

# I John - if We Confess Our Sins

by Mariano Di Gangi

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of confessing our sins and having fellowship with God, and highlights the role of repentance, faithfulness, and God's justice in the forgiveness of sins.*

**Duration:** 21:52

**Scripture:** Isaiah 55:6-7, Jeremiah 31:34, Mark 12:30-31, John 1:1-3, Acts 2:38, 1 John 1:6, 1 John 1:8

**Topics:** "Sin"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of falling short of God's standard of excellence and the need to confess our sins. The apostle Paul's statement that all have sinned emphasizes the importance of acknowledging our wrongdoings. The speaker then explores the nature of God, describing Him as light with perfect knowledge and spotless purity. The sermon also mentions the pilgrimage rituals in northern India as an example of people seeking to wash away their sins. Ultimately, the speaker emphasizes the personal experience of Jesus Christ and the proclamation of His resurrection as the message to be shared with others.

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## Transcript

If a fresh version of 1 John were to be printed in Renaissance French for circulation among the Francophone people of Western Switzerland, I could very well imagine John Calvin writing in the Geneva Globe and Mail that this was a marvelous book filled with teaching on the essence of the Christian faith. Loaded with exhortations to Christian love. How do I know that that is what John Calvin would have said? Because that is what he states at the very beginning of his own commentary on the letter of 1 John.

He begins with a reference to Jesus Christ and throughout the five chapters of that book, which shall be our theme on successive Sunday mornings right through to Labor Day, John points us to Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ is the very center of our faith, and Jesus Christ is the inspiration of our love. He begins his letter by a reference to the eternal existence of Jesus Christ.

He is the one who was there from the beginning with the Father, involved with the Father in the outpouring of power that is creative, and so the heavens and the earth come into existence. This eternal Christ was also manifested in the course of time and came to this planet, and the historical expression which we call the humanity of Jesus made it possible for people to see him and to hear him and to touch him. His eternal existence is followed by his historical expression, the Word becomes flesh, the Son of God becomes also the child of Mary, and he is visible to the human eye, available to the human touch, audible to the human

ear.

And then the Apostle speaks of a personal experience of Jesus Christ. We have seen him, we have heard him, we have been challenged to reach out and touch and see for ourselves that he is risen bodily from the dead. And now, says the Apostle, we proclaim that message to you and to others.

Why? So that accepting the message of the gospel and receiving Jesus into their hearts, they might have fellowship with God. But the question arises, what is God like, and how can you and I have communion on close terms with him? Well, says John, if you want a capsule comment to describe the indescribable, let me say that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. Darkness in scripture is a symbol of ignorance.

In God there is only perfect knowledge, no darkness at all. In scripture, darkness is a symbol of human iniquity, and in him is spotless purity. There is no darkness at all.

Darkness in scripture is a symbol for mortality, but he is the immortal and the everlasting God, who is the Lord and giver of life to others. Now how can you and I, who are frail and fallible and faulty creatures, have communion with such a God? How can you and I, who are creatures of dust and of depravity, have communion with a God who is light? The only way that you and I can have fellowship with that kind of God is to get rid of our sins. Now the Apostle John uses a series of lightning-like contrasts to discuss the matter of the false remedies and the true solution with reference to the removal of sin, which will make possible fellowship and closest communion with the living God.

One of the false remedies to which he refers is this, to ignore the gap between what we profess and what we practice. In verse 6 he says, if we claim to have fellowship with him, the God who is light, and yet we walk in darkness, we lie and we do not put the truth that we profess into actual daily practice. We profess to walk with God.

God is light. If we persist in the way of sin, we are walking in the darkness, and therefore we cannot possibly in practice be doing what with words we profess. Others imagine themselves to be sinless.

Verse 8, if we claim to be without sin, and that route is taken by people who have a false superficial concept of perfection, we must remember that what God requires of us is not 66 and two-thirds. What God requires of us is not even 80 percent. What God requires of us is more than 99 percent.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. God's passing grade is 100 percent, and therefore it is in vain that you and I imagine ourselves to be sinless when God demands total perfection, radical as well as superficial, substantial as well as in surface. And if we cannot meet that requirement, in vain do we say that we are sinless.

Or we may be aware of problems within our life but insist on our guiltlessness. We claim that we have not sinned, that we have not sinned. It might have been my heredity.

It most certainly could be my environment. But it is not me. The blame is shifted.

The guilt is passed on. We refuse to look at ourselves in the mirror of the Word of God and see ourselves as we actually are in ourselves. Now the Apostle says if we follow any of these expedients, if we use any of these false remedies, we are only deceiving ourselves.

And worse still, we are dishonoring him. For remember, he is not only the great lawgiver, he is also the great physician. And with eyes of penetrating flame, he looks into the deepest, darkest recesses of our souls, and he knows what our true state of affairs is, and he has x-rayed our situation, and he has put our secret sins in the light of his countenance and made us painfully aware of them.

