

The Certainty of Sin, Part 2

Scripture: 1 John 1:5-2:1

Code: 62-6

We are in a study on Sunday nights of 1 John, so you can open your Bible to 1 John, right at the back of the New Testament, 1 John, 2 John and 3 John, epistles written by John and right before the book of Jude and Revelation. Now I don't want to go back over old ground, it's easy to do that in 1 John because it cycles back around through the same truths again and again. But we don't want to do it any more than we need to. Suffice it to say that John is the apostle of certainty. He is the black and white apostle, he's the apostle of absolutes. He's the dogmatist. And as a writer he writes very, very matter of factly about issues with no caveats and no exceptions, he lays down the divine truth.

And John presents for us in this epistle tests by which someone may know whether they're in the Kingdom of God, tests by which you can measure someone's claim to be a Christian, tests by which you can determine whether, in fact, you are on your way to heaven or not. These tests literally repeat themselves all through this epistle. And we've already gone through the first four verses and John introduces us to what is essentially a doctrinal test. Nobody can call themselves a Christian, nobody can hope to have eternal life and enter into heaven unless they have a proper understanding of Jesus Christ. And that's how John opens his epistle, talking about the \word of life, the living Word, the Lord Jesus who was manifested and John saw Him and bore witness and proclaimed to him that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. That is the first and great truth that John lays down and that is the truth of the incarnation, that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, as he also wrote in the first chapter of his gospel.

For someone to claim to be a Christian, they have to pass that doctrinal test and affirm the incarnation of the God/Man who became for us the life of God manifest, came into the world to die for sinners and to rise again. It is with Him and with the Father through Him that we enjoy fellowship.

Now the second test by which a man or woman can measure their true spiritual condition is the sin test. There is the Christ test and then there is the sin test. And that becomes the theme of verse 5 down through the first half of verse 1 of chapter 2. Let me read it again to you, starting in verse 5, "This is the message we have heard from Him and announced to you that God is light and in Him there's 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 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 we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin."

Here then is the important recognition of the reality of sin. Now we're getting right down to the nub of things, aren't we, in the society in which we live. And that's why John's message is so important for us. We live in a society that, number one, doesn't want to recognize Christ, doesn't want to recognize the incarnation, doesn't want to recognize God in human flesh, the eternal life manifest in the world, doesn't want to recognize that Jesus alone is Savior and that the Word of God is the record that tells us that He will come, the Old Testament; the gospels, that He has come; the epistles, why He has come; the book of Revelation, why He will come again. The world does not want to recognize the singularity of Jesus Christ as the only Savior. Secondly, the world does not want to recognize it is guilty before God for violation of His Law, that is men are sinners. Our society would rather define terms on a psychological level, we would rather talk about people psychological deficiencies, lack of self-esteem, etc., etc. People are victims of certain relationships, certain forms of abuse, certain forms of deprivation, certain forms of second-class citizenship. They have been disenfranchised and that's why they behave the way they do. Anything but a biblical diagnosis of sin.

But here then is another test of someone who is a true believer. They not only have the right view of Christ, but they have the right view of sin. And not so much sin categorically as sin personally...personally. The first man, Adam, was caught in the original dilemma. Adam and his wife flatly disobeyed God, they sinned, they broke the Law of God. They immediately had a choice, confess or cover.

Well you know the story. They covered, they actually covered themselves with some fig leaves that they put together to cover their nakedness which had become for them a point of shame. And then in an effort to further cover, they hid themselves from God. This is ever and always the tendency of sinful man. When becoming aware of his wretchedness, of his sin, when beginning to feel the pangs of guilt and shame, the immediate effort is to cover, to deny, to explain away, to blame anything but confessing.

