

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A0420 -- May 16, 2004 -- 1 John 1:7-8 -- Staying in the Light

I. DVP NORM: SPIRITUALITY

7 But if (*ean*; Conditional Clause) **we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another** (*alleilon*; Reciprocal Pronoun) **and the blood** (*haima*) **of His Son Jesus Christ cleanses** (*katharizo*) **us from each sin** (*hamartia*).

Here's the second conditional clause of vv. 5-10 indicated by the *ean* (if). The first one was in verse 6. Again, this means it's up to your volition. In this verse the condition is "if we walk in the light". If you do walk in the same moral sphere as God then fellowship is the result.

A. *GOD HAS ONE NATURE*

Notice that v. 5 said **God is light** but John says here in v. 7 that God **is in the light**. Is God light or is God in the light? Well, He's both. God's character is morally perfect *and* God is continually in that sphere. That God *is* light revealed to us the purity of God's moral nature, particularly His righteousness and justice. That God is light also revealed that He is a revealing God. He's revealed Himself through Creation Revelation and Written Revelation. In Creation Revelation He reveals Himself through nature and conscience. In Written Revelation He reveals Himself through the written word. That God is in the light means that God is continually in a sphere that is morally and spiritually consistent with His nature. God is always in the light because His nature is immutable. When we say God is immutable we are saying that God's nature never changes. His nature is absolutely stable. He's the same God yesterday, today, and forever.

B. *BELIEVERS HAVE TWO NATURES*

During the believers lifetime he has two natures; the old sin nature and the new regenerate nature. The fact that this verse presents a conditional situation means that we have to use our volition to choose which nature we want to operate from. Your two natures are like two bases of operation. Your old sin nature is equipped with everything you need to commit personal sin and human good, both of which are rejected by God. When you operate according to the old sin nature you are walking in the darkness (v. 6). However, because you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ you have a new regenerate nature. Remember, regeneration is *the re-creation of the human spirit*, it means that *Christ's life has been created in the believer*. You now have the ability to walk according to your new regenerate nature. Because it is Christ's seed which abides in you (1 John 3:6, 9) your regenerate nature cannot sin. It has partaken of the impeccability of its source which is the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything that comes from your regenerate nature is pleasing to God. Your regenerate nature is equipped solely to produce divine good. So, when you operate according to the new regenerate nature you are walking in the light as God is in the light. That is, you are walking in the moral and spiritual sphere that is compatible with God's character. The result is true **fellowship**. Remember **fellowship** means "sharing". When walking in the light you are sharing in

the same moral and spiritual sphere as God is. The verse says *we have fellowship with one another*. The phrase *one another* is not referring to you and other believers but to the believer and God because it is He who is in the light. It is a *reciprocal pronoun* meaning “He is having fellowship with you and you with him”. The fellowship is mutual not one way. How then do we have fellowship with other believers? To have fellowship with another believer you both have to be walking in the same moral and spiritual sphere as God, you both have to be walking in the light. Then you can have true fellowship with another believer, but here the concern is about being in fellowship with God.

C. THE HYPOCRITE CHARGE

This answers the problem that non-Christians often have with Christians. Non-Christians often argue that Christians are hypocrites because they don't live what they preach. What non-Christians don't understand (and some Christians) is that becoming a Christian does not mean that the Christian always lives consistent with the teachings of Scripture. We don't always live according to the Christian system of reality. There is a biblical reason for this; namely, we didn't get rid of our old sin nature that we had as unbelievers and so we often live like unbelievers. Becoming a Christian does not mean the Christian stops sinning, what it means is that he is free from the *penalty of sin* and the *power of sin* over his life. He is yet to be free from the *presence of sin*. The believer doesn't have to sin, but all believers still *do* sin because they still have two natures; the old sin nature and the new regenerate nature. When the believer operates from the base of his old sin nature the non-Christian claims hypocritical living. And he's right in the sense that the Christian is not living consistent with what Christianity teaches. But to call a Christian a hypocrite is not to say that the system of Christianity as presented in the Scriptures is therefore wrong. Adherents to every philosophy or religion are inconsistent to those philosophies or religions. A system is never measured by its followers but rather by whether the system itself provides the preconditions of intelligibility or not. Does Christianity account for the whole of reality is the better question. So, to claim that Christianity is false because of the inconsistency of its followers is not a logical deduction. The Scriptures themselves do account for why Christians don't live consistently with the Scriptures and that reason is because they still have an old sin nature.

