

1 John (Quality: Very good, Quiet)

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[0 : 0 0] God, may His Spirit help me, I would turn your attention this morning to the first chapter of the first epistle of John and to verses 6-9.

The 1 John, chapter 1, verses 6-9. if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth but if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness 1 John chapter 1 verses 6 to 9 it has sometimes struck me what a blessing it is that God's people in every generation have been dull hearted and subject to the effect of difficulty and even error within them

I believe that were it not for that fact we should not have the revelation that we have here in the New Testament before us because many of the epistles were written to encourage those that were faint hearted those that had been affected by the entrance of error into their churches those who had slipped away from the moorings of truth those who were the reasons why God inspired the apostles of old to write these letters in order that their faith in order that their faith might be re-established that they might be instructed in their minds that the loins of their minds might be girded up again by a fresh application of the truth and this is certainly true of this great epistle that we have before us this morning the apostle John that aged apostle the last surviving apostle was in his old age evidently considering the errors that were creeping in to the first century church and under the inspiration of God he set down these thoughts which we have in this letter this general letter to the Christians in the Asia Minor and so on in the Middle East where error and difficulty had come to them he writes to encourage them and to establish them in the truth

I believe that the method that he uses as is so often the case with these letters is instructive in itself because not only does he show that the great thing that God requires in the life of a true child of God is that love that unbiased love love to God and love to the brethren but he also starts further back as it were with the problems and that he deals with the great effect that error will always have in our minds and our hearts the effect is to make us unstable to affect our assurance to make us doubt the great realities of the redemptive work of Christ error will always have that effect always must have the effect of either reducing and affecting our assurance and reality or of allowing us to go to sleep in a nominal profession error is Satan's device it is Satan's way of working in the hearts of men and women and his one aim is to damn the souls of men and women and he'll use any device he can to that end error is but one of them and it will either have the effect of allowing us to sleep on in an unrenewed unregenerate condition or it will have the effect in the life of the true Christian of bringing him into a state of dullness of unreality and a loss of his assurance this is evidently if you read the various sections of this book the plight into which these people had come there were antichrists abroad there were those that were working in opposition to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and these poor people beleaguered as they were in a pagan world knew the pressures on them in many ways it seems to me that the background of this epistle is very similar to the background of the epistle of Peter and to the Hebrews there was error and disarray evidence in the church and in the world how does he meet this?

he meets it in a different way in terms of a way that Peter set out to bring encouragement the way that John deals with the matter is first and foremost to show them the reality of the faith that they professed or on the other hand to root out from them that which was mere nominal assent to truth you see he comes he comes in the opening verses particularly in the verses the early verses of our text where that surgeon's knife we have sung of the physician sometimes it is necessary for that same physician to cut deeply into a wound that it may be dealt with at its root we are all too inclined to want a comfortable religion we are like those in past days that have often said prophesy into a smooth thing peace peace all but peace peace where there is no peace is no gospel at all it's a delusion of satan this is the fearful thing that is being spread abroad today but John you see being given wisdom from on high doesn't fall into this difficulty he doesn't come to this epistle and try to smooth over the differences he doesn't seem to cry down the errors he comes to the point and in this verse 6 which we have before us and which

[8 : 18] God may help us to look at he comes and he lays things bare you are saying this the first thing that we must establish is where you stand if personally you do not stand upon the rock Christ Jesus then there is no point in going on there is no point in trying to bring comfort for you you have no comfort you are yet in your sins and he brings it in this way if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness we lie there it is he's saying to them there is no two ways about this there is no way you can hide this if you profess faith in Christ if you profess that you have come to him in your need and committed the weight of your soul to him and you go on walking in sin you lie there is no reality in the profession this is where John starts and it seems to me that this is where we must start my friend

I bring this word to you this morning not because I'm setting myself up as one who can read this word with no effect it is because it's searched me out and is searching me out we can profess many things and it can all be a lie it can be a delusion it can be hypocrisy this is where John starts with these people who were perplexed in difficulty who were being assailed by Satan and by the by the state everything seemed to be against him now you may have thought that he should have come with words of comfort it was a word of comfort that I had on the mind to bring to you but it seemed to be taken away a word of comfort and these people may have thought that they needed a word of comfort more than anyone else there they were in this terrible condition but God saw them as they were and he said let's start at the beginning we must first establish where you stand if we profess if we say that we have fellowship with him if we profess faith in him and we walk in darkness we lie and do not the truth what he is saying is simply this that there must be a consistency between what we say we believe and the way we live just and it's a searching test you see we can profess many things we can profess various spiritual experiences if you like there are many in our day that are professing all sorts of things they're not all true in the fourth chapter of this book of this epistle

