

Is There Sin In The Light?

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Donahue's Position

The phrase “walking in the light” in I John 1:7 is equivalent to walking in truth (II John 4), walk after his commandments (II John 6), walkest in the truth (III John 3), walk in truth (III John 4), walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel (Gal 2:14), abide in the doctrine of Christ (II John 9), walk in the law of the Lord (Psa 119:1), walk in his ways (Psa 119:3), and continue in my word (John 8:31).

I John 7 says we should walk in the light “**AS he (God) is in the light,**” and verse 5 says God is light and “**in him is NO darkness at all.**” So there is absolutely zero sin in the light. How could there be any darkness in light anyway?; that's a contradiction. And since “walking in the light” is synonymous with “doing what the Bible says,” to say “we sin when walking in the light” would be equivalent to saying we sin when doing what the Bible says. That's the same contradiction.

As you know, it only took one sin for Peter to not be “walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel”/ the light (Gal 2:14). So when we sin, we step out of the truth, the doctrine of Christ, the law of the Lord, that is, out of the light. And when we begin our walk in the light again by confessing our sin (I John 1:9), we are forgiven for the sin we committed outside (previous to us walking in) the light.

Waters' First Response

Pat's reasoning may seem persuasive to those seeking truth rather than defending tradition, until they consider the implications of his claims and examine the context carefully. A widely accepted rule of hermeneutics is: “**Do not draw a conclusion that has consequences that are unacceptable.**” Most Christians recognize that we all commit sins of ignorance, weakness, inadvertence, and omission daily. Thus, one who believes as Pat has affirmed cannot have any spiritual security (confidence of being in God's grace) UNLESS he is certain he has no sin at all in his life. This evidently is not a problem for Pat. He evidently thinks he is living above sin; else, he would not be believing and teaching what he is teaching. Pat's teaching, if believed by honest Christians, leaves them hopeless.

Pat presents a list of phrases he tries to treat as identical to “*walk in the light,*” to argue that a single sin causes a person to fall from grace. But none of those expressions is tied to the result of John's statement pertaining to those who “walk in the light” —that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. A person may walk “uprightly” without that phrase carrying the same meaning as continual cleansing by Christ's blood.

Peter and the others were not walking uprightly, and that sin required correction and repentance. But the text does not say they had fallen from grace. By contrast, those who were fully seeking justification through the law were clearly told of their condition (Gal. 5:4).

Pat treats John's statement about walking in the light as a scientific matter, but it is not. To "*walk in the light*" describes a person's manner of life, not perfect righteousness equal to God's. One who walks in the light *practices the truth*, much as a physician practices medicine. As 1 John 1:6 says, "*If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth*". Even skilled and respected physicians make mistakes. Some are minor; others may cost them their license. But if a state medical board revoked a license for every error, however small, such a policy would be unreasonable and unacceptable. In that case, the only licensed physicians would be those who had just begun practicing and had not yet made a mistake. We know medical boards use common sense, but are we to conclude God does not?

Albert Barnes ably explains the phrase "**As he is in the light.**"

In the same kind of light that he has. The measure of light which we may have is not the same in degree, but it is of the same kind. The true Christian in his character and feelings resembles God.

Pat's beliefs and teachings seem to rest on an assumption he draws from 1 John 1:9: that each sin must be specifically confessed to be forgiven. But the passage does not teach that, as the context shows. The concern is whether we confess our sins or deny them. Those who hold Pat's view also tend to define sin only as a willful act (Heb. 10:25,26), which ignores the clear teaching about sins committed in ignorance (Lev. 4:5; Numbers 15). In doing so, they effectively deny their sins. As a result, the very passage they use to support their teaching condemns it.

Consider the context of the passage below:

1 John 1:6-10 MKJV) 6 "*If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.*"

John's message above concerns what we *think* and *speak*. Pat has said some things that contradict John's teaching.

First, this "*walk in the light*," this "manner of life," results in ALL sin being forgiven as one is living this life – it is continuous. The confession of sins as we learn of them is part of that "*walk*." The "manner of life" is what God looks at – not one's personal righteousness. One who walks in the light is one whom God looks upon as faithful and is not "out of the light" (lost) when he sins, as Pat affirmed. A sin does

not necessarily constitute a turning from the light to walk in darkness. The sin of rebellion and impenitence is likely the “sin unto death” (1 John 5:16). It is important to note that this same passage says *“there is sin not unto death.”*

Verse 8 says, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* Is this not what Pat is effectively saying about himself if he thinks he is walking in the light? It certainly is implied. And this teaching, when believed and taught, serves the devil well. We must wonder if, when asked if he believes he is in a saved condition, he would give a straightforward answer.

