

## Walking in the Light: Turning Away From Sin



### SABBATH—JULY 11

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** John 3:19; John 8:12; Romans 3:10–20; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 John 1:5–2:2.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “But God is faithful and fair. If we admit that we have sinned, he will forgive us our sins. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure” (1 John 1:9, NIRV).

**IN 1982 AN UNUSUAL WORK OF MODERN ART WAS SET UP.** It was a shotgun connected to a chair. A person could see the artwork by sitting in the chair and looking directly at the gun. The problem was that the gun was loaded and set on a timer to fire at any time within the next hundred years. But people waited in lines to sit and look into the bullet's path. They did so when they knew that the gun could fire at any moment.

Talk about tempting fate!

Sadly, people do the same thing with sin. They think that they can look at it in the face and still escape without any harm. Sin will kill them if they do not do something about it.

This week John looks at the problem of sin and at how Jesus Christ solved it.

**A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** What does the Bible mean when it calls God “light”? What kind of errors did John try to correct in these early verses? What promises does John give to us as the cure for the sin in our lives? Why do we need those promises?

**SUNDAY—JULY 12****THE LIGHT (1 John 1:5)**

**Read 1 John 1:5. What does John mean that “God is light”? After all, light is just light. It is a form of energy made up of photons. What point is John making? Read Psalm 27:1; Psalm 36:9; Matthew 4:16; John 3:19; John 8:12; John 12:46; 1 Timothy 6:16.**

Light symbolizes (represents) both Jesus and the Father. Light is God’s glory.<sup>1</sup> And it points to Him as the One who brings salvation. The symbol also gives the idea of truth. And especially in our understanding, light shows His righteousness, holiness, and perfection (read also 1 John 2:9).



Light symbolizes both Jesus and the Father.

**John is not satisfied with saying that God is “light.” Instead, he adds “in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5, NIV). Why?**

1. glory—great beauty, power, and royal perfection.

2. criticizes—finds fault with.

By adding this phrase, John focuses on God’s perfection and His separation from sin. He argues that God is greater than the Greek or Roman gods who were both good and bad combined. But God is pure holiness, pure goodness, and pure righteousness. He is as opposite to sin as darkness is to light.

John’s darkness introduces a new idea. It prepares a person for what follows. As fallen sinners, humans (men, women, and children) belong to darkness rather than to light. If God is light and we are in darkness, the difference between us and God is very great.

**Think about darkness. What kind of emotions, pictures, and thoughts does it give you? Write down what you come up with about darkness. What does it mean to you? How does it make you feel? Why is it such a perfect image (word-picture) to describe sin and unholiness? Bring your answers to class.**

**MONDAY—JULY 13****THE SIN PROBLEM  
(1 John 1:6, 8, 10)**

First John 1:6–10 forms a unit. After his statement about God’s character, John deals with some beliefs among the believers. It is these beliefs that John criticizes.<sup>2</sup>

All five verses begin with the wording

“If we.” But we find a noticeable difference among them.

**What are some of the claims John, in verses 6, 8, and 10, is dealing with? What false statements are being made? And what do they have in common?**

The first statement discusses fellowship with God. People claim to have fellowship with God. But really they walk in darkness. This means they really are not walking with God.

But verse 7 shows walking in the light results in true fellowship. Those who do are cleansed from their sins. So, to walk in darkness has to do with living in sin. Living in sin and claiming to have fellowship with God is a lie, John says.

The next two claims, in verses 8 and 10, also are connected with sin. John speaks against the practice of sin. But he is very clear that the problem of sin is real in our lives. In verse 8, John seems to be dealing with the belief that humans are not sinful. This teaching goes against the most basic Christian doctrine.



To live in sin is to walk in darkness.

**Why is John’s declaration in verse 10 so important? What does the idea that “we have not sinned” mean?**

Notice these verses. In verse 6, the folk are lying. In verse 8, they deceive (fool) themselves. In verse 10, they make God a liar. Clearly, John understands the sin problem is real and serious for all humans.

