

Total Forgiveness and the Confession of Sin

Scripture: 1 John 1:8-10

Code: 62-8

I want us to go back to 1 John chapter 1. We have launched out on a study of the epistles of John, 1, 2, and 3 John. Chapter 1, of course, is critically important as we have been learning. And some number of weeks ago we started into a discussion of the subject "confession of sin, a certain proof of salvation." It is the purpose of John in this epistle to offer proofs of salvation, to offer tests by which a true believer can be distinguished from the false. One of those is the confession of sin. "If we say," says verse 8, "that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us."

There is a distinct line drawn between those who are true believers and those who are not. The false deny their sin, the true confess it. In fact, that really is the glory of the gospel, isn't it, at its heart, the glory of the gospel, the value of the gospel is that it provides complete forgiveness of all sin for the sinner who embraces the gospel. And the forgiveness that God provides for us is so comprehensive that it removes from the believer all defilement, all shame, all guilt, all punishment forever and replaces it with righteousness, security and eternal reward. This is the gift of forgiveness. It is inviolable, it is irrevocable, nothing and no one can cause the forgiveness of God granted to the believer to be taken back, to be rescinded. No one can talk God out of it, or change His mind, or successfully bring up an accusation against that believer that would cause God to cancel that forgiveness. The consummate promise that we cling to with regard to that is found in the eighth chapter of Romans, verse 1 starts that chapter by saying, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." If you are Christ's, there is no condemnation for you.

At the end of that chapter in verse 28 we read that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. God takes everything and works it to the good of those who belong to Him. There is no condemnation, there is only good on behalf of those who are Christ's, God sees to it, because that's how He planned it, "For whom He foreknew He predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." Whoever it was that He chose in eternity past He determined would come to the very image of Christ in eternity future. Whoever He chose He will bring to glory. Whoever He chose to be in the image of Christ will realize that reality. And whom He predestined, in verse 30, He called and whom He called He also justified and whom He justified, these He also glorified. There is no condemnation of those who are in Christ, there never can be any condemnation of those who are in Christ because God takes everything that

happens in our lives, good-bad and indifferent, and works them to our good. And that is because in the beginning in eternity past He chose us for salvation to be conformed to the image of His Son and He will bring that to realization in eternity future so that all He predestined are called to salvation. They are then justified and they are to be glorified. If all of this is true, and it is, verse 31 asks, "If God is for us, who is against us?"

If God has so determined that our forgiveness is irrevokable, inviolable, cannot be cancelled, never to be removed, if that is true that God is for us in that sense, who successfully can be against us? If God didn't spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all," in other words, if God gave the gift of His Son to accomplish this eternal forgiveness, "then will He not also with His Son freely give us all things necessary to the preservation of that forgiveness?" That is to say, if He gave the greatest gift, His own Son in death, to secure our forgiveness, will He not give us whatever lesser gift is necessary to sustain that forgiveness. Verse 33 says, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect?" Paul is saying, "Who can successfully bring an accusation that sticks? God is the one that justifies, there is no higher court, there is no superior judge and if we are acquitted by God, if we are declared righteous by God based upon the work of Jesus Christ, there is no higher court, there is no successful accusation that can stand against us. Who can condemn us?, verse 34 asks. "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes rather who was raised and who's at the right hand of God who also intercedes for us." No one can bring a successful accusation against us before God because as the judge of all the earth He's already rendered His unchangeable verdict. No one can come with any successful accusation before that throne of God because we have a lawyer for the defense, Jesus Christ, who is our advocate, who is at the very right hand of God interceding for us. Because of these realities, he asks the question, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword?" And skipping down, "In all these things," in verse 37, "we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. I'm convinced that neither death nor life, or angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created things shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What all of this is saying is that when God forgives your sin, it is absolutely permanent. Back in Romans chapter 4 verses 7 and 8 taken from Psalm 32 say, "Blessed are those whose sins or lawless deeds have been forgiven and whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account." We are blessed because God will never take our sins into account. The Old Testament says, "He's buried them in the depths of the deep blue sea. He's removed them as far as the east is from the west," that's infinity, "And He remembers them no more." Galatians 3 tells us that Christ having borne the curse for us, we are no longer under the curse of sin, freed from that curse because Christ became a curse for us.

