

August 20, 2017

## *Walking in the Light*

*"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 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."*

I John 1:5-10



Because of God's grace poured out on us through Jesus Christ you and I can now be children of our heavenly Father. As his children our lives should reflect in every possible way who we are. Rather than trying to follow a series of rules and regulations as a way of living as his children we really need only focus on two tasks. First, we must simply and constantly choose to do the next right thing. John would write, *"And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him."*

Thus, the simplest definition of a Christian's walk could be described as doing the next right thing over and over again. At the same time we continually seek to stop our own sinning. That becomes our constant battle as children of God; to stop our own sinful choices. Our focus has to be on our own sinning alone. Too many of us think our task as believers is to stop others from sinning, but that is really is not our responsibility. Overcoming our own sins will require all of our attention.

John writes, *"Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he (Jesus) is pure."* Our two-fold focus as God's children then, is to continually choose the next right thing and to constantly work to rid our own lives of our own sinful behaviors. John would conclude, *"Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."* While we will never accomplish either of these tasks completely, they still have to be our constant focus, not so that we can be saved, but because we have been saved.

So, in taking stock of our personal walk as children of God what should we be measuring? First, we need to be focused on constantly choosing the next right thing. Now, we might claim not to know what the right thing is, but in truth we nearly always do. This is especially true when we consider the second half of the passage we just referenced. We know how we ought to treat others in almost every single situation. Jesus would teach us, *"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you..."* (Matthew 7:12) This becomes the standard or our next right thing.

In our relationships with family members, with friends, with co-workers and with brothers and sisters in the faith, we know how we ought to behave. Our challenge is to constantly choose to

do the next right thing in those relationships. Our second task is to address our own shortcomings. We all choose sinful actions and attitudes. These are nearly always sourced in our own selfishness. We, frankly want our own way and we most often want it now.

Our sin is founded in our own selfishness, and I have become convinced that we will never overcome our own sin until we overcome our own selfishness. Why is that so hard? As we have often shared, much of our selfishness is driven by our own drive to survive. We are literally afraid that if we do not get our own way, and if we do not get it now, our very survival will, in some way, be threatened.

Ultimately then, overcoming our inherent selfishness is the only way for us to overcome our sin. Jesus thus calls us to deny our selves (the source of our selfishness) and finally, to put that battle to survive to death if we would follow him. (Matthew 16:24-25) In truth doing these two things, always because we have been saved and because we are God's children, will require all of our energy and time. Focusing on what is or is not going on in the lives of others is frankly, not something we can afford the time to do.

So, take stock. Are you constantly focused on choosing to do the next right thing in your life and in your relationships? And, are you completely committed to removing the sin from your own life by surrendering you very existence to God's control? To walk as a child of God is not hard to understand, but it is intensely hard to do. How are you doing?