

## CERTAINTY REGARDING HUMANITY'S SIN 1 John 1:8-2:2

### INTRODUCTION

- We are living in a morally insane culture, given over to irrationality and sexual perversion, like John's day when he was writing 1 John.
- How can we understand and discern what is happening and live with certainty in these confusing times?
- What not long ago was regarded as sexual perversion is now regarded as a civil rights issue, according to Voddie Bauchman.
- Those of us who are older have the contrast of a more rightly ordered society, where the younger generation has no comparison. Today's moral order could seem to be a legitimate contender for how a society should be morally ordered.

*Proverbs 17:15 "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD"*

- What is needed to discern and untangle our current confusion with biblical certainty?

**MESSAGE THEME:** *Living with discernment and certainty regarding humanity's sin and God's provided redemption.*

### REVIEW

- Context of persecution and pre-gnostic confusion.
- After John describes his experience with Jesus Christ of Nazareth, he explains the foundation of fellowship with God and begins correcting some false teachings that had been propagated.
- The false assertions are:
  - Claim to walk in the light yet while living in darkness (1:6), also claim to be without sin (1:8), and claim to have not sinned (1:10).

### YOU HAVE NO SIN? vs. 8-9

*1 John 1:8 (ESV) If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

#### **The False Claim vs. 8**

- The second false claim dealt with those who claimed that they were without sin.
- *The N.T. language in verse 8 literally says, "We do not have sin."*
- Sin is in the singular, which refers to the inherent nature, or principle, of sin from which all acts of sin spring forth.<sup>9</sup>
  - The error John addresses in verse 8 is one step worse than the first, *to be without sin.*
- The first step recognized the existence of sin, but that fellowship with God was not strained.
- This step is saying that no matter what their conduct might be, sin is not inherent in them
- The phrase "we have no sin," marks the presence of something that is not

isolated, but a continuous source of influence.<sup>11</sup>

- Today, some refuse any responsibility for sin, for sinful conduct is a physiological, psychological, **or sociological issue**.

### **The Reality vs. 8**

**1 John 1:8 (ESV) If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.**

#### **1. The Deception**

- John says that if we say we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves.

*Romans 7:20 (ESV) Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*

#### **2. The Absence of Truth in Lives.**

- John states that those who make such a claim, “The truth is not in them.”
  - *If TRUTH indwells us, we will inevitably be aware of our sinfulness.*
- This truth is not merely abstract, objective information.
  - Truth describes God Himself and the “eternal life,” which is God.
  - It is personal and dynamic.
- John often references the *Truth* that is in God’s people.

*2 John 2 (ESV) because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever:*

- **Due to fellowship, our being integrated into *truth*, which is a person and is found in God’s life, that truth would expose error to us.**

### **C. Truth Statement vs. 9**

**1 John 1:9 (ESV) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

- John’s corrective statement is to confess our sin, not deny it.
- *Confess*: “homologomen” to acknowledge a fact publicly, often about previous bad behavior - ‘to admit, to confess.’<sup>12</sup>

#### **1. Confession’s Blessings.**

- The two following consequences are **sin forgiven** (debt satisfaction) and **cleansed** (stain removal).

#### **2. God’s Character Regarding Confessed Sin**

- **God is faithful.**
- He is faithful to His nature and His covenants.
  - He will punish sin, for He is righteous and promises to forgive sin when confessed.

*Psalm 32:5 (ESV) I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said,*

*"I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.*  
*Selah*

- Central to the Old Covenant was the means of atoning for sin in the sacrifices. Central to the New Covenant is the means of sin forgiven.

*Matthew 26:27-28 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.*

- **God is just** (or unrighteousness is judged and paid for).
- **How can God, being righteous, freely forgive sins?**
  - **John explains in a couple of verses, 2:1-2.**
- God does not compromise Himself regarding His righteousness.
- He maintains the integrity of His faithfulness and righteousness when He forgives and cleanses, confessing mankind through Jesus' death.
- **John's message: Don't deny that you are a sinner. Confess it to God and experience freedom and a cleansing that can only come from God.**

## **YOU HAVE NOT SINNED?**

### **The False Claim vs. 10**

*1 John 1:10 (ESV) If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

- John now addresses the third false assertion, "We have not sinned."
- Some say they do not have sin (vs. 8) and some also say they have not sinned (**vs. 10**).
- It is possible that the false religionists maintained that their superior enlightenment rendered them incapable of sinning.
- Here, they are denying the practice of sin in their lives.

### **The Reality vs. 10**

*1 John 1:10 (ESV) If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

#### **1. We Call God a Liar**

- John says that to say that we have not sinned is not just telling a deliberate lie or being merely deceived; it is saying that God is a liar.
- John says that to say this is evidence that God's word has no place in that person. For His word clearly states that sin is comprehensively universal.