The effect of the doctrine that Pat and a few others teach is serious and of great consequence. The following are a few things that are noteworthy: 1) divisions have occurred over doctrinal matters that were not a threat to the church nor to the salvation of any individual, simply because some entertain the idea that we must be "right" on everything we believe; 2) those who have accepted the other extreme (once saved always saved) look upon "The Church of Christ" as legalists and perfectionists, which often leads to prejudice against all members of Christ's church; 3) brethren who accept and hold to the perfection doctrine are going to be less apt to admit a sin because to do so would be to admit that they were disinherited by the Lord, and that their teaching might not be sound after all; 4) the doctrine tends to beget self-righteous and arrogant attitudes and impenitent dispositions; and 5) it has even led to the denial of the deity of Jesus while on earth. The argument made is, “Jesus was just a man, and he lived without sin. If he could do it, anyone can.” It is amazing the lengths to which men will go to defend their tradition!

Conclusion

Now compare Pat’s teaching with God’s instruction on how believers can be assured they remain in His grace: *“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet. 1:10, 11). Pat’s view of what is required to remain saved is fundamentally different from God’s teaching.

Donahue’s First Rebuttal

Robert’s first reason for rejecting God’s truth is his made-up rule *“Do not draw a conclusion that has consequences that are unacceptable.”* That rule is the very opposite of truth. Following that rule would have caused Abraham to rebel against God and not offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22. As a matter of fact, we really only prove we love God when we follow what He says (John 14:15) even if the consequences are unacceptable to us (we do not agree with God’s requirement or do not like it).

Robert says believing what God says on this issue means one *“thinks he is living above sin”* and has no *“spiritual security.”* Neither assertion could be farther from the truth. Again, Robert is deciding what truth is based upon a completely wrong basis. He is doing exactly what the Sadducees did in Matt 22:23ff when they used a hypothetical to try prove there is no resurrection. Jesus corrected them by appealing to what the scriptures actually said (verse 32). For example, if we think nobody could be saved if we have

to repent of “all” our sins (Ezek 18:21), then we can be sure we are not fully appreciating the power and providence of God (II Tim 4:7-8, I Cor 4:4).

Robert says Peter was not “fallen from grace” when he “walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” in Gal 2:14. That position seems strange considering verse 17 says Peter was found to be a “sinner” as opposed to being “justified by Christ.” But even granting Robert’s false assertion, Galatians 2 still proves it only took one sin to change Peter’s “walk.” Now apply the same reasoning to I John 1:7.

It is true state medical boards don’t necessarily revoke a license for every transgression by a physician, but that doesn’t illustrate what we read in I John 1. Verse 7 says we are to “walk in the light, **as he is in the light**” and verse 5 had just said “**God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.**” If I John 1:7 had said a physician is to practice medicine as God does, wouldn’t that mean the physician is expected not to make errors, and that when he fails, he should make correction? So I John 1:5 proves indisputably there is no sin in the light of verse 7; there is no way around those two statements of the inspired John. Verse 5 actually says there is no darkness “at all” in the light; what do we have to gain by arguing against that? Now this does not mean we can’t be forgiven if we sin (step out of the light); it just means we need forgiveness (based upon the blood of Christ) whenever we sin.

When you think about it, even though I John 1:7 is not written about non-Christians, the statement would be equally true about them. If a sinner will walk in the light (he begins that walk by believing, repenting and be baptized – Acts 2:36-38), then he will be cleansed from all his sins. Which sins? The **sins he committed while outside (previously to walking in) the light**, right? It is the same for a Christian; the conditions are just different.

Robert’s view is an earn your salvation with your works kind of theory, that is, a generally good “**manner of life**” (as he puts it) makes up for our occasional sins, as long as those sins are not too many or too big. His view makes the grounds of our salvation based upon how we live, instead of by grace through the death of Christ. No, we have to get forgiveness for every sin; forgiveness is always based upon the blood of Christ. We don’t make up for a few little sins by doing a lot of things right – a good general life.

I John 1:9 actually says a Christian must confess his sins to be forgiven for them; Patrick didn’t assume that. That’s the force of the little word “if” – “if” introduces a condition. So the forgiveness of a Christian’s sins is conditioned upon him confessing those sins. Read the verse for yourself; there is nothing ambiguous about it. And there is absolutely nothing in the context that would even appear to run contrary to what the verse requires. His context assertion really just amounts to Robert’s imagination. The verse means what it says, period.

Robert brings up the Leviticus chapters 4-5 section on “**sins committed in ignorance,**” but notice what the section actually teaches in more than one place – “**If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity**” (5:17, NKJV). Luke 12:46-48 teaches the equivalent about sins of ignorance – “**The lord of that servant will come ... when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes ...** (will those few stripes be in heaven?). So does Matt 15:14 (“**Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead**

the blind, both shall fall into the ditch”), Prov 14:12 (“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”), and II Thess 2:10-12. Whenever the Bible talks about sins of ignorance, it consistently teaches ignorance is no excuse.

