

1 John 1 5-10 part 2 Nov 10

1 John 1:5-10 (NKJV)

⁵ This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

⁶ If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

⁷ But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

How is the church supposed to look?

What picture does the New Testament **paint** of what life in the church will look like?

What is **reasonable** to expect of a church of believers in this world and what should we **not** expect?

Our text paints a very clear picture of what life as a believer on this earth will look like. It paints a picture of what each of our lives will look like if we are really believers.

Now let's just focus on behavior for a second. How much should we expect being a believer will **change** our behavior?

Let's lay out a continuum.

On one end of the continuum is no change at all. This view would say that we cannot expect that life in Christ will change us at all. We can pray the sinners prayer and remain exactly as we were when we first prayed it. It would say that changing is an option we can choose but it is not mandatory. As long as we prayed the sinners prayer God is bound to save us and it does not matter at all what we do.

The other end of the continuum is perfection. This view would say that we are to achieve perfection in this life, to where our behavior is pretty much the same as Christ's. We should live in such a way that **we never sin**. Sin should be an extreme rarity in the Christian's life to the point that it drifts into oblivion eventually.

There are theologies that form at both ends of that continuum. There are people who believe both extremes. But what does scripture say?

Well, let's start with verse 5.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

OK We start with a God who is clearly at one end of this continuum. God is perfect light with no darkness. He is perfect Holiness with no impurity. He is just wonderful and deserves that we should be perfectly Holy. We never have an excuse by saying, "Well God, I am only flawed because you have not loved me well enough. You did not provide a good enough example". No. None of us can register that complaint.

So we have a perfect God. But then what?

We need to look at this passage as a whole to get our answer.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Look at this closely. The focus is on walking.

The word in Greek for walk is per-ee-pat-eh'-o

The idea is to make one's way, to make progress, to make due use of opportunities. Walking is clearly a process. It is what one does every day in living. It is not made up of, or measured in, a single instance of time. But it is measured in predictable habits and repeated activities.

These are the extremes. And these are really the only two choices. Our lives will be characterized by one or the other. We will either **walk in the light** or **in the dark**. Is there a believer's life that is characterized by walking in the dark? No. If we walk in the dark, if we use our opportunities consistently in life to sin, we are lying about being in fellowship with God. We are not in fellowship with God if we will not practice the truth. We are not in fellowship with God if we choose consistently to live in sinful behavior.

Now remember, John is talking to people who think that they can separate their spiritual life from their life in a body. And they have a great excuse. They live in denial. They say, it does not matter that my body is sinning. It

does not matter that I am **going against what scripture clearly and forcefully** says I must do. It does not matter because **my soul** is in a **really good place**. I have wonderful spiritual fellowship with God. I pray well. I relish my quiet times. I love the scripture. I just don't do what it says in time and space reality and that is ok. That has no bearing on my spiritual status. That has no bearing on my fellowship with God and His people.

We need to get this. **What we do reflects what we are**. What we do reflects **whose** we are. How we respond reflects who we really trust. If we want to think otherwise we are only fooling ourselves. God is not required to buy our nonsensical thinking. He is not obliged to live according to our rationale for why **doing what He says** is just **too hard for us**. We believe what we tell ourselves. But we have got to understand this one thing. **God is not obligated to believe what we tell ourselves**. They aren't **His** excuses. They are **our** excuses. He paid the price for us to live obediently. If we don't choose to, that is **not His fault** no matter what lies we tell ourselves. Gnostic beliefs didn't free the Gnostics from **their** guilt, just as **our excuses** for our sin does not free us from **our guilt**.

Now what about if we choose to walk in the light? What will that look like?
7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Wait a minute. Why does John throw in the part about sin? If we walk in the light we should not need forgiveness should we? Really, if we are walking according to the light that God is shedding in our souls, shouldn't we be walking perfectly?

Well, that might be true except for who we were when Christ saved us. We are fallen sinners.

Jeremiah 17:9-10 (NKJV)

9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

10 I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

Scripture never says **of us** what it says **of God**. It does not say **we are light and in us there is no darkness at all**

Even when we walk in the light, we are carrying into this walking process a heart that has some serious problems. We all have heart problems. We have flesh that wars against the Spirit. So we walk in the light. And the light reveals. And sometimes the light reveals good stuff. And sometimes the light reveals bad stuff.

Now the person who walks in the light calls **what it sees** what **it is**. When we walk in the light sometimes the Holy Spirit shows us that we are in the wrong. We have made promises that we have not kept. We have had opportunity to meet needs we have not met. We have lied about our real reasons for doing things. We have assumed things of people that are not true. We could go on and on. And even while **we are walking in the light** we do these things. Because we cannot always see everything about ourselves and our actions and our motives. They are no less sins, just because we did them blissfully unaware.

