

MONDAY 10 October 2022 "IF WE" (1 John 1:10-2:2)

Good Monday morning to you my 'Walking with Jesus' friends,

Monday has historically been a day which people disliked, maybe even dreaded! For kids, it's back to school from the fun and laziness of the weekend. For workers, it's back to the work grind from time spent with friends and family over the weekend.

But there's another dark challenge having to do with Monday's. *You'll remember one of the frequent priorities God gave to His people was something He called "SABBATH". If I understand God's design for Sabbath it is one vital idea "RESTORE"!* With rest from the busyness of our work week, our bodies restore energy and are ready for a new work week. With more time with family and friends over the weekend, our emotions and attitudes are 'restored' and prepared for the challenges of a new week. And for Christians, with time focused on worshiping God, reflecting on God's Word, time with God's people, and some extended time with God Himself, *our spirituality should be restored so we are ready to step back into the spiritual challenges of living in what seems to be an increasingly dark world.*

So, I need to ask us all... was this weekend a 'RESTORE' weekend for each of us? Was yesterday a wonderful Sabbath? Are you ready for Monday?

On Friday we began a new journey as we are spending these days with the Apostle John. He is writing the first of his three little letters we have near the end of our New Testament. John is now approaching the last of 5 'If we' statements found in 1 John 1:6-10. Each is powerful. Here they are again...

1. ***"If we claim to have fellowship with God yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."***
2. ***"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus God's Son, purifies us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)***
3. ***"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."***
4. ***"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."***

In the past few days, we've looked more deeply at each of those powerful statements. *They are foundational to an accurate understanding and living of the Christian faith.* Do you fully grasp the significance of each? Are they 'God truth' rooted deeply in you, my friends?

Now today, here's the fifth **"If we"** statement of John's, and it is staggering and shocking: ***"If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him [Almighty God the Father] out to be a liar and His [God] word has no place in our lives."*** (1 John 1:10)

I wonder if you can remember a time in your life as a child when you were asked if you had done something, like perhaps breaking something precious while the shattered pieces were strewn all over the floor, around you? And do you remember how you felt when you denied it, even though you knew full well you had done it? Or maybe you denied cheating on a test in school, or taking something from a store which you had stolen or. . . We all have those shameful memories of denial, don't we?

*Notice that John wants us to understand that our denial of sin is not simply a lie about us, but it makes a powerful accusation against Holy, Almighty, Creator God. Our deceitful claim that we have no sin accuses God of being a liar because God has said **"There is no one righteous, not even one... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."** (Romans 3:10,23)*

But there's more that John wants us to understand here. Not only have we declared God to be a liar, John says **"His Word has no place in our lives."** Oh, my that is very serious, in fact, I think we could say that is terminal! *For if we think God is a liar, then there is no room in our lives for God's truth and no hope for us in our terminal sin condemnation.*

Now ponder that my friends! This weekend I urged you to consider the spiritual 'incompatibility' that is all around us in our dark world and too often is found deep within us as we live deceitful lives. Do we see the "incompatibility" in this powerful statement from John?

John calls us to see that either we live according to God's truth, or we live in denial and try to define our own truth, and that never works. Either we live in respect of God, or we ignore or reject God and that always ends up in disaster. So, I think John's fifth **"If we"** statement calls us to ask some honest questions of ourselves:

1. Do I claim or pretend that I have not sinned, when indeed I know full well I have? If so, what have I gained by living a lie and being a hypocrite? What has that denial done to my reputation, my self image, my view of life?
2. As I try to live in my hypocrisy and deceitfulness do I understand I am declaring that Holy God is a liar? And what does history show me is the reward for living in rebellion against God or spewing mockery of God out of my mouth? Am I willing to live with the ultimate judgment of God, which I will face, if I insist on living my life declaring God a liar?
3. Do I understand I can't have it both ways? Either God's Word and God's Truth find a home in my heart and put down deep roots which then shape how I think and how I speak and the choices I make, or God's Word is not welcome in my life, and I am actually living in opposition to God's Truth!

Now my "Walking with Jesus" friends, are we courageous enough to look into the mirror of God's Word and ask ourselves the most important life questions? And what are your honest answers?

I imagine John is so overwhelmed with what the Holy Spirit has led him to write that he lays down his stylus, leans back in his chair and looks out the window next to his writing table. Ephesus is a big and busy city with people living here from all over the known world. It's a city of trade business from all over the world, so fresh ideas, fresh news are always coming into town with every ship or caravan bringing supplies from everywhere. *John feels a high and holy calling to represent Jesus to this city.*

John and Jesus had a remarkable friendship during those years Jesus was doing the miracles and teaching God's great truth. John had watched Jesus die on the cross. (John 19:26) John had stood in the empty tomb and held the burial cloths on resurrection morning. (John 20:5-8) John had spent many memorable times with Jesus after His resurrection, (John 21) and John was on the hillside when Jesus said farewell and elevated up into the sky, (Acts 1:9-11) returning to heaven. John was in that room, with more than 100 others on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon them. (Acts 1:12-14; 2:1.2)

Over these years John had been thrilled to see so many people trust in Jesus as their Savior in all the places John had visited since those days with Jesus. But here in Ephesus religions from all over the world competed for everyone's attention. Some made wild claims, others made ridiculous demands of those who followed their teachings. *But God's truth found in Jesus was of course unique from all the religions in Ephesus.*

The apostle Paul had been in Ephesus several times and proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus here. Many people had found true freedom in Jesus, and they were living a glorious contrast to those who lived in bondage either to their sin or to false religions.

John was burdened though, that some who had trusted Jesus as their Savior struggled looking for absolute certainty that their sins were forgiven by God, and they really were accepted by God because of Jesus. So, John picked up his stylus again. Building on those five **"If we"** statements, the Holy Spirit leads John to write one of the most powerful statements ever written by anyone: ***"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*** (1 John 2:1,2) Now that, my friends, is one of the most powerful truth statements ever spoken or written, do you agree! Can you find the great promises of God in this statement that John wrote?

When we stumble and sin, either in our thoughts, our words, our attitudes or behavior, look at God's promise: ***"we have One who speaks to the Father in our defense - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."***

This is a foundational, remarkable truth of Christianity. When the resurrected Jesus ascended back to heaven THIS is one of the main things He is NOW doing. (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 1:3) Jesus is our advocate, speaking to God the Father as our defense attorney! But unlike a human attorney, Jesus is not debating or arguing or making any false claims. *Jesus is simply showing His nail scarred hands to God the Father and declaring that whatever sin we have committed, Jesus paid for that sin with His atonement death on the cross.*

And my friends remember yesterday we looked at 1 John 1:9 and one of those great **'if we'** statements which promises us that ***"If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*** Can you see how these two statements connect my friends? *God can ONLY forgive us our sins because Jesus is our advocate and has paid the full sin penalty for us which God accepts!*

So, the next time you wonder if God is willing to forgive you again, go right here, 1 John 2:1,2... *Jesus is standing in God's presence as your advocate, your attorney, with His nail scarred hands held out as proof of His payment of your sin penalty.* And because God is faithful and just, God will accept the full payment of Jesus and God will forgive us!

And I think we need to celebrate that great truth with this remarkable song... 'At Calvary'.

Today's Scripture is 1 John 1:10-2:2.