

1 John 1:7, 9, 2:1a. “Confession & A Transparent Life” (p.959)
Ajax Alliance Church. Sunday April 21st, 2024.

There are a lot of **contentious** elements in the last federal budget delivered this past week. One of those is dealing with the issue of **loan forgiveness**. In the budget, the government promises to spend \$48 million over four years and \$15.8 million thereafter to **forgive the loans** of early childhood educators. Another \$253.8 million over four years, plus \$84.3 million a year thereafter, will go towards **loan forgiveness** for a host of health and education workers, including hygienists, pharmacists, teachers and social workers. (<https://financialpost.com/news/economy/canada-budget-2024-key-highlights>)

- With the concept of **loan forgiveness**, **no** one is saying the students did not incur the debt, but **for a variety of reasons**, their debt will be forgiven and the **debt incurred** covered by another party who did **not** incur the debt.

Theologically, in terms of sin, the fact that **forgiveness is complete** and **irrevocable**, led some to **wrongly conclude** that **those who have received salvation** need **never** again confess their sins before God and request forgiveness. **The proponents of this view** contend that, in order for Christians to accept genuinely their full pardon and fully enjoy their liberty in Christ, they must **ignore** sin and **focus solely** on God’s grace. But **historically**, such teaching has consistently led to the **error** of antinomianism—a practical **disregard** for the law of God and a **callous** lack of concern for violating it. **If such people are truly saved**, they are **indifferent** toward the disciplines that produce holiness in their lives. **The effects of such faulty thinking** are disastrous. (John MacArthur, *The Freedom and Power of Forgiveness* [Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 1998], chapter 3.)

Repentance is not only God’s work in the heart leading to salvation (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Tim. 2:25), but also an essential element of every believer’s sanctification (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1). **John concludes the opening section** by applying two tests of genuine salvation that are related to repentance: a belief in God’s forgiveness of sin and a regular practice of confessing sins. **This instruction suggests three terms that describe true believers** in **contrast** to those who falsely profess to be in the fellowship of faith (cf. 1:6, 8, 10). **True believers are 1) Cleansed from sin** (1 John 1:7); **yet, 2) Confessing sin** (1 John 1:9); **and even 3) Conquering sin** (1 John 2:1a).

True believers are:

1) Cleansed from sin (1 John 1:7)

1 John 1:7 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 cleanses us from all sin (ESV)

Walk is used throughout the New Testament, especially in Paul’s letters, to describe the effect, not of justification, but of sanctification. **Salvation** is not only a change in one’s legal status as divine righteousness is credited to one’s account, but **a change in behavior** as actual righteousness is given to believers by the very indwelling presence of God’s Spirit. **Daily living of the Christian life** is a Spirit-enabled walk (John 8:12;

12:35; Rom. 6:4; 8:4; 1 Cor. 7:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 2:10; 4:1; 5:8; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 4:1). **The verb is a present subjunctive, expressing continuous action** that is nevertheless hypothetical because it **applies only to some people. Those who walk in the Light do so because the power of God has regenerated them.** As “new creature[s]” for whom “new things have come” (2 Cor. 5:17), **they will behave in a way that reflects the power of God’s righteous life in them, just as God Himself is in the Light** (cf. 1:5). **The opposite of living in the darkness is living in the light,** i.e. being responsive to the divine revelation of the truth which **shows us how we ought to live. To live in the light is to come into the sphere where God himself is to be found, or rather to live in the same way as God himself.** (Marshall, I. H. (1978). *The Epistles of John* (p. 111). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.)

To **walk in the light** involves a willingness to be open towards God and His revelation in Christ, while **walking in the darkness** involves a refusal to do this. The author of 1 John, however, is **less concerned to define what walking in the light or the darkness means than he is to explain the consequences of doing so.** He noted in 1 John 1:6, **the consequences of walking in the darkness while claiming fellowship with God are that ‘we lie and do not live by the truth’.** **The consequences to walk in the light are spelled out in 1:7. These are twofold: The first consequence is, we have fellowship with one another.** There is **no real fellowship with God which is not expressed in fellowship with other believers.** (Kruse, C. G. (2000). *The letters of John* (pp. 63–64). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.)

