

The Certainty of Sin, Part 3

Scripture: 1 John 1:5-2:1

Code: 62-7

We return tonight to 1 John chapter 1, and I apologize that we have been so often interrupted and will be again interrupted over the next couple of weeks, but we're going to keep working at it as much as we can because it is such a marvelous and wonderful book for us to study. We're in the first chapter of 1 John and we're actually looking at the last section in the chapter, verses 5 through 10 and we've entitled this section, "Confession of sin, a certain proof of salvation....Confession of sin, a certain proof of salvation." This is part 4 in our look at these verses.

By way of an introduction, let me say that this past week I had the opportunity to participate in the Christian Booksellers Convention down at the Anaheim Convention Center. I suppose there were about 20,000 or 25,000 people down there associated with Christian literature, music and Christian stuff in general...whatever that might be that you sell in the name of Christianity at the broadest possible level. And I had the opportunity to speak and to be involved in some various projects and meetings and things there. I also had the opportunity to meet with editors of a well-known publishing house in our country and one that has had a wonderful reputation for publishing those things that represent the Word of God. And recently they published a book on salvation and I brought it to their attention that in this book on salvation, I could not find anywhere the word "repentance." And I asked the question, "How can you publish a book on salvation that doesn't mention the word 'repentance'?" I even called the author, whom I know, and asked the same question. How could you write a book on salvation that doesn't mention repentance? How can you have a book on salvation that doesn't deal with confession of sin?

Repentance and confession is one of the great themes of Scripture. Repentance is a work of God done in the heart necessary to salvation and equally sustained unto sanctification. It is not only God's work in the heart leading to salvation, it is the continual pattern of the heart producing sanctification. Repentance, confession of sin is a constant way of life for one who comes to the Lord.

To say it another way, true Christians are by nature repenters. I remember years ago the first time I went to the former Soviet Union just after perestroika and glasnost and they were fresh in terms of enjoying the freedoms that the yoke of communism had kept from them. And there was a...there was an openness, it was a wonderful thing and I was so thrilled to go there in that openness and proclaim Christ. Many things stunned me about eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, but one, I think,

shocked me the most was how they spoke of conversion. And it is true throughout Eastern Europe, in particular the former Soviet Union, they say, "I repented." And the first time I ever preached there, I preached to a packed church, I preached the gospel and the pastor got up and said, "If anyone wants to repent, please come to the front."

Well, I didn't know how they were going to get there because there weren't any aisles because people packed the pews, packed the aisles, stuffed the doorways and in the winter they were outside in the cold looking in the windows. I didn't know how anybody could get to the front, but come they did. If I remember right, I stopped preaching about 11:30 and they stopped coming about 1:30. And what would happen would be they came to the front and the pastor would take the microphone and hand it to them and say, "Please repent." And the person would take the microphone and repent. And so, when anyone over there spoke of their conversion they say, "I repented such and such a place...I repented at such and such a time." They don't talk about being born again, they don't talk about being saved, they don't talk about being converted, they talk about repenting.

For the true believer, repentance is a way of life. Confessing sin is habitual. Covering sin, denying sin, trivializing sin, diminishing sin characterizes non-Christians and that really is the message of this section of the first chapter, verses 5 through 10. Listen to it, "This is the message we have heard from Him and announced to you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say 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."

And here John is giving a test and the test that he gives in this section...many tests are given through this epistle, as you remember, but the test that he gives here is the test of true salvation, the first test and it is the test of confession. It is the test of repentance. To John, repentance is an indicator of genuine salvation and so he expresses that in the verses I just read. And in the first part of the first verse of chapter 2 he says, "My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin." And with that he closes that section. The chapter division should come between that statement and the next one in verse 1, and we'll look at that in a few moments.

