

~ 1 John ~

Lesson 8- Confession of Sin: the proof of a faithful Christian

Let's begin by reading our text today- **1 John 1:8 – 2:2**

We are continuing our discussion of sin and last week we looked at 1 John 1:8 and learned about Original Sin. That all of us have sin, because we live in a fallen world, and we are still eagerly waiting the redemption of our body and soul. Our spirit is justified and free from sin, but every day, as we live in this world, we battle with the sins that burden this mortal body. We looked at some examples from Scripture, specifically Romans 7 and remember what Paul said in Romans 7:24... Oh this wonderful man that I am... NO! he said, "*Oh wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

We must have an awareness of our wretched, sinful nature because this shows us the continual need for our Savior Jesus Christ. We must know what Jesus saved us out from to truly understand salvation and what Jesus did for us on the cross. So in verse 8 John tells us we all have sin, and to say you don't makes you a liar and the Truth is not in you. But there is a big difference between having sin and being in bondage to sin. We all have sin, but just like Paul, we can thank God that He has rescued us out from the bondage of sin and because of the blood of Jesus, sin no longer has dominion over my life... unless you give it place in your life. Unless you allow it to have dominion over you. If you commit your life to sin, then you are a slave of sin, and a slave of sin does not abide in God, John 8:34-36; Romans 6:11-16; Eph 4:27.

Remember what God Himself said to Cain after they made their sacrifices and Abel's sacrifice was accepted by God and Cain's was not. Turn to **Genesis 4:5-7**. Cain had a choice how to respond to his anger, and God warned him. Notice that in verse 7 sin is depicted as a force with its own desire. Even today, sin has a desire to overtake and dominate your life. Thank God we have the Holy Spirit within us, to make it possible to overcome, but just as Paul says in Romans 6:12, we must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies.

In these three verses in 1 John 1:8-10, John gives us three tests of Truth about sin, two wrong professions and 1 correct, to give us the right mindset concerning sin.

1 John 1:8- *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

1 John 1:10- *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

The correct profession of sin is not to cover it up and pretend we don't have it, but rather to confess our sins, and humble ourselves to the Savior.

And that leads us into our verse today:

1 John 1:9- †If we confess our sins, †He is faithful and just †to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

† *If we confess our sins...* *ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν*

- What does it mean to confess?

Confess is the word *homologeō*, *ὁμολογέω*. This is a compound of *ὁμο* (same) and *λόγος*, (word (verb: to say, arrange in order) It is saying the same thing that God says. The confession is matching our words with God's Words. This is walking in the Light as He is in the Light. It is imitating God, Eph 5:1.

By confessing, *homologeō*, *ὁμολογέω*, which is saying the same Words that God says, you are humbling yourself to the need of the Savior. **Romans 10:8-10**. This is the confession leading to salvation.

1 John 4:2- *By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses, *homologeō*, *ὁμολογέω*, that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,*

1 John 4:14–15-¹⁴ *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.* ¹⁵ *Whoever confesses, homologeō, ὁμολογέω, that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*

In the case of verse 9, to confess our sins is to say the same thing that God says about our sins. This is humbling ourselves to the Savior. Acknowledging the wretched sin in us and the need for a Savior. This is the opposite of hiding or covering up our sin as we see in verses 8 and 10. Verses 8 and 10 are denying sin and covering it up, therefore they are denying the need of a Savior.

Who do we make our confession to? To a priest as the Catholics mandate? No, to our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 3:1- *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, homologia, ὁμολογία, Christ Jesus,*

Hebrews 4:14- *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession, homologia, ὁμολογία.*

Hebrews 10:23- *Let us hold fast the confession, homologia, ὁμολογία, of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.*

Confessing your sin to God is the proof of being committed to the Truth and in fellowship with Him. This is the proof of being in fellowship with God. God doesn't want us hiding sin, pretending that you haven't sinned. God knows your heart, so confess your sins to Him instead of covering them up. Confession is an outward display of your heart. It is a corresponding act to your faith, putting your entire trust and reliance in God.