Please turn to Colossians 1 (p.924)

True spirituality manifests itself in community fellowship. One **cannot** (properly) say that he or she communes with God and then **refuse to commune with God’s people.** Such was the case with some of **the false teachers of John’s day,** and this situation exists among **false cults today. Often their followers and leaders claim to have special relationships with God,** but they **don’t affiliate with other believers.** They stay **isolated and withdraw from everyone else. John’s point is that the natural result of living in the light** (in **fellowship with God**) **should be joyful relationships with other Christians** (Barton, B. B., & Osborne, G. R. (1998). *1, 2 & 3 John* (p. 22). Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.).

Paul theologically explained this collective fellowship:

Colossians 1:9-14 ⁹And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be **filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,** ¹⁰so as to **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.** ¹¹May you be **strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy,** ¹²**giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.** ¹³He has **delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,** ¹⁴in whom we have **redemption, the forgiveness of sins.** (ESV)

- **“Wisdom and understanding” (v. 9) from God, enables believers to have changed lives, for it enables Christians to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.**

Every good work (v. 10) is here viewed as the fruit of salvation in the life of a Christian, **not** as the prerequisite for entering a relationship with Christ. Finally, according to v. 13, **God has delivered** believers now from the domain of darkness, that is, from the realm of Satan and the powers of evil (see Acts 26:18) and **transferred them into the kingdom of his beloved Son**. (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2294). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)

We see back in 1 John 1:7, to all who walk in the Light, God grants His grace so that throughout their lives the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses them from all sin. The term **blood** is often used in the New Testament as a dramatic and graphic way to represent Christ's sacrificial death on the cross (cf. Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:12; 10:19), by which He "released us from our sins by His blood" (Rev. 1:5; cf. Col. 1:20–22; 1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:17; Rev. 5:9). It is a **metonymy** (something that represents a greater whole), in which "**blood**" is substituted for crucifixion and the giving of one's life. John makes clear that **the benefits of Jesus' work on the cross** are a necessary element in our fellowship with God (E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, 609.).

This is **not** to say that Christians **no** longer struggle with sin, for **no** one will ever be totally free in this life from the **unredeemed humanness** of their flesh (Matt. 26:41; Rom. 7:18–24; Gal. 5:17; cf. Rom. 13:14). However, because **the blood of Jesus Christ continually cleanses** away every impurity, **sin** can **never** change a believer's standing before God (cf. Rom. 8:33–39). John's use of the **present tense "cleanses"** describes a principle of life (gnomic sense) and an active process (Haas, de Jonge, and Swellengrebel, 28; Williamson, 69). He is **not** referring to Christ's work in our justification, **but His daily, moment-by-moment ministry in our sanctification**. It is a work of God the Father in the life of the believer through His Son (Williamson, 70 as recorded in Derickson, G. W. (2012). *First, Second, and Third John*. (H. W. House, W. H. Harris III, & A. W. Pitts, Eds.) (1 Jn 1:7). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.).

Illustration: 479 Nothing But The Blood

At a great parliament of religions, held in Chicago many years ago, practically every known religion was represented. During one session, **Dr. Joseph Cook, of Boston**, suddenly rose and said: "Gentlemen, I beg to introduce to you a woman with a great sorrow. Bloodstains are on her hands, and **nothing** she has tried will remove them. **The blood** is that of murder. **She has been driven** to desperation in her distress. Is there **anything in your religion** that will remove her sin and give her peace?" **A hush fell upon the gathering**. **Not** one of the company replied. **Raising his eyes heavenwards, Dr. Cook then cried out**, ... John speaks: 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sins' (1 John 1:7)." Not a soul broke the silence: **the representatives** of Eastern religions and Western cults sat dumb. **In the face of human need**, the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone could meet the need. **The sin of the race** demanded the blood of Calvary (Tan, P. L. (1996). *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (p. 203). Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc.).

