed, and sought forgiveness through prayer 🡪**
      2. **Cf. 1 John 5:14-17** – God only forgives when forgiveness is sought/requested. **However, then He only forgives** ***“according to His will.”***
         1. **A sin NOT leading to death** – sin that is repented of, confessed, and forgiven.
         2. **The doctrine of continual cleansing is completely at variance with this, and chapter 1:9.**
3. Harmful Inconsistent Approach **(vv. 6, 7)**
   1. *Some approach the text of* ***1 John 1*** *and like to harp on the word* ***“walk”*** *in* ***verses 6 and 7****.*
   2. **Such is their approach to the word “walk:”**
      1. ***“Walk”*** is a continual action. Therefore, an isolated instance of sin does not constitute a ***“walk in darkness.”*** Therefore, a ***“walk in the light”*** is the general walk in light, despite an isolated act of darkness.
      2. **More plainly – Just because you have sinned one time does not mean you are necessarily *“walking in darkness.”***
      3. *The phrase,* ***“a step is not a walk,”*** *is sometimes used. (Even by those who do not believe “continual cleansing.”)*
   3. **NOTE: Any text cannot be taken beyond its natural (or contextual – whether remote, or immediate) limits.**
      1. **EX: cf. Galatians 2:16** – Not justified by works.
      2. What works? – ***“the works of the law”*** (of Moses)
      3. **Immediate contextual limit** – not any works, but works of the law of Moses.
      4. **Remote contextual limit** – **cf. James 2:24** – Justified by works, not faith only.
   4. ***“Walk”*** cannot mean something which the context of **1 John 1** does not let it mean – **Is an isolated sin *“darkness?”* Then, one who has committed an isolated sin is in darkness, and cannot be said to *“walk in the light as He is in the light [and in Him is no darkness at all].”***
   5. ***“Walk”* further considered:**
      1. **Walk** – *peripateo* – “figuratively, ‘signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual…’” (Vine).
         1. So, the idea some take from ***“walk”*** in **1 John 1** is that that it signifies the “whole round,” or general “activities of the individual.”
         2. This is certainly the meaning of the word in the figurative approach. **However, it cannot be taken to mean something which the context does not allow.**
      2. ***“Walk”*** used elsewhere:
         1. **Romans 8:4** – Walk not after flesh, rather after spirit. (**Is an isolated fleshly act a *“walk…to the flesh”* or *“to the spirit.”*)**
         2. **Ephesians 4:17** – Do not walk as Gentiles walk. (**Did Paul suggest they not “generally” walk as the Gentiles, but one isolated act will not place you in darkness?**)
         3. **Understand** – An isolated act does not mean we “generally” conduct ourselves in flesh or like Gentiles, and therefore “generally” walk in darkness.
         4. **However – Is an isolated act of flesh, or like the Gentiles, an isolated act of “darkness?” Yes – then are you not in darkness after committing such, until it is forgiven?**
      3. **Consider** – *If a sign said, “Do not walk on the grass,” is the sign suggesting one step on the grass is okay? Would the makers of the sign suggest one step on the grass is a violation of the command of the sign?*
      4. **Consider – If an isolated sin is not a *“walk in darkness,”* then how many sins committed will make up a *“walk?”* (Such is completely subjective.)**
   6. **This approach to *“walk”* does not fit the context:**
      1. **(v. 5)** – The message necessary to know in order to have fellowship with God – ***“in Him is NO DARKNESS AT ALL”***
      2. **(v. 6)** – One lies if they say they have fellowship with Him and ***“walk in darkness.”***
         1. **Verse 5 and 6** must be taken together – **they act as divine commentary on each other.**
         2. **(v. 6)** – Why does one lie – because in darkness, and God is light.
         3. **(v. 5)** – What does it mean that God is light? – **Negatively, *“IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL.”***
         4. **Is an isolated sin darkness? – Yes. THEN IT IS *“DARKNESS AT ALL,”* and that person cannot say he *“walk[s] in the light,”* and he does not have fellowship with God.**
      3. **What, then, can be done? – THAT IS WHERE VERSE 9 COMES IN…**
   7. **Consider Simon the Sorcerer (Cf. Acts 8):**
      1. **(v. 13)** – Believed and followed Philip.
         1. Followed Philip – ***“continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine” (Acts 2:42)*** which Philip by inspiration preached.
         2. In other words – **Simon was walking in the light**.
      2. **(v. 14)** – Apostles come from Jerusalem to Samaria to impart spiritual gifts.
         1. **Jerusalem to Samaria? – at least a 30-mile journey.**
         2. This without modern transportation. (**All this time Simon is walking the light – this is his continual, or general way of living**.)
      3. **(vv. 18-19)** – This was Simon’s sin as noted by Peter next.
         1. Was this something Simon ***continually did***? No.
         2. Was this different than his ***normal walk in light***? Yes.
      4. **(vv. 20-24)** – Peter’s response shows undoubtedly that Simon was without God, therefore, in darkness.
   8. **THERE IS NO BENEFIT IN MAKING A DISTINCTION OF CONTINUAL ACTION WITH THE WORD *“WALK.”* IT ACTUALLY DOES NOT FIT WITH THE CONTEXT OF 1 JOHN 1.**
   9. Why do some harp on the word ***“walk,”*** and suggest an isolated act does not mean you are now ***“walk[ing] in darkness?”:***
      1. **SEEKING ASSURANCE** – one sin does not undo everything!
      2. **That is true, but one sin DOES PLACE YOU IN DARKNESS.**
      3. **Where’s our assurance if we fall short?:**
         1. **(v. 9)** – Confess/repent of sins and pray for forgiveness – faithful and just is He to forgive.
         2. **(2:1-2)** – We have an advocate!
         3. **(5:14-15)** – We know He hears us, and we have what we asked for – if it be according to His will.
         4. **IS THIS NOT ASSURANCE ENOUGH?**
   10. **If anything, approaching the text in this way regarding the word *“walk”* gives way for more harm than good:**
       1. Suggesting that an isolated sin does not mean you ***“walk in darkness”*** only leaves one alternative – **that despite the isolated sin you still *“walk in light.”***
       2. Even though some who take this approach teach the necessity of confession and repentance of **verse 9**.
       3. **This approach gives a semblance of assurance of fellowship with God when sin – even if it be only one, *“a step in darkness”* – is present!**
   11. **Let us not seek assurance beyond the assurance that God has given us in His word** – our assurance when we sin is turning to Him in PENITENT CONFESSION AND ASKING FORGIVENESS – WE WILL BE FORGIVEN.

**Conclusion**

1. The text of **1 John 1** within its context is clear, and simply to understand.
2. We must understand the principles contained in this text to know we are in fellowship with God.
3. **We must not abuse this text in any way to make it say something it does not say.**
4. Are you in darkness, or light? If darkness, what will you do about it?