D. PROBLEM OF UNKNOWN SIN

This final phrase of v. 7 is the answer to unknown sin. John says that when we are walking in the light and having fellowship with God then *the blood of His Son Jesus Christ cleanses us from each sin*. We have to confront the question of what happens if I commit a sin and I don't know it. Does that mean I am walking in the darkness and I don't even know about it and therefore I'm a liar? John's answer is “no”. Why not? Well, this involves us in the known and unknown commands of God for this dispensation or age. Just what are the co I'm to follow? Let's face it, we're all in different places in the Christian life, some of us are new or immature believers, others are mature and most of us are somewhere in between. That's what's different about us and that's an indication of how personal God really is. He deals with each one of us individually. But every believer today has the same commands to follow. That doesn't change. A question you might have is what are the commands that I am to follow? Do I follow the OT Mosaic Law? Just where in the Bible are the commands for me found? Well, the way I understand this is that all the laws in Scripture emanate from the Eternal Law of God. The Eternal Law of God is like a repository of Laws that are compatible with God's character. God takes various laws from this Eternal Law of God and dispenses them to His created order at various times. This is closely related to what we call dispensations. God reveals His will for a specific age through the laws that He chose to dispense during that age. We presently live in the Church Age so the Laws dispensed to the Church are the Laws we are to follow.

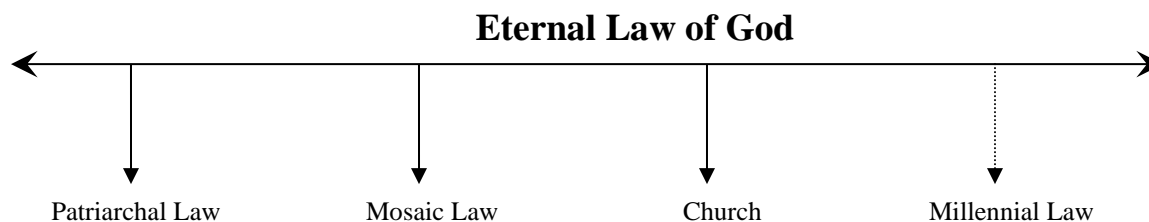


Diagram 1: *What commands do I follow to stay in fellowship?*

During each of the dispensations God administers or holds men accountable for certain laws which He draws from His Eternal Law. Sometimes laws are repeated in different dispensations and sometimes they are not (e.g. 9 out of the 10 commandments of the Mosaic Law are repeated for the Church). But this repetition is not to be confused with the idea that the Mosaic Law is still operational, Christ is the end of the Mosaic Law for those who believe (Rom. 10:4). Thus, the sphere of necessary knowledge to which a believer is responsible changes from dispensation to dispensation. We live in the dispensation of the Church and the Church began on Pentecost. Jesus lived under the OT Mosaic Law. So, Jesus followed a set of 613 Laws given to Moses. We are not to live under this Law. It has been fulfilled by Christ. However, in the latter part of Christ's ministry He revealed some Church truth (e.g. John 13-17). So, some of Jesus' teachings are applicable to you and all of the epistles of Paul, James, John, Peter, and the author of Hebrews are full of commands you are to follow. Now that we know where and what commands I am to follow how do I follow them? Well, first, you can only follow commands you know. So, this means the first step is taking in Bible doctrine. You've got to know the word in order to obey the word. Jesus says, if you love me you'll keep my commandments. The way to love God is to keep His commandments. There are a lot of people who claim to be Christians, running around saying they love Jesus. But they don't really know Jesus, they don't know about His person or His works and they certainly don't know His commands. And if they don't know His commands and do His commands then Jesus Himself says they don't really love him. If you really want to love Jesus my suggestion to you is that you take in the word! Day by day. You need Bible doctrine! You can never get too much Bible doctrine. You can't ever get too much Bible knowledge. If you don't deposit Bible doctrine into your human spirit being processed by the Holy Spirit then you will never love Jesus. Emotions just won't do. Announcing it just won't do. It's not what everyone else sees, it's the inner man. Did you realize that 95% of the Christian life is lived in the mentality of your soul? Less than 5% of the Christian life has to do with what you actually do or say. You spend more time thinking in your mentality than doing anything else. It's the mentality of your soul where decision making takes place and the battle between HVP and DVP is really taking place. O, first you have to take Bible doctrine in to your mentality under the filling of the Holy Spirit so that doctrine gets processed. Now that the doctrine is processed the Holy Spirit can use that doctrine, He can apply it to any given situation. But, if you don't deposit DVP in your soul then the Holy Spirit can't use it! Now that we know how I am to follow the commandments how do I deal with unknown commands in the present? What happens if I commit an unknown sin?