And so you have typically with human beings covering of sin. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." As long as you will not acknowledge your sin, as long as you would redefine your behavior psychologically or socially, you will not prosper, that is to say you will not prosper, as it were, before God. But when you confess and forsake your sin, then God grants mercy. That's why we say that prior to salvation comes confession and repentance. But the practice of concealing is a very refined art form among

unbelievers. The practice of concealing sin, of covering sin, of redefining sin is characteristic of people who don't know God, who-- to borrow the language of John--are not in the fellowship. They do not fully acknowledge their sin. Oh they might admit they make a mistake here and there, they might admit they could have made a better choice. We hear that so often today. People are victimized by bad choices. That's not really true, better way to say it is people make bad choices because they're basically bad and bad trees don't bring forth good fruit. Bad choices are the function of bad people.

But people want to blame somehow the cultural influences on their choices, or the parental influences on their choices, or the psychological influences on their choices, or whatever it is. As long as people will not confess in the full range of a appropriate confession of their own culpability and sin, they'll never prosper spiritually. But that's what they do, they cover and they conceal. Christians, on the other hand, are people who confess. That doesn't mean that they unpack everything that's wrong in their life and spread it around among people in conversations. It is rather that they are open and honest before God about their iniquities. God has built into mankind a device called conscience. And according to Romans chapter 2 and verse 14, conscience has a very important function. What conscience does is make you feel bad about your sin. That's a very benevolent gift from God, by the way, because it slows down your self-destruction. It slows down your iniquity pace. It slows down the rapid increasing speed of your wretchedness. To be constantly shouted at by your wounded conscience is a help in retarding the speed with which you plunge into eternal destruction. When a person tries to conceal sin, the conscience, an alarm system, goes off.

David said, "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long." Here was David unwilling to confess his sin to God, unwilling to be honest and open to God about his sin, and it was literally tearing him up physically. "Night and day," he says, "Your hand was heavy upon me." How did it manifest itself? "My vitality, my life juices drained away as with the fever-heat of summer." As you were out in the middle of the desert in 120 degrees as it can occur in the land of Israel, and baking and being dehydrated and literally running out of life fluids. That's how David felt because of the weight of his unconfessed sin and the burden of his guilt. "I acknowledge, on the other hand," he says, "my sin to You, my iniquity I didn't hide." Finally he acquiesced to the screaming conscience, to the pain of his own body, the agony of his battle with God and he says, "I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord and You did forgive the guilt of my sin." When he did that, the burden was lifted.

The man who covers his sin in this life heaps upon himself a severe and painful burden and he will not prosper under it. The man who covers his sin in this life also will have it uncovered in the next life. There will be a day for all who cover their sin, Jesus Himself spoke of it in Luke 12, He said this, "Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed. Nothing is hidden that will not be known. Whatever

you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light. What you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops," end quote. What an amazing statement. Jesus said, "You've never said anything anywhere, you've never done anything anywhere, trying to cover it that won't be uncovered. In fact, there is a full record of your sinful life written down by God in what the book of Revelation calls "Books," which keep an accurate record, an infallible record, an unrelenting record and a record in which there is not a single omission of sin. And on the basis of that record comes down a just and righteous sentence from God at the Great White Throne Judgment that catapults the sinner into eternal hell. There will be no secrets. There are no secrets. What you cover now is only for now a secret, and some day it will be fully disclosed. God will in the end judge all sin because all sin is committed against Him.

David is a good illustration of that. You remember that David was out on his rooftop and he was the king so he had the highest roof, palace. And he was looking down on other roofs. He saw Bathsheba and he was pleased with what he saw. He was attracted to her. He lusted for her, as you know. He took her for himself. He had a child by her. He arranged the death of her husband. He literally broke four of the last five commands...four of them. He broke the command not to covet. He broke the command not to steal. He broke the command not to commit adultery. And he broke the command not to kill. In one relationship he broke four of those last five of the Ten Commandments. And even though he had sinned against her, and sinned against her husband, and sinned against the nation, and sinned against his own family, when it came around to his repentance he says this, Psalm 51:4, looking to God he says, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." He recognized that ultimately all sin is against God who alone is absolutely holy and who is always offended by every sin.

