

MISCONCEPTION 1: MAN CAN FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND STILL WALK IN SIN 1 JOHN 01:06–07

Introduction: Man's Unbelief

The Son of God has come to earth. This is the great testimony of John the Apostle. He came to earth so that man can *have fellowship with God and with His Son Jesus Christ*.

“But wait,” man shouts. “We already have fellowship with God. We already worship God and feel safe and acceptable in our religion. We do not need someone else to show us how to become acceptable to God. We can reach God on our own; we can secure His approval by ourselves. We don’t need someone else telling us how to approach God and how we should worship God and secure His approval.”

This is the great subject of this particular section (1 Jn. 1:6-2:2). Man objects to the idea that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He is truly God’s very own Son. Man objects to the idea...

- that the way he worships is wrong.
- that he has no merit with God.
- that he is unacceptable to God.

This is the reason many reject John’s declaration: “the Son of God has come to earth.” Jesus Christ came so that man can have *true* fellowship with God. But man objects to the idea that he needs help in reaching God. He feels sufficient within himself. He objects to the idea that he cannot reach God on his own. This passage strikes at these objections and exposes their fallacies. There are basically three misconceptions of man.

1. Misconception 1: man can fellowship with God and still walk in sin (1:6-7).
2. Misconception 2: man is not totally sinful and depraved (1:8-9).
3. Misconception 3: man can become righteous and sinless on his own (1:10-2:2).

The first misconception is the subject of the present passage. The other two misconceptions are discussed in the next two studies. Note that the first misconception strikes at the belief that is held by most people on earth. Most people believe that they can *fellowship with God even while they walk in darkness and sin*.

- I. We can fellowship with God and walk in darkness (v. 6).
 - a. This is a lie.
 - b. This is not the truth.
 - II. The truth: we must walk in the light (v. 7).
 - a. Then we have fellowship.
 - b. Then we are cleansed from sin.
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I. 1 John 01:06 Fellowship with God while Walking in Darkness

First, why does man object to the deity of Jesus Christ? To the Son of God coming to earth? That it was *necessary* for Him to come? Because they believe that man can fellowship with God and walk in darkness at the same time. What does it mean to walk in darkness?

=> It means that the world is in the dark about God. Man cannot see God nor talk face to face with God. Man cannot hear God nor touch God. How then can man know that God really exists? Man and his world are in the dark about God.

=> It means that man does not know exactly how God wants him to live: how moral and pure, how righteous and just. Man cannot talk with God; he has no way to communicate with God, for he cannot see God and he does not know where God is so that he can set up communication with Him. Therefore, man has no way to discover God nor to find out how God wants him to live.

Note four significant facts.

1. First, the world is in the dark about God. When it comes to God, man is in darkness, for he cannot see God nor talk with God. He cannot even be sure that God exists, not absolutely sure. Why? Because man's physical senses and flesh (sinful nature) can know only the things of the physical and material world. If there is a God, if there is a spiritual world, man has absolutely no way to penetrate it. Man can take all his technology and science, all his intellectual and creative reasoning, and he will never be able to penetrate the spiritual world, not with his physical and material nature. The physical and material world cannot and never will be able to penetrate and cross over into the spiritual world. Man and his world are completely in the dark about God. No matter what any person claims, no matter how religious or how much a spiritist the person may be, no person from the physical world can cross over and enter into the spiritual world to find out if God exists, much less fellowship with God.
2. Second, how then can man ever know God and fellowship with God? There is only one way: God has to leave the spiritual world and dimension and enter the physical world and dimension. God has to come to earth and reveal Himself to us. This is the only conceivable way man could ever fellowship with God. This is the glorious gospel: this is exactly what John declares: that the Son of God has come to earth. He came to reveal God to us (see notes, 1 Jn. 1:1-5).
3. Third, note the foolishness of man: man rejects the Son of God and declares...
"We [can] have fellowship with God yet walk in darkness."
 - Man declares that he can find God on his own, that he can relate to God and be good enough to fellowship with God and to secure God's approval by himself.

- Man believes that he can use his own mind and reasoning and find out enough about God to become acceptable to Him and to fellowship with Him.
- Man believes that he can use his own hands and energy and do enough to please God and to receive His approval.

Man thinks this: if he believes in God and does halfway right, then his belief and good deeds will put God in debt to him. God will never reject him; God will accept him. Therefore, man concludes that he can reject Jesus Christ as the Son of God. He concludes that he can fellowship and become acceptable to God by believing that God exists and by doing enough good to please God.