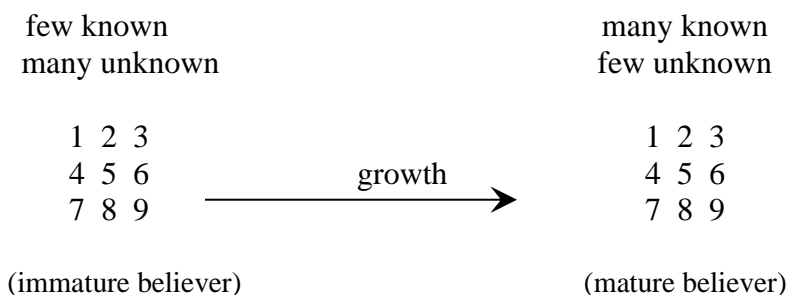


Diagram 2: What about my unknown sin?

Diagram 2 is meant to show you two examples, an immature believer on the left and the mature believer on the right. The immature believer knows *few commands* and has *many unknown* and the mature believer has *many known* and *few unknown*. That's what is being illustrated by the numbers 1-9. The immature believer has a small sphere of responsibility because he only knows a few commands (circle the 5, I meant to but I forgot before we made the copies). His sphere is small. The mature believer's sphere is larger (circle all numbers). When the believer, whether immature or mature sins within his sphere he knows it's wrong and he is walking in the darkness. But, if he sins outside that sphere meaning he didn't know it was sin he is not taken out of fellowship with God, it' doesn't mean he's walking in the darkness. Now, it's still a sin, regardless, but it doesn't get him out of fellowship. God holds you responsible for what you do know, not for what you don't know. See, the grace of God is so great that as long as you are walking in accordance with what you know of God's word then ***the blood of His Son Jesus Christ cleanses you from each (unknown) sin***. However, it doesn't cleanse you from known sin. How to be cleansed from known sin is what 1 John 1:9 is all about. We'll look at that next week. But, if you commit some unknown sin then there is an ongoing cleansing taking place by the blood of Christ. Let me also say that I know it's also true that you are already cleansed (1 Cor. 6:11), but John is here talking about an ongoing cleansing that occurs as a part of the parent/child relationship. Notice that the Greek word for cleansing (*katharizo*) is in the present tense. There is no other way to understand the present tense here other than an ongoing cleansing. Since this is true some may say, "well, I guess it's best just to stay ignorant of the word of God and then I'll be continually cleansed". But, this won't work because you're in God's family now. And just like there is discipline and growing up to do in your earthly family so there is discipline and growing up to do in your heavenly family. There is growth and maturity after salvation, not stagnancy.

II. HVP GIMMICK #2: DENIAL OF SIN NATURE

8 If (ean; Conditional Clause #3) we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth (aleitheia) is not (Present) in us.

Notice the danger here in v. 8. As a believer who knows that he is being continually cleansed of all unknown sins you may be tempted to ***say that you have no sin***. John says this would be self deception. To claim sinlessness on the basis of our conscious knowledge of sin fails to account for the old sin nature. We cannot, no matter how pure we think we are living, make the audacious claim that we have no sin during this life. There is still the old sin nature that has yet to be eradicated.

A. ORIGIN OF SIN NATURE

How and when did we get a sin nature? The sin nature is the nature that we inherited from our parents and they from their parents and so on back to Adam who got his nature by eating of the forbidden fruit. David says that this "sin nature" was received at conception (Ps. 51:5). This is why I taught you about the *Seed of the Woman* several weeks back. I wanted you to see the mechanics behind how Jesus Christ avoided a sin nature and yet came through a woman who had a sin nature. So, whether you are a male or female here today you received a sin nature at the moment of conception. What happens is that when a female is conceived the cells begin to divide in such a way that her germ cells are harbored and protected early on during cell division before differentiation occurs so they avoid being tainted by the sin nature, but the body cells of both male and female are corrupted by the sin nature and that is why everyone is born spiritually dead and

will eventually die physically. So, it's the male germ cells through which the sin nature is passed on from generation to generation. Since Mary's ovum was conceived by the Holy Spirit then Jesus Christ was able to be born of the *Seed of the Woman* without inheriting a sin nature. Of course this is crucial to the plan of Salvation.

