



**Talmid תלמיד** a Hebrew word that means “a true disciple who desires to be what the Rabbi Jesus is.”

*Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:6 (NIV)*

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STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, RIGHTLY  
DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH. 2 TIMOTHY 2:15



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## The ASSURANCE of Our SALVATION Part 12

### *Filled with Life Anew*

**John 17:2-3 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> “Even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.”

<sup>3</sup> “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

As we have been considering the eternal life which we receive through our Lord Jesus Christ, we have seen that it is something that we cannot analyze too carefully or too closely. The danger is always that we stop short at certain points such as forgiveness and assurance without realizing that we are

really called to share this life of God. Christianity, we reminded ourselves, in the terms of the definition of the Scotsman, Henry Scougal, is ‘The life of God in the soul of man’. So, the object of all our endeavors, of all our worship, of our prayers and of our Bible reading, indeed, of everything we do, should be to experience what is expressed in that old hymn.

**Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Fill me with life anew,  
That I may love what Thou dost  
love,  
And do what Thou wouldst do.  
*Edwin Hatch***

and nothing less than that. And here we are reminded of this glorious objective towards which we should all be striving, and which should be the supreme desire of our lives.

We have been looking at only one aspect of the radical manner in which eternal life manifests itself in our life and living, namely, the ways in which it affects our thought, our outlook and our attitude—the difference, if you like, that it makes to us in an intellectual sense.

We must now go on to consider certain other manifestations of this glorious and wondrous life which God gives to us through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is sent from heaven to earth, to the cross and the grave, to the resurrection and the ascension, in order that He might give eternal life to those whom God has already given Him. There is a sense in which the best way of looking at it is to say that those who have this eternal life begin to live the kind of life that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself lived; that

is perhaps the most accurate definition of it.

We are meant to be living the kind of life that He lived, for, let us never forget, while He never ceased to be God, He became truly man as well. He is God and man, He is perfect man as well as perfect God, and what He says here is that He has come in order to give the type of life which He lived to those whom God has given Him. So, then, as we come to examine the kind of life which we live, we who possess this eternal life, the best way of doing so is to look at the life of our Lord Himself, and to see that the principles which characterized His life should be the very principles that animate and characterize our own.

Again, I have selected certain principles. The obvious one—and we touched on this in our last study—is that the man who has received the gift of eternal life knows God. It is not only that he knows things about God, it is not even that he believes certain things concerning God, it is beyond that, he *knows* God.

You cannot read the gospels and their accounts of the life of our Lord without seeing that this was clearly the fundamental and the basic thing in His life here on earth as man. He knew God. He keeps on saying it — “...I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants.*”<sup>26</sup> Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight” ([Matthew 11:25-26 NASB](#)).

He says, “**All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him**” ([Matthew 11:27 NASB](#)). God was not some stranger in the far distance; no, He knew Him with an intimacy and frankness which enabled Him always to come into His presence. He seemed to be longing to be there at all times. And all that is something which is offered to the Christian. He is meant to know God, by which I mean that God becomes real to him. God is not merely an intellectual concept to the man who has eternal life, he becomes an actuality and a reality. He really does know God and he knows what it is to realize the presence of God.

Now on the one hand this is a high and difficult subject and one about which people can often go astray; and yet on the other hand we must be very

careful not to stop short of the fullness which the Scripture thus offers. There are two types of knowledge of God which we must always hold. There is, first of all, the knowledge of faith, the knowledge that is common to most people who are at all religious. It means a belief in God, a fulfilment of what the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says in [Hebrews 11:6 \(NASB\)](#) **“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.”** That is what I call the knowledge of faith.

But something beyond that is offered to the Christian. There is a kind of spiritual knowledge which is more direct and more immediate, and which you will find often described in the psalms, under the Old Testament dispensation, and also in the New Testament. You remember the knowledge of God that came to Moses when God put him in the cleft of the rock so that Moses could have a glimpse of Him as He passed by. God revealed His glory to Moses and when he came down from the Mount his face was shining with the reflection of this divine glory. You find the apostle John having a similar experience on the Isle of Patmos. It is just as clear in the epistles, the apostle Paul knew what it was to be taken up into the third heaven, and there to experience things unseen and indescribable. He was a man, and yet he had that amazing experience.