Now that is not denying that he had sinned against himself, that he sinned against Bathsheba, that he sinned against Uriah, her husband, that he sinned against the whole nation, that he sinned against his own family, but he recognized that in the end the ultimate heinousness of sin is that it is against God. So that true confession, and we're getting to important thoughts here, true confession is not just admitting I sinned against somebody, it's admitting that all sin is primarily against God. And it is when you uncover sin to that degree, when you uncover it to the degree that you acknowledged that, "I have sinned against You, God," it is that kind of uncovering that causes soul prosperity, that brings a person to true repentance and then through faith to full forgiveness and blessing.

So you have a choice. All sinners have a choice. You can cover up or you can confess. And here John shows us that people who belong to God confess. People who don't, cover up. In our passage then, confession of sin becomes a test of salvation. And as I have been saying to you, there are a number of tests in this epistle. There is the test of doctrine, right doctrine about Christ which we mentioned was in the first four verses and will appear again. There is the test of obedience, which we'll come to very soon. There is the test of love, which we'll also address. And then there is this test of a proper view of sin. John says you can always tell a Christian by their view of Christ, their view of

sin, their view of obedience, and their view of love. And if they do not have what the Bible says is a sanctified attitude toward those things, then they're not Christians no matter what they claim.

So here we are then in this portion of Scripture in which the test of a true view of sin is laid forth. Now I don't want to go into a lot of the background because we've covered it already, but John was writing against the backdrop of some false teachers. And these false teachers had denied the true doctrine of Christ. They had also denied in one way or another, or in several ways, their sin. They neither confessed Christ in the true way, nor did they confess sin. The word confess is a good word, it's *homologeō*, *logeō* is to say...to say; *homo* is the same, something that's homogeneous is something that's the same, something that's heterogeneous is something different. *Homologeō* is to say the same thing, to confess means to say the same thing that God is saying. If you confess Christ, you're saying the same thing about Christ that God says about Christ. If you confess sin, you're saying the same thing about sin that God says about sin. But influencing the churches in Asia Minor where John was ministering were false teachers who came in and were saying different things about Christ. They were false teachers presenting another Christ. And they also were engaged in the denial of the true biblical doctrine of sin.

Now John wants to protect the church. Remember we've been seeing this? John wants to protect the church and he wants to protect it from destructive error. And the first place you have to start to protect the church is to make sure everybody knows who's a Christian because the first way you can identify a false teacher is if you know how to identify a Christian. It's the most important safeguard. Since false teachers and deceivers and antichrists are not true believers, you need to have some criteria in which to evaluate them. John wants to make very clear then who's a Christian. And here is that test that deals with the issue of sin.

Let's go back to verse 5 and just a brief reminder. John starts here, "This is the message we have heard from Him and announced to you." Didn't get this from mankind, this came from divine revelation, this gospel message. And here is its foundation, "That God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all." And I went to some detail last time and I hope you were able to appreciate what I was conveying to you last time, to show you that light is synonymous with life. God is eternal life. As we saw last time, everything is based upon who has eternal life. It all starts with God who grants eternal life. "And in Him is no death," that's what darkness refers to. That eternal life is holy, that eternal life is true, so you're going to see manifest holiness and manifest truthfulness. But the light aspect of God is simply a way to express His life.

So we're talking then about who has God's life. Who has eternal life. That's the point. Since God is light, or life, and dispenses that life to those who believe, we can then know who believes genuinely by the manifestation of the essence of that life, that eternal life which is both holy and truthful. That is

it is committed to sound doctrine and godly living. That's the basic truth of the passage. We're talking about who is in the light, who has divine life.

