

“FRANKLY FACING UP TO OUR SINS”

I JOHN 1:8-10

Pastor Keith E. Gephart

INTRODUCTION

We already noted in v. 6 that there are those who minimize the wickedness of and dangers of sin; they believe that they can have fellowship with God while still walking in the darkness. John’s condemnation of such a position is”

- 1) They are lying, for God is light and has no darkness at all in Him (v. 5)
- 2) They do not practice the truth—and if they don’t practice it, they likely don’t have it either.

John’s solution given is that we must “walk in the light as He Himself is in the Light so that we will have fellowship with one another and that the blood of Jesus His Son will cleanse us from all sin (7).

But now other issues arise. What if some argue that they don’t need cleansing from sin or sins? There have always been groups that for one reason or another deny either the existence and reality of sin, or deny that they have any connection with sin.

- 1) Those with **Gnostic** tendencies of that day who may have had one of several approaches to this issue:
 - a. Did they argue that sin related to the “flesh” and had no connection with “the spirit”?
 - b. Did they argue that the believer has the Spirit and now are beyond the reach of sin and guilt? (See B. p. 44)
 - c. Did they argue that Christians with superior enlightenment and a new nature are now unaffected by sin—have become sinless beings?

Whatever their specific views, their teachings were wrong and caused major problems. If one claims either that he has no sin, or that he has not sinned (vv. 8, 10), then he is not responsible for his behavior and he also denies God’s truthfulness, faithfulness, and righteousness.

- 2) Modern **cults**: There are modern heresies that somewhat resemble the ancient ones—such as Christian Science, New Thought, Theosophy, and their relatives. Christian Science not only denies the reality of matter, it also denies the reality of sin. God can only create good, therefore sin, pain, sickness, and death are all unrealities that need to be stripped of their disguise. Gnosticism did not deny the reality of matter, but regarded it as intrinsically evil. Now John’s concept of sin is consistent with OT teaching that regards it to be the breaking of God’s laws (2:3-6).
- 3) **Christian Perfectionism**: Christian perfectionism is another distortion of John’s teaching concerning sin in this passage. The basic claim of such perfectionism is different in that sin’s reality is not denied, nor is the claim made that they have never sinned, but the similarities make John’s teachings here applicable in that the adherent claims that he has come to the stage in his life that sin has been removed from him completely. That theology is made possible by distinguishing between “sin” and “infirmity.” Sin is the willful transgression of the known law of God; infirmity is the unintentional violation of God’s law due to human ignorance or weakness. The holiness teaching also distinguishes between “inbred sin” (or “depravity of nature”) and “willful sin.” In “**entire sanctification**” the inbred sin is eradicated so that the sanctified believer no longer is indwelt by sin and therefore ceases to commit willful acts of transgression. Infirmities [involuntary, ignorant transgression] remain, but they are not regarded as sins for which one becomes guilty or responsible.
- 4) **The New Morality**: Another contemporary application is with the “New Morality” that refuses to be governed by external standards such as found in the Ten Commandments and in the Law of God. Standards are regarded to be relative and subjective in basis. Circumstances and rational judgment of the human are involved in determining what is right or wrong, and “love” is often the criterion used to determine whether some action is acceptable or not. There are not absolutes. John, however, regards moral values and standards as absolute since they are based on God’s character—and He is “light.” Men must walk in the light (1:5-7). No one can live in darkness or unrighteousness and be in fellowship with God (1:6).
- 5) **Psychological and Sociological** excuses for sin. Responsibility is explained away and “sins” become “weaknesses” or “illnesses” or even “human inheritances” that cannot be avoided—such as alcoholism, other addictions, anger and bad temper, homosexuality, etc.

There are more. But as Paul states, **“Let God be true, though every man is a liar.”** What does God say here about sin?

YOU MUST FRANKLY FACE UP TO YOUR SIN—CONFESS IT AND FORSAKE IT.

- I. THE FALSE CLAIM THAT WE HAVE NO SINFUL NATURE/ORIGINAL SIN (8)
 - A. Those who make this claim are practicing self-deception—very strong expression found only here. We **lead ourselves astray**. Verb uses of false teachers, the Antichrist and False prophet, and **the Devil!**
 - B. Those who make this claim do not have the truth in them. Such is said of Satan in Jn. 8:44—“There is no truth in him.” **It is not good to be put in the same class with the devil!**
 - C. Others are not deceived about us—they can see and know that we are SINNERS!
- II. THE FALSE CLAIM THAT WE HAVE NOT SINNED (10).
 - A. The verb speak of a past action with results continuing to the present time.
 - B. Those who make such a claim make God a liar! [Jn.8:44 says the Devil is a liar!]
 1. God has shown men to be sinners in both Old and New Testaments—Genesis 3, Genesis 6, Romans 3, etc.
 2. God has provided for man’s redemption through sending His own Son to pay sin’s penalty
 3. God sends the gospel to call all men to repent and be forgiven and saved
 - C. Those who make such a claim do not have His word in them—the word is truth spoken and delivered (John 17:17).

Only one human being could say that He was without sin: “I always do the things that are pleasing to Him” (Jn. 8:29); “Which one of you convicts me of sin?” (Jn. 8:46); “The ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me” (Jn. 14:30). **The more a man knows of the meaning of ‘God is light,’ i.e. the more he realizes the absolute purity and holiness of God, the more conscious he will become of his own impurity and sinfulness.** Men can only claim such by 1) Stifling the conscience and 2) Muzzling the word of God.

- III. THE CORRECT CLAIM CONCERNING OUR SIN—CONFESSION (9) [Used elsewhere of confessing Christ]
 - The believer has had forensic forgiveness at the Cross; his guilt and condemnation are gone.
 - But the believer needs filial forgiveness as a child of God in order to restore fellowship with his God.
 - All the contexts of this verb and its companion verb are **public** settings.
 - A. Object of confession—“our sins”—ours, no one else’s; actual sins committed.
 - B. Person confessed to—“He”—**God** throughout the entire context; others as needed, restitution if proper.
 1. He is Faithful—keeps His word, completes His work, guards His own.
 2. He is Just/righteous—gives people what is due; follows His character; supports His law.
Sin must be punished; His Son took the punishment; sin must be forgiven when confessed: **Rom. 3:25-26.**
 - C. Results of confession
 1. Forgiveness of our sins—judicial action—“send away, remove, pardon, forgive” [**Peace**]
 2. Cleansing from defilement [**purity**—progressive sanctification
 - “all unrighteousness”—for He is righteous, He is Light; See I Jn. 5:17—sin is “unrighteousness”
 - God is the agent of cleansing; the blood of Christ the cleansing medium (v. 7)
 - D. Description of Confession—“to say the same thing as”; take God’s point of view
 1. The decision to agree with the Holy Spirit as to our failures as revealed in Scriptures.
 2. A clear declaration to acknowledge our actions as sinful and to accept the verdict of “guilty.”
 3. The determination by God’s grace “to be done with it forever.”

CONCLUSION

It is time to stop “playing with” sin; time to stop “feeling comfortable with” sin. Time to stop renaming sin as being “a mistake,” “infirmity,” “error,” “weakness,” “sickness”, etc. **Call it what it is—“Sin.”**

Do not say “I have no sin.” Do not say, “I have not sinned.”

You are only deceiving yourself, and worse, you make God a liar!

When you twist facts you show that “the truth is not in you,” and that “His word is not in you.”

YOU MUST FRANKLY FACE UP TO YOUR SIN—CONFESS IT AND FORSAKE IT.