And it is not merely confined to the people of whom we read in the Bible. It is something which has been experienced on innumerable occasions by those of God’s people who have realized the possibility of this, and have sought it as the most precious thing they could have in this life and in this world.

One of the great Puritans, John Flavel, was taking a journey and suddenly, as he travelled along, God revealed Himself to him. He did not have a vision, or see anything with the external eye, he just knew he was in the presence of the glory of God. He was so overwhelmed by it that he did not know how long he was there; he said that he **‘utterly lost sight and sense of the world and all the concerns thereof’**. He was, as it were, just enjoying the presence of the glory of God.

Those who have read the autobiography of Jonathan Edwards will know that he had a similar experience of just finding himself in the presence of the glory of God. Again, there was no vision but just this sense, this consciousness, of the reality and nearness, and the holiness and the majesty, of the glory of God.

You can read of the same thing in the life of D. L. Moody, Moody was actually walking along Wall

Street, New York, of all the streets in the world, when, suddenly, he had a similar experience. God, as it were, revealed and manifested Himself to him in an immediate way, he had believed in Him before, he had been used by Him, he was a great Christian man, but here was something new, this consciousness of the immediate presence of God, the glory of God.

It was such a marvelous thing that he turned into a hotel, and asked for a room for himself. He wanted to be alone and the glory became so tremendous that he asked God to withhold His hand lest it might crush him—the surpassing glory of it all. I give these illustrations to impress the point that the possession of eternal life, which is life from God, leads to such a knowledge of God if we but realized it and cultivated it and developed it. And I do not hesitate to say that this is something which goes beyond the reaches of faith based upon knowledge. Genuine faith, established upon the full doctrine of the Bible, leads us to a knowledge of God which is more immediate and more direct, what the Puritans called a spiritual knowledge of God, over and above the knowledge of faith.

And that of course leads in turn to a fellowship with God. See this in [1 John 1](#). The old apostle realizes that he is coming to the end of his life, and as he writes to the young Christians in the churches, he tells them what he desires for them. It is that they might have fellowship with Him, but, he says, not merely that they might have fellowship with Him, because **‘truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ’**.

### [1 John 1:3 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> **“What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”**

I want you to know that, says John. I want you to know that in spite of things that may happen to you in this world, you can be enjoying active fellowship with God. You are meant to be walking with God now, and you are never meant to feel that you are alone. You are meant to know for certain that God and Christ are with you, and that your life is to be a walk and a pilgrimage in the presence of God the Father and God the Son, by the Holy Spirit which is in you. That fellowship is meant to be unbroken.

Should you fall into sin, you will break the fel-

lowship, and you will be so conscious of sin that you will be aware you have been left alone. But, says John, I want to assure you that if you realize what you have done, and if you confess and acknowledge it, and go back to God, the blood of Jesus Christ is still efficacious. Your sin will be wiped out, you will be renewed, and you will continue in this holy walk in life in the presence of God.

Christian people, that is the thing to which we are called, that is the kind of life we are meant to be living. That is eternal life—to be walking with God, to be sharing His life, and to be having fellowship with Him; not feeling that God is a stranger far away from us, whom we try to find when we are in trouble, but realizing that we are always with Him, always in His presence, conscious of His presence, and walking together in fellowship with Him in the light. That is the Christian life, to be always with God, not just during our special times of prayer. Our whole life is to be lived in the conscious presence of God.

And that, in turn, leads to the next thing, which is that knowing Him in this way we come specially to know His life. When the apostle Paul prayed for the Ephesian church, he prayed that they **“may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,<sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God”** ([Ephesians 3:18-19 NASB](#)), that they might join together with all the saints in knowing this.

You know, my friends, I feel increasingly that this is our greatest lack; it is the greatest need of the modern church and the modern Christian. What we do not realize—and it accounts for most of our errors and deficiencies—is the amazing love of God. Oh, if we but knew this love! If we but knew and understood something of the whole mystery of the incarnation and the atonement, this astounding love of His towards the world, in spite of its sin! But the man who has eternal life begins to know and to realize this. It becomes attractive to him, and that is why he is able to smile at cruel foes. He can know and say with the apostle Paul that nothing can separate him from the love of God.