His basic premise is in verse 5 and we're just going to review that for a moment. In the...in verse 5 he establishes this premise, "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." And John says there is a division...there is light and there is darkness. And God is all light and in Him there is no darkness. What does it mean that

God is light? Well, we could say that light refers to truth and we would be right. We could say that light refers to virtue or righteousness or holiness and we would be right, it does in the Bible. But primarily light is a synonym, as I proved to you some weeks ago, light is a synonym for eternal life which is by nature both true and pure, true and holy.

So what he is saying here is that the eternal life which God gives has no darkness in it. This is foundational to the whole epistle. There is life and there is death, there is light and there is darkness. The life that comes from God is that eternal life which is both true and pure. And those who have that eternal life manifest both that love of the truth and that love of purity that is consistent with that eternal life. There were at John's day and always, including today, those people who wanted to claim they knew God. And so you have in verses 6 and following the "if we sayers," if we say, verse 6, if we say, verse 8, if we say, verse 10. But that's not what John is interested in. "If we say" means nothing. It's if we walk, it's if we confess that matters, verses 7 and 9.

We saw last time those who claimed to be in the fellowship, and he uses the plural pronoun "we" only because he is stating truth that is applicable to all people. And in verse 6, "If we," that is anyone, "say we have fellow with Him," fellowship with God, "and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." Claiming to possess eternal life isn't sufficient to prove it. We look at your life and do we see that eternal life manifest in the love of truth and the love of holiness? Claiming to be in the fellowship and walking in darkness indicates that rather than being believable in our confession, we are rather liars who do not practice the truth. Verse 8, "If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us." Somebody who doesn't recognize sin in their own life is self-deceived, possesses no true understanding. Verse 10, "If we say we haven't sinned, we make Him a liar," and that is blasphemy and mockery of God and surely His Word is not in us.

And so, just to claim to possess eternal life is not enough. You may claim it and be a liar. You may claim it and be deceived. You may claim it and blaspheme. And John, of course, was talking to people who were doing just that, making claims to be connected to God which claims were not true.

And so, as we saw last time, they failed the test of repentance. They failed the test of repentance. In verse 6, "They say they have fellowship with God but they walk in darkness." And so the first word that describes them is "darkness." There is the absence of life, eternal life, characterized by the love of truth and the love of holiness. Further, it's even beyond that in verse 8, they go so far as to say, "We have no sin." Not only do they say we have no sin but in verse 10 they say "We have never sinned." They redefine their human condition without regard for the reality of sin. Though they are dead in trespasses and sin, they are deceived and deceiving. Their condition is blasphemous against God whose true diagnosis they mock.

And so, John simply says in these very, very penetrating words, "You're not in the fellowship because you say you are if you're not confessing sin in the present and in the past, walking in the light of truth

and holiness and practicing what that truth proclaims." It's not what you say, it's who you are.

So let's look at the second in these two groups here, those who are in the fellowship. Not those who claim to be but those who are. Now the words that we just saw defining those who claim are darkness, deceit and defamation we could say for verse 10, they defame the name of God. But there are three words to describe the true believers here and they're very simple. Let's just start with the word "cleansed...cleansed." Go back to verse 7 for a moment. "But on the other hand, unlike those who say and don't do, 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."

Now let's talk about this verse, this one and verse 9 are not easy to interpret, I want you to hang in there because this is very, very important. Walk is in the present subjunctive, it refers to continual action. It is hypothetical because it's a general statement that is thrown out generally and applies only to some people but should be known by all...If we are continually, habitually moving in the light. Walk is a term used throughout the New Testament to speak of constant daily conduct. Paul uses it numerous places. Walk is synonymous with living your life on a daily basis. This is the index to a person's true spiritual condition. It's not what they claim, it's not what they say, it's how they walk, how they step-by-step live their life. And if step-by-step, day-by-day we walk in the light, that is we manifestly evidence that eternal life which is synonymous with the light, we then are the ones truly having fellowship with one another and being cleansed by the blood of Jesus. If we are sharing that very light of God, if we are sharing that very eternal life of God and we show that by a continual life pattern of behaving in a way that reflects that eternal life of God, then we demonstrate that we are, in fact, true believers. We are the ones, notice there are two ways he describes us, we are the ones who have fellowship with one another. This, I believe, refers to God. We are the ones having fellowship with God, we are in communion with God. The ones who are walking in the light are having fellowship with God because we possess the common eternal life.