If you are a Christian then, all your sins for all time have been forgiven. Ephesians chapter 1 reminds us in verse 7 that we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according

to the riches of His grace. And He has much more grace than we have sin, Romans 6 says, "Where sin abounds grace does much more abound."

There is no way a forgiven person can then be reversed, as it were, out of that condition of forgiveness and held before the judgment bar of God to pay ultimately for his own sins. I just want to make it very clear that all our sins are forgiven and yet in spite of this gracious, merciful generosity on God's part toward all of those who repent and embrace Jesus Christ we are still, according to 1 John 1, we are still known as Christians because we continue to confess our sins. And that is what verse 9 is saying, if we are confessing our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And we looked at that in some detail and pointed out that is not a command, that is a statement of fact. True believers are habitual confessors who therefore demonstrate that their sins are continually being forgiven. We are still known as penitent. We are still known as eager to repent, as confessors of sin.

In our previous study we looked into this verse and into the context a little bit and we saw that John is providing one of these several tests to verify a true believer. There were those people with whom John was dealing who claimed to be in the light. They claimed to have fellowship with God. But in actuality they walked in darkness because they refused to confess their sins. They are so described in verses 8 and 10. Very different is the pattern of a true Christian. It is the pattern of our lives to be constant confessors, never denying our sin but always acknowledging our sin and always enjoying the on-going benefits of that confession and that repentance. In fact, we never come to the table of the Lord without the attitude of confession. We never come to the table of the Lord, such as we're doing tonight, without a heart searching to see if there's any sin in our lives that could cause us literally to bring chastening upon us by partaking of this table without due consideration of the confession of our sins. The godly are confessors.

We learn that throughout the Scripture. I quoted to you from Romans chapter 4, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven," and I said that comes from Psalm 32. Psalm 32 is prayed by David. David was a believer. David was a justified man. David was a child of God and yet he confessed his sin. He said, "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long, for day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me, my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to Thee, my iniquity I didn't hide, I said I'll confess my transgression to the Lord and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin." David was a believer. David was a child of God and yet when he didn't confess his sin he felt tremendous pressure. It dried up the fluids in his body. It distressed him. He ached all over. What was happening was the guilt that was flooding his mind was having an impact on his body. And then he confessed and he opened his heart. He felt the free flow of God's forgiveness and restoration. Those of us who are believers then, even though all our sins have been forgiven, are nonetheless confessors...confessors. And as I said, this isn't a command to confess, it's a statement of fact. Believers by nature do this. It is the result of the work of God in them. It is the result of the work of the Spirit in them. It is the result of the work of

the Word in them, all of which convicts of sin. So even though we have been forgiven, we are very much aware of our sin, very eager to confess it, repent of it and be washed.

This is not a command in 1 John 1. But there are commands in the Bible that tell believers to seek forgiveness. Luke 11:4, what did Jesus teach the disciples? He taught them to pray this way, "Forgive us our sins...forgive us our sins."

Now we have a problem here. You see where I'm going? We have a dilemma. Why would I be saying, "God, forgive my sins," when I know He's already forgiven my sins? How am I going to reconcile this?

Well, some teachers increasingly popular, by the way today, claim that since we are already forgiven we must never ask God to forgive our sins. To do so, they tell us, is an expression of unbelief. It's an expression of doubt. And, in fact, you are calling God's Word into question. Why would you ever ask the Lord to forgive your sins when He has told you all your sins are already forgiven? And so they insist that 1 John 1:9 has nothing to do with Christians but it is an invitation to non-Christians. When I was writing the book on forgiveness, I used some illustration from the best-known contemporary proponents of this view, a man named Bob George who teaches on the radio, a popular author, he says that Christians who pray for forgiveness, quote: "Live in daily insecurity, doubting whether all their sins are forgiven." He and several others who teach similarly claim that the only way to enjoy your liberty in Christ is to forget your sin, forget about it all together and just embrace God's forgiveness as a fully accomplished reality because of the work of Christ and never again pay any attention to your sin.

