



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 1:8-10

"Communion and Confession"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] There was a great growth in grace in the 8:30 service when that announcement was made by Dr. Howard, and I commended him for his compassion in not turning and looking at me when he made that announcement. And Mr. Prier, I'd like to commend you too, for your compassion. I know what you were thinking, [laughter] and you may confess that to the Lord according to the message this morning, but nevertheless I appreciate the compassion of not looking at me. For some of you in the audience who did look at me and smile, for you there is little hope. [Laughter] Every year you will continue to laugh, and I can hardly blame you. This is an inside joke in Believers Chapel. For those of you who are visitors, we won't give you the details of it.

The Scripture reading for today is in 1 John chapter 1, and we're reading verses 8 through 10. Now, as we read these verses you will notice twice, the apostle again uses the little expression, "If we say." Now, he has already said in the 6th verse, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." So that's an inconsistency that the apostle points to as an evidence of failure in life. Now, in verse 8 we have the second, and in verse 10 the third. He writes in verse 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

One slight modification I would like to make in the 9th verse, there is nothing wrong with rendering the Greek text "If we confess our sins," but in the light of the context and the light of the precise form of the Greek word, we probably should think about this as, "If we are confessing our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So if you can think of that as being something that is, in most cases, to be a continuous confession of sin, then I think you will have a further understanding of our text. In the 10th verse he concludes this section with, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." It's rather interesting to notice the contrast between this, and the statement in the 6th verse where he says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie." But now in the 10th verse, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

May the Lord bless this reading and these comments on his word. Let's bow together in a time of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we give Thee thanks for the word of God, and we pray that as we consider the Scriptures today, and the exposition of them, that our minds may be opened by the Holy Spirit illuminated. And may not only our minds be illuminated, but may by Thy grace we be motivated and enabled to respond to the message that the apostle has received from the Lord, and in a marvelous way has given to us. We know, Lord, that this must be important, for Thou hast preserved the message that the apostle received and gave to those in his day, down through the centuries.

We thank Thee for the beautiful day that Thou hast given to us, and Lord, we thank Thee, our creator and the creator of this universe, for all of the blessings of common grace that [are] ours by virtue of our triune God and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ through the Spirit. We thank Thee and praise Thee for the beauty of the creation, and for the way in which it reflects Thine eternal power and deity. Help us, Lord to be responsive and to give to Thee the glory and praise of Thy great work as creator.

And especially do we thank Thee for the work as redeemer which the Lord Jesus Christ, in obedience to the Father in heaven, has accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit. We thank Thee for the apostle's message that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. And we rejoice in that; Thou hast been so marvelously good to us. As we reflected in the singing of the hymn, the hymn writer asking that God "vouchsafe to us the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ;" we are thankful that Thou hast done this, and we, by and through the love of God, have come to know it.

We thank Thee Lord for the whole church of Christ and for all of those who, by Thy grace, have been brought to the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal. Bless each member of the body today. Bless other bodies who meet, such as this body of believers meets here in Believers chapel. May the blessing of our triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be experienced by the churches of Jesus Christ today, over the face of this globe.

We thank Thee and praise Thee for all that Thou hast done here, and we pray for our elders and deacons, the members, the friends, especially for the visitors who have been here today, and the ones who are here now. Lord, may this be a memorable day in the life of each one of us. We pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon it. We pray especially for the sick and for those who have difficult trials and problems, some of which mentioned in our calendar of concern. We pray for them, we ask Lord, that Thou wilt encourage, console, strengthen, give healing in accordance with Thy will, and richly bless in Christ.

We ask now that Thou will be with us in this meeting. Bless the ministry of the word, the singing of the hymn, the time of Christian fellowship. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today in the continuation of our study of John's first epistle is "Communion and Confession." We have said several times that John writes, in 1 John, not to bring sinners to salvation but to bring God's children to assurance of life, to fellowship with one another and God, and to a completed joy. We've cited particularly 1 John chapter 5, in verse 13 where the apostle writes, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God;

that ye may know that ye have eternal life." Other purposes, the apostle refers to as he writes his epistle, but it's very clear that that at the conclusion of the epistle is one of his chief purposes in writing. Unfortunately, however, we might think when we reflect upon this at the beginning. The apostle has made a statement in the 5th verse of the 1st chapter that raises questions. He has said, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

Now, let me remind you that, citing another commentator whose comments have been cited by almost every modern commentator, "light is a concept suggesting splendor and glory physically." In fact, the psalmist, as we have mentioned, in the 104th Psalm in the 2nd verse, makes the statement that God clothes himself with light as with a garment. The term light also suggests truth intellectually, and we are reminded of the statement of the psalmist in the 27th Psalm, that the Lord is his light and his salvation. And in the 36th Psalm, shortly after, that "with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light."

