

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship
June 20, 2021
“The Darkness”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Happy Father’s Day! Thanks for VBS. The New Building is progressing

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I JOHN 1:4&5 ~

The phrase “God is Light,” in verse 5 has to do with God’s _____ -
 which is to say His otherness (Isaiah 55:8, I Samuel 2:2, II Samuel 7:22).

For there to be harmony there must be _____. How is that going to be achieved?

Harmony must start with _____.

I JOHN 1:5-10 ~

If we who claim to be Christians “Walk in the darkness,” we are _____.

Sin is “Disobedience to the Lord that destroys fellowship.” It is Greek
 ἁμαρτία (hä-mär-tē-ä), with the basic meaning of missing.

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the
 offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or
 Deacon of the church.*

God Bless You!

Every human being has the same perfect outcome for their existence - to be right with God. It is _____. The parameters for which can only be defined by God.

We usually misunderstand sin as a _____ problem because external evidence is the easiest way to measure it.

The Bible clearly and constantly, through Old Testament and New, denounces drunkenness as a _____. We think in terms of behavior - hence _____.

Ask people on the street what they think it means to be a good Christian and the vast majority will talk in terms of lifestyle and performance.

Ask yourself, "What is it that I'm trying to accomplish?"

Thinking people are free to adapt in order to better accomplish the goal because they actually _____ what the goal is.

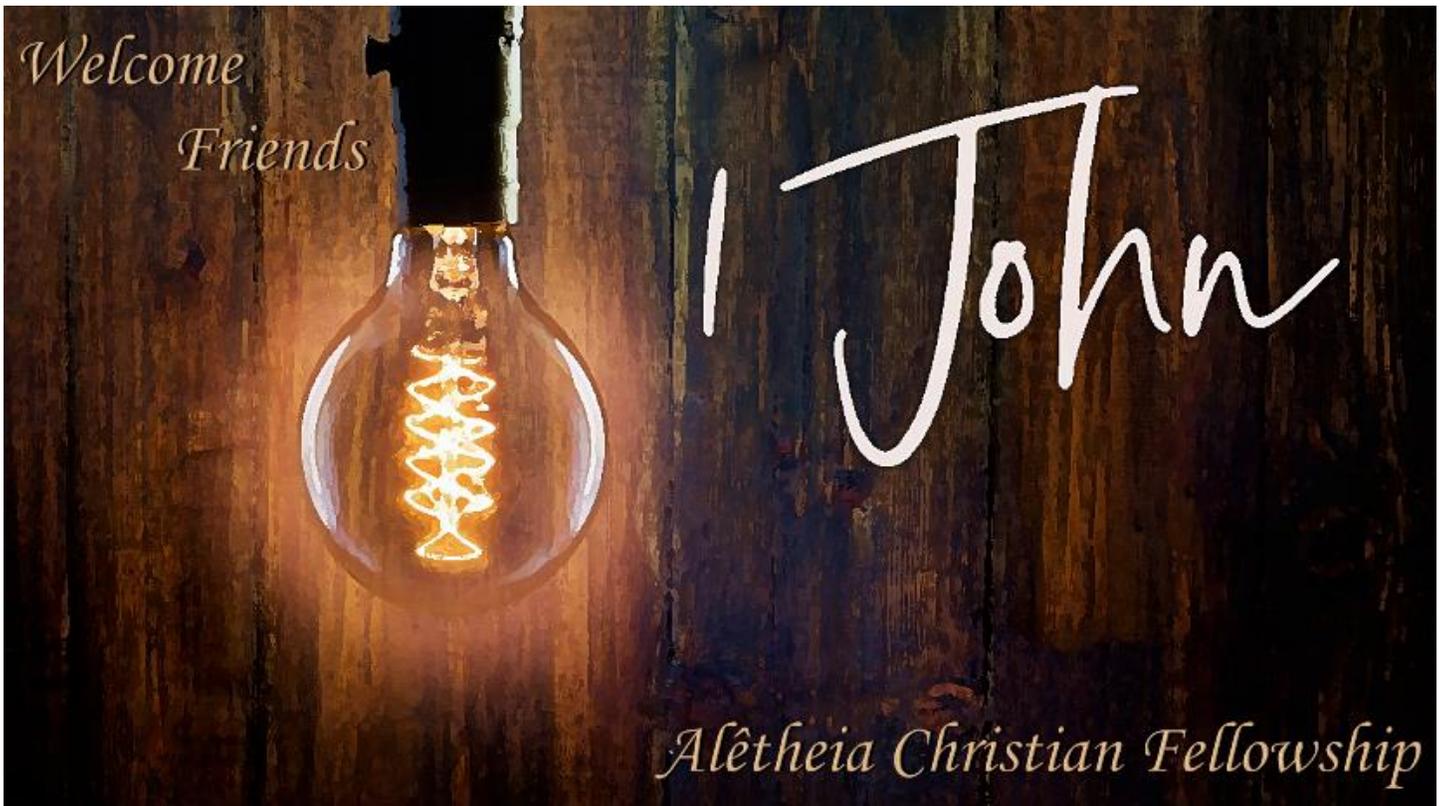
Close friends have a high level of mutual _____. Christians are relationship builders.

