

Radiant

1 John 1:5-2:2; October 15, 2017

Who enjoys taking tests?

- School: example of Ava; college students - test our knowledge
- Examined by a doctor (tests our health)
- Driving test (tests our knowledge and our ability to drive).

Transition: In many ways, 1 John is a series of tests for us and it's a test the really matters because eternal life is at stake.

What's the purpose of 1 John?

- First, as a reminder, the author of this letter is the Apostle John, the same author of the Gospel of John. When we preached through that Gospel last year, we saw this his purpose there we was distinctly evangelistic (John 20:30-31). It was to lead readers to a personal saving faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- John's purpose in his letters are little different. We might say they are more pastoral. On multiple occasions John, in this letter, says something like this, "I am writing these things to you so that..." (1:4; 2:2, 12-24, 21, 26; 5:13). These verses provide a window into the purpose why we was writing this letter (like his purpose statement in John 20:30-31). Most scholars agree that 1 John 5:13 states his primary purpose:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13 ESV)

- John's purpose in this letter is to lead believers to a full understanding and **assurance** of their salvation in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- The way he leads his readers into an assurance of their salvation is by providing a series of tests by which Christians can examine true doctrine, obedient living, and fervent devotion. As you read through 1 John and as we preach through it, we're going to see test after test which we can use to examine our professions of faith (cf. 2 Pet. 1:10). And, for clarity sake, I don't think John is giving us tests to rank our spirituality (i.e. You get an "A" in the subject of Christianity, you get a "B," you barely squeeze by with a "D."). Rather, he's giving these tests so the believers can determine if they actually have eternal life or not and his hope is that they would in fact assure them of their right standing with God.
 - Different than an exam in school, it's not a pass that we seek to pass and then move on and forget about the material.
 - It's also different that getting your license. You can lose your license (you don't pass the test when it's time to renew; you don't follow the rules; you become unable to drive). You can't lose salvation. You can't have "eternal life" and then lost "eternal life." If so, then you never had "eternal life" to begin with.
 - In fact, this test is probably more similar to our health checkups whereby

- we keep constant perspective of the vitals of the Christian life.
- Additionally, John intended for these tests to reveal, expose and rebuke hypocrisy and false religion that had crept into the church through false teachers.

Read 1 John 1:5 - 2:2

The flow of 1 John 1:5-2:2:

- John begins this section with a statement about the character of God and follows it with a series of three claims and counterclaims. These claims begin with “if” (1:6, 8, 10) and the counter claims begin with “but if” (1:7, 9, 2:1). I believe there are three key questions that we should wrestle with today.

Transition: the first question relates to our understanding of the nature of God.

I. Do you tremble at the radiance and holiness of God (1:5)?

This statement concerning the character of God

“God is light.”

- He is affirming God’s holiness and purity. J. I. Packer describe God’s holiness in this way: “...the word signifies everything about God that sets him apart from us and makes him an object of awe, adoration, and dread to us. It covers all aspects of his transcendent greatness and moral perfection and thus is an attribute of all his attributes, pointing to the ‘Godness’ of God at every point. Every facet of God’s nature and every aspect of his character may properly be spoken of as holy, just because it is his” (Packer, Concise Theology).
- As image bearers, Christians are called to pursue holiness. We are most like our creator when we live a holy life (1 Pet. 1:13-21).

“In him is no darkness at all”

- John follows up with stating the same sentiment but negatively. Darkness refers to moral perversity and unrighteousness (cf. John 3:19-21) and so John is affirming that God is completely free from any taint of sin and cannot tolerate any form of it.

You who are of purer eyes than to see evil and cannot look at wrong... (Habakkuk 1:13 ESV)

- As a result, Packer finishes his description of God’s holiness by saying it calls sinners to “constant self-abasement in his presence (Isa. 6:5)” (Packer, Concise Theology).

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!” And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was

filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:1-5 ESV)

- Could it be that for some of us today, maybe many of us, the cure for our lax and ongoing struggles with sin is God's holiness. As John Piper says, "Pure and simple —his holiness seen and bowed before."

Given the above understanding of who God is, John is completely shocked at the conclusions they came to regarding how they viewed sin. A correct view of sin begins with a right understanding of the holiness of God.

Transition: the second question relates to our understanding of humans and sin.