So, then, the man who has eternal life is the man who knows God, the man who enters into an increasing awareness of the character and nature of God. Here again I would ask a question: as we look back across our lives and review them, can we say that we are coming to an increasingly greater knowledge of God? Do we feel that we understand the whole nature of God more than we did before? Is God becoming more and

more real, and are we increasingly aware of His astounding, amazing love?

Let us now come on to the second big principle, which is that having eternal life means that we not only know God in that way, but we begin to become increasingly aware of our relationship to God. This is something that the apostles emphasized without ceasing. The man who has eternal life, says Paul, is the man who has the spirit of adoption, who now really knows God as his Father, and I suppose it is in a sense the distinguishing feature of Christianity.

The Jews of old believed in God in a general sense, in God as Creator, in God as the Maker of the world, but, surely, the special thing that our Lord introduced was this sure and certain knowledge and assurance of God as Father. Paul says, **“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’”** ([Romans 8:15 NASB](#))

Now that is inevitable, of course, from all we have been saying, it is the inevitable outcome of our knowledge of God. We begin to realize the truth about ourselves in our relationship to God, and I know of nothing which will enable us to know more certainly whether or not we have received this gift of eternal life than our answer to a simple question: when we think of God and when we come into His presence, what is our thought, what is our idea of God? Do we realize and know for certain that He is our Father? When we say, **“...Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name”** ([Matthew 6:9 NASB](#)) do we really mean that?

Our Lord described this in the Sermon on the Mount. He was anticipating there what was to be true of the Christian and He says, You should not worry about food and clothing, **“For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things”** ([Matthew 6:32 NASB](#)).

We are coming to our Father, and as we come to Him we should realize that He is our Father. Indeed, we should not only believe that, we should have a consciousness of it, the spirit of adoption which makes us cry, **“Abba Father”**—this intimate relationship. The Christian begins to realize that God is indeed his Father, that the hairs of his head are all numbered, and that his relationship to God is not something mechanical, it is experiential. That, of

course, leads to a sense of dependence upon God, and the consciousness that, as time passes, we are in His hands. And that, further, means that we begin to look to Him for strength, and for power, and for everything.

Oh, what fools we are! I make no apology for using such a phrase. How foolish we are as Christian people in failing to realize that in this relationship to God our every need can be supplied, and our every want satisfied. The life that was lived by the Lord Jesus Christ here on earth, He Himself tells us repeatedly, was a life that was lived in constant dependence upon His Father. He says, **“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works”** ([John 14:10 NASB](#)).

But it is only as we realize this that we begin to understand why our Lord ever prayed. So many people cannot understand why the Son of God prayed while He was here on earth. The answer is that His life as a man was dependent upon God. He looked to God for the works He was to do and received power to perform them by receiving the Holy Spirit. He was constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit that was given to Him without measure, and it was in this strength and power that He offered up Himself. It was through the Spirit that He offered Himself up to God, and He was **“...was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord”** ([Romans 1:4 NASB](#)).

This is surely one of the most staggering things that man can ever learn in this world, but it is an essential part of knowing God. And thus, you find, as you read the lives of the saints throughout the ages, that they have always been people who have spent much of their time in prayer. They realized that they were supposed to live this life as Christ lived it in dependence upon God, so they did not rely upon their own strength and ability. They sought His mind and will, they sought the fullness of the Spirit, they sought the power which God alone could give, and they drew from God and lived their life of victory and triumph.

But I want to emphasize another suggestive aspect of this great life, which is that the man who has eternal life not only knows God and his relationship to Him, he delights in God, and his supreme desire is to know God better. Here again I take you back to the psalms. Do you remember what David felt like when he came again to the house of God? He tells us, **“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?”** ([Psalm 42:1-2](#))

[NASB](#)). Now that inevitably happens if we possess eternal life; like always attracts like.

The characteristic of love is that it desires to be in the presence of the object of its love, and the receiving of eternal life leads to that attitude with respect to God. And thus, you find, as you read your Scriptures about these holy men of God and as you read the lives of all the saints, that their greatest desire was to know God better. They were always seeking His presence, and an ever-greater realization of it. It was this that led them to examine themselves every day and to discover how they lived.