True believers are:

2) Confessing sin (1 John 1:9)

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

This verse is actually a reiteration of God's faithfulness to His New Covenant promise of salvation in the Old Covenant: "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:34; cf. Luke 1:77–78; Heb. 9:13–14). **Instead of claiming that we are without sin, we ought to confess our sins.** Although the statement lies in a conditional clause, it has **the force of a command or obligation: we ought to confess our sins,** and, **if we do, he is faithful and just.** (Marshall, I. H. (1978). *The Epistles of John* (p. 113). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co)

John now explains **what God enabled to precipitate that forgiveness.** The word translated **confess** (*homologeō*) means "to say the same thing." Thus **believers are those who confess their sins, agreeing with God about their sin—they acknowledge its reality and affirm that it is a transgression of His law and a violation of His will, the presence of which the truly penitent seek to eliminate from their lives** (3:4; James 2:10–11; 4:17; cf. Rom. 7:24). **What John is actually saying here about confession** is that since believers are forgiven, they will regularly confess their sins. **Stated another way, their forgiveness is not because of their ongoing confession, but their ongoing pattern of penitence and confession is because of their forgiveness and transformation. As the Holy Spirit sanctifies believers, He continually produces within them a hatred for sin** (Ps. 97:10; Prov. 8:13; Rom. 7:15–25; Phil. 3:8–9; cf. Ps. 1:1–2), **which results in penitent hearts and a sincere acknowledgment of their sins. The more believers grow in Christ, the greater their hatred of sin becomes and the deeper is their penitence. We are called to openly and honestly face sin without hiding it or finding excuses for it. We confront the sins we have committed, without defending or justifying ourselves. We confess our sins to show repentance and renewal of life.** We are **not** told when, where, and how to **confess our sins,** but **daily repentance of sin** leads us to continual confession. John actually writes, "If we keep confessing our sins." He writes the word **sins** (in the plural) **to indicate the magnitude of our transgressions** (Kistemaker, S. J., & Hendriksen, W. (1953–2001). *Exposition of James and the Epistles of John* (Vol. 14, p. 246). Grand Rapids: Baker Book House).

Please turn to 2 Corinthians 7 (p.909)

If confession is genuine, it will always stem from proper sorrow over sin and a real longing to turn from sin. In **2 Corinthians 7:9–11 Paul was comforted by Titus's coming** because Titus reported that the Corinthians had fully repented... and therefore back to the gospel: **He writes:**

2 Corinthians 7:9–11 ⁹As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a **godly grief**, so that you suffered no loss through us. ¹⁰For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas **worldly grief produces death.** ¹¹For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves, what **indignation**, what **fear**, what **longing**, what **zeal**, what **punishment!** **At every point you have proved yourselves innocent in the matter** (ESV). (cf. 2 Sam. 12:13)

- **When people have worldly grief,** they have a **remorse** brought about by losing the world's approval, which leads to a **resolve to regain that approval,** and this **produces death,** or divine judgment. The apostle was **not** referring to feeling

bad about the consequences of one's sinful conduct, which is the worldly sorrow characterized by despair, depression, and sometimes suicide (Matt. 27:3–5). But when people have **genuine godly grief**, they are **saddened** with losing God's approval because of their sin, and they **repent of that sin**, which is in itself a gift of God, whereby **He enables one to believe the truth**.

Back in **1 John 1:9**, the reminder that **He is faithful and just/righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness** reemphasizes the truth **John had just stated in verse 7**, that **God will**, because of His character, secure their eternal glory by continuing to cleanse believers from all future sin. **He is faithful to His promise** and always does what is righteous. God **is faithful** in himself, that is, **to his own nature** (cf. 2 Tim 2:13), and **faithful** to his promises (cf. Rom 3:25; 1 Cor 10:13; Heb 10:23; 11:11). Everywhere **he promises forgiveness to his children**—e.g., “**I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more**” (**Jer 31:34**; cf. Mic 7:19–20). And in **keeping this promise**, **God reveals his faithfulness and justice**. (Barker, G. W. (1981). 1 John. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation* (Vol. 12, p. 312). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.)

