

1 John 1:5-2:2 Walk in the Light of Christ! Easter 3 April 15, 2018

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You who were once dead in your sins have now received God's grace, peace and life in Christ Jesus. Amen. We read 1 John 1:5-2:2, his letter to Christians who needed guidance and power to walk in God's light. These are your words heavenly Father to give us strength and direction to walk with our living Christ.

Dear Christian Friends of the Savior,

Which of these statements is true regarding you as a Christian. "I can do nothing right!" "I can't do anything wrong!" One is pessimistic and the other is arrogant! Which is right regarding us? Both are! We have a sinful nature that will cause everything we do to be tainted by sin. Yet, we have Christ's perfect life through faith, which causes everything we do to be perfect in God's sight. With these two truths side by side, we walk in life every day. Evil seeks to trap us in sin and harm our faith, while God helps us win a victory over evil so we can:

Walk in the light of Christ!

Let's define spiritual light. It is whatever is good, right, and true from God, which brings lasting joy. Also, it rejects sinful attitudes and selfish living. Darkness is whatever is evil, false, wrong, ungodly, and ends in misery. As Christians, we have light from God and a new nature. But we also have darkness from within and we have the sinful world urging us to follow the devil's ways that lead people to hell.

First, we need God's help to walk in the light. At John's time there were false teachers who proposed that the physical world was evil and only spirit was good. To become more spiritual, they taught that you had to expand your mind by experiencing evil. It sounds just like the devil's temptation for Adam and Eve. He called evil good with devastating effects still today. John warned, "*If we claim to have fellowship with [God] yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*" (v.6) To walk in darkness means that even though the Bible calls something a sin and wrong, people reject that truth. By nature of all of us want to deny that we sin. We want to cover our sins in darkness. Our sinful natures easily see our sins as small compared to others people's sins. If we must admit we're wrong, we quickly point the blame at others.

But John wrote, "*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*" (v.8) God is not impressed by our excuses. His Word states that we were born as sinners (Psalm 51:5) It states, "*All have sinned and fallen short of His glory.*" (Romans 3:23) In Romans 2, it describes how the *wrath of God will be revealed* to everyone who sins. (v.5) In life, God's judgment for sin will end in death. After death, God's judgment will end in eternal separation from His love in hell.

Christians know this truth. We know that we can't save ourselves. That's why John wrote, "*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*" (2:1-2) Some people may be willing to die for someone they love. "*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" (Romans 5:8) God put the guilt, shame, and punishment that we all deserved for sin on His Son. How awful those sins must have been! Jesus' sacrifice satisfied God's just anger so that He declared the whole world not guilty of any sin! How amazing that God would do this for us, who didn't deserve it!

This is the powerful message of the gospel. We have received it by faith in Christ as our Savior. The Bible declares to us: "*The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*" (v.7, 9)

What a beautiful picture of forgiveness. The red blood of Christ washes us clean of all our sins. Jesus' forgiveness covers all. When He died on the cross, He said, "*It is finished.*" (*John 19:30*) His work was complete. God's Word has promised it and we know it is true! Even though we often feel guilt or sin, God has the final word which does not condemn us as long as we have Christ. Think of sin as snow that falls in April. In a day or two the powerful sun melts it and it disappears! The powerful Word of God assures us that Jesus paid for our sins in full. In Christ's forgiveness, God no longer sees our sin. The Son has taken them away. We are now free to live as the children of God! What great news this is for us!

Second, God gives us strength to walk in the light of Christ. As Christians, God sees us as saints through Christ's perfect life no matter what we do! That doesn't mean that we should stop living for Christ and turn back to the control of sin. When we find that we have broken God's commandments, it should grieve us. We don't want lies or laziness or hatred to become a way of life so that we aren't sorry for those sins. They could separate us from all that Christ has won for us. So, we daily fight against our sins in Christ's strength!

How do we get that strength? John wrote, "*If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...*" (v.7) John pictures Christians gathering together around the Light of God's Word. If a group of people are camping on a cold April day and someone lights a large campfire, it doesn't take long for everyone to gather to it to get warm. We are gathered together here around the light of Jesus. We come in for worship from a world that is often cold and indifferent to our needs. Jesus knows exactly what we need: His full forgiveness which gives us peace with God forever! How blessed we are to gather around His truths so that we can encourage each other in our walk with Christ!

When we have peace with God, our new nature wants to live in God's light with Christ and believe God's truth and hold on to Christ's blessings. But, our old nature continues to fight against the light. Sin is like a sticky sheet of paper. The more you touch it, the more places it sticks! We need God's Word to assure us that we are not alone in this fight. Every time we confess our sticky sins, Christ applies His forgiveness to us and it rips those sins free from us. Jesus is like a doctor whose office hours are 24/7. His medicine is forgiveness which He won by dying on the cross. He prescribes His medicine to us through His Word, baptism, and the Lord' Supper. Whenever we receive Him by faith, we are forgiven and made new in His strength. His Word gives us power and guidance for life!

I want you to open your bulletin and find the picture by the sermon Scripture lesson. The risen Savior is in the front of the picture. At a distance behind Him are the women who have left the empty tomb. They had been afraid, confused, and hurting. But, Jesus suddenly appeared before them and all their fears, confusion, and hurting disappeared. The risen Christ changed everything for them! They went back to the gloomy disciples with joy for they were walking in the light of God's truth with the risen Savior!

I pray that today God's Word has done the same thing for us. We came here as Christians burdened by our sins and the troubles of life. Yet, God has told us through John that despite our sins and problems, Jesus came to set us free. He directs us by faith to confess our sins and bring our burdens to Him. He will lift them off of us. He already has carried them to the cross to set us free forever. In Him, we are certain of heaven where we will walk with Jesus perfectly and will never be bothered by sin again. Even now the risen Savior is walking with us in His Word. The more time we spend with Him, the better we will know His truth. Christ will keep warning us not to turn back to our old sinful patterns of life. But He also will encourage us so that in His strength we will accomplish many good things for His honor. He will work this in us as we walk with Him in the light of His Word. Amen.