

**I John**  
**The Believer's New Relationship to Sin (Part 2)**  
**I John 1:5 – 2:6**  
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Well, I encourage you to take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 John, chapter 1, as we continue our study of this wonderful letter. Today, we come to one of the most important passages and one of the most important issues relating to us as believers, and that is the confession of sin.

During our years in LA, one day I was at Grace Church and got a call from my wife, Sheila, that she had been forced to lock herself in our home, and she was told by law enforcement not to leave because there was a criminal who was barricaded in a nearby house. The would-be thief thought that the homeowner was gone and so he broke in the back of the house and unbeknownst to him, the woman who was in the home left the front door and went next door and contacted the police. A standoff ensued and there was a police helicopter, as there always is in Los Angeles, circling right over the top of the house, and, when I came, there were two SWAT bands, and there were about twenty-five police cars, and I think there were three or four fire trucks and paramedic vehicles as well. It looked like we had been taken siege!

Well, this barricaded individual, and all the circumstances surrounding it, actually ended peacefully a few hours later when he actually called police from inside the house to confess and to ask for help because, as it turns out, he had found the homeowners gun, and as he was sort of practicing for the potential use of it, he accidentally shot himself, and so he needed the paramedics to come.

Now, that's a forced confession, right? I mean, that was not the profound and genuine confession that God requires of us. And yet sadly, I think a lot of people kind of think of the confession of sin like that; it's something that is just to be done quickly and only if it's absolutely necessary. The truth is, we are to be known as a people who confess our sins to the LORD, and today, we're going to learn how and why to confess our sins to God.

Just to remind you of the context, we're studying John's first letter, and it consists of three cycles or three movements of the tests of eternal life. We're looking at the very first of those cycles. It begins in chapter 1, verse 5, and runs through chapter 2, verse 27.

In this first cycle, there are three tests; so there are three movements or three cycles in the book, and each of those movements or each of those cycles consists of three tests. And the first test, in this first cycle, whether or not we have eternal life, is our obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word. Let's read it together, 1 John, chapter 1, verse 5, and I'll read through chapter 2, verse 6.

This 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. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but 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. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate

with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Now, the theme of these verses we reduce to this, you can know that you have eternal life, that you are a true Christian because you now have a new relationship to sin. Now, this first test that we've just read together is based on two fundamental biblical truths. I've already introduced them to you, let me mention them again. The first truth, as we saw in verse 5, is "God's Essential Nature of Holiness." Verse 5 says, "This is the message we have heard from Him... (we) announce to you (that)." Here's the content of the message the Apostles heard from Jesus. First of all, "God is Light." That is, God is holy, He's separate from sin, He's pure, He's morally right.

And then it says, "...and in Him there is no darkness at all." This is related to the first statement but separate and making a separate point, and that is, God is completely without sin. Everything we know as light here, has shadows and shades and variation; even the brightest light of the midday sun casts shadows. God casts no shadows; there are no hints of shadow in His character. He is all perfection; He's completely without sin.

Now, because of God's essential nature, this is the point John is making here, because of God's essential nature of holiness, you can't know Him, you can't be in the fellowship with Him, that is, have a relationship with Him and continue to have the same relationship to sin that you did before you came to know Him; it's not possible.

That then, he introduces us to a second fundamental biblical truth that we started to look at last time and that is, "The Believers New Relationship to Sin." If you have been born of God, just as God is Light, you have become light and you have a new relationship to the sin that you once enjoyed and lived in. In the rest of the section, beginning in verse 6 of chapter 1, and running through chapter 2 and verse 6, John shows how our relationship to sin reveals whether we are true, genuine Christians or whether we are false Christians.

Now, let me just remind you of what I mean by a false Christian. A false Christian is someone who says, "Yes, I'm a Christian, I believe in Jesus, I've been saved, I know Him," and yet truly isn't His. There are such people. Jesus says in Matthew 7, that "At the Judgment, many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, we know you.'" And He'll say, "I never knew you. Depart from me you who work lawlessness." And so clearly, there are many in the world who are true believers, and there are many attached to the church of Jesus Christ who are false believers, false Christians.

How do you distinguish them? Well, John is **going to** help us understand that and it has to do, in part, with our relationship to sin. So, we're learning then, that the believer's new relationship to sin is first shown, "By the Pattern of His Life," that's in verses 6 and 7. We studied that last

time together, it's shown by the pattern of his life. A false Christian, verse 6, habitually lives in sin; "He walks in darkness," that's what his lifestyle looks like. He's characterized by sin.

