



Sunday School Lesson for November 2, 2003.
Released on October 30, 2003.

Study 1 John 1:5-2:6 , 15-17 , 29-3:1. Walk In Righteousness
Questions and answers below.

TIME: A.D. 90-95
PLACE: probably from Ephesus

1 John 1:5-10

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto 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 the truth:

7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth 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.

1 John 2:1-6, 15-17, 29

1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

.....

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

.....

29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

1 John 3:1

1 Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Lesson Background

Today we turn to the first letter of John. This letter was written by one of the fishermen who became apostles of Jesus. None of the Twelve was closer to Jesus than was John. After Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, John lived in Ephesus, a city on the western coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). It was probably there that John wrote his first letter (epistle) between A.D. 80 and 90. More than half a century had passed since Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to Heaven. The church was being invaded by false teachers who valued human opinion more than divine revelation, much as some false teachers do today.

Unlike the false teachers John was combating, he had heard the message of salvation directly from the Lord Jesus Christ. Concerning whether Jesus of Nazareth was the eternal Word (John 1:1-3; Col. 2:9), John declared that he had been in such close proximity to Christ that there was no doubt in his mind concerning His true identity. Not only had he seen the Son of God, but he had touched Him as well (I John 1:1). This Jesus was no mere phantom but God Incarnate (John 1:14).

As one of the original twelve disciples, John was in a unique position to share the gospel message with his readers. While false teachers claimed a special knowledge, John had a close, personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT (I John 1:5-10)

1. What was this "message" from Jesus (v. 5)?

John brought the message that he and the other apostles heard from Jesus himself. Jesus said that God is light. In Him there is no trace of ignorance or evil. Since God's Son spoke God's word on earth, everyone ought to know that any contradiction of it was false.

2. What does it mean to walk in dark ness (I John 1:6)?

While "light" and "darkness" can be used literally, John used them figuratively here (I John 1:5). Light stands for truth and righteousness; darkness stands for error and sin. God is not only the source of physical light (Gen. 1:3) but also the source of spiritual light.

3. What results when we walk in the light (v. 7)?

One can profess to be a follower of Christ, but that profession must be backed up with Christian living.

If we walk in darkness, that is, continue to live in sin, we are lying and not living by the truth. Of course, God knows whether we are in fellowship with Him, but we deceive ourselves if we think we can live as we please (Rom. 6:1-2).

However, if we walk in the light, following Christ and His teachings, we have the assurance that we are in fellowship not only with God but with His people too.

4. What is the significance of the present tense of the word "cleanseth"?

A personal relationship with God brings us into fellowship with all who share our faith in Christ. For those who enjoy this relationship, a great promise is given: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).

That the blood of Jesus was shed for our sins is a truth that is reiterated many times in Scripture (Matt. 26:28; I Cor. 15:3; Heb. 9:12; I Pet. 2:24). The present tense of "cleanseth" in I John 1:7 shows that this was not just an event in the past but is a continual reality in our lives at present. While Christ's sacrifice covers all sin, this should not lead us to presume upon God's grace and think that it does not matter how we live. God's grace teaches us to live holy lives (Titus 2:11,12).

5. How can Christians live in the midst of a sin-darkened world without becoming "of the darkness" themselves?

Jesus teaches in the Parable of the Sower that "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word," with the result that some become "unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22). What a challenge it is to live in this world without allowing our minds and souls to be corrupted! Spiritual victory is available in Christ, of course; Jesus prays for us and the Spirit strengthens us (John 17:9, 15-17). With proper caution and the power of the Holy Spirit we can keep our "boats in the water" without letting "the water into our boats."

6. What were some saying concerning their sins (v. 8)?

Some people think they can have fellowship with God even while their physical bodies are doing wrong. They claim that they have no present sin in their lives even while their physical bodies are sinning. But they are only fooling themselves with that kind of thinking. The Word of God clearly states "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (v. 8).

7. What happens when we confess our sins (v. 9)?

The good news is that those who confess their sins will find forgiveness through the blood of Christ. When we confess our sins to God, we are not telling Him something He does not already know. Rather, we are acknowledging that His Word is true and that we have transgressed His divine law (Rom. 7:7; Jas. 2:10; I John 3:4).