There are a lot of people who claim to be in the light. There are people in verse 6 who say they have fellowship with Him. That's the same as being in the light. It's the same thing, possessing life, sharing life with God. But they walk in darkness. There are people in verse 7 who actually walk in the light. And that's the distinction. It's not the ones who claim, it's the ones who walk who are the true believers. People in the fellowship have the life of God. They walk in the light of that life and not in the darkness. And anybody who walks in the darkness demonstrates that they're not possessors of the life of God because in Him there is no darkness at all. And we're going to see this kind of unfold.

So another contrast you could say, we're talking about the "if we sayers," and the "if we doers." And as James says, "Be not hearers only but doers, don't even be just hearers and sayers, be doers." It's not enough to claim you're in the fellowship, you have to prove it.

Let's look then, first of all, and we'll only have two points in this text and I don't know that I'll be able to get through them tonight, but the first point, we're going to look at those who claim to be in the fellowship. We'll look at people that John was addressing who claimed to be possessors of eternal life. They claim to belong to God. They claim to possess salvation, be in the Kingdom. Literally to have fellowship with God is to share common life. Fellowship is the word *koinonia*, the noun form *koinonos* means partner. They claim to be partners with God. And he uses, you notice, we...we in verse 6, we in verse 7, we in verse 8, we in verse 9, we in verse 10. And he uses this first-person plural only because he is staying general principles, it's not because John identifies with each, he's rather speaking in sort of a generic way for everybody who will be exposed to this truth. We-meaning anybody, all people, anybody who says this...if we...meaning anybody who says it...if we do...meaning anybody who does it. So this is general principle. Even though he's addressing against...churches against the backdrop of a perhaps unique false system, this is general truth for everybody to come to grips with.

Now as we start into this, we're going to split it up differently than we might normally. We're going to skip around. We're going to look at verse 6, 8 and 10, and then come back and look at the verse 7 and 9 in between because it breaks down that verse 6, 8 and 10 describe those who claim to be in the fellowship, verse 7 and 9 describe those who are in the fellowship. And again this certainly goes along with what we're learning on Sunday mornings as we see Jesus addressing the issue of who is a true disciple. Very similar emphasis made here as it is made throughout Scripture.

Ow here are the claims of false Christians. Verse 6, "They say they have fellowship with Him, but they walk in darkness, therefore they are liars who don't practice the truth." In verse 8, "They actually claim to have no sin and they therefore are self-deceived and the truth is not in them." And then in verse 10, "They claim never to have sinned and such a claim is so contrary to what God says that they make God into a liar and obviously His Word is not in such people."

Notice that in all three cases it is the absence of the truth that is the issue. End of verse 6, they don't practice the truth. End of verse 8, the truth is not in us. End of verse 10, His Word is not in us." This is speaking of gospel truth, saving truth. Nobody is saved, nobody is regenerated, nobody participates in salvation apart from the truth. I was writing the commentary yesterday for...to be published later this summer...on 2...on 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and I was writing a chapter from chapter 2 of 2 Thessalonians and verse 13 and it struck me in such a, I suppose, a fresh way how important the truth is in salvation because 2 Thessalonians 2:13 says, "We should always give thanks to God for you," and this is a whole litany of the elements of salvation, "We give thanks to God for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." The whole plan of God starts with divine love set upon us before the world began, which leads to election, which leads to sanctification, being set apart from sin which is the result of belief in the truth. That's always the issue. Romans 6, Paul says, "You...you are different because you have come to understand that form of doctrine by which you were delivered from your past."

So you have people here who are void of truth, doctrinal truth. And I simply emphasize again for you, nobody is going to be in heaven apart from belief in the truth. That's why we have to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. That goes on all the time. I'm reading a book this dealing actually, personally, with the author of the book and saying, I called him and I said, "Do you know that your book says that non-Christians without belief in the gospel are going to be in heaven? Are you sure you want to say that?" Because there is no salvation apart from belief in the truth, and it's pointed out at the end of these verses that if you don't know the truth and if you don't live in response to the truth, it doesn't matter what you claim. It isn't a matter of what you claim.

