

Light Comes before Warmth

1 John 1:5-2:2

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One of the biggest criticisms of Christianity is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy happens when our beliefs take us in one direction, but our lives move in another. Authentic Christianity happens when our lives flow in the same direction our beliefs are taking us.

The apostle John exposed the hypocrisy of the false teachers who had infiltrated and impacted various churches (1 John 1:5-2:2).

Shedding Light on Hypocrisy in Christian Fellowship

I. Where does hypocrisy come from?

Hypocrisy is a gospel issue (v5a). John was going back to the historic gospel message he had received first-hand from Jesus Christ. While the beginning of Christian fellowship is fellowship with Jesus, our experiences are not ultimate. Our tendency is to redefine the gospel to match our experiences; we replace the historic gospel with a subjective gospel. At the core of the gospel is God's holiness (v5b). The light of God's holiness is the source of God's loving warmth. God's love is holy. Replacing God's holiness at the core of the historic gospel, turns it into a man-made gospel. Hypocrisy abounds with man-made gospels. Hypocrisy comes from misunderstanding the gospel.

II. What does hypocrisy look like?

2 Manifestations of Hypocrisy

1. Duplicity (living a double life, v6)

We cannot have fellowship with a holy God while walking in darkness. The false teachers taught that only spiritual things mattered to God - therefore we can do as we like with earthly things (compartmentalisation). John condemns this form of duplicity and exhorts us to walk authentically in the light, just as God is in the light (v7a).

2 Blessings from Walking in the Light:

#1 *'...we have fellowship with one another,'* (v7b) – Christian fellowship is triangular. As we enjoy fellowship with Christ, we also enjoy fellowship with one another.

#2 *...the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.'* (v7c) – Walking in the light doesn't mean being perfect. Repentance is key to authentic Christian fellowship!

2. Self-righteousness (v8)

It is self-deception to say that one is not a sinner. Being a sinner is recognising that there is something fundamentally wrong with us. Rejecting the reality of our sinfulness leads to self-righteousness. John leads us from the sinfulness of our hearts to the actual sins of our hands; a self-righteous life calls God a liar (v10)! Acknowledge your sinfulness and sins, and humbly repent (v9). Repentance is key to authentic Christian fellowship!

III. What is the hope for hypocrites?

1 John 2:1a – John removed his apostle hat and spoke to the people as a loving father and pastor. Even as sinners, we must fight against our sinful desires. When we do sin, we have an advocate in Jesus Christ the righteous, who has the Father's listening ear (1 John 2:1b). Not only is Christ our advocate, but also the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). All manner of sin is directly against God and this invokes His wrath against us. Yet this wrath has been satisfied because Jesus the advocate became the sacrifice for us. Through this, he has reconciled us back to God. Not only is Christ our advocate and propitiation for our sins, but also the whole world's. Such is the holy love Christ has! Such is the hope we have in Christ! Christian fellowship is restorative.