If we say that we are not involved in relationship destroying disobedience to God, we have nothing to be saved from and cannot properly accept His _____.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____



I John chapter 1, we start with verses 4&5 again,
4These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. 5This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

Last week we talked about a few concepts to help us define what John was actually trying to share with us - this message that he received directly from Jesus.



Most importantly we saw that the phrase “God is Light,” in verse 5 had to do with God’s holiness - which is to say His otherness. His set apartness. His differentness if you will. God is not fickle, not petty, not impatient, not rude, not hypocritical, not double-minded, not disloyal... In short, unlike us, God is not a completely self-focused little kid trying to fit in and terrified He won’t. This due to His perfection in every conceivable and inconceivable way (yes, I know what that word means). The created material, physical, natural reality is unlike its Creator. In Isaiah 55:8, God bluntly states, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord.” Hannah prayed in I Samuel 2:2, “There is no one holy like the Lord.” Later,

King David stated, “You are great, O Lord God; for there is none like You, and there is no God besides You” (II Samuel 7:22). We could go on... God by necessity is outside of and beyond the spacetime-matter He created, or He would have required a Creator as well.



Very quickly now, because I know that there isn't a big appetite for such things... Atheists only believe in purely physical processes and so a physical explanation for the existence of the universe. Well, there is no physical process where something comes from nothing. Why is there a universe instead of no universe?

There is no answer for where the stuff came from... The most popular idea today is that it has always existed - expanding and contracting. When confronted on the matter, atheistic scientists say that the idea of an infinite universe is no different than the idea of an infinite Creator. Where did God come from? They ask. It is a fundamental switch of equivocation, a logical fallacy, a contrived argument... Equating an intelligent energetic Living Being with a mindless directionless set of physical interactions.

What it requires though, is the reality that only the Bible teaches, that God is completely other than the physical and He absolutely must be in order for a physical universe, let alone you and me, to exist at all. He is utterly unlike anything physical and therefore needs no beginning as He is not bound by the physical laws, including time, that He Himself established.



Through the Gospel Message we know that the entire point of His creative activity was to have meaningful relationship with human beings agreeable to that union. We could discuss how becoming agreeable happens another day. Here, we find that the relationship between a person and God is a membership in a family unit with other participants. For there to be harmony within that fellowship there must be harmony within that fellowship. God, Who by definition, is an eternally and internally harmonious Being is not at all interested in disharmony in His family... Please get that. How is that going to be achieved? That's the question God answers through the Apostle John in this Book.

Harmony must start with parameters - modes of being, and defined interactions. It must start with what God will allow and not allow - He's the Father, the head of the household, and He's the One Who simply speaks, and galaxies burst into existence - the sole Creator of the Heavens and the earth, in case we forgot that bit. He gets to set the limits, establish the boundaries, make the rules for how things will be under His roof.

What many of us miss, is that being under His roof does not start when we get to heaven, it started the moment we believed. The household of God for us currently is the church. You cannot be a properly functioning member of God's family unless you are practicing what He demands that you practice within His family.

Let's read on... I'll give you a couple of verses from last week to keep the flow as we introduce the remainder of that thought.



1 John 1:5-10, 5This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

We started with a basis statement - “God is Light,” “God is Holy,” we could say, and because He is, there are implications that Jesus wants you to know...

