

*“Walking in the Light”* (Part 2)  
August 14, 2001  
Text: I John 1:8-10

**In his commentary on 1<sup>st</sup> Jn, John MacArthur writes:** “Ever since the fall, mankind has tried to deny the reality of sin.”

The Apostle Paul would have agreed with that analysis.

In Rom 1:18 he wrote that sinful men “*suppress the truth*” about sin, because of their own unrighteousness.

Today many people treat the whole concept of “sin” as archaic/obsolete.

Not long ago I used the word “sinner,” & a lady chuckled. She had never been exposed to anything but the world’s view, where that word is only used as part of a joke.

As the world sees it, people are basically good at heart.

So their “sins” aren’t really sins at all, but merely errors in judgment; or at worst, “addictions.”

By contrast, Jesus taught not only that people are sinners, but that they are sinful to the core.

Mk 7:20 (X)=> “*That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. / For from **within**, out of the **heart** of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, / deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.*”

Quoting an OT analysis of men’s sinfulness, Paul went even further in Rom 3:13-16=> “***THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING, THE POISON OF ASPS IS***

*UNDER THEIR LIPS; WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS; THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD, / DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS.”*

Any believer who thinks man is essentially good holds to an inadequate doctrine of sin that is irreconcilable with what Jesus/Paul/the-OT taught.

To a great extent, even today’s evangelical Church avoids talking about sin as if embarrassed to do so, for fear of offending, or seeming old-fashioned/overly-negative.

This reluctance has diminished the Church’s effectiveness as an agent of moral/spiritual truth/light.

It’s simply trying to survive in a world where the idea of sin is not accepted—a world which feels free to call that which is good “evil”, and evil good.

Xns lack the moral courage to declare as Isaiah did (5:20):

*“Woe to those who call evil good, & good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”*

**With the doctrine of sin undermined, man’s ability to distinguish between moral truth/falsehood (or untruth) is diminished (if not eliminated altogether).**

When a society no longer believes the concept of “sin” is viable, it no longer has any moral basis for declaring lying/fraud/dishonesty to be wrong/immoral.

It views God's 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment to not bear false witness as simplistic legalism, & bars it from the public schools.

The courts still prosecute perjury, but only on the basis that it's illegal according to man's law;  
Not on the basis that it is immoral.

In stark contrast to this undermining of truth/truthfulness within our own society, the Bible says (1 Jn 1:5)=> *"God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all."*

God's *"light"* is intellectual-truth and moral-righteousness.

**God is a God of truth/knowledge, who knows all things.**

Falsehood/ignorance/hypocrisy/pretence are completely alien to Him and to His character.

He always deals with things as they actually are, not as they might appear.

In that sense He is unlike man who is both a-victim/a-perpetrator of his own deceptions.

As He told Samuel=> *"God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart"* (1 Sam 16:7).

God is all about truth, and His all-discerning eyes see all things as they actually are.

If He is to deal graciously with us, we must be willing to set aside our hypocrisy/insincerity and come to Him in absolute truthfulness, entering His penetrating light from which nothing can be hidden.

But man tries to hide the reality of what he is from God, just as Adam hid from Him in the Garden of Eden, after he sinned. That tendency to deceive/delude alienates us from God, who is light, & in whom there is no ignorance/darkness at all.

**1 Jn 1:5-10 deals with 3 lies men tend to believe/claim about themselves, their sin, and their relationship with God.**

We found the first of those lies in 1 Jn 1:6=>

*“If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we **lie** and do not practice the **truth**.”*

Believers are always tempted to think that because their sin is covered by grace, it no longer really matters to God.

But as we saw 3 weeks ago, that is a lie.

It does matter to God, because there is no darkness in Him at all.

Unless we walk in the light of God’s truth/righteousness, just as He is in the light, we can have no fellowship with Him.

John said that if we claim to have fellowship with God while walking in the darkness of our sin, we lie. We’re not simply mistaken/deceived.

We’re lying, knowing intuitively that God is a perfectly holy God, & our sin excludes us from Him, His presence, or His fellowship.

