

If We Confess Our Sins (1 John 1:5-10)

Water of Life

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INTRODUCTION TO 1 JOHN

Author = John the apostle

Date: sometime after AD 50, but not after the mid-60s

Readership: Leaders of a Local Church (likely Ephesus)

Purpose: To enjoy the same fellowship with the Father and Son that John enjoyed

EXPOSITION

Issues related to all of 1:5-10

The purpose of these verses is to serve as a preventative for sin (per 1 John 2:1)

Logically (by itself) this negates any contention that 1:5-10 could describe unbelievers

The referent of “we.” Cf. 1 John 1:3, 5. It may be profitable to substitute (mentally) “the apostles” for “we/us/our” in this passage

Two Theses: God is without taint of sin, but people (even apostles) have the taint of sin

Verse 5 states a fellowship-related truth

Verse 3 presents the idea that ordinary-sinful men can have fellowship with God.

Verse 5 poses the issue that God is without any taint whatsoever

How can sinful man (even apostles) have fellowship with a holy God?

Verse 6 would be a false word by an apostle about fellowship.

Verse 7 would be a true word by an apostle about fellowship.

Verse 8 would be a false word by an apostle about sin.

Verse 9 would be a true word by an apostle about sin.

Verse 10 would be a false word by an apostle about sin.

How can sinful man (even apostles) have fellowship with a holy God?

God has no taint of sin (1:5)

The apostles would be liars and would not be doing the truth, if they claimed to have fellowship while walking in darkness (1:6)

The apostles have fellowship with God (and God has fellowship with the apostles) and Jesus Christ's work on the cross cleanses the apostles from all sin, if the apostles walk in the light (as God Himself walks in the light) (1:7)

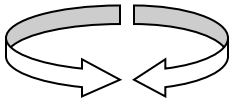
The underlined words clarify: we have fellowship with one another:

God fellowships with the apostles and the apostles fellowship with God

The apostles would be deceiving themselves and would be without truth, if they claimed not to have sin (1:8)

The phrase "have sin" does not mean possessing a sin nature. Cf. for example, John 9:41.

The apostles would make God a liar, if they claimed not to sin (1:10)



I am dealing with verses 9 and 10 in reverse order. Verse 10 reinforces the statement of 1:8. (I want to end with verse 9).

God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse the apostles from all sin, if the apostles acknowledge their sin (1:9)

Forgiveness is not a judicial term. It is not the term for the once-for-all dealing with sin. Propitiation (which appears in 1 John 2:2, in the next paragraph) is the once-for-all dealing with sin.

All the apostles (especially, John, the author) wanted the readers (mature believers leading churches) to enjoy the same type of fellowship that the apostles did. Thus, we know that the apostles would affirm verses 5, 7, and 9.

CONCLUSION

If believers were to affirm the wrong statements (1:6, 8, or 10), they would lack the type of fellowship that John wished for them to have. The "forgiveness" of verse 9 is to have, rather than to lack this fellowship.