

(1 John 1:8-10) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. {9} If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. {10} If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Who would you say was the worst dictator of the last century? Names like Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin or Sadam Hussein may come to mind. Well, the correct answer is Joseph Stalin and likely most of you probably chose Adolph Hitler. Stalin was responsible for over 30M deaths beginning in the 1930's. He massacred over 3M people in what is referred as the Ukrainian Holocaust. Then he turned against his own people in what is now referred to as Stalin's Red Terror. When he had finished, the blood of 20-30M people had been shed.

We hear about people like that and the dreadful deed they did and we think something as atrocious as that just has to be unforgivable. There is absolutely no way that God could ever forgive a crime of that magnitude. Now we may put other sins in that same category like the sin of homosexuality or child abuse or a drunk driver guilty of manslaughter. But the scripture teaches that God is willing and able to forgive any and every sin and this is important for us as Christians to understand because there are some who look at their own lives and some of the things that they have done and they come away with a sense of hopelessness. They reason, "*Maybe God could forgive everyone else but there is absolutely no way that God could forgive me. I've just done too much. My sin is just unforgivable.*" While there are a lot of sins inexcusable, there are none that are unforgivable IF we come to God on His terms and conditions. In our passage, John sets forth at least **three conditions** that we must meet.

First, if you are to receive God's forgiveness, you must acknowledge the fact of your sin. This is a problem for many people. They are unwilling to admit that they have done wrong. If there is a problem, then it's always some else's fault. As far as they are concerned, they live above temptation and there is nothing really bad in their

1 John 1:8-10

lives and they don't need God's grace. But John says (*1 John 1:8*) ***If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. {10} If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*** John is talking to people who deny the reality of sin. One of the reasons this world is filled with unforgiving people is because there are many who refuse to acknowledge that they have sinned. Instead we tend to rationalize and excuse our behavior. Likely Stalin rationalized to himself that what he did to his countrymen was all right. We tend to do the same thing.

There is a passage over in Proverbs that talks about an adulterous woman. (*Proverbs 30:20*) ***Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.*** It's been paraphrased this way, *Equally amazing how an adulterous woman can satisfy her appetite, shrug her shoulders and say what is wrong with that?* Now this should sound familiar because that is the prevailing attitude in our society today. We are being bombarded with the message that you can do pretty much anything you want to do. There is nothing off limits, so you see people claiming to be religious all the while they have a live-in boyfriend or girlfriend and they say "What's wrong with that?" A lot of people have developed the attitude that premarital sexuality or homosexuality are social accepted and so what's wrong with that? Whether you see anything wrong with it or not does not change the fact that sin is still real and it is still a problem that we struggle with.

Paul in Rom 7:19 describing the struggle he went through in living the Christian life. (*Romans 7:19*) ***For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*** Now we can all identify with that. Haven't you had those moments when you did or said something that you knew you shouldn't and that you wish you hadn't? Now this is true even of the best of us. (*James 3:2*) ***For in many things we offend all.*** We know this to be true. There are countless examples we could observe in scripture to illustrate this. For instance, there was David, the one described as a man after God's

own heart and yet we know he committed some terrible sin. Then there was ole Moses who was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of his sin. The great apostle Peter in a weak moment cursed and denied Jesus. We can all point to those kinds of experiences in our own lives so we know that sin is real. Now if we are going to have any kind of relationship with God, we must acknowledge the reality of sin. We need to come clean and fess up to God. Verse 10 makes this clear. ***{10} If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar.***

No. 2. We must admit the fault of our sin. The remedy for sin is not a good lawyer or a good excuse in trying to pass the blame on to anybody else. The remedy to sin is confession. ***{9} If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*** What does it mean to confess our sins? The word “confess” in the Greek language is made up of a prefix “*homo*” which means “*the same*” coupled with “*legeto*” which means “*to say*” or “*to speak*.” So literally the word means “to say the same thing.” When we confess our sin to God, then we say the same thing about our sin that God says about our sin.

Confession is difficult for some because you are testifying against yourself by admitting your own guilt. In our legal system, that is something that a person cannot be required to do. The fifth amendment of the constitution does not compel a man to testify against himself in a criminal case. You cannot be forced to incriminate yourself. But the Fifth Amendment does not apply in our relationship to God. If you want to be right with God, you can't take the fifth and you don't have the right to remain silent. You've got to be willing to confess your sin.

