

Dealing with My Sin

1 John 1:8-10.

I read some time ago about a U.S. Navy vessel caught in a storm. The First Officer was at the helm that night, when off in the distance he saw the light of a ship that seemed to be coming toward him. He immediately called to the ship on the radio and said, "**This is the First Officer of this naval vessel, calling to inform you that you are on a collision course with us and you must change your heading.**" The ship radioed back, "**Negative, you change your course.**" Big ships can't swerve like a sports car so the officer replied urgently, "**You must move over for a vessel of the U.S. Navy.**" The mysterious ship replied, "**I won't move, you must move.**" The First Officer was infuriated, He alerted the captain and he sent the message, "**I am the captain of a U.S. Battleship, according to maritime law, I order you to divert your course.**" The voice sounded over the radio, "**I am the watchman of the lighthouse. I cannot move. You must avert your course.**"

In v.5, John tells us "**God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.**" God is holy and true and in Him there is no sin or error. Many of us are sailing in dark waters. We may be saved, that is we may have a RELATIONSHIP with God, but little FELLOWSHIP. Why? Because we choose to "**walk in darkness.**"

In the second half of chapter 1 of this letter, John tells us what fellowship with God is like. And he describes the problem that hinders fellowship with God and with others: sin. Last week we saw that there were three false claims that John deals with here. The first one we looked at last week from verse 6:

1. "**If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.**" (1 John 1:6).

The other two we will look at today.

Today we are going to talk about a dirty little three letter word: SIN. What keeps us in "**darkness?**" Sin. What keeps us from having intimacy with God? Sin. What prevents the full power of the Holy Spirit from flowing through our lives? Sin. God not only wants us to have a relationship but close fellowship with Him. He wants us to have full joy, to be continually cleansed and to live in holiness.

Why are so many who claim to love Jesus going no where spiritually? The answer is sin and how we deal with it. Today, we will learn that many deal with sin the wrong way, by denying or rationalizing it. And there is only one right way to deal with sin, to confess it.

I. False Claim #2: "WE HAVE N S " (1 John 1:8)

A. We Deny our Sin (1:8).

"**We claim to be without sin.**" Notice that the word "**sin**" is not plural, but singular in this verse. The sin being talked about here is sin as a root within people. It's apart of human nature as a principle. Those making this claim say that they have no sinful nature. They don't deal with the flesh as most people do. They are sinless. They are saying they have no ability to sin.

He says, "**If we say we have no sin...**" that is the ability to sin. I hear you. You are saying, "**Wait a minute pastor. We know John is writing to Christians. What believer would ever say that he has no sin or no ability to sin?**" I can think of at least three types of believers who deny their ability to sin.

- *First, some Christians have bought the lie of false teachers.*

John was dealing with a religion known as Gnosticism that taught that the man's spirit was pure and his body sinful. Therefore, real sin was impossibility since man was inwardly good and perfect.

Although Gnosticism as a religion is long since dead, its errors are seen in the philosophy of *relativism* today. Relativism basically states, "**Just because something is wrong for you does not mean it is wrong for me.**" In other words there are no absolutes. Light and darkness are figments of our imaginations. Good and evil are merely superstitions. Therefore there is no sin.

This teaching is widespread throughout our culture. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom writes, "**There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes that truth is relative.**"

In *Right from Wrong*, Josh McDowell reports, "**70% of today's generation (both church and non-church youth) claim that absolute truth does not exist, that all truth is relative... 'nothing can be known for certain except the things that you experience in your own life.'** In other words, they don't believe that anything can be definitely defined as right or wrong."

This may be why teenagers can shoot down their fellow students in cold blood, why they can have sex with multiple partners, why violence is entertaining to them, why cheating is only bad if you get caught... they don't know right from wrong. They don't think there is an absolute right and wrong.

Because of the widespread acceptance of relativism, there are a great many people who say they love Jesus, go to church, give and volunteer but never admit that they are sinners. In fact there are many churches who will not even mention sin for fear of offending someone.

Here is the truth: **Denying Sin is Self-Deception** (v.8). Instead of being honest about sin, we say it does not exist and so we "**deceive ourselves**" proving that "**the truth is not in us.**" Sin IS very real. Evil is very real. It is present within all of us.

- *Second, some Christians believe the root of sin has been eradicated within them.*

There are some very sincere believers who have concluded that the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit completely removes the root of sin or the ability to sin from their lives. They quote 1 Jn.3:9, "**Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.**" Now we will deal with that verse in detail in a few weeks. Today let's suffice it to say that John is not teaching that Christians do not have the ability to sin. Look at 1 John 2:1, John says, "**My little children** [that is, children of the faith, this is addressed to fellow believers] **these things I write to you, so that you may not sin.**" John doesn't want Christians to sin. But then he says, "**if anyone sins,**" you see, John knew that Christians do sometimes sin.