Now let's look at these things kind of individually, as we look at verse 6 to verse 8 again. Verse 6, this person says we're in the fellowship. We're just in the fellowship. There's nothing here about sin. He doesn't bring sin up because it's not even...it's not even a reality. There's no discussion of sin in verse 6. He is...he says he has fellowship with God, while he walks in the darkness. He's just a flat liar, John says. He doesn't confess because what's to confess? He thinks the darkness is light. How deceived is he? Now the man in verse 8, the "if we say" there, he's not confessing because he thinks he's reached a state where he has no sin. If we say we have no sin, he recognizes that sin exists, he just doesn't have any.

So there's really no sin for him to be concerned about. If he did have any sin, it was in the past. He's reached an elevated position of enlightenment which is what the Gnostics came to be known as, those who had ascended to the higher knowledge and this group of people John is dealing with here were pre-Gnostic in their thinking.

And you come down to verse 10, and it goes a step further. The first man said...sin? What's that? Second man said...sin? Oh, I don't do that anymore. Third man said...yes there's sin, I've never sinned. He claims he's never sinned. If we say we have not sinned, never...we have a problem here.

It's evident that you don't know the truth. You don't know the truth about the gospel and you don't know the truth about sin. And they go together. None of these claimers are in the fellowship. None of these claimers are in the light. None of them are saved, they failed the test of a right understanding of their own sinful condition. The first guy thinks that his sin is actually righteousness. The second person thinks he's reached a state where he doesn't sin. And the third one has never sinned.

Now to go back through again just to continue to enrich you and follow John's sort of cyclical pattern, let's go back to verse 6 and let's just pick a word that we can use to define each verse. The first word is "darkness....darkness." "If we say we have fellowship with Him," a lot of people say that. "Yes, we have fellowship." What does that phrase "fellowship with Him" mean? They share common life. That's what fellowship means to us in a mundane sense. If I say I have fellowship with certain people, you know that we share life, we share common aspects of life. This is a person who says, "I share life with God." It's another way of saying, "I've received the light of God's life. I have possessed...I have been made a possessor of eternal life. I have the common eternal life with God. I am a partner, a *koinonos* with God."

If they say that, and many do...many, many say that. I'm a partner with God. I hate to bring it up but certainly the whole Catholic priesthood says that. They're the vicars of Christ under the great Pope who is the supreme, infallible representative of Jesus Christ in the earth, according to Catholic theology. They are not only the possessors of God's life, they are the purveyors of God's life. They can give it to you through the sacraments. We know God, they say. We walk in the light. In the truth of the matter, we're all starting to find out, they walk in the darkness. Don't they? Serious darkness.

In order to deal with the claim, we have to examine the life. So if we say we have fellowship with Him, it doesn't mean anything if we walk in the darkness. Walk is an expression that refers to the manner of life, how you live your life. It's not the claim that matters, it's the conduct. To say you have the life of God and you possess His eternal life, you are therefore in the light of His life, you're a

partner with God, you fellowship in the same common life with God and then walk in death and unholiness and untruth, you're a liar. Plain and simple, you're a liar. That's what he says. We lie if we do that. We lie. You can't claim to be in the light while you're walking in darkness, and it's just an amazing thing how many religious leaders, how many people within the framework, the broad framework of Christianity claim to be the instruments of God, who know God, who talk that God talk and many people in their congregations, massive millions of people all over the face of the earth in Catholicism and all kinds of other forms of quote/unquote Christianity who claim to know God and obviously when you look at their walk, how they live their daily life, it's a walk of death, of sin and untruth.