Robert asserts I John 1:8 contradicts my view of verse 7, but I want to ask Robert a question before I respond further: Is verse 8 saying we all have forgiven sin or we all have unforgiven sin? Does the reader see how my question reveals the hole in Robert’s argument?

Jesus is certainly Deity. I actually affirmed that in debate with a Unitarian in Atlanta in 2006, and have agreed to debate the same topic again later this year. But Jesus still proves “we do sin but we don’t have to” (Heb 4:15).

100% we should compare our teaching with II Pet 1:10 – “if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” I suggest Robert’s view is just the opposite; that we won’t fall even if we don’t “do these things.” Isn’t that exactly what Robert taught about Peter in his article? That even though Peter didn’t add/practice “brotherly kindness” with his Gentiles brothers in Gal 2:13, Peter didn’t fall?

We’ll get nowhere by compromising God’s word. We must keep teaching non-Christians must believe, repent, and be baptized to be forgiven (ignorance notwithstanding), and similarly that Christians must repent and confess to be forgiven (Acts 8:22, I John 1:9). Our salvation assurance is not based upon hoping God will overlook sin (Nahum 1:3a), but on having confidence in God’s guarantee that those who truly seek God and His righteousness will find (Matt 7:7,5:6).

Waters’ Second Response

Pat opened this discussion with his article, “Is there sin in the light?” In it, he argues that no one is saved unless absolutely no sin is present in that person’s life. He teaches that committing any act that could be classified as sin—any transgression or failure to meet the mark—brings immediate separation from God. Although this view is readily contradicted by clear biblical teaching, its implications are so serious that they call into question the judgment of those who promote it.

In keeping with tradition, when someone’s article is published, the writer gets the last say. I trust Pat will not introduce any new material. If he does, you can see the argument addressed in my 252-page book, “Continual Cleansing,” which is free to download from my website.

Is it prudent to reject a sound rule of hermeneutics?

PD: Robert’s first reason for rejecting God’s truth is his made-up rule “Do not draw a conclusion that has consequences that are unacceptable.” That rule is the very opposite of truth. Following that rule would have caused Abraham to rebel against God and not offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22.

When God gives a command, the only truly unacceptable consequence is what happens if you fail to obey it. Abraham understood the cost of disobedience, and he obeyed, so his case does not apply to the harmful

consequences of false teaching about the forgiveness of sin. Pat rejects a well-established rule of hermeneutics by treating “consequences” as merely “what we do not like.” In doing so, he shows little concern for what is unacceptable and applies the rule inconsistently. For example, he recognizes (rightly) that it would be unacceptable to conclude that Jesus contradicted the law God gave through Moses regarding a divorced woman’s right to marry (Deut. 24:1,2). But unfortunately, to avoid that consequence, he argues that Jesus was not speaking directly to His audience and that His teaching applied only after the cross. Yet when it comes to sin, Pat has no problem accepting the unbelievable consequence of his own teaching—that no one could be saved, since no one is sinlessly perfect—because he is unwilling to abandon his false view of sin. Or is that he really thinks he and some of his cohorts are indeed living above sin, and is content believing that they are the only ones who are saved?

Is “walk in the light” the same as “Walking Uprightly”?

PD: Robert says Peter was not “fallen from grace” when he “walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel” in Gal 2:14. That position seems strange considering verse 17 says Peter was found to be a “sinner” as opposed to being “justified by Christ.” But even granting Robert’s false assertion, Galatians 2 still proves it only took one sin to change Peter’s “walk.” Now apply the same reasoning to I John 1:7.

Pat claims I said Peter had not fallen from grace. I doubt that he had, since the text does not say so, as it does of those who sought justification by the law (Gal. 5:4). Pat treats the consequence of Peter’s sin as separation from God and equates sin with automatic spiritual death. But Paul says, “We are free from the law of sin and death.” Who, then, should we believe?

In his original article, Pat wrote that “walking in the light” is equivalent to “walking uprightly.” Maybe it is, or maybe it is not. But when Scripture is allowed to define what it means to walk uprightly, Pat’s teaching is shown to be false. Consider Psalms 19:13:

“Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.”

It is not “all sin” that the Psalmist feared but “*presumptuous sins.*” The great transgression would be separation from God, which Clark says are:

“Sins committed not through frailty or surprise, but those which are the offspring of thought, purpose, and deliberation. Sins against judgment, light, and conscience.”

Clark continues:

Let them not have dominion over me - Let me never be brought into a habit of sinning. He who sins presumptuously will soon be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Then shall I be upright - Let me be preserved from all the evil that the craft and malice of the devil or man work against me, then shall I continue to walk uprightly, and shall be innocent from the great transgression - from habitual sinning, from apostasy, from my easily-besetting sin.