And finally, the term light suggests holiness morally, and we remember, too, that the Apostle Paul in the last chapter of 1 Timothy speaks of God as dwelling in the light to which no man may, or can, approach. So here we have the apostle writing that we should have fellowship with God, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and with one another, and we should know the joy of that fellowship, but at the same time saying, the God with whom we are to have fellowship is a God whose very nature is light; intellectually, truth; morally, holiness. The majesty of God then raises a very significant question. How can we, who are sinners in thought, in word, in deed, possibly have fellowship with a God who is light, holy, intellectually truth, and physically all that is represented by splendor and glory? If there should ever be a contrast in the whole of this universe, it would be the holy God and a sinner, a human sinner in relationship with one another.

Now the apostles faced this question; the prophets did as well anticipating the coming of the redeemer. But the apostles say that our light-possessing God, our God who is light gives himself to us, enabling us to welcome him and to be assimilated to him through his redeeming Son. In fact, in

this very epistle, in the 3rd chapter, and the 2nd and 3rd verses, the apostle alludes to this assimilation that will ultimately be ours. He states, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." That's a marvelous hope that we have, and it's not simply a hope, it's a certainty that will ultimately be ours. And so we have then, the apostles telling us that through the Lord Jesus Christ and the redemptive work which he has accomplished on Calvary's cross, it is possible for sinners to have fellowship with the one who is light.

As a matter of fact, by virtue of what Jesus Christ has done, for he says here in the 7th verse that "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." As a matter of fact then, the light of God itself can discover no sin in us for which that blood is not an absolute remedy. Let me say that again so it will impress us, it should impress us. The light of God itself can discover no sin in us for which that blood, the blood Christ has shed is not an absolute remedy. In other words, all that the light shows us of our evil, of our sin, of our wickedness, all of that and more is covered by the blood the Jesus Christ shed on Calvary's cross.

Now, of course, if we are to enter into fellowship with God, a frank recognition of what we are is necessary. The apostle deals with some false and tempting views that one must reject. Now, if you are a believing Christian, you might think that some of these views are not so tempting. We don't know the precise circumstances that the apostle addressed in his epistle; unfortunately he did not give us an introduction to 1 John. Commentators give us introductions, but then the commentators do not have any more information, as a general rule, than is available to any of us.

And so there is a great deal of speculation about the background of 1 John. Generally speaking, it is believed by many that the apostle wrote against a background that might be called, if not Gnostic, insipiently Gnostic. And therefore, some of these inconsistencies that the apostle refers to are references to the inconsistencies of the Gnostics. "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." And evidently, there were some who were saying

just that very fact. He says, "IF we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Astonishing fact; Gnostic ideas of the despising of the material level of being, and the claim to live only in a spiritual level of being may be involved. But at any rate, whatever is the background, its plain that it was such that these false views were common.

Well, we want to look at them. They were tempting to individuals at that time, to say that you can have fellowship with God and walk in darkness, and that you do not have sin and even that you have not committed sin. I say these are great inconsistencies, because a Christian man finds it very difficult to even think of anyone saying something like this now. But you must remember that the apostle wrote not simply to our age, he wrote to an age that didn't have nineteen hundred years or so of instruction in the word of God. If one reads the church fathers, it's very easy to see that their understanding of biblical doctrine is not nearly of the kind and level of the understanding of biblical doctrine that the reformers and others since that time have come to understand.

So now let's look then at our apostle, 1 John 1, verse 8 through verse 10, and after giving the first inconsistency in verse 6, which we have already looked at, the second inconsistency appears in verse 8. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Now just as the first inconsistency was the inconsistency of saying and not doing, and yet naming the name of the Lord which made it even more astonishing. So here the apostle refers to those who say they have no sin, and apparently say that they have no sin in the name of the Lord. In other words, these are individuals within the general company of the apostles.