Matthew 6:22 describes this condition. Jesus gives a very vivid little illustration. "The lamp of the body is the eye, if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body is full of light." That's a wonderful analogy. If you close your eyes, it's dark. You open your eyes, the light floods through your eyes, goes into your brain and your brain perceives everything. Then he says this, "But if your eyes' bad, your whole body's full of darkness." That's right. If you're blind, it's darkness. And then he adds this, "If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness?" And He moves from the argument of the lesser to the greater. If it's bad to be physically blind, and to be in the dark, how much worse is it to be dark in your soul? Jesus came, John wrote, you remember, in his gospel, He was the light and the light was shining in the darkness. He was the true light. But as we learn later in the gospel of John, men loved...what?...darkness rather than light. Somebody saying they're in the light and walking in the darkness is just telling lies. Somebody saying they have fellowship with God while you look at their life and you see darkness, that is they do not know the truth, they do not live virtuous and holy lives, whatever they claim is a lie.

This was the...one of the early claims of pre-Gnostic heresy. They were living in this kind of blatant sinfulness, blatant sinfulness...claiming that this was only their physical body, this was only the physical part of them. And so it was...it didn't matter. It had no implications, it had no influence, it had no effect on their pure, enlightened spirit. And John takes them right down to earth and says, "If you claim to have a pure, divinely, enlightened spirit but your life is dirty, you're lying...you're lying." There's no such thing as some mystical intimacy with God. There's no such thing as some spiritual bridge that takes your soul into the holy place while your body is sinning. That was...that was the lie that was prevailing. And there are a lot of people who live that lie today, as we've been learning. Parading around as if they are holy men, who walk in the darkness and not the light. They do not the truth, that's present tense at the end of verse 6, they continually and habitually function apart from divine truth. They don't understand it, they can't comprehend it. The natural man understandeth not the things of God, divine truth is incomprehensible to them, they may have Bibles, they may have theology books, they may have gone to seminary, etc., etc., they do not understand the truth. More importantly, they do not do it...they do not do it.

Over in chapter 3 verse 4, "Everyone who practices sin, practices lawlessness and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins. And no one who sins has seen Him or known Him, or knows Him," either one. So here's John, black and white. Down in verse 9 he says, "No one who is born of God practices sin because His seed abides in him, he can't sin, he's born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who doesn't love his brother." And he will repeat that same thought again. It's not what you claim, it's how you walk.

Truth is not just a creed. It is a kind of life. It's back again to James 1:22, being doers of the Word. And John really addresses this in his third epistle, verse 11, "Beloved, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. The one who does good is of God. The one who does evil has not seen God." I mean, how obvious is it? If your life is characterized by walking in evil, you don't know God. You don't have fellowship with God. You're not in the light. Jesus said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." If you say that you have fellowship with Him, but you walk in the darkness, it's a lie.

I love what it says in Colossians 1 that the Lord has delivered us..first of all, qualified us, verse 12, to share in the inheritance of the saints in light because He's delivered us from the domain of darkness. We have the life of God which manifests itself in a knowledge of an obedience to the truth as well as love. Not a matter of what you claim, it's a matter of how you walk. A Christian can never walk in darkness. We're in God, we possess His life. We're in Christ. We're in the Holy Spirit. And God is light and in Him is no darkness.

You say, "Wait a minute...wait a minute. Are you saying we never sin?" No, I'm not saying that. Go down to chapter 2 verse 1, the middle of the verse, "If anyone sins, we have an advocate." That is the only...the only exception in this whole epistle. And John has to say that. He's not saying we never sin,. He is saying that's not the pattern of our lives. We have a new pattern of life. And we walk in obedience and love in the truth. We may occasionally do the deeds of darkness, but we don't walk in the darkness. We walk in the light and the character of our lives is a manifestation of God's life and holiness and truth.