On the other hand, no matter what you claim if you walk habitually in the darkness, your claim is a lie because you do not practice the truth, as verse 6 says. If you have received Jesus Christ truly, if you have been regenerated, if you have been born again, then you are walking in the light, that is you are walking evidencing on a routine basis that you possess eternal life which is manifest in the love of truth and holiness. And you are, in fact, demonstrating that same attitude that He Himself has, that's why we call it godliness. If you have received Jesus Christ as manifest by the fact that you live out that eternal life which is in you, you then have fellowship with Him. We have fellowship one with another, that is a believer and God. And you can say, like in verse 6, you have fellowship with Him, it doesn't mean anything unless it's manifest in the way you live your life.

And the second thing he says, if you live this way not only are you enjoying communion with God, but the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. Now listen carefully, because I have eternal life, because I'm in the light, because I love truth and holiness does not mean that I do not sin. As long as I'm in the flesh I will sin. As long as I'm in this unredeemed humanness I will sin. As long as I'm on this side of heaven I will sin. "But when I sin, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son keeps on cleansing us." What a great statement. Sin never alters the fellowship because it is continually being cleansed. The blood of Christ is simply a vivid gory way to describe His death. He loves us, according to Revelation 1:5, He released us from our sins by His blood, by His sacrificial death. And if I have come to Christ, truly embraced Him, I will be being continually cleansed, therefore I will be being continually in fellowship with God because nothing can really come between. I will enjoy that partnership with God in an unbroken fashion.

And please notice, the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from how much sin? All sin, all sin, every sin...no sin in the life of a believer ever goes uncleansed...never. The cross provides a full cleansing. You say, "Well how can God do that?" He can do that because Jesus paid the penalty for all that sin in full, did He not? If you are walking in the light, that is if you are a possessor of eternal life, manifesting itself in the way you live your life which is demonstrable in the love of truth and holiness, as you live that way you reveal that you are in the light, you are having your sins consistently cleansed.

By the way now, confession is not a condition in verse 7. Confession is not a condition for cleansing. There isn't any condition except salvation. What this means is that always, all the time for those who are God's who dwell in the light with Him, who possess eternal life, there is constant complete and full forgiveness. Oh there are people who want to argue about this and they say, "No, no, that's wrong, this verse means that Christians can walk in darkness but they better stop and start walking in the light if they are going to be forgiven and cleansed." Really! So the only way I can get forgiven and cleansed is if I stop sinning. Well then I don't need it. It seems fairly apparent. You're telling me forgiveness and cleansing is only available to those who don't need it? This is not a command, this is no command in verse 7. This is a fact. Christians always in the light, always in the fellowship, always enjoy cleansing. How thrilling is that? Always, always, always, all sin is being cleansed.

First Corinthians 6:11, "Such were some of you but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." When you came to Christ you were washed and you were declared righteous before God by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. You were covered with His righteousness. You are no longer guilty, defiled or unclean. Ephesians chapter 1 verse 7 says, "That He has forgiven all your trespasses in the redemption provided through His blood."

Turn for a moment to John 13, there is a comparative passage that is instructive for us. In John 13 and someone would ask the question if I didn't refer to it, in John 13 and verse 8 Jesus was going to

wash the disciples feet. Of course, impetuous Peter in verse 8 said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet." Peter was feeling humble at the time and didn't want His Lord to stoop and wash his filthy feet. Jesus answered, "If I don't wash you, you have no part with Me." Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head." And Jesus said, "Stop it, Peter, you're tampering with the illustration! I know exactly what I want to do here, just be quiet." Jesus says, "The point is this, he who has bathed needs only to wash his feet but is completely clean and you are clean."