Confession is the opposite of denial. Notice John's comparison in 1 John 1:8 and 10 between those who deny sin, compared to verse 9, those who confess sin. Matthew records Jesus showing this comparison as well.

Matthew 10:32–33-³² *“Therefore whoever confesses, homologeō, ὁμολογέω, Me before men, him I will also confess, homologeō, ὁμολογέω, before My Father who is in heaven.* ³³ *But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.*

1 John 2:23- *Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges, homologeō, ὁμολογέω, the Son has the Father also.* (read from 2:22 thru 3:3) The one who confesses the Truth is the one abiding in Him and the one abiding in Him has the hope of eternal life, and this fellowship is working in him sanctification.

Confessing sin is an act of humility to God. It is the mark of a humble Christian, The proud and arrogant man will say he has no sin or that he has never sinned. But the humble, faithful Christian will confess his sin, **Luke 18:9-14.**

Confession is an outward expression of our heart acknowledging the need of Jesus and His perfect sacrifice. When we confess, we are exposing our sin to the Light and Light always overcomes darkness. But when we deny and cover our sin, we are giving place to the devil, Eph 4:27; Ps 32:1-5; **Proverbs 28:13; Daniel 9:2-4, 7, 20-27.** Jesus is the answer to the end of sins, to the reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. But notice what brought the prophecy to Daniel. It was his earnest heart for mercy. It was his confession to a Righteous God and his humble heart, admitting the sins and failures and pleading for the Savior.

† *He is faithful and just... πιστός ἐστι καὶ δίκαιος*

- Remember who we are making our confession to? Our High Priest, Jesus Christ. Look how Paul describes our High Priest,
 - Hebrews 2:17- *Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.*
- And He is Just, dikaios, δίκαιος, Righteous. The same word is used in **1 John 2:1**... Jesus Christ the Righteous, dikaios, δίκαιος.
 - Jesus is Righteous and the act of forgiving and cleansing is Righteous because He paid for our sin

with His blood. The payment for sin is complete, and now His Righteousness is being revealed to us, not in wrath, but in justification, Rom 3:21-25.

† *He is faithful and just... to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* ἵνα ἀφῆ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας, καὶ καθάρισή ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας.

Verse 9 is a very familiar Scripture, but it can be hard to interpret because at first glance it looks as if you must confess your sins in order for your sins to be forgiven. There are two common viewpoints concerning this verse. The first interpretation is that we must continually confess our sins in order to be Justified. This is the stance the Catholics take with this verse, but we as Reformed Christians know this is not correct. We are saved by grace through faith, and faith alone in Jesus Christ. Continual confession gets into meritorious works, and we are not saved by works, but by grace, Eph 2:8-9. Confession and forgiveness pertaining to Justification is not a tit for tat; it is not “confess...be forgiven...confess...be forgiven”. And there are many Scriptures dealing with this fact, Heb 7:27; 9:11-12, 25-26; Acts 2:38; 10:43; 26:18; Eph 1:7; 2:8-9; Col 1:14.

The 2nd interpretation of this verse is that this is the sinner’s prayer. It is a prayer you only pray once at the time of justification. You confess your sins once and you are saved. This may be true if the word confess was written a different way. But when you take a closer look at the word confess in 1 John 1:9, you will find the word, homologomen, ὁμολογῶμεν, is a first-person plural in the present tense, meaning “we are continually confessing”. Not a one-time event. So this isn’t the confession unto Justification.

So for as well-known as this verse is, it’s actually quite complicated theologically. So, we need to understand what John is saying.

We have to remember why John is writing this letter. It is a letter to believers, to those who are already justified, 1 John 5:13. So he is not telling his flock how to become saved. This is a letter of sanctification. We have to look at the context around what John is saying to understand his point in verse 9. Remember in 1:7, the blood of Jesus continually cleansing our sins because we have fellowship in Him. This is the process of sanctification. John has this thought in mind when he writes verse 9. This isn’t a means to our justification; this is the process of the sanctification of our soul. This is the context of the entire letter. It is a letter to believers that they may have the assurance of eternal life, abide in Him and be in fellowship with Him. The only way to achieve this is through the sanctification of the soul.

