

# Shining Light on Authentic Faith

## What about my sin? [1 John 1:5-2:2]

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Author Rosaria Butterfield says that being born with a sin nature is a little bit like inheriting a garden. In a radio interview Butterfield put it this way:

Let's say that you inherited an enchanting garden. And for 10 years, you just let it thrive. You let it do anything it wanted. You never pruned back the weeds. You never got rid of the pests. You never worked with the roses. You just let it quote-unquote "thrive."

And after 10 years, what is it? It's a disaster. It might even be way past the point of no return. And you go to a master gardener and you say, "Hey, this is not fair. I want my money back. I just did everything I could to let this garden thrive. I let it do exactly what it wanted." You know, the master gardener's going to laugh at you and say, "Buddy, gardens come with weeds! It's part of its nature and by failing to deal with that, *you* destroyed it."

**Today God's Word shines light on authentic faith as we ask this question: "What about my sin?"**

**Read** [1 John 1:5-2:2](#)

### Darkness (1:4)

After reminding us that in Jesus Christ we have beautiful good news: that we can know God and be known by him. John, then penetrates a dark issue that plagues all mankind, from the greatest saint to the worst sinner: the wickedness, iniquity, and unquenchable selfishness of our hearts.

God's Word is very clear: Sin is Serious! And not simply as an ambiguous metaphysical concept. Your sin is serious. Why?

First, my sin and all my sin is serious because God is holy. Specifically God is light and there is no darkness in Him. Light is surely also associated with God's holiness, since the OT often represents God's holy presence as fire, which in turn radiates light (ECNT). Moses' face aglow with light following intimate communion with God in Exod. 34:29-35

Jesus said, "I have come into the world as a **light**, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness [John 12:46](#).

Light is the enemy of darkness. And my darkness is an enemy of the light of God. Your sin is serious because God is Holy! Sin is an assault on the character and nature of God.

How serious? One of the new-found joys living in Alabama is the gift I found called Milo's sweet tea. And recently, Milo's is the gift that keeps on giving when I discovered a blend called half and half (tea and lemonade). If I offered you a pure glass of tea would you accept it? Now, here is how sin mortally taints our existence. How much poison would I have to pour into the tea before you would categorically reject my offering as deadly and ruined? A whole bottle? A half bottle? Or just one drop? **One drop of sin – ONE- is destructive,** deadly, and leads to ruin. How much more does one sin lead to eternal separation from the Holy presence of God.

**Sin is serious! There is absolutely – no – darkness!**

At the very least it means that shadowy Christian belief, behavior, or devotion is revealed as a sham when exposed to the divine radiance (ECNT).

The more serious your faith, the deeper our understanding of the sovereign holiness of God, the more we will take our sins, rebellions, and shortcomings serious.

**It is time to get serious!**

## **Denial (1:4)**

A common way that we deal with sin, and an attempt that has been thousands of years in the making, is the use of denial. We all know denial – the failure to acknowledge an unacceptable truth. **We practice the art of denial and deflection from a young age: did you break the picture or vase? NO brother (dog, alien) did.**

**Denial is destructive.** What are some common ways we practice denial?

**1. We call our darkness (sin) light.** God's word is very clear – darkness is dark and has no fellowship with God. Murder- Lust – lying – coveting – sexual practices – holding up the image of life. No matter what we call it as a society or individuals sin is sin.

**2. We recognize but rationalize (an attempt to explain or justify).** This yet another game of denial that destroys our souls. I realize it is not right and not good for me but... I am not hurting anyone. Drugs are ok because I drink/smoke/get high on my own with no one around. Pornography is ok because its in the privacy of my own home or "it keeps me from having an affair."

We often say... everyone else is doing it or its just a "white" life.

**3. We simply call ourselves Christian in spite of our sin. The denial of "overlooking."** How often do we day "well he/she/I am a good man." I have a good work ethic. They used to go to church or they were baptized ... God's Word is clear our sin separates us eternally from Jesus Christ. **To overlook our sin is to overlook our need for a redeemer and Savior.**

**4. Some say they have not sinned (1:10).** Often we can refuse to even recognize our shortcomings.

**5. Holy Roller mentality. Another way we live in denial is for church people to act/portray that have no or don't sin anymore (1:10).** John says that we sin on the throne of lies! They world does not need to see perfection (only Jesus has that). They need a church that freely and quickly admits sin and points to Jesus as the redeemer. The world needs to see our sinfulness and see our quick abundant repentance. **This should be a place where sinners flock. This is a place where sinners flock. People do not need to see your ivory towers, your three-piece suit, or your Sunday best mask. No! they need to see that we are consumers of grace.**

In 2004, the Boston Public Library opened a new exhibit to commemorate the 85th anniversary of a strange event. Boston's "Great Molasses Flood" killed 21 people and injured 150.

On January 15, 1919, an enormous steel vat, containing 2.3 million gallons of molten molasses, burst. Hot, sticky waves of syrup thirty feet tall, destroyed buildings, crushed freight cars, wagons, automobiles, and drowned people. One author called it the "Dark Tide."

The enormous tank, 50 feet high and 240 feet around had been poorly designed. Company officials reacted to the constant leaks by repainting the tank to match the leaking molasses. "Out of sight, out of mind."

These people knew the molasses vat was dangerous but didn't do anything about it.

**Everyone struggles with Denial – and we all need a deliverer.** Instead of denying sin, John commends **owning up to it** (ECNT)

## **Deliverance (1:7-9)**

BUT! Every time you see this small contrastive conjunction either something really good or very difficult will follow. In this case John contrasts cheap talk (1:6) with authentic living.