A true Christian, verse 7, habitually lives in holiness, he walks in the light, he walks in the same moral purity that God Himself has, not to the same extent, not without shadow; we sin, but it doesn't characterize our lives as it once did.

Now today, we learn a second way that this new relationship to sin is shown. It is "Shown, (secondly), By the Admission of Inherent Sinfulness," by the admission of inherent sinfulness. This is the message of verses 8 and 9. As **did** with the first explanation, he begins here with the false Christian, and in verse 8, he tells us that, "A False Christian Denies His Sinfulness," a false Christian denies his sinfulness. Notice verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin." Literally, it's in the present tense in the Greek text so, "If we are saying (that is consistently claiming) that we are having no sin."

Now, this expression "no sin," could mean that this person is denying that he's ever committed acts of sin. That's possible but unlikely. And the reason it's unlikely is, look down at verse 10. Verse 10 says, "If we say that we have not sinned." That clearly refers to acts of sin. So, it's best to see verse 8 as a separate denial, a different denial; not a denial of the acts of sin, but verse 8, is a denial of inherent sinfulness. In other words, this person is denying the presence of what theologians call Original Sin or of Total Depravity, and you can see this even in the wording. Notice the wording carefully, "If we are saying that we are having no sin," singular, it doesn't say "sins," but "sin." This is a claim, not to be in a state or condition of sinfulness,

again, not a denial of the acts of sin, but rather of an inborn disposition to sin. It is a denial of human depravity.

Now before I go any further, let me give you a couple of theological definitions just so you're clear. Alright, I'm **going to** use a couple of phrases. First of all, 'Original Sin.' What is Original Sin? It is a theological expression that describes the effects of the sin of Adam on every person, the effects of the sin of Adam on every person because Adam was your representative in the garden, because he acted in your place and in mine as well; because he fell, we have original sin, we have effects because of that and there are two basic effects. The first is imputed real guilt. In other words, he acted in my place, his guilt is imputed to me, and I am guilty because of Adam's sin. We saw that in Romans, chapter 5.

Secondly, and more sobering in many ways, is inherited corruption. Not only did I get guilt because he represented me and failed, but I get inherited corruption from my parents. By natural generation, I have received inherited moral corruption.

Now, that corruption manifests itself. So, that's original sin; that corruption, that I inherited in original sin, manifests itself in total depravity. And total depravity simply describes how far-reaching the effects of that corruption are. We say 'total.' That doesn't mean every person is as bad as they could be, obviously. 'Total,' maybe a better word is 'comprehensive.' It is comprehensive depravity; that is, it affects every part of our nature including every faculty and power of both body and soul. That's what the Scripture teaches, and I'll show you that in a moment.

So, what you have here, in verse 8, was a first century denial of that reality, a denial of inherent sinfulness. Now, in the first century, this is what it looked like. I **told** you, when I introduced this book, that John is writing, in part, to confront those who believed the heretics and pulled out of the church. Remember chapter 2, “They went out from us because they were not of us.” Who were those heretics and what were they teaching? Well, the heresy that infected those churches was an embryonic form of Gnosticism, we call it pre-Gnosticism, influenced by the dualism of the Greek philosophers that taught that matter is evil and spirit is good. That was the heart of what they believed.

And so, the pre-Gnostics argued this way. They said, “Since the body is matter and it's evil, simply because it's a matter, it's irredeemable; nothing can be done to the body, and so God doesn't really care what you do with your body, and so what you do with your body doesn't matter, it doesn't affect your relationship to God, it's just inherently evil, so do whatever your body wants. It really developed into an Antinomianism, a sort of live however you want, and that's exactly what happened. You can read about it in the New Testament again and again as Paul and the other Apostles confront this mindset. That was the first century.

Now, I assume there are no Gnostics here, so what are the modern manifestations of this? You see, the denial of inherent sinfulness is still alive and well today; it just doesn't look the same as it looked in the first century. So, let me give you just a couple of modern manifestations of what's going on here in verse 8.

First of all, there are those who deny the reality of total depravity. This person says this, "I'm basically a good person who sometimes makes bad choices." How many times have I heard that? How many times have you heard that? "I am basically a good person who sometimes makes bad choices or decisions." You see, this person convinces himself or herself that when they sin, it's not really who they are. They'll even say that, "You know, I don't know why I did that, that's just not me." In other words, what I just did was an aberration; it was like an anomaly, it's not really me. Now, this view is common, this denial of the reality of total depravity, is common in liberal mainline denominations, mainline Protestantism, like in the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church, other mainline churches. It's also the view, frankly, of the common man on the street; this is how most people think.