**Today we'll consider 2 more claims sinners often make=>**

\* Claim #2=> That they have no sin (verse 8).

In this case, spiritual liars come to believe their own lies. Falsehood has so saturated their hearts, they consider darkness light, & they've become morally blind.

\* Claim #3=> That they have never sinned (verse 10).

At this point the darkness will have so controlled/perverted their thinking that they'll actually even call the God of light, a liar.

\* In between these last two false claims, we will find the remedy to all this lying/self-deception—candid/truthful confession. Confession is coming before the God of light just as we really are, not trying to improve our image, or to hide anything from Him.

And yet, ironically, if we are to walk in God's light, we must stand every day in a shadow=> the shadow of the cross, honestly confessing that we no more deserve His grace now than we ever have.

So we begin with=>

\* **Claim #2—That We Have No Sin**

[1 John 1:8]=> *“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”*

**It's obvious that John is talking about people who claim they don't sin, but it's not exactly clear what they mean that.**

There are several possibilities=>

\* They may be denying they were born with a sin-nature—what theologians refer to as “original sin.”

I.e., “*We have no sin*” may be a denial of the principle of depravity, meaning there’s no sinful influence within us, compelling us to commit actual sins.

This is a doctrinal belief held by people called Pelagians.

\* Or, secondly, John may be referring to a claim by the Gnostics that, having learned certain mystical truths, they had risen to a level of spiritual superiority in which they no longer sinned.

There are Xns still today who believe that’s true of them.

I have a distant relative who goes to a church where that’s taught.

She once told me, “It’s hard for me to believe that  
I no longer sin.”

I said, “Dear Lady, I can guarantee that you still sin.”

\* John may be referring to those who claim that sin isn’t a reality, but just a religious fiction.

Atheists can’t believe in sin, because sin is a violation of God’s holiness, & they don’t believe in God.

They might talk about guilt as a psychological phenomenon, or as the violation of the societal mores w/i a culture.

But they dismiss sin as a spiritual offense for which God will judge men in eternity.

They would prob. consider “sin” an antiquated philosophical notion no longer held by any but the most backward religious fanatics.

**The H.S., speaking through John, says that to the extent anyone denies he has sin, he is self-deceived.**

God’s Word says=> *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:23).

To claim that we don’t sin, is to claim that God is wrong. When each one of us stands before Him someday, there is 0 possibility He will declare that we haven’t sinned. Only when those who are born-again thru saving faith in Jesus X become glorified in heaven, will their sanctification be completed, & their proneness to sin eliminated.

Then (and then alone) will they finally cease to sin.

**Only self-deception could lead a man to believe he doesn’t sin.**

He knows that’s not true, but has persuaded himself that it is.

According to Paul’s words in Rom 2:14-15, even Gentiles, who don’t have God’s Law, know intuitively, they sin, & their consciences accuse them because of it.

Self-deception is natural to us because our hearts are so deceitful.

Jer 17:9=> *“The **heart** is more **deceitful** than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”*

We can’t understand our own hearts because we are all gifted self-deceivers, from birth.

Sin has tainted every aspect/atom of our being, and our inability to detect that fact, betrays a self-imposed blindness.

We tell lies, and then we come to believe our own lies.

Having fed on our own self-deception long enough, we render ourselves incapable of discerning the truth.

We come to believe we're not sinning when in fact, we are!

We get very good at tricking our own minds in this way because we want to be tricked.

The essence of hopeless-spiritual-unteachability is clinging tenaciously to one's own lies.

It's "confessing" as the Pharisee in the Temple did=>

*"God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer" (Lk 18:11)*

Such a person trickes/condemns himself thru his self-deception.

God is light, & in Him there is no darkness at all, so He is never tricked/deceived by us or about us, as we ourselves are.

He abhors everything but the strictest truth/truthfulness.

So if we are to fellowship with Him, we too must abandon the darkness of self deception, & get real with God.

As David prayed when he confessed=> *"Behold, Thou dost desire **truth** in the **innermost being**" (Psa 51:6).*

**The person who deceives himself has no truth within him.**

He may actually know a lot of Scripture, but he has never really embraced it by faith, & applied it to his own heart/life.