Remember the analogy John gave us in John 13 about Jesus washing the disciples’ feet? Our spirit has been Justified, bathed in the blood of Jesus, resulting in the forgiveness of sins forever and Jesus continually keeps washing the dirt of this world off our feet, separating us from sin and cleansing us from a guilty conscience.

In verse 9, John uses the word “forgiveness” in conjunction with “cleansing”, and we established two weeks ago, in verse 7, that our katharizo, καθαρίζω, our cleansing, is always connected with sanctification. And when you look at the context of verse 9, John is linking forgiveness of sins to the sanctification process. Let me explain my thinking...

The word “forgive” is aphiemī, ἀφίημι. It is a compound of απο (away from) and ἵημι – (to send out or expel) Together, this word means “to purposely expel away from with much force and deliberation”

Look at the way it is written in the original Greek:

ἵνα ἀφῆ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας, καὶ καθάρισή ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just... so that He might forgive, purposely expel away from us the sins, and cleanse us away from all unrighteousness.

When we think of forgiveness, we usually think only of Justification, but our forgiveness carries us into all eternity. Yes, there is absolutely a onetime occurrence at the cross when our sins were forgiven, paid for by the blood of Jesus, Acts 10:43; Eph 1:7; Col 1:12-14, but if you look at forgiveness in its Greek meaning, “an expelling away with much

force”, it doesn’t have to pertain only to this onetime event of Justification. Paul also uses this same word, *aphiemi*, *αφιημι*, in the context of divorce in 1 Corinthians 7:11-13. So we can apply that same thinking to 1 John 1:9. Those who are in fellowship with Him, Jesus is continually expelling the effects of sin away from us, He is divorcing sin away from our soul so that sin does not have dominion over our mortal bodies. There is a book by C.S Lewis called, “*The Great Divorce*”. It is a Christian story of our divorce from the things of this world so that we can be in fellowship with God. Our Justified spirits are perfect, but our soul needs continual expelling and cleansing of sin.

Hebrews 10:14 explains this perfectly. There was a onetime offering that perfected us forever, the Justification of our spirit, but we who are perfected forever are still continually being sanctified away from sin in our soul. The confession isn’t what prompts the cleansing, its just a continual, perpetual cycle of living and abiding in Him. We who have been perfected are continually confessing our sins, and He is continually cleansing our soul from our sins. We are confessing our sins NOT TO BE perfected, but because WE ARE perfected in our spirit. The faithful Christian will continually confess his sins, not as a means of forgiveness, but because he **IS** forgiven. Confession is the proof of a faithful Christian.

This is the sanctification of the soul. The forgiveness, *aphiemi*, *αφιημι*, expels the sin away from us so that sin does not have dominion over us, and the cleansing, the *katharizo*, *καθαρίζω*, is the cleansing of our soul from a guilty conscience so we can take part in Him, dwell in Him, and continually enjoy fellowship with Him, Hebrews 9:14; 10:22; **Psalm 51**.

To summarize 1 John 1:8-10 we could say:

Those who cover up or hide sin, **SAY** they do not have sin or even that they have never sinned. They are giving heed to deceiving spirits. They are hardening their conscience toward righteousness. They are denying the need of a Savior. Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 1 Timothy 4:1-2.

But we as faithful Christians will **CONFESS** our sins, and humble ourselves to our Savior, because we have confidence that Jesus, our High Priest, is faithful and just to expel sin away from our soul and continually cleanse us from a guilty conscience away from all unrighteousness.

Confession is a humbleness that says, “I did it, and I don’t want to do it again.” We lay ourselves out before Him and expose our sin to Him and we say, “thank you for your blood that continually cleanses me from all my sins, make me hear Your joy and gladness. Make my humble bones rejoice in You that I might receive the joy of being justified in You”