**The light of Jesus Christ gives us hope, healing, and deliverance from our sin.**

**If we walk in light→**

Its not enough to walk (moral legalism/behavioralism), you must walk in light.

John suggests that walking in the light involves a willingness to be **open** towards God and his revelation in Christ, while walking in darkness involves a refusal to do this. (Kruse)

Walking in light does not mean that those who do so never sin, but that they do **not seek to hide** that fact from God (Kruse). Adam and Eve hid. Jonah hid in a boat and a whale.

**It's time to stop hiding and be open to the one who opens his arms to welcome you home.**

## If we confess →

Confession of the mouth reveals two things. First, how the speaker assesses behavior that God finds reprehensible and secondly, the condition of the speaker's heart (ECNT).

God's forgiveness means that He no longer holds people's sins against them; he cancels their debt (Kruse)

God's forgiveness means that he removes the defilement which their sins had produced (Kruse).

This is God's **response** to confession and walking in light→

## Cleanse

Christ's cleansing tends toward eradication of sin, not dismissal of it in the sense that the sinner is exonerated in the very thing he or she claims to be acknowledging wrong but at the heat refuses to forsake (ECNT).

## All

The reference to all sin means that even the gravest sins can be expunged and even the worst of sinners cleansed (BW).

# My Response to the Gospel

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## What about my sin? It is serious and denial is not the answer. But...

**1John 2:1** My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

Advocate—parakletos, the basic meaning of this Greek term is “someone who pleads a case, a legal advocate, one who intercedes for another.

We have one in Jesus Christ who is pleading for us in the presence of the father. But cleansing, forgiveness, and redemption is only found for those who confess –agree and admit their sin.

And this is our promise – he is faithful and just to forgive!

Church you are not perfect – but you are cleansed from all!

# Notes

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**1John 1:5** Now this is the message we have heard from Him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in Him.

## Light

Light is surely also associated with God's holiness, since the OT often represents God's holy presence as fire, which in turn radiates light (ECNT). Moses' face aglow with light following intimate communion with God in Exod. 34:29-35

Jesus said, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness John 12:46.

It eventually becomes clear that the community he addresses is beset by darkness of a doctrinal, ethical, or relational nature, or some combination of the three.

## No darkness

At the very least it means that shadowy Christian belief, behavior, or devotion is revealed as a sham when exposed to the divine radiance (ECNT).

The implication is that believers should mirror the character of God as well as of Christ (BWIII).

**6** If we say, "We have fellowship with Him," yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth.

Walking—talk of behavior as a matter of walking or doing the truth is typically Jewish, and it reflects the fact that for our author there is no hard and fast line between belief and behavior (BW).

They have fallen into the trap of not living out the bright implications of the gospel (ECNT)

It is not enough to claim to know God; people must also live in the light of that truth, putting it into practice and avoiding sin (Kruse).

Ethics is putting theology into practice (BW)

**7** But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

John contrasts cheap talk (1:6) with authentic living in 1:7.

While walking in darkness makes a mockery of fellowship, walking in the light facilitates fellowship and preserves believers from the ravaging effects of sin which no one in this life can claim to be completely immune (ECNT)

Walking in light does not mean that those who do so never sin, but that they do not seek to hide that fact from God (Kruse).

John 3 suggests that walking in the light involves a willingness to be open towards God and his revelation in Christ, while walking in darkness involves a refusal to do this. (Kruse)

To put it another way, there is no real fellowship with God that is not expressed in fellowship with other believers (Kruse).

By his use of present tense for the verbs, walking and purifying/cleansing are ongoing activities (Kruse).

**8** If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

To say “we have no sin” is to conceive oneself as at least somewhat free from transgression and its penalty despite failure to give full acknowledgement to Jesus. John disputes such a self-justifying claim (ECNT).

Anyone claiming to be without sin is saying in effect no thanks to the Father’s offer of forgiveness of sin through the death of his Son (ECNT).

The final goal is redemption for the world, but central to the goal is people pursuing and receiving forgiveness of sin (ECNT).

While making the claim is presented as a complete act, the concomitant self-deception is presented as ongoing (Kruse)

**9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God’s forgiveness means that He no longer holds people’s sins against them; he cancels their debt (Kruse)

God’s forgiveness means that he removes the defilement which their sins had produced (Kruse).

Confession of the mouth reveals two things. First, how the speaker assesses behavior that God finds reprehensible and secondly, the condition of the speaker’s heart (ECNT).

Philo states that awareness and admission of personal transgression are of the essence of godliness (ECNT).

Instead of denying sin, John commends owning up to it (ECNT)

For John, confession of sin is fundamental to proper acknowledgment of God (ECNT).

It is in fact part of the Lord's prayer. It still entails acknowledgment of personal transgression before God and of the need for his forgiveness and restoration. (ECNT)

One of the things John says most emphatically is that God will show mercy on those who fear and seek Him (ECNT).

### **Cleanse**

Christ's cleansing tends toward eradication of sin, not dismissal of it in the sense that the sinner is exonerated in the very thing he or she claims to be acknowledging wrong but at the heat refuses to forsake (ECNT).

### **All**

The reference to all sin means that even the gravest sins can be expunged and even the worst of sinners cleansed (BW).

To Sum: John is indicating that confession results in absolution of guilt via forgiveness and transformation that frees from wrongdoing via cleansing. (ECNT).

**10** If we say, "We don't have any sin," we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

More than likely it means that they claimed not to have sinned since they came to know God and experienced the anointing (Kruse)

In one sense this is a restating of 1:8.

**1John 2:1** My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the Righteous One. <sup>2</sup> He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

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# Application

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Confession leads to cleansing