A person might say, “I want to feel so tender/penitent toward God that I’ll know all is right between Him/me.”

Actually, if someone came to feel that way, he would be feeling a lie;

He’d have embraced a lie, and the truth would not be in him, because by our fallen nature, nothing is right between God/us.

God won’t deal w/ us on the basis of a sham pretense like that.

So that person should go to God and tell Him the truth=>

“Lord, my heart is so hard that I don’t feel tender/penitent toward You at all.

“I don’t love You as I should, & I know that’s wrong.

“Grieve my heart, making me feel the sorrow for this so keenly that my cold/hard/proud heart is shattered/melted.

**\* The Remedy—Honest, Heartfelt Confession**

[Verse 9]=> “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*”

**“Confession” is the opposite of saying we have no sin.**

The original word means “to say the same thing,” & in this context it is saying the same thing God says about our sin.

It is agreeing with Him that it's a reality; that it's utterly, despicably, intolerably wrong/wicked; & that it took the death of God's only begotten Son (Jesus X) to pay for its punishmt.

It's not hiding/justifying/making-excuses-for our sins.

Confession is a honest/humble response to our guilt over our sin.

The tax-gatherer in Lk 18:13 responded that way, looking downward & beating his breast in humility, as he confessed, crying aloud for all those around him to hear=> "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!"

**Confession of sin takes place at the time of a person's conversion, but then it becomes a lifelong habit.**

So John is talking about both justification/sanctification when he

writes=> *"If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful & righteous to **forgive** us our sins and to **cleanse** us from all unrighteousness."*

The tenses of the verbs here tell an important story.

"*Confess*" is a present tense verb which describes an ongoing activity—believers continually confess.

"*Forgive*" and "*cleanse*" are aorist tense verbs that describe a 1-time event—the atonement of our sin.

John is saying=> If we are the kind of people who continually & habitually feel the need to confess our sins to God, then we are the very kind of people He has once/for-all forgiven/cleansed of their sin.

Because the H.S. indwelt us at the time of our conversion,  
He is continually prompting us to confess our sins.  
Believers' sins have been forgiven, & so they regularly  
confess them, as an ongoing result of their sorrow for  
sin.

The Spirit produces an inward hatred of sin in our hearts,  
and the more we mature in our faith, the more we  
hate our own sinfulness.

It comes to grieve us so much, that we can eventually say  
as Paul did at the end of his life=> *“Jesus came into  
the world to save sinners, among whom **I am  
foremost of all**”* (I Tim 1:15).

**Because a believer is compelled by the H.S. to confess his sins  
throughout his whole life, he lives in constant self-  
denial.**

The Xn is called to continually deny the desires of his flesh & to  
continually humble himself daily in confession whenever  
he sins.

He openly acknowledges before God that he is a sinner  
both by his fallen nature, and his sinful deeds.

He is forever going back to the cross of Jesus X, finding  
forgiveness based on Jesus' gracious death for him.

He is forever clinging to the cross of X, never forgetting  
that he'll always depend on His gracious forgiveness.

In Mt 10:38, Jesus referred to this as “taking up one’s cross and following Him” in lifelong rejection of self/self-indulgence.

In Lk 14:26, He called it hating his own life, just as Paul said in Rom 7:15 that he hated the sinful things he saw in his life.

In Lk 9:24, Jesus referred to it as saving one’s life, by losing it.

Pastor/author Walter Chantry refers to this as “living in the shadow of the cross.”

As we cling to the cross, we can never get out from under its shadow—and we never want to.

**If we are living a life of ongoing confession like that, God is faithful/just to forgive/cleanse us from all our sin.**

Through confession/repentance, one humbles himself before the Lord, which is the starting-point for reconciliation to Him.

In II Chron 7:13-14, God promised Israel=> “*If...My people who are called by My name **humble***

*themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will **forgive** their sin, and will heal their land.”*

\* God is by nature a faithful God, who will always keep His promises to grant forgiveness/fellowship to those who humble their hearts before Him, in honest confession, repentance, and faith.