Does 1 John 1:5 prove that one who walks in the light does not sin at all?

Pat asserted that "...1 John 1:5 proves indisputably there is no sin in the light of verse 7..." Continuing, he said, "Verse 5 actually says there is no darkness "at all" in the light..."

The text says, "...God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." It teaches that there is no darkness in God, but Pat twists this into the claim that anyone who walks in the light is entirely free from all categories of sin. One whose walk is "in the light" (which is the word) has his sins cleansed, but this is because of his "walk" and the promise that if he does so, all his sins will be forgiven.

I pointed out that Pat treats "*walk in the light*" as a scientific concept, though it is not. I also provided a quotation from Barnes explaining this, but he addressed neither point.

Perfection versus God's view of a faithful Christian

PD: Robert's view is an earn your salvation with your works kind of theory, that is, a generally good "manner of life" (as he puts it) makes up for our occasional sins, as long as those sins are not too many or too big. His view makes the grounds of our salvation based upon how we live, instead of by grace through the death of Christ. No, we have to get forgiveness for every sin; forgiveness is always based upon the blood of Christ. We don't make up for a few little sins by doing a lot of things right – a good general life.

Pat has made a serious and unfair misrepresentation of what I believe! He endeavors to make it appear that I believe anyone who has a "general good life" need not worry about his sins. Furthermore, he demonizes the idea that the "*walk*" (or manner of life, or how we live) is an integral part of our faith. He views "walk" as a step. Nevertheless, we agree that there must be "forgiveness for every sin...and that forgiveness is always based upon the blood of Christ."

Pat said, "We don't make up for a few little sins by doing a lot of things right." In other words, no matter how God sees our character in our devotion to him and His word, the things we do have no influence on Him – He condemns us if we are not sinlessly perfect. Compare Pat's notion with James 5:20 and 1 Peter 4:8. "*Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall **hide a multitude of sins.***" "*And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall **cover the multitude of sins.***" Pat says no sin is forgiven until it is confessed, but both James and Peter disagree.

Does 1 John 1:9 teach that sinless perfection is required to "walk in the light"?

PD: "1 John 1:9 actually says a Christian must confess his sins to be forgiven for them..." "Christian's sins is conditioned upon him confessing those sins."

Pat did not address my point about 1 John 1:9. The verse does not teach that each sin must be confessed individually to be forgiven. Rather, it teaches that a person must acknowledge his sins rather than deny them. The previous verse makes this clear, and Pat offered no reasonable answer to that point. The passage

says, "*if we confess our sins,*" not "**when**" we confess them, indicating a posture of honest confession rather than the separate naming of every sin.

Sins committed in Ignorance

Pat responded at length to my point that he does not regard sins of ignorance as sin. I noted that his associates take this view to soften the hopelessness and insecurity created by teaching that any sin places a person outside God's grace. Strikingly, Pat appears to disagree with them. If so, his own position implies that his associates are lost because they have not admitted and confessed their error. He says, "Ignorance is no excuse," yet stops short of acknowledging that ignorance can still involve sin. That leaves the same problem in his teaching: anyone who fails to teach the truth, or who acts or fails to act in ignorance, would be lost.

Pat sidesteps the teaching of 1 John 1:8

PD: Robert asserts I John 1:8 contradicts my view of verse 7.

Verse 8 shows that Pat's interpretation of verse 9 is incorrect because it contradicts the context. It does not teach that every individual sin must be specifically confessed to be forgiven. The verse plainly says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If this refers to unforgiven sin, the person making that claim is not walking in the light. If it refers to forgiven sin, it describes someone who is walking in the light. Either way, believing oneself to be sinless is not something we should say, believe, or make a condition of salvation. If Pat believes he is saved, he needs to reckon with the implications of this verse for his teaching. Admitting self-deception and the absence of truth may be difficult. A person may even reject the truth for so long that he comes to believe a lie (2 Thes. 2:10,11).

Does Jesus' sinless life mean it is possible for everyone to so live?

Even though Pat does not deny what his associates teach- that Jesus, while on earth, was merely a man- we must wonder what he means by "we don't have to"? Does he mean a person can choose to live entirely without sin, like Jesus, and actually do so? How does that fit with "*for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*"? When would such sinlessness begin—at birth, at the age of accountability, after baptism, or only after reaching some supposed point at which one becomes like God and no longer sins? If Pat's view of being "in the light" is correct, that last option would have to be the starting point.

Recognizing and resisting sin is very different from living without sin altogether. True sinlessness would require the total absence of sins of ignorance, doctrinal error, weakness, thought, omission, as well as sins such as selfishness, pride, wrong attitudes, and greed.

