

1 John

Dr. Charles “Buddy” Parrish
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1 John 1:8-10

Vs. 8

- One of the points I have tried to make in our Bible studies is that the issues of the first century that the disciples faced are still the issues we face, only that the issues have been repackaged with a 21st century gloss. Truly, nothing is new under the sun.
- Here in verse 8, John is still battling the Gnostics who say that they are not guilty of sin. They argue that their sin can only be committed spiritually, so if they eat like gluttons, covet their neighbor’s wife, lie, steal, and murder, none of those things are sin to them, for none of those acts effect their spirit. In our own time we deal with people who likewise believe they are unstained by sin because they are “good people”. It was way back in 1973 that the immanent psychiatrist and physician Dr. Karl Menniger wrote his book, “Whatever Became of Sin?” Nearly 50 years he was warning of the deep societal and personal issues caused by the growing permissiveness of Godless secularism. Public nudity became freedom of expression. Abortion became freedom of choice. Vandalism during street riots became the right to protest. Menniger argues that our culture may deny the existence of sin, but it cannot deny the enormously tragic consequences of unchecked sin. “If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves...”
- From the beginning, we humans have been trying to deny our sin. Adam tried to shift his responsibility for sin by pointing out to God “it was this woman who YOU gave me!” So it may have been the woman’s fault, or it may have been even God’s fault, but in Adam’s mind the sin was not Adam’s fault. And when God confronted Eve, she blamed the serpent. We have been trying to find ways around God’s law, to wiggle out from underneath the weight sin since the beginning, but the very real

consequences of our sin are undeniable, as Adam and Eve soon found, and we find ourselves simply lying to ourselves, living in delusion. This delusion was the basis for the picture of hell CS Lewis gives us in “The Great Divorce”.

Vs. 9

- Finding our way out of the disaster caused by our sin begins with confession. Spurgeon once said, “There is mercy for a sinner, but there is no mercy for the man who will not own himself a self a sinner.” Confession is not some act of piety. Such piety always carries the aroma of insincerity. In Jesus’ time and too often in the Catholic tradition, confession was simply following certain perfunctory steps without any real change of heart. Some free church traditions have members turn to each other and confess their sins, but its highly unlikely that the whole truth is ever told. Programmed confession is never real confession. Real confession pours out of the deepest cellars of heart.
- True confession begins as Spurgeon suggests: when you can look at the person in the mirror and own that YOU are a sinner in need of God’s forgiveness. Second, as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:23-24 you then need to make it right with the person you have sinned against, (read). In 1 John 4:20-21 we find further that if we hate our brother, sin against our brother, we cannot say that we love God. Put the two together and we see that if we sin against others then we must own our sin and go and confess our sin to them and make it right. Other wise the conflict interrupts our relationship with God Himself. He will not accept our worship, our offerings, nor our insincere prayers asking for forgiveness and blessing. Third, we must confess our sin to God. Psalm 51 is David’s confession of his sin with Bathsheba where he conspired to have her husband killed so he could have her and yet he says in his prayer “Against You and You only have I sinned...” (Ps. 51:4a). Ultimately all sin is a sin against God because it is God’s law we are violating, and the earth is the Lord’s and all it contains. When John Doe commits a crime and goes to

court it is the State of Florida vs. John Doe because it is the law of the state that he has violated.

- “...He is faithful and righteous/just to forgive our sins...” : We are not forgiven because we have owned our sin and genuinely confessed. We are forgiven because of who God is. He IS faithful and just. To not forgive would go against His very nature. God is love and that love expresses itself in part in His faithfulness and His justice and His forgiveness. God has promised that He would never despise the contrite heart (Ps. 51:17).
- The Greek word here for “cleansed” is **katharizo**. This is important to us because it is the same word used in Greek to describe the work of taking the laundry down to the river every day to get things clean. If we confess our sins to our Father in Heaven, then His faithfulness and righteousness is extended to us every day and His cleansing will be complete, total. We will be cleansed of ALL unrighteousness.

Verse 10

- If we say we have no sin, not only do we deceive ourselves and totally lack the Truth of Christ, but we also make God a liar. Part of the demise of sin in our day is that we have forgotten what sin is. The Greek word is **hamartia** meaning “to miss the target.” God in Jesus Christ has made clear the target and to fall short, shoot wide, to miss the mark, to miss the target, is sin.
- Does not the word of God say in Romans 3:23 that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God? If the whole world, all of us, have not fallen short and sinned, then it was not necessary for God to love the whole world, nor for the whole world through Christ to be saved.
- Thus to say we have not sinned contradicts God’s Word, accuses Him of being a liar both concerning my condition and His holiness, and nothing of the Truth is in us. To say we have not sinned is to say we don’t possess the Truth of Christ and that His death on the cross means nothing to me.