Well there's enough truth, of course, in saying that all your sins are forgiven to confuse people with that. And, you know, that's a...that would be a great way to live, pay absolutely no attention to your sin as if it didn't exist. That's what historically and theologically is known as antinomianism, disregard for the law of God and your violation of it. Our sins are all forgiven, that's true. But to say therefore we should pay no attention to our sin and if we ever were to ask forgiveness we would be disavowing, doubting or denying the promise of God indicates that you may understand some of the truth but you don't understand all the truth. It is true that all our sins are forgiven but that's not all the truth. From the perspective of God's judgment throne, the sins of believers are forgiven...forgiven, even before they're committed and even if they're never confessed. Did you get that one? Before the judgment throne of God the sins of believers are forgiven even before they are committed and even if they are never confessed because God has said He has forgiven all our sins.

As a righteous judge, He has done that because He thoroughly and completely punished Jesus Christ for our sins. The price is paid in full and therefore God by justice cannot hold us guilty because the price has been paid.

But that's not all the truth in this matter and to say that God therefore pays absolutely no attention to our sin is ridiculous and to say that you are to pay no attention to your sin is also ridiculous and dangerous. To say that we can sin and completely ignore it and bear no guilt and no remorse and offer no confession and ask for no forgiveness will, believe me, bring down on such a person's head the discipline and the displeasure of God. The idea that a Christian should never pray a penitent prayer seeking forgiveness is unbiblical, it's heretical. So-called Christians who think they can sin and never need to seek their Father's forgiveness is seriously deceived, but that is an increasingly popular view.

Another advocate says, I'm quoting, "You've probably heard people pray like this, 'And, Lord, we ask You to forgive us for all our sins,' but why do forgiven Christians ask God's forgiveness? Do they not believe they are forgiven? If they believe they're forgiven then why do they ask for it repeatedly? Their prayers reveal unbelief." Same approach. A few paragraphs later he proposes what he thinks is a better way to pray. This is what he writes, 'How frequently do you hear someone pray and...Lord, I thank You that I stand before You a completely forgiven man, thank You that I am as spotless as the driven snow? How frequently do you hear people pray that?' he asks. Those words are rare but they thrill the heart of God because they demonstrate faith that a man believes God who says we are forgiven in Christ. There is no way you're going to cozy up to God if you feel He is increasingly upset with you. To feel secure you must believe that He does not hold one single sin against you."

Here is a bold statement he writes, "It is impossible for a Christian to ask God's forgiveness for a besetting sin the umpteenth time and then snuggle up to Him. He will feel like God's patience is being stretched to the limit," end quote. I don't even know what cozy up and snuggle up to God means. But what he is saying is, you're never going to enjoy the presence of God until you stop thinking about your sin. And if you really want to get close to God, pay no attention to your sin. How much sense does that make? That's a happy doctrine for an antinomian. That's a wonderful conclusion to come to if you don't want to pay any attention to your sin. Very convenient theology.

But don't be under any illusions. Just because you tolerate your sin doesn't mean God does. In fact, the Bible teaches the opposite. Luke 11:4, Jesus said to the disciples, "Here's how you pray, 'Forgive us our sins.'"

You say, "Well what do people do with that verse?" Well, those who argue against praying for forgiveness say that that verse applies to the Old Covenant under Moses' law. They say that under the Old Covenant, under the law of Moses, under the legal dispensation of the past and maybe some future legal dispensations, some of them refer to, that prayer applied. In other words, when you ask for forgiveness you got it and the next time you asked you got it, and the next time you asked you got it. And that's how it was, they say, under the Old Covenant.

Guess what? That's never how it was under the Old Covenant...never. People were saved under the Old Covenant the same way they're saved under the New Covenant. They cried out to God about their sinful condition and God in mercy forgave all their sins...that's Psalm 32, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin at all. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Justification in the Old Testament was exactly the same as it is in the New Testament, as it is now...the sinner cries out to God, God forgives based upon the death of Jesus Christ. God applied the sacrifice of Christ to penitent sinners in the Old Testament even before Jesus died. The New Covenant was already in operation, though it wasn't ratified until Calvary. There wasn't any dispensation that operated like that, that if you confessed your sin it's forgiven, if you confess it's forgiven, if it's confessed...nobody would ever believe the Bible teaches a conditional salvation that comes and goes with every sin and be able to defend that biblically. There never was salvation by law. There never was salvation by works. And if they're trying to say that was some legal code that operated in time past and might operate in some time in the future, then they don't understand the role the law played. The way people were saved in the Old Testament was when they realized that they could not save themselves. No amount of penitence, no amount of confession, no amount of law keeping could overcome the fact that they could not...could not get over the just judgment of God against their sin. They needed a substitute. The substitute was pictured in the Old Testament sacrificial system. There would come one day one whose death would be in their place. This is a way they have to get around the issue.