John says beloved believe not every spirit but try the spirits whether they are of God because many false prophets have gone into the world hereby know ye the spirit of God every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God I think that is a weak a weak test to make but remember the circumstances in which John spoke believe not every spirit believe not every influence we have there is the spirit of error abroad there is Satan himself abroad as well as the Holy Spirit of God what John is saying to them check this does the experience you claimed or had make you see in Christ more glory does it make him to be dearer to you or can you now more easily live on your experience without

Christ many many in our day it is to be feared are being influenced by experiences in the image of his son and showing us more glory in the Lord Jesus Christ himself these are the touchstones on which experiences are to be judged but John you see knew these things he knew that there was error regarding these things in the church and he comes to a much more practical level as we shall see in the various tests that he holds before these people he does not speak of spiritual experiences he speaks of how their life has been affected what their view of sin has been brought to how their regard of other true Christians is their view of God their view of themselves and so on

I say it is a very searching test that he gives a very searching way to deal with these people before he attempts to deal with their actual condition of trouble and uncertainty he is setting out to put a foundation down on which they can stand a foundation against which nothing can move them oh this is this is the way that John constantly works with these people well as we come then to look at this verse we must bear its overall message in mind it is saying simply this that if we profess faith in Christ and our life is unchanged then our profession is alive I believe that as we come to look at this we need to fear one thing because I believe it's been a burden to more than one it is this word darkness if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness we lie and Satan will come to force some poor doubted humble soul of

[15 : 30] God and say look at the darkness you're in surely by the word of God it proves that your profession of faith is alive well this is the thing that he will often do he will often come and quote other passages of scripture which seem to confuse us more than ever we'll come maybe to you and say just this look at your own condition look at the darkness of your mind look at the darkness of your heart do you suppose that in spite of all this you're still a child of life his word declares that if you walk in darkness after professing faith again you lie the whole thing is hypocrisy I believe that God that Satan will come in this way he'll refer you see to that passage in

Isaiah's prophecy chapter 50 verse 10 who is among you that feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of his servant that walketh in darkness and hath no light let him trust in the name of the Lord and stay upon him you see the difference here in the word darkness this is the point I making but in John's epistle he uses the word light and darkness very frequently to indicate the purity which is God that is the light and darkness as sin the work of Satan the work of darkness in this very chapter he says that God is light and in him is no darkness at all in verse 5 what is he saying then he is saying that this darkness to which he refers in verse 6 is the darkness of sin that is why I interpreted to say that if we profess faith in

Christ and continue to walk in sin we lie he is not saying that if we have professed faith and walk in darkness that is darkness of mind a felt desertion a felt distance from God we lie this is the use of the word darkness that Isaiah is making but there is a vast and a vital difference between those two words same word with a different meaning oh believe not Satan if when you are brought into darks and paths sides of desertion and difficulty Satan comes and quotes this verse to you he is a liar you see and a deceiver a different darkness is spoken on here is the darkness of a continuation under the domination of sin if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness in sin we lie what is he saying he is saying this that there must be a consistency somewhere in our life between what we claim to believe what we claim to have experienced and the way we live this is shown in verse 7 but if we walk in the light as he is in the light we are fellowship one with another and so on this darkness and this light is godliness as opposed to a life of sinfulness that's all so we are warranted are we not in saying that the verse does mean just what we have said it meant that if we have we claim if we say we have fellowship with him if we claim to have professed faith in Christ and go on walking in sin we lie there is where we must start well this is something of a negative in the text if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness we lie it goes on to a positive aspect of this if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another let us then look at this first negative in verse 6 if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness we lie we lie there must be a consistency between our life and our profession is he here then suggesting sinless perfectionism is he saying to us that if we have professed faith in

Christ the belief is that Christ has washed away our sins then we must go on walking in sinlessness I don't believe he is saying this at all it's quite obvious that he is not saying this from verse 8 if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves the truth is not in us in verse 1 of chapter 2 if any man sin we have an advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous what is he saying he is saying that there must be an effect in our life that we must be able to discover some effect in our life since the time that he brought us to his sleep with a cry for mercy since that time when we believe that our sins were taken away the point he is making is shown throughout the

New Testament and it's shown in that verse which I believe on more than one occasion I've quoted because it seems to me to be so apt the point he is making is this that the salvation which comes to the poor sinner by an application of the work of Christ to him does more than deal nearly if I may use that word nearly with the guilt of sin the work of Christ does not only remove the legal barrier of sin by the imputation of his own righteousness to the coming sinner but it deals with his heart deals with his heart Ezekiel in chapter 36 says this a new heart also will I give you a new spirit will I put within you I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you a heart of flesh