The idea is simple. In the Orient before a man would come to a dinner like this, he would take a bath thoroughly cleaning himself. He had then when he arrived only to wash off the dirt from his feet and he would be prepared to recline at the meal. And each time he went outside and came into a house through the day, he would need not to take a full bath again but just to wash off his feet. Jesus is saying, "Look, once you've been cleansed, once you've been bathed, all sin has been removed, only the dust of the world needs to be cleaned from your feet and I'll continue to do that." Jesus washes their feet as a way of saying...in salvation you're bathed and as your feet get dirty along the way, I'll clean them too. This is a marvelous picture of the ongoing continual washing that Christ provides for those who are His.

Back to 1 John, this is just thrilling. The first word then that describes the one who is in the fellowship, the possessor of eternal life is the word "cleansed." The second word is "confessing...confessing." This in verse 9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I suppose most people have memorized that verse somewhere along the line if you've ever been in a Bible class or a Bible study or Sunday school somewhere along the way. Very familiar verse and yet it's not an easy verse to interpret because on the surface it appears to be conditional. If we confess, He forgives...conversely, if we don't confess, He won't forgive. But we've just heard in verse 7 that as we are walking in the light, as we are truly God's in the fellowship, demonstrating the love of the truth and the love of holiness that characterizes those who possess eternal life, as we walk that way in communion with God the blood of Jesus His Son keeps on cleansing us from sin. Which is to say, we haven't become perfect, we still sin but it's constantly being cleansed. We had been bathed at salvation and Jesus just keeps washing our feet. Why then in verse 9 do we introduce this condition? Why is this introduced, "if we confess our sins He's faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness," when it says in verse 7 He's already cleansing us from all sin?

Well we want to understand that. First of all, He is faithful. He will continue to do what He says He will do I verse 7, He will cleanse us from all sin. He is faithful to His promise, the promise of the New Covenant, Jeremiah 31:34, "I will forgive their iniquity, I will remember their sins no more," and all the

other passages of Scripture that speak about forgiveness, removing our sin as far as the east is from the west, bury it in the deepest sea. He is faithful to do that. He is righteous to forgive, not unrighteous because Christ has paid the penalty in full, so it is a righteous act of God, it is a just act of God since the penalty was paid to forgive the guilty sinner.

So here is simply a reiteration that He is faithful and righteous to do exactly what He said He would do and that is to keep on forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. By the way, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins in the aorist tense which speaks not so much of a process but a single act. That's wonderful, wonderfully important because it shows that forgiveness is not constant, it's not habitual, it's rather event related which shows that the pre-salvation unbroken pattern of habitual sin has ceased and sin comes here and there and here and there. Later on in chapter 3 we'll see that in verse 10, "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. Anyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not of God." Back in verse 9, "No one who is born of God practices sin."

In other words, that habitual practice of sin and unrighteousness is broken and now sin rather than being the continual pattern of life, present tense or imperfect tense in the past, is now that event which interrupts the righteous flow of life.

Now he says that God is faithful and righteous to forgive the sins of those who confess. What does *homologeomai* mean? What does the word confess mean? It means to say the same thing, to say the same thing. *Logeo* is to speak or to say, *homo* is the same...the same. Homogeneous means it's the same, heterogeneous means it's different, *homo* means the same. It is to say the same thing. What do you mean? To confess your sin is to say the same thing about your sin that God is saying about it. It is to acknowledge reality. It is to affirm the truth. It is to say what God is saying.

Look down in chapter 2 verse 12, "I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His namesake." Your sins are forgiven because that's what salvation gives you. Your sins are forgiven because that's what God promises you. Your sins are forgiven because they have been justly paid for. Your sins are forgiven because Jesus promises to wash your dirty feet. Your sins are forgiven, chapter 2 verse 12, "Because of His namesake." That is to say because it is consistent with who Jesus is and what He promised. In other words, not to forgive you would be a breach of the integrity of the Son of God. It's not something that He does reluctantly, it's not something by which you're sort of hanging by a thread, it is consistent with a perfectly faithful, perfectly righteous, just, holy, loving nature of God, it is consistent with the justice of God to keep on cleansing those who sins have been fully paid for and it is filial as well. God will continue to do that for those who are His own beloved children for whom He sent His Son to die and whom He has brought into His eternal family and to whom He has granted eternal life and in to whom He has planted a new nature...a nature they

share with Him.