II. Do you have a right attitude toward sin (1:6-10)?

John follows in this section with the three claims and then counterclaims that all relate to their attitude toward sin. The false teachers had minimized the seriousness of sin and John highlights three errors that we should avoid when it comes to thinking rightly about sin.

3 Errors to Avoid in Our Attitude Toward Sin

1. Don't love sin (1:7).

- There were people claiming to "have fellowship with God" (i.e. eternal life) yet "walking in darkness."
- *Walking* is used figuratively in the sense of live and it's a present tense verb, thus highlights]ing the ongoing practice and trajectory of one's life. The NET translates it, "... and yet keep on walking in darkness."
- *Darkness*, as mentioned above, is just another way to speak of sin.
- Putting these two words together, we might say:
 - They were habitually engaged in sinful conduct.
 - They were consciously abiding in sin.
 - They were deliberately keeping on sinning.
 - They were happily making sinning their practice.
 - Their life was characterized by a life of sin.
 - They loved sin.
- This picture is painted of someone claiming to be a believer with their lips ("we say") but not in their practice. They were saying you could *be* righteous without actually *practicing* righteousness. They said you could claim to have fellowship with God regardless of what your behavior was.
- Such a person is a "liar" and does not "practice the truth."
 - "It is excluded for anyone to live a 'dark,' immoral life and yet claim to believe in

a God who is light” (Andreas Kostenberger).

- Jesus changes people. Actually! Really! Jesus came to take away sin and destroy the works of Satan. How can you be a Christian and continue loving the things he came to destroy?
- “We are right to be suspicious of those who claim a mystical intimacy with God and yet ‘walk in darkness’ of error and sin, paying no regard to the self-revelation of an all-holy God...Religion without morality is an illusion” (John Stott, 74).
- All Christians continue to struggle with sin, including myself, but the test John gives us here suggests that if our lives are continually characterized by a casual and comfortable attitude toward sin, then we should stop and honestly evaluate whether we really know the God of “unapproachable light” (1 Tim. 6:16).
- You can’t be a Christian and love sin. Rather, John says, we are to be people who “walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1:7).
 - We increasingly love righteousness.
 - We habitually engaged in living a holy life.
 - We happily make holiness our practice.
 - Our life is increasingly characterized by a life of holiness.
 - We love holiness.
 - We bring all of our sins to the light, seeking to imitate our God who is light and find forgiveness in the cleansing blood of Jesus (cf. Luke 22:20; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:7-25, esp. 22).
- Don’t love sin, love holiness.

2. Don’t deny sin (1:8).

- You also can’t be a Christian and flat out deny sin either. The error here is the denial that sin exists in our nature (so Combs, Stott). Stated positively, it would be claiming to be inherently good.
- Here’s the test: if I were to ask you, “If you died today, would your eternal destiny be heaven? If so, why?” and you replied, “Yeah, I’d probably go to heaven because I haven’t really done anything that bad. I’m a pretty good person,” you fail the test.
- If you claim to be sinless, or to state it positively, if you claim to be inherently good, you deceive yourself and the truth is not in you (cf. Rom. 3:23).
- The way to fellowship with God isn’t through a denial of sin. That would render Jesus useless. How can you benefit from the cleansing effects of the blood of Jesus if you say you have no sin. The very reason he came and died was to pay the penalty for sin.
- You shouldn’t deny your sin but rather you should confess your sins?
 - The proper Christian attitude toward sin is not denial but a practice of continual confession of sin, trusting in the blood of Jesus, which is the vehicle of both forgiveness and cleansing that God has promised.
 - God is faithful and just. He is true to his word. He has promised cleansing and forgiveness for those who trust in Jesus and he will do it.
 - Genuine believers grow in recognizing, confessing and repenting of sin to God. As we see this grow in our own lives, it should increasingly give assurance of

salvation.