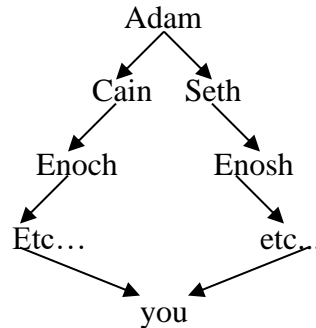


Diagram 3: *How did I get a sin nature?*

John says that for a believer to deny that he has a sin nature is a form of self-deception. Verse 6 was the believers attempt to deceive *others* into thinking he was in fellowship. But in verse 8 the believer has deceived *himself* into thinking he is in fellowship.

B. *RATIONALISM OF SIN NATURE*

The sin nature is profoundly rationalistic. It wants to justify its actions. So, the sin nature always tries to justify the person's actions through situation ethics, pragmatism, or relative thought. But John says it all amounts to self-deception. Self-deception is the old sin nature's ability to distort a human's self-perception through HVP gimmicks. He becomes unable to perceive that he is not God, he is not perfect. It might be added that if a man makes this claim he does not deceive his wife, children, or friends, only himself. Nevertheless, for a believer to make a claim to sinlessness is not unheard of. In fact, many commentators **BLATANTLY** teach that after conversion we are sinless. This is what I call Perfectionism which we'll deal with now.

C. *PERFECTIONISM*

Are believers sinless after *true* conversion? Four basic arguments are put forth by Perfectionists:

1. Biblical Claims that Certain Men Were "Perfect"
 Noah Gen. 6:9
 Job Job 1:1, 8

*The Hebrew word *tam/tamim* carries the idea of "upright" and "sincere", not the idea of *sinlessness*.

2. We are Called to be Perfect Like the Father
 Matt. 5:48

*Context is "loving our enemies" in v. 44. But the Greek verb is future, *we shall be* perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. This is not in this life but when we receive our resurrection body.

3. We Are Sanctified
 1 Cor. 1:2

*This is clearly positional sanctification (Phase 1). These people are not *sinless* in their daily walk. If they were then why did Paul spend most of the letter chiding them for their sins (cf. 5:1-2; 6:1, 7-8)? Obviously they weren't sinless.

4. Sin Nature Removed

- a. Self Deception – in this view the believer modifies the character of sin and by that process thinks he can relieve himself from the consciousness of sin. This ultimately destroys the mind (it becomes futile and vain in its imaginations) but the conscience remains at work, though seared.
- b. Denial that Sin Nature is Source of Sin – believers and unbelievers do this. Some believers argue that the sin nature was removed at conversion but that the believer can still sin in the likeness of Adam from an *unfallen nature*. This is impossible considering the fact that the regenerate nature is unable to sin according to 1 John 3:9. The idea is that when we sin it's like our new nature is having a "Hangover".

Biblical Responses

1. Phase 1 Positional Sanctification is Finished – the moment you believed in Christ you were positionally sanctified in Christ. This sanctification is as perfect as He is perfect. The fact of Positional Sanctification is a motivation toward Experiential Sanctification (1 Cor. 1:2)
2. Phase 2 Experiential Sanctification is Progressive – quite naturally the increase in knowledge of truth under the internal teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit results in believers being progressively set apart unto God (Gal. 3:3; James 1:4)
3. Phase 3 Ultimate Sanctification is Future – all believers will ultimately receive glorified bodies, being conformed to the very image and glory of Christ (Rom. 8:29-30).

*The Bible does not teach that the believer is totally sanctified in daily life before the resurrection body. Thus, the teaching of Perfectionism is a confusion of Phase 3 with Phase 2 Sanctification and is inadequate to account for how a Holy God can have fellowship with believers who still sin? In other words, self-deception doesn't solve the problem. The truth is not in these believers.

Notice, once again, John uses the pronoun *we*, signaling that even John, an apostle, could be deceived into this vile error! The apostles were not infallible in their lives. They were only infallible when writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I don't know if you realize how remarkable this statement is in terms of validating the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Let's think about it for a minute. If the words of Scripture are really only the human opinions of kings, fishermen, and wise men and the words claim to be divine then why would the human authors deliberately claim that they were subject to self-deception and sin? That would be pure stupidity, if the Bible were written by mere human authors unguided by the God behind the Scriptures. John also says that not only are we self-deceived but ***the truth is not in us***. It is beyond the text to say that this phrase describes an unbeliever. It does nothing of the sort. John is still including himself in the group! What it means therefore is that the truth is not in us in an effective of dynamic way. It is not directing our thoughts and behavior

[Back To The Top](#)

Click [Here](#) to return to other lessons.

[Return to Fredericksburg Bible Church Web Site](#)