So then, how does the phrase "if we confess our sins" fit in? How does it fit in? Well the Roman Catholic Church has an answer. They say you're not going to be forgiven if you don't go to the priest and confess. Confession to the priest becomes a meritorious act and you know what happens when you go to confession and you confess your sin? That meritorious act earns you forgiveness. Does that sound right? Can forgiveness be earned by a meritorious human act? Forgiveness then becomes a reward for your meritorious conduct. And when you go from the confessional booth and cycle your way through the beads and say your rosary as many times as you're told to say it, that continued meritorious act earns you forgiveness in the Catholic view. And that is the "if we confess" that brings about in their view the forgiveness.

Socinius said, another view, "Confess simply means to perceive sin, to be aware or conscious of it." The psychological view is that confessing sin is therapeutic, that is it teaches you humility and it's really good to feel bad, it's cathartic and if you can just feel really rotten and weep, that catharsis is especially helpful and you will feel forgiven because you gushed and wallowed and inflicted pain on yourself. That shows up in Catholicism as well. Others say this can only be referring to salvation. This is looking at the moment of salvation, "if we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins," the problem with that is there's more than just confessing your sins to being saved. You have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And furthermore, confess here is in the present tense and should be translated "if we are confessing our sins" as a pattern. And there are others who say, this is the more popular view, that you're only forgiven the sins you confess. One writer put it this way, "Confessed sin will be forgiven, unconfessed sins will remain in a person until the judgment seat of Christ, then He will deal with them. Sin can never be cleansed from us until it is forgiven in us, it is never forgiven in us until it has been confessed by us," end quote. That's not true. That means you're going to go to heaven with unforgiven sins. There's nothing in the Bible that indicates that and it diminishes the work of Christ, right? People just say things, I think. I think they get enamored with their own little ditties and their own little musings and they just say things without regard for Scripture.

The twelfth verse again of chapter 2, "Your sins are forgiven you for His namesake," it's not about you, it's about Him. He forgives your sins because it's consistent with who He is. It's consistent with the God of justice and mercy and with the accomplishment of Jesus Christ on the cross. You do not have to confess every sin to have every sin forgiven.

In Romans chapter 4 in verse 6, David speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works, "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." I mean, we're blessed because God forgives all our sins, they're forgiven, forgotten, removed from the

account. "Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving each other even as God for Christ's sake as forgiven you," Ephesians 4:32. So that kind of popular view can't be right.

Confession here isn't presented as some tit-for-tat kind of concept, confess-get forgiven, confess-get forgiven, and it goes like that. Rather what it's saying is this, if we are the ones confessing our sins then we are the ones being forgiven. To say it another way, the ones who are being forgiven are characterized as confessors. That is the only way to understand this verse in the context both of this passage and the Bible. The forgiveness is not because of the confession, listen to this, the confession is because of the forgiveness. One of the things that the Spirit of God works in the life of a forgiven person is a hatred of sin, particularly in his or her own life. And that hatred of sin rises from the heart as penitence, as confession. Somebody who comes along and says, "I'm in the fellowship, I'm in the light, I know God, I commune with God, I have eternal life," and who denies sin is a liar, who says they don't sin, they never have sinned, they're liars, they're deceived. On the other hand, if we are the ones continually confessing our sins then that is indicative of the marvelous work of the Spirit of God in our lives that has cleansed us from sin and given us a holy hatred of sin which causes us to be confessors.

