Hosea and The Epistles of John: *Hesed*, God's Covenant Love

Lesson 3: Covenant Light

Key Verse: "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin"~1 John 1.7

The Bible is full of criminals. Murder, rape, incest, and theft began in Genesis. Crimes and criminals are documented throughout Scripture. These will not end until all the promises in Revelation transpire. Criminal minds and behaviors are rooted in humanity's sin nature, or our shared inability to live holy lives. Jesus is clear about sin within *all* people in Mark 7.14-23. Our sin is legally and morally incompatible with God's holiness, or His **Light**. However, God sent Jesus to provide **justification,** or to legally secure a way for sinful people to enjoy God's presence. Jesus' blood splattered, gushed, and erupted at His crucifixion to legally and permanently cleanse you from their sin. When you call Jesus your Savior, you are graciously given the legal status "justified", or clean, allowing you to enjoy a relationship with the Living God.

Jesus, I praise You as my Savior. Thank You for being tortured, abused, and killed so that I may have an eternal relationship with God. Thank You for dying so that I may receive forgiveness for every sin I commit. Thank You for joining me with other brothers and sisters in Christ, unifying us in the cleansing blood of Jesus. May I cherish Your people, walking in Your Light, to Your Glory alone.

1 John 1.5-10 This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Diamonds: John enjoyed the clarity that polarity, or opposing and contradictory truths, provides in securing Christ-followers as saved from God's wrath for their sins through Christ. Through the polar opposites of light and dark (V 5), John teaches his fellow Christ-followers the hallmarks of those who love God and follow Christ from those whose theology proves that they remain in need of salvation from God's wrath against their sin. He introduces three hallmarks using the repeated refrain, "If we say…"

1. What is John's first distinguishing hallmark from V 6 ("If we say…")?

Interestingly, the distinguishing evidence of walking, or living daily, in the light of God is found in V 7: the "fellowship" we have with one another. Fellowship is deeper than having things in common. It means having a relationship that includes support, authenticity, respect, and companionship. "The terrible thing about sin is that it not only breaks fellowship with God but with other Christians as well."[1]

2. What does Jesus teach us about walking in the light in John 3.16-21? According to Jesus, why do some people not walk in His light?

The second distinguishing evidence is our daily cleansing from sin through the blood of Jesus (V 7). John's choice to write in the present tense indicates his understanding of every Christ-follower's need for the daily confession of sin. "The notion of cleansing indicates that John is not viewing sin as a principle or as a power, but rather as an act that defiles and needs to be cleansed from the Christian life (Hebrews 10.4)."[2]

3. Read Hebrews 10.19-23 and list the phrases, key words, assurances, or confidence provided by the blood of Jesus for the daily forgiveness of your sins found there.

John knew the Gnostics were attempting to create dissension, division, and theological confusion among Christ-followers. As such, he addresses two theological hallmarks that distinguish those who love God and follow Christ from those whose theology proves that they remain in need of salvation from God's wrath against their sin. These theological hallmarks are

[1] Allen, p. 38

[2] Allen, p. 39

discovered in us through our view of our sin or in our view of our sinlessness!

4. What is the false theology that indicates God's truth is not in us from V 8 ("If we say…")?

It is alarming to remember that John's letter is to Christ-followers! However, even today Christians struggle with the truth that we remain capable of sinning. As one scholar states, "This is to claim that I am not *fundamentally* a sinner. Sin may be a feature of the things I do, but it's not who I am." This mindset is contrary to the gospel, or truth (V 8), and is the result of self-deception (Romans 3.9-18, 8.23, 8.26-28).

5. Jesus provides a comprehensive list of the truth of each person, saved or unsaved in Mark 7.14-23. Write your first thought at the idea that you are a sinner:

6. How does the reality that you are a sinner intensify or strengthen the truth of V 9? Write your first thought about the opportunity Jesus has provided for your confession and cleansing of your sin:

John's final theological hallmark teases out the nuance that some believe they have never sinned. As one scholar explained, "This person might recognize they have the capacity to sin; they just think they happen not to. They believe they don't sin." One way to 'un-sin' is to rationalize our reaction or behavior. We may reframe our sin through self-justification, much like Adam did when God confronted him in Genesis 3.12. Eve too shifted the blame for her sin in Genesis 3.13. Some embrace a victim mentality, or belief that they are powerless and blame external forces or other people for their problems instead of taking personal responsibility. Thus, they claim they do not sin!