Pat posted an article on his profile titled "Things We Don't Know," listing many areas in which we may be mistaken. He has also written against Christians defending themselves, their families, or their countries, along with other controversial positions. How, then, can someone admit so many possible errors and still confidently teach that a single sin causes immediate separation from God?

Pat recently condemned preachers who use others' sermons without giving credit. Is that common practice sinful? If so, perhaps he should provide a guide showing exactly where he believes someone crosses the

line. Pat treats all sins as equally spiritually fatal and misuses Scripture to support that view. All are fully explained in my book and on my website.

“Shall never fall”

I cited Peter’s teaching, where he plainly said that if a person practiced these things, he would “*never fall*.” Pat claims that any sin causes a person to fall, but this passage directly undermines his position. He replied, “Robert’s view is just the opposite; that we won’t fall even if we don’t ‘do those things.’” He argues that because Peter failed to show *brotherly kindness*, Peter therefore fell. But the text never says Peter fell. Pat reaches that conclusion only because he misunderstands God’s grace, patience, and judgment. In his view, a person falls automatically regardless of the sin, the intent, the heart, or the repentance and confession that would surely follow once the error is recognized.

“Sin not unto death”

The Calvinist view that a child of God cannot do anything to fall from grace is false, but the opposite extreme—teaching that every sin separates us from God—is also false.

“Sin not unto death” refers to sin whose consequence is not spiritual death. A child of God who commits *sin not unto death*: 1) is penitent and reveres God’s law; 2) has not fallen from grace; 3) is not separated from God; 4) has not lost the hope of eternal life; 5) still has his name in the Book of Life; and 6) continues to *walk in the light* and be cleansed from all sin by the blood of our Savior. While Pat and I agree that there is *sin unto death*, we do not agree that all sin results in spiritual death.

On what is our hope based?

PD: Our salvation assurance is not based upon hoping God will overlook sin (Nahum 1:3a), but on having confidence in God’s guarantee that those who truly seek God and His righteousness will find (Matt 7:7,5:6).

Does our confidence rest only on our “seeking and finding?”

Pat’s comments suggest that assurance depends on seeking and finding until one reaches sinless perfection. We do not teach that God “overlooks sin.” Rather, we teach that when God judges a person to be walking in the light, that person is cleansed by the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7). This is the view held by most members of the Lord’s church.

Compromise and consequences

Pat needs to learn the difference between compromising God’s word and teaching a doctrine that has consequences that are not acceptable – namely, that if true, no one is saved except maybe a person who was just baptized but for a very short period. But he has expressed that consequences are not a concern of his. In fact, he said, **“That rule is the very opposite of truth.”**

Conclusion:

Pat began this discussion with his article, “Is There Sin in the Light?” Although God is light and completely free of darkness, we are not God, and Christians’ sins remain visible (in the light) —especially to Him. Paul reminds us that though we were once darkness, we are now “*light in the Lord*” and must therefore “*walk as children of light*” (Eph. 5:8). As God’s children, we must walk in the light to be continually cleansed from sin.

A widely accepted rule of hermeneutics is, “Do not draw a conclusion that has unacceptable consequences.” Most Christians recognize that we all sin daily—in thought, attitude, ignorance, weakness, inadvertence, commission, and omission. Therefore, anyone who accepts Pat’s view can have no spiritual security or confidence of being in God’s grace unless he is certain he has no sin at all in his life. This consequence does not seem to trouble Pat. He apparently believes that he and those who share his teaching are living above sin; otherwise, he could not hold and teach this view. In reality, Pat’s doctrine leaves sincere Christians without hope. Would it not be better simply to accept the teaching of 1 John 1:7 rather than vilify those who do so by accusing them of teaching Calvinism?

From both the Old and New Testaments, it is clear that the metaphorical or figurative use of the English verb "walk" refers to conduct or behavior. The metaphorical use of the word "walk" in the Bible refers to how an individual lives; the Christian's walk will regularly be in stark contrast to that of the unbeliever.

How is it that Pat and those who believe as he does can entertain the hope of eternal life? First, they convince themselves that, since Jesus lived without sin, we can do so as well. Second, they redefine sin as being limited to BIG things, like adultery, murder, and lying. Third, they convince themselves that an action is not a sin unless there is “intent” – that the “will” must be involved, and that it is always the result of succumbing to temptation. Fourth, they convince themselves that they are right on every biblical teaching and that they are doing everything God requires – basically, that they “*have no sin.*” But John, whom they cannot hear, headed that thinking off at the pass when he wrote, “*for if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*”

Patrick has joined others who, in reacting against Calvinism, have gone to the opposite extreme. His teaching reflects a flawed view of God’s love, grace, patience, longsuffering, justice, and mercy. As shown above, he also disregards the consequences of his doctrine. Earthly fathers do not disinherit a son for every mistake, yet Pat teaches that God does. As a result, those influenced by Pat and others associated with the “**Faith and Facts**” publication can have no spiritual security.

