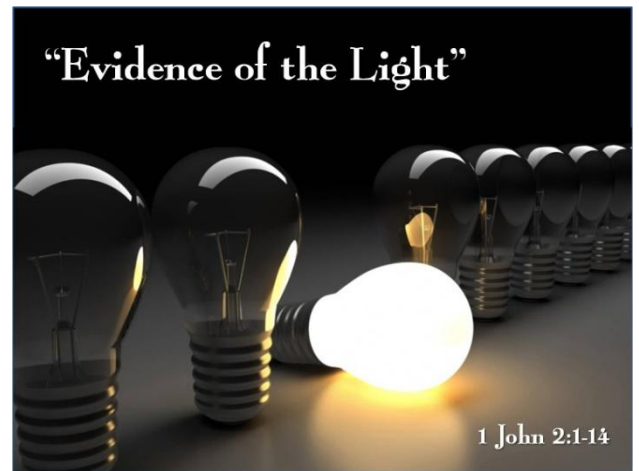


"Evidence of the Light" - 1 John 2:1-14

Pastor Tim Dodson at Jesus Fellowship of Believers
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1 John 2:1-14 (1) My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (2) And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (3) Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. (4) He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (5) But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. (6) He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (7) Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. (8) Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. (9) He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. (10) He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. (11) But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (12) I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. (13) I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. (14) I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

"My little child" literally means "my born ones." The idea therein is that John is addressing himself to those who are truly born again in Christ. So at least in the immediate, John is talking *to* and *about* the factually redeemed. That's important as we proceed now into the second chapter of 1 John.

John begins this chapter saying that he is writing this letter because he desires very simply that the readers...*that's even us today*, ...that we do not sin. We can often lose our way in high concepts and difficult ideas in living out our post-salvation faith when frankly it boils down to a much more unvarnished and unpretentious concept; "*Stop sinning.*" We read late in the last chapter, that John has little patience for the "professional perfectionist," but he appears to have even less tolerance for those want to claim redemption and spiritual membership and yet still engage themselves in wholesale trespass.

John isn't being accusatory or overtly judgmental. He seems to be addressing the issue of *sin* as much as the actual *sinner*. But in that subject, John is cutting no slack. As already established in chapter 1, there will never be any of us in this life that will walk in sinless perfection. But that is not in any way to say that sin...even a single offense...is a light issue or something to "let slide." He isn't saying "I am writing all these things to you so you sin as little as you can." Or "so you will sin just a little." Let us never forget that God's standard is *perfection*. The grace we receive for falling short of such is provided through Jesus Christ and the cross. Without that, we too would be held to the status of perfection in order to ever be in God's presence. Which essentially means you and I would be in serious trouble.

Thus with God there is no place for sin. He calls upon us to "be holy as I am holy." Every sin is an offense to God. Every sin an affront to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. We are given no room to wiggle. No excuse. No 'special dispensation'...no special 'permission.' There never is a 'good reason' to sin. When it comes to sin, the 'line is drawn.' There is no allowance for sin, but a perfect provision in case we do sin: no need to sin, no right to sin, no compromise with sin, no license, **but a provision in case we do.**

When we *do* fall short of that perfect standard, God is quick to be there to restore when there is confession and repentance. But we need to realize that our actions even therein do not change the *nature* of sin! The sin doesn't change, just our relationship with our God. And we must know that God's desire in such situations is not merely to "erase the offense from the books." He aims to take that error and turn it into a "teaching moment" to make us leaner, meaner, and more faithful. To take us to a place where we grow stronger and able to endure temptation more successfully. Always forward...always upward. Always toward a greater degree of maturity. We don't crash our cars because we have seat belts and airbags. But they are there in case we have an accident and aren't we all so very glad they are!

Steven Cole says - *Every time I see the bumper sticker, "Christians are forgiven, not perfect;" I want to add another line, "But, they're striving for holiness." As it stands, the bumper sticker seems to say, "God accepts me, faults and all, so you need to accept me, too!" Okay, but please give me some assurance that you're working on things! As the author of Hebrews states (Heb 12:14ESV), we are to "strive for...the holiness without which no one will see the Lord." Holiness is not an optional accessory that you may add to your Christian life at some point, if you so choose. Holiness is essential. If you are not striving to grow in holiness in the sight of God, you need to examine whether you know Christ as Savior at all. Every blood-bought child of God desires to please the Lord Jesus who gave Himself on the cross to save us from our sins.*
(1John 2:1-2 The Key to Holiness)

John is telling us that we cannot allow ourselves to become apathetic and complacent about sin, as if it is no "big deal." We must not drift toward a passive approach and think we can just confess to God (1Jn 1:9-note) and we're "good to go." We can have too low a view of sin, because we have too low a view of the holiness of God and the effect of sin on the Father's heart ...not to mention the grieving of His Spirit!