A second manifestation of this, or expression of this idea, is denying the depth of total depravity. This person says, "Okay, I recognize that there is a part of me that's bad, but I'm not totally bad; there's also a part of me that's good." So, here's the person who says, "Okay, yeah, I can't ignore the fact that there is a part of me that's bad, but I'm not all bad."

A third manifestation is denying the extent of total depravity. This is the person who says, "Okay, I admit it, I'm not a good person, but it's still true that I sometimes do good things. So, I'm not entirely without something praiseworthy." You see, most people will admit to sometimes committing acts of sin, but most will not admit that they are totally depraved in all parts of their being; they will not admit that their minds, wills, emotions, and bodies are terminally infected by sin. They will not admit that there's nothing spiritually good in them which is exactly what the Scriptures teach.

A fourth manifestation or expression of this, in our day, is denying the guilt for sinful choices. In other words, this is a person who says, “Okay, I do make bad choices, I do sinful things, but it's not really my fault, it's not me. My bad choices aren't my fault; it's because of something else; it's something external to me that's made me this way; it's my culture that shaped me; it's the Internet; that's why I have the problems I have; it's my environment; it's my dysfunctional home; it's my psychological problems; that's why I am the way I am.”

Mark this, “Unbelievers always refuse to take full responsibility for their sin.” Let me say that again, “Unbelievers always refuse to take full responsibility for their sin.” Oh, they will say, “Yes I was wrong, I shouldn't have done that,” and they'll say, “I am in part to blame for that,” but they'll never come to the place where they will say, “It is entirely and completely my fault. God's not to blame, my family's not to blame, my genes aren't to blame, it's me.” Only the Holy Spirit can bring a person to that place.

Now, if we claim to be a Christian and we deny the reality, the depth, the extent, or the personal guilt of total depravity, here is John the Apostle's assessment of our spiritual condition. Look at verse 8, “We are deceiving ourselves.” The word ‘deceiving’ means and is often translated in the New Testament, ‘to lead astray.’ It was used of the false teachers who led people astray from the truth. Ironically here, the person is leading himself astray; he's leading himself away from the truth. The point is, this isn't an accident, this is not a misunderstanding, this is deliberate self-deception! He persuades himself that he's not a sinner.

Why do I say it has to be deliberate? Because he knows, every person on this planet knows he's a sinner. I have that on the authority of God Himself. Remember Romans, chapter 1, verse 32, talking about the Gentiles, even those who don't have the Scripture; what does he say about them? "They know the ordinance of God and they know that those who commit such things are worthy of death, but they do them anyway," Romans 1:32. You say, "How do they know?" Well, remember Romans 2, verses 14 and 15, "...they know because God has written the substance of His law on every human heart," (Paraphrased).

And so, here's what happens, a person knows, they know that they're sinning, and they know that their sin deserves death; what do they do? They begin to talk to themselves and convince themselves that, "No, that's not true; I'm really a good person, I'm really okay." That's why he says here, "They deceive themselves," it's deliberate, and therefore, verse 8 goes on to say, "and the truth is not in us." The truth here is the body of Christian truth; this person does not truly believe the body of Christian truth. Why? Because if you deny your sinfulness, then it always leads you to a different gospel, right? It's never **going** to lead you to the true gospel because, instead, you're **going to** see that you can contribute somehow.

So, these people, they're not in Christ. Those who deny that they have a sinful disposition that lies behind all of their sinful actions are deceiving themselves; they've told themselves that lie often enough that they've actually started to believe it and God's truth, the truth of the gospel, is not in them because you can't be saved, mark this, you cannot be saved until you first come to realize your own spiritual bankruptcy.

If you're here this morning and you say, “Yeah, I'm a Christian, I'm in.” Well, let me ask you, “Has there ever been a time in your life when you have really come to understand and you still live in this understanding, that you're not just spiritually sick, you were spiritually dead? And you're not just spiritually poor; you are spiritually bankrupt; you have absolutely nothing to offer God.” This is where it starts.

