

# FIRST JOHN 1:7:WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT TAUGHT

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### I. INTRODUCTION

1. What **IS** and **IS NOT** taught in 1Jno.1:7 has been the focus of much discussion, debate and many articles written in recent years.
2. It seems many brethren are **NOT** willing to **CAREFULLY** examine what is **TAUGHT** in 1Jno.1:7. Perhaps, wittingly or unwittingly their prejudice, for one reason or another, is showing itself.
3. We must be very careful as we study and explain this passage (as well as any and all others) and make sure that we not only teach what the passage teaches, but that we do not say that the passage teaches something that it does **not** teach.
4. Therefore our approach to the study is: 1Jno.1:7: What Is And What Is Not Taught, by means of a careful analysis of the passage.
5. Read the passage here and carefully take note of what it says and what it does not say, in order to set the stage to prepare to examine what it teaches and what it does not teach.

### II. DISCUSSION

#### A. 1<sup>ST</sup>. WHAT IS TAUGHT IN 1JNO.1:7

1. That God is light (v.5), and God is in the light!
  - a. The expression “**as** he is in the light” shows that God is in the light.
  - b. For the word “God” in V.5 is the antecedent of the pronouns “him” and “he” of Vv.6,7.
2. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God!
  - a. The phrase “Jesus Christ his Son” proves that Jesus Christ is God’s Son since the word “God” of V.5 is the antecedent of the pronoun “his” in the expression “Jesus Christ his Son” in V.7.
3. That the fellowship mentioned here is spiritual and conditional!
  - a. The fellowship is a fellowship enjoyed or experienced while walking in the light, in which God is, and is therefore identified as spiritual in nature. It’s not coffee and do-nuts in the church fellowship hall!
  - b. It is probably that fellowship which God’s children have with God himself; but even if it is a fellowship between brethren, it is still spiritual in nature!

- c. And it is obviously conditional because it is experienced “if (and only if) we walk in the light, as he is in the light.”
  - d. To “walk” means to “live” or to “abide in” the light as a manner of life. Cf. 1Jno.2:3-6; 3Jno.4; 1Cor.7:17; 2Cor.5:17; Gal.5:16; Col.2:6; 3:5-7.
4. That those who walk in the light as he is in the light are cleansed from **ALL** sin by the blood of Jesus Christ his Son.
- a. Note the “we” and the “us” of this verse, which, of course, would include the apostle John, the author of the Epistle, and other **saints** who are in the light and who walk in the light.
  - b. This is not talking about aliens, i.e., those who have not by faith obeyed the gospel and been saved from past sins, but of those in Christ who are children of God as per 1Jno.2:1.
  - c. The blood of Christ is here said to cleanse “**us**” – those walking in the light, as he is in the light – “from **ALL** sin.”
    - (1) Note: It says, “**ALL** sin.
    - (2) Not just “some sin”.
  - d. This cleansing of all sin is obviously conditional because it says: The blood of Jesus Christ cleanse “us” – on the condition that “we walk in the light, as he is in the light.”
  - e. Note also the conditional specified in V.9 in order for him “to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness.”
5. Note also: If there are other conditions of pardon (of sins committed by God’s children) stated elsewhere in God’s word they **must ALSO** be accepted.
- a. 1Jno.1:7 does **NOT** contradict, eliminate or make void what other passages of Scripture say.
  - b. **Repentance, confession of sins and prayer** are conditions of pardon specifically stated in 1Jno.1:9; Ac.8:22; Jas.5:16.
  - c. Let’s make sure we do **NOT** say that **1Jno.1:7** teaches anything that is **not** set forth therein.
  - d. Let’s **also** teach what is found in **ALL** other passages of Scripture on the same subject.

## B. 2<sup>ND</sup>. WHAT IS NOT TAUGHT IN 1JNO.1:7

- 1. That God is in darkness or that there is any darkness in Him!
  - a. V.5 says “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”
  - b. V.7 says “he (God) is in the light”

- c. “Light” in the Bible in a moral sense is always used to refer to righteousness or holiness. Cf. 1Jno.2:9,10; Rom.13:12; 2Cor.11:14,15.
  - d. And “darkness” refers to unrighteousness; to moral or spiritual depravity. Cf. 1Jno.1:5,6; 2:8,9,11; Jno.1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35,46; Ac.26:18; Rom.13:12; 2Cor.6:14; Eph.6:12; Col.1:13; 1Th.4:4,5; 1Pet.2:9.
2. That Jesus Christ is not the Son of God!
    - a. The verse says, “...Jesus Christ his Son”
  3. That fellowship with God is unconditional.
    - a. The verse says, “we have fellowship...**IF** we walk in the light, as he is in the light.”
    - b. It is, we have fellowship, “**if**” and **only if** we walk in the light as he is in the light. Cf. Jno.3:3,6; Rom.10:9; 6:5; 2Cor.5:17; Gal.3:29.
  4. That cleansing from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ is unconditional.
    - a. The verse says, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”
    - b. Obviously, this verse says the cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ his Son is conditional.
  5. That some sins are in the light and others are in darkness.
    - a. This verse does **not** include sins (darkness) of any kind!
    - b. All sin is **darkness!** See Isa.5:20; Rom.13:12; Eph.5:11; 2Cor.6:14; 1Jno.2:9-11.
  6. That “walking in the light” does not include, or that repentance, confession of sins and prayer are not essential for forgiveness or for cleansing by the blood of Jesus Christ.
    - a. If it did, it would contradict 1Jno.1:9; Ac.8:22; Jas.5:16.
    - b. Now note the error of E.M. Zerr, taught in his commentary on 1Jno.1:7, Vol. Six, Bible Commentary: “But this phrase (i.e., “walk in the light”) means a man whose general life is one of godliness and whose motive principle is the light of the New Testament. This man can truly be said to be walking with the Lord because he is in the pathway that Jesus laid out for him. Being in the fellowship with God the source of all light, is like being constantly in the stream of the blood of His Son. That blood is constantly flowing (figuratively) through the body or church of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the natural body of a man whose blood stream is healthy, if germs slip into the person that blood, being always present, will be like a disinfectant that will destroy the germ. Likewise the blood of Christ is ever present to cleanse away the mistakes and incidental sins that a true Christian does. Hence if a man is a worker in the Lord’s vineyard and his life as