**How open and honest are you with yourself about sin in your own life? Do you ignore it, make an excuse for it, or scold yourself over it? What should be your attitude (feeling) toward your own struggles with sin? What can you do to develop the right attitude? What *is* the right attitude?**

## TUESDAY—JULY 14

### ANSWERS TO THE SIN PROBLEM (1 John 1:7, 9; 1 John 2:2)

It is clear that in these verses (1 John 1:7, 9; 1 John 2:2) John shows how sin can be serious. How does he understand sin? In 1 John 3:4, John says sin is lawbreaking. According to 1 John 5:17, sin is wrongdoing or unrighteousness. It does not follow the will of God as made known to us in the Bible. Sin also is against the truth. Sin separates a person from God. And this separation leads to spiritual death. *Sin* may point to the separation of the sinner from God. But *sins* may

point to sinful acts. But one thing is for sure: sin is real. If we do not deal with it, it will destroy us.

**First John 1:7 and 9 hold God's promises about how the sin problem can be solved. What are those promises? And how can we make them real in our own lives? How can we experience for ourselves what God is promising us here?**

Forgiveness of sins has become possible because of Christ's sacrifice and death. We have broken the law and deserve death. But Jesus died in our place and has set us free from the death that our sins will bring us. More so, Jesus' blood makes us pure from every sin.

But our confession<sup>3</sup> of sins is necessary. The words *to confess* in 1 John 1:9 also can mean *to admit*. The verse does not say to whom we need to confess our sins. But we know it is God, because in the next part of the verse we read that if sins are confessed, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins. The confession of sins may be a public confession before those who were hurt through our sins. But the forgiveness of sin comes only from God.

First John 1:9 is also a command. We should lay our sins before God, and He will forgive us and make us pure. Sinning makes us guilty. We need forgiveness. Sin makes us

unclean. We need to be made pure. Through Jesus, God has made a way for us to have both.



**We should lay our sins before God, and He will forgive us.**

**What areas of your life might you need to change so that you can have these wonderful promises? What stops you from choosing to surrender<sup>4</sup> all your sinful ways to God?**

### WEDNESDAY—JULY 15

#### THE CHRISTIANS' GOAL (1 John 2:1)

**In 1 John 2:1, John calls us not to sin. How should we understand this warning?**

The call not to sin is connected with walking in the light. If we want

3. confession—the act of telling God your sins and admitting to others what you have done wrong against them.

4. surrender—the act of giving one's whole life to Jesus to love and serve Him and to obey His holy law.

to live in fellowship with God and His children, we must walk in the light. To walk in the light means to turn away from sin (1 John 2:1).

John addresses the believers in a caring way. He calls them “little children” (NKJV) and gives them one reason for writing his letter: they must refuse to accept any sin in their lives. By doing this, John is not suggesting that a perfectly sinless life is possible. But he is begging that Christians stay away from any clear act of sin.

**Why does John balance his warning not to sin with the wording “and if anyone sins” (NKJV)? Read also 1 Kings 8:46; Romans 3:10–20; 1 Timothy 1:15.**

The discussion of sin could have been misunderstood. Someone might think sin is not important: “Do not claim to be without sin. You are a sinner anyway. Just live your life, and do not worry about sin.”

So, John has to balance his statements about sin. He does this with 1 John 2:1. The goal of a disciple (follower) of Christ is not to sin. Christians must admit they are sinners. But they must make it their goal to live without sin.

At the same time, John does not want to give the idea that we can be perfectly sinless. So, with his warning against sinning, he says, “If anyone sins, we have an Advocate”<sup>5</sup> (NKJV). This is a clear notice that sin is real in the lives of Christians. Even

faithful and sincere Christians may sin. Unfortunately, sinning is real among church members. So, they need help. They need Someone to help them keep away from the desire to sin. But they also need Someone who works for them after they have sinned.



**John balances his statement that we are sinners with his statement that we must make it our goal to live without sin.**

**How can we learn to live with the struggle of being sinners and of the Bible’s strong warning not to sin?**

## THURSDAY—JULY 16

### THE CHRISTIANS’ COMFORT (1 John 2:1, 2)

First John 2:1, 2 gives encouragement to sinners who turn away from sin. This verse fills them with hope and courage. Terrible results often arise from our sins, but there is an answer. John already has spoken of forgiveness of sins. Now he comes

5. advocate—a person, or lawyer, who defends you. In this case, the Advocate is Jesus Christ.

back to this topic again. He says this forgiveness has become possible through Jesus.