Matthew, chapter 5, verse 3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Literally, the Greek word there is ‘beggars.’ “Blessed are the beggars in spirit for to them belong the Kingdom of heaven.” You don't get into the Kingdom till you realize you're a beggar; you're bankrupt and you have nothing. All you can do is throw yourself on the mercy of God. That's why Jesus told that parable in Luke 18, where He talks about the Pharisee and the tax collector going to the temple to pray. You remember, and the Pharisee stood and prayed to himself and talked about how wonderful he was, and he didn't ask for forgiveness because he didn't understand his inherent sinfulness. But the tax collector wouldn't even lift up his eyes to heaven. What did he do? He beat on his chest saying, “God, be merciful to me the sinner.” That's how you become a Christian. So, you have to realize your own spiritual bankruptcy. So, a false Christian denies his sinfulness.

That brings us to the second part of it in verse 9, the other side. A true Christian admits he's a sinner and confesses his sins, a true Christian admits he is a sinner and along with that admission, confesses his sins. Look at verse 9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Now, remember this verse is correcting the false claim of verse 8. So, that means there are a couple of things

implied here that aren't directly stated. Let me just bring those out before we look at what's directly stated.

First of all, this verse implies that the true Christian admits, “His Total Depravity before Christ,” he admits his total depravity before Christ. As I said, this is how we became a Christian; you have to start by acknowledging your spiritual bankruptcy and throwing yourself on the mercy of God and Christ. David described our total depravity before Christ this way, he said, Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth, (I was born in moral guilt), And in sin my mother (even) conceived me.”

By the way, that's not a comment about his mother; that's a comment about him. You see, when he looked at his sin with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband, Uriah, he didn't say to himself, “You know what, this is not me. I don't know what happened that day. That's just not who I am.” No! He said, “No, God, it's exactly who I am and it's exactly who I've always been; I'm taking full and complete responsibility for the choices that I made.” He wasn't claiming his sin was an aberration; he was saying sin has been a reality in his life since he was conceived, and he was just acting out who he was.

Isaiah 64:6 says, “...all of us have become like one who is unclean, (All of us, like one who was unclean. And listen to this.), ...all our righteous deeds (your best moment) are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.” We see that this fall, right? The leaves fall and they're swept away by the wind. That's what happens; our iniquities carry us away; we are so guilty.

Jeremiah 13:23 says, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” What he is saying is, it's impossible to change our nature, our make-up, who we are; we can't do that.

Then, you also, if the Ethiopian can change his skin, the leopard his spots, “...Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil.” What Jeremiah is saying is our problem is our nature; it's impossible for us to make moral choices that conflict with who we are by nature.

That's the point of Romans, chapter 3, you remember? “There is none righteous, no not one.”

We've all sinned, and he goes through that list of the description of our sinfulness, before Christ. Remember? He goes through and he talks about “our words were like snakes in terms of how we struck at others; our hearts were filled with violence and anger; our relationships, we destroyed them all with conflict and we had no fear of God before our eyes,” (Paraphrased).

You come to, that's us before Christ, you come to Ephesians 2, verses 1 to 3, and there Paul says, “We were dead in our trespasses and sins,” spiritually dead to God, we didn't know God, we were completely distant from God, we were hostile toward God,” to use his description in Romans. And, he goes on to say, “We were enslaved to sin,” we were enslaved to the world and its views, we were enslaved to our flesh, “indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind,” and we were slaves to the devil in his religious systems that he created, and therefore we were children of wrath, we were sons of wrath, (Paraphrased). That was who we were, and the true Christian acknowledges all of that.

“The true Christian Also Acknowledges His Sinful Flesh After Christ,” his sinful flesh after Christ. This is the theological foundation of the confession of sin in verse 9; look at it again,

“We confess our sins.” Now, first of all, take that little pronoun ‘we.’ John means himself, the last living Apostle, as well as every other true Christian. Instead of claiming that we have no sin after professing Christ, which is what the false teachers and their followers did in verse 8, no, we are confessing our sins, verse 9.

Now think about this, the fact that we are still sinning implies that sin still clings to us even though we are a follower of Christ. That's exactly what the New Testament teaches. Make sure you think rightly about what's happened to you. In regeneration, at the moment of salvation in regeneration, you were, to use Jesus's words in John 3, “You were born again.” You became a new person, or to use Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5, you were made a new creation, “If anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation.” And then to use Paul's words in Ephesians 2, “You were raised from the dead; you were spiritually dead, and you were given new life,” (Paraphrased). All of that happened to you at the moment of salvation. At the very moment you were saved, the person that you used to be died, Romans 6, and you were raised with Christ to new life; you are a new person in Jesus Christ, you're not the person you were before; you have a new nature.