It was this which made that saintly man **John Fletcher, English Methodist preacher (12 September 1729 – 14 August 1785)**, ask himself a series of questions when he went to bed every night. These questions were all destined to establish this point: had he been walking with God as he should have been? Had this walk been neglected in his life? Had there been any break in the fellowship? Had sin come in and spoiled and tarnished it? This is something that is universally true of all the saints, whatever the century, whatever the nation to which they belong; they have set before them, above everything else, a realization of the presence of God, and they have done so because they have delighted in Him.

To spend time in reading the Bible and in meditation is no burden to those who have eternal life. They delight in it, it is their greatest joy, because knowing God as they know Him, they enjoy Him. The first question of the shorter Catechism is: **‘What is the chief end of man?’** The answer is, **‘The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.’** And you cannot read the Bible honestly without seeing that those who are described in the Old Testament knew and enjoyed God and enjoyed living their life with Him. Our Lord’s chief delight was to be talking to His Father, to be communing with Him. He enjoyed God and we are meant to enjoy God. Oh, God should not be a taskmaster to the man who has eternal life, to the man who is a true Christian! God should be the supreme object of his joy and his delight and of his pleasure.

My friends and fellow believers, if we but knew God in His holy, loving, character, if we but knew His love, we would want to spend our whole life in His presence and with Him. That is the thing to which these men were looking forward. **‘That I may know him,’** says Paul; he is forgetting the things that are behind, and he is looking forward to this unmixed enjoyment of God in heaven.

That is the reality of heaven, to be basking in the love and glory of God. The man who receives eternal life begins to awaken to these things. I do not want to discourage anybody. I am describing this life in its fullness, but I am obviously suggesting, as I do so, that if we are utter strangers to this and know nothing about it, even in the most elementary form, then it is time we asked ourselves whether we have received eternal life.

Am I a Christian at all? Do I know anything about these things? Have I ever had a passing second in my life in which I have known something of God and realized His presence and known something of His astounding love? The man who has this life is the man who loves God. You see, God does not stop at asking us to believe in Him. ‘The first and great commandment,’ says our Lord, is, **“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND”**<sup>38</sup> **“This is the great and foremost commandment”** ([Matthew 22:37-38 NASB](#)). Faith is insufficient, we are meant to go on to love God and to love Him with the whole of our being.

But obviously I must come to the next principle, which is that the man who has eternal life loves to do the will of God. That is the logical sequence. The man who loves is the man who is anxious to please the object of his love. There is no better test of love than that, and unless you desire to please someone whom you claim to love, then I assure you, you do not love that person. Love always wants to be pleasing and to give itself, and anyone who loves God wants to do the will of God.

If you look at Christ, you see that the whole of His life, His one object, was to do the will of His Father. He did not care what it was; even in the Garden of Gethsemane when He faced the one thing He did not want, even there he said, **“Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done”** ([Luke 22:42 NASB](#)).

He says, I do not want to drink this cup, but if it is doing Your will, I will do even that—that is love at its maximum and its best, and it is true of all who have His life. The chief end of the true Christian is the glory of God; therefore, he spends his time in seeking to know the will of God and in doing it. He strives to do it and he loves to do it. He is controlled by this one idea. Having learnt what God has done for him and what God is to him, having realized something of this love of God, he says as in the old hymn, **‘Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.’** And man, therefore, who has eternal life, has this as the supreme object and desire of his life, to do the will of God.

And this brings me to my last word. The ultimate manifestation of the possession of eternal life is that it produces certain results in our lives. Fortunately for us they have all been set out in a very brief compass by the apostle Paul in [Galatians 5, verses 22](#) and [23](#), where he talks of the fruit of the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:22-23 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup> **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**  
<sup>23</sup> **gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”**

A man once said a very profound thing when he described these verses as ‘The shortest biography of Christ that has ever been written.’ He was absolutely right. That is the perfect description of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ; those were its characteristics **“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”**, and anyone who has received this gift of eternal life from Him is one who in turn begins to manifest that sort of life, that is the kind of person he becomes. **“For the kingdom of God,”** says Paul to the Romans, **“is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”** ([Romans 14:17 NASB](#)). **“The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so”** ([Romans 8:7 NASB](#)), **“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace”** ([Romans 8:6 NASB](#)).

So that as we examine ourselves at this moment, we must again ask ourselves this vital question: can Christ fulfill in me the object of His coming and dying? He says He has done it all to give eternal life. Have I received eternal life? And a very good way of testing it is to ask further: is the fruit of the Spirit manifesting itself in me? Because Christ is the eternal life and the Spirit produces its fruit in us.

