

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***  
*107 East Austin*  
*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*  
*830-997-8834    jthomas@fbgbible.org*

**A0421 -- May 23, 2004 -- 1 John 1:9-10 -- Restoration to the Light**

Last week we looked at 1 John 1:7, 8. Verse 7 taught the Normal Spiritual Life and verse 8 taught the Human Viewpoint (HVP) Gimmick #2: Denial of the Sin Nature or the error of Perfectionism. Today we're going to look at HVP Gimmick #3: Denial of Personal Sin and the DVP Solution: Confession of Sin.

**1 John 1:9**

*(DVP Solution: Acknowledgment of Sin)*

***If we acknowledge (homologeō) our sins, faithful (pistos) is He and righteous (dikaios) to forgive (aphiemi) us the sins and to cleanse (katharizo) us away from (apo) each unrighteousness (adikia).***

**CREATION PICTURE OF REGENERATION**

This is a very controversial verse. As I've said in the preceding weeks the Epistle of 1 John is very misunderstood. The reason John is misunderstood is because John's vocabulary is simple. However, it is my contention that his thoughts are profound. That is why we set the stage with the introductory teaching regarding 1 John 3:6, 9.

*Man Created, Man Fallen, Man Regenerated, Man Resurrected*

We learned there that when you became a believer your being instantly took on a new complexity. In particular you have two natures rather than one; your old sin nature remains but the Holy Spirit imparted to you a new regenerate nature. This new regenerate nature consists of Christ's life created in your human spirit. Regeneration is the re-creation of the human spirit and that's why the doctrine of regeneration is always likened to creation. For example, Paul says in **2 Corinthians 5:17** ***"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold,***

*new things have come.*” The human spirit that sustained your body (James 2:26; 1 Cor. 2:11) was spiritually dead such that it was unable to receive spiritual truths (1 Cor. 2:14) and the same power that created the universe re-created your human spirit; that’s regeneration (Titus 3:5-7). In fact, regeneration is so closely related to creation that the word for regeneration (*paligennesis*) is used of the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth after the Millennium (Matt. 19:28). So, the picture you want to have in mind when you think of regeneration is Genesis 1-2: Creation and Rev. 21: Creation of the New Heavens and New Earth. The inhabitants of that New Heavens and New Earth will be required to have a body and spirit fit to live in that new creation. If you are a believer here today your human spirit has already been regenerated. It is fit for habitation in the New Heavens and New Earth. The problem is that our bodies still carry the old sin nature and our body has to be re-created by resurrection (*via* transformation). John’s way of expressing regeneration is found in **1 John 3:9** “*No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*” He’s not teaching perfectionism of the believer as a whole, he’s teaching that the believer’s new regenerate nature is perfect because it is Christ’s seed of eternal life deposited in your human spirit. This work of regeneration was done by the Holy Spirit. Your new nature, because it is Christ in you, cannot sin. 1 John 3:9 has absolutely nothing to do with habitual sinning. The verse is not saying that believers don’t habitually sin or continually practice sin. What it is saying is that the new regenerate nature cannot sin. To claim that the new regenerate nature *can sin* is to claim that Christ is sinning in you.