A letter came into our ministry from someone, "The Lord's prayer belongs to the Old Covenant," the writer said, "when law, not grace, was the governing rule." Does he mean that forgiveness under the old economy was the way that was doled out one confession at a time so that's the way you became saved? Of course not...of course not. He went on to say, "Conditional forgiveness does not apply to Christians."

Now I'm kind of belaboring this because I want you to understand a little bit about the dilemma. People who try to say that that command to ask the Lord to forgive your sins is some legal command borrowed out of another dispensation in which salvation was on different terms, don't understand that salvation has always been on the same terms. It also reveals an elemental misunderstanding and that is that forgiveness is always by grace, never by some mechanical means. That is to say salvation is given as a gift to the penitent sinner who knows that he can't make things right with God no matter how many confessions he makes. Salvation was by grace, it's always been by grace, it's never been by anything but grace. The whole argument of Romans 4 is that Abraham was justified by grace and not by works. Penitence of the Old Testament, you can hear the cry of the penitent, Psalm 6, Psalm 32, Psalm 38, Psalm 51, Psalm 102, Psalm 130, Psalm 143 and many other places. You can't get away with turning the disciples prayer into some dispensational relic. Jesus said, "You need to pray, 'Forgive our sins, Father.'"

Well how are we then to understand this apparent contradiction? Simple, really, they're two kinds of forgiveness...two kinds of forgiveness. It is true, as I said, that all our sins are forgiven insofar as the judgment of God is concerned because He meted out that judgment in Christ. It is true. It is also true that we need to continue to ask the Lord to forgive our sins. Both are true, both are taught in Scripture. I'll show you how they harmonize if you'll turn to the thirteenth chapter of John, and this in the words of our Lord Himself. John chapter 13, it is the upper room, the familiar account of Jesus with the disciples. They're sitting at the table, nobody has provided a very important part of any social gathering like this where they're reclining at a table, and that was the washing of feet. There was apparently no servant available to do that, none of the disciples had deferred and taken the humble place to do it on behalf of the others. Jesus manifesting again His own humility as well as seeing in this a very important lesson, verse 4 says, "Rose from supper, laid aside His garments, took a towel, girded Himself around, poured water into the basin, began to wash the disciples' feet and wiped them with a towel which He was girded." The most menial of all tasks. They wore sandals. The roads were either dusty or muddy. You didn't recline at a banquet without properly washing your feet. This was the commonest of courtesies done by the lowest of servants. But no one did it, so Jesus did it. And it provides an opportunity to help us to understand these two kinds of forgiveness.

He came to Simon Peter, said to him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" I mean, Peter understood that this is ridiculous, what are You doing down there washing my dirty feet? It ought to be the other way around.

Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter." It will become clear to you in a while.

Peter said to Him, with his usual brashness, he doesn't even hesitate to command Christ, "Never shall You wash my feet! Never!"

Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."

Whoa! Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." I want a part with You. I want a relationship with You. Wash everything, Lord, everything.

But Jesus said to him, and here is the lesson, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean. And you're clean." Boy, that's so insightful. Here is the distinction in an unmistakable analogy. Bathing...Peter took an appropriate bath before he came. He was basically clean, he didn't need his head and his hands, he didn't need to be literally doused. He had just accumulated dirt on his feet. Bathing illustrates one kind of washing, one kind of forgiveness. It illustrates the forensic forgiveness of justification. That is to say it indicates those who are justified by God as being declared free from the penalty of sin, free from the penalty of sin forever. You've

already been justified, you've already been declared righteous because even though Jesus hadn't died yet, Peter had already been justified before the cross God applying the cross before it even took place. You have already been declared free from the penalty of sin forever by God who has His justice satisfied through the sacrifice of Christ. So bathing illustrates the forensic forgiveness of justification, washing illustrates the fatherly forgiveness of sanctification.

He says you're clean. You appear before God as clean and righteous. You are free from the penalty of sin in your justification. But then there's the matter of your sanctification and you need to be continually washed from the presence of sin and the power of sin. You don't need to be justified again, you just need to be being sanctified. And it is in that fatherly sense, it is in that sanctifying sense that Jesus tells us...Say to the Father...Father, forgive us our sins.

