

## Standpoint Theory & Its Impact on the Sufficiency of Jesus Christ

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Max Fernandez

Certainty: Absolute Truths that Produce Joyful Assurance / Critical Theory; Assurance; Confidence / 1 John 1:5–2:2

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In the last two sermons, we have looked at the following truths: the word of God preserves the absolute truth of Jesus Christ, and the unchangeable message is that *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*. Today, we will examine Standpoint Theory and its' impact on the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

Everyone has a standpoint. Maybe you would not call it *standpoint*. You may tend to use the word *experience*. **How do you think of your experience?** How many of you are thankful for the experiences that you have, even the difficult ones, because you tend to find your experiences give you wisdom? Your experience is a good thing, right? **How do you think of your experience if your experience is understood as the very problem of your existence?** What if your belief about your experience may actually be the problem?

One of the alternative ways of thinking within the Critical Theory worldview is called *Standpoint Theory*: “the belief that knowledge comes from the lived experience of different identity groups, who are differently positioned in society and thus see different aspects of it” (Pluckrose & Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 78). **There are two assumptions in Standpoint Theory:** (1) oppressed people have a standpoint that is more authoritative and fuller, and (2) privileged people are blinded from knowledge that oppressed people have (194).

The Bible actually shows us what our *standpoint* should be, and without the standpoint given by the Bible, there is no assurance. Typically, if we want assurance or confidence, we will tend to lean upon our experience or upon our standpoint. We try to rationalize everything out, but **the standpoint of the Bible is the exact opposite** and teaches us that we are utterly sinful people:

**1 John 1:8 KJV 1900**

<sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

So, if we will have confidence, it will not be by pride in our own experiences.

- › We must be honest with our sinfulness if we will have assurance in our lives.

In the book *The Gospel-Centered Life*, one of the most striking points the author makes is with regards to the statement we often say: “I can’t believe I said/did that...” This statement though reveals how we have a **wrong belief about ourselves**. In those moments when you are in shock about something you did/said, it is important to realize that this is a revelation of our true selves according to the Bible. When we live in denial of this truth about ourselves, there is no resulting assurance or confidence.

The following statement is on the path to certainty in our Christian life: “You and I are more sinful than we ever thought possible.” Now, this is radically counter-intuitive. We don’t want to show our weaknesses, but God is pointing them out explicitly. And that is really where it begins.

## (1) God is the standard for an absolute Standpoint

**1 John 1:5 KJV 1900**

<sup>5</sup> This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

There are two important truths to note about the meaning of the phrase *God is light*:

### **God is life**

To say that *God is light* is to speak of Him as the Source of life. To say that *in him is no darkness at all* is a statement saying that there is no lack of life in him at all. Thus, later, when the writer speaks of walking in the light or walking in darkness, there is a sense in which he is saying that someone is walking like a living person (saved) or walking like a dead person (unsaved) as explained in Ephesians 2:1: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

**John 1:3-4 KJV 1900**

<sup>3</sup> All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

## God is perfect

The statement that *God is light*, in this letter, has to do with the moral and ethical perfection of God. As the writer develops the passage, you will see that someone who does not love his brother or does not obey the commandments of the Lord is in *darkness*. *God is Light* means that he is perfectly righteous (always perfect in justice); he is perfect Truth (anything that does not conform to his nature is false); he is perfectly moral (perfect in love and care for his own creatures and his own Person).

In application, if you want to have a proper evaluation of who you are, your standpoint or experience, we do not need to begin with ourselves but with God. He is the standard for an absolute standpoint. Without this, there is no assurance.

## (2) Standpoint Theory is exposed before the God Who is Light (1 John 1:6-2:2)

One of the worst colors to have for walls when you have small children is white. One of the worst color carpets to have when you have small children is bright white. Why are both of these statements true? Our experience tells us that bright white walls and carpets, when we have small children, show every speck of dirt, and they do not stay very clean for long.

Such is the case with what John is doing. He has set forth a perfect, clean God, and now the dirt is going to be manifested.

## Exposing False Teaching

There are three “if we say” statements that reveal what the false teacher’s doctrine was:

### **1 John 1:6 KJV 1900**

<sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

### **1 John 1:8 KJV 1900**

<sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

### **1 John 1:10 KJV 1900**

<sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

The teaching is clear. These teachers are apparently propagating a form of *sinless perfectionism*. They are religious people within the church who are denying that they have sin. Sinless perfectionism is defined as the state of being totally free from sin; some hold that such a state is possible in this life (see also “perfectionism”).<sup>1</sup>

## **Increasing Severity of the False Teaching**

### **First Level - Denial in General**

Notice that with each “if we say” statement, there is an increasing severity. In the first statement, it is a general denial of the truth. To deny the sinfulness of our existence generally is not consistent with any form of perceived reality. There is evil in the world because the evil is inside of mankind. Some men and women are better at hiding it from one another than others.