## OUTLINE AND PURPOSE OF 1 JOHN

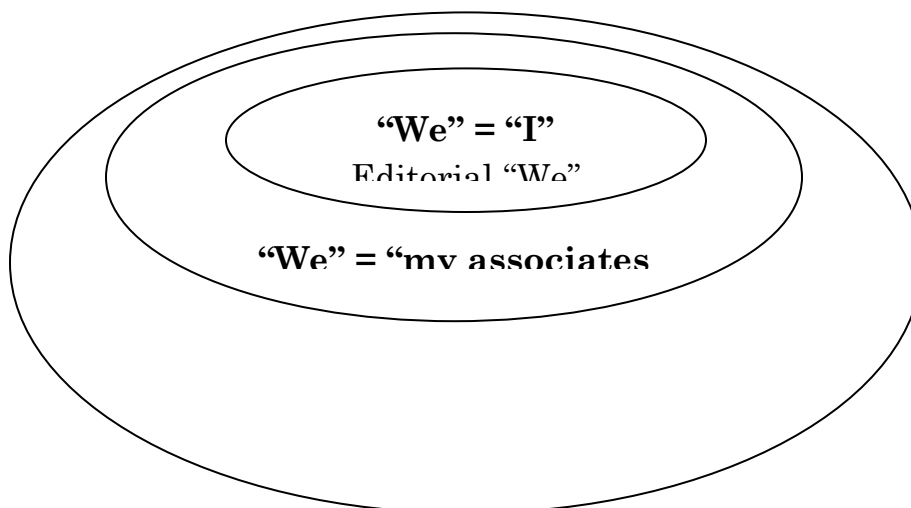
We also outlined the book in the early weeks to help us find John’s purpose for writing. Commentators are all over the place on this one. They start with 1 John 5:13 and claim that is the whole purpose of the book. The way they interpret 1 John 5:13 is that *these things I have written to those who claim to believe in the name of the Son of God...so that they may know that they have eternal life*. So, they conclude that the purpose of John is to give tests to determine whether or not we are really believers. Am I really a believer? Have I really exercised saving faith? But, fortunately for us and unfortunately for those commentators, that’s not what it says. It doesn’t say anything about claiming to believe. It says *these things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life*. Remember, this book is written to believers, how do we know that? (2:12, 13; **3:1, 2; 4:4-6**). So, what we have is a group of believers that John wants to protect? Who or what do John’s readers need to be protected from? They need to be protected from a group of false teachers we’re calling the Revisionists (cf. 1 John 2:19-20). We called them Revisionists because they didn’t ditch all of Christianity, they simply revised it. One of the false teachings these Revisionists were spreading was the doctrine that these

believers did not have *eternal life*. We have a lot of modern Revisionists today spreading the heresy that you can't know whether you have eternal life or not or that you can lose eternal life through some sin you commit. Ultimately all these groups are devoted to a form of works salvation. They take passages out of context and confuse temporal deliverance passages with spiritual salvation passages. They also think that we can commit some sin that's greater than the grace of God. If you believe this who do you think you are anyway that you can sin some sin greater and more powerful than the grace of God? The point of the Scriptures is that no sin is too great for the grace of God. You may have murdered someone, you may have murdered millions, but the grace of God is infinite, even the Russian Stalin and all the murderous vile evil he committed is not greater than the grace of God. God loved you and Stalin so much that ***He sent His one and only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life*** (John 3:16). That's right, Stalin could have believed and could be in heaven some day just like the little lady who never even stole a pack of gum from the corner grocery. Now, all this is not to say that we should go on sinning because the grace of God is so great. Paul says, ***“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”*** (Rom. 6:1-2). But, the point here today is that the purpose of John's epistle is not found in 1 John 5:13. Rather, there are two purposes to the book; both are found in 1 John 1:3-4. The first is *fellowship*. John wants us to have *fellowship* with the apostles and with God. Remember, *fellowship* is the Greek word *koinonia* and it means “sharing”. John wants us to share something with the apostles and with God. What he wants us to share is the same sphere (1 John 1:5). He wants us to walk in the Light as God is in the Light (1 John 1:7). So, he wants the truth to dwell in us in an *effective* and *dynamic* way so that we are walking in the same moral and spiritual sphere where God is (1 John 1:8, 10). The second purpose was found in v. 4 and that is apostolic *joy*. Remember, nothing brings John more *joy* than seeing his children walking in the truth (3 John 4). So, John's second purpose is to maximize apostolic *joy*. The way apostolic *joy* is maximized is through taking Bible doctrine to the streets; putting it into action in daily life. So, in light of this careful approach to 1 John that we are taking, an approach which is grammatically very careful and honors God's word to the utmost, now we can understand the controversial 1 John 1:9 and go to combat with the false Revisionists of our day.

