

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Part 3: Confession of Sin

Study Guide · 1 John 1:8–10

Overview

Sin damaged humanity's fellowship with God at the Fall, and every person inherits Adam's guilt and alienation. Through Christ's atoning death, believers are reconciled to God and permanently secure — but present, unrepentant sin still disrupts the day-to-day communion (not the legal standing) between a Christian and God. This study examines 1 John 1:8–10 and what it means to own, confess, and forsake sin to keep that fellowship warm and unhindered.

Key Distinction

Justification vs. Fellowship — Justification is a one-time legal verdict; believers are secure forever in Christ (John 10:29). Fellowship is the ongoing, relational communion that present sin can interrupt, much like a spouse's careless word cools a marriage without ending it. Confession restores the warmth, not the standing.

I. Sin Must Be Owned

Before sin can be confessed, it must first be acknowledged as real. The false teachers John confronted claimed sinlessness by separating the 'spiritual self' from bodily deeds. John calls this self-deception.

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

- Personally — We must take individual responsibility, without excuses (Jeremiah 3:13; Psalm 51:3).
- Persistently — Confession in verse 9 is present tense: an ongoing posture, not a one-time event.
- Penitently — Ownership is marked by godly sorrow, not boasting or joking about sin (Psalm 51:4; 2 Corinthians 7:9).

II. Sin Must Be Confessed

The Greek word for confess, *homologeō*, means to say the same thing as another — to agree with God's verdict.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

- Admission — Agreeing that God's judgment on the sin is right and just (Psalm 51:3–4).
- Acknowledgement — Trusting God's promise to forgive, rooted in His faithful character and the cross (Numbers 14:18; Micah 7:18; 1 Peter 3:18).
- Acceptance — Receiving forgiveness by faith rather than by feeling, since the promise rests on God's unchanging nature (Luke 21:33).

III. Sin Must Be Forsaken

Confession without any intent to change is false confession — a religious cover for sin that God sees through.

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will receive compassion." (Proverbs 28:13)

- Repentance — A godly sorrow that turns the heart, mind, and actions away from sin and toward obedience (2 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 4:28–29).
- Rest — Resting in God's promise of mercy rather than laboring under guilt; sin itself offers no true rest (Isaiah 30:15; Matthew 11:28–29).

Discussion Questions

1. The sermon distinguishes between justification (a legal verdict) and fellowship (a relational communion). Why does this distinction matter for how a Christian responds to ongoing sin?
2. What are some modern ways believers might, like the Gnostics, minimize or deny personal sin?
3. Why does genuine confession require agreeing with God that the sin was wrong, rather than simply admitting it happened?
4. What is the difference between confession that leads to repentance and confession that merely conceals sin under "religious pretenses"?
5. How does knowing God delights in mercy (Micah 7:18), rather than merely tolerating it, change the way you approach confession?
6. Is there a sin you have been aware of but have not fully owned, confessed, or forsaken? What would taking that next step look like this week?

Memory Verse

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

Personal Reflection

Use the space below to write out a specific confession, owning it personally, persistently, and penitently, and note one concrete step of repentance.
