

CHRISTIANITY (*defined*)
A Study of 1 John
“What to do with your Sins”
1 John 1:8-2:2

Pastor David O. Dykes, Green Acres Church, Tyler, Texas, January 31, 2021

INTRODUCTION: I heard a humorous story about a preacher who announced that the next Sunday he was going to preach on the sin of lying. He asked everyone to read Mark 17 in preparation for the sermon. The next Sunday, the pastor said, “Raise your hand if you read Mark chapter 17 this week.” Half the people raised their hands. The preacher said, “You’re the ones that need this message because there are only 16 chapters in Mark!”

This is a message about what to do when you sin. Now, I’ve got to make a clear distinction at the beginning. I want you to think about the difference between SIN and SINS. You and I were born with a SIN problem -singular. We have a sin nature. But when you come to faith in Christ and are born again, Jesus fixes your sin problem. He removes the penalty of sin – which is separation from God forever. So if you are a child of God, every sin you have ever committed, or will ever commit is under the blood of Jesus. Forgiven. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the SIN of the world.” But even after we are part of God’s family, we still sometimes stumble and fall and commit sins. What happens? Think about the two words we studied last Sunday. RELATIONSHIP and FELLOWSHP. When you are a child of God you have a RELATIONSHIP that can never be broken. But our FELLOWSHIP with God is affected when we commit sins.

The Apostle John was an old man when he wrote this letter to Christians. These Christians were confused because they assumed that once they were saved, they would never, or should never commit sins again. So, some of them were promoting a heresy that once they were Christians, they could live perfect lives. Through the years, I’ve actually met a few very pious Christians who claimed that they had reached a state of sinless perfection. They called it total sanctification.

I heard about a preacher who was speaking along these lines and he asked the congregation, “Has anyone here ever met a perfect man?” One man in the back raised his hand. The preacher said, “Sir, have you met a perfect man?” He said, “No sir, but I’ve heard about him.” The preacher said, “Who is it?” He said, “My wife’s first husband.”

Well, he wasn’t perfect, and neither are we. But as I understand the scriptures, no one is perfect except Jesus. Let’s read about what we should do whenever we stumble and commit occasional sins. Our text is: 1 John 1:8-10. Remember, John is writing to Christians: **If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**

There should be no division between these chapters, so let’s continue to read 1 John 2:1-2 **My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one. He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.**

If you are a believer and you don't take seriously the sin in your life, the Bible says you're deceiving yourself. And you're making God out to be a liar. Christians do sin. You say, “Well, what's the difference between a lost person sinning and a Christian sinning?” A lost person, a non-Christian, is running towards sin. Their unredeemed nature draws them towards sin like a magnet. They sin without feeling any remorse or regret. By contrast a Child of God may be attracted to sin -but it’s like the same poles of the magnet -they are repelled by the thought of sin. Our new nature causes us to experience regret and remorse when we commit sins.

Remember, 1 John was a letter written to address the basic truths of the Christian life. So as we talk about committing sins, there are three things you can do. One of them is bad and two of them are good.

1. YOU CAN CONCEAL YOUR SINS AND FACE THE CONSEQUENCES. Sometimes Christians sin, and they try to conceal

it. They try to cover it up. This passage pictures a lying Christian who denies that he ever commits sins. They lie to others and they lie to themselves. The lie they are telling themselves is that, “I can get away with this sin and there will be no consequences.”

One of the most vivid case studies of a Child of God sinning comes from the life of King David. Although he was a man after God’s own heart, he fell into two terrible sins and then tried to cover them up.

In 2 Samuel 11, we read that David had stayed home while he sent his army away to fight the Ammonites. The King’s palace was the highest in the city of Jerusalem, and from his balcony, he looked down on all the roofs of the houses below. One night he looked out and saw a beautiful woman taking a bath on her roof. If David had simply turned away and gone back inside, he would have spared himself, his family, and many others a world of misery. But that one look became a lingering look, and then a lustful look. He sent for her and committed adultery with her. She later told David she was pregnant and he was the father. David tried to cover up his sin, so he sent for Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah, to return from the battlefield for a little R&R. David’s wicked cover-up was that with Uriah home, everyone would just assume he was the father of the child. But Uriah was such a patriot that he refused to sleep in his house. So David had to come up with plan C – and it was even more wicked. He sent Uriah back into battle and told his general to lead Uriah to the front lines, and when he was surrounded by the enemy, to desert him. So Uriah was in the heat of battle, and he was surrounded by Amorites warriors. He looked around and didn’t see any other Israeli fighters. He was surrounded and was killed in battle. It was as if David was holding the sword that murdered Uriah. But with Uriah dead, nobody would know if he was the father of the child or not.

So, this man after God’s own heart was guilty of adultery and murder – and he tried to cover it up. Later, the prophet Nathan was sent by God to confront David with his sins. And David eventually confessed and repented. But until that happened, he had to deal with the misery of knowing he had failed God.

In Psalm 38 David is lamenting over the sickness and misery he was

experiencing because of sin in his life. He cried out in Psalm 38:1-5:
“LORD, do not punish me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has pressed down on me... For my iniquities have flooded over my head; they are a burden too heavy for me to bear. My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness.”