## **1 JOHN 1:9: WRITTEN TO UNBELIEVERS FOR SALVATION?**

The first group of Modern Revisionists interprets 1 John 1:9 to be a salvation verse. They say that John is writing to unbelievers in verses 1-9 and that when John uses the phrase “Little children” in 2:1 he switches to talking to believers. A popular radio program put on by *People to People Ministries* teaches this view. These Revisionists teach that since we have already been forgiven

we don't have to *acknowledge* our sin to God. There are some major problems with this view. **First**, it is true that we are forgiven *positionally* (Eph. 1:7; 4:32; Col. 2:13). *Positionally* we have died with Him, been buried with Him, were raised with Him, and were seated with Him in the heavenly places (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:5-6; Col. 2:12). But we live here on earth. We go about our daily life and we sin. So, to say that we don't have to confess because we are already forgiven fails to account for our daily *experience*. Believers on earth do not always walk consistent with their *position*. In fact we often go about sinning. So, just because we are forgiven *positionally* does not mean that we do not need daily cleansing. This is not hard to understand because earthly parent/child relationships work exactly the same way. The Divine Institution of Family was given by God to mirror this relationship between God as our Father and believers as His children. If your son or daughter never came to you and apologized, something would be wrong in that relationship even though they would still be your child. In the same way, when we believe we become a part of the family of God permanently; but when we knowingly sin or sin is brought to our attention He requires confession as a condition for restoring fellowship. The **second** major problem with 1 John 1:9 being a salvation verse is the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural pronouns *we* used in vv. 5-10. Who are the *we*? I've been teaching you that it refers to John, the other apostles, and his readers. This is what we call the inclusive use. However, modern commentators have developed a new way to interpret the *we* in order to get around this problem. What they say is that *we* here means "you, but not me". This is hardly worth interacting with. *First* of all, if *we* really means "you, but not me" this would be the sole example in the NT. *Second*, in light of John's consistent use of the pronouns "we, you, and they" throughout the book (vv. 1-4 exclusive use of *we*, vv. 5-10 inclusive use of *we*, *you* = readers, and *they* = Revisionists) it seems quite clear that every time John uses *we* in vv. 5-10 he is using the inclusive use of *we*.



**Third**, this verse, if taken to be a salvation verse is not the gospel. It never says we have to believe and it never says anything about receiving eternal life if you believe. Over 100 times John's gospel says the sole condition for salvation is "belief". Belief is desperately absent from this passage.

### **1 JOHN 1:9: TO FALSE PROFESSORS FOR SALVATION**

The second group of Modern Revisionists also interprets 1 John 1:9 to be a salvation verse. However, their approach is a bit different. They believe the whole book is written to people who *profess* Christ but may not *possess* Christ. So, the purpose of the book is tests of salvation; tests to see whether you're really a believer or not. Well, quite frankly this does havoc to the whole book. This also wreaks havoc on the doctrine of assurance. Can I really know I'm a believer? Well, this second fallacy comes from old Puritan teachings and is gaining popularity in evangelicalism today, particularly among Reformed and Lordship adherents. It is built on self-introspection. We are told that in order to find assurance of salvation we have to look inward. We have to be fruit inspectors. Do I really have the right stuff (like the movie)? John says in his gospel **5:24** "*Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.*" In other words John makes assurance of the essence of belief. IOW's assurance is part and parcel of saving faith. *He who hears my word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and has passed out of death into life.* Assurance is not a matter of subjective introspection. It's a matter of believing that the word of God is true. Many other passages knit belief and assurance so closely it is impossible to even suggest that what John really meant was that we must look inward and check our fruit to determine if we are really believers (Jn. 3:15f, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:35, 40, 47; 12:46; 1 Jn. 5:10). But nevertheless this is what many teach. What has happened is that Bible teachers observe that there are 1,000's of people in the pews who claim to be believers yet live like the world. And, so they diagnose this problem by saying that since I don't see any fruit then they must not be a believer. This is a right prognosis but a wrong diagnosis. Their remedy for the problem is to re-define "saving faith" so that it includes all sorts of other elements (e.g. *obedience, forsaking all, submission to Christ's Lordship, discipleship, confession of sin, sorrow, crying to Christ*). When they do this they are simply adding human works to salvation. Interestingly, those who teach this claim to find their roots in the teachings of John Calvin and Martin Luther, Reformation Theology. However, at the Synod of Dort in 1619 Reformation Theology did an about face which essentially returned them to a Roman