I remember years ago when I first came to Grace Church I was teaching in a place at UCLA called "The Light and Power House." Hal Lindsey and Ray Nethery(?) and some people who had come out of Campus Crusade were teaching there and they were teaching that you never need to confess your sin, that you don't have to confess your sin, you only confess it once. They took the view that this is a salvation verse, you confess once, that's it, never again. And I remember sitting and listening to this lecture from one of these guys to all of these UCLA students and I...and they were basically saying "don't confess your sin, that is...that is foolish, that is nonsense, that is needless, that it questions the goodness and grace of God, you only pray that prayer once and then you're forgiven, you never have to do it again." And he made a huge point out of this for about an hour.

Afterwards I went up to him and I said, "I have a question. Do you confess your sins?"

He said, "Well I just said you don't have to."

I said, "I know you said that. Do you?"

He said, "Yeah, and I don't understand why."

I said, "Good, because you're probably a Christian. If you didn't, I would think you weren't. God hates evil. He hates iniquity. And whoever possesses the life of God has the attitude of God toward that." You go...wildly going through life in some kind of bliss without recognizing your sin and claim you're a

Christian, you have the attitude of Paul in Romans 7 who said, "O wonderful man that I am..." is that what he said? Or did he say "O...what?...wretched man that I am, what I want to do I don't do, what I don't want to do I do and I'm sick of it." Continual confession of sin is the mark of a Christian. Later on we're going to find out love for God is a mark for a Christian, love for one another is a mark of a Christian, obedience to the Word of God is a mark of a Christian. And here we're learning confession is a mark of a Christian. It's no different...I'll give you an illustration, it's no different than faith. You don't say, "Well, I believed when I became a Christian I don't need to believe anymore. I stopped believing after I was saved." What is that? You didn't stop believing, you continue believing. And so you don't stop confessing. In fact, you're probably more of a confessor now than you were when you were converted. You probably have a greater hatred of the sin in you that you did before you were saved because the more mature you are in Christ, the more you hate sin. If salvation is real, then confession becomes a way of life. The very opposite of these people who deny sin, we're happy to admit it, aren't we? True Christians go on and on and on admitting their sin. It's just the way it is. And as we go on admitting our sin and confessing, the Lord goes on cleansing.

Continual confession characterizes Christians. There you have it, the four "Cs", continual confession characterizes Christians. Now I admit there are degrees of thoroughness in confession. There are varying numbers of confessions, full or incomplete repentance. But faith differs from one Christian to another, doesn't it? And our faith in the Lord and our trust in Him wavers, has its highs, has its lows. Our obedience to Him has its highs, has its lows. And so our confession has its highs and its lows. But agreeing that you're a sinner and seeing your sin the way God sees it is characteristic of a Christian. True confession then involves sorrow over sin, the longing to turn from sin.

You might want to look with me just for a brief moment, so many passages pertain to this but look for just a brief moment at 2 Corinthians chapter 7 and I won't get in to a lot of detail, but this is really the definitive text on repentance. Second Corinthians chapter 7, Paul gives us this very good definition of repentance. Down in verse 9, 2 Corinthians 7:9, "I now rejoice," he says, "not that you were made sorrowful but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance. For you were made sorrowful according to the will of God in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us." Paul commends a true kind of sorrow, a sorrow unto repentance. And then in verse 10 and 11 he defines that, "The sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret leading to salvation. But the sorrow of the world produces death." We're not talking here about feeling bad that you got caught. We're not talking here about feeling bad regarding the consequences of your sinful conduct. We're talking here not about a sorrow of the world that only puts you in to despair and depression and suicide. We're not talking about that kind of Judas sorrow that makes you go out and hang yourself. We're not talking about the world's kind of sorrow that brings death. We're talking about the kind of sorrow that produces repentance that leads to salvation.