1) From verse 6, if we who claim to be Christians “Walk in the darkness,” which is to say, walk in unholiness... We are pretenders - we are fake, we are false, we are liars, we are not Christians at all. Every word I used there is easily understood, except what it means to “Walk in unholiness.” That’s the key concept, we’ve skirted the issue, we’ve approached it from a couple of different angles.

The word "sin" is displayed in a large, stylized font against a textured, brown background. The letter 's' is a dark, bold serif. The letter 'i' is a vibrant red, italicized serif with a solid red dot above it. The letter 'n' is a dark, bold serif. The overall aesthetic is classic and somber.

Last week I clarified that Sin is “Disobedience to the Lord that destroys fellowship.” I cited Jesus’ last command to “Love one another” as the quintessential example... A failure to love the people in this church is a direct disobedience to our Lord Jesus and it destroys fellowship - it is a sin... Sin definitely has an “I” in the middle.



Greek ἁμαρτία (hä-mär-tē-ä), with the basic meaning of missing. As in the definition you’ve probably heard, that to sin is to “Miss the mark” - one of least favorite definitions of all time. It’s bad, not because it’s incorrect, so much as how it is then miss-explained giving people the wrong impression.



It isn't to miss the bullseye of a target you're shooting at, it's to miss the entire target because you're shooting in the wrong direction - shooting at the wrong target. A fellow seminary alum Spiros Zodhiates put it well, writing that "Sin is missing the true end and scope of our lives, which is God."

That's it. Every human being has a greatest possible outcome, and for all human beings that outcome is identical. There is only one most perfect, most correct, most productive, most fulfilling, most meaningful existence and that is to be right with God. It is relational. A right, correct, good relationship between God and a human. People don't miss that relationship

because they're trying their best to have it, they miss that relationship because they're trying to have something else even more.

If we have any sense at all, we can see that it is a relationship that can only be defined by God and enabled by God... No human can dictate to God the ways, the means, and the terms - He's God.



In our culture's celebration of arrogant self-obsession that elevates personal opinion above facts it seems like we should get a say in defining our relationship with God. Well, that's super dumb. You can ask a 5-year-old what she thinks about the geo-political landscape in

eastern Europe... You can ask a 10-year-old what he thinks about the electromagnetic radiation and kinetic energy released in nuclear fission exothermic reactions... You can ask a 15-year-old Swedish girl what she thinks about Climate Change... But to take any of them seriously on those topics is more dangerous to the fabric of society, than to let the 5-year-old lead our negotiations with Russia. More dangerous than letting the 10-year-old build a nuclear power plant. More dangerous than letting a 15-year-old lecture the United Nations - oh we did that one. Why more dangerous? Because this elevation of opinion without the requisite education and experience hinders our ability to discern objective reality and that is Satan's goal in promoting it.

My friends, if there is no absolute universal Truth with a capital "T," then everything is relative - everything is then permissible. Historically, such quagmires of uncertainty led to the rise of messianic figures who are blindly followed by the masses into the deepest darkness imaginable.



There is only one Messiah. He lived on earth 2,000 years ago and is still alive today and forevermore. He has led hundreds of millions out of darkness and into the light. You can either get on board with Him and conform to the relationship God has defined through Him, or you can hold out for a plan more to your liking. How do you know that you have a Messiah figure? If your personal identity is tied up in someone else, that someone else is your Messiah, whether it is Hitler, Marx, Obama, Trump, or even your own kid... The only one who you should bury your own identity in is Jesus the only true Messiah.

There's much about Christianity that is hard to swallow and that's actually the point. Jesus often asked people "Will you stumble over Me." In other words, will what I Jesus, say and do, teach and demand, offend you to the point that you will look elsewhere for Salvation?

Many people, especially young people in our country, find the Jesus of the Bible to be far too out of touch with the times. They don't want to identify with a Messiah Who selected only male Apostles... Who taught that marriage was ordained by God from the beginning as a covenantal union between one man and one woman... Who told the Gentile woman begging Him for help that He was sent to the children of Israel and that "It's not good to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs."



Every person has a maximum greatest outcome for their existence, and it is to be in right relationship with their Creator through the means of His enablement and within the boundaries of His definition. To relate to God as He defines and as He enables means that He is obeyed. That's what that means.

Sin is by very definition missing out on that right relationship - why? Because God is disobeyed... Once again, sin is "Disobedience to the Lord that destroys relationship." Destroying relationship first with Him and then with all others as we've said.