However, there is still a part of you that remains unredeemed. Its beachhead is your body; and the New Testament calls that unredeemed part of you, your unredeemed humanness that still remains, your flesh. You can read about it in the second half of Romans 7. First-half Romans 7, Paul struggles with the law and his sin before Christ; but beginning in verse 14 and running through the rest of chapter 7, he's dealing with his struggle as a believer. And where does Paul land? He says, “Listen, what I want to do, I find myself not doing, ‘O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’” Why does Paul and why do you as a

Christian experience that? Because of your flesh! There is a part of you that remains unredeemed. You're a new creation in Jesus Christ, but you still have the flesh, and true Christians not only acknowledge their total depravity before Christ, but they also acknowledge their sinful flesh after Christ.

Now, that brings us to verse 9, and "The True Christian Also Confesses His Sins Consistently After Christ," the true Christian confesses his sins consistently after Christ, or throughout his Christian life. Look at verse 9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Now, this is a truly amazing verse, and in this verse, John describes the nature of the true believers ongoing confession of sin throughout his Christian life. And in this verse, believe it or not, he teaches us eight crucial truths about confession. Let me just point them out to you, and I hope this will be a great encouragement to you as you think about carrying out this practice of confessing your sins, eight crucial truths, very briefly.

Number one, it's evidence of genuine salvation. Confession of sin is evidence of genuine salvation. Remember, John is contrasting how false Christians respond to their sinfulness and sins, in verse 8, with how true Christians respond in verse 9. So, regular confession of sin and the genuine effort to turn from that sin mark a true Christian.

Listen, if you claim to be a follower of Christ but you aren't consistently and regularly confessing your sins to the Lord and seeking His forgiveness, you're not a Christian, that's what

he's saying. Because at some level, you are in verse 8, denying the reality of your sinfulness, or you'd be confessing to the Lord. So, it's evidence of genuine salvation.

Number two, it has nothing to do with our justification. Our ongoing daily confession of sin has nothing to do with our justification. Now, verse 9 says, "If we confess our sins, (we will receive God's forgiveness)." If you're a thinking person, and I hope you are, that should raise an important question in your mind, "Wait a minute, Tom, I thought, at salvation, all of our sins, past, present, and future were pardoned?" And my response to you is, "Yes, they were."

Colossians, chapter 2, verse 13, God, listen to the verb tense, "(God has) forgiven all our transgressions." Perfect tense; happened in the past, continuing results. He has forgiven all of our transgressions. Okay, so why do we still need to keep asking for forgiveness? Why does a sinner who has been totally forgiven, who has been declared righteous before God through justification still need daily forgiveness?

The answer comes in two pictures. The first picture our Lord himself gives us in John 13. Now, I mentioned this recently so I'm not **going to** take you there, but let me just remind you what we saw. In John 13, Jesus is at the Last Supper, and He washes the Disciples' feet. Now, you remember when He comes to Peter to wash his feet, Peter says, "No Lord, you're not **going to** carry out the duty of the lowest slave and wash my feet." And Jesus says. "Well, if I don't wash your feet, then you have no part with me," to which Peter typically responds, "Well, then give me a bath!" And Jesus says, "No! No! Peter you're misunderstanding, there's a theological

lesson I'm teaching you here. The person who's been bathed, that happened at salvation, doesn't need to be re-bathed, they only need their feet washed.” And then, of course, Peter permitted it.

In other words, at salvation, we were bathed; and Jesus says later in that same text, “You are clean; you’ve been bathed and you’re clean; you’ve been forgiven all of your sins, you don't need another bath, you don't need another justification, you just need your feet to be cleaned.” That's the daily confession of sin and seeking of God's forgiveness.

Let me use another metaphor. At justification, at the moment of your salvation, you came before God, crying out for the forgiveness of your sins. Where? You were in the courtroom of God's justice. God was your judge behind the bar; you're coming to God, pleading for forgiveness, judicially (Right?), you are looking for judicial forgiveness. I am guilty before God's Law; I'm **going** to be damned; I'm going to be condemned rightly, God forgive me. So, what happens? God does forgive you, all of your sins in the courtroom of His justice.

Then, he does something amazing. The Judge comes down from the bench, puts His arm around you, and says, “I'm **going** to adopt you as my own son or daughter, and you're coming home to live with me, and He takes you home.” Well, guess what? You get home, you get to His house, and get your stuff unpacked and no sooner does that happen; then you start sinning again. What needs to happen? You don't need to go back to the courtroom; you’ve been totally, once and for all forgiven in the courtroom of God's justice; you’ve been justified, you’ve been declared right before God and that will never change. Now, you need forgiveness relationally, not forgiveness judicially, that happened the moment of salvation, now you need it relationally,

you've sinned against your Father, and so you come, seeking His forgiveness. Before, we sought justification with our judge in the courtroom; now, we seek reconciliation with our Father at home. Before, we sought judicial forgiveness; now, we seek relational forgiveness.