And to say that he is all wrong in his diagnosis of our situation is to call him a liar, and so to aggravate our plight as sinners in his eyes. The fact remains that something must be done to put right what we become aware of as wrong. In northern India, in a stream that becomes mightier as it flows southward from the snowy Himalayas, at certain times in certain years, millions of pilgrims come by caravan, elephants and oxen and horses and camels and sadhus and ashes and tridents and chants, and people offer prayers by that sacred river that they might be spared from the pain of future incarnations and that they might bathe to wash away sins of their previous lives.

But you don't have to go to the foothills of the Himalayas to see something of that sort. You make a journey from here to Stratford and you buy your tickets to see Shakespeare's Macbeth, and in one dramatic scene you see Lady Macbeth, absolutely sleepless, tormented by her pride, by her ambition, by her violence, by her murderous inclinations, and try as she will, she cannot cleanse that accursed spot from her hands. We know that something is wrong.

How can it be put right? The true solution is given to us by the Apostle with a minimum of words and a depth of feeling. He says, first of all, we must repent. He doesn't use the word repentance, but that's precisely what he means when he says, we confess our sins.

It is our sins that we confess, not our heredity, not our environment, but our sins. And the word here translated sins has to do with falling short of an authoritative standard which has been raised by God. It has to do with shooting wide of the mark and missing totally the target that he has set before us.

That's what the Apostle Paul meant when he said that all had sinned and fallen short of the glorious standard of excellence that God had set before us. But to be aware of something wrong is not enough. We've got to confess it.

We've got to admit it and admit it, not in the way that lets it all hang out and figures that that is all that is required. That's the way I am. So what? It has to be the kind of confession that is accompanied with sorrow, not sorrow for having been caught in the act, not sorrow for having been exposed as a fraud, but sorrow for what our sins have done to hurt others.

Sorrow for what our sins have done to us in keeping us from being reflections of the divine likeness. Sorrow for what we have done to the Christ who suffered upon the cross and more than sorrow for our sins, hatred for them, to detest the sins that made him mourn and kept us from becoming what he had in mind for each of us. If we confess our sins, our sins when we are weighed in his balances and found wanting, our sins when we are measured by his standard and found lacking.

God be merciful to me, a sinner. The true solution lies in the matter of repentance. But it also involves confidence.

Confidence in him who offers himself to us in the gospel as our savior. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Confidence in him that he will forgive our sins.

Debt has become fashionable these days and even the richest of the industrialized nations of the world. But the debt that they owe each other is nothing compared to the infinite debt that you and I owe God of duties left undone and on the demerit side of the ledger, all the evil that we have spoken or accomplished or thought. We owe all this to God.

The weight is insuperable. The barrier is insurmountable. But we must have confidence in a God who will draw a broad stroke through that debt and cancel it once and for all.

That is what is behind the apostle statement that he will forgive. He will cancel our indebtedness. And more than that, he will put to our account the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Not only will we become debt free and square our account with God because of what God is willing to do for us, but he will also purge us. He will also purify us. He will cleanse us from the stain and deliver us from the pollution of personality which sin inevitably brings with it.

He will pardon. He will purify. But can you be sure of this? The apostle tells us he is faithful to do it.

He is as good as his word. In the prophecy of Isaiah in chapter 55, he encourages us to seek him while he may be found and to call upon him while he is near. That the wicked should forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and that he should return to the Lord our God and this God will abundantly pardon.

We have his word for it. He is faithful to his word. He does it again in Jeremiah chapter 31 at verse 34 where he says that he will write his law on the hearts of men and women so that they will obey him spontaneously and from within and he will forgive their sins and remember them no more.

When people were convicted of their faults on the day of Pentecost and cried out to the evangelist and said to Peter, what shall we do? His answer was repent and be baptized and you shall receive the forgiveness of sins. God is as good as his word. He is faithful.

If he has promised to cancel the debt, he will. If he has promised to make us clean, he will. Come now and let us reason together, says the Lord.

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. But what about that reference to God being just? You would have expected the Apostle to say he is faithful, loving, gracious, merciful to pardon and to purify.

But no, he uses that word just. Because he is just, he will forgive us our sins. Because he is just, he will purge us from all unrighteousness.

Is it surprising that he should introduce the justice of God at this point? Not at all. Our God is fair. He is righteous.

He is just. And when the soul sins and comes under the sentence of death, and he provides one who will absorb that sentence in himself, and you and I turn to that substitute savior and recognize him as the sacrifice for our sin, God will not demand from us the payment of a penalty that his son has already met on our behalf and met in full. That's why Jesus said on the cross, it is finished.

Atonement has been made, full atonement. Your debt is totally covered. Put your faith in me and my merits will be credited to your account and your liabilities will be credited to my account.

For I will bear in my own body your sins on that tree. There is now therefore no condemnation to those who by faith are related to Jesus Christ. Why? Because he has borne that condemnation in himself and in their stead.

No wonder the apostle concludes the passage by saying, My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, don't despair. Don't lose hope.

Take heart. We have one who speaks to the Father in our defense, Jesus Christ, the righteous one. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world.

The one unpardonable sin is to resist the Holy Spirit who would lead us penitently and confidently to Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you for the good news of the gospel which is precisely what we sinners need to hear.

Now enable us to believe what you have promised, confident that you are faithful, confident that you are just, confident that you will keep your word in Jesus' name. Amen.

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