a whole is one of obedience to the law of Christ, **he does not need to worry about the mistakes he might make which he does not realize, for the blood of Christ will take care of it and wash them away.**” (All emphasis mine, EJD).

- c. What an imagination he has to be able to see all this in 1Jno.1:7!
7. That the blood of Christ cleanses God’s children of sins committed through ignorance and /or weakness without repentance, confession of sins and prayer for forgiveness.
  - a. See 1Jno.1:9; Ac.8:22; Jas.5:16. Is there a contradiction? God forbid!
  - b. Take note also that the verse says, “cleanseth us from **all sin**”
  - c. There is no distinction made in sins in this passage.
  - d. Either “all sin” is cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ his Son without repentance, confession of sins and prayer for forgiveness, or **NO** sin is so cleansed!
  - e. What does the passage say?
  - f. Brethren will all no excuse for any kind of justification or forgiveness because of ignorance in the case of the alien, why do they do so for the one they say is under the blood?
    - (1) There is no more Scriptural justification for the one than there is for the other!
    - (2) If so, where is it. Book, Chapter and Verse, please!
    - (3) 1Jno.1:7 certainly is not it!
8. That the blood of Jesus Christ his Son **automatically** cleanses God’s children of the sins they commit either through ignorance or weakness!
  - a. A person must be very “big” on assumptions to get such an idea as from 1Jno.1:7. Yet, some have, and some still do!
  - b. There is absolutely no evidence of such an idea as this in 1Jno.1:7.
  - c. And only two verses later the idea is plainly and scripturally refuted in 1Jno.1:9, which shows the cleansing is conditional, not automatic!
9. That the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses **ONLY** sins committed in ignorance.
  - a. What evidence (statement or principle) is there in 1Jno.1:7 that could possibly give anyone the idea that the expression “**all sin**” means only sins committed through ignorance?
  - b. Is there anything stated in the text (or elsewhere) that restricts the meaning of “**all sin**” to sins of ignorance?
  - c. This text says “**all sin**”! It does not say, “some sin.” It does not say, “sins committed through ignorance.”
  - d. Obviously, the expression “all sin” includes every sin of every king!

- e. No argument can be made from 1Jno.1:7 about the forgiveness of “sins committed in ignorance” that cannot be made about **all** other sins!
  - f. If on the basis of 1Jno.1:7 sins committed through ignorance can be forgiven without the conditions of repentance, confession of sin, and prayer for forgiveness, as taught in 1Jn.1:9; Ac.8:22; Jas.5:16, then all other sins can also be forgiven without those conditions. If not, why not?
  - g. On whatever basis the sins committed through ignorance are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ his Son, all other sins can be forgiven on the same basis.
  - h. Remember: 1Jno.1:7 says “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”
10. Why did anyone get the idea that sins committed through ignorance are forgiven on some other basis than other sins?
- a. Was it because someone thought it would encourage brethren to be more concerned about learning what pleases God and being more careful about doing God’s will? I doubt it!
  - b. Did someone think that by such teaching it would tend to encourage brethren to be less concerned or anxious about learning what pleases God and a little more lax about doing God’s will?
  - c. Was it because they wanted to relieve the minds of brethren and make them feel better about themselves, and to feel more secure in their present salvation and their hope of future salvation?
  - d. Regardless of the motives or the thinking (or the lack of thinking) that prompted someone to begin teaching that sins committed through ignorance are somehow cleansed by the blood of Christ without the conditions as taught in 1Jno.1:9; Ac.8:22 and Jas.5:16, it is a false doctrine that is not taught in either 1Jno.1:7 or in any other passage!

### III. CONCLUSION

- 1. We must be very careful not to **take away** from what 1Jno.1:7 says and or teaches.
- 2. Neither should we be guilty of **taking away** from what God says in other passages on the same subject.
- 3. At the same time, we must make such we do not **add to** or **substitute for** anything taught in God’s word in any passage.
  - a. For example: We must not substitute “sins of ignorance and/or weakness” for the expression “all sin.”

4. We must respect, accept and teach what **ALL** other passages say, including 1Jno.1:9; Ac.8:22; Jas.5:16 on forgives of sin.
5. Also, we must be very careful about assuming something without proof! Nor denying something that is taught in a passage.
6. We must ever keep in mind that “The sum of thy (God’s) Word is truth...” Psa.119:160 ASV.
7. 1Jno.1:7 does **not** teach “constant (continuous) cleansing” of any other kind of sins, or one kind of sin to the exclusion of another. The verse **plainly says: “ALL SIN”**
8. There is no hint of “automatic” cleansing of any kind of sin taught in 1Jno.1:7.
9. There can be unity of teaching on 1Jno.1:7 as long as all of us stay with what the text **actually** says (as well as all other passages on the same subject) when we discuss it.

-- credit to and notes from Carrol R. Sutton, from “The Instructor”, Vol. 27, No. 9,10; Sept. & Oct, 1990; Vol.34, No.6, June, 1997