Do you know this life of God in your own life? Have you this joy in the Holy Ghost, something that makes you independent of circumstances? Do you know a great peace in your heart, peace within, peace with other people, something that, whatever happens, leaves you unruffled? Are you, longsuffering? He was longsuffering when He suffered the contradiction of sinners against Himself.

Are we gentle; are we good; are we patient with people or do we lose our tempers with them? Are

we constantly manifesting our irritability and touchiness, or do we manifest longsuffering, gentleness and goodness, faithfulness, meekness, humility and temperance—or self-control? Is there a discipline in our lives? There is a control and balance in living the life of Christ.

See these things and remember that He offered them to us. And I put these questions not only that we may know these things here and now, but that we may *enjoy* them. We can receive the gift of eternal life in this life and in this world, but if we die without receiving it, we cannot possibly enjoy the life of God in eternity. This is but a preparation, it is a foretaste. We are not given the full possession of the great estate, but we are given the seal, the earnest, the title deeds, so that I know I am going to get it all, because of what I receive now. And if I have not received the title deeds and the earnest of the inheritance here, it just means that I will never receive the full inheritance there.

Have you received eternal life, my friends? The most momentous challenge you have ever faced is the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross and who rose again to give you this gift. Do you find something of this life in you? If you do, well pledge yourself from this moment to live for it, to receive more of it, that it may grow and develop. But if you feel you have never received this life, hasten away quietly somewhere into the presence of God and tell Him you see clearly that you have never had it; acknowledge and confess your sin to Him, and give up relying upon yourself and your own goodness.

This is the test of a Christian, not to be better than anybody else, not to be a church member, not simply to hold certain views, nor to pride yourself in some strict morality. No, this is the test of Christianity and nothing less, and if you realize that you do not have it, confess it to God, confess all your self-righteousness, acknowledge it all. Cast yourself upon God’s offer of salvation freely in Christ who has died for you, and ask Him to give you this gift of eternal life, this gift of life divine which is life indeed. And once you have it, you will begin to manifest these things and you will begin to live for God and His glory and to enjoy Him.

Religion will no longer be a task, it will be your chief delight. I end as I began, and ask you to pray:

**Breathe on me, Breath of God,  
Fill me with life anew,  
That I may love what Thou dost love,  
And do what Thou wouldst do.**

*Edwin Hatch*



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## 1 John 1 Overview Part 10

### Forgiveness of Sins

In this study we want to begin to look specifically at [1 John 1:9](#) which says,

**1Jn 1:9** **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

I wonder if you have ever felt like you simply could not draw close to God. It was like something was hindering you from getting close to Him. Maybe you had done some things in your life that you **knew** were displeasing to God – things that the Bible simply calls “**sin**”. They were things that you knew were wrong before you decided to do them. Maybe you just ignored God and thought that you could live your life without His guidance or without obedience to Him. Maybe you became involved in some kind of sinful habit or some kind of immoral affair, and from your perspective you were going to do what you wanted to do and live how you wanted to live – or so you thought, right? Unfortunately, you never accepted the fact that a person can actually become enslaved by a particular sin in their life. For whatever reason, you believed that you were the

exception, and that living in sin would not impact you. So you did what you wanted to do. However, after a period of time, the consequences of your sins left you personally drained, miserable, and confused, and worst of all you felt very distant from God. You felt guilty. Then the enemy made it even worse by making you feel completely unworthy to even approach God – so you never did. Well, if that describes your life, then this verse is for you.

There are several issues that first need to be clarified. First, notice that in v7-9 that John talks specifically about “**sins**” vs. “**sin**”. The singular use of the word “**sin**” is referring to the person’s general condition of sinfulness that is characteristic in anyone’s life – lost or saved. We are all sinners and we are all sinful. There are no exceptions. However, in [1 John 1:9](#) John uses the plural word “**sins**” which is referring specifically to any kind of disobedience that a Christian commits against God.

