

1 John 1:5-2:2 Answers
False Professors vs. True Possessors

Review: Unlike most New Testament letters, 1 John has no greeting or farewell. Some think it may have originally been a verbal message that John later put into written form. John penned this when he was fairly old and living around Ephesus. This is significant, because it was to the church in Ephesus that Jesus said: "I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first" (Rev 2:4). John, of course, recorded what Jesus said in Revelation. Perhaps this sermon (1 John) is John's way of helping the Ephesian church in light of what Jesus said. John is described repeatedly as the disciple whom Jesus loved. This letter explains how any believer can have a closer relationship with God, just like John had.

According to 1:1-4, what was John's purpose in writing? (*Read aloud*). John wrote for purposes of fellowship (1:3) and joy (1:4). We as God's people should be in fellowship with each other and with God, and our lives should be characterized by complete joy.

It is possible to be genuine Christian and not in fellowship with God. It is possible to be a true Christian and not experience full joy.

Would you say you have fellowship with the Father and Jesus like John had (1:3)? (*Rhetorical*) **If you are not in fellowship with God now, when do you plan to start walking in the light?** (*Rhetorical*) **What is going to change?** (*Rhetorical*)

It should be fairly obvious to you, and those around you, if you have complete joy. Do others see you as a joyful person or one whose joy has been taken away (always grumpy, a Sad Sack, a Puddleglum, an Eeyore)?

In John's sermon, he explains how to walk in the light of God's fellowship and how to experience a life of full joy.

ESV **John 15:11** [Jesus speaking] These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

The way to have complete joy is to abide in Jesus, to abide in His love and by keeping his commandments (John 15:7-10).

Introduction: In 1:5-2:6, John deals with the subject of false professors versus true possessors. Three times he raises and refutes false claims of salvation. One of his goals was to help his readers determine if they are really saved or not (2:6).

*******What message did John hear and proclaim (1:5-10)?** In short, the message is that God is light and those who have fellowship with Him walk in the light and practice the truth.

Review: In the previous paragraph the word of life referred to both the message and the messenger, to both Jesus and His teachings. Now, in this 2nd paragraph, John focuses on the actual message he heard from the Messiah.

1. In what sense is God light (1:5)? **1)** Light is **pure**. It can shine on the most filthy, gross thing imaginable, but the light itself will not be contaminated. Light illustrates purity; God is holy and righteous and pure and life. **2)** Light dispels darkness (darkness is the absence of light). Light thus represents **truth**, which illuminates people's understanding about God.

ESV **John 1:4-9** In him [the Word] was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it . . . The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

What does darkness represent (1:5)? Darkness represents false gods, sin, evil and lies.

******What is the first lie, the first false profession (1:6)?**

2. What test of fellowship did John set up in 1:6? Those who walk in darkness cannot be in fellowship with God.

ESV **John 3:19** . . . the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.

Reality: This (1:6) shows us that not everybody who talks about heaven is going there. There are those who say they walk with God, but in reality do not. They are either self-deceived or wolves in sheep's clothing who knowingly lie about it.

3. What does it mean to walk in darkness (1:6)? Based on what John wrote in 1:6, to walk in darkness means we fail to practice the truth, we are characterized by evil deeds. Conversely, to walk in the light means we practice the truth.

4. How does one practice the truth (1:6)? To practice the truth is to obey the truth, to embrace the truth, and act on it. There are two steps: first you have to know the truth, then you have to obey the truth.

Pilate asked Jesus, "What is truth?" (Jn 18:38). What truth did John have in mind (1:6)?

ESV **John 14:6** . . . I am the way, and the truth, and the life . . .

ESV **John 16:13** When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth . . .

ESV **John 18:37** I have come into the world — to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.

ESV **John 17:17** Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

(John heard Jesus say all these things in person).

According to 1:7, what is true of those who walk in the light? Those who walk in the light **1)** have fellowship with one another and **2)** are cleansed from all sin. To walk in the light is to be open and transparent.

5. In 1:6 John spoke of fellowship with God. In 1:7 John spoke of fellowship with one another. What is the relationship between the two? See also to 1:3. If a person is truly in fellowship with God he will also be in fellowship with other believers.

What role does the blood of Jesus play in allowing us to have fellowship with God (1:7)?
There is no access to the Father except through Jesus.

ESV **John 14:6** No one comes to the Father except through me.

Forgiveness only comes through the blood of Jesus (1:7). A lot of people do admit they are sinners, and might even confess their sins to God, but there is no access to God except through Jesus.

6. How many of our sins does the blood of Jesus cleanse us from (1:7)? It cleanses us from all sin (past, present and future). When we slip up and sin, remembering this truth can bring tremendous blessing, relief and comfort.

******What second lie did John expose in 1:8-10?** A second lie of false professors is stated in 2:8-10 ("we have no sin").

Søren Kierkegaard: "The matter is quite simple. The bible is very easy to understand. But we Christians are a bunch of scheming swindlers. We pretend to be unable to understand it because we know very well that the minute we understand, we are obliged to act accordingly. Take any words in the New Testament and forget everything except pledging yourself to act accordingly. "My God," you will say, "if I do that my whole life will be ruined. How would I ever get on in the world?" Herein lies the real place of Christian scholarship. Christian scholarship is the Church's prodigious invention to defend itself against the Bible, to ensure that we can continue to be good Christians without the Bible coming too close. Oh, priceless scholarship, what would we do without you? Dreadful it is to fall into the hands of the living God. Yes it is even dreadful to be alone with the New Testament."

