

IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS

I John 1: 5-10 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

Confessing our sins as believers is a difficult subject. It gets into the most intimate parts of our life and our conscience before God. It gets into our relationship with others. It is hard for sinners to say, “I have sinned.” It may even be harder for believers to say, “I have sinned.” As believers, we find ourselves saying, “I apologize if what I did hurt you,” or, “I apologize if what I said was harsh.” That’s not true confession of sin. It’s our feeble attempt to whitewash sin. Confessing sin doesn’t include “ifs.” When we insert “ifs,” we are justifying ourselves and coming up short of true confession as the Word of God teaches. When we say to each other, as believers, “I have sinned,” or “I repent,” it should not be an attempt to use empty words so we can be seen in a better light in our relationship, but it should rather be our sincere attempt to set the record straight before God and each other. James 5: 16 exhorts us all as believers to confess our sins to each other. The word James used was **exomologeō**. It means to publicly acknowledge our sins to each other, so we can pray for each other that we may be healed. It means openly, freely, acknowledging before others that we have sinned. We first must get right with God, for all sin David said, is first, against Him—against His glory—Romans 3: 23. Then we must get right with each other. The success of mutual confession means two humble hearts are connecting before God and each other. Two believers not only want cleansed before God, but want to be reconciled to each other.

A newspaper editor, William Bevermark, in London spoke evil of a member of Parliament and then met him in his club washroom. The publisher, taken back and embarrassed by this chance encounter, said, "My dear chap, I've been thinking it over. I was wrong to say what I said about you in the paper. I apologize to you." "Very well," grunted Edward Heath. "But the next time, I wish you'd insult me in the washroom and apologize in the newspaper." Successful mutual confession is only possible for believers if we have kept short accounts with God, confessing first of all, our sins to Him, so that when we obey the Holy Spirit and confess to our brother or sister in Christ, our husband or wife or our children or parents, that we do so in a humble manner without demanding forgiveness or hurrying up the process of getting our “I forgive you,” quickly. The word for confessing to God is different from the word for confessing to each other. The Greek word for confession of sin to God is **homologeō**. It speaks of our spiritual walk with Jesus. It speaks of the Holy Spirit speaking to us, confronting us with our sin. Homo means “same” and logeō means “speak.” When we confess to God, it means we confess to God the same words the Holy Spirit gives us as He convicts us of sin. Homologeō means to covenant in speech, to speak the same thing to our Father in heaven and to Jesus our Advocate at His right hand—the same words the Holy Spirit gave us. It’s easy to say to God, “I blew it again,” knowing He knows what

we did, easier than speaking out our sin specifically to God, saying, “I was unfaithful to my wife,” or “I am bitter against my brother,” or “I’ve been viewing pornography again.” True confession to God is confessing the sin the Holy Spirit puts His divine finger on in our lives. Specific confession of sin is costly. It cost Jesus His life in our place as He shed His precious blood for us. Each specific sin, Jesus bore in our place on Calvary’s cross. To help us understand specific confession, let me tell you a true story.

Charles Steinmetz, a genius, worked as an electrical engineer for General Electric in the early 1900s. After his retirement, the other engineers around GE were baffled by the breakdown of a complex menagerie of machines. They finally asked Charles Steinmetz to come back to see if he could pinpoint the problem. Steinmetz spent several minutes walking around the machines, then took a piece of chalk out of his pocket and made a cross mark on one particular piece of one particular machine. To their amazement, when the engineers disassembled that part of that machine, it turned out to be the precise location of the breakdown of the machines. A few days later, the engineers received a bill from Steinmetz for \$10,000 - a staggering sum back in those days in the early 1900s. This seemed exorbitant, so they returned the bill to Charles Steinmetz with a request that he itemize it. After a few more days they received a second, itemized bill: It read, Making one cross mark: \$1.00. Knowing where to put it: \$9,999.00.

The hard part of confession, is the homologeō—to confess to God what He has marked and pointed out in our lives. When we come before our holy God, asking him to put the cross on the right spot, He does it every time. When we say, “Lord, why am I not close to You like I used to be? Why can’t I enjoy reading Your Word and praying?” “Why am I so shallow and dry in my relationship with You?” He knows where to put the mark. It’s costly to confess to Him the sin God the Holy Spirit has pin-pointed, and then later, to confess that same sin horizontally with a brother or sister in Jesus. So, I ask you each one today; let the Holy Spirit speak to you as He has spoken to me this week. He has reminded me of I John 1: 5—“This message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. The foundation of our cleansing when we confess our sins is the precious blood of Jesus, the faithfulness of Jesus, the justness and righteousness of Jesus, and the cleansing forgiveness of Jesus. Notice the blood of Jesus in v. 7, His faithfulness, justness and cleansing forgiveness in v. 9. The significance of our cleansing when we confess is that it is complete—v. 9 says from all unrighteousness. It is competent. Nothing but the blood can do the cleansing, v. 7 and it is continual. John is writing to believers, who have been saved from past sins. But notice I John 2: 1, because we need daily or continual cleansing. The benefits of our cleansing when we confess our sins is: We have a cleansed walk. – v. 7. We have a cleansed account before our Advocate in Glory

when the accuser of the brethren comes against us—2: 1. We also have a cleansed message to give to others. 2: 2. This cleansing is not just for our sins but for the sins of the whole world. What God has placed on my heart is to teach us to confess our sins—homologeo to Him and then to exomologeo to others. It all begins with five “if’s.” Only if we are willing to confess sin, can know the foundation, significance and benefits of confessing our sins. What are these 5 profound “If’s?”