Donahue’s Second Rebuttal

Robert says later in his article “[we agree that there must be forgiveness for every sin,](#)” consequently I know Robert agrees with me “[no one is saved unless absolutely no \(unforgiven, ptd\) sin is present in that person’s life.](#)” So it escapes me why Robert has a beef with me on that in his first paragraph. **Our difference is what does a Christian have to do to be forgiven**, must he repent of and confess his sins like Acts 8:22 and I John 1:9 directly say, or will God overlook our sins as long as they are few and “insignificant”? Does a NT saint really have to “[turn from all his sins](#)” (like OT saints did - Ezek 18:21), or can we be forgiven even while committing sin?

There is no rule of hermeneutics that says “[Do not draw a conclusion that has consequences that are unacceptable](#);” Robert made that up. And as I pointed out in my last article “That rule is the very opposite of truth. Following that rule would have caused Abraham to rebel against God and not offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22. As a matter of fact, we really only prove we love God when we **follow what He says (John 14:15) even if the consequences are unacceptable to us** (we do not agree with or do not like God’s requirement).” Now, there is a rule that says no Bible verse contradicts another verse. But of course, Robert didn’t even attempt to give us a verse that contradicts Acts 8:22 and I John 1:9, God’s plain requirement that a Christian must repent of and confess his sins to be forgiven of them.

Robert next talks about Gal 2:14, but he again does not address the argument I made in both of my previous articles, that since one sin caused Peter to not be “[walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel](#),” that proves **one sin affects our walk**. And that makes sense - if a man walking on a road, steps off the road into the ditch, he is no longer walking on the road (until he steps back onto the road), correct? Now apply this Gal 2:14 fact to I John 1:7 and you have to conclude when we sin, we are no longer “walking in the light.” I repeat – did the one sin Peter committed in Gal 2:12 mean he still “[walketh according to the truth of the gospel](#),” or did it mean he stepped out of the truth? So would one sin mean a Christian still “walks” in the light, or would it mean he steps out of the light? Now do you see why Robert won’t address my point here?

I John 2:6 says we “[ought ... to walk, even as he walked](#).” Jesus’ walk had zero sins, correct? Psa 119:3 confirms this – “[walk in his ways](#)” is equated with “[do no iniquity](#).” So there **should be no sins in our “walk.”** I John 2:10 says “[there is none occasion of stumbling in him](#)” who “[abideth in the light](#).” To the contrary, Robert says there are many occasions of stumbling in a Christian even while he is abiding/walking in the light. Consider the following illustration: TV’s “Alias Smith and Jones” were told: “If you live within the law ([‘walk in the light’](#)) for three years, you will be granted pardon for all your crimes.” Does this imply their crimes were committed while they were living within the law? Neither does the parallel I John 1:7 imply “walking in the light” includes sin. We are to “[walk in the light, as he \(God\) is in the light](#)” (I John 1:7). And how many sins does God have in the light?

I am **not saying here a Christian has to live perfect to be saved**. What I am saying is when one does not do what the Bible says, he is not doing what the Bible says – duh. He is not abiding in the light (God’s word), so he needs to repent to be forgiven (Acts 17:30).

It is true the Psalmist does pray “[keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins](#)” (19:13), but that doesn’t imply the Psalmist thought it was okay to commit sins of ignorance. As a matter of fact, I am sure Robert also prays “keep back thy servant also from ignorant sins.” I know that because of Robert’s argumentation in previous discussions that “[cleanse thou me from secret faults](#)” in verse 12 would encourage us to do exactly that. So his own teaching would prove **Robert doesn’t even believe his own argument on Psalms 19:13** – that we only need to pray about (and get forgiveness for) presumptuous sins to be “[upright](#).” And has Robert forgotten about Lev 4:22-26 which shows a ruler such as David (the presumed author of Psalms 19) who committed sin through ignorance had to sacrifice a goat after the sin had “[come to his knowledge](#)” in order to be “[forgiven](#).” He wasn’t forgiven while committing ignorant sin; instead, he learned of his sin and met conditions to be forgiven for it – just like we read for NT Christians.

Robert agrees I John 1:5 (“**God is light, and in him is no darkness at all**”) “**teaches that there is no darkness in God.**” Then he proceeds to contradict the other fact **I John 1:5 asserts - that there is no darkness in the light.** Does the reader see how verse 5 plainly states such? It is right there in black and white. I can’t think of any way God could have made that fact any clearer than how I John 1:5 puts it – there is zero sin in the light. Saying there is darkness in the light is an obvious contradiction anyway.