Now, let’s forget about King David for a moment and think about us. What happens when we commit sins and refuse to confess them before the Lord? When we try to cover up our guilt, we can face suffering from two sources. First, we have to face the consequences of bad choices. The result of David’s sins led to a pregnancy which in turn led to deception and murder. And if you continue to read about David’s family after this there was murder and deceit among his children. You see, when we sin, we don’t sin in a vacuum. Our sins are like a pebble dropped in a pond and the ripples spread out and affect others around us.

The second source of suffering when we try to hide our sins is the discipline from the Lord. My dad wasn’t a perfect father, but he was a loving father. And there were times when he disciplined me for my bad choices. Like a lot of you in my generation, our parents didn’t spank us, they whipped us. My dad would use a folded over belt. I know that today, that might be considered child abuse. But I never considered it child abuse. Every time I got a whippin’, I deserved it, and there were many times I needed one and didn’t get one. These are different times we live in now, and I’m not suggesting parents punish the way my dad punished us. There is never an excuse for child abuse. But I know now that my dad disciplined me because he loved me. He would often say during the administration of the discipline, “Son, I’m doing this because I love you.” And I’d say, “Well, I wish you wouldn’t love me so hard!” Now, if my imperfect, earthly father disciplined me, we can be sure that our Perfect Heavenly Father will discipline His children when they persist in rebellion and sinning. If you want more truth about this read Hebrews chapter 12 where the writer quotes Proverbs 3:11-12. **“Do not despise the Lord’s instruction, my son, and do not loathe his**

discipline; for the Lord disciplines the one he loves, just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights.” (Proverbs 3:11-12)

So, if you meet someone who claims to be a Christian and they are continuing to live a life of habitual sin without any signs of remorse or regret – and they aren’t under the discipline of the Lord. What are you to think? Well according to Hebrews 12:8 that person is an illegitimate child of God. If they claim to be a Child of God, they are guilty of Divine Identity Theft.”

On the other hand, I’ve had individuals come to me through the years and say, “Oh pastor, I’m so disappointed. I have failed the Lord, and sinned. I feel absolutely miserable. I feel rotten about it.” I tell them that the fact they are suffering over their sins is actually a sign that they are a child of God, and then I lead them to do what we’ll talk about next. So, brother and sisters be warned that if you insist on concealing your sins, you’ll have to face the painful consequences. But here’s a better option.

2. YOU CAN CONFESS YOUR SINS AND FIND CLEANSING.

1 John 1:9 is one of the most important verses in the Bible. It says, **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

I’ve already told you that you don’t have to confess every sin you’ve ever committed to go to Heaven. Instead, we confess our sins to stay in fellowship with the Father. The word “confess” means to agree with God about our disobedience. There is a lot of confusion about confession. Have you ever heard somebody pray, “God, forgive us of our sins.”? That’s kind of a blanket confession, and that’s not what that word means. The Greek word for confession is a combination word: *homo lego*. You know what the word *homo* means? It means “the same kind.” *Lego* means “to say.” And so when we confess our sins, we are saying the same thing about our sins that God says about our sins. We are agreeing with God that our sin is serious. We’re agreeing with him that our sin is an affront to a Holy God.

You may say, “Well Jesus taught us to pray, ‘forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.’” That sounds like a blanket confession. First of all, that’s a model prayer – a guide. Jesus would

never actually pray that prayer Himself because He never sinned. Confession should be specific. “Father, I confess that I lost my temper with my spouse this afternoon. I agree with you that I sinned. Please cleanse me of this sin.”

In Proverbs 28:13 we read: **“The one who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them will find mercy.”**

So here’s the choice: try to cover your sins or confess them. I had a life lesson about the folly of trying to cover my sins. When I was in college, I was a youth evangelist. It was a time in Alabama when many churches had week-end youth revivals led by college students. This was the early 70’s so I was dressed in style. I had long hair, and I wore a totally white suit, with a navy-blue shirt and a white tie. The ensemble was complete with white patten leather shoes and navy-blue socks.

Before services we would usually eat supper in the homes of some of the members. This particular Friday night we were somewhere near Mobile, and the hostess served one of my favorites, boiled shrimp with red cocktail sauce. I should have taken off my white coat, but I didn’t. And in the process of dipping a shrimp in the sauce and bringing it to my mouth, I dropped a big dollop of cocktail sauce right on the lapel of my white suit. I said, “Oh no! That looks awful. I guess I can’t wear this coat tonight.” The hostess was very creative. I think she’d been reading hints from Heloise or something. She said, “I’ll take care of that. She blotted out the stain with water, but a red circle still could be seen. Then she took some baking flour and patted it on the spot – and it disappeared. I said, “You’re a genius!” However, later that night at church, due to a combination of me moving around and the heat and humidity, that flour began to flake off – and mysteriously, a red spot began to appear on my lapel. I’d like to say that it resulted in a huge outpouring of the spirit as people thought it was a manifestation of the blood of Jesus – but that didn’t happen. Most people saw it as a stain I had tried to cover up. So the Bible is correct – when you try to conceal your sins, you won’t prosper. But when you confess them, you will find mercy.