In Isa 55:7, He says=> “*Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him*

*return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him;  
And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”*

\* God is also a just/righteous God, who has made provision for our forgiveness/cleansing through the death of His Son Jesus.

“*Forgive*” pictures the cancellation of a debt.

God cancels our debt to the Law (created by our sins) so that we are no longer condemned by the Law when we place our faith in X.

“*Cleanse*” pictures sin as a stain on our souls which God removes through the blood of His own Son’s death.

God is a God of light/truth/honesty, so He will not meet with any man who tries to hide from Him the truth about his own sinfulness.

He’ll meet w/ you/me on the ground of full truth, but nowhere else.

The sooner we honestly confess our sin, the sooner we’ll enjoy the blessings of forgiveness/cleansing, thru faith in X.

If we had cancer, we’d go to a surgeon and tell him to cut it out of us.

We would say=> “Don’t try to spare me any pain by doing less than a thorough job—cut it out, roots and all.”

In the same way, we come to the Lord in confession, saying “Here’s all my secret sin, a deadly spiritual cancer.

“Purify me of it all, & give me no peace until You do.”

**\* Claim #3—That We Have Never Sinned**

[1 Jn 1:10]=> *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”*

**You may know people who can look you straight in the face and say, “I’ve never sinned.”**

They truly feel that their sin isn’t really sin at all.

If you press the issue, they may add something like this=>

“You might say I sin in a technical sense, but I have a good heart & am really well-intentioned.”

Some in this group would justify themselves by saying that their environment/upbringing have made them what they are, or that they’re from a race/family of passionate people who can’t control what they say/do.

By that they mean their sin isn’t really sin, they’re not responsible for it, & they’re victims to be pitied, not sinners to be condemned.

Some, like the religious young man in Mt 19:20 would say=>

*“All these things [Commandments] I have kept”* (confusing their fulfillment of religious duties with sinlessness).

They’re not the same thing.

Another group might admit that they sin, but quickly add that they think they’ve gotten their hearts right, & are now fit to

receive God's mercy/grace because they've repented & become religious.

That sort of "fitness" is just a vain notion of personal merit.

I.e., it's just another self-deception.

It means, "I may be a sinner, but I'm a good sinner."

**All such people are to be pitied, because until they really humble their hearts before God & sincerely confess, they're beyond hope.**

Man's deceitful heart deceives him into believing that he hasn't sinned (or at least that his sins are so menial/insignificant, that God should/would simply overlook them).

The vast majority of men believe that they are not so sinful that God would ever keep them out of heaven, much less cast them into hell.

Sadly, they're wrong.

**John explains why that is such a dangerous belief=>**

1) It an implied accusation that God is a Liar.

He has repeatedly said in His Word that man is a cold-blooded sinner, but instead of trusting His judgment on this, the person who believes he hasn't sinned says, "I don't feel like I'm a sinner, & I think God is lying to/about me."

That is blasphemous, making the sinner's guilt even worse.

2) This belief proves God's Word is not in the person's heart.

It proves that he is outside of God's light, locked in the darkness of his own self-deception and Spiritual-ignorance.

God convicts people of sin through His Word & His Spirit.

Heb 4:12 says=> *"The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."*

But a person must read God's Word through eyes of faith in order for it to get into his heart and to convict his heart of sin.

A person claiming he hasn't sinned is faithless, like the Israelites, about whom Heb 4:2 says=>

*"The word they heard did not profit them, because it was **not united by faith** in those who heard."*

Until someone hears God's Word with faith so that it can do its convincing/convicting work on his heart, he's locked in darkness.

3) The belief that one hasn't sinned is dangerous to his soul because it places him outside Jesus' call to salvation.

In Mt 9:13, He said=> *"I did not come to call the righteous, but **sinner**s."*

In I Tim 1:15, Paul wrote=> *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinner**s"* [not those who don't sin].

Anyone who can't admit that he's a sinner, that he has sinned, must also believe he doesn't need a Savior (X, or anyone else).