[23 : 06] I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and ye shall keep my judgments and do them a new heart was given when our sins were dealt with a new heart which causes us to walk in his statutes and to keep his judgments sin so what John is saying is this he's saying if your profession of faith is a true profession of faith not only what the question of the legal barrier of your sin dealt with but you were given a new heart with new desires after God and after holiness and the very presence of that heart within you must make itself manifest in the tenor of your life

I believe that this is what John is teaching here and if there's not a real noticeable change in some of our attitudes towards the various things that he brings attention to later on then it's a false profession of Christ you see I said earlier we can delude ourselves we can delude other people by recounting what we believe to be spiritual experiences but we can't delude others we can't delude ourselves if we look at the practical aspects of their life have they been changed or haven't they if this morning my friend years ago you felt that you had some spiritual experience on which you're basing your hope for eternity and your life is unchanged if your life is still characterized by greed and lust and all those things which we knew rampant and controlling us at one time then our profession is alive according to

John nothing less than that you see how deep John cut these people before he started to heal them he wanted to make sure that he was not healing that which needed removing he wanted to make sure that before he poured in the balm of the gospel the growth of sin the tentacles of sin have been removed and this is why he came at the outset of this great epistle and cut so deeply for it may cut you and it may cut me it has cut me it's a serious thing to look at their lives sometimes as against the lives of other people that profess nothing at all and you find so many defects so many deviations so much carelessness so much worldliness this is what John is saying is that new heart in evidence is it making itself evident in your life from day to day he's not saying are we when we're with God's people in his house of a Sunday different to the neighbour it can be traditions it can be nothing but formality of course we shall all look the same and behave the same here what are you like on Wednesday evening what are you like on

Monday morning you see this is where it searches us out why are we not we know we're certainly not sinless there's no need for me I believe to suggest again that John here is saying that the sinless protection is a possibility or that it's to be striven for it is an impossibility it is to be striven for God you see this new heart this new heart which we are given it is made as Ezekiel says in order that it may keep his judgments that it may do that which is pleasing to God so really what is our test what are we to look at what are we to think about ourselves when we come to examine ourselves according to this standard well John will help us he'll help us because he sets out a variety of tests in a positive way so that we can check our thoughts against them but what are we relying on this morning what are we doing in our lives what affects as all the gospel sermons and the reading of

God's word and their coming and going done to us I mean why are we here this morning we can be here looking very respectable thinking about what we've done last week or what we're going to do the week following we can be here merely because it is habit for us to be here now I'm not even decrying that how much better it is to be in a place such as this where the gospel is preached than to be seeking pleasure in this world what I'm saying is this that if we're relying merely upon the fact that we are here we don't do what other people do or do what other people don't do if this is all we have as a basis for our hope for eternity what a fearful condition we're in because by

[29 : 31] Thursday night you'll probably forgotten every word that you heard the effect of being in God's house will have dissipated and you'll be like the man in the street who never darkens the door of a church oh my friend do you sometimes feel like that now I do I believe you know that that little hymn which says and they who fame would serve him best are conscious most of sin there's truth in it but there's no excuse we can't hide behind this God's word comes and it says clearly that if your professed faith in Christ and your life during the week is unaltered it's a lie and not true faith at all oh how do we work and live through the life through the week what is our life like outside our church and chapel what is it like what is yours like well

I believe that this word is to search us out may God by his spirit search us out by it may not leave us to make these excuses that we can't be perfect here we can't be perfect here and God's word does not suppose that we can be perfect here but he has set a standard he has set a standard and that new heart if it's given will be urging after that new standard be ye holy as I am holy or it will bring us not into a state of a holier than thou attitude it will not buoy up in any self righteousness we shall see against God's standards how far short we come but nevertheless he has set standards that you and I should aim to walk in if ye love thee keep my commandments the greatest indication of the love of heart to God is a walking in his precepts

I believe I really believe this that those who do not believe as we do that salvation is all of grace some such people endeavour to live a more careful more godly life than those who profess to believe the doctrines of grace it's a fearful thing to say but you see Paul had a suspicion that this could be the outcome in some people's lives shall we continue in sin that grace may abound surely this verse cuts at the root of such a thought if we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in sin we lie therefore it can't be that let sin abound that grace may much more abound no we can't adopt that attitude because this heart this new heart that God has given to us will be striving after him why because it will know what communion with him is it will know what communion with him is and it will recognise it will come to know by experience that once the life becomes careless once sin is given a little headway in our lives again then the spirit is grieved and is influenced felt influence is withdrawn from us we lose our comfort or there are many safeguards against