You're not doubting justification. You have been justified before God. You have been set free from the penalty of sin. But be honest and realistic and though you are set free from the penalty of sin, you have not been delivered from the presence and power of sin and while you don't need to be justified again, you need to be continually washed. Sin needs to be confessed and forsaken as a regular pattern of life, not before a judge who will otherwise condemn us to hell, but before a Father who will otherwise chasten us. And that too is clear from 1 John 1:9. We go on confessing, and He goes on forgiving and cleansing.

The on-going confession does not bring justification, the on-going confession is related to sanctification. The forensic decision regarding our freedom from the penalty of sin has been made, it's inviolable, it can't be reversed, we pointed that out. The fatherly concern for our holiness and our sanctification is related to the on-going confession and forgiveness. In Christ we have forever satisfied the judge. He will never be displeased. But God as Father is displeased when we behave sinfully.

Now to point this out is to clarify the issue. There are two kinds of forgiveness...judicial forgiveness, or forensic forgiveness. The forgiveness that was purchased in full by the atonement that Jesus Christ rendered on our behalf. That kind of forgiveness frees us from the threat of eternal punishment, eternal condemnation and that's why those who are in Christ Jesus are not under condemnation, Romans 8:1. It is the forgiveness of justification. But then there's not just the judicial, there's the paternal forgiveness. This is granted by God not as judge, but as father. He is still grieved when His children sin. Yes we are justified, but He also wants us to be sanctified, to be conformed to the image of Christ. He is pleased with that justification. He is displeased with the breach of sanctification. Forgiveness of justification takes care of judicial guilt, but it does not eliminate fatherly displeasure. We have been delivered from the penalty of sin by justification, but we haven't been delivered from the presence and the consequences of sin. That is an on-going process and that's why we are always confessing and always being forgiven and being cleansed. Your justification is a fixed and settled reality. Your sanctification ebbs and flows dependent on how you deal with the sin

in your life. You are covered with the righteousness of Christ that pleases God and settles the issue of your eternity. In terms of punishment, there never will be any. But the sin in your life, in your humanness, displeases the loving Father, retards your sanctification which also displeases Him and muddies up the image of Christ which you and I are to manifest.

Are we supposed to believe that because Jesus Christ atoned for our sins God no longer cares about our sins? Of course He cares, why do you think the Bible is full of commands? What do these people do with them? What do they do with all the commands to holiness? One Christian confused about these things sent an e-mail, "Are you saying to me...are you saying God will become angry with His own children? If we're clothed with Christ's righteousness, how could God even see our sin? And if He can't even see our sin...that's a quick conclusion to his point...if He can't even see our sin how could He ever be displeased by it? I thought God was never displeased with any Christian because He accepts us in Christ as if we were as righteous as Christ and He's well pleased with His beloved Son. Besides, if we believe God gets angry with His own children when they sin, can we honestly say we believe He's forgiven us in the first place?"

Boy, people have gotten confused about this. The answer to that last little question that he offers in that e-mail is God does get angry with His children, He gets very angry with them. And to show you that, I want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 12. God has to be angry with sin, I don't care whose sin it is, because it violates His holiness. To say that when God looks at you He sees the righteousness of Jesus Christ is symbolic language, in a sense, it's forensic language. It doesn't mean He's ignorant about your sin. There isn't anything God doesn't know. Listen to Hebrews chapter 12, "You have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you're reprov'd by Him, for those whom the Lord loves He...what?...He disciplines.'"

And some of these guys say, "Well, that's...that's discipline in the sense of instruction and training." Well, you've got to read the next line. "And He scourges every son whom He receives." That doesn't sound like training. That sounds like punishment. "It is...verse 7...for discipline that you endure, God deals with you as with sons for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons." You're not even a child of God if you're not under divine discipline because every child of God is going to feel divine discipline, he's going to feel the scourge of God on his back or her back because God is concerned about your holiness. And if you're not being disciplined by God, you don't belong to God, you are illegitimate.

Furthermore, verse 9 says, "We had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. You respected your father because he had a holy standard, if that was the situation. Shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seen best to them, but He disciplines us for our good that we may share His holiness," that's sanctification.