- Do I need to confess every single one of my sins in order to be saved?
 - No. If that were the case, none of us could be saved. We all commit sins every day that we forget or don't even realize are sinful.
- Am I already forgiven of sin or not?
 - Yes (see 1 John 2:12; cf. Col. 3:13). Believers are already forgiven for every single one of their sins — past, present and future — at conversion, when they initially admit their sin, confess their sin, turn from their sin and place faith in Jesus.
 - We call this justification: as regards to your standing before God, he views you the way he views Jesus: completely clean, perfect, righteous.
- Then why are we still commanded to confess sin?
 - In one sense, confessing sin is the opposite of saying we have no sin. So, continual confession of sin is a way for us to habitually walk in the light. It's a way for John to say, "Daily, be aware of your sinfulness. Take note of your sins. Be grieved by your sins. Don't hide them. Bring them to God and let the blood of Jesus cover them."
 - Viewed in a relational sense, sin is always against God, our Father. We have a relationship with him.
 - What happens when you sin against another person? Isn't your relationship distanced until confession and forgiveness has happened?
 - Sin weakens relationships .
 - Our daily confession of sin is necessary for restoring and renewing our day-by-day relationship with God.
 - Remember the Lord's Prayer: this is how you should pray
 - "...and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation" (Luke 11:4).
 - Daily confession of sin and turning away from sin are essential to our progress in holiness. It's a way we daily apply what Jesus bought for us.
 - I love how John Piper says it, "The price of forgiveness was paid once for all. The application to particular sins in our lives is experienced day by day. We add nothing to the purchase."
- A genuine Christian will have a sin-confessing attitude. As one scholar noted, "Those who are not willing to confess have no reason to be assured of their salvation" (William Combs).
- Don't deny sin, confess sin.

3. Don't claim to be perfect and incapable of sinning (1:10).

- This claim is similar to the previous one but with a slight nuance. Here, they are claiming to be incapable of sinning. We might call this the error of perfectionism and of a false righteousness.
- You shouldn't claim to be perfect but rather you should look to the only perfect one, his

sacrifice and his ongoing advocacy for us before the Father.

Summary: the one who enjoys true and genuine fellowship with God is the one who has a right attitude toward sin.

Transition: the final question relates to our understanding of the person and work of Jesus.

III. Do you daily fix your eyes on Jesus as the only provision for your sin (2:1-2)?

This passage started with a statement about the character of God (1:5), then it addressed the nature of humans, particularly in relation to gaining a right attitude toward their sinfulness. Finally, this passage concludes with Christology, God's provision for our sin. John highlights three aspects of why Jesus is the only provision for our sin.

1. His righteous character

- "Jesus Christ the righteous"
- This reference makes explicit the basis on which Jesus is able to take our place. He was without sin.
- Another way to say this is to say, "Jesus is the light of the world" (John 8:12). Or, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:4-5).

2. His propitiatory death

- "He is the propitiation for our sins"
 - This word propitiation appears only four times in the NT (1 John 4:10; Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17). Your translation might even translate it as "atoning sacrifice."
 - Propitiation means that Jesus is the wrath bearing, wrath exhausting sacrifice.
 - In order for us to be saved, our sin must be dealt with but God's wrath also. God's hatred for sin flows from his holy character. He hates all sin. Jesus, as the wrath exhausting sacrifice, cleanses me from sin and appeases the wrath of God. As a result, we now have peace with God.
- "...And not for ours only but also for the sins of the world"
 - "In the case of John's first letter, it [the reference to the universal scope of redemption] broadens the application beyond any privileged group of initiates to all who trust in Christ's atoning sacrifice. In this way, John rejects an attitude by which some in the Christian community arbitrarily sought to exclude others from the scope of salvation" (Dr. K, 265).

3. His heavenly advocacy

- "We have an advocate with the Father"
- Another word for advocate is helper. Here's the deal: John exhorts us not to sin, but we will continue to struggle with sin. And when we do sin, he says, we have a helper, an advocate with the Father who is interceding for us. He's saying, "They are mine. I paid for their sin." Jesus is our mediator. He is our high priest.

Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself. (Hebrews 7:25-27 ESV)

“Neutrality is impossible; people remain in darkness and sin unless they put their trust in ‘the light’ and thus are rescued from the domain of darkness, epitomized by Satan, the ‘prince of this world’” (Andreas Kostenberger).

Conclusion:

The Point: Walk in the light as God is light daily trusting his provision in Christ.

How do you know if you’re making progress?

- Others around you will see and confirm the progress in your life.
- You will see the progress in your life.
 - You will grow in your hatred, confession and repentance of sin.
 - Temptations won’t be as strong as they used to be.
 - Your love for holiness will grow.
 - You will see yourself drawn to holy acts that once were burdens.
 - You will increasingly have a desire for more and more of Jesus as your greatest satisfaction.
- As we see progress, John Piper says, “This will encourage us that God is at work in our lives. And it will humble us because progress will mean we can see more clearly how far we have to go and how small are our advances. And how much we will always need a great Savior.”