Catholic gospel. Arminianism is no better in that it, in most forms, is essentially Roman Catholic doctrine as well. However, listen to what John Calvin taught about faith and notice how different it is from Modern Puritan and Lordship adherents.

Now, we shall have a complete definition of faith, if we say, that it is a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence towards us, which, being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds, and confirmed to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit. (Calvin Institutes III.II.7)

Calvin clearly makes assurance of the essence of faith. For Calvin faith is receptive, not active. Since it is not active it cannot be classified as a work and can thus be the human requirement of each individual for salvation. He does not separate saving faith from assurance as Modern Puritan and Lordship theologies insist.

Calvin emphatically warns against looking to ourselves, that is, to our works or the fruit of the Spirit, for certainty of our salvation. We must turn from ourselves to rest solely on the mercy of God. The Scholastics taught that the Christian should look to works and to the virtues of righteousness as proof of salvation. However, Calvin rejects this exhortation to self-examination as a dangerous dogma, and argues that we can never rely on such a subjective basis for assurance, for our sinfulness insures that we will not find peace in this way. Forgetting the judgment of God, we may think ourselves safe when, in fact, we are not. By placing our trust in works, rather than in God's freely given grace, we detract from his salvific work in Jesus Christ. If we look to ourselves, we encounter doubt, which leads to despair, and finally our faith is battered down and blotted out. Arguing that our assurance rests in our union with Christ, Calvin stresses that contemplation of Christ brings assurance of salvation, but self-contemplation is "sure damnation." For this reason, then, our safest course is to look to Christ and distrust ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

## 1 JOHN 1:9: AN ADJUSTMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP

Now for the famous verse 9. If 1 John 1:9 is not teaching the way of salvation then what is it teaching? It must be teaching something. What 1 John 1:9 is teaching is that believers can get out of fellowship with God but upon confession of sin they are restored to fellowship with God.

First, what does the word *confess* mean? The Greek word is *homologeō* which is a compound word made up of *homo* and *legeō*. *Homo* means “same” and *legeō* means “to say” so *homologeō* means “to say the same thing”. Thus, to confess one’s sins is to say the same thing about sin that God says about sin. However, the English word *confess* has picked up many wrong connotations (Tyndale saw this problem and translated it *acknowledge*). When I *confess* do I have to make penance? Do I have to ask for forgiveness? Do I have to feel guilty? Do I have to have an emotional response? The word *homologeō* does not carry any of these overtones. No believer is called to pay a penance price for his sins, Christ and Christ alone paid the price. Neither are we told to ask for forgiveness, forgiveness is the promise if a believer confesses, it’s automatic, we don’t have to ask, it doesn’t say to ask. Nor are we told we must feel guilt, for believers and unbelievers have feelings of guilt, feelings of guilt are not enough to fix the problem. We are not commanded to have an emotional response either though it may accompany or stimulate confession. When people confuse confession with these other things they are trying to make some form of payment for their guilt. It makes them feel better if they really felt sorry for the sin, somehow their sorrow obligates God to forgive them and restore fellowship. It does nothing of the sort!!!! Your emotional response never obligates God. God promises that if you are willing to *acknowledge* sin for what it really is, namely that there is something in your life which is contrary to the character of God and something that has no place in the Christian life, then He will forgive you, it’s automatic. We are identified with Christ, therefore we are called to live consistent with our new identity in Christ. We are to see our sin the same way God sees sin. We are to have the same attitude about sin that God has about sin. And God hates sin, for He is the God of light and there is no darkness in Him, not even a bit! The bottom line is that if you are walking in the light and God reveals to you some sin and you are an honest believer you will *acknowledge* the sin. If and when you do this fellowship goes on unbroken. However, if the light reveals sin and you don’t *acknowledge* the sin then you get out of fellowship and walk in the darkness.

