

Sermon by Pastor Bob Brown

1 John 1: 5-10

Consistent Confessions

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I remember reading a comic about a pastor interviewing for a job. He was sitting around a table with a bunch of elders, to whom he responded, "Maybe I don't have a lot of experience like you, but I have watched a lot of TV!"

There is a part of the problem in our society; we sometimes confuse reality with what we see happening around us. I can still remember when I found out, as a young boy, that the people on our TV weren't real! What a blow, no real Superman, no real Captain Kangaroo, no real gunfights. TV hasn't really changed that much today either. The people blown up, shot up, lying dead, are still there for the next program. It isn't reality!

We must make sure that our real lives, the lives we lead every day, in the world and in the church are not out of touch with the truth of God's Word. We read in the prophet Isaiah, 5:20: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." Just because something seems, sounds or looks right doesn't make it right.

Now, let's look at what is expected of us from the Word of God. If a person claims to be "in the light" (v.7), we see that it is only true if they are walking in the love of Christ, for God is love. This means love for God and others around them, particularly brothers and sisters in Christ (cf. 2:9-10). Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount, "You're here to be light, bringing out the God colors in the world...If I make you light bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket do you?" (Matthew 5:14-16).

We as believers are to be light-bearers in this world, walking in such a way that others know the truth of whose we are! Now, in this passage, 1:6-2:2, we see the claims of false teachers and students who are eager to go with what they are saying.

Here John exposes the false, but contradictory claims they are making, and then gives the truth. The truth will always come from within the light of God's Word, and will be confirmed by the Spirit.

When listening to the teachings of someone who claims to hear from God, ask yourself this: Are their teaching and behavior consistent with each other? Does what they say fall in step with the Scriptural teaching that God is light and all sin is exposed in His light and glory?

What the apostle John is teaching here is: here's the false teaching/belief, here's the error of it and here's the truth that refutes the error. The one thing that we can never get around is this—sin—that goes against the moral content of who God is, is in our nature and affects our relationship with God.

We see three false errors in this passage of Scripture. All of them are based on a false premise, of people who want to be close to God, but think it can be done on easy terms! This comes from having no idea of the doctrine of sin and how that affects our relationship to a Holy God, who is light and His light exposes sin. So, John explains the problem of sin, before he gives the solution. He explains the sin and even tells us the remedy, which comes when we acknowledge our need for forgiveness.

The first false claim is that we can have fellowship with God, which is closeness to Him, be of one heart with Him and others of like faith, and at the same time have a habit of walking in darkness. Usually this means that we try to hide our thoughts and actions from everyone, or else we try to make it seem like it isn't really a bad thing we're doing. We get this impression from TV and other false ideas.

What happens is that it is not that uncommon for people who claim to have fellowship with God, to see no reason to either first go to the cross of Christ for cleansing and forgiveness, or to lead a

consistently sanctified life after coming to Him. If we make a claim to be walking in fellowship with God, and we aren't, we are deliberately lying, and the truth is not in us, because we do not live according to the truth.

The error is walking in darkness; the truth is that we need to walk in the light. That means we walk in the light of His holiness and His presence without deceit or dishonesty in our mind or consciously tolerate sin in our conduct. Walking in the light means walking in absolute sincerity, with nothing to conceal. We see two results of this, fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, God's Son, purifies us from all sin. This means that when we receive cleansing through His blood, we enjoy the fellowship of God and each other, in an open, sincere, honest, transparent relationship.

The second false claim that is being made is this: the denial that sin even exists in our nature. This means that if there is no sin nature, that they cannot benefit from the cleansing effects of the blood of Jesus because they say, we have no sin.

But, to say we have no sin means that we are only deceiving ourselves. In other words, we are self-deceived rather than deliberate liars, but either way, the truth is not in us. Not only do we fail to do the truth (v.6), we don't have any truth. Today many people fall into the same kind of trap, by saying that we are only scapegoats for all of the psychological and physiological social ills that plague our culture. We might as well say with Flip Wilson, "The devil made me do it!"

The attitude that we should have is to admit our sin and receive the forgiveness in Christ, which God has made possible for us. IF we confess our sins, i.e., acknowledge before God that we are sinners not only by nature, but also by doing sin God will forgive & cleanse. So we really see we are in debt to God (but He forgives) and we are stained with sin (which He cleanses). Both the forgiveness and the cleansing are a part of the faithfulness and justice of a loving God, but are conditional upon our confession.

The third false claim is somewhat like the second, "if we say we have not sinned..." We may know that there is sin, and that sin would break any possible fellowship with God if we did sin. We may even acknowledge that sin actually does exist in our nature, and yet deny that we have ever sinned, so we convince ourselves that we are not out of fellowship with God.

To say that we have not sinned is not just to tell a deliberate lie (v.6), or even to be deluded (v.8), it is actually to accuse God of lying, to make Him a liar and to reveal clearly that His Word is not in us. Because we learn from His Word that sin is in all of us, and the Bible clearly tells of the sinfulness of all men.

So let's all stop playing games and get honest with God and ourselves. If we will consistently confess our sin, we will consistently be forgiven and cleansed, by the Lord Himself. The fact that you are here this morning says that you know too much to even try to deceive yourself any longer.

This morning, we called this message consistent confession, but I want to make it not only a head thing and a heart thing, but also a real thing. Let's make it a claim check! When you check in a coat, hat or another belonging at a public event, they give you a piece of paper that you present to redeem your personal belongings. This morning, if you want to redeem yourself, to say to God, I want to live in your light, and make it once again a public declaration, then I want you to come forward and receive your own personal claim check. This can be used whenever you need it, to continue to walk in the light of His love and grace.