When I suggested Robert believes a “**general good life ... makes up for a few little sins,**” Robert claimed that is an “**unfair misrepresentation of what he believes.**” But then Robert turned right around and argued against my opposing statement “**We don’t make up for a few little sins by doing a lot of things right**” in his very next paragraph. **Which is it Robert – does a good manner of life make up for a few little sins?**, or do we need to have the blood of Christ applied to every sin – even if few or little?

Robert’s same paragraph brings up the phrase “**multitude of sins**” from James 5:20, seemingly as evidence one can be forgiven of multitudes of sins simply by repenting of a few of them. You mean if a Christian is guilty of committing every single sin mentioned in Gal 5:19-21 (“**adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like**”), **he can be forgiven of all of them by only repenting of two or three of them?** Isn’t that the logical consequence of Robert’s extreme argument here?

Robert next claims I John 1:9 “**does not teach that each sin must be confessed individually to be forgiven.**” I can’t help it the verse says “**if we confess our sins.**” That’s individual sins, not just that we are a sinner (sin singular as a package). Robert says “**The passage says, ‘if we confess our sins,’ not ‘when we confess them.**” This has got to be Robert’s most disturbing argument. I am not sure how that is any different than why Martin Luther rebelled against the Catholic church – because of their selling of indulgences. **One can get forgiveness for a sin before he ever commits the sin?** – it is if, not when? What is this theory progressing to!

Robert must be joking when he claims I haven’t made it clear a sin of ignorance is a sin. Not only did I teach such was sin, but in my previous article I used Lev 5:17, Luke 46-48, Matt 15:14, Prov 14:12, and II Thess 2:10-12 to prove if one commits a sin of ignorance, he will be “**guilty and shall bear his iniquity,**” “**shall be beaten with few stripes**” in “**the ditch**” (h-e-l-l), will suffer “**death**” spiritually, and will be “**d-a-m-n-e-d.**” Of course, Robert declined to reply any of my five passages. How could he? – they are **the passages in the Bible that actually talk about sins committed in ignorance.**

Robert says “**Pat sidesteps the teaching of I John 1:8,**” but then he turns right around and admits my point, that he and I agree **I John 1:8 is not saying we all have unforgiven sin**, because that would mean we are all lost even according to Robert’s view. And if I John 1:8 is saying we all have forgiven sin (that we all sin and receive forgiveness when we confess - verse 9), then Robert has no point whatsoever. Perhaps Robert doesn’t understand my argument here, because he didn’t answer my question. I am thinking simply answering my question could have cleared the whole thing up (I John 1:8’s meaning) in his mind.

Robert thinks Jesus’ life proving we don’t have to sin (isn’t that right there in Heb 4:15?) does not “**fit with ‘for all have sinned**” in Rom 3:23. How they fit is really so simple I don’t see how Robert can miss it. Rom 3:23 teaches we do sin, but not that we have to. Bill Clinton sinned with Monica Lewinsky, but he didn’t have to, did he? Each and every time we sin, we could have taken advantage of God’s way of

escape (I Cor 10:13), so **whenever we sin, it's our fault**, and we need to repent of that and get forgiveness (II Pet 3:9) – based upon the blood of Christ, not based upon our own merit by doing a lot of other things right (Robert's view).

And I am not the one to originate the idea that sin separates us from God. Isn't that clearly taught by Rom 6:23 and Isa 59:2 – **"your iniquities have separated between you and your God"**? Along these lines consider:

- How many sins did it take for Adam and Eve in Gen 2:17 to be considered outside the light, and die spiritually?
- How many sins for Uzza to be out of God's favor when he touched the ark in I Chron 13:7-10?
- How many sins for Peter to be called **"Satan"** by Jesus in Matt 16:23?
- How many sins for Ananias and Saphira to be out of God's favor in Acts 5:1-11?
- How many sins for King Saul to lose the monarchy in I Sam 13:7-14?
- How many sins for Nadab and Abihu to be struck dead by God in Lev 10:1-2?
- How many sins for Peter to be called a **"sinner"** in Gal 2:17?
- How many sins for the man who picked up sticks in Num 15:32-36 to be ordered stoned by God?
- How many sins for the new Christian Simon to be **"in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity"** (not walking in the light) in Acts 8:23?
- How many sins does James 2:10 say a Christian has to commit to be **"guilty of all"** of God's law?

I know Robert doesn't agree with the above overwhelming evidence for **God's "it only takes one sin" truth**, but hasn't Robert admitted he rejects it only because of his "I can't accept the consequences" rule? – not because he gave any scriptures where it took two or more sins to be out of favor with God.

Robert completely ignored what I said about what the **"sin unto death"** is in I John 5:16, and instead just asserted that **"not ... all sin results in spiritual death."** But if the verse is not talking about the **"blasphemy against the Holy Ghost"** (Matt 12:31-32), then the **"sin not unto death" here would be a sin repented of** – so Robert has no point about sin unrepented of.