Once a man approached the great evangelist D.L. Moody and stated that

he had progressed in holiness to the point where he no longer sinned. Moody smiled and said, "**Well, I'd like to ask your wife about that.**"

- *Third, some Christians believe they have so mastered the flesh that they cannot sin.*

Gal.5:16 says, "**Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**" If we have a relationship with God and diligently pursue fellowship with God by "**walking in the light,**" if we listen carefully to the voice of the Holy Spirit, it is true--we can go for lengths of time without sin.

However, we must never say "**we have no sin**" for the root of sin is always with us. Even the great apostle Paul said in Rom.7:19, "**For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.**"

A pastor finished his message early one Sunday, and he wanted to check his congregation's understanding. So he asked, "*Can anyone tell me what you must do before you can obtain forgiveness of sin?*"

There was a short pause and then, from the back of the room, a small boy spoke up, "*You have to sin.*" There is a lot of truth in that. If we say we have no sin, then we have no forgiveness. If we say we have no sin, we cannot be cleansed from our unrighteousness. All people, even believers, must confront their sin.

B. We Confess Our Sin (v.9).

How do we stop this self-deception? How do we grasp the truth? How do we come to "**walk in the light?**" John says in v.9 that we must "**confess our sins.**"

What does it mean to "**confess?**" It does not mean to ask forgiveness. Christ's atoning work on the cross has already provided our forgiveness for all sin past, present and future. Confession is to see "**our sins**" honestly. *Fess* (as in "fess up") means "to say." *Con* means "with." Which accurately translates the Greek word, "*homologeō*" which means "to say the same." "**Confess**" then means "to say with," to say with God or agree with God concerning our sins. It means to say the same thing about our sins that God says about them.

We should not say, "**Lord, if I sinned today...**" but "**Lord, I did sin today when I...**" Confession is the opposite of denial.

What happens when we "**confess our sins?**" John tells us that God is "**faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" God is "**faithful**" to His promises and to His nature. He is "**just**" in that He does not merely overlook our sin. Jesus has already died to pay for all our sin. Forgiveness is what Jesus bought with His blood on the cross. He is our "**propitiation**" (we'll talk more about this next week).

God does not forgive our sins because we confess them. He forgives our sin because of what Jesus did on the cross. God forgives our sin because he is faithful to His holy and loving nature and because He is just in punishing sins. The good news is that Jesus took our punishment for us. On the cross Jesus suffered and died to pay the debt for my sin and yours.

Confession is our way of receiving the free gift of forgiveness that Jesus has already purchased for us. Forgiveness deals with the debt Jesus already paid.

Cleansing refers to removing the stain, the taint of sin. Sin is the excrement of our soul. I'm not trying to be gross, but as much as our physical excrement may disgust us, our spiritual excrement disgusts God even more.

When we sin, we soil our soul. Our kidneys process the poisons that accumulate in our bodies, and eliminate them. Without that process, we poison ourselves. Humans die from kidney failure every day. The poisons in our bodies can't be processed out, and those poisons eventually backup into our bloodstream and kill us. Sin does the same thing to our souls. If we don't confess our sins, sin just continues to build up like a poison, and our spiritual life deteriorates, our fellowship with God and others is stained.

The required treatment is to come into the light, to confess and be cleansed. You might think of it as spiritual dialysis. Only Jesus can cleanse the poison of sin from our souls through his sacrifice for us.

God won't allow a sin stain spoil our fellowship with Him forever. When we stop denying our sins and "**confess**" them, Jesus "**cleanses us**" and makes us useful for the Kingdom. All of us get stained by our sins. Let's stop denying the stains and let Jesus "**cleanse**" them.

That brings us to verse 10.

II. False Claim #3: "WE HAVE NOT S _____" (1 John 1:10)

We Rationalize our Sin (1:10).

We all have a penchant for rationalizing away our sins. . Rationalizing sin is the most common failure in the Christian experience. In v.6, we saw the person who doesn't like what God's light reveals so he stays away from it. In v.8, we saw the guy who says he doesn't need God's light because he believes there is really no darkness in him at all. Here in v.10 is a person who says, "Of course, I know I *can* sin, but I simply *don't* sin. I know am not perfect. I have my failures, but I have not really sinned."

Rationalization is an evasion of reality, the ability to clothe wrong so that it looks right and evil so that it looks good. It's really just making excuses for our sins.