Now John has just said in verse 7, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Three essential marks of a genuine Christian: one, he walks in the light; two, he has fellowship in the Christian circle, fellowship with one another; and three, he has forgiveness, by the atonement, of all sin. Well now, if it's really true that Christians walk in the light, and after all, they do, we've said. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Paul says we are children of the light, and we are to walk in the light. If we

walk in the light, if we have fellowship with one another, and if we have the forgiveness of all of our sins, then why have we anything further to do with sin? And so, one can see as the apostle moves from his thoughts to the next thought, how he might have then encountered people who have heard that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin, therefore we don't have sin. But John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." I think I can understand how this false claim may have arisen. It's astonishing that anyone who had any moral understanding of himself should claim to have no sin, but perhaps Gnostic interpretations of reality had affected the individual. At any rate, it's a strange delusion.

It reminds me of the story, which preachers have often told, of the little boy who used to draw pictures, and after he drew some queer little picture which was a caricature of something in his mind, he would write under his picture, "This is a horse." And one would never know it was a horse if there were not a little statement, "This is a horse." So when we hear someone saying, "We don't have sin," or to say, even more astonishingly, "I have not committed sin." Then we have to say, we are like the individuals looking at the caricatures. One would never know that it were so, if we were not told. Even Wesley's perfectionism could not say this.

John Wesley believed in Christian perfectionism. One would think that it was, in the first place, a great mistake to call it Christian perfectionism, and no doubt Mr. Wesley, at the present moment in heaven, and he is there. Mr. Wesley would say, "That was one of my mistakes. I should never have called that Christian perfectionism, because it's so capable of misunderstanding. He went on to make very plain in his writings, but very few people read his writings to understand. When they hear Christian perfectionism, they think of sinlessness. Mr. Wesley didn't believe in sinlessness. He was too godly and fervent and zealous a Christian man to believe in something so obviously unscriptural. What he believed, however, is Christian perfectionism was liable to misunderstanding, and furthermore, there were some weaknesses in his views. He did tend to believe that if a person did not intend to sin, it was not regarded as sin, and furthermore, if he did not know that what he had done or thought was a sin, that too, was in his eyes and mind, apparently not regarded as sin. So

the way in which Mr. Wesley constructed the doctrine of Christian perfectionism was to water down the Christian doctrine of sin. Well, even Mr. Wesley could never say, "If we say that we have no sin." He could never say we have no sin. Mr. Wesley was a godly man, he knew that we had sin, but here were individuals who deny that they have sin.

In what sense do they mean, "We don't have sin?" Well probably, we do not have sin as a continuous source of influence in our life. Or to put it in a more doctrinal fashion, they were denying indwelling sin. Now, the apostle says, for us to deny indwelling sin, to deny that we have sin even in our most gloriously holy moments, is self-delusion. The only one who could ever say, "I do not have sin," was the one who said, "Which of you convinceth me of sin;" the Lord Jesus Christ. No prophet could say that, they feely admit that. No apostle could say that. In fact, the greatest understanding that we have of the nature of sin in a Christian believer is the Apostle Paul's interpretation and insight into indwelling sin, in Romans chapter 7, verse 13 through verse 25. We'll talk about that later. But nevertheless, if you read those verses in which the apostle says, "The things that I wanted to do, I could not do; and the things that I did not want to do, I did," you have great insight into a Christian's inward experiences. And Paul wrote that as a believing man.

Almost all of the Christian church down through the years, since the days of Augustine who changed his views, have believed that. There are others who, from time to time, have constructed theories to deny this, but the great mass of Christian scholarship have believed, and I think rightly, that the apostle wrote those words as a believing man. He was analyzing indwelling sin in the heart of a believing man. And so, only our Lord could say, "I have no sin." And "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, the truth is not in us." Well, that's the first of the inconsistencies of this particular message. It's the second of John's three.

We turn now to the 9th verse, and the remedy for this influence of sin. There's a great deal of debate that has taken place, particularly in recent years, over the meaning of the expressions, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." For example, is the apostle talking about the initial forgiveness of sins, when a

man, as an unsaved man, reaches the sense of the knowledge of his sin; lays it out before the Lord God in heaven acknowledging his sin, confessing his sin, having heard of the saving ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ; and committing himself to the Lord receives the gift of the forgiveness of sins and cleansing from all unrighteousness, that initial entrance into Christian salvation. It's possible that the apostle is speaking of this.

In the 12th verse of the 2nd chapter, he uses the expression, "forgiveness of sins." He says, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake." He seems to be referring to initial forgiveness of sins there. The expression, again, occurs in John chapter 20, in verse 23 and there too, appears to refer to the initial forgiveness of sins. And so there is no reason why we could not use this as a gospel text. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I contend that that is true, that that can be used as a text for the initial forgiveness of sins. After all, the principle of the forgiveness of sins is the same, whether we are talking about the forgiveness of our sins once-and-for-all eternally or whether we're talking about the forgiveness of our sins governmentally and temporally family forgiveness, the principle is the same. The ground is the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The means is the believer's faith granted to him by the Lord God.