## ABSENCE OF REPENTANCE

Notice that 1 John 1:9 doesn’t say anything about repentance. Nor is it used anywhere in the entire epistle. Repentance means “a change of mind” (Gk. *metanoeō*). The reason 1 John 1:9 does not say anything about repentance is because repentance is for a believer who is in a *persistent sin*

*pattern* that needs to be changed (Rev. 2:5, 16, 21, 22; 3:3, 19). Maybe a believer has been in a persistent sin pattern for 15 years. Are we to expect that the only way that believer can come back to fellowship with God is by naming every sin he committed in the last 15 years? That's absurd. That believer needs to repent. He needs to change his mind, turn 180 degrees and head the other direction. In our text John is talking about people who discover sin while in fellowship, not those who have been walking in a persistent sin pattern. That is a separate issue that calls for repentance. These believers are strong believers according to 1 John 2:12-14, 21 the word abides (Gk. *meno*) in them. John's point is that he wants them to continue to abide, that is, to stay in Christ. The way to do this is to stay in the truth (2:24, 28). John wants them to avoid the Revisionists and their false doctrines.

## CONCLUSION

Staying in the truth and avoiding modern Revisionists is extremely important for you here today. There are a lot of hop-scotch theologies out there today. You can go in a bookstore today and there are literally thousands and thousands of authors with very diverse theological views. I'm here to warn you about that. I want you to grow spiritually and I don't want you to rely solely on me. I want you to check me out. But I also want to earn your trust because I can help direct you to accurate teachers of the word. I can help you sort through the 1,000's of books and authors. I can suggest authors that are sound teachers. See, 98% of the books and authors out there are Revisionists, they are false teachers and I, like John, want to protect you against their false teachings. What they write can be very persuasive. False teaching is always most effective when it is merely a distortion of the truth. And that's who these Revisionists were, they revised Christianity. I don't want you to buy into revisions of Christianity. The way your going to be protected is by making your primary source material the word of God. Never, never get infatuated with me or another Bible teacher or author. I've seen this happen time and time again. You be infatuated with Christ and the Scriptures. I'll say it again, I don't care how good a teacher or writer he is you keep your eyes on the word. That goes for me too. You keep your eyes on the word when I'm teaching. So, to conclude, *homologeō* means to "say the same thing about sin that God says about sin". It does not mean pay penance, ask for forgiveness, feel guilty, or have an emotional response. It means to name the revealed sin and move on in the Christian life.

If and when we do this John says in v. 9 ***faithful*** (*pistos*) ***is He and righteous*** (*dikao*) ***to forgive*** (*aphiemi*) ***us the sins and to cleanse*** (*katharizo*) ***us away from*** (*apo*) ***each unrighteousness*** (*adikia*). ***Faithful*** is the Greek word *pistos*. It's emphatic in the Greek word order meaning John is trying to emphasize the "faithfulness of God". Often you may feel guilty about your sin but John wants you to realize that God is faithful, don't rest on your feelings but on God's faithfulness. He is also ***just*** or better translated ***righteous***. The Greek word is *dikao*. Notice on the back of your