The most difficult thing about sin is the typical misrepresentation and misunderstanding that it has to do with behavior. That sin is doing or failing to do things. Last week I said that ultimately it comes down to behavior, but that it never starts there.

Behavior becomes the evidence. Because the easiest way to measure a thing of this nature is by an obvious physical manifestation that's what we focus on. As I've repeatedly said, that is putting the cart before the horse and is why so many Christians and non-Christians are so confused about sin.



Let's take a specific, but also simple example to help us see what I'm trying to say. Drunkenness. The Bible clearly and constantly, through Old Testament and New, denounces drunkenness as a sin.

It fits our definition because it is a disobedience to our Lord, and it destroys relationship. Relationship with the Lord because it ignores His demand, relationship with others because our judgment decreases, and we become extremely vulnerable to relationship harming error. That is a whole host of things adversely affecting relationships from causing anxiety in one's family members, to physical violence, abusive language, sexual promiscuity, accidents, and incidents.

You cannot be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, legal or otherwise for non-legitimate medical reasons without disobeying God and doing some damage to other relationships as well - even if you are unaware of the damage... Drunkenness is a sin.



The typical Protestant reaction is to denounce all alcohol consumption as sinful... Avoid drunkenness by never drinking at all, then vilify and shun all who do. The idea, without admitting it, is to see the Bible as a minimum standard and so to go beyond God's command. The assumption is that He will approvingly nod in our direction because we are overachievers. What it really means is that we have taken a stricter, and by definition, a holier stance than God does, and turned it into legalism. We love clearly defined rules. No alcohol is black and white. No drunkenness is grey at best.

The problem with that approach beyond what I've already pointed out is it is a focus on behavior... Don't drink. Whether we make God's parameters more stringent, keep them relatively the same, or make them less stringent, we nevertheless think in terms of dos and don'ts - in terms of behavior - hence the legalism.

Ask people on the street what they think it means to be a good Christian and the vast majority will talk in terms of lifestyle and performance with nary a word about the fundamental relationship with God through Christ and the membership in His church family.

Even if people mention love, it is a human love associated with behavior. How often and with what gusto does a person volunteer their time, effort and money becomes the litmus test for love.

It isn't just non-Christians, most Christians themselves, assess their eternity on their current performance.