4. Fourth, note what the Scripture says to any of us who say this: we lie and do not live by the truth. No matter how great our minds and thoughts imagine God to be — no matter how many good works we do — we are not living by the truth. And note: a thinking and honest person knows this, for no person can cross over into the spiritual world. If we are ever to know God, God Himself has to come to us. It would not even be enough for some lesser spiritual being to come, for he would not be God. The only way we can ever hope to *know God* and to *know Him accurately* is for God Himself to come to earth. Therefore, to profess that “we can fellowship with God yet walk in darkness” is a lie. Whatever we do — all the approaches to God that men use — they are not the truth. By taking any approach to God other than by the Son of God, we do not take the true approach; we take a false approach.

Thought 1. The Word of God is strong. It says this: if a person says that he is saved, and then lives in the darkness of this world, he lies. God is light; therefore, if a person walks in darkness, he does not know God. He is not fellowshiping with God. Light and darkness cannot dwell together. A person has to choose in which he wants to live: he has to choose to live in either the light of God or in the darkness of the world.

Acts 17:23 *For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.*

John 1:5 *The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

John 1:10-11 *He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.*

John 3:19 *This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*

John 4:10 *Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”*

John 8:19 Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

John 9:30 The man answered, “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes.”

John 14:9 Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”

1 John 1:6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

Psa 82:5 They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Prov 4:19 But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

Jer 4:22 “My people are fools; they do not know me. They are senseless children; they have no understanding. They are skilled in doing evil; they know not how to do good.”

Jer. 23:12 “Therefore their path will become slippery; they will be banished to darkness and there they will fall. I will bring disaster [judgment] on them in the year they are punished,” declares the LORD.

II. **1 John 01:07 Walk in the Light and Fellowship with God**

Man cannot fellowship with God and walk in darkness. The truth is that man must walk in the light if he is to fellowship with God. What is the light of God?

=> The light of God is the revelation of God Himself. The Lord Jesus Christ came to earth to reveal God. Jesus Christ has the very nature of God; therefore, He was able to show us exactly what God is like.

=> The light of God is the revelation of just how God wants us to live while upon earth. When the Son of God came to earth He told us and showed us exactly how to live, exactly what God expects of us.

Therefore, to walk in the light means to believe in the Son of God who came to earth and to follow Him. If we walk upon earth believing in Jesus Christ and doing exactly what He said to do, then we are in the light just “as he is in the light.” Note: this is exactly what this verse says: we are to “walk in the light, as he is in the light.” This means two most wonderful things.

1. If we walk in the light of Christ, then we have fellowship with Christ and with God and with all other believers. Jesus Christ is the Son of God; therefore, when He was

upon earth, He was in constant fellowship with God. He is the One who shows us how to relate to and fellowship with God. Therefore, when we walk in the light of Christ, we do what Christ did. We approach God through Christ and fellowship with God just as Christ showed us. The result is glorious. It means that we have true fellowship — that we actually know God and fellowship with God, that we actually know and fellowship with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and with all who believe and walk in His light.

Thought 1. Note: God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Few if any persons would deny this. But note this: it is impossible to walk in both light and darkness at the same time. Therefore, if we walk in darkness, we are not walking and fellowshiping with God. As stated, it is totally impossible.

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”*

John 17:3 *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

1 John 1:3 *We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

1 John 1:7 *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, purifies us from all sin.*

Rev 3:20 *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.*

Psa 119:63 *I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts.*

Mal 3:16 *Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honoured his name.*

2. If we walk in the light of Christ, then the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin. This is a critical point to note. It was not enough for God’s Son to come to earth and reveal God to man. Man is sinful; he has transgressed God’s law. Man has chosen to live like he wants to live upon earth, to do his own thing. Man has...

- ignored God
- cursed God
- neglected God
- disbelieved God
- rejected God
- disobeyed God
- rebelled against God

Man is guilty of offending God and of transgressing God’s law. Therefore, just as with any law, when the law is broken, the penalty has to be paid. The lawbreaker has to pay or else someone has to step forward to pay the penalty for him. This is just what Jesus

Christ did. He not only came to reveal God to us, He came to take our sins and transgressions upon Himself — all the guilt of them. Jesus Christ died for our sins.

=> He faced the judgment for us.

=> and He suffered the punishment for us.

=> He bore the condemnation for us.

The blood of Jesus Christ was shed upon the cross for us. Therefore, to walk in the light of Christ means that we walk believing that Christ died for us. It means that we believe His blood cleanses us; it “purifies us” from sin, that He actually paid the penalty for our sins, that we are thereby freed from the guilt of sin. When we walk in the light of Christ, God sees our sins covered by the blood of Christ. He accepts us in Christ. Our sins are forgiven by the blood of God’s Son.