I don't think Robert really believes his reasoning **"earthly fathers do not disinherit a son for every mistake"** (sin), therefore God doesn't. I'm not accusing Robert of being dishonest here; I'm just saying he evidently hasn't thought through his own argument here. Because I don't know any earthly fathers that punish anywhere close to what we see God doing in my ten bullet points above, do you? But according to Robert's argument - **we earthly fathers should punish like God (strike dead our children for disobedience?)**, because God punishes the same way human fathers do (Robert's premise).

Robert talked again about II Pet 1:5-10, but still didn't get around to replying to my response, so I repeat it here – I suggest Robert's view is just the opposite (of II Peter 1); that we won't fall even if we don't **"do these things"** (add the "Christian graces"). Isn't that exactly what Robert taught about Peter? That **even though Peter didn't practice "brotherly kindness" with his Gentiles brothers in Gal 2:13, Peter still didn't fall?** I John 2:11 confirms Peter only had to **"hate his brother"** once to **"walk in darkness"** – exactly what we see happening in Galatians 2.

Regarding our assurance of salvation, his comments betray the fact **Robert doesn't really believe God's Matt 7:7 and 5:6 guarantee**. Robert thinks even if we truly **"seek"** we will not necessarily find truth,

that even if we genuinely “[hunger and thirst after righteousness](#)” we will not necessarily be filled with righteousness. Instead, Robert’s assurance is based upon God overlooking sins, basically that my one little sin is paid for by me doing nine big things right (or some such ratio like that). Consider conversion accounts like Saul (Acts 9), Cornelius (Acts 10), Lydia (Acts 16), and Josiah in the OT (II King 22-23:25). Did God overlook their sin (forgive them in their sin), or did God make sure they had the opportunity to repent and turn to truth?

Another passage on assurance I mentioned previously is I Cor 4:3-4. According to Robert’s view (that sins we are unaware of will never be held against us), we can effectively judge ourselves. But Paul teaches here that even though he didn’t know of anything he was presently guilty of, he was not necessarily justified, because God might know something Paul had done wrong. Even Bob Myhan, whom I debated orally on this same “Continual Cleansing” issue in 1991, admitted the truth of this verse. Bob said “[even Paul had to admit, that just because he was ignorant of any sin in his life, that didn't mean he was justified.](#)” Stated another way - sins Paul had possibly committed that he was unaware of would be held against him; ignorance is no excuse (John 8:32); truth is absolute. As a matter of fact, if “ignorance is bliss” for a Christian, then wouldn’t it be better not to teach Christians out of their ignorance, as they would be better off not learning truths, since learning such will cause them to be lost? So **our assurance is not based upon God overlooking sin (Robert’s rational)**, but upon knowing if we are sincerely seeking with our whole heart, we will for sure find the truth (Phil 3:15). I John 2:3 says “[we do know that we know him](#)” (assurance of salvation) “[if we keep his commandments](#)” (not because God overlooks “venial” sins as Robert contends).

Let’s think again about **what causes one to die spiritually, to be separated from God?** Answer: Gen 2:17 sin, Isa 59:2 sin, Rom 6:23 sin. That’s any and all types of sin – these Biblical texts make no distinction. To confirm this answer, does II John 9 say a Christian has God or does not have God if he through ignorance/weakness does not abide in the teaching of Christ? Everybody except Robert knows the answer.

Why is this “Continual Cleansing” topic important?: I recently learned a well-known creation / evolution preacher was in his 5th marriage. His secretary’s justification for it? – “we’re all sinners.” However, Jesus said in Matt 19:9 couples in such marriages are living in adultery. They are committing adultery every time they sleep with a spouse they have no right to (are not bound to) – Rom 7:2-3. It is true “we’re all sinners,” but that doesn’t mean it’s okay to sin; instead, it means we all need to try to improve and eliminate sin in our life - the opposite of “it is okay to keep on doing it.” Now this particular creation preacher is Baptist, but it seems to me **Robert is making the same “we’re all sinners therefore it’s okay to sin” argument** – as long as we are talking about just a few “insignificant” sins. Robert’s theory tends to encourage Christians to relax and not be careful to avoid sin, because of the false security of promised forgiveness even while practicing sin.

Finally, I ask the reader to look back over this five-article discussion and evaluate. Haven’t I given **Bible verses that actually prove what I am teaching?** In contrast to that, hasn’t Robert just been giving you the way he thinks it ought to be with no actual proof? We need to learn the vast difference between someone giving conclusive proof, and someone just talking about the way they would like for things to be; as “Robert’s rule” puts it - the way “acceptable” to him. Robert needs to learn a first principle – “[except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish](#)” (Luke 13:3).