The aorist tense of the verb *aphiēmi* [**forgive**] carries a past connotation and **further demonstrates that God's forgiveness derives from a historical event, the atonement, which has lasting benefits for all who believe.** **Forgiveness** is consistent with who Jesus Christ is and with what the Father promised, according to His perfectly faithful (Isa. 49:7; 1 Cor. 1:9; Heb. 2:17; Rev. 19:11), righteous (Ps. 7:11; Isa. 53:11), just (Gen. 18:25; Col. 3:25), holy (Ex. 15:11; Rev. 4:8), and loving (Jer. 31:3; 1 John 4:8) nature. Forgiveness is **not** incomplete or dependent in the saving sense on believers' confessing. When the metaphor of defilement is unpacked, it **also denotes the removal of the impediment to fellowship with God through forgiveness of sins** (cf. Ps 51:1–2). **Both verbs in "forgive" and "cleanse", being aorist subjunctive in form, portray forgiveness and purification as complete**, rather than ongoing actions (Kruse, C. G. (2000). *The letters of John* (p. 69). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos.).

- The **good news of the gospel** is **the forgiveness and cleansing of all sins repented**. That means for genuine repentance there is total forgiveness. There **may be temporal consequences** for sin that **cannot** be removed but **judicially before God, they are forgiven**. But **are we mature enough** to forgive the **penitent that wronged us when they repent? When repentance is present, believers will have a strong desire** for God to deal with sin at any cost (cf. Matt. 5:29–30), even when that cost may be high for them personally (cf. Luke 19:8–10). True believers are therefore **habitual confessors** who demonstrate that God has not only pardoned their sin and is faithfully cleansing them daily from it, but has truly regenerated them, making them new creatures with holy desires that dominate their will.

Illustration: Corrie's Cold Heart

To confess our sins means, literally, “to say the same thing” (*homologeō*: *homos* = same; *legō* = to speak) that God says about them. **When the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin**, we agree that it is sin and that we should forsake it. This is the basis of fellowship with God and other Christians. **A powerful example of this is seen in the life of Corrie**

ten Boom, a Christian woman who lived in Holland during World War II and whose family was involved in hiding Jews fleeing from the Nazis in Germany. Corrie and her family suffered terribly at the hands of the Nazis. Her sister died in a Nazi concentration camp, and Corrie herself spent many harrowing years in the same camp. When she was released, she committed her life to spreading the message of forgiveness through Jesus to all people. In her book, *Tramp for the Lord*, she records a powerful example of how lack of repentance and forgiveness allows walls to exist between Christian and Christian and between a Christian and God. Corrie went to Munich with the message that God forgives, a much-needed message in that defeated and disillusioned nation. After speaking in a basement room, with solemn faces staring back at her, not quite daring to believe this unbelievable message, she saw one of the most cruel guards in all the prison camp coming toward her. In an instant, her mind was flooded with flashbacks of a blue uniform and a visored cap with the skull and crossbones, a huge room with harsh overhead lights, a pathetic pile of dresses and shoes in the center of the floor. Following hard were a flood of emotions ... the shame of walking naked past this man. She could see her sister's frail form ahead of her, ribs sharp beneath the parchment skin. Finally, this former prison guard stood in front of her, his hand out in friendship. "A fine message, Fraulein!" he declared. "How good it is to know that, as you say, all our sins are at the bottom of the sea!" Corrie continued the story, in her own words: "And I who had spoken so glibly of forgiveness, fumbled in my pocketbook rather than take that hand. He would not remember me, of course—how could he remember one prisoner among thousands of women? But I remembered him and the leather crop swinging from his belt. I was face-to-face with one of my captors and my blood seemed to freeze. "You mentioned Ravensbruck in your talk," he was saying. "I was a guard there." No, he did not remember me. "But since that time," he went on, "I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me for the cruel things I did there, but I would like to hear it from your lips as well. Fraulein"—again the hand came out—"will you forgive me?" And I stood there—I whose sins had again and again to be forgiven—and could not forgive. Betsie had died in that place; could he erase her slow terrible death simply for the asking? It could not have been many seconds that he stood there—hand held out—but to me it seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