"...if anyone sins." John uses the **aorist tense** here, which would lead us to see that he is picturing the act of sin as an isolated one, not as one's normal state. It is often described in Christian circles as a 'stumble.' But if you are constantly physically stumbling and falling over and over again, not only are you going to be perpetually black and blue, but eventually you would have to consider that maybe there is a more serious issue to consider besides being clumsy and you would go see a doctor. But is that what we think when we are finding ourselves spiritually on our face again and again?

"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world."

Propitiation is a big biblical term which essential means "payment." It means to be a sacrifice, a covering, a satisfaction, an appeasement for sin. It means you and I owed a great debt, and Jesus paid that debt and satisfied an unfathomable standard of holiness to approach our Creator. Notice the ever important last words in that verse, *"not for ours only* (the sins of those born again)*but also for the whole world."* That means the payment has been made and the door for man to go to God is wide open. If such is fact, then how can some be therefore lost eternally and bound for hell? Such a question is crucial, because many will take a stance that because of such an act of Christ, all will be saved in the end, or at least that we are saved through intellectual belief alone...that nothing is required on our part. If that were true, could not scripture be boiled down to a one verse version, *this verse alone*? No, there remains our participation in such! We must enter through narrow gate.

Luke 13:23-27 *Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. "When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' "then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' "But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.'*

As this passage in Luke tells us, as well as verse 3 of our text herein, we must "know" Him. We can *say* that we know Him but according to scripture we **prove** we do indeed know Him by "keeping His commandments." Thus any attempt to "wash our hands" of any personal and individual responsibility and/or participation according to verse 4 is to reject scripture and make ourselves into liars.

John chapter 15 speaks into this issue in depth. It calls upon us to "abide" in Him. Such means we **remain** and **remain faithful**. We, the redeemed, are the branch that is grafted onto the vine. And having done so, we are called then to "produce fruit." It is a scriptural fact that if we are connected, we *will* produce fruit. This is further exemplified in the fact that John tells us that any branch that fails to do so is "*taken away,*" ultimately to be "*gathered up and burned.*"

So let us resolve herein to not be deceived by those who would try to tell us differently. James 1:15-16 says that "...*sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.*" Verse 5 of our text reminds us that "...*whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.*"

Verse 6 goes even further to call upon us that claim to love Christ to "walk as He walked." Can there be a more clear and yes *daunting* verse in all of scripture when it comes to the living out of our faith? I know a pastor who claims you do not have to be a disciple in order to be a Christian. I'm not sure what he does with this passage! Was Jesus a disciple of Father God? A disciple is "*one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.*" Such denotes a principle of commitment and by default mandates dedication and a living priority in 'all things God.' What does having the love of God perfected in us mean, unless it means quite simply we are really born again Christians? To be one is to seek in all ways to "walk as He walked." Think about the impact of that truth! Suddenly it seems the field of players just got a lot smaller.

Does such mean we are to don a robe and sandals and live as homeless evangelists? If so, what did Paul mean when he said in 1Corinthians 7:24 "*Brethren, let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called?*" And why did Jesus not let the healed demonic do so, the one who had wandered the tombs as a crazy man until Jesus freed Him? In fact, Jesus told him rather to "*Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.*" No, the answer is not to mimic the physical lifestyle of Jesus in a day that such was not so bizarre, but rather to take upon ourselves the spiritual walk and 'sold-out' living of Jesus. For Him there was no half-way...no compromise, and no excuse.

So take a deep breath and ask that "elephant-in-the-room" question: "**Am I really seeking to walk as Jesus walked?**"

John emphasizes that what he was saying herein was not a new concept. Those who are uncomfortable with what he is so plainly saying will even today claim that John was operating on the fringes...that he was speaking in hyperbole. But John apparently saw that coming and reminded them that he was not alone in this principle: That he was just reiterating what was already said, and we have declared as much with the words of Jesus in John 15! With such a defense established, John goes back in for more, declaring that in fact, "*He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.*"

So let's see if we understand just what he is saying. John is declaring that if one claims to be a Christian, and hates his brother...literally detests him, he is lying about his position in Christ. That he is *not* a Christian! Now what I find here on this fact is that those in the hot seat will invariably say that they don't actually *hate* the brother, but that is an extremely dangerous game to play! To many of these I would say "well, with friends like you, who needs enemies?" Ironically this book is all about avoiding being deceived and to be spiteful, abusive and hostile towards a brother or sister and then claim that hate is not implied is the height of self-deception!