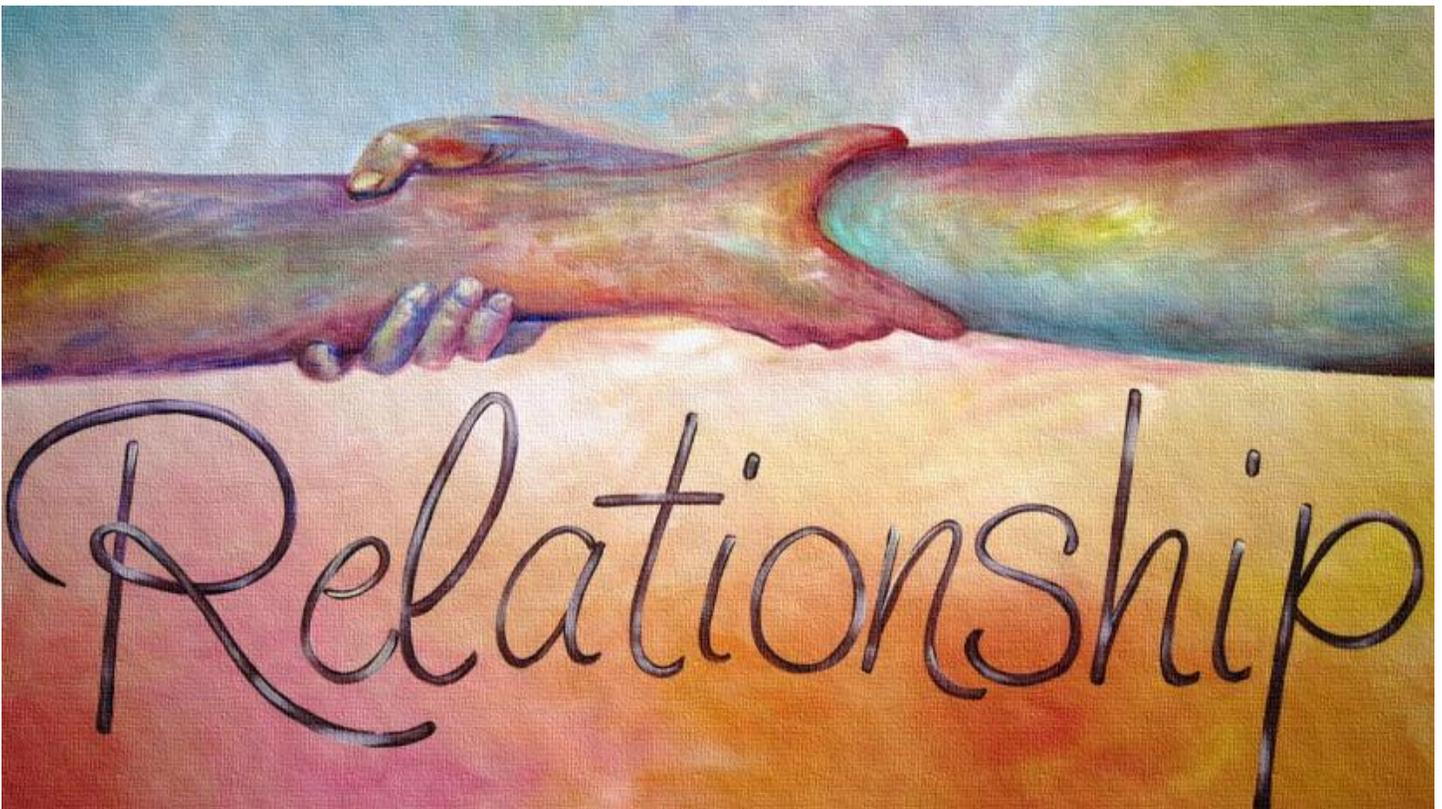
How should it work? Well, start with this... Constantly ask yourself, "What is it I'm trying to accomplish?" This is a wonderful question to ask yourself regarding all kinds of things - it's a question that turns rote, mechanical, unthinking, robotic, blind, ignorant, oblivious, essentially unconscious, or at least subconscious activity, into what is conscious. We can act like the higher, sentient, reasoning beings that God made us to be when we ask ourselves that simple question.

An example... When flying we don't want to be wrongly configured for a particular phase of flight - it could be bad and while I'm fuzzy on the whole good, bad, thing,

I'm confident crashing an airplane is bad. Anyway, to make sure everything is as it should be pilots use checklists. I watch people go down the list, putting all the switches, levers, radios, etc. in the appropriate condition without ever thinking about why. I teach that before every new phase requiring a checklist ask yourself what it is that you are trying to accomplish? I'm trying to start the engine. Okay, to accomplish our goal, we need to turn off all the non-essential stuff, so we don't take electrical power away from the starter, set up all the controls to get fuel to the fire we're trying to start, let people know to get out of the way as we're about to turn some big blades very fast and hold the brakes so we don't go zipping forward across the ramp. With that in mind, as we do the checklist, everything actually makes sense, we know what we're doing. Now, such knowledge enables the most amazing thing that we can never have with the mindless, legalistic, rules of read "A," do "A." Read "B," do "B," and that is the ability to adapt to any changing situation with the necessary fluidity.

Thinking people are free to change in order to better accomplish the goal because they actually know what the goal is.

Bring it back to sin. What am I trying to accomplish? Check all the boxes? Not get God too upset with me? Give myself a good shot at heaven? Conform to a standard so my church friends will like me? What is the goal?



Remember the definition of sin. It is missing out on the relationship with God, and through Him, relationship with others that is possible. With that definition, what it is that I'm trying to accomplish is, in a single word, relationship. I'm trying to accomplish right relationship with God and with others... That's my goal. How do I do that?

That's what obedience to God is - it is rightly relating to Him. Think about it. To know God is to recognize that whatever He demands of us, whatever He desires of us, is right, perfect, good, and noble. Only a fool would think otherwise. Anyone knowing God relationally knows that whatever He deems good, is good, whether it seems that way, or feels that way is irrelevant. It is about identity... We Identify with Christ and receive the Holy Spirit driven desire to rightly relate to Him. That means conformity to Him.

We all know that close friends have a high level of mutual conformity. If you want to be close friends with someone you must be compatible. You might say that opposites attract and while that's seemingly true, it is only seemingly so. Any two people fitting that description in healthy relationship long-term have far more in common than the surface differences would suggest. You will not rightly relate to anyone unless there is tremendous conformity even if it's not obvious.