Now real genuine confession is more than just admitting that you have done wrong. Confession involves accepting responsibility for what you have done. When you make a confession of sin to God, you are assuming full responsibility for your wrongdoing. While others can encourage you to do wrong and Satan can tempt you but ultimately the responsibility for wrong doing rest on your soldiers. The sin you commit is your own doing and no one else's. So confession involves not only admitting that you sinned but

accepting the responsibility for your sin.

Confession involves even more than that. It involves renouncing and turning away from your sin. Confession is a close cousin to repentance. (*Prov 28:13*) ***He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*** The word “forsake” there means to “let go.” *It’s like the little boy who had his hand stuck in a valuable vase. His parents tried everything they knew to get his hand out but nothing worked. Finally they broke the vase only to discover the little boy had his fist folded holding on to a nickel. He wouldn’t let go.* That’s the way a lot of people are with the sin in their life. They want let it go. But the only way to have a right relationship with God is to admit our sin.

No. 3. If we are to receive forgiveness, then we must accept forgiveness. If you do your part and you genuinely confess the sin in your life, then God will do His part and He will forgive you. *{9} If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.* Now here we come down to the secret of forgiveness. John tells us that we can count on God’s forgiveness because of two attributes. He is faithful and He is just (righteous). That means first of all that He is faithful to His word. God had made the promise that He will forgive and if he make a promise, you can be sure that He will faithfully keep that promise. God doesn’t make a promise with His fingers crossed. So when scripture says that God will forgive, then God will forgive.

Not only is God faithful to his word but He is also just. Now that means that God is “just” in His work. Some wonder why God doesn’t look the other way when we do wrong. Why doesn’t He kind of sweep that sin under the rug and pretend that it never happened. Well the reason is because God is a “just” God and because of that sin must be dealt with. For God to maintain His righteousness and holiness and purity He has to deal with sin. **QUESTION:** how can God deal with sin; punish sin and forgive us at the same time? The answer of course is through the Lord Jesus and what He did on the cross. God will be fair and just because of the blood that was shed.

Notice too that 1 John 1:9 says that God is “*faithful*” to forgive us. That means

1 John 1:8-10

every time. There are 365 days in a year and a man who is faithful to his wife 364 days out of the year is not faithful to his wife. In order to be faithful to his wife, he has to be faithful to her all the time. God is faithful in forgiving us all the time. So we have to learn to take God at His word and believe His promise. But there are people at times who realize that they did something wrong so they go to God in prayer and ask for his forgiveness. Then they get up from that prayer and they really aren't sure they were forgiven and they carry around a load of guilt, perhaps for years. God has promised that He will be faithful in forgiving us and when we go to God on His terms and ask for forgiveness, then we need to accept His forgiveness. ***(Hebrews 8:12) For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. (Hebrews 10:17) And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.***

God forgives and when He does, He remembers no more. Now that means that the sins He forgives no longer affects our relationship with Him. He doesn't bring them up any more nor are they held against us anymore. As the psalmist says, He cast them into the deepest part of the sea. We are truly forgiven. God forgives and God forgets. This allows us then to have a peace that passeth all understanding. Can you be forgiven for any and every sin? Yes you can if you take it to God on His terms by confessing and asking for forgiveness.

I want to close with this story. *It was on the night of Oct. 6, 1979 Tracy Fresquez was abducted from a convenience store and murdered. Nineteen years later, in Sept. 1998 there was a fellow named Daniel Crocker who had committed a murder 19 yrs earlier did an amazing thing. One evening he was high on drugs and abducted a young teen age girl from a convince store, took her out and killed her and no one had tracked him down. Over 19 years the authorities still had no clues or evidence linking him to the crime. No one had any idea that he was responsible for the crime. In fact the police had closed the books as an unsolved crime. During that time he moved hundreds of miles away from Kansas City to Virginia. But one day, 19 years later, he said good-bye to his wife and two children. He got on a plane and returned to Kansas City and turned*

1 John 1:8-10

himself in and he was sentenced to ten years in prison. There was a reporter from a local radio station that interviewed him and she asked, "Why did you return and turn yourself in? Why confess to a crime that you had apparently gotten away with?"

This is how he explained it. "I know it's hard to understand but it was the right thing to do. The reason it was the right thing to do is because it was the only way I could be right with God and totally clean and that's all that really matters." Crocker is seen as unusual even by his lawyer, Tom Bath, who says he has never "seen anybody willing to risk so much to take responsibility for what he's done."

You know, he was right. In both time and eternity, the only thing that really matters is whether or not you are right with God and the only way to be right with God is to deal with the sin in your life.

Invitation. Have you dealt with the sin in your life? Are you a NT Christian?