"True confession is naming sin- calling it by name what God calls it: envy, hatred, lust, deceit, or whatever it may be. Confession simply means being honest with ourselves and with God, and if others are involved, being honest with them too. It is more than admitting sin. It means judging sin and facing it squarely" (Wiersbe, The Bible Exposition Commentary, Victor).

While John's words were directed toward believers, unbelievers too must acknowledge their sinfulness as an initial step toward the Saviour. People cannot repent of sin unless they first admit that they are lost in sin (Mark 1:5; Luke 18:13).

8. Do we confess our sins only to God? Why, or why not?

The context of this lesson teaches us to confess our sins to God, as He is the only one who is able and willing "to forgive us" and "to cleanse us" for eternal life. Even so, the epistle of James exhorts, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another" (James 5:16). Though we are not required to confide our shortcomings and wrongdoings to everyone in the church, a certain personal transparency is important if we are to be forgiven by anyone against whom we have sinned. Confession of wrongdoing to another person requires humility—we admit we were wrong!

WALKING WITH THE LORD (I John 2:1-6)

9. Who is our "advocate" (I John 2:1)? What does this imply?

Affectionately, the aged Apostle John addressed these saints as "little children." Since John was the last living apostle and had lived in Ephesus for many years, the believers in that region looked upon him as their spiritual father. No doubt many of them had been influenced to accept Christ through his personal testimony.

John has been writing that all human beings are sinners, but he does not want that to be taken as an excuse for sinning. On the contrary, he is writing to help his readers keep from sinning any more. Still, he points out that our case is not hopeless even if we do sin. We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. In any courtroom a criminal needs an advocate, a lawyer who can argue his case better than he himself can. If guilt cannot be denied, perhaps the advocate can point to mitigating circumstances or some other reason to treat this criminal with mercy.

Jesus is our advocate in God's court of justice. He is righteous; He will not resort to lying or anything wrong to save us from punishment. He knows we have sinned, and God knows it, and we know it. Then why should God have mercy on us? See the next verse.

10. What is the meaning of "propitiation" (v. 2)?

Jesus is the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice, the means of appeasing God's wrath and gaining His favor for us in spite of our sins. He died in our place. The punishment we deserve has been given to Him, and so we can receive God's mercy instead. Furthermore, the sacrifice Jesus made is enough to atone for the sins of the whole world; but that does not mean all the sinners will receive mercy instead of justice.

There are proud sinners who declare they will gain Heaven by their own merits or not at all. Unless they repent, it will be not at all. There are other sinners who deny that there is a God or a Savior, a Heaven or a Hell. Unless they repent, they will learn the truth too late.

11. How can we test someone who claims to know the Lord (vs. 3-6)?

John asserted that one of the tests of genuinely knowing the Lord is obedience to His commandments. This is a true sign of our love for the Lord, for Christ said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Conversely, the one who claims to know Christ but refuses to obey Him is engaged in self-deception, "and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4). Any directive of our Lord is important and should be taken seriously. Those who say that some commandments are less important than others will ultimately have to answer to the One who gave them, for He has all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18).

In verse 6 of our lesson, the way we walk means the way we live, the way we conduct ourselves, the way we behave. Everyone who claims to be in Christ ought to live as Christ did. Of course that does not mean every Christian ought to walk on water and do other miracles as Jesus did. But every Christian ought to copy Jesus' attitudes and His actions that were not miraculous.

Every Christian ought to be honest, kind, generous, helpful, considerate, courteous. If one is not striving to be like Jesus, that shows that he really is not in Jesus; he is not a real Christian.

WALKING WITH THE WORLD (I John 2:15-17)

12. Why is it wrong to love the world (I John 2:15)?

"Love not the world." Here "world" stands for that which is opposed to God (5:19).

It is not just this evil world system itself that we are not to love; we are to be careful not to love the things that are in the world, either. Of course, it is necessary to have a certain amount of things to function in this world. Nevertheless, we can easily become captivated by the things of the world and become consumed with them, thus diminishing our love for God and His Son.

For some, worldliness is determined by whether one follows a carefully crafted list of prohibitions. Others may think in terms of how we use the things of the world, either for the glory of God or for our own self-gratification.

While no two believers are likely to agree on a precise definition of worldliness, we need to be aware of the world's power to draw us away from our devotion to Christ. In that sense, anything that weakens our dedication to the Lord and hinders our Christian witness might be seen as worldly.

