

## The Cleansing Power of Confession

**1 John 1:8-9 HCSB** If we say, "We have no sin," we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

### Introduction:



**A Story of Greek Mythology:** Hercules was called to clean a large barn that had not been cleaned in nearly 30 years. He picked up two mighty rivers and redirected them toward the barn. The rivers flowed through with a great rush and the barn was sparkling when he was finished.

Although this story is obviously untrue it can serve as an illustration to our passage this morning. Similar to the cleansing of the barn our passage today we will see how the confession of a believer points the rivers of God's grace toward our hearts and cleanses them.

This morning I am going to propose that the way to cleanse the human heart is through the voluntary act of confession to Christ. So let's now dig into God's word and hear John as he teaches on ...

### I. THE PURPOSE OF CONFESSION (vs. 9) *Humility*

- **1 John 1:9 HCSB** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In order to understand the purpose of confession we must first understand what John means by the term confession, if we look at our text we will see many clues to help us understand what John is teaching...

#### Exegesis

- "If": Suggests that confession is an act of free will and not forced upon us by God or man.
- "We" / "Our": Confession is for everyone; all have sinned and are responsible for their own sin.
- "Sins": At the root of confession are our transgressions against God. Notice vs. 6 and vs. 8 both prior to and after today's verse we are reminded that we are sinners in order that the key center of the passage will stand out as the solution to our problem.
- "Confess": Admit wrong doing; take personal responsibility for wrong doing.

Therefore confession is: Admitting and taking responsibility for our sin by an act of our own free will.

We have seen the definition of "confession" but what is its purpose? John is trying to show us that we are sinners. He does this because once we realize we are sinners then we are able to confess our sins to God and get freed up from the guilt and weight of our transgressions. The purpose of confession is humility.

**ILLUSTRATION:** After hearing a sermon on confession a man approached his pastor with a heavy conscience. He asked the pastor what he should do. He worked for a boat builder and had gotten into the habit of stealing the expensive brass nails. He could not tell the boat builder: He would lose his job or the boss would think he was a hypocrite and all of the times he had shared his faith would go to waste.



Finally guilt got so bad he had to confess. Upon hearing this the pastor advised him to confess his sin to his boss regardless of the consequences and to offer to make restitution, no matter how long it took. He heeded his pastor's advice and this was the boss's response: "Sir I always did think you were just a hypocrite, but now I begin to feel there's something in this Christianity after all. Any religion that would make a dishonest workman come back and confess that he had been stealing copper nails and offer to settle for them must be worth having." God always blesses humility...

### **Application:**

- a. • Confession humbles us: Shows us who we are and who God is.
- b. • Confession allows God to change us: God's tool for changing us, not our tool for changing us.
- c. • Confession allows God's grace to be activated in our lives: We are never closer to God than when we are on our knees confessing our weakness and His strength.
- d. • Confession allows us to be free: The purpose of guilt is to drive us to Christ once we do that we are free from it's power over us.

## **II. THE POWER OF CONFESSION (vs. 9) *Forgiveness***

How many of you know there is power in confession? The key to understanding this power is also found in vs. 9.

- **1 John 1:9 HCSB** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

### **Exegesis**

- a. "He" the power of confession is not in us but in Him
- b. "Faithful and Just" God gave the power to one who is faithful and just.
- c. "Will" The power is assured in the lives of all who confess their sin. There is no maybe here.
- d. "Forgive us our sins" The power is the forgiveness of "OUR" sin

John is trying to give assurance to us by letting us know that the power of confession is the forgiveness of our sins. At the same time John shows us that the power of confession is found in the one who is faithful and just.

Even Lowlanders understand that there is power in the forgiveness of sin. They confess to: Psychiatrists; Doctors; Mentors; Family members; Friends...All in the hopes that they can get freed up from the guilt of sin, yet without the power of Christ's forgiveness it is a futile exercise.

- **Psalms 51:4 HCSB** Against You--You alone--I have sinned and done this evil in Your sight. So You are right when You pass sentence; You are blameless when You judge.

The Psalmist says "Against you and you alone have I sinned". We must receive forgiveness from the one whom we sinned against.

**Application:** Today do you desire forgiveness of your sins? Today are you heavy laden and burdened? Here is a way to begin to heal:

Find a quiet place. Speak your sin out loud (either to someone you trust or in a quiet place with just you and God). Receive the promise of Christ when he says he will forgive you. The power of confession is Christ's forgiveness

## **III. THE PROMISE OF CONFESSION (vs. 9) *Cleanse***

John does not give us a command only but also a promise. The promise begins by forgiving us but it ends with purification. Let me show you what I mean:

- **1 John 1:9 HCSB** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

## Exegesis:

- a. "And" shows us that forgiveness itself is not the end of God's promise to those who humble themselves.
- b. "Purify" To free from sin, guilt, or other defilement.
- c. "Us" Again this applies to all who have obeyed this teaching thus far.
- d. "All" There are no limits to the purification process presented here
- e. "Unrighteousness" Sins against God

Understand what John means; he is telling us that forgiveness in and of itself is powerless without the purification that comes from Christ. He shows us that it does not matter what we have done but what we will do about it. The promise of confession is that we will be cleansed.



Have you ever noticed that it is more fun to drive a clean car? The same old car, the same old rattles, and the same old seat suddenly become exciting again simply because they are clean.

Over and over again we hear in scripture: "Wash!" It was the message of John the Baptist. "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me," said the towel-draped Jesus to Peter. Without our being washed clean, we all die from the contamination of sin.

## Application:

- Today God has put it on my heart to call you to get washed in the blood, to not only allow God to forgive you but to cleanse and make you whole again. This can only happen when we confess our sins.

## Conclusion:

1. The purpose of Confession: To humble yourself before God (Humility)
2. The power of Confession: The forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ (Forgiveness)
3. The promise of Confession: The cleansing and washing away of ones guilt (Cleansing)

Today are you washed? Has God lifted that burden of guilt because you went to Him with a humble heart? If not has God gotten a hold of your attention today?

- You do not have to live a life of guilt
- You are not called to suffer alone and carry the burdens of sin
- You are not hiding anything from God anyway

**ILLUSTRATION:** I heard about a man who robbed a bank and drove off. He thought he was in the clear until he opened the bag and it exploded with permanent ink. He was fluorescent blue from head to toe. Day after day he scrubbed himself trying to get free from the ink but it was futile. He lived with all this money yet could not leave his home for fear the paint would be seen and he would be arrested. The ink served as a constant reminder of who he was and what he had done, a constant reminder that he was a guilty man and the shame drove him mad. He was completely isolated from the world because of the ink and was driven almost insane. Finally the day came when he could no longer take the paint and he decided to turn himself into the authorities for at least in prison he could be free from the guilt of what he had done.

Today maybe you feel like this man, of course you did not rob a bank and for sure you do not have blue paint all over your body but it's my guess that each of us has sin that weighs us down

in the same way. Sin that has to date gone unconfused. Like the man maybe our sin has lead us to a place of isolation from others and threatens to drive us crazy.

Today I want to encourage you that there is a cleansing waiting for you, A cleansing that will remove the florescent blue stains of sin in your life.

Will you go before the throne with me this morning? Will you allow God to scrub off the stain of sin and in its place put on a white Robe?