

1 John 1:9-2:1 (KJV) 1/19/2006

### The provision of confession.

**“If we confess our sins,...”** 1 John 1:9a

**What confession is.** The last time we covered this subject, we discussed mostly what confession was not. Today I want to go to the heart, the capstone of confession: 1 John and passages around 1.9. Simply put, confession is admitting that the Lord is right when He reminds us that we have sinned.

*Homologeō* the word for confession in the original is a compound word *homo* = same and *logeō* = word. It's sort of repeating in our minds what the Lord has already reminded us of. So, for example, if we have been unkind toward our spouse and the Holy Spirit reminds us based on

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Ephesians 4:32 **“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you...”** that we have sinned in this specific regard we should admit to the Lord that He is right, that we have committed the sin of unkindness. That's really the simplicity of confession. The provision for Confession is an important ministry between God and His child. It is, in fact an on-going dialogue if confession is to working properly.

### The result of confession

**“...he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** 1 John 1:9b.

The whole of the confession experience is not who we are or how successfully we manage to adapt our lifestyle to fit in the glove of fundamentalism but who and what God is. That is He – God is faithful – we are not. That He – God is Just – we are not. Forgiveness of sin is not a meeting of a lifestyle criteria but a result of the fact that God *always* forgives us and is *always* just in doing so because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, his Son. That is not to say that we may live just as we please but rather that we are empowered to live as He– *God* pleases. That, after all, is the true aim of a child of God, isn't it? The result is that we are *continuously cleansed* durative active of *katharizo* (to be cleansed). Here is the exciting additional benefit – when we confess all known sin, we are also cleansed from our unknown sins – the sins we commit in ignorance – the operative phrase here is that we are cleansed from **“...all unrighteousness.”** “Unrighteousness” refers to actions that violate the law of God – a very broad spectrum indeed.

I want to address another item that is, in my opinion, important to not overlook. Many times this business of keeping records of how good we think we are doing might take the place of how our Lord intends us grow. While it is true that we need to confess our personal sins before the Lord it is also true that He is

sovereign in these matters. The problem is that we tend to draw up checklists of sins and in so doing tend to overlook others – sort of a shopping list of sins we are comfortable confessing. It's the Lord's prerogative to teach us and lead us in growing up. Many times we will learn from reading His word or perhaps during a message – a challenge from the Bible teacher will hit home. It's important for us to realize that the Holy Spirit indwells us and will remind us when we have sinned. There will be times when we will be very uncomfortable with our personal sins and it should be that way. Let the Lord have His way in our lives when it comes to reminding us when we have sinned.

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### The imperative of confession.

**“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”** 1 John 1:10.

We all sin every day whether willfully or in ignorance. Notice the ministry of God's word in this daily experience. It is important that we study God's word every day *and apply it in our everyday lives*. The danger of ignoring the possibility of daily personal sins is that we become like the Pharisees of Jesus' time. Paul attacked this mind set in [Romans 2](#) where he accused the Jew of his day of hypocrisy where the very things they accused others of – they were committing themselves – through willful blindness. We must be aware of God's word in our lives on a daily basis and also, through prayerful consideration / application, let God's searchlight reveal our personal sins *through His word*. John minces no words – if we do not involve ourselves in this humbling exercise, we are calling God a liar and His word is not *in us* – that is, it has not taken root as per James' comment in [James 1:21](#) (Read [Amplified](#) on this). The real issue here is this; do we trust our own sense of right and wrong or should we become immersed in God's word *and recognizing His sovereignty in these matters*? Should we not receive His word and *obey it*? If we adopt the Lordship of Christ in our lives we will become more and more like Him.

### The Basis of Confession.

**“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:”**  
1 John 2:1 See also 1 John 1:7.

The whole basis for our acceptance into the presence of God is the shed blood of Jesus Christ for all our sins. Here's where I need to make a slight detour and talk about *Positional Truth*. Positional Truth is that body of biblical doctrine that presents the reality of the believer's condition before God the Father. Here are some doctrines that fall under this body of truth:

The doctrine of Justification by faith

The doctrine of Eternal Security  
 The doctrine of Propitiation  
 The continuous cleansing of the blood of Christ.

These are but a few pertinent doctrines that tells us of our status before God. It is not the scope of this lesson to go into detail of these doctrines but suffice it to refer to these truths to aid us in understanding the basis for confession.

Have we ever looked at the whole experience of confession as a *privilege*? What gives us the right as sinners to merely admit before God that we have committed this sin or that sin and expect that our confession would translate to forgiveness?

**Have we ever looked at the whole experience of confession as a *privilege*?**

**The fact is that without the finished work of Christ on the cross there would be no basis for forgiveness from the confession of our personal sins.**

**Justification by faith.** The wonderful truth is that because it's God's plan for us to have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, we are righteous in God's sight ([Romans 1:17](#), a quote from [Habakkuk 2:4](#), see notes in [Amplified](#)). Paul goes on in his epistle to the Romans to give Abraham and David as examples of this wonderful truth. Of Abraham it is said that because he believed God about the promise of a son it was accounted to him as righteousness. Not just any righteousness but God's righteousness (the only righteousness He recognizes). Of David Paul points out that a man is truly blessed when God imputes to him righteousness *without works* ([4:6](#)).