Now, having said all of that, and also I should have said that while this is an interesting debate, it's not doctrinally crucial for that very reason. Incidentally, if this were shown to be only a reference to initial forgiveness, we still would have texts in the Bible that refer to the forgiveness of believers' sins by confession. For example, in one of the Old Testament books, we read, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." We also read David's comments in the 32nd Psalm where he states in the 5th verse, concerning his own sin, "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." So the forgiveness of temporal sin within the government of God, family sin, which restores one to communion, not brings one into union, but restores one to communion, is taught in both the Old and New

Testaments. We don't want to make too big a point over this; it's quite obvious, anyone who reads the Bible, I think, understands it.

But nevertheless, I tend to think that in the light of the context that what the apostle is referring to is the temporal, continuing forgiveness and restoration to communion of believers who have sinned within the family and have lost communion. That is, there is a controversy between them and their Father in heaven over their sin. So what the apostle, then, is telling us is if we are confessing our sins, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." And at every occasion, constant confession is to be expected and forgiveness and cleansing is the response of the Lord God.

When I was going through theological seminary, one of my teachers used to love to say, "Men, keep short accounts with God." That is, we are not to let sins fester, and if we do not confess them, they will fester just like a wound. "Keep short accounts with God." We don't wait until we have a sufficient number of them, and then bring them to the Lord God, because in the meantime, we walk with a cloud over our spirits. I have another friend who invented the expression, "Rebound, and keep moving." And he used to lay great stress upon the fact that this was a text which we may use to confess our sin, to rebound from the laws of communion, and to keep moving.

I would like to suggest that that's not entirely true, that what the apostle is talking about is not about intermittent occasions upon which a person sins. I'd like to go on and make that point that what he's talking about is that the Christian life is normally, normally, a sin-confessing life. The more we understand ourselves, the more, I think; we will see that that is true. And the less likely we are to use such expressions as, "The victorious life," which is not a biblical expression, should never have been used. It is only a means, in many cases, to bring despair to earnest souls who discover, from their own experiences, earnest, zealous, seeking of the face of God, that there is no such thing as a life that does not require constant confession of sin.

Now then, he says, "If we are confessing our sins." What does that mean? What does confession mean? It simply means to say the same thing about our sin that God says about it, that it

is contrary to his word, contrary to his will. It's not merely admitting that we sin, and it surely is not the kind of thing which a preacher often engages in on Sunday morning, "and forgive us our sin," a general statement in which all particulars often are avoided. That is not what the text of Scripture means. This confession, this saying of the same thing that God says about our thoughts, our actions, our deeds, is the laying of them out before the Lord God openly, and the seeking of forgiveness for them.

And I'd like to say to you, my Christian friend, that this is one of the great privileges of the Christian life. Don't think of it as something that is a burden. It's one of the great privileges of the Christian life, to be able to come into the presence of the Lord God, and to lay before him our sins and to expect and receive from him the forgiveness for them. Let me further say this, confession of sin is to be definite. In fact, in the Old Testament, in the 5th chapter of Leviticus, when one of the Israelites brings one of his offerings, the particular offering there, the text of Scripture says that when he brings his offering, he's to make confession in that thing. In other words, the very thing that is the cause of the offering is the thing that he's to confess. He's to confess, he's not just to bring an offering and say, "This is for my sins." No, he's to make confession in that, literally the Hebrew text says, "in that." That is, the thing that makes necessary this particular offering.

Secondly, it must be definite then, and secondly it must be made to God, not to men; no human priest. We know from reading the New Testament, why don't you try this sometime, begin at Matthew and read through the whole New Testament and see if you ever find the term "priest" in the singular applied to anyone other than the Lord Jesus Christ. We are priests of God, but the great point of the New Testament is the body of priests. That is, the priesthood is a priesthood of the believers, looked at as a body in the church of Jesus Christ. That's the great thrust of the New Testament. Priest is our Lord, the priest, through whom we come to God. So confession is to be definite, it's to be made to God. The idea, incidentally, of oracular confession is something that grew up in the middle ages. The Christian church did not practice that in the early centuries of the Christian church's existence. It actually was not imposed even on Roman Catholics as an article of

the faith until the Fourth Council of Lateran in 1215 A.D. when Pope Innocent III is responsible for the promulgation of that dogma.