### **Second Level - Denial before Self**

The documentary on the BTK serial murderer gives insight to the arrogant, damaged psyche of a man who would “Bind, torture, and kill” his victims. Sometimes these extremes make us deny our sinfulness because we compare ourselves to others, but to deny our sinfulness is to lie. The second level of denying is more specific in 1 John 1:8. This is self-deception. If we think that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves.

### **Third Level - Denial of God**

This third level is the epitome of denying our sinfulness. The God who is Light manifests how dirty we are, and to deny our sinfulness is to make God out to be a liar. We must agree with God about our sinfulness.

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<sup>1</sup> Grudem, W. A. (2004). *Systematic theology: an introduction to biblical doctrine* (p. 1254). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House.

As humans, we try to justify our standpoint by saying, “*I am doing the best I can.*” The problem is that “the best we can” leaves us wondering if it is really good enough. This is very unnerving and leads to heightened insecurity. **The sooner we realize that our best is not compared to one another but to the very nature of the God who is light, the quicker we will realize that we do not meet up to His standard** — *we are utterly sinful in our thoughts, our desires, our words, our deeds...etc.*

### (3) Only one Standpoint can lead to absolute certainty (1 John 1:7, 9, 2:1-2)

One of the major problems with *Standpoint Theory* is that it makes an ultimate standard of the experience of the oppressed, whereas the Bible makes God as the ultimate standard. Our lived experience is not the ultimate basis for right/wrong, good/evil, or love/hate. The ultimate standard is the very Person of God.

Part of the problem though is how Christians in the West lean so heavily on their experiences rather than on God and the sufficiency of Christ. For example, listen to these statements which often introduce our responses: “Well back in my day...,” “I have been a Christian for 50 years...,” “My experience has been...” If you use your experience as the basis of your argument, you have the wrong starting point; and this starting point will not be effective with someone who believes in *Standpoint Theory* because your experience is what actually blinds you to what they say is true. How does the scripture lead us to respond? How can we respond in a way that leads to absolute assurance?

- › Our standpoint, based on the scriptures, is that we are all sinners before God but that **we have a sufficient Savior.**

**1 John 1:7 KJV 1900**

<sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

**1 John 1:9 KJV 1900**

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

**1 John 2:1-2 KJV 1900**

<sup>1</sup> My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

<sup>2</sup> And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world*.

## **Sufficiency of Jesus**

When we use the phrase *sufficiency of Jesus Christ* what do we mean?

### **Utter Sinfulness**

We desperately need Jesus. We are insufficient before God. If you take away our sinfulness, then you simultaneously take away our need for Jesus. There is no need for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus if we are not sinful.

### **Sufficient payment for Sin**

We mean that Jesus is sufficient for the full payment for our sins. We mean that we don't have to add our work, our experience, our credentials, our anything to the blood of Jesus Christ.

### **Exclusive sufficiency of Jesus**

Lastly, we mean that Jesus is exclusive — sufficiency of Jesus alone. If you have to add to him, then he is not sufficient.

### **Confident living cannot result from a theology that denies our sinfulness.**

Assurance can only be found through a theology that begins with a perfect God and exposes our sinfulness; consequently, we accept our sinfulness and fully cast ourselves on the sufficiency of the blood of Jesus Christ. Biblical theology leads to a life of perpetually recognizing and affirming this. If we don't perpetually affirm these truths, we will perpetually deny the sufficiency of Christ in our living (regardless of what you say).

We should be cautious about our own experience as the ground of objective truth. We are sinners in need of a Savior regardless of what side of history you are on — oppressor or oppressed.

Hopeless sinner, there is hope in Jesus Christ alone. *God is light* renders you utterly **hopeless** (any basis of security dissipates before this God) and in need of **forgiveness of sins**. Jesus' blood sacrifice is the only sufficient atonement for you to receive the forgiveness of sins. You have no need of Jesus if you do not see your sinfulness. If you do see your sinfulness, repent of your sin and believe with your heart on Jesus Christ as your Lord — **for full assurance of eternal life through the forgiveness of sins**.

Retiree: The greatest rest you can experience does not come through snow-birding but through the daily exercise of remembering: **God is Light, you are sinful, and Jesus is enough**. Your confidence must be in Jesus alone and not in your experience or your standpoint.

Church: It means that **our theology must never lessen the utter sinfulness of both unbelieving people and believing people**. Sin must be a theme in our message for Christians and non-Christians alike. For the Christian, this theme reminds us of our need for Jesus. For non-Christians, this theme alerts them to their need for Jesus.

We must be honest with our sinfulness if we will have assurance in our lives. We are more sinful than we ever thought, but Jesus is more sufficient than we would have ever dreamed.