Number three, it's a constant practice. This must be the unbroken pattern of our lives. Literally, John writes, "We are confessing our sins." This is an ongoing, constant, regular pattern. I mean, Jesus taught us that (Right?) in the Lord's Prayer. He says, "I want you to pray in this way," Matthew 6:9. When are we supposed to pray? "Without ceasing." So, when you pray, you're supposed to pray in this way, this is verse 12 of Matthew 6, "...forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Jesus taught us to seek regular, consistent, forgiveness relationally from our God. True Christians are consistently confessing their sins to God.

Number 4, it's directed primarily to God. Now, don't get scared by the word 'primarily;' I'll explain in a moment. It's directed primarily to God, this confession. Now, you'll notice John doesn't tell us specifically that we are to confess our sins to God, but that's clearly implied. If God is the One who forgives us our sins, which is clear in verse 9, then it's reasonable to suspect and to conclude that we're confessing our sins to God, right? So, that goes without saying, and as we just saw the Lord's Prayer, Jesus commands us to confess our sins to God; it's a regular practice. Here's what I want you to get, we are to confess our sins always to God. Scripture never tells us to confess our sins to a priest, a pastor, or anyone else to obtain God's forgiveness. In fact, that didn't even happen in the Roman Catholic Church until the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 A.D. when Pope Innocent III made confession part of Roman Catholic dogma. But

Scripture utterly rejects the idea of our seeking God's forgiveness from anyone but God. So, we always come to God, confessing our sins, that's verse 9.

However, Scripture does teach that there are times when in addition to confessing our sins to God, we also are to confess our sins to others. When? When we have sinned against them. In Matthew 5, verses 23 and 24, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "...if you are presenting your offering at the altar." In other words, if you're coming to worship, you're coming to present your sacrifice at the Temple, "...and there remember that your brother has something against you," in other words, you've sinned against somebody, "leave your offering there before the altar and ...first...go (and) be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering." The implication is, "Go and confess your sin, and seek reconciliation with your brother, and do it before you even worship."

Can I say, there may be somebody here this morning who shouldn't even be here? You should first be seeking reconciliation with the person you've sinned against and seeking their forgiveness.

Luke 17:4 says essentially the same thing, "...if (your brother) sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times (a day), saying, 'I repent,' forgive him." What's the implication? When you sin, you not only seek forgiveness of God, but if you have sinned against someone else, you go to them saying, "I repent." Here's what you do, if you've sinned against someone else, you go to them, and you seek forgiveness from them the same way you seek it from God. You name the sin. "Listen, I'm sorry I sinned against you by *fill in the*

*blank*,” just like you would to God. And then you say, “Would you please forgive me? I am totally responsible, this is not your fault; I’m not blaming you, it’s me! Would you please forgive me?” So, you seek forgiveness from others that you’ve sinned against in the same way that you seek it from God, and they’re commanded to extend it. The confession of sin should be as wide as those sinned against. So, if it’s only against God, then you confess it to God. If it’s against others, you confess it to them and seek their forgiveness.

Number five, it’s an admission of personal guilt, it’s an admission of personal guilt. This is the meaning of the word ‘confess.’ The Greek word is a compound word, ‘*homolego*.’ ‘*Homo*’ means ‘same;’ ‘*legeo*’ means ‘to say;’ so literally the verb confess means ‘to say the same thing,’ implied as God says about our sin. In other words, we pass judgment on our sins before God in the same way God would pass judgment on our sins if we stood before Him. It’s like 1 Corinthians 11:31, “...if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged by God.” Psalm 32:5, David says, “I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’; And You forgave the guilt of my sin.”

There’s Psalm 51, verses 1 to 5, where David pours out his heart and says, “(God) be gracious to me...according to...the greatness of your (steadfast love). Wash my sin away,” (Paraphrased). By the way, these are great patterns of seeking God’s forgiveness, but it’s an admission of personal guilt. “Lord, it’s me, I judge, I say the same thing about my sin that you would say if I stood before you.”