bulletin my translation and the Greek word, **righteous** is *dikao* and notice at the end of the verse the word **unrighteousness**, it's *a-dikia*, the *a-* is a negation (e.g. *a-agnostic*, *a-millennialism*). So, God is righteous to forgive our unrighteousness. That's the contrast John is making. How does He remain righteous and forgive sin? Because of the shed blood of Christ. We should not fear that God will not forgive us of some sin because it would not be right for Him to deny forgiveness. The blood of Jesus Christ was sufficient for all the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). But what is he faithful and righteous to do? **To forgive us**. The Greek word for **forgive** is *aphiemi*. Turn to 1 Cor. 7 to see what this word means. **1 Cor. 7:11-13** *“(but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce (aphiemi) his wife. <sup>12</sup> But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce (aphiemi) her. <sup>13</sup> And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away (aphiemi).* So, the word **forgive** means “to send away”. When you name your sins God sends them away. But, you might say, I thought my sins were already sent away. Well, they were, positionally, but remember that we also died positionally, were buried positionally, were raised positionally, and were seated in the heavenlies positionally. But don't forget that we live here on earth. This verse is talking about in the here and now on earth. So, you have been forgiven, you are being forgiven, and you will be forgiven. You are saved (justification), you are being saved (sanctification), and you will be saved (glorification). Not only is He faithful and righteous to send away our sins but He's also faithful and righteous to **cleanse us away from each unrighteousness**. Cleanse here is the same word used in verse 7, it's the Greek word *katharizo*. God forgives us of **the sins** we confess but what about the unknown sins? That is answered by this phrase. John says that when we confess known sins He also cleanses us from each unknown unrighteousness. The preposition **from** is *apo* and could really be translated **away from**, it is a very directional preposition. So, just like your confessed sins were **sent away** (*aphiemi*) so your unknown sins are cleansed away from (*apo*) you as well.

Acknowledgement of sin restores you to the Light, the moral and spiritual sphere where God is so that you can live a dynamic and effective Christian life. But, what happens if you do not **acknowledge** the sin?

## 5. HVP GIMMICK #3: DENIAL OF PERSONAL SIN

**10 If** (*ean*; Conditional Clause #5) **we say that we have not sinned** (*amartano*; Perfect), **we make Him a liar** (*pseusteis*) **and His word** (*logos*) **is not** (*Present*) **in us**.

This is the third HVP Gimmick John predicts believers will try to deal with the tension between a Holy God and sinful believers. The first HVP Gimmick was in verse 6: The Carnal Lying Believer.

This is where the believer pumps out human good and claims it is divine good. The second HVP Gimmick was found in verse 8: Denial of the Sin Nature. This is the believer who makes a claim to perfectionism. Finally we are looking at the last HVP Gimmick in v. 10: Denial of Personal Sin. *If we say we have not sinned* is the 5<sup>th</sup> and final conditional *if* clause. *Sinned* is *hamartano* and is in the perfect tense. This means that a personal sin was committed sometime in the past but is having effects in the present. The effect is that the believer is that the believer is walking in the darkness, he's out of fellowship. He was in the light and the light revealed sin but the believer dishonestly says he has not sinned. This starts the downward road toward a potential sin pattern if the believer does not acknowledge the sin.

## EXCURSUS ON PERSONAL SIN

Don't forget that there are consequences to personal sin. What happens is you sin and then things crop up later in your life. This is important to remember. When you sin you are not getting ahead of the game, there will be consequences down the line. When you sin you are not trusting that God has something better for you if you resist the temptation. You are trying to get ahead by sinning but you have to deal with the unknown consequences when you do this, plus you are missing out on what God would have provided.

John says that when the light shows us our sin and we claim to be without Personal Sin *we make Him a liar*. The word of God teaches that no man is without personal sin (Rom. 3:23). It is clear then that this 3<sup>rd</sup> HVP Gimmick fails to solve the problem. So, when a believer says this *His word is not* in the believer. This means that *His word is not* in him in a *dynamic* and *effective* way because if it was it would be directing his thoughts and behavior. This is no solution to the problem. John has exhausted us with HVP Gimmicks that Christians, even the apostles, were in danger of using. Gratefully, there is a DVP solution for sin in the believers life through the message of 1 John 1:9.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hodges, Zane, *Absolutely Free!* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 215.

[Back To The Top](#)

Click [Here](#) to return to other lessons.

[Return to Fredericksburg Bible Church Web Site](#)