13. In what two biblical accounts do we see the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life appealed to (v. 16)?

John now identified the "lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" as the means by which we are attracted to and captivated by the world.

We have two excellent scriptural examples of how the above can be used to tempt us. The first was in the Garden of Eden, and the second was in Christ's wilderness temptations.

When the serpent (Satan) approached Eve, he appealed to her fleshly desires, because "the tree was good for food" (Gen. 3:6). He appealed to the lust of the eyes in that it was pleasant to look upon. Satan also appealed to her pride in that he promised that eating the fruit would make her as wise as God.

Centuries later, Satan used this same approach on the Son of God in the wilderness. In attempting to appeal to Jesus' fleshly desires, the devil told Jesus to

turn the stones to bread. Appealing to the eyes, Satan showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and offered them to Him if worship was given to the devil.

Finally, Satan appealed to pride when he tempted Jesus to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple (Luke 4:1-13).

Examine the temptations that you face, and you will discover that they involve the desire of the flesh, the appeal to the eyes; and the stirring up of pride.

14. What promise is there for those who put "the will of God" first (v. 17)?

While many invest only in this world, they fail to realize that this world is passing away. It is even now in a state of decay and will one day face the wrath of God.

In contrast, however, are those who do the will of God. Generally speaking, Scripture reveals the will of God for our lives. It is by being obedient to God's Word that one lives in the center of His will. John did not depict believers passively awaiting God's will to be accomplished in their lives. Instead, they are active in doing God's will.

Those who put God and His will first in their lives have the promise that they will abide forever with Him in heaven. So let's be in training for eternity.

WALKING IN GOD'S LOVE (I John 2:29-3:1)

15. Can a person be born again as a child of God by living right (I John 2:29)?

A person is not born again as a child of God by living right, but a life of righteousness is convincing evidence that one has been born of God. A man can go through the motions of becoming a Christian just to please his wife. He can profess repentance without really repenting.

He can mouth a confession of faith with no real faith in his heart. He can be baptized without really being born again. But it is impossible to live a life of righteousness like that of God without really being a child of God. Such a life, day after day and year after year, is the proof that a person has been born of God.

16. Why does the world not recognize Christians (I John 3:1)?

Like John, we know that Christ is righteous. He is perfect, pure, and holy (Heb. 7:26). Likewise, those who have been born into God's family are committed to doing righteousness throughout their lives.

As God's children, we are amazed at the magnitude of the love that the Father has lavished on us. Such incomprehensible love is fathomless (Eph. 3:18,19). Though we are sinners, we have become children of God through faith in Christ (Gal. 3:26,27). The world, however, does not recognize us as the special objects of God's love because it never knew Him.

CONCLUSION

Looking at Ourselves

Like the first-century Christians, we know God's righteousness is flawless, and we know ours is flawed. Like those Christians of long ago, we are trying to prove that we are God's children by matching our righteousness with His. But we have no referee to blow the whistle when we fall short. Each one of us must be his own referee.

So take a critical backward look. Examine what you have done in the week just past. Count the times when your righteousness has been less perfect than God's. If you find no such time, look again. But do not be dismayed if you find more flaws than you expected. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Then take a look at the week that lies ahead. Plan not to repeat any of the fouls of last week, and plan to commit no new fouls. Perhaps you will not be as perfect as you plan to be, but you can make some progress. Thus you will be growing toward "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

PRAYER

Father in Heaven, we can never say enough in praise of Your perfect righteousness and Your perfect love. Thank You for holding before us a faultless example, and thank You for sending Jesus to show us that faultless righteousness is possible even where we live. Again we must beg forgiveness for our recurrent unrighteousness, and again we must ask for wisdom and strength as we try daily to be more like You. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

"Truly our fellowship is with the Father" (1 John 1:3).

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

We will pause the Sunday school lessons for a three week vacation beginning November 2 - 16, 2003. Your Sunday school lessons will resume via e-mail on Thursday, November 20, 2003 (Lesson 12 "Remain Loyal" Printed Text: 2 John 4-9; 3 John 3-12). Please keep us, as well as this ministry in your prayers.

May the Lord continue to bless you!

Sincerely,
Willie Ferrell
Jesus Is All Ministries
www.jesusisall.com