Here’s a quick formula on how to deal with your sins. Admit it. Quit it. Forget it. As soon as the Holy Spirit convicts you of a sin, confess it to God. Then be willing to let go of that sin – quit it. Occasional sins for a

Christian are a tragic truth, but when a Christian continues in sin, that can lead to much deeper problems. Let go of it.

3. YOU CAN CORRECT YOUR SINS BY FOCUSING ON

CHRIST. That's what chapter two in 1 John is all about. He says, “I write these things to you that you sin not.” It is possible for you to attain a level being confessed up to date, and clean before the Lord. That’s not perfection, that’s being a clean vessel that God can use. We can’t become sinless, but it should be our goal to SIN LESS. That is what the Christian life is all about. God is trying to conform us to the image of Christ. Every day and in every way, the One who began a good work on you will keep on completing it until the day of Jesus Christ. There are two powerful truths about Jesus that will help us when we stumble into sin.

(1) Jesus is our advocate. The word advocate is the same word Jesus used in John’s Gospel to describe the Holy Spirit. He is the paraclete – one called to stand alongside us. 1 John 2:1 says, **“But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one.”**

Advocate means “defense attorney.” That means that when we do stumble and sin, we have Someone to speak up on our behalf.

Thankfully, I’ve never needed a real defense attorney. But I remember when we lived in Alabama, we sold a house to a couple. A few months after the sale, we were contacted by their lawyer about something they didn’t like about the house. He was threatening legal action. I had never gotten a letter from a lawyer before, so I went to an attorney who was a member of our church. He looked at the letter and he said, “Don’t worry about this one bit. If they contact you again, just tell them to contact your lawyer. I’ll take care of it.” That felt really good. The next time I heard from their lawyer, I said, “Just speak to my attorney. And it all got resolved with no problem.

That’s what Jesus does for us. When we sin and confess that sin, we have an advocate, Jesus, who stands before the Judge of the Universe and says, “Father, that’s my child. He’s guilty, but I’ve already paid for his crime, so I declare Him forgiven.”

Of course, the devil is the prosecuting attorney – the accuser of believers. He accused Job before the Lord. And he accuses us to make us feel guilty when we've been forgiven. So the next time he slides up to you and whispers how guilty and rotten you are, just say. "Satan, just speak to my lawyer, Jesus Christ." And Satan says, "Sorry. All charges are dropped!" We have an advocate in our hearts – the Holy Spirit; and we have an advocate in Heaven – Jesus Christ.

(2) Jesus is our atonement. That means that Jesus has already paid the price to redeem us from the slavery of sin. 1 John 2:2 says: **"He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world."**

The word "atone" or "atonement" is a little tricky because we don't use it in our everyday conversations. The Jews have a Day of Atonement, called *Yom Kippur*. When there was a Temple, the priests would sacrifice a lamb and take its blood and sprinkle it on the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies. It was to cover the guilt of the sins of the people for the previous year. Another goat would be taken out into the wilderness and released to symbolize that God had removed their sins. The Jews today still recognize Yom Kippur as a holiest day of the year. Nobody works and they fast all day long.

Jesus died as the lamb of God to take away our sins – not annually – but once for all time. Let's take the word "atone" and take it apart into two words: "at one." It's a good way to understand the meaning. Our sin problem separated us from God. But Jesus' death on the cross made us AT ONE with God again. He paid the price so we could be one with our Creator.

CONCLUSION: I think many Christians don't take sin seriously.

We're forgiven, and we know that if we confess our sins, God cleanses us. But the whole point of growth in the Christian life is to become more and more like Jesus. Our goal should be to sin less and less. And in order to do that you've got to HATE SIN the way God hates sin. Do you hate sin in your life the way God hates sin? Let me give you a very crude illustration. Just imagine that when my daughters were toddlers that one of them was playing in our backyard, and I look up and she was lying on the ground not moving – This never happened, thank God, it's just an

illustration. So I rush over to her and pick up her little body and it is cold and lifeless. I notice two swollen puncture marks on her leg. And then I hear a rattle and look to the side and see a huge rattlesnake. And I realize in that moment that the rattlesnake was responsible for the death of my child. Now, what is going to be my attitude toward that snake? Am I going to say, “Don’t worry, Mr. Rattlesnake. I know it’s your nature to be poisonous, you can’t help it. And she probably provoked you.” Am I going to say that?

No! Instead I’m going to take a machete and chop off the snake’s head and then keep chopping until there’s not much left. You can only imagine how intense would be my hatred for that snake.

Now that didn’t happen. But let me ask you, “What was it that killed God’s only Son?” It wasn’t a crown of thorns, or a cross, or a spear in His side. It was my sin and your sin that killed His Son. That’s how much God hates sin- and we should hate sin with that same intensity. Don’t conceal your sins – that leads to painful consequences. Instead confess your sins and correct your sins by focusing on the holiness of Jesus.

Will you pray: “God give me a holy hatred for sin in my life. Father, please convict me when I commit sins so that I can confess them to you and be in fellowship with you again.”