Who needs a Savior from sins he hasn't committed? If he's not convinced he needs a Savior, he can't/won't respond to X's call to salvation.

**When you/I feel absolutely overwhelmed with our sin, that is the most fortunate day of our lives.**

\* It's the day we step into God's light, get honest/real w/ Him, & stop lying to ourselves that we can hide the truth from Him.

\* It's the day when Jesus X, the fisher of men, has caught us in His net, so that there is no longer any escape.

He is about to lift us out of the net, & cause us to rejoice.

\* It's the day we stop trying to deal only with our feelings of guilt, and start dealing with the guilt itself, by confessing it to X.

\* It's the day we pray, "Lord, look at my soul with Your piercing, penetrating, all-seeing eyes of fire, & reveal to me the true depths of my sinfulness.

"Go ahead and show me what I know must be true=>

That I'm a far worse sinner than I could ever have imagined I was.

"Then show me Your infinite grace & the infinite power of Jesus' dying love, to save me from my sin."

**What is the state of your heart this morning?**

\* Is it as cold as ice to the Lord, & to the things of the Lord?

If so, your first inclination is prob. to hide it from Him.

Do the opposite=> Tell Him candidly/honestly how you  
feel=> Confess it to Him.

\* Is your heart hard/unfeeling?

Confess that to Him in the full light of His truth, and ask  
Him to give you sincere sorrow for your sin, and a  
sincere love for Him.

\* Then dare to add=> “Despite what I feel/don’t-feel, I rest my  
soul (by faith) in the blood of Jesus, which I know is the  
only true cleansing agent for sin, and I ask You, Lord, to  
forgive/cleanse me from all my unrighteousness.”

Because He is faithful/just, He’ll do it, just as He promised.

**“Walking in the Light” (Part 2)**  
August 14, 2001

Text: I John 1:8-10

1. As the world sees it, people are basically good at heart so their “sins” aren’t [14 really] sins at all.

Rom 1:8; Mt 7:20-22; Rom 3:13-16; Isa 5:20

2. With the doctrine of sin undermined, man’s ability to distinguish between moral [12 truth] and falsehood is diminished.

1 Jn 1:5; 1 Sam 16:7

3. 1 John 1:5-10 deals with three lies men tend to believe and claim about themselves, their [8 sin], and their relationship with God.

1 Jn 1:6

4. **Today we will consider two more claims sinners often make: that they have no sin (verse 8), and that they have [12 never] sinned (verse 10)...**

**\* Claim #2—We Have No Sin**

**[1 John 1:8]**

5. The Holy Spirit, speaking through John, says that to the extent anyone denies he has sin, he is [10 self]-deceived.

Rom 3:23; 2:14-15; Jer 17:9

6. The essence of hopeless spiritual unteachability is clinging tenaciously to one’s [8 own] lies.

Lk 18:11; Psa 51:6

**\* The Remedy—Honest, Heartfelt Confession**

**[1 John 1:9]**

7. “Confession” means “to say the same thing”; in this context it is saying the same thing [8 God] says about our sin.

Lk 18:13; 1 Tim 1:15

8. Because a believer is compelled by the Holy Spirit to confess his sins throughout his whole life, he lives in [20 constant] self-denial.

Lk 14:26; Rom 7:15; Lk 9:24

9. If we are living a life of ongoing confession, God is faithful and just to forgive and [16 cleanse] us from our sin.

II Chron 7:13-14; Isa 55:7

**\* Claim #3—We Have Never Sinned**

**[1 John 1:10]**

10. You may know people who can look you straight in the face and say, “I have never sinned”; they truly feel that their sin isn’t [14 really] sin at all.

Mt 19:20

**John explains why that is such a dangerous belief...**

\*11. It is an implied accusation that God is a [10 liar].

\*12. This belief proves God’s [10 Word] is not in the person’s heart.

Heb 4:12, 2

\*13. It places him outside Jesus’ call to [22 salvation].

Mt 9:13; I Tim 1:15

14. Is your heart hard and unfeeling? Confess that to the Lord in the full light of His truth and ask Him to give you sincere [14 sorrow] for your sin.