Number six, it's always accompanied by repentance, it's always accompanied by repentance. In other words, it's not good enough just to check the box and say, "Yup, confessed that, move on." You don't confess your sin while holding your crossed fingers behind your back; you know; "God forgive me but, in my mind, I know I'm not **going** to give this up and I have no plans to give this up. In fact, I am planning to do this again."

Listen, you're not going to get God's forgiveness. God knows your heart; He knows what's going on in your mind, and He's not going to extend real forgiveness unless that confession is accompanied by repentance. Proverbs 28:13, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, (Don't hide them, don't hide from God; don't hide the reality of who you are from God.) But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."

That doesn't mean, by the way, that you'll never commit that sin again, but it does mean that you are serious about hating that sin. You come to God, and you say, "God, forgive me for the sin; I hate it, I don't ever want to commit it again, and I'm taking real steps to cut this sin out of my life." Don't play games with God; confession is always accompanied by a spirit of repentance. Read 2 Corinthians 7:9, where Paul talks about what godly sorrow looks like, and what he says is, "Listen you are going to leave no stone unturned to make everything right with God and everybody else when it comes to your sin."

Number seven, it's specific and comprehensive, it's specific and comprehensive. "If we confess our sins," our particular and individual acts of sin as well as categories of sin, even all of our sin inclusively. In other words, sometimes it's, "God, I'm a sinner, please forgive me." Other

times, it's, "God, I sin often with my mind," and sometimes it's, "God, here are the specific sins I've committed against you, please forgive me." Now, this doesn't mean we have to confess every sin specifically and in detail to get God's forgiveness because you don't even know all your sins; neither do I. And according to verse 7, "As we are walking in the Light, the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing us from all sin." But what this does say is we are to regularly confess our sins, both in categories and specific sins.

You want great examples of this? Study Nehemiah 9, Psalm 32, Psalm 51, Psalm 130, Daniel 9. You know, those passages are wonderful passages, they provide a pattern for my own confession. When I'm confessing my sin to God, I love those passages because it gives expression to my heart; that's what they're there for, that's what they're intended to do. Walk through those Psalms, through those passages.

Now, when it comes to what you confess; this includes sins of omission as well as sins of commission, it includes sins at every level, actions, words, attitudes, thoughts, and motives. Study Mark 7, verses 20 to 23, where Jesus says, "Don't just stay at the fruit level; go down to the heart and your thoughts and even go down to the motives and what drives you; confess sin at every level."

A final truth about confession, number eight is it receives God's full forgiveness, it receives God's full forgiveness. This is the rest of verse 9. Now, in this as we hear about and learn about God's full forgiveness, he teaches a couple of lessons here. The first is the reason for this forgiveness. Notice, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful." The word 'faithful' means

‘dependable and trustworthy.’ God is dependable to act consistent with His character and to keep His promises. He’s dependable to be His gracious self. That’s why I can expect God to forgive.

You remember Exodus 34, verses 6 and 7, what does God say about Himself? He says, “I am gracious, I delight in doing good to those who deserve exactly the opposite.” And then He goes on to say, “I abound in steadfast love,” and listen to how God explains His character, “I am the God who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin,” (PARAPHRASED). That’s God’s nature; He’s faithful to that nature; He will do what is His character to do.

And I love the way it’s stated in Psalm 86, verse 5; Psalm 86, verse 5, “... You, Lord, are good, and (you are, this is your nature) ready to forgive, And abundant in (steadfast love) to all who call upon You.” So, the reason we can expect God’s forgiveness is because He’s trustworthy, He’s dependable to His own character, and to His promises. He promises forgiveness. It’s not just who He is, it’s what He’s promised.

For example, in the New Covenant, Hebrews, chapter 10, verse 17, “God,” if you’re in Christ, you’re a member the New Covenant, and here’s the promise God promised to make to you. This is Hebrews 10:17, “...THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE.” That’s God’s promise in the New Covenant. That’s for the forgiveness in salvation, but what about the forgiveness daily as we confess our sins? 1 John 1:9, God’s promised, “If you confess, He will forgive.”

What's the basis of this forgiveness, this full forgiveness that we enjoy? The reason is His faithfulness; the basis is his righteousness. Look at it, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins." What's that? Why would he say, "righteous to forgive?" The word 'righteous' means 'conforming to the standard of right.' It even means, 'according to the law, in keeping with the law.' In other words, it's just of God to forgive.

