

So That You May Know

An Expositional Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 4- The True Test of Salvation- Part 2

32. The Belief in Confession and Forgiveness- Part 4

WAOY Friday/Monday 06/1-4/07; WOSM Tuesday 11/15/22

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We are continuing to go over our verse by verse “journey” through the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to continue to examine what John taught about “A Biblical View of Confession and Forgiveness”. So let’s open our Bibles and read **1John 1:7&9** and **1John 2:1a** again together.

7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin...

Now that we have established that confession is mandatory in order to receive forgiveness- we need to discuss just *how* we are to confess our sins. Some people teach that unless you go to another person- a pastor or a priest- and confess your sins to him- then it doesn’t really count. But the Bible doesn’t teach that.

Some religious organizations teach that Confession is a Sacrament of the Church, and that Salvation is wholly dependent on the Sacrament of Confession and the so-called Rite of Penance. But one again- the Bible teaches that Salvation is a sovereign Work of God that is not based upon any human work at all.

Those who believe in the Sacrament of Confession also have to believe in the Rite of Penance. And that unscriptural exercise teaches that since you have confessed your sins- that you must do something religious to earn God’s forgiveness like serve in a leper colony or say so many “Hail Mary’s” or so many “Our Fathers”. And the purpose of doing that- is to make God look bad if He does *not* forgive you.

The Rite of Penance is a mockery of Salvation by Grace through Faith alone. It forces people to try to be worthy of God's forgiveness and no amount of effort on our part can every do that.

The Bible teaches that we must go to another human being and confess our sins to them in order to be forgiven – in only two cases- when we desire to be healed and when the sin involves that person.

For example, say I sold something to an individual but didn't tell them that it was broke. Let's say that I purposely hid that information from them so that I could make some money off them. According to many, many Scriptures, I have sinned.

Well, since I sinned, I can just go to God in secret and confess my sins to God and be forgiven, right? Wrong. In this case- I am required by Scripture to go to the person I defrauded and confess that I lied to him and that I deceived him. But it goes even further than that. Part of my confession to that person must also include that I deceived him "on purpose" willfully- so that I could make money off him.

The idea is that this person must be made aware of my sin in all of its hideous detail because he was involved in it. So, if I try to hide my effort to deceive him or if I make excuses for it or if I lie about it in order to make myself look better- then I am not truly confessing because I value my own pride over my agreement with God about my sin. And if I do that- then I am not really confessing and since I am not really confessing my sin- then I am not forgiven and I am not cleansed. And in this case it probably would be appropriate if I would refund the money to the person that I had deceived.

I knew a man who went to the length of taking out a second mortgage on his home in order to pay back an individual that he had defrauded. And this man struggled to pay off that second mortgage- month after month- and it took him nearly fifteen years to do so. I admire that because that is truly confessing sin.

So generally speaking, sins that are committed in private should be confessed in private to God but sins that are committed in public- involving another person- should be confessed in public- with perhaps making restitution as well.

So, for example, let's say that you were jealous of someone- but they didn't know it. To go to that person and confess that you were jealous of them might make you feel a whole lot better- but it may really hurt them very badly- and that would be counterproductive to all that

you are trying to do. So, it would be better to simply confess that secret sin to God and not tell the other person.

But if you did something to that person based upon your jealousy and they knew that you did the things that you did- then it would be appropriate to go to them and confess your sin in addition to going to God.

Now today I want to zero in on the second part of verse 9:

... He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Notice that this verse says that God is both Faithful and Righteous. Now we must not just pass this up because we will get the wrong impression here. So *why* did John bring up the fact that God is Faithful and Righteous at this point in his discussion about Forgiveness and Confession? Is John saying that by virtue of the fact that we have confessed our sin- that God is now *obligated* to forgive us? Is John saying that *because* we have confessed that God *has to* forgive us? If that is what John is saying here then doesn't that mean that our confession has *earned* God's forgiveness? And if that is true then doesn't that mean that our human work of confession has purchased our forgiveness?

This issue was one of the root causes of the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago. Martin Luther said that to suggest that God is *obligated* to forgive a person simply because he has confessed his sin puts God in the place of being obligated to Man and God will never be obligated to Man in any way.

The Roman religious system teaches today that God sees Man's repentance and it would be "unseemly" for Him *not* to forgive Man due to his penance over his sin. This is why the Rite of Penance is so vital to Roman Theology. But again, if God *must* forgive me because I have confessed my sin- then God is now *obligated* to me- and that puts *me* in a superior place to God and that could never be.