And then there are the exceptions when we sin **knowing exactly** what we are doing. Maybe we do it because **doing the right thing** seems just too hard, maybe impossible for us. Maybe we do it simply because we want the temporary pleasure of the sin.

Whatever the case if we walk in the light the flashlight turns on and is pointed right at our sin. And if we are walking in the light we say- I am **the** sinner. It is me who has sinned. And I did it, not because I have a good excuse. I did it because I love myself and it is difficult to love God in that position. I did it because it was the thing I wanted most at that point of time. I did it because I am like I am.

Now when we see that and we confess it, when we call it what it is, we can be sure that God will reject us immediately because we are screwups and the deserves better, right?

No. Not at all. The process of walking in the light is one of continual failure and continual confession.

So what is the difference between the person who walks in the darkness and the one that walks in the light? The answer is that the light changes the believer and continually restores fellowship. The believer is being steadily and continually changed by the light. Sin is confessed and it is put behind them. It is repented of. The direction is one of conformity.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Do you see the process here? The light shines. It says what we have done is a sin. We call it a sin. We call out to God telling God that He is right and we are wrong. We sinned. And He deserves better. No excuses. No alternative strategies.

God responds by counting what Christ did for us on the cross to cover our sin. And He holds us as being completely forgiven on that sin. And He cleanses us from the sin we committed. He works in us the process of moving away from

that sin. He washes us up from the part of us that would love to cling to that sin.

Can you see that He has no intention of **leaving us in the condition where we will repeat the sin?**

The difference in living in light and living in darkness is partly displayed by the effect that light has on our lives. People who are living in the light are **being changed** by the light, they are **being conformed** to the light, they are **moving in the direction** of the light.

Those living in darkness do not move in the direction of the light. Their lives are the same after seeing the truth than before they saw the truth. No amount of truth will get them to agree with God about their sin in such a way that they will repent of the sin and be cleansed of their way of doing things.

Now, let's get back to the original question. What can **we expect** in our Christian lives and in the church?

First, **sin will always be a problem as long as we live.** We can and must expect this or we will be continually surprised. We will never be free of it while we walk in the light. The light will continually be exposing **it** and **us**. If we pretend that we do not sin we are lying.

So in the church we can expect that we are always going to be battling sin. I know sometimes we want to come into this fellowship with a view of everyone that the big sins are behind us. But they are not. They are as close as the next breath. And that is why we must be continually on our guard. The elders must be continually watchful. We all must be continually diligent. Godly living is never the default condition of a human. Effort is always required. We are always swimming up stream.

The church on this earth is never more than a conglomerate of sinners saved by grace. And there is not a single one of them who is really a hero. We all have our histories of failure. We all have our sins that easily beset us. We all fail at times.

Do not come into this fellowship with a misunderstanding about this. We are a **fellowship of failures** clinging onto the coat tails of the One who has never failed. That is what First John tells us we can expect.

Then next thing we can expect is that **walking in the light transforms our behavior.** If we walk in the light as Christ is in the light stuff happens that changes us.

First it mentions that we have fellowship with one another.

Being in the light changes our attitude toward each other.

What we can expect is that **people who have really been affected by what Christ** has done will have something in common that causes them to act differently than the worldlings who have something in common.

We have a fellowship, a koinania, that draws us together and smooths out the rough spots.

Again, remember that these are not perfect people. We all still have the light showing us bad things regularly. But we know that we are all in this process together. There are no people who are beyond the struggle. We are all in this together. Much of 1 John will go on to tell us how much we must act lovingly toward each other. We cannot hate. We cannot live in jealousy and rivalry. We must love. We must spend what we have to meet the needs of others, even when that is really not what they want.

So in the church we can expect that there will be fellowship. There will be a common bond. There will be a bigger thing that pulls us together than that which pulls us apart. Walking in the light will cause us to see that we have a lot in common. Walking in the light causes us to relate to each other, not in the **pretention of our goodness** but in the **reality of our forgiveness**. We are all, each one of us, only here because of what Jesus Christ did for us.

And then we have the change in our behavior.

and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

We know that we have already been forgiven of all sin in the death of Christ. So what is this all about? I think this is **not** talking about **Justification**, the once and done action of Christ. This is talking about **sanctification**. In this process God is making us more like Him. He is cleansing us. He is ridding us of the rudiments of the sinful nature that gets displayed in the sin. He is taking that which **was done in justification** and applying **its effects in sanctification**. There is a change happening. And it is not just to get all sins forgiven. There is a process of submission to God's light, God's will. It is dramatically opposed from the behavior of those who walk in darkness. The walking, the process is accomplishing spiritual progress. There is a different **direction** in these followers of Christ. It cannot be mistaken.

So we can see that there is **progress** in walking in the light. We do not stay the same. While we can see that there is **failure**, we can also see that **failure** is not the **victorious faction**. Conformity to light will be steadily winning in the life of a believer.