But note: the word “purifies” is in the present tense. This means...

- that the blood of Christ *continually purifies* us from sin.
- that if we are walking in the light of Jesus Christ, then His blood is *always purifying* us from our sins.
- that if we walk in fellowship with Jesus Christ we are *constantly confessing* our sins, we are living in *open confession* before Him.

The believer is to walk in fellowship with Christ *all day long every day*. He is to walk acknowledging God in *all His ways*, praying, praising and confessing his shortcomings and sins *all day long*. The believer who walks in fellowship with Jesus Christ like this is being *constantly cleansed, constantly purified* by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Thought 1. This is the point so often missed by man: he cannot erase the sins of his past. He has no way to pay the penalty and judgment of his sins, and they have already been committed. Therefore, the penalty has to be paid. And note: the payment has to be made by Someone who is perfect, for God is perfect. Only perfect sacrifices can be acceptable to God. And this is the terrible problem that man faces, for who is perfect other than God? No man is; only the Son of God is perfect. This is the reason the Son of God had to come to earth. He had to come to sacrifice Himself for man. He had to take man’s sins upon Himself and become man’s substitute in death. He had to die for man. It is His death, the sacrifice of the blood of God’s Son, that covers our sins. No person is ever acceptable to God unless he is free of sin, unless his sins are purified and forgiven by the blood of Christ.

Mat 26:28 “*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*”

Rom 5:8-9 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!*

Eph 1:7 *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.*

Col 1:14 *In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

Heb 9:14 *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

1 John 1:7 *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, purifies us from all sin.*

Rev 1:5 *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood. ■*

MISCONCEPTION 2: MAN IS NOT TOTALLY SINFUL AND DEPRAVED 1 JOHN 01:08–09

Introduction

The great testimony has been borne; the great proclamation has been made. John the apostle has declared: “the Son of God has come to earth. He has come to earth to reveal who God is and what God is like and how God wants us to live. In addition to this, He has come to die for us and to cleanse us from our sin.”

But note: man objects to the idea that Jesus Christ *had to die* for our sins. Man shouts at the idea:

“We are not that sinful, so sinful that we cannot handle the problem of sin ourselves. We can change our behaviour and act responsibly. Man has the capacity to reform himself, to discipline and control his own life. Man has the ability to live a responsible life: he can resolve to change and live a decent, moral and responsible life. Man has the power to please God himself. Man can do good and be good enough to make himself acceptable to God. Man is not so terrible a sinner, not down deep within. Man can become a moral and righteous person on his own. All he needs is...

- to be educated to understand himself and his world.
- to have a set of moral values and religious worship to encourage him in his values.
- to use his technology and science for moral and just causes.”

The point is this: man rejects the idea that he needs someone to die for his sins, that he cannot become acceptable to God on his own. Man objects to the idea that the perfect and sinless Son of God had to come to earth to die for his sins. Man objects because it means that man is...

- sinful and depraved.
- so sinful and depraved that he is totally unacceptable to God.
- so sinful and depraved that he cannot become acceptable to God by his own efforts.
- so sinful and depraved that no matter what he does, he cannot secure God’s approval.
- so sinful and depraved that he can never fellowship with God, that all his prayers; worship and thoughts about God are vain and empty.

This is the reason many persons object to Jesus Christ. This is the reason many accept Him as a great religious teacher, but reject His claim to be the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. They are unwilling to accept the fact that man is depraved, totally sinful.

This is the great subject of this passage, the second major misconception of man about the deity of Jesus Christ; about the Son of God coming to earth: *man is not totally sinful and depraved*.

- I. We are not totally sinful and depraved (v. 8).
 - a. This is a deception.
 - b. The truth is not in us.
- II. The truth: we must confess our sins (v. 9).
 - a. Because God is faithful and just.
 - b. Because God forgives.

I. 1 John 01:08 *Man is Sinful and Depraved*

The misconception is forcefully stated — “we claim to be without sin.” Note that the word *sin* is not plural but singular. The sin being talked about is *sin as a root within man*, as a part of man’s nature, as a principle, a law, a force, an energy within man. Persons who say that they can approach God on their own are saying that they have no sin, no root of sin, no nature of sin, no principle of sin within them. They are saying...

- that they can handle sin themselves; that they can change their lives and stop sinning enough to please God and to become acceptable to Him.
- that they do not need the Son of God to come to earth and die for their sins.
- that they can control their lives enough to keep from sinning.