And finally, confession is immediate, and incidentally, just as an incidental comment, the apostle says "If we confess *our* sins." We don't get down on our knees and confess the sins of others. In fact, the confession of the sins of others is the work of a prophet. The prophets did that and the apostles too. We don't confess the sins of others. Now then, the apostles says, "If we are confessing our sins, he is faithful;" that is, he abides by the things that he has said. He's faithful to his word, and he's just because the sufficient payment for our guilt is made in the sacrifice of Christ. He is faithful, and he is just to forgive us our sins. He is not an indulgent father who does not punish his children as he should. God is not that. He is light, and so sin must have its penalty, but the marvelous and wonderful thing is that the light can show no sin within us, for which the absolute remedy is not the blood of Christ. So he's faithful, he's "just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

And I think this is a reference, not simply, to the guilt, family guilt, you understand, eternal guilt of sin is covered when we believe in Christ. But the family guilt, the family filth of our sin is referred to here, the pollution of it, when he says, "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In other words, sins are so forgiven as that we are cleansed of them, not simply absolved from responsibility but cleansed. Some people think of the forgiveness of sins as getting down on the knees, receiving forgiveness. That is, we have no responsibility for them anymore, but remember, my Christian friend, there is a process of sanctification that is to be going on in the life of a Christian. We don't get down upon our knees and confess sin simply to be relieved of the responsibility of our sin. We get down upon our knees, as the apostle says, that God may forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In other words, confession is part of the work of divine sanctification, by which we are brought, constantly, into the likeness of our Lord, which we never reach in this life, but we shall reach when we are pure, even as he is pure. So to confess our sins is to open our heart to him.

We're always opening it. The Christian life is a constant opening of our heart in confession of our sin. Your bedside ought to be worn where you get down upon your knees and confess your sins, or your chair, your closet, wherever it is. Opening your heart to him, we're always opening it, telling him of our sloth, our selfishness, our worldliness, our indifference, our lethargy, our guilt, our filth, whatever it may be; the things we think, the things we do, the things we do not think, the things we do not do; all of the things that characterize the life of an individual. If you know your heart, and if you've looked into your heart, that's what you will find.

Now, it's a marvelous thing to be cleansed, and I want to say this to you, that you can trust the Lord God with all of your secrets. Bring all of your secrets to him, all of those things deep down within your heart that you feel would be things that you could never say to anyone, say them to the Lord God. Bring them to him, you can trust him. He will deal with you justly. He will deal with you faithfully. He'll not deal with you lightly. He'll not be an indulgent father. He will do what is righteous. He will do what is just, but after he's done it, you will thank him for your experience of confession of sin.

The final inconsistency, the apostle speaks about in verse 10, he says, "If we say that we have not sinned." "This is the most daring form of error," one of the commentators said. "If we say that we have not sinned," defiant rejection of the word of God; why, what this means, essentially, is if you are right, God is wrong. If you are true, he's false; because the Scriptures, from beginning to end, unfold the wickedness of the human heart. Who could be in this company of people who says, "We have not sinned." Well, I don't know, and so far as I know, the commentators do not know either. We may speculate.

We know in the 19th verse of the 2nd chapter, John writes about some individuals who were with them at one time. "They went out from us, but they were not of us. If they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." And he calls them antichrists, so we can assume, perhaps, that these are the ones,

or at least among the ones of whom he's speaking. These antichrists who say that, "We have not sinned." Think of it. They were in John's church.

You tend to think of the early church as being a church filled with zealous, open, marvelous, victorious Christians -- foolish, foolish thought. Read the Bible. The apostles had to write letters to these churches for the very reason that they were not such churches. The idea of a church, in the earliest days of the Christian church, as a pristine church glorying in the holiness which they were experiencing day by day, is unknown to the church historian. So, "If we say that we have not sinned," these antichrists, "we make him a liar." This is stronger than "we lie." We give God the lie. The message of God, mediated through the prophets, the Lord, the apostles, has not touched them. It's the same kind of thing that we find in a modern heresy. What is sin? It is the error of a mortal mind. It's not really sin, in the sense of an offense against a holy God. It's not that. It's the error of a mortal mind. When we say that, we make God a liar.