So the first word describing the claimers we'll use for verse 6 is the word "darkness." The second word for verse 8 is the word "deceit...deceit." Verse 8, "If we say we have no sins, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." This is really worse in some ways than the first claim. The first people sort of redefined life without sin. And that was just sort of a generic kind of philosophical thing. There just was no sin. So that at least for them they had reached some...some philosophical point

where they had been convinced that for people with enlightened spirits, sin doesn't really exist in terms of touching that inner man. Well this is in some ways worse. This is someone who says, "Well, it does exist, but it doesn't touch me." This is a step up from the level of pride of the people in verse 6. This is the person who says I don't have any sin, it's not a part of my life. The first category of people may have felt that sin was there, but only in the physical, this person says I don't have any sin...no sin. Sin is in the singular, referring to the actual principle of sin, a denial that it's there. Maybe believing...and we can't fill in all the blanks...that they had ascended to this place in their Gnosticism which means, from the Greek word "to know," that elevated knowledge. Well anybody who thinks that, he says, that we are deceiving ourselves. This is a serious case of self-deception. If you're interpreting what's wrong in your life psychologically, socially, if you're trying to define what's wrong in your life as the absence of self-esteem, which is popular in our world today, you have a serious problem. You are self-deceived. You don't know how wretched and wicked and vile you are. And that's clear evidence that the truth isn't in you, you don't know the truth.

And the first...you know, I would say this, the first truth that anybody needs to know is the truth about sin before they know the truth about salvation, wouldn't you agree? To claim that you're sinless is to be hopeless...hopeless. Because Scripture is so clear we're sinners. And I'm not going to rehearse all of the portions of Scripture that define the depravity of man, I mean, there are plenty. But if you need to go somewhere, read Romans chapter 3 verse 10 through verse 23, and you're going to find there that nobody escapes, nobody. Or if you like the Old Testament, you can read 2 Chronicles 6:36 which says there's no man that doesn't sin, no one, perfectionists included. Nobody can deny sin and claim fellowship with God. You can't say, "I'm in the fellowship, I know God, I walk with God, because I don't have any sin." Boy, are you deceived. If on the other hand, if you're really walking in the light, you're going to be overwhelmed with the sin that is there, even though that's not the normal pattern of your life, when it is there you're going to see it for what it is because the light shines on it. I've often said through the years, we do not walk in darkness, if we do the deeds of darkness, we do them in the blazing light of the life of God and they are revealed.

But a person who denies sin, first of all, lives in the darkness. And secondly, is self-deceived. That's compounding the sinner's problem. It's one thing to be in the darkness. It's something else to be deceived about that condition. And finally, there's a third word here that we can use for verse 10, let's use the word "defamation," since we're using "D" words...darkness, deceit and defamation. Anybody who denies their sin, anybody who will not admit their sin engages in defamation. Of whom? Verse 10, "If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us."

Again it's apparent we don't know the truth because if you knew the truth you wouldn't deny your sin. That's clear in all three verses. But in this one we've reached sort of the high point. Here is the person who says not only do I not sin, I've never sinned...never. It's not that I've just reached some

point of enlightenment, I've never sinned. In a sense, it's hard to distinguish these three from each other, they overlap so much. But...and maybe I'm forcing the issue just a little bit but it seems to me that John has a reason to repeat these things. There are some people who just redefine sin and say it's the light, when it's the darkness. There are some people who think they have reached the point of enlightenment where they don't sin and then there are some people who think they've never sinned. And if you say you've never sinned, you just made God a liar. Why? Because God says all have...what?...sinned. And God, according to Titus 1:2, cannot lie. First John 5:10, "The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself, the one who doesn't believe, God has made him a liar."

There are two ways you can make God a liar...two ways you can blaspheme God that John points out. Number one, deny that you're a sinner and you just made God a liar because God said you are a sinner. Number two, deny that Jesus Christ is the Savior and you've just blasphemed God who said He is the Savior. And John points those out. One in chapter 1, and the verse I read in 1 John 5:10. And there is no greater form of blaspheme than to deny that you're a sinner and that Jesus is the Savior, to put it simply. If you say you haven't sinned, you just made God a liar.

Well you say, "What does God say about my sin?" Well, listen to Romans 3, this is what God says and Paul writes what is essentially a section with verses borrowed from the Old Testament. "There is none righteous, no not one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become useless. There is none who does good. There's not even one. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their paths. The path of peace have they not known. There's no fear of God before their eyes." Verse 23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." And that's just a summation. And if you say you haven't sinned, you just made God a liar. And if you say Jesus isn't the Savior, you have made God a liar because God has said His Son is the Savior and Redeemer.

