

Day 232, 1 John 1

by David Servant

The sermon emphasizes the importance of walking in the light, being in fellowship with God, and serving others, as these are essential tests of true salvation.

Scripture: John 14:6, Acts 2:44, 1 John 1:5-10

Topics: "Salvation Evidence", "Christian Sanctification"

Description

David Servant delves into the final New Testament epistle believed to have been written around AD 85 or 90 by the apostle John. John wrote to protect Christians from heresies, particularly those denying the physical incarnation of Jesus. He emphasized the importance of obedience as evidence of true salvation, highlighting the need for believers to walk in the light by following Jesus' commandments. John addressed the misconception of sinless perfection among believers, emphasizing the necessity of confessing sins and receiving God's forgiveness for sanctification.

Transcript

This letter is thought to have been written around AD 85 or 90, making it one of the final New Testament epistles to be penned. Most, if not all, of the original apostles had been martyred, with the exception of the aged apostle John, who reportedly spent the last years of his ministry in Ephesus before being banished to the Isle of Patmos.

To what group of Christians was John writing? That's uncertain, but he obviously wrote to protect them from heresies that were spreading. From certain historical sources, we know that there were those who were teaching a concept of the complete, separate distinction between the physical (impure) and the spiritual (pure). Therefore, it made no difference what a person did with his body, as long as his spirit was clean. This kind of logic led some to claim that they had never sinned. Moreover, it was being contended that one could become a Christian without his behavior being affected. An additional heresy existed that claimed Jesus had only come in the spirit, not in the flesh.

Right from the start of his letter, John addressed the latter of those heresies. In the first three verses, he stated that he and others heard, saw and touched Jesus, whom he calls "the Word of Life" (1:1; see also 4:2). Jesus came in the flesh and was not just a spirit.

John then introduces three erroneous conceptions, beginning each one with the words, "If we say that" (1:6,8,10). Obviously, there were some who were making certain erroneous statements.

First, some were claiming to be in fellowship with God yet at the same time practicing sin, a heresy that continues to this day. John will address that heresy so often throughout this first epistle that we could say that the primary theme of this letter is: "How one can know if he has been truly born again by God's Spirit." John will repeatedly list three tests in that regard, the first being the test of obedience:

God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth... (1:5-6).

"Walking in darkness" is synonymous with living in disobedience to Jesus' commandments, as Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6). Everyone is either walking in darkness, following Satan and his lies, or walking in light, following Jesus and His commandments.

It will become clear as we continue to read John's letter that the phrase, "being in fellowship with God," is an equivalent expression to "being saved" or "being a child of God." The word walk in the same verse implies an ongoing practice. Thus we could paraphrase 1:6 to read, "If we claim that we are saved but practice sin, we are lying."

Lest anyone think that John was advocating that all true Christians are perfectly obedient, he quickly offers further clarification and corrects another erroneous conception:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1:8-9).

So believers aren't perfect, but they are striving for perfection. When they fall short, which they all do, they confess their sins and receive God's forgiveness and cleansing. That is the pruning and sanctification process that all believers experience.

Finally, some were apparently claiming never to have sinned (1:10). That is heretical because it contradicts Scripture and eliminates the need for salvation and a Savior, making Jesus' death meaningless.

If we "walk in the light...we have fellowship with one another" (1:7). When John wrote of having "fellowship with one another," he was not thinking of people standing around after church drinking coffee in the "fellowship hall." The Greek word translated "fellowship" is *koinonia*, which denotes a sacrificial sharing with others. We read in Acts, "Those who had believed...had all things in common," or "in *koinos*" (Acts 2:44). Those who "walk in the light" love each other. Holiness is primarily characterized by servanthood. Does the word "servanthood" describe your lifestyle?

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