God true children turning the grace of God into life anxiousness those those that have never known grace of God may suppose in theory that this will be the effect I believe one that has been dealt with and known the reality of true communion will so value that will so covet its retention that they will be very careful in the way they walk but having said all this we come back to this problem that you and I so often lose communion we lose a sense of reality because of our carelessness still well what does this mean does it mean that we haven't got this new heart I believe there's one test that we can apply to ourselves in this connection which will lay open our true condition and it's that great passage in

Romans 7 where Paul speaks of this tension this contradiction between the flesh and the spirit within his heart Paul who had been used of God for such great work he recognised still that there was a law that when he would do good evil was present within for I delight in the law of God after the inward man but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members oh wretched man that I am you see after we have said all that we have this will be our true view of ourselves still we'll never reach that pinnacle that fictitious pinnacle of sinlessness here although that is our aim that is our striving after to live in accordance with the law and the precepts of God's word is not to earn our salvation thereby it is a demonstration that the new heart is living within us and is striving after these things how then on a practical level when we know so many failures when we know so many disappointments when we know so much of sin at times in our lives how can we judge as to whether we are in this way at all or not well

[36 : 12] I say Romans 7 is a great help to us here because Paul is describing a tension which is known and felt in the heart of the true believer he has a new heart which is seeking after God with a desire to live a holy life in accordance with God's precepts and with his law but he has the old nature still within him disturbed broken no longer has the dominating power in his life which once it had but it's still there still have pride and unbelief still have enmity and all those things which work in opposition to faith they're within us still now Paul says there's two things in a Christian there is the new and there is the old and there will be a tension between them have you known that tension do you know that tension can you look back to your life when there was no tension when sin had it all its own way when there was nothing in you to restrain you perhaps at times you had a calm of conscience a word from your father or your mother used to come and affect you but by and large sin had it all its own way there was no tension there was no desire after him there was a desire maybe not to offend your parents there was a desire not to be caught doing something wrong there was a desire not to have to pay the penalty of sin but there was no desire after him there was no principle within which was seeking after God and holiness is there now

Paul brings these two things together and they're an evidence an evidence I believe no poor sinner will ever come to a satisfactory conclusion about the holiness of his life he'll come to the opposite so I do but is there this tension if there's a tension it means that two forces are at work within you the new heart and the old nature if we know that there is evidence that God has dealt with us but John doesn't leave it there he doesn't leave it there you see there again Paul writing to the Romans is a great help to us but John goes again and takes it further because there is this positive side in verse 7 which says this but if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin but if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one with another this proves the truth of the faith that we have professed

John say how does he go about this if you look through this epistle you will find there is a number of very practical tests which can be applied by yourself to yourself he says this we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren well there is a practical thing that we can all examine ourselves on we know that we have passed from death unto life because we know that we love the brethren this is one test that John brings to us to determine whether our profession of faith in Christ is true or not have we that new heart working in us if we have that new heart working in us then one of the effects one of the signs of life will be that we love the brethren now it's all easy enough for us to love those that think the same way as we do it's easy enough for us to be friendly with those in the same little connection but you see Paul was a wider view than this and he asked God to bless all those who love the Lord

Jesus Christ in sincerity this is a difficult test I say the world loves their own those in societies have connections and get on well together those that go to the same church or chapel may get on well together he's saying something more than this he's saying something more than this because he connects it with his fellowship you see he says in verse seven we have fellowship one with another we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren therefore because we love them for a given reason we can have fellowship with them do we have we always was there a time in the past when we didn't love the brethren when we didn't have fellowship with them this is what john is asking us to look into our hearts and determine was there a time in your life when you've got no interest in god's people when you really wouldn't have chosen them as your friends you certainly wouldn't have chosen to go on holiday with them live with them have communion and intimacy with them at all they may have been nice people but there was something about them that was too strict too straight to sit you you didn't really want to be too involved oh i know what that was like when i was young some of the old people i liked but i didn't want to become too involved with them oh when i could throw off the shackles and be away with my friends be away in the world there was a different feeling altogether freedom not hampered not cramped in these laws and precepts is it the same with you now is it the same with you now who do you choose to spend time with i believe john is asking us to ask this simple question who do we choose to spend time with if we choose to spend time with the world if we choose to spend time with those who ridicule the lord jesus christ who deny the purpose of his death who can use his name in name who can run rough shot over all his precepts and all his commandments i ask you what does it say about you answer to your own conscience what does it say about you if this is your attitude to friends it says one thing plainly that you're in the world you're of them you choose them voluntarily there is no restraint put on you in fact all the restraints have been in the opposite direction and you've thrown it aside i say what does it say to you in your inner conscience this morning if all your spare time all your thought all your longing is to be with people who deny these very things what does it say it doesn't need me to tell you what it says you know what it means that you're one with them john says here we know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren we love those queer old people we leave those narrow minded people we love those not because they're narrow minded not because they're strange but because they have something that we can understand that they have something that is our possession