Secondly, even if a Christian does not seek God’s forgiveness, they are still forgiven. After their salvation, a Christian seeking forgiveness is not the basis of their being eternally forgiven. The basis of a believer’s forgiveness is the blood of Jesus Christ – and nothing else. [Ephesians 1:7](#) and [Colossians 1:14](#) and [Colossians 2:13](#) state,

**Eph 1:7** **In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace**

**Col 1:14** **in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.**

**Col 2:13** **And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,**

So, when [1 John 1:9](#) says that God is “**just to forgive us our sins**”, John is not talking about eternal forgiveness, but what is the basis of a believer’s “**fellowship**” with God **after** they have been saved. If a believer continues to live in sin, they cannot and will not have fellowship with God. If you do a detailed study on forgiveness, what you will find is that the vast majority of teaching on it comes in the gospels. For instance, the words “**forgive, forgives, forgiven, and forgiveness**” are only found 10 times outside of the Gospels and Acts, and in each of those cases there is no development of the topic.

Thirdly, notice that the main subject of this passage deals with the verb “**confess**”. What John says is that the Christian who understands the issue of confessing their “**sins**” to God can have forgiveness of their sins and be cleansed from them. We have dealt with the cleansing part in some detail, so this study will not rehearse too much of that aspect of this verse. However, I am sure that immediately someone is going to think that they are already forgiven of their sin, so what is John actually talking about? In the context of [1 John 1](#), John is clearly talking about a believer’s “**fellowship**” with God, and in this case what hinders that “**fellowship**”. The word “**fellowship**” is used 4 times – v3, 6, and 7. John is not talking about a believer’s salvation, but about their “**fellowship**” with God and their ability to draw near to God. In [Matthew 6:14-15](#), however, Jesus made a very important statement regarding forgiveness.

**Mt 6:14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.**

Without going into any detail about these verses, suffice it to say that when a believer has an unforgiving heart and a bitter spirit toward someone who has wronged them, they forfeit God’s blessing on their life and ultimately invite His chastening and discipline on their life. An unforgiving spirit is inconsistent to someone who has been totally forgiven by God. Only genuine forgiveness can break down the barriers that sin continually and inevitably erects between people. There is a parable in [Matthew 18:21-35](#) about an unforgiving servant. There the man is forgiven an unpayable debt that he owed, but then he refuses to forgive someone who owed him an almost negligible amount. The result is that the unforgiving servant is immediately and severely chastened. So, whenever a Christian refuses to forgive, it invites the discipline and chastening of God into their life. The believer may begin to experience stress, hardship, pressure, and other difficulties until their sin is acknowledged, forsaken, and confessed. When we forgive someone for the wrongs that they have committed against us personally, it does not remove the hurt of what they may have done against us. We may carry that hurt and the pain of their sin against us for a long time. What it does do, however, is put us in a right relationship with God where we are in a position to receive the grace of God and begin to more fully develop the character of Christ within our life. If Christ could say to His Father as

He was hanging on the cross to forgive those who were actually crucifying them, then certainly as Christians we are indebted to Him to provide the same kind of forgiveness to others that Christ did. Bitterness and anger are very cruel taskmasters and they will eventually destroy parts of anyone’s life if they allow them to control their heart and mind.

So, to what is John specifically referring when he says that we as believers are to “**confess our sins**”? Well, he actually says that believers are to do two specific things. The first is found in v7 which says that believers are to “**walk in the light**” and secondly in v9 that we as believers are to “**confess our sins**”. We cannot divorce these two from each other. They are the primary subject of what John is talking about – “**walking**” and “**confessing**”. There is really only one proof that a believer has genuine biblical faith and that their heart and mind have truly been opened to the gospel and its message on their life. That proof is that they are striving with all of their strength to “**walk in the light as He is in the light**”. Is that important to the individual? Is that what is controlling their life? In reality, John is testing the reality of a person’s confession, and the way that he does that is by stating that it is **NOT** enough to simply say the right things – [1 John 1:6, 8, and 10](#), and [1 John 2: 4, 6, and 9](#). John uses the phrases “**if we say**” and “**he who says**” to help the reader focus on what he is actually saying. Anybody can say the right things. Just saying the right things about salvation does not constitute salvation. In reality, what John is saying is that for someone to **ONLY** say the right things, but to have no genuine evidence of a changed life is actually evidence that they are not saved. That is his undeniable message here. John is clearly saying that it is of no value and no merit whatsoever for someone to say “*I believe*”, but then to consistently and knowingly live as if they do not believe. I worked with a man one time who regularly attended a Baptist church and was a deacon in his church. He was involved in many of the church’s activities and attended most all of their services. However, something vital was really missing from his life. He cursed very badly all of the time at work and would constantly speak in a condescending way about his wife. His language simply revealed what was really in his heart. [Matthew 12:34](#) and [Luke 6:45](#) declare that “**out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks**”. What is in a man’s heart is revealed by what he says and how he lives. The two must match in order for what he says to be genuine. John clearly says that people like this are not walking in the light and he is bold to claim that they are not actually saved. A person cannot divorce their life from their beliefs. What someone truly believes is revealed by how they actually live. How someone is living today reveals what they really believe