*Ecclesiastes 7:20 Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.*

## 2. His Word Not in Us

- To say *His word is not in us* parallels **verse 8** when John said *the truth is not in us*.
- Remember that Jesus is identified as the Word, John 1:1.

## The Truth Concerning Error vs. 2:1-2

### 1. God's Heart vs. 2:1a

1 John 2:1 (ESV) *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.*

- John now expresses a personal plea from his heart to his readers.
- John wants to ensure that his readers do not misconstrue what he previously said as condoning sin.
  - This may be like Paul's concern in **Rom. 5:20-6:2**.
- **If you accurately and effectively explain God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness, some might understand such truth as providing a license to sin.**

### 2. God's Provision vs. 2:1b-2

1 John 2:1–2 (ESV) . . . *But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.*

- If anyone sins, God has provided a solution. The solution has two aspects for those who have fellowship with God.
- **First: Jesus serves as our "Advocate."**
  - An advocate, *parakletos*, is a Greek term meaning 'called to the side of' and hence "advocate."<sup>13</sup>
  - This one is called alongside as an aid or counselor, especially in a legal setting.
    - This one is not just any advocate, but Jesus Christ, the righteous one.
  - Note both His human name, Jesus, and His office name, *Christ* (the sent One from God).
  - The double name almost certainly describes Jesus in His relation both to man *and* God: as one with both, and therefore qualified to represent us before God.<sup>14</sup>
  - Note the description of Jesus as *righteous*. He shares mankind's nature and God's, which heightens the ability of Jesus Christ to act as the credible *Advocate*.<sup>15</sup>
- **Second: Jesus serves as the "Propitiation."**
  - The "Advocate" is also the *means* of forgiveness for our sins.
  - "Propitiation" (NASB), "Expiation" (NIV): is the Greek Term *hilasmos*, which is how sins are forgiven - "the means of forgiveness, expiation."<sup>16</sup>
    - *Hilasmos* can be understood as a price paid to satisfy an angry one.

- Jesus *Himself* is how mankind's sins are pardoned.
- God, in His righteousness, cannot but punish sin and those who sin, But He provided a substitute, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sins.

*Romans 3:24-26 being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;26 for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

- God is *faithful* to forgive and maintains the integrity of His righteousness through Jesus's atoning work. Therefore, He is just in forgiving.
- What cleanses us from all our sin and unrighteousness, and how are we forgiven of our sins (vs. 1:7, 9; 2:2)?
  - The blood of Jesus Christ, His sacrificial death, is the means to forgive our sins.
- **Our advocate does not plead that we are innocent. He acknowledges our guilt and presents His vicarious work as the grounds for our acquittal.**<sup>17</sup>
- The power of Jesus' advocacy is the fact that He is the *propitiation*.

**False Claim**

**Reality**

#1 - 1:6 *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness,*

*we lie and do not live by the truth.*

#2 - 1:8 *If we claim to be without sin,*

*we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

#3 - 1:10 *If we claim we have not sinned,*

*we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.*

**Truth Statement**

**Reality**

#1 - 1:7 *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,*

*we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

#2 - 1:9 *If we confess our sins,*

*he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

#3 - 2:1 *But if anybody does [incidentally] sin,*

*we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.*

**APPLICATION**

**Understanding Humanity**

- Every person is a sinner. Romans 3:23 is very clear in stating that all have sinned.
- It does not take much to recognize that something is wrong in this world.

- To begin to address societal issues, one's relationship with God must be addressed and that humanity, in essence, are sinners.

### Understanding Sin

- We cannot rationalize sin as sociological, psychological, or physiological.
  - Because mankind's essential nature is sin, sinful actions will emerge.
- We cannot separate spiritual realities from our day-to-day events.
- Our spiritual and physical are integrated and inseparable.

### Understanding Forgiveness

- Forgiveness is the answer, and that is for only those who confess their sins.
- It is possible only in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Today, the work of Jesus Christ continues to be applied to those who recognize their sin, are confessing ones, and live in God's forgiveness.

- Do not be confused; the issues of our day are not sociological, psychological, or physiological. They are fundamentally spiritual.
- Our society is living with the idea that there is no God and there are no absolute moral rights and wrongs. This is a terminal error for any person or society!
- *Living in Discernment and Certainty in an Uncertain World requires understanding humanity's sin and God's solution in Jesus Christ.*

### Endnotes

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9. John R. W. Stott, *TNTC, The Letters of John*, p 82.

11. Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Printing Company, 1966), p. 22.

12. Johannes P. Louw, and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies 1988, 1989), s.v. homologomen.

13. Paul J. Achtemier, Th.D., *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc. 1985), s.v. parakletos.

14. Stephen S. Smalley, *WBC, 123 John*, p 37.

15. Ibid.

16. Johannes P. Louw, and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, 1989), s.v. hilasmos.

17. John R. W. Stott, *TNTC, The Letters of John*, p 87.