Is.5:20, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness..."

We rationalize our sin by substituting other less offensive words. What the Bible calls sins we describe as weaknesses, frailties, addictions and genetic disorders.

Joe Wright is the pastor of Central Christian Church in Wichita, KS. On January 23, 1996, He was asked to be the guest chaplain for the Kansas State House in Topeka. He prayed a prayer of repentance that was written by Bob Russell, pastor of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky. According to an article in the Kansas City Star from January 24, 1996, his prayer stirred controversy, and one member of the legislative body walked out. Others criticized the prayer. Here's what he prayed:
"Heavenly Father, we come before you today to ask Your forgiveness and to seek Your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, "Woe to those who call evil good," but that's exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and inverted our values. We confess that: We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism. We

have worshipped other gods and called it multi-culturalism. We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn and called it a choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it political savvy. We have coveted our neighbor's possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the airwaves with profanity and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; try us and see if there be some wicked way in us; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent here by the people of Kansas, and who have been ordained by You, to govern this great state. Grant them Your wisdom to rule and may their decisions direct us to the center of Your will... Amen

What kind of change would it make in our lives and in our church if we simply started calling sin, sin, and stopped making excuses for it by calling something less offensive.

We rationalize our sin by blaming others. We blame stress when we are irritable and impatient. Fatigue makes us speak roughly. We think, "**I would be a better husband if I had a better wife,**" or "**I would be a better pastor if it weren't for my people!**" We say, "**My kids drive me nuts, that's why I yell at them.**" "**I am the way I am because of my parents.**" "**If you knew what my ex did to me you'd understand.**"

In effect, we say that *the problem is not us but our circumstances and others.* We say, "**We have not sinned**" but others have sinned against us. We say, "**It's not my fault. I can't help it. I can't help myself. This is not sin, it is just the way I am.**"

John tells us that with this attitude what we are saying is that God is "**a liar.**" We are not shifting the blame to anyone but God for God controls all circumstances. If we say it is not our fault we are saying that it is God's fault, that He is "**a liar**" when He says He is "**light and in Him is no darkness at all.**" We can't have it both ways. Either we are sinful people or God is a sinful god.

Here is the conclusion: First, there is a warning to the smug and arrogant. If you are feeling you are better than others you are deceiving yourself! You don't understand the nature or the depth of sin. You are most likely hiding behind a mask. You are living in a fantasy world. You think you are better than others but you are not. Stop pretending and let's get honest with God today.

Second, there is a message to the broken. You may feel distant from God today. You may believe deep down that God could never forgive you for what you have done. You see the hurt you have caused. You mourn over the darkness of your soul. You may feel like you have no right to be here in this church. You may live every day in fear that someone is going to learn what you are really like.

Be honest before God. You can take the broken pieces of your life to Him and say,

"Lord, look what I have done. Look at the people I have hurt. Look at how I have ignored your warnings and rebelled against your authority." Take responsibility for your sin and lay your wickedness at the cross of Jesus. Dare to take God at His word. Dare to believe that He will, He does, and He has forgiven you. Trust Him to make you new.

Third, there is good news for the lost. If you have never come to Jesus for forgiveness and cleansing before, come now. Be honest with God.

An elder at a big down-town 1st church went to visit Mrs. Smith in her home. It was this elder's practice to help confirm someone's assurance of their salvation when he went to visit. After a very friendly visit, he said, "Mrs. Smith, are you a sinner?"

She was shocked. "Sir, how dare you. I'll have you know I was a charter member of the 1st church. For years, I have sung in the choir. I have been the past-president of the woman's auxiliary. I have never stolen a thing. I've never killed anyone. Listen, I'm a good person."

The elder was not phased by her verbal rebuke. He asked her "Have you ever sinned?"

Once again, she unloaded another verbal barrage on him.

Before she could reload, he said, "Mrs. Smith, do you believe the Bible is God's Word?"

"Well, of course I do" she replied. "I've been reading it all of my life."

He then opened the Bible on her table to 1 John 1:9 and read it to her. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

After he finished reading, he said, "Mrs. Smith, the Bible says Jesus came to save sinners. Has He come to save you?"

For the first time in her life, Mrs. Smith realized she was also a sinner who needed to be saved by God's grace. "I never realized I was a sinner. Do you think that God would still save an old woman like me?" she asked.

The elder took her by the hand and led her in a prayer for God to forgive her sin and to save her. Her salvation was made sure as her name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Jesus did not die for perfect people. He died for sinners...just like you.

Today the invitation is: Be honest with God and respond accordingly.