too they have indwelling within the holy spirit god has given them a new heart he has indwelt them by the spirit and there is that bond that family bond together or there should be this should be uppermost all my friends often times god's own children are left to their own spirit do we not know what it is left to their own spirit wherein they deny the work that god has done in them by their attitude to others i'm not saying that we should agree with all they say no man is infallible no man is perfect in this life and many of god's children hold strange ideas many of god's children have such strange ideas that we can't really walk with them as we would but what is their attitude to them or is it the attitude that paul so often adopted when he was speaking about the jews he would to god that he almost might be lost providing they might be saved there was a humility there was a compassion in that man that is so lacking in us well this is but one of the tests if we have passed from death to life we love the brethren do you love the brethren do you spend time with the brethren do you choose their company do you choose their fellowship because they have fellowship with your father this is what it amounts to there is that family kingship because of the work of the holy spirit within us and this is the test that john brings to us here he goes on to say in verse nine whosoever is born of god doth not commit sin for his seed remaineth in him and he cannot sin because he is born of god if we look at this epistle carefully this cannot mean sinless perfectionism for the reasons i've already stated what does it mean then it means surely that the dominating power of sin in the unrenewed heart has been broken and taken away when the new heart was given when the guilt of sin was dealt with the power of sin was also dealt with sin indwelling sin yes we know it and shall know it but john still goes on to say whosoever is born of god does not commit sin does not commit sin habitually by choice what is their attitude towards sin this is the test that is here put before us is it what it once was when our ambitions when our trust in life was such that if there was a little sin involved in attaining our ambition or our possession then well we would submerge it when sin really didn't mean anything to us at all when sin because of the heart that we had within us was our natural our natural our everyday tendency and we didn't feel it we didn't know it is that so now this is what john is asking us we cannot habitually sin we cannot

[48 : 55] be under the dominating power of sin with no abatement if we are those who have been forgiven their sins and have received a new heart impossible he is saying it is a lie if you live this way he is saying this what is your attitude towards sin it is not that you are sinless and perfect if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves it is saying this what is your attitude towards sin now you know it you fall into it once it was a pleasure now what is it well I believe it can be nothing less than a burden it can be nothing less than that which separates us in our feelings from communion with the Lord Jesus Christ it has become a reality to us whereas it wasn't a reality before we can see something of the cost of sin's redemption in the blood of the Lord

Jesus Christ how can we then enter into sin how can we then with a new heart which is seeking after holiness live under the dominating power of sin I say is sin a burden to you or is it something that you hardly know when you've committed or not this is the text that John is bringing before us here and there are many others which we can't now consider but he is saying this but if we walk in the light if we walk in the light if we walk in the influence of that new heart according to the precepts the commandments of God's word then we know that we have this new heart there will be this fellowship together oh my friends this is what we need in the church today more than anything else the knowledge of this fellowship together the influence of the new heart being liberated and to be seen that there may be this fellowship together if you read the history of the church in those times when

God has come down and blessed it has been a coming together all these petty divisions all this this awful dissension and difference of opinion on non-essentials is largely dealt with and the fellowship of Christ in the heart by the spirit is that which binds them together read George Whitfield's account of his disagreement with John Wesley it was a deep deep disagreement a disagreement as far as I know that was never healed but there was still in Whitfield at least that spirit towards the man which was only the outcome of a new heart working with him or that we might know it more if we knew it more I believe we would demonstrate it the more readily in showing fellowship in the church of

Christ together may God speak today may he speak to us each from these solemn words but these are not the end of the text you see God when he inspired these apostles to write he never he never as it were used a knife without bringing that that bar of the gospel and oh look how that gospel shines in the verses if these things discover you to be a hypocrite if these things discover you to be still a sinner in your sin on the broad road of destruction look at the provision the gospel makes for even you in that verse 9 may God have his blessed noieil in flame to spread abroad our naturalist pain and with a solemn pleasure tell the grace which saves from death and hell hymn 407 hymn 407 hymn 407 hymn 407 hymn 407 hymn 417

Thank you.

[56 : 13] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[58 : 43] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.