God sees your sin, God is displeased with your sin, God disciplines you because of that sin, scourges you because you are His child and He cares about you progressing in holiness. And if all of this was with some warm and fuzzy training, verse 11 wouldn't make any sense. "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful but sorrowful." Whatever it is God is doing is sorrowful, it's a tough experience. "Yet to those who have been trained by it, it afterwards yields peaceful fruit of righteousness." That's what God is after, the two key words...holiness and righteousness connect to sanctification.

Now this is not sheer punishment with no goal but the administration of holy justice, the death of Christ took care of that. But this is discipline and while it is without ultimate judgment, it is not without elements of punishment necessary to any corrective. In fact sometimes the punishment can be so severe that the person dies. In the Corinthian church there were some people who were weak and some were sick and some were dead because their sins were manifest at the Lord's table, remember that? There's correction in this discipline. There's correction in this chastisement and it is based on God's displeasure over sin. Listen, get this in your mind, God always has the same response to sin, always the same response, never has any other response than the response of displeasure, righteous indignation whether it's a non-believer sinning or a believer sinning. God's reaction is always the same because perfect holiness is always offended by iniquity. But He is particularly offended by it in one of His own children because He longs for that child to be in the image of His holy Son. There is a punitive component in His discipline. There is an element of shame in His discipline, words like scourging, chastening, rebuking all contain the idea of disapproval, punishment in a parental sense, even fatherly indignation and fatherly anger. It is not the wrath of abused justice, it is the wrath of abused grace.

Moses is an illustration. Moses knew God. Moses was justified. And yet in Deuteronomy chapter 1 we read, "The Lord heard the sound of your words and He was angry and took an oath saying, 'Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give to your fathers except Caleb the son of Jephunneh, he shall see it and to him and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot because he has followed the Lord fully.' And then Moses said, 'The Lord was angry with me.'" The Lord was angry with me...the Lord got angry with Moses and Moses was His child. And then the Lord got angry with Aaron in the incident at the foot of Mount Sinai where the Israelites had under Aaron's tolerances built a golden calf. Deuteronomy 9 verse 20, "The Lord was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, so I prayed for Aaron at the same time."

God gets angry with those that are His. Sometimes He gets angry enough to destroy them. There is a sin, even among those who are believers, unto death, we'll see that in 1 John chapter 5. Solomon...Solomon was a man who knew God and yet in 1 Kings 11:9 it says, "Now the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the Lord." I think there were times when Jesus demonstrated this, He got angry at the disciples, righteously indignant when they refused to let the children to come to Him in Mark 10. He got righteously indignant with Peter when He said,

"Get thee behind Me, Satan." He harshly rebuked James and John in Luke chapter 9. So the idea that God is somehow indifferent to sin because His children are committing it is absolutely ridiculous. And whenever God comes at His children in discipline over sin, there is an element in the discipline of punishment.

Listen to what it says in Psalm 89 verses 29 to 33, "So I will establish his descendants forever and his throne as the days of heaven. If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in my judgments, if they violate My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod, their iniquity with stripes but I will not break off my loving kindness from him nor deal falsely in My faithfulness." When God is talking of one of His own and He makes a promise, He may get angry and He may discipline but He'll never break the promise. In fact, God's discipline is the proof of His love for us. His anger over our sin and corrective punishment is the proof of His desire for our well being.

So the forgiveness...back to 1 John 1...the forgiveness in 1 John 1:9 is parental forgiveness, relational forgiveness, it's restorative. It's like Psalm 32, Psalm 51, "Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation." It's the kind of discipline that deals with our sin and brings us to repentance, confession, forgiveness and restored joy. It is not the washing of regeneration, that's already done. It's not the forgiveness of justification, that's already done. It isn't the bath. We need one bath and many times need our feet washed.

A Puritan commentator, Matthew Henry, wrote, "The Christian religion is the religion of sinners, of such as have sinned in whom sin in some measure still dwells. The Christian life is a life of continued repentance, humiliation for and mortification of sin, of continual faith in thankfulness for and love to the Redeemer and hopeful joyful expectation of a day of glorious redemption in which the believer shall be fully and finally acquitted and sin abolished forever." Beautifully said and that is why Scripture teaches us to be continually confessing our sin, continually asking the Lord to forgive us and cleanse us and He continually will do that. He is faithful and just to forgive us. Faithful because we're His and He made a covenant with us. And just to forgive us. How is He just to forgive us? Because the sins have already been...what?...paid for. He is faithful as a covenant-keeping God to His children to whom He has given the gift of salvation. And He is just when He forgives because the sins have been paid for.