Note what Scripture says about this misconception: we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. No person can keep from sinning. If any person thinks that he can keep from sinning, the truth is not in him; he is utterly deceived. And note: if we cannot keep from sinning, this means that we have a nature, a root of sin within us. The force and energy of the root shoots out and we sin. As stated, we cannot keep from sinning: this fact alone proves that we have sin within our nature, a nature that is depraved. To say differently is to be deceived and to deny the truth of all human experience. Remember: sin is imperfection. Sin is falling short of God’s glory and perfection, missing the mark of His glory and perfection. This is the reason no person can ever live with God. God is perfect; therefore, only perfection can live in His presence. Man is imperfect and short of God’s glory; he is sinful. Therefore, man can never live in God’s presence. This is what the objector needs to see. If he misses this, then he will miss the eternal salvation that is in Christ Jesus our Lord, the very Son of God who came to earth to die for our sins.

Thought 1. Note a significant fact. There are those who say that man is not responsible for his sin; therefore, he cannot be charged with sin. They say that man acts the way he does because of his upbringing, parents, society, environment, education or the lack of it, playmates and associates. They say that man is a product of his environment; therefore,

God cannot charge man with guilt. Man just is not responsible for his behaviour. For this reason, God nor society can hold man accountable for his actions. The reason man sins is because someone else made him do it.

The problem with this is that it is only partly true. Environment and upbringing do affect us and have some bearing on our actions. But this is not all that we are; we are not just robots responding to the trigger of environment. We are free moral creatures with a free will that chooses to sin or not to sin. And it is deception to deny the fact. The truth is just not in us if we deny that we have a great degree of freedom in all that we do. The problem is not our environment; we just cannot keep from sinning and acting irresponsibly. We sin because there is a root, a nature, a force of sin within us. To object to what is so clear and visible is to be deceived, to show that the truth is not in us.

Thought 2. The person who thinks that he can control sin enough to become acceptable to God has a low view of God and too high a view of himself. Think how weak man really is: how weak his flesh is. He is not only sinful by acts, but he walks short of God's glory every day. And he is so corruptible that he dies after just a few brief years on earth.

Mat 7:21-23 *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evil doers!”*

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Rom 5:12 *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.*

1 John 1:8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

1 John 5:19 *We know that we are the children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

Rev 3:16-18 *So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.*

Gen 6:5 *The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*

Psa 53:3 *Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

Prov 20:9 *Who can say, “I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin”?*

Isa 64:6 *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

II. 1 John 01:09 Confession and Forgiveness

The truth is this — we must confess our sins. Man is deceived if he denies that he has sinned, if he denies that he has a root and force of sin within him. He deceives himself if he says that he does not need the Son of God to deliver him from sin and its guilt. Remember: the Son of God came to die for our sins, and it is His blood that cleanses us from sin. Therefore, if we will confess our sins, God will forgive our sins. And He will do even more: He not only will forgive us for the sins we know about and confess, He will purify us from *all unrighteousness*.

=> *To forgive our sins* means that God forgives the *guilt of sin*. God justifies us: He counts the death of Christ as our punishment. Jesus Christ bore our guilt of sin. When we believe in Jesus Christ and confess our sins, God counts our belief and confession as the guilt which Christ bore. We stand before God, no longer guilty of sin.

=> *To purify us from all unrighteousness* means that God cleanses us from all the dirt, filth, pollution and contamination of sin. Not a single stain or spot of sin remains on us. We stand before God sinless and perfect, but remember why: because we believe in Jesus Christ and confess that we are sinners who trust the blood of God’s Son to purify our sins.

How do we know that God will forgive our sins and purify us? How do we know that God will count the death of Jesus Christ as the punishment for our sins? Because God is faithful and just or righteous.

=> God is perfectly just or righteous; therefore He must condemn and punish sin. But note: God is also perfect love and mercy; therefore, He must demonstrate His love and mercy and provide a way of forgiveness for man. This is exactly what He has done in Jesus Christ. God has demonstrated His love in the most perfect and supreme way possible: He has given His Son to die for the sins of man.

The point is this: having done this for man — having given His Son to die for man’s sins — God will forgive man. He is faithful and righteous; therefore, He will keep His Word. He will do exactly what He says. He would be unfaithful and unrighteous if He did not forgive us. Therefore, God will forgive any repentant sinner who truly turns away from his sin and turns to God and confesses his sin. God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

Acts 5:31 *God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.*

Acts 13:38 Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.

Eph 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Ezra 10:11 Now make confession to the LORD, the God of your fathers, and do his will. Separate yourselves from the peoples around you and from your foreign wives.

Prov 28:13 He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Isa 43:25 "I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."

Isa 44:22 "I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you."

Isa 53:6-7 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Isa 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.

Jer 3:13 Only acknowledge your guilt — you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favours to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me," declares the LORD. ■