So why did John use these two words- Faithful and Righteous to describe how God pardons us when we confess our sins? In what sense is God Righteous and in what sense is God Faithful?

To help us understand the word, "faithful" let's read what God said that He would do about this in **Isaiah 1:18:**

Come now, and let us reason together," Says the Lord, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.

And through the prophet Jeremiah, God said, in **Jeremiah 31:34**:

They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

So clearly, if God has made such promises and then refused to forgive us- He would not be considered faithful. But God *is* faithful- He is Faithful to *Himself*; He is faithful to what He has spoken; He is faithful to His Plan and to His Purpose and God is faithful to do what He has promised that He will do.

So, God forgives us—*not* because He owes anything to us. God owes no man anything. And God will *never* be beholding to any Man and God will *never* be in a position where he is obligated to any Man. No, John teaches us here that God forgives us simply because He is faithful to what He has promised that He will do. Now to the issue of God's Righteousness in forgiveness- we must turn to **Romans 3:20-28** to find the answer:

20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.

21 But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was* to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;

26 for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

27 Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.

Here Paul is explaining how it is that God can be both “just” and the “justifier” of the one who has faith in Jesus. Now on the surface- this seems to be a real theological problem. God is “Just” or Righteous only because He condemns the guilty and punishes them and will not allow a single guilty person to go free. God’s Righteous Wrath against all sin and the certainty of that Wrath is what makes God to be Just and Righteous. So, if God allowed a single guilty person to go free- then He would cease to be Righteous and therefore He would cease to be God. So, God’s Justice and Righteousness *demands* that He punish the guilty and God’s Word says that all men are guilty of being sinful.

But if it is true that all men are sinful and if it is true that God must punish all sin- then how does anyone go free? How can one guilty sinner ever go to Heaven if God is to remain Just and Righteous?

This is the dilemma that tears apart every single religious system in the world except Biblical Christianity. Islam has no answer to this question. Islam miserably fails to answer the dilemma of how God can be merciful and pardon guilty sinners and remain Just and punish all guilt at the same time. Hinduism and Buddhism and Judaism is silent about this issue too.

But while the religious systems of the entire world grow silent- the glory of Christianity shines at this one vital point of Man’s Redemption and God’s Justice and Mercy. This one single issue proves without doubt that Islam is a cruel fraud- perpetrated upon humanity by a demon possessed man named Mohammed. It is at this one point that the foolishness of both Hinduism and Buddhism and Judaism are brought to light.

This is the most important intersection of all religious thought, and it is at this intersection where all man-made religions fail to provide an answer. Only Biblical Christianity has the answer because only Biblical Christianity has Jesus Christ. Only Christianity has the answer in the mystery of God becoming Man; the Incarnation when God Almighty draped Himself in human flesh and was born of a virgin and lived a human life. This aspect; this God/Man- Jesus Christ alone and

singularly is the only answer to Man's great dilemma of having our sins forgiven and of God remaining Righteous. Only Jesus was 100% God and 100% Man in the same body at the same time without conflict or contradiction. Only Jesus solves this riddle as He lived a human life and was tempted in all points as we are- yet without any sin. Only Jesus solves this problem as He maintained perfect Deity amidst perfect Humanity.

And when this sinless, spotless Lamb was hung on a tree- God poured out all His Fury and all His Wrath and all His Vengeance against all our sins upon this substitutionary Sacrifice and God's Righteous Justice against all sin was forever satisfied and now guilty sinners can be shown Mercy and guilty transgressors can go free and now guilty and wicked men can be set loose from their chains and the prison doors are opened and the captives are released!

The brilliance of Paul's argument shows the majesty of God's Grace- and how God satisfied His Justice by pouring out His Wrath against my sin- upon His Own Son- which now allows God to be merciful to me. The Scripture declares that

2Corinthians 5:21

He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

I tell you that our forgiveness comes at such an astounding price and so we must never think for a minute that we *deserve* forgiveness. We must never think that God is so in love with us that He owes us our redemption. No, God loves Jesus and God so loves Jesus that He honors what Christ did by Him taking the sins of the whole world on Himself and thus paying the penalty that should have rightly fallen on us.

And God so honors what Jesus did- that He forgives us; He pardons us; He cleanses us. And when we confess our sins- when we agree with God that sin is wrong and when we agree that we are guilty; and when we agree that God would be just in condemning us because we are guilty; and when we agree that we should hate our sin to the same degree that God hates sin- then God looks at the wondrous Act of obedience that Christ has done on the Cross and God then pardons our sin and cleanses us from all unrighteousness in the greatest Act of Kindness and Mercy that the world has ever known!

Well, I'm out of time again today, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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