### **Eternal Security.**

This doctrine teaches that there is nothing we can do to revoke our salvation once we have trusted in Christ as Savior. See [Romans 8:33-39](#) on this.

### **Propitiation.**

Propitiation is an important doctrine for it shows the dissipation of God's judgment against the sinner because of the shed blood of Christ. See [Romans 3:24-36](#) on this. I have in the past used the heat shield on an Apollo space craft as an example of propitiation. It's a clumsy illustration but it might help us understand how propitiation works. Jesus Christ became our heat shield from the wrath of God when He took our place on the cross. Another illustration is taken from our family life. On one occasion I was about to spank one of my children for misbehavior and our dog, Sandy, tried to put himself between me and the child in order to protect the child. The point we need to get here is that the Lord Jesus Christ took the "licking" for us in that He died for our sins so that He might be our justifier.

### **The continuous cleansing by the blood of Christ.**

This important doctrine is taken from the language in the original of 1 John 1:9 – the action is linear durative active – that is, the action is continuous. I could take this in several directions but I would like to point you to [Ephesians 5:25-27](#). Here

the analogy of the husband and the wife comes into play. Just as the husband protects the wife from danger and contamination so Jesus Christ the bridegroom will present his bride to the Father completely spotless and without blame. Only the Lord can do this – and He will.

Does that mean the believer can sin at will without consequences? No. Look at [Romans 6](#) – look also at our passage in [1 John 1:10](#). It is the plan of God that we be victorious over sin but if we do sin we have an Advocate – a court lawyer who pleads our case before the Father. All this is a continuous experience for the believer – what a wonderful salvation!

### An Example of Confession: David after his sin with Bathshiba

The narrative [2 Sam 11](#).

Emphasize narrative some points on how he got to the sin, then go to prophet's accusation and focus on David's response "I have sinned against God."

The confession, [Psalm 51](#)

Deal briefly with what was going on in David's mind then go to his confession and show David's point of sinning against God. Finally, emphasize the consequences of David's treachery.

### Dealing with a guilty conscience.

<sup>19</sup> And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. <sup>20</sup> For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. <sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. 1John 3:19-21.

**Now, there is nothing wrong with being convicted of a sin through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and God's word but when we take over with our own faulty conscience and start to "kick ourselves all over town" after forgiveness then that's a problem.**

Bible commentators are all over the map on this passage. I accept Vincent's commentary on this. "If our hearts condemn us..." means that our hearts condemn ourselves much as a court of law would condemn someone accused of a crime *even though we have confessed our sin before the Father*. Now, there is nothing wrong with being convicted of a sin through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and God's word but when we take over with our own faulty conscience and start to "kick ourselves all over town" after forgiveness then that's a problem. The problem is when the internal judgment of conscience is at variance with God's forgiveness, says Vincent. See also [Amplified](#) translation on this.

We need to approach this passage with great care. One extreme is for the believer to go around with a constant condemning spirit – one that condemns himself and others around him. His forgiveness by the blood of Christ is not a reality in his life – rather he operates *in the flesh* basing his spiritual successes or

failures on his own criteria not on the word of God and the operation of the Holy Spirit in his life. On the other hand the other extreme is to assume that since he is positionally under the cleansing of the blood of Christ he has no accountability for his personal actions / sins. Neither approach is biblically sound. Rather, the believer who is rightly under the filling of the Holy Spirit knows he has sinned but also knows that the blood of Christ cleanses him from all sin and that confession is a normal outcome of that spiritual operation. Notice that in verse 20 that God is greater than our conscience and knows everything *including our personal sins*. The key here is for the believer to be reassured of this fact to the point of complete transparency with the Father in dealing with personal sins and also dealing with the responsibility of one's actions.

**The greatness of God versus the condemnation of our hearts.**

At this point I feel compelled to lift a quotation from Vincent: *"Is this superior greatness to be regarded as related to God's judgment, or to His compassion? If to His judgment, the sense is: God who is greater than our heart and knows all things, must not only endorse but emphasize our self-accusation. If our heart condemn, how much more God, who is greater than our heart. If to His compassion, the sense is: when our heart condemns us we shall quiet it with the assurance that we are in the hands of a God who is greater than our heart - who surpasses man in love and compassion no less than in knowledge. This latter sense better suits the whole drift of the discussion."*...

The fact is that for the truly regenerate mind the issue is not to "get away with anything" but to please the Lord – no matter how one slices it. In this regard we can rest assured that the Lord knows our frame and that we can come to Him in complete transparency with no preconditions and be confident that He accepts and loves us. The quieting of the heart in verse 21 reflect this idea that we receive a quieted heart as we are reassured by the Lord that we are truly forgiven. Amen.

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