Incidentally, the apostles don't mince words. They don't say, "We trim the truth a little bit." They don't even say, "We prevaricate." They say that hateful word, "We lie." And further, we make him lie. We don't make him prevaricate. We don't make him trim the truth a little bit. We make him a liar when we say we have not sinned. In fact, when you think about the fact that these individuals obviously have no regard for the word of God, then it's clear. You can understand why they say things like this. Chesterton once said, "He who does not believe in God, will believe in anything." And so, if an individual does not believe in God, there is no ultimate standard, and consequently there is no reason why he may not believe in everything. Like one of the great Russian authors has said, "If there is no God, everything goes." Everything goes, that's the society in which we are living today or at least we're approaching it rapidly.

So now, let me conclude, what Paul, what John, do I have to say John? [Laughter] What the apostle has said, pick your author, what the apostle has said is this. There are two indispensable conditions of communion, walking in the light, confessing sin. No wrapping of ourselves in the fig leaves of the garden, and hiding among the trees when the Lord God comes desiring fellowship, but

walking in the light, confessing sin. If you have something to confess to the Lord God, come out from behind the fig leaves. Come out from the trees in the midst of the garden. Approach the Lord God who has indicated, not only because he's light and light is the kind of thing that moves out and searches for objects, but by virtue of the saving ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are talking about a God who seeks and saves the lost, and always seeks to bring to fuller fellowship the saints of God.

That's why this message was given to the apostles and preserved in his mighty power to us. Don't wrap yourselves in the fig leaves, but come out confessing sin. These two things go together, walking in the light, confessing sin. As a matter of fact, confessing sin is just a particular of walking in the light. To walk in the light, is then, among other things, to be constantly confessing our sin. The Christian life, let me put it very simply, the Christian life is a constantly sin-judged life. That's what the Christian life is. It's not any glamorous brilliant kind of glorious experience, perhaps like the elect angels are conceived of as living. We are sinners. We are never anything but sinners as long as we're in the flesh. Indwelling sin is within our members. We hope that by the experience of constant confession, constantly going to the Lord God, that he will do his work of cleansing us from the pollution of sin.

He said, "He that hath begun a good work in you will perform until the day of Christ." He will do it. He will bring us to likeness of Christ. He is going to do that for every believer. This is one of the ways, along the path, by which we come to likeness to him, constantly sin-judged light; constant coming to the light, constant confession of sin. Listen, when the apostle wrote that great 7th chapter, reaching the end of it he said, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" He explained the answer, but it was not a once and for all thing. In the 8th chapter he said it will only be his finally at the time of the resurrection.

But then he summed up his present life by saying, after saying, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord," listen to what he says, it's very important, "so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin," present tense, present tense. That's Paul's life as he

lived it, but this same Paul, who could say "with the mind I serve the law of God, with the flesh the law of sin," will say in a moment, "There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." No condemnation, but nevertheless, with my mind I serve the law of God, with my flesh, the law of sin. And he says, as he goes on to talk, that the law, what it could not do, God accomplished through the sending of his Son, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The Christian life is a continually sin-judged life.

Now, in these two things we come, if you'll reflect upon it, we come to know the Lord God, and we come to know ourselves. And as the confession continues through the years, and as we bring these things to the Lord God and learn through our experience with him and communion with him, we grow, ever repenting, ever confessing, ever calling to mind what Christ has done, in his marvelous love and grace, for us. God, my Christian friend, desires truth in the inward parts, so David wrote after his great sin.

So let me live, let us all live, let me live in the secret place. Let me confess all of my sins with no compromise, no concealment. May, as the psalmist prayed, may my constant prayer be, "Search me O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." And when those wicked thoughts, and wicked ideas, and wicked actions take place, let me not be afraid. Let me look upon this as one of the great privileges of the Christian life, that I may come out of the trees, fall upon my knees before my heavenly Father, and give him thanks for the privilege of the confession of my sin that I may know forgiveness and cleansing. That's the Christian life; it seems to me, as the apostle describes it. That's what it means to have communion with God, to be in his presence, not only praising him, not only thanking him, but confessing our failures. Let's stand for the benediction.

If you're here today, and you've never believed in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, you don't have this privilege. Your responsibility is to recognize, as the apostles put it, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. Come to him who died for sinners. Receive the gift of salvation. By

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his grace, become a member of the family of God, and then in his marvelous grace and power, learn to live, the walking in the light, and the privilege of confession of sins. Let's bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the blessings of life. We thank Thee for our great God in heaven, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We thank Thee for the blood that was shed for sinners, for such we are. And we thank Thee, Lord, for the privilege of coming to Thee. It so often hurts, so often so difficult, so often so hard.

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]