IF WE WON’T CONFESS OUR SIN, AND CLAIM TO FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS WHILE WALKING IN DARKNESS, WE LIE AND DO NOT PRACTICE THE TRUTH. (I.) Notice v. 6. “If we say we have fellowship with

Him, while we walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practice the truth.” The company we claim to keep with God is the company or fellowship of walking in the light. By walking in darkness, we have not forfeited our Life in Jesus, nor strangled the Love we have in Jesus, but we have clouded and fogged up our lives. The Light of Jesus is not shining through us when we walk in darkness. We are still in the Family of God, but our Father sees us as prodigal sons and daughters. There is a dark cloud between us and our Father by our not practicing the truth. It is a lie to say we are in fellowship with Jesus if we have seared consciences with no sensitivity to sin and darkness, if we stand aloof of the need for the cleansing blood of Jesus when we sin. This unwillingness to admit sin in our lives, this darkness is a spiritual blindness, a spiritual cataract we have. When we were cleansed at our new birth, we said as the blind man in John 9: 25, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” As believers denying Christ in our walk and our fellowship, listen to the prophet Amos 3: 3 say to us, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” Darkness in a straying believer not only denies fellowship with Jesus, but we endanger other lives that look to us as their example.

A good many years ago, on the Florida coast, on one wild night of storms at sea, the lighthouse keeper saw that a pane of glass in his mighty lantern was broken. Not having at his disposal another glass pane to replace it, he substituted for the glass, a sheet of tin. That night, a ship, W. Y. Fullerton tells the history—that night a ship was going at a fast rate, trying to make the harbor, but the light wasn’t there to warn him and the ship hit the cliff wall and both the ship was lost as well as all on board. The light was still there. It wasn’t extinguished, it was not burning dimly, but where the light was needed, there was a dark part, a darkness that failed to warn a ship captain of rocks ahead. Is there a dark part, a dark habit, that leads others astray and causes shipwreck to other lives? An angry church member almost yelled at her pastor, “Why do you keep preaching to us who are already Christians about sin? Sin in a Christian is different from sin in the life of an unsaved person!” “Yes,” replied the pastor. “It is different. It’s much worse!” There’s a second if.

IF WE CONFESS OUR SIN, WE WALK IN THE LIGHT AS JESUS IS IN THE LIGHT, AND HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER AS HIS BLOOD CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN. (II.) Notice v. 7. “If we walk in the

light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” The straying believer has another option. That is to confess sin and walk in the light as Jesus is in the light. Then the fellowship with the Lord is restored and fellowship with the family of God—with one another is restored as the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. This wonderful promise of God is not a magic so we can sin willfully and then confess as one man said, “I sinned because I knew God would forgive me when I came back.” Beloved, lying, denying sin, being bitter, or refusing to forgive another, are they sins you are making plans to sin against your faithful, loving Lord?

The Bible clearly teaches the security of the believer in Christ, but it also clearly teaches warning passages in Hebrews 6 and 10 that are meant to drive any straying believer to his knees. In the world, we have no security. The world knows little of forgiveness. I saw the words this week printed on a “No Trespassing” sign in west Texas, with the rancher’s name signed in blood red paint at the bottom of the sign. The sign read, “STOP. I know you're thinking about crossing this gate. What you should know is that if the Coyotes, Cactus, Mesquite, Heat, Dust or Rattlers don't get you, I will.” I am so glad we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous—I John 2: 1, but I warn us! Never see confessing our sins and having God’s cleansing blood applied as a cheap remedy when we plan to live a life of sin. New creatures in Christ Jesus, II Cor. 5: 17 willingly confess sin, tearfully confess sin, and also confess sin to each other as it is appropriate when we have sinned against others. Remember, there is no forgiveness without confession-confessing.

One night at a crusade, a man came forward and told the counselor, “I know I am a Christian, but there’s sin in my life. I need help. The counselor showed him our text in I John 1: 5-10. He said, “Brother, confess your sins to God.” The man began to pray, “O Father, if we have done anything wrong—“Just a minute,” the counselor told him. “Don’t drag me into your sin! It’s not “if” or “we”—get down to business with God! It’s about your specific sin—you and you alone.” How many of us have withheld confessing sin to God and to others, specific homologueo—confessing just what God the Holy Spirit has told us to confess? Is today our day to confess—honestly, completely and to start walking in the light? Thirdly,