You say, "Wait a minute, timeout, you mean there are times when it's unjust for God to forgive?" The answer is, "Yes, it's unjust for God to forgive sinners if the price hasn't been paid for the sin." God cannot be just and forgive sin if the penalty hasn't been paid. You understand that at a human level. You wouldn't expect a judge over in Dallas or Fort Worth to have this horrible criminal come before them and the criminal says, "Listen, you know, Judge, I am so sorry, would you please forgive me?" And the judge says, "You know what? You're forgiven, your forgiven. Leave my courtroom; no problem." You say, "That's a violation of justice."

Well, the same thing is true of God. Some people have this sentimental idea of God that, you know, you come to God and you say, "God, please forgive me," and God is the sort of sentimental, old grandfather figure, who says, "Oh Sweetheart, come here, I forgive you."

That's not the God of the Bible. The God of the Bible is a God of perfect justice, and that justice must be satisfied. Hebrews 9:22, "Without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness." Let that sink into your mind. There has to be a payment, there has to be the death of the criminal; your death or somebody is in your place. God's perfect justice has to be satisfied, and here's the good news; He's just to forgive your sins because Jesus paid the penalty for your sin.

Look down at chapter 2, verse 2, "...He Himself is the propitiation, (the satisfaction of God's justice) for our sins." That's why God can be just and forgive you. He's not sentimentally saying, "Oh well, okay, it's fine." No! He's saying I can forgive you because my justice has been fully and completely satisfied, not in you, but in the One who stood in your place. He paid the debt in full."

Romans 3:25:

...God displayed (Jesus) publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith...so that He could be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

It's the only way it could happen; the only basis on which God can forgive our sins is the redemption purchased by Jesus Christ through the shedding of His own blood. He satisfied the justice of God. Christ's death was His complete payment to satisfy the justice of God for every sin of every believer who would ever believe, and therefore there is forgiveness for the repentant sinner in salvation, and there is forgiveness for the confessing believer, ongoing in his daily confession, that's 1 John 1:9.

So, think of it this (**way**), when you come to confess your sin, this is what you plead with God, on the basis of. You come and you say, "Father, I don't deserve it, but it's your nature to forgive; you said you are a God ready to forgive, you forgive an iniquity, transgression, and sin, and you promise to forgive, and so I'm here, asking you to be faithful to who you are and what you promised." That's my only hope. And then to His justice, "Father, your just wrath against my sins has been fully satisfied in the death of Jesus; forgive me because He paid my debt." Always remember that it was at the cross that Christ purchased your forgiveness.

Now, he goes on to assure us here that full complete forgiveness, the assurance of our forgiveness. Here is the result of God's faithfulness to His character and His promises and the fact that His justice has been satisfied in Christ, notice what he says. He says, "If we confess..., He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Here God promises to respond in two ways; it's really one way described two different expressions. The first is to forgive us our sins; Literally, "to be forgiving us our sins."

The Greek word for 'forgives' here means 'to send away, to let go, to give up a debt by not demanding payment for it.' Think about that; God is promising that in response to our confession, He will not hold on to our sins; He will not cling to the debt we owe Him. Instead, He will let our sins go, He will send each one away, He will pronounce the debt completely paid.

"And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," this is really synonymous with forgiveness. Some see it as the cleansing of sanctification, but here, it's truly just another picture of forgiveness. Forgiveness sees sin as a debt that needs to be forgiven; cleansing sees sin as a stain on my soul, but God needs to clean off. It's like Psalm 51:2, "Cleanse me, O God, cleanse me," (Paraphrased).

Notice we are cleansed, not by our confession, but by the blood of Jesus, God's Son, verse 7. So, here's God's promise to the true believer who, as a pattern of his life, is confessing his sins. If you're that person, listen to God, "I will forgive your sins, and I will cleanse you from all

unrighteousness.” So, the believer’s new relationship with sin is shown by the pattern of his life; and as we’ve seen today, is shown by his acceptance of his inherent sinfulness and the regular constant pattern of confessing his sins, not to his Judge but to his Father!

Let’s pray together. Father, thank you for this amazing teaching; thank you that you hear our cry. Lord, you forgave all our sins in your courtroom at the moment of salvation; we never have to go back to the courtroom, we’re justified. Father, thank you that now that you are our Father, when we sin against you, we can come to you and find that relational forgiveness that we so long for. We’ve been bathed; thank you that, through the daily confession of sin, you clean our feet.

Lord, we love you and we are so amazed that you are so faithful to your character, faithful to your promises and just; because Jesus paid for every one of those sins, we confess to forgive us and to cleanse us. Lord, help us to walk in confession. We pray in Jesus’s name, Amen.