about God and His Word and what they truly believe about Jesus Christ. A person can intellectually agree with the Bible and give their mental assent to what it says, but be as desperately lost as possible.

Now, in [1 John 1:9](#) John introduces the word “**confess**”. It is the Greek word “*homologeō*”. The Greek prefix “*homo*” means the same, and the word “*lego*” comes from “*logos*” which means to speak. The word literally means to say the same thing. In our terms, it would mean to fully agree with what God has said about sin. In v9, it is referring to a believer confessing their sins, or agreeing with God about what sin is in their life. However, the word carries a deeper meaning than just agreeing with someone about something. If that was all that the word meant, then when a believer prayed and asked for God’s forgiveness and cleansing, it would seem that that would be sufficient. What the word fully implies, though, is a little different than once again just saying the right things. Ultimately what God is after in the believer’s life is for them to have the same hatred of sin that He has, and then to have a high level of contrition about that sin when they commit it. What God desires is that the believer determine to put sin out of their life. That is what confession means here – not just merely saying the right things. As stated earlier, anybody can say the right things.

It does no one any good whatsoever to simply say the proper and correct things if what they are saying has no impact on their life. [1 John 1:8](#) says the person who does that is deceived and the truth is not in them. Normally, when the English word “confess” is used, it refers to a person admitting that they actually did what they were accused of doing. I.e., they have owned up to the fact that they have committed an offense of some kind against someone else, and they admit that they are indeed guilty of that offense. However, the Greek word for “**confess**” goes much deeper than that. It is in the present subjunctive tense which means that the confession is a continuous action. The true believer has a constant attitude toward sins that they commit against God in which they are eager for the Holy Spirit to reveal that sin to them so that they can confess it and put it out of their life.

What happens when a believer is willing to “**walk in the light**” is that the “**light**” of God’s Word will constantly be revealing to them the things in their life that are not right. It reveals the things in their life that are not pleasing to God. So, if a believer is

unwilling to acknowledge their sin, then they are refusing and avoiding the truth about their life. They are resisting the work of the Holy Spirit to bring those overt or hidden sins to the surface so that the believer can actually deal with them. John clearly stated in [1 John 1:5](#) that “**God is light and in Him is no darkness at all**”. Whoever you are and however you may have chosen to live, you must allow God’s truth to penetrate your life and expose where you truly are in your life. In order to do that, agreeing with God about sin is absolutely essential. It cannot be avoided. It is not something that a person can ignore and expect to receive God’s blessings in their life. An unbeliever must allow God to expose their sin and then be willing to repent of it before they can ever be saved. A believer must allow God to expose their sin if they desire to have meaningful fellowship with Him. Most people, to include Christians, are very adept at avoiding everything that is being discussed here. They are not willing to agree with God about sin in their life because they are not willing to yield and submit their life to God and to His Word. They want to live how they want to live and they want to make the decisions about their life that they want to make, and so they simply are not going to let God’s Word have any meaningful impact on their lives. The worst part of all of this is that very often God says “*Okay, if you do not want Me, have at it! Go ahead, do your own thing. Live however you want to live.*” That is literally one of the worst things that could ever happen to a person – for God to withdraw His grace and His work out of their life because in their pride, arrogance, and willfulness they believe that they are much smarter than God and know much better what they need than He does. The Bible actually declares a person like that to be a complete “**fool**”. That individual has become so blinded and deceived by their sin and this world and what it offers that in many cases they become utterly irrecoverable. When God reveals things that are wrong in your life, do not make any defenses about it. Just let God do in your life what He knows is best for your life. Let the Word of God and the Holy Spirit search you deeply. Let them speak to your life so that your life can be made right with God.