Robert Yarbrough says - "*Being in the light means being in fellowship with both God and other believers as the result of the cleansing effected by Christ's death (1Jn 1:7). It is a condition made possible by the nature of God, who is light (like Christ himself; John 12:46), as the gospel message goes forth and is received (1John 1:5). It is fitting and natural that believers should openly claim their allegiance to the light that is God and Christ; 1 John is itself an extended example of such testimony. But the claim can be bogus....The claim is one thing; the reality is something else....Such a person's spiritual and practical condition is out of conformity with salvation-historical possibility...and indeed divine expectation. In 1Jn 2:11 John elaborates on this sorry state.*"

H A Ironside - "In 1John 2:9-10 the apostle speaks very seriously and very solemnly concerning something that may well convict some of us. "He that says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now" (1John 2:9). **If you hate your brother, no matter what you profess, you are still in darkness. Notice he did not say you may be a real Christian who has fallen into darkness; but he said, if you hate your brother you are "in darkness even until now."** **You have never been anywhere else. You have never been in the light at all. You cannot have divine light or the Holy Spirit or the love of God dwelling in you, and still hate your brother. And yet we often see people professing the name of Christ while showing hatred toward others."** (1 John 2 - Ironside's Notes)

And finally we hear from **Pastor Steven Cole**: *The phrase, "The one who says," tips us off that John again has the heretics in mind. They claimed to be enlightened, and yet, apparently, they were arrogant and self-centered. They did not love others in a sacrificial way. They were using people to build a following for themselves, rather than building people to follow Christ. So John gets out his black and white paint again, and without mixing them into shades of gray, he shows that these false teachers were not true believers. They do not love; they hate. They are not in the light; they are in the darkness until now (1Jn 2:9). But we should not only use John's words to identify false teachers. We should also apply them honestly to our own lives. Sadly, there are many that profess to know Christ, but in their marriages and towards their children they do not practice biblical love. Many evangelical churches are torn apart by conflict because certain powerful members did not get their own way. Rather than acting in love, they viciously attack those who don't agree with them. So John shows that love is inseparable from the light, just as hatred invariably is bound up with darkness. He does not allow for any middle ground, where you can be sort of loving, but sort of cantankerous, too! He makes three points: Your profession of being in the light is exposed as false if you **hate** your brother (1Jn 2:9). You may be thinking, "**Hate** is a pretty strong word! While I may not love that difficult person, I wouldn't say that I **hate** him." But John doesn't let us go there! You either love the other person, which requires sacrificing yourself for that person's highest good, as Jesus did for us on the cross (John 13:34)—or, you hate him. Writing to a Gentile church situation, Paul contrasts the new way in Christ with the old life before he met Christ (Titus 3:1-3): "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, **hateful, hating one another.**" He goes on to talk of how God's kindness and love transformed us through salvation. **The point is, no matter how pagan or unloving your background, if you continue in a lifestyle of hate rather than a lifestyle of love, your profession of faith is suspect. (The Old New Commandment 1 John 2:7-11)***

*If we lose love then we lose everything. There is nothing left. You can do all the right things, believe all the right truths, but if you do not love other Christians then all is lost. (Guzik) And then John goes on to seemingly "put the period at the end of the sentence" by saying "But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and **does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.**" Such would lead us to believe therefore that in most cases it does little to scold or even correct such an individual. He is blind, and cannot see to understand what you are even implying. He is in the dark and has never come out into the light to even understand what light is. How can one explain to a man born blind what light is like? Such is outside of his grasp. A supernatural work must occur first, and that is John's point! And that work is not mine or yours, but God's only. How often we entreat folks to "love others" when we would better to encourage salvation so one might experience and know what real love looks like. It's profoundly easier to love when we have experienced the "author of love."*

But let us realize that John was not just writing to us so we might recognize a pretend Christian. He is writing also so we might look in the mirror and confirm that we aren't one ourselves. I will be the first to acknowledge that love does not always come readily in me. I can only love because God has so empowered me to do so, and I have to ask Him regularly for such a love. And that "God of love" is faithful to equip me to do so, but such will not and *cannot* happen if I am blind and do not know light. As John stated in the last chapter "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all." The only way to be a Christian...to know love...to know light, is to do so with my "eyes wide open."