So, go ahead and deny sin. And what are you left with? Darkness, deceit and defamation. And therein is the profound essence of human depravity. Man is a sinner and he covers his sin, plunging himself into darkness, self-deception and blasphemy against God. Those kind of people may say they have fellowship with God, but they don't. They don't. They may say we have fellowship but they lie, the truth is not in them. They failed the test of the doctrine of sin and it is because they don't know the truth. The truth isn't in them. The truth isn't in them. And the third time he uses the Word...the Word of God isn't in them.

Now this reminds us at the end of...this is where we're going to stop tonight...but it reminds us at the end that if we're going to bring somebody to a true understanding of their sin, we have to take them to the true revelation of sin and that's the Word of God, right? So when you're witnessing to somebody and you want them to understand their true condition before God, you open the Bible and you show them what God says about their sin and then you remind them that if they feel prone to cover and hide and deny that, that's evidence of how dark the darkness is, how deep the deception is, and how severe the defamation of God is. And you need to remind people that if you point to the Bible and God says this about them, and they deny that that is true, they need to be reminded that they are guilty of calling God a liar.

You can say that in a gracious way. But no matter how you say it, it's not a gracious reality. To say to somebody, "I hate to tell you this, but you just called God a liar, and for you to have the brashness and the boldness and the pride to call God a liar is unimaginable, who do you think you are?" That ought to stimulate something in their thinking. So John says, "Look, there's a test here to determine a true Christian and it's about sin. Anybody who comes along and claims to have the fellowship but there's a life pattern of darkness, and they might even parade as if they are holy, and sinless and maybe ever sinned, that's positive evidence that they are in the darkness, in a serious state of self-deception and engaging in blasphemous defamation of God." True believers when they do the deeds of darkness, even as they walk in the light, don't deny them. Before God there's an openness and an honesty and a confession. There's a willingness not to cover, but to confess. We're going to see how that works next time. Let's pray.

Well, Lord, You know that sometimes we planned to cover a certain amount of material and just don't have the time to do that. And we just have to trust You with what You've given us tonight. It's so important, so important to remember what David said that when he confessed his sin he was liberated, he was freed from the debilitation of a frantic, abused conscience and his soul was put to peace and rest. You know, as believers we have a choice, bring our sins before You and confess or cover. But, You know, Lord, those of us who have already been to the cross, we already understand that we are sinners, we've made that known to you when we embraced the only sacrifice for sin, Jesus Christ. We are self-confessed wretches, we are self-confessed reprobates, we are self-confessed iniquitous, worthless, sinful men and women who had not within us any capacity to alter that condition and so came by the prompting and convicting work of the Holy Spirit to cast ourselves upon Your mercy provided for us in Christ. And plead that You would forgive us and change us and some day change us totally and completely so that we could ultimately and finally and forever be holy. Those of us who came to the cross and prayed that prayer, even those who were baptized tonight, we have already acknowledged our sin. We don't stand with those who say we have fellowship but walk in an unbroken pattern of darkness. We don't stand with those who say we have no sin, or we have never sinned. We say we are sinners, we have sinned, we do sin but we have confessed and we have received Your forgiveness and we now walk in the light of eternal life granted

to us by Your great grace through the resurrection of Christ who is our life. I just pray, Lord, that all who are here are in the light, possessors of the light, who are not covering their sin but uncovering and confessing it for where there is that confession...as we'll see next time...there is that full cleansing. And give us discernment to protect the church from those who say they're in the light but walk in darkness, self-deception and defamation of Your glorious and holy Word. We thank You for this wonderful day that we've shared together, for all the truth that has been brought to bear upon our hearts for which we are now responsible. Give us opportunity to live it, to proclaim it. We pray in Your Son's name. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).