Corrie knew that she would have to forgive. Jesus said, "If you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses." She knew this, not only as a command, but as an utter necessity. The victims of Nazi brutality who were able to forgive their tormentors were able to heal and get on with life, no matter how bad the physical scars. Those who didn't, couldn't. She knew that forgiveness was an act of the will, not of the emotions, so she prayed for help. Then, she lifted her hand, woodenly, mechanically. As she did, the Lord filled her heart with forgiveness and love for her former captor. Warmth filled her heart as tears filled her eyes. "I forgive you, brother!" she cried. "With all my heart" (Corrie ten Boom, 55–57 as recorded in Walls, D., & Anders, M. (1999). *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude* (Vol. 11, pp. 161–163). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.).

Finally, true believers are:

3) **Conquering sin** (1 John 2;1a).

1 John 2:1a. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin (But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous) (ESV)

John's strong love for his readers and his desire for them to heed his words and not sin comes across in his tender designation, my little children, an expression that occurs six other times in this letter (2:12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21; cf. 2:13, 18). Being faithful, diligent confessors of sin, as an expression of their new creation, made it contrary to their own disposition to abuse God's grace by indulging in further sin (cf. Rom. 6:1–2; Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16). John was writing these things to encourage them in consistent holiness, because they were regenerate people indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who had been delivered from habitual sin (cf. Rom. 8:12–13; Titus 2:11–12; 1 Peter 1:13–16). The goal is that they "may not sin". He is not saying that they are incapable of sinning or that they will not sin, but that the expectation and goal are to not sin (Case, D. A., & Holdren, D. W. (2006). *1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude: a commentary for Bible students* (p. 235). Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House.)

Please turn to Romans 6 (p.886)

The New Testament makes it clear that Christians, no longer slaves to sin, are given the spiritual means to have victory over sin. Paul's strong command to believers assumes their resources to conquer the sin that still remains in the unglorified body:

Romans 6:11–18 ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. (ESV) (2 Cor. 5:15; 1 Peter 2:24)

- Being "Dead to sin" means dead to the pervasive love for and ruling power of sin yet there is still a tension between what God has already accomplished and the responsibility of his people to obey. They are still tempted by desires to sin and must not let those desires gain control.
- In this New Covenant era, believers are permanently indwelt with the Holy Spirit, who gives them the ability to resist sin. If they choose to ignore that ability and sin, it leads away from full enjoyment of life with Christ (cf. Gal. 5:4). Unbelievers are those who give themselves utterly to sin and will face the

ultimate consequence of that sin, eternal punishment (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2168). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)

- **Each day** they must give themselves afresh to God (Crossway Bibles. (2008). *The ESV Study Bible* (p. 2167). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.)

So, at the close of 1 John 1, the aging apostle presents further tests of salvation and a clear picture of who passes those tests. Those who pass are true Christians who embrace God's forgiveness but are nonetheless constant confessors of their sin. That characteristic is a reality in their lives due to God's regenerating and sanctifying work in their hearts, by means of the Holy Spirit (John 16:13; Rom. 8:15) and the Word of truth (John 17:17). Genuine believers are thus people who have been cleansed from all sin, yet feel its presence powerfully and are eager to confess their remaining sins and, by the power of new life in the Spirit, conquer temptation.

(Format Note: Outline & some base commentary from MacArthur, J. (2007). *1, 2, 3 John* (pp. 33–42). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.)