Well, God is not going to change, partly because He's pure existence and can't change. Even if He could change, He wouldn't because He's already perfect - any change would be a step in the wrong direction. If

He's not going to change and you want to be His friend, guess what.

The Holy Spirit conforming Christians to the image of Christ is that very thing and it can just as correctly be understood as the Holy Spirit enabling you to obey the Lord - same thing. Obedience to God is rightly relating to your Heavenly Father and it is only possible with justification through Jesus and enablement from the Holy Spirit. See, the Trinity and you are working together relationally to make the relationship better... That's obedience and the opposite of that is sin. The relationship destroying disobedience to the Lord.

Only when we have a right-relationship vertically with God can our horizontal relationships be right.

When I understand what sin is and understand what I'm trying to accomplish then instead of a rule book the Bible becomes a relationship book and I am free from legalistic rule keeping to the far more difficult, but far more rewarding relationship building.

Christians are relationship builders. We build relationship with God and with our fellow Christians

and with the Lost in order that some of them might join our family.

Then I refuse to get drunk, not because it's a rule, but because God has repeatedly told me that it harms the relationships I'm trying to build. Drunkenness harms my relationship with God because it says I don't care what His opinion on the matter is - I know better than He does when it comes to my alcohol consumption. It harms my relationship with my spouse, with my family, with my friends, with my work, with my church, with my unsaved associates I'm trying to influence for Christ. I don't want any of that and those things are the absolute minimum that will happen with drunkenness - the minimum. If you think I'm overstating that, you probably have a drinking problem. Beyond that minimum of relationship destroying stupidity, is the very real possibility and growing probability and eventual certainty that a loss of judgment will result in some serious disaster.

What I want to accomplish is relationship building and so I will be diligent in avoiding drunkenness for that reason... See how the focus shifts from me and my behavior to others and how my choices affect them.

The first other than me in focus is of course God and beyond that focus there is the deeper focus of knowing only He can help me build right-relationship.

So, back to where all this began, “If we claim to be Christians, but are unconcerned about striving to access the Holy Spirit power to build right relationships first with God and then with others, we are liars.” We are false-Christians, which is to say, not Christians at all.



Verse 7 essentially says, “On the other hand, if we are concerned about these right-relationships in the same way that God is concerned about them, then we have

membership, and fellowship, and familial friendship with each other in the Body of Christ.” Having the same concern for right relationship that the Father demonstrated in sending His One and Only Son in the first place confirms our status as His children and while striving for that, when we fall short, the same blood that cleansed us when we were saved, continues to cleanse us forevermore.

Some folks have the idea that they need to cleanse themselves to be part of God’s family initially and then continue to perform to some standard beyond in order to stay in His family. Some see Christ’s work on the Cross as sufficient to save them initially, but then after that it’s a works-based endeavor to stay saved. Some folks actually believe the Bible and recognize that not only is Jesus sufficient for the totality of their eternal salvation, but that any human effort on their part to supplement His sufficiency is a blasphemy against Him.

Jesus saves entirely, or not at all. Our response as saved people isn’t to earn anything, it’s simply to begin acting like a member of His family for the sake of fellowship together forever.

If we refuse to admit that we were not involved in relationship destroying disobedience to God, we have nothing to be saved from and cannot properly accept the Salvation proffered. The person not broken by their own sin - not ashamed and devastated by their guilt and their need for forgiveness is not saved. Show me a person who says that they are basically good and don't need much forgiveness I will show you a self-deceived person who is calling God a liar... According to the Bible.

Beyond that, once we become Christians to then think that we no longer engage in relationship destroying disobedience to God we are again self-deceived. My dear friends, if you don't see the monster inside of you, you cannot be what God hopes and dreams and desires you to be... You are missing out.

Because to fail to see who you really are apart from Him is to put up a barrier to right-relationship. It is critical to recognize how sinful you are in order to daily fall on your knees in humble gratitude for the cleansing from all unrighteousness He provides and to then in the strength of that Truth to stand and strive to build right relationship right here, right now.

Striving to build it with Him and with those you are connected to at home, at church, at work. If you can't love the one's you know, it is only ever a lie to say that you love those you don't know.