IF WE WON’T CONFESS OUR SIN, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US. (III.) Notice v. 8. “If we say we have no sin, we

deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Sin is a root, it’s a habit, and it is a specific behavior—maybe coming on us by surprise. Nevertheless, sin is universal in us all, for we were all born in sin. Guy King spoke of sin as an evil presence like

a jelly-mold that gives its pattern to its children. If you drop the mold, all subsequent jellies bear the mark of the fall.” He’s right. All of us who came from Adam carry the mark and stigma of his fall in to sin. This is why sin is so attractive to us, so strong, and so usual, and so common. So what does the person do who refuses to confess his sin as sin—who justifies his every action that other believers know is sin, but he sees it as no big deal, not over the line, or that the end of our sin justifies its action. We most often refuse to confess sin, when we blame others for our actions, or we may claim as in basketball, “No harm, no foul.” We may say, “If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound.” So we may philosophize, “If I did something that could be branded a sin by many, but it ultimately caused me no problem nor others really, but helped some people, how can that be called a sin?” Learn early when you make such excuses for sin, that you in an argument with God that you can never win. God always wins. Fourthly,

IF WE CONFESS OUR SIN, GOD IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SIN, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.

(IV.) Notice v. 9. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Don’t misunderstand this promise as if the mere words are a promise of that person’s forgiveness. When that hardened sinner, Pharaoh said to Moses, “I have sinned. The Lord is in the right and I and my people are in the wrong.” (Ex. 9:27) Was that true repentance and true confession as he was trying to get the plague of hail and fire gone from Egypt? In Numbers 22: 34, when the covetous prophet Balaam had his donkey talk to him telling him to watch out for the angel with the drawn sword—then Balaam said, “I have sinned!”—was that true repentance and confession of sin? In I Samuel 15: 24, when King Saul said to Samuel, “I have sinned,” and then made excuse, “because I feared the people”—was that confession bringing cleansing from God? When Judas told the chief priests and elders he had betrayed innocent blood and said, “I have sinned,” in Matthew 27: 4, before he went to hang himself, was that true repentance and confession? Achan confessed “I have sinned,” just before he was stoned for disobeying Joshua and the Lord—Joshua 7: 20. Was that confession his salvation? Some debate it, others believe it was. I for one believe it was a late—very late confession before death came—but Achan confessed as Joshua said to him, “My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and give praise to Him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me. Beloved, when David the king sinned, even after hiding his sin for a year, until confronted by the prophet Nathan, he said, “I have sinned,” and he added against the Lord. Read Psalm 32 and 51 and you see the truth of I John 1: 9. When we sincerely repent of sin as we confess it to the Lord, God is faithful, just to forgive us, and cleanse us from ALL unrighteousness. No sin is too terrible to forgive—if you will confess it. Fifthly,

IF WE WON'T CONFESS OUR SIN, WE CALL GOD A LIAR, AND HIS WORD IS NOT IN US. (V.) Notice v. 10. “If we say we have not sinned, we

make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us.” The “we” in this passage is here because John is writing to us as believers. All of us as believers have the Holy Spirit inside us—because at our new birth, when we were born again, the Holy Spirit baptized us into His one body of Christ. (I Cor. 12: 13) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit—Romans 8: 14-16 telling we are sons and daughters of God and we can call Him “Abba.” The Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost to convict us of sin, of what is righteous, and of what God’s judgments are—John 16: 8. If any of us are debating with God today as the Holy Spirit is convicting us, our debate is with God. We are calling Him a liar, and beyond that, our denial of sin He convicts us of, proves that His Word is not abiding in us. Without being clean through the Word, without the cleansing of Jesus’ blood as believers when we sin, without walking in the light as Jesus is in the light, our lack of confession is a true debate with God only—we’ve called Him a liar. We will lose the debate. It is worthless to debate with God. Only by losing our debate and listening to the Word again, can we be cleansed and have His holy Word again alive in us. Beloved, all true believers must ever be part of the confessing Church. We not only confess Jesus is Lord, but we confess our sins when we sin. Measure where you stand with God today, by whether you are a ready confessor of sin, or a quick justifier of your sins. I praise the Lord for our text and for God’s promise to forgive me—how many times I will never know. Would you like a confessing verse to put on your refrigerator? Proverbs 28: 13 says, “Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” The world and many believers worry about a good self-image, thinking they will suffer loss of pride, place and a good name by confessing sin. How wrong! Confessing sin to God and others is what gives a good name back to us as well as God’s forgiveness.

A Tennessee pastor wrote about a thief in his church. This church leader confessed to his pastor he lived with a heavy conscience. He worked for many years for a boat builder who used expensive brass nails. He continually stole a few of them daily until he had boxes of them at his home. He said he couldn’t tell his boss because he would lose his job as well as his testimony. He often witnessed to his boss who wasn’t interested in Jesus. His pastor said confession was the only right response to God’s Spirit making the sin so heavy on him. At first, the thief refused, but the Holy Spirit made his guilt worse and worse. Finally, he confessed the whole awful truth to his boss. He offered full restitution. His boss smiled and said, “I always did think you were a fake, a hypocrite, but not today, hearing your confession makes me interested in Jesus. If He can change you, a thief who steals brass nails, and make you offer to settle for them, I need Him; He is worth listening to.” May God make us all willing to confess our sin when God’s Spirit points His finger at our sin inside. The results will change us forever. Amen.