7. According to 1:8-10, what is true of those who think they are without sin? They are deceiving themselves. There are a great many unbelievers who deny their own sinfulness and need for salvation.

The worst form of badness is human goodness, when human goodness becomes a substitute for Christ's righteousness (Adrian Rogers, "The Final Judgment" sermon on Revelation 20:11-15). Such people think salvation is for the thief or the murderer or the wife-beater, but not for them. They are not out and out sinners. They are nice people, they drive nice cars, they wear nice clothing. They treat their neighbors fine. They think they are too good to be damned. They think they are heaven bound.

ESV **Luke 18:11-12** . . . God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

What is the significance of the word we in 1:8? The aged apostle John included himself among those who were guilty of sin.

Salvation Application: John may have said this with reference to the fact that all men in their natural condition, including John, are sinners, and in need of the blood of Christ. You are not good enough to go to heaven; only Jesus is good enough to go to heaven. We must trust in Jesus, no self.

Sanctification Application: If John meant by this that even as believers we will still sin, then this verse would seem to put an end to the notion of sinless perfection.

8. What promise are we given in 1:9? God is faithful to forgive the sins of those who confess them.

ESV **Proverbs 28:13** Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

9. Suppose a Christian dies before can confesses his latest sin. Is he forgiven (1:9)? The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins (1:8), even the ones we don't confess. The forgiveness offered here may primarily refer to a person's initial salvation experience, when he first believes in Jesus, acknowledges his sins and looks to Jesus for forgiveness.

Beyond our initial salvation experience, God's children are convicted when they sin, they are ashamed of their sin, and they desire to confess it to God. Confession of sin helps us in our fellowship with God.

ESV **James 5:16** . . . confess your sins to one another and pray for one another . . .

10. How does claiming to be without sin make God out to be a liar (1:10)? God has declared that we are sinful! He is God's testimony:

ESV **Genesis 6:5** The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

ESV **Psalms 143:2** . . . no one living is righteous before you.

ESV **Isaiah 64:6** . . . all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

ESV **Jeremiah 17:9** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

ESV **Romans 3:9-11** . . . all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God."

ESV **Romans 3:23** . . . all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .

ESV **Ephesians 2:1-2** . . . you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world . . .

******11. Why was John writing these things (2:1-2)?** He wrote "so that you may not sin." Even though we are all sinners (1:5-10), our goal, our desire, ought to be to live sin free (2:1).

KJV **1 Peter 1:16** . . . Be ye holy; for I am holy.

ESV **Romans 6:1-2** . . . Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Of course we all do sin, but it should be punctiliar, not on-going continuous sin, not a lifestyle of sin. The lost man leaps into sin and loves it, the save man lapses into sin and loathes it (Adrian Rogers).

According to 2:1, if anyone does sin, what advocate do we have? Jesus is our advocate, speaking to the Father on our behalf.

12. What is an advocate (2:1)? The Greek word is *parakletos* and fundamentally means helper. It literally means one called alongside (to help). Rienecker points out that it could indicate one who offers legal aid or one who intercedes on behalf of someone else (p. 786). In a legal context it means advocate or counsel for the defense, your defense attorney!

13. Why did John think it important to describe Jesus as "the righteous" (2:1)? Unlike us, who are sinful, Jesus is sinless. Jesus' righteousness qualifies him to be our advocate.

God's justice demands punishment for violated holiness. Jesus the righteous served as our advocate and through His blood took the punishment for our sins.

What big word did John use in 2:2 to describe what Jesus did to our sins? Jesus is the propitiation for our sins.

14. What does propitiation mean (2:2)? The NIV renders this as “atoning sacrifice”. It means “satisfaction.” The idea is of placating the wrath of God, in this case with respect to our sins (Rienecker, p. 786).

ESV **Ephesians 5:6** . . . the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

ESV **Romans 1:18** . . . the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . .

ESV **Romans 5:9** Since . . . we have . . . been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.

Trinity: The Bible says God so loved the world, not God so hated the world. God has both love for man and wrath toward man’s sin. There is no difference in disposition between God the Father (wrath for sin) and Jesus (dying to save us from wrath). When it comes to salvation, the Father planned it, the Son accomplished it, and Spirit applies it. Adrian Rogers said we are selected by the Father, saved by the Son and sealed by the Spirit.

So What?

15. Based on 1:5-2:2, upon what should a person base his assurance of salvation? He should base his salvation on the fact that he has recognized and confessed his own personal sinfulness and that Jesus’ blood cleanses us from all sin (propitiation, 1:7, 2:2).

Small Group Discussion Questions: Ask everyone to divide up by gender into groups of three and discuss the following two questions for 5-10 minutes:

Tell examples of people you’ve met who made the false professions of 1:6 or 1:10.

What do the true possessors confess (1:9) and practice (1:6, 7)?

What reasons did John give us not to sin (2:1)?

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session and are based on the text of the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at www.SermonAudio.Com/NTRF.

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