What is the nature of that kind of repentance? Verse 11, "Behold, what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow has produced in you, what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong? In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter." Here in this list of words he defines real godly repentance, it is earnest and that means it is aggressive, it is seeking after holiness, it pursues what is right. That's the nature of it. He also says it has in it a vindication of yourselves, that is open testimony of the desire to be clean from sin. You...you want yourself to be vindicated, that is to say you are open about the desire that you have to be pure. It contains a certain indignation, anger. There is a...there is an anger over sin in true repentance. There is fear, that is reverence for God and concern over His chastening. There is longing, that is for a pure and uninterrupted life of holiness. There is zeal which again is passion for God and for righteousness. There is avenging...a desire for an avenging for wrong. In other words, there's a sort of a desire for design justice to see sin dealt with at any cost...even in your own life. These are the things that make up the kind of repentance we're talking about.

Well now you can go back to 1 John with just that brief look. Confession doesn't change our fellowship, our fellowship is with the Lord Jesus Christ and with the Father. Our fellowship began at the time of our new birth when we entered into the family and into the fellowship. Our fellowship is forever, nothing can break the fellowship. Listen to this, you can never be out of the fellowship. That never changes, it can't be broken. The fellowship is *koinonia* or *koinonos*, partnership, union, common sharing of that light which is eternal life. We are all partakers, 1 Corinthians 10:17, we are all *koinonia* of that one bread. We share the common, eternal life. Fellowship can't be broken, if it can then this passage is telling us how to get saved again.

Confession like faith, like obedience, like love is an evidence of salvation. And it is not the perfection of our lives, but it is the direction of our lives. So the true Christian experiences cleansing and confessing. Thirdly, the third word is conquering...conquering. And we'll go down to chapter 2 verse 1, "My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin." Guess what? We don't have to sin. What good news, huh? What liberty. Even though sin is always going to be there somewhere in our lives and we're always going to be confessing that sin, always going to be being cleansed, that is not to lead us to an attitude that says, "Now it's going to be there and it's going to be cleansed and we're going to confess it, so why bother striving for holiness?"

And so John says, "My little children, don't abuse God's grace, don't abuse God's cleansing, I'm writing these things to you that you may not sin." This is the tender regard of an old man who is at least 90, though you're always confessing, you're always being cleansed, don't think that sin is a necessity that you can't avoid. Don't treat sin lightly, it is to be mastered, it is to be conquered and you can conquer it...you can rise above it in the strength of the new life and the indwelling of the Holy

Spirit. Romans 6:1, "Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? May it never be." May it never be.

He says, verse 6, "We are no longer to be slaves to sin for He who has died has freed from sin." Verse 12 says, "Don't let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts." Verse 14, "Sin shall not be master over you." "Do you not know that when...in verse 16...you present yourselves to become a slave for obedience you are slaves of the one whom you obey whether of sin resulting in death or obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God though you were slaves of sin you became obedient from the heart that that form of teaching to which you were committed you've been set free from sin, you become slaves of righteousness." You don't have to sin. And John is saying, "Look, back away and understand you can conquer, you can conquer. You have that power to conquer." As you grow in Christ there should be the decreasing frequency of sin.

And so John gives us a clear picture of who is a Christian, one who is being cleansed, one who is confessing, one who is conquering. We'll stop there. That's good preparation for the Lord's table for us.

Father, as we apply this to our life now in this moment, it is clear to us that we have enough information to take a good look at our hearts and discern our spiritual condition. And I pray, Lord, that You give us insight, may we know the state of our hearts, may we know where we stand with you. We are reminded that before we come to this table we are to examine ourselves and that examination is to reveal to us our spiritual state. May we ask the question...am I a true Christian?...first of all. Is there manifest eternal life in me? Am I walking in that light and demonstrating the love for truth and purity that characterizes that light? Am I a cleansed, confessing, conquering Christian? And if not, if the answer is no or I don't know, may this be the moment when that person embraces Christ and pleads for salvation. For those of us who are Christians, if we have come to contentment with some sins, if we have abused grace and failed to sin not, given up on the battle, no longer pursued with all our might in the strength of the Spirit, virtue and holiness, would You convict us of that so that we don't come to this table holding to any sin. We would release it all, confess it, repent of it and ask that You would remove it from us.

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>).