

Active Fellowship

1 John 1:5-10

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Last week we learned that spiritual quality of life is dependent upon fellowship with God and the joy that it produces. Today's we find out what could hinder this fellowship and how to remain in fellowship with God. In order for Christians to have active fellowship with God, we must conduct our lives in Jesus, in the likeness of God's conduct, and confess our sin while continually trusting in God to forgive us.

In the children's book *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, the main character returns to stealing several years after promising his wife that he would stop. His justification was that he was by nature a thief and couldn't change. We also by nature are sinful and cannot change ourselves, but through fellowship with God in Christ we can grow in the new nature given to us. This involves adopting the mind of Christ, having the same attitude towards sin as God does. It means being aware of sin in our lives and like Paul considering ourselves the worst of sinners. But so often we rationalize, redefine, or deny our sin, claiming to be close to God while living contrary to His character. Though He will never disown us as His children, such sin breaks our fellowship with God. Proverbs 28:13 warns us against denying our sin and calls us instead to confess. And 1 John 1:5-10 exhorts us in a similar manner.

In v. 5 we see that the fact that God is light should be the basis on which we are to live righteously and confess our sins. Being in fellowship with God, we should walk in the light as He is in the light. We should confess the darkness in our lives, and He will restore us to the light. Here the concept of light is not just about God's glory or revelation, but more about His perfection, holiness, and righteousness. Don't forget this aspect of God's character. Too often we downplay God's righteousness and justify our own sin, thinking that God won't take it seriously or that because of His mercy He doesn't expect us to be always holy. We sometimes even think we can bribe God into turning a blind eye to our sin if we do good works. But we can't bargain with God. His holiness cannot be compromised. Darkness is the absence of light. As we draw near to God, we should expect that His light will fill us and drive out the darkness in us. Let us therefore not resist the light.

Verses 6-7 tell us to walk, to live in the present and continually, in the light. It speaks of our conduct, behavior, and lifestyle, not just in front of people but all the time. Accepting the

truth of the gospel means walking in the truth, not just accepting the idea. If someone claims to be in Christ yet never lives accordingly, that person probably does not have true saving faith. But at the same time Christians do sin and this does not cause God to reject us, since we are accepted in Jesus and through His work. Don't forget God's grace, but also don't use it as a license to sin. We may still stumble, but if we are consistently walking in the opposite direction as God, we are liars. It's like someone who joins a health club but eats junk food every meal of every day. Too often we see prominent Christians exposed as lying hypocrites. In our own lives how often do we justify lust, deception, theft, hatred, or greed? Today people love to rename sins. For example, we categorize some lies as white lies to justify ourselves. But renaming it doesn't make it less of a sin. Aim to live in God's light. Though we could never match the degree of His righteousness in this age, we should strive to match His likeness, to constantly walk toward the light. And the best way to do this is by walking according to God's word. Use it as a mirror to see where you fall short and a light to point you in the right direction. And depend on the Holy Spirit for strength. Encourage each other in your walks, for we all walk the same path, abiding in Christ as His lifeblood continually flows in us, cleansing us of sin and binding us together.

Finally, active fellowship with God is on the basis of confession of sin. Sin in our lives is as easy to spot as water in the sea. From birth we all have the disposition to sin. Christians have been born again on the inside, but our flesh is still sinful until Jesus returns. Don't deny it, or you will just be deceiving yourself and the truth is not in you (v. 8). Don't minimize sin. Don't wait until you get caught to address your sin. Confess to God, admit your guilt, be contrite, and God is faithful to cleanse you of your sin. Because of Jesus we can always rely on God to forgive us. So, let us remain in fellowship with God and one another as we continue to walk in the light.