7. According to V 10, what do we say about God when we refuse to believe we sin?

8. How does Romans 3.23 contradict the belief that one may have the capacity to sin, but doesn't?

Deity: Light[3]~ (1 John 1.7) **"**God is light in the sense that He is life, and He is the source and sustainer of both physical and spiritual life." (Psalm 36.9; John 1.1-13, 8.12)

"Scripture reveals two fundamental principles that flow from the foundation truth that God is light. First, light represents the truth of God, as embodied in His Word (Psalm 119.105; Proverbs 6.23; 2 Peter 1.19). The light and life of God are inherently connected to and characterized by truth. Second, Scripture also links light with virtue and moral conduct (Isaiah 5.20; Romans 13.12; Ephesians 5.8-9; 1 Thessalonians 5.5-6)."

"These two essential properties of divine light and life are crucial in distinguishing genuine faith from a counterfeit claim. If one professes the Light and to dwell in it – to have received eternal life – she will show evidence of spiritual life by her devotion both to truth and to righteousness…" (Matthew 5.14-16, 25.34-40; Luke 1.6, 11.28; Romans 6.17, 16.19; James 2.14-20; 1 John 2.9-11)

"If truth and righteousness are absent from one's life...They cannot belong to God, because in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1.5). God is absolutely perfect in truth and holiness. Obviously, believers fall far short of that perfection, but they manifest a godlike desire for and continual striving toward heavenly truth and righteousness." (Philippians 3.8-21; 1 John 1.7, 9)

9. Where is God's light revealing your need to correct false theology about sin (V 8 or 10), or that your "walk" (daily living) is incongruent with God's truth (V 6)? What is the result of confessing this before God?

Doctrine: Justification~ (1 John 1.7) "Justification is a legal, or forensic, declaration of righteousness, not an actual

[3] MacArthur, pp. 24-25

impartation or infusion of righteousness. It describes what God *declares* about the believer, not what He *does to change* the believer (Romans 3.21-26). In fact, justification itself effects no actual change whatsoever in the sinner's nature or character. It is an instantaneous change of one's status before God, not a gradual transformation that takes place within the one who is justified."[4]

Justification is established by God through the Law of Moses, or the Levitical Law. Through the blood sacrifices necessary to approach God in Leviticus 1-15, we learn of God's acquittal process. Through the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), the once-a-year sacrifices and rituals that allow the high priest to enter the presence of God, we learn of God's judgment and His ability to make His sin-stained people clean. The required rituals, festivals, and "legislation for the priesthood" remind us of God's holiness and His desire to be with His people detailed in Leviticus 17-27.[5] Through Christ's perfect blood, Christ's willful taking upon Himself God's judgment for our sin, and Christ's sinless life, His righteous living, God's people are justified before God (Romans 8.1). Hallelujah! *What a Savior!*

10. What verse(s) in this lesson strengthens your faith in Jesus' cleansing blood? (Hint: Use the verse(s) you chose as a springboard for your Scripture-Soaked Prayer.)

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: The brilliant light of God's holiness purifies and perfects our souls.

I. Pure and Perfect Light (1 John 1.5) **T1:** The brilliant light of God's holiness reveals the purity and perfection of His divinity.
   a. What does the truth about God as Light stir in your soul?
   b. How does a vision of His utter holiness help you understand His purity and perfection?
   c. How might the truth of the purity and perfection of God's divinity change how you approach Him or worship Him?

II. Purified and Perfected Life (1 John 1.6-10) **T2:** The brilliant Light of God's holiness inspires a believer's holy living.
   a. In what subtle ways might you be denying, repackaging, or redefining your sins?
   b. How might your unconfessed, unrepentant sin be causing your soul to sigh instead of sing?
   c. Which of John's three solutions do you need to apply to your sin problem? When will you begin to do so?

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[4] MacArthur & Mayhue, p. 612

[5] Morales, pp. 29-30