It is important to understand that confessing sin is much more than simply saying that we are sorry for what we have done. To the contrary, confessing our sin is being very specific about specific sins. Most all Christians pray in general. They say something like this: “*Lord please forgive me of my sins. If I have failed you in some way, if I have sinned against you in some way, please forgive me.*” That may sound nice, but that is not confession at all. That is actually avoiding confession. It is not being specific about specific sins. A believer cannot just gloss over their sins or simply deny or ig-

nore that they have even committed any. We must agree with God about sin in our life and call it the same thing that He does. Unfortunately, that is why most people do not confess their sin to God. It is because they are not willing to agree with God as to what sin really is. They are not willing to call their sin what God calls their sin. If you have a bad habit in your life, you must confess what God says about that habit. If you are immoral in your life, you must call it immorality. If you are selfish and stubborn in your life, you must call it exactly that. If you are proud and arrogant, then you must confess that sin. If you are inflexible and lack tenderness and forgiveness with people, you must call it exactly what God calls it. If you are an angry person, or a lazy person, or a fault finder, then you must come to God and call those sins exactly what God calls them. If you have to always speak your mind, then you must call it the sin that it is – a lack of self-control in your life. There are no other options. If you really want God’s blessing in your life, then confessing your sins to God is a non-negotiable work that must happen in your life. There are no other biblical options for you. Until a person is willing to recognize, forsake, and confess their sins to God, they will NEVER have any victory over any of their sins.

So, here is the truth that must not be missed. If a person is not willing to acknowledge their sin before God and to agree with God that what they are doing in their life is sin, then they will never be willing to forsake that sin. For the unbeliever, it means that they will never be saved if that persists. The Greek word for “**forsake**” literally means to let go and to turn loose. It means to leave something behind and to abandon it. There comes a point in every person’s life where they have to choose whether or not they are going to let go of their sin and follow Christ, or if they are going to hold on to their sin and follow their own ideas and impulses. The former leads to salvation and the latter leads to spiritual and eternal death. Everyone has a choice to make. That choice is unavoidable before God. It can be avoided if the individual chooses, but in the end everyone will answer to God. There are no exceptions. No one will escape God’s judgment who has refused to come to God on His terms. There are no exceptions.

I remember reading a long time ago about how hunters would capture a particular kind of monkey in Africa. The monkey had very tiny hands, and so the hunters would drill a very tiny hole just barely big enough for the monkey to get his hand through. Then the hunters would go around to the other side of the tree and drill out another hole and place a nut

inside and then temporarily plug up the hole. When the little monkey would put his hand in the hole, he would discover the large nut, but when holding the nut in a fist like position, he could not get his hand back out of the hole. He was so determined to keep the nut that he would not let go of it and the hunters would come and capture him. If he would just have let go of the nut, he would have been free. Unfortunately, that describes many people and what they are like. They simply are not willing to agree with God about sin in their life, and so they never let go of it so that they can be free from the sin that is actually destroying their life and keeping them from Christ. You can call sin anything that you want to call it. You can give it fancy names. You can call it an addiction, or you can call it a personality problem, or you can call it having a good time, or you can call it “doing your own thing baby”. You can call it “being in a relationship”. You can call it anything that you want to, but until you call it what God calls it, you will never let go of it.

The word “**confess**” is only used 14 times in the New Testament, and the word “**confesses**” is only used 4 times. Of those 18 times that the word is used, [1 John 1:9](#) is the only place that it talks about a believer confessing their sins to God. In all other cases but one, it is always referring to confessing Christ. Christ is always the object of confession. [Romans 10:9-10](#) says this about Christ and is the very essence of how someone is saved,

**Ro 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

In order for anyone to be saved, no matter who they are, what they have, or what they believe, they must agree with God about His Son Jesus Christ and about sin in their life in order to be saved. Both of those elements are essential for biblical salvation to occur, and without either one a person cannot be saved.

*Continued in next edition...*

**ENDNOTES:**

<sup>1</sup>MacArthur, 143.

<sup>2</sup>Vine, 216.

<sup>3</sup>Wuest, Last Days, 104.

<sup>4</sup>Wuest, Last Days, 104.

<sup>5</sup>Vine, 455-456.

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