So we see that we can expect that Christians, if they are truly Christians, will be conforming to the light. There will be an honesty about their lives that will lead to surrender of their lives at every rebellious front. There will be candor about what one really is. There will be none of this self righteousness brought

about by growth in Christ. Self righteousness is darkness. It is a lie. It is counter to the truth. Self righteousness never really confesses sin. Self righteousness never beats upon its own breast in the agony of confessing what one really is. Self righteousness is full of justifications and excuses and reasons that God cannot possibly expect certain things from them. Self righteous people might simply view themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their control. Nothing is really their fault.

We can expect better fruit in the true church, or at least those who are truly part of the true church.

Believers will walk in the light. They will walk under the direction and supervision and scrutiny of God's Word.

They will see their failure because the light will display it.

We will call it what it is, repent of it, and work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit as He changes the person and cleanses us of this sinful action or attitude.

And believers will be displaying a movement toward a life of victory over sin.

We began with a continuum of, on one end, **no change in behavior** due to the Christian faith, and on the other end **perfection**. What we have seen this morning is that neither is an accurate picture of the church.

We are not "light and in us is no darkness." We are not sinless. That is only true of God. But it is also not true that a believer will continue to walk in darkness in such a way that light has no effect on him. We are not at the extreme where our salvation does not change our behavior at all.

We are somewhere in the middle of those two extremes. We can expect that when we come to church we will be surrounded by people struggling with sin. We can expect that some may be failing and anguishing in that failure. But this is a temporary state. We are thrown into this mix together so we can help each other. So that we can stir each other on to good works.

We can also expect that the truth of the word of God will be the **bottom line** in a believer's life. The light of God's word will have absolute sway in their lives. When the word of God is applied to their situation they will surrender their ground won in rebellion and submit it to Christ. They will confess their sin and admit their guilt. And they will eventually, or suddenly, confess that God is right and they are wrong and they will commit themselves to change.

I think this is encouraging, because this is how our church is. We don't have any heroes. We don't have anyone not plagued by sin. We are all struggling in different areas at different times. It is a tough row to hoe.

But God has put us together to walk in this light with help. And as we walk in the light, we have this wonderful fellowship between each other that makes this journey just a little easier, a little more enjoyable, a little more tolerable. Now it is important to understand that **to the degree that we will not walk in the light**, to the degree that we **will not see and admit and tell the truth** about ourselves, we will lack the fellowship we desire. This fellowship is a product of walking in the light.

We all want deep fulfilling relationships. But unfortunately we do not all want to walk in the light and humbly admit what is true about us. If you find that you are really suffering from lack of fellowship, the most likely culprit is that you are refusing to walk in the light as Christ is in the light. You are protecting areas of your life that you do not want revealed and you do not want dealt with. That is the most likely problem based on what this scripture says.

Walking in the light is painful. Because what it reveals is a mixed bag. Sometimes it shows very good and positive things about us. But often it reveals that even the things **about us** that **we think** to be positive are not nearly as positive as we would want them to be.

And just as often it shows our motives to be less than stellar and our actions to be less than godly.

John mentions the word sin 5 times in these 5 verses. This is very revealing. If we are to walk in the light, we are going to have a lot of sin to deal with. This will be the greatest obstacle in the church. And everyone in the church will want to cheat on this process. That is pretty clear from the context. But if we want to walk in Joy, we cannot skip this. We cannot bypass it. There is just one more thing I would like to add.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

How do you know if God has forgiven you? Is it by feeling or faith? I think much of the time that we **feel unforgiven** by God it is due to the fact that we will not **believe what He says**. We trust our emotions over His Word. We cling to our sin and simply cannot believe that God could forgive such a thing. Which is sort of a backhanded arrogant statement. It is as if to say we are such a tremendous sinner that we have managed to **do a sin above God's capacity to forgive**.

But if we confess our sin, and we are not planning to commit it again or making arrangements to facilitate that sin in the future, we can trust that God has forgiven it.

This is a promise and should be received as such. We can believe that it is true if we will truly **confess and repent**. We don't need to forgive ourselves. We

do not need to feel forgiven. We simply need to believe that our God in heaven has forgiven us because that is what He said.

So this morning John has shown us what church life will be like. We can see what we **can expect**. And I don't think it is a huge surprise to any of us. We can thank God that he has given us each other to help us along the way. And because of Christ, we can have the kinds of relationships we are intended to have, the kind that involve a real fellowship in something that is much greater than ourselves.

Let's consider this week as we walk, as we make our choices, as we view our behavior, am I walking in the light? And as we do, what do we see? What needs confessed? What requires thanks to God for what He is doing? If we are walking in the light, we should be seeing things we have not seen before. And it should be drawing us into closer fellowship with both God and His people.