How? First, Jesus is our Advocate. And He works for us. This Advocate is spoken of as the Messiah (Christ). John says He is righteous (holy). Righteousness (holy living) was connected with God the Father in 1 John 1:9. It is connected with the Son in 1 John 2:1. It is because of Jesus' righteousness that He can work for us.

Second, our forgiveness is made sure through Jesus' death, which paid the price for our sins. Jesus also paid the penalty (price) for our sins. For us Jesus paid the debt that we owed and could never pay.

John pictures Jesus as the Sacrifice and Intercessor.<sup>6</sup> This picture suggests Jesus lived among us a sinless life, died on the cross, rose from the dead, and went to heaven where He works for us as High Priest.

The Greek word *paraklētos*, for *advocate* in 1 John 2:1 (NKJV), has several different meanings: *Comforter, Helper, Mediator,*<sup>7</sup> or *Intercessor* (read John 14:16, 26; John 15:26; John 16:7; 1 John 2:1). It is a person who is called to the side of someone else and who works for someone else. A *paraklētos* can be a person who helps a friend. In the Gospel<sup>8</sup> of John, the Holy Spirit is the Helper. In the first letter of John, Jesus is the Helper and Intercessor (1 John 2:1).

Jesus is our Advocate, who helps

provide forgiveness for our sins. But we must be careful not to think the Father is mean and harsh and needs a go-between to forgive us. Such a picture of God is wrong. God is the One who sent Jesus to help us for our sake (John 3:16). A few verses earlier, we were told that Jesus is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us (1 John 1:9). Jesus does not have to make the Father less angry. Instead, the Father is the One who has made known through Jesus, His desire to save us.

**Based on what we have just read, how do you understand the wonderful promises given to us in 1 John 2:1, 2? How are they connected with our daily walk with the Lord? How can you make those promises more real in your own life? What changes should those promises bring to our experience?**

### FRIDAY—JULY 17

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Read Ellen G. White, "Confession," pages 37–41, in *Steps to Christ*.

"If we confess our sins, He [Jesus] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' [1 John 1:9]. The requirements for getting mercy from God are simple and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some

6. intercessor—the person who serves as the third party, making peace between the sinner and God.

7. mediator—a person who works to make peace or an agreement between two persons or groups; an intercessor.

8. Gospel—one of the first four books in the New Testament that tells the story of Jesus' life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.



difficult thing that is hard to bear so we may receive forgiveness. We do not need to make long and tiresome trips nor pay a painful price for our sins to make our souls acceptable to the God of heaven. He that 'confeseth and forsaketh' [turns away from] his sin 'shall have mercy.' Proverbs 28:13. In heaven above, Christ is pleading for His church. He is pleading for those for whom He has paid the price of His blood for saving us. Hundreds of years can never lessen the value of Christ's death on the cross. Life or death, height or depth, cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. This is true not because we hold Him so firmly but because He holds us so dearly. If our being saved depended on our own efforts, we could not be saved. But it depends on Jesus who is behind all the promises."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 552, 553.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In class, read what you wrote about the thoughts and emotions and pictures that the idea of darkness brought to you. How does that help you better understand what it means to be in sin and what it means to walk in the light of God?
- ② How could you help those who are so burdened with their sins and guilt that they are ready to give up on God completely? What promises and encouragement can you give to them? What examples from the Bible can you share of God forgiving some very terrible sins?
- ③ Some people believe we have to be fully free of all sin before we can be saved. How do you address this belief without making sin seem as though it were not important?
- ④ Someone killed most of a family of people who never believed in Jesus. Years later, on his deathbed, the murderer confessed his deeds and accepted Christ as His Savior. How would you answer a member of the family who said, "You Christians say that my whole family has to face final punishment. But the person who murdered them now has the promise of heaven. Is that what your religion teaches?"