One important thought I need to add. When we confess and our sins are forgiven, does that nullify all the consequences of our sin? Answer: no...no. There's no way to get back the consequences that sin created. That we can't undo. And Scripture is clear about that. When you sin there are consequences. The consequences may never ever be mitigated. David is a classic illustration of that. Sins with Bathsheba, he sins having her husband, in effect, killed. Then he comes to God and he pours out his heart in Psalm 32 and Psalm 51, literally the purest kind of penitence and confession and seeking forgiveness. And he can't get sin off his mind, "My sin is ever before me," Psalm 51:3, "My sin is ever before me, it's ever before me. All I see is my sin, my sin, my sin, my sin, my sin."

That was the first consequence. Confessed, forgave but there it stayed in his mind. He's not going to forget that. He's not going to forget that he committed adultery with another man's wife. He's not going to forget that he was so passionate with that situation that he actually had her husband killed. But Proverbs 28:13 is this promise, "He who conceals his transgression will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."

You can't undo what's been done. But a forgiving God will render compassion. The consequences...David couldn't forget his sin. That's the first consequence. Second consequence, the child born to Bathsheba dies. Next consequence, David's wives defiled in broad daylight by his son Absalom. Horrific. Another consequence...Absalom attacks his father, dies a horrible death riding along getting his head caught in a tree. What could God say to David? Second Samuel 7:14, God promised, "I'll be a Father to him and he'll be a son to Me. And when he commits iniquity, I'll correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men. But My loving kindness shall not depart from him." I can't fix all the consequences, but I will show him My loving kindness...I will show him compassion.

At the heart of God's pledge to His children is forgiveness and compassion. If you sin, He'll discipline you. Why? To bring you to the place of confession so that your joy can be restored and your holiness and your righteousness. And then when you face the consequence of your sin, He will minister to you His loving kindness, His grace and mercy and His compassion.

The aim of confession then is not to erase consequences, it's to restore joy. And then the consequences are what they are. Your sins have consequences. They're rocks thrown in the pond and the ripples go and they touch every shore. But God does promise when you've confessed and repented that He will show you loving kindness and compassion because you are His eternal child.. Your justification is settled forever. Don't cover your sin, confess it. That's what true Christians do. You've been bathed that you need continually to have your feet washed as they get dirty walking in your fallenness. If you don't confess, you'll be chastened. If you do confess, you may never be able to change the consequences but because you're God's child He'll come to you in compassion and loving kindness and minister to you. He disciplines His impenitent children because He loves them and He wants them to be holy and righteous and you can be holy and righteous even though the consequences are still painful. And while you're going through the pain of the consequences, He will flood you even if you're a broken-hearted child, with His mercy and compassion. That's why we are eager to confess our sins. We want that forgiveness, that compassion and that kindness to mitigate against the circumstances we've created.

And that's why coming to the Lord's table we are called to confession. It's a constant reminder of how important this habitual spiritual exercise is. The Lord gives us this as a reminder to look at our hearts and confess, and He also disciplines us when we don't. Take the positive and confess your sins and you won't suffer the discipline.

Our Father, as we come now to this table to partake, we do confess we are sinners. We hold nothing back. We are sinners in every sense. To be totally depraved doesn't mean we're all as bad as possible but it does mean that every part of our faculties is sinful. Nothing in our humanness escapes it. And even though we have been declared righteous before You, and freed from the penalty of sin, we're not sin from the power and presence of sin and it's still there and we still cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? " We feel like there's a corpse attached to us and it's possible to shake. So we come admitting our sin, confessing our sin and asking, O God, that You would grant us that parental, fatherly forgiveness that will cause You to stay Your discipline, that You'll give us back the joy of our salvation. And if we have sinned in such a way as to set consequences in motion, would You, O God, give us that compassion and that loving kindness and sympathy that will bear us up in the midst of those circumstances, those consequences? Clean us and wash us now as we come to this table, even as You washed the feet of the disciples as they sat at the table of that first communion service.

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