**The Certainty of Sin – (1 John 1:5-2:1)**

**“And this is the message we have heard from Him and announced to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say / claim that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice / live by the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses / purifies us from *all sin*. If we say [claim to be without] that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from *all unrighteousness*. If we say [claim] that we have *not sinned,* we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us [has no place in our lives]. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not [will not] sin. And if anyone sins, we have [one Who speaks to] an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous One;and He Himself is the propitiation [the atoning sacrifice] for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.**

The dominant or key word in this text is the word sin. But as we begin to understand what the text is communicating, we may should title it this way - “Confession of Sin, A Certain Proof of Salvation.”

In the first four verses of John’s epistle, he begins with a *theological certainty* – the certainty of the humanity of Christ – it is the first test of genuine fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ. Now, he continues with the second test – the *moral certainty* in dealing with sin.

***“God is Light and in Him there is no darkness at all”*** –

Intellectually, in Scripture “light” refers to biblical truth, and “darkness” refers to error or falsehood .

Morally, in Scripture “light” refers to holiness and purity, and “darkness” refers to sin and wrongdoing.\**As a home study, use a bible study concordance to find references on “light” and “darkness.”*

1. **There is no sin within God** – He is absolutely perfect in being, in character, in words, in deeds. Everything God is, says, and does is perfect. Isaiah 6:3 – “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty” … that is raising Holy to the superlative degree… holy, holier, holiest!!
2. **There is no error in God**. There is no untruth that proceeds from Him. No misstatement or falsehood or inaccuracy or misinformation. Everything He says is absolutely true. Matthew 5:48 – *“Your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Gnostics taught that THEY claimed divine enlightenment within them – that they were walking in the true light. Today, among professing Christians, there are those who believe this light is coming from them and that this *insight* is in them from God and they are to silence their minds in order to hear God speak to them through the practice of Lectio Divina. **A**

**NSWER**

*Lectio Divina* is Latin for "divine reading," "spiritual reading," or "holy reading" and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and provide special spiritual insights. The practice of lectio divina is currently very popular among Catholics and Gnostics, and is gaining acceptance as an integral part of the devotional practices of the Emerging Church. The actual practice of lectio divina begins with a time of relaxation, making oneself comfortable and clearing the mind of mundane thoughts and cares. Some lectio practitioners find it helpful to concentrate by beginning with deep, cleansing breaths and repeating a chosen phrase or word several times to help free the mind. Then they follow four steps:  
  
- **Lectio** - *Reading the Bible passage gently and slowly several times.* The passage itself is not as important as the savoring of each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow speaks to the practitioner.  
  
- **Meditatio** - *Reflecting on the text of the passage and thinking about how it applies to one’s own personal life.* This is considered to be a very personal reading of the Scripture and very personal application.  
  
- **Oratio** – *Responding to the passage by opening the heart to God.* This is not primarily an intellectual exercise, but is thought to be more of the beginning of a conversation with God.  
  
- **Contemplatio** - *Listening for God to speak.* This is a freeing of oneself from one’s own thoughts, both mundane and holy, and hearing God talk to us through words/word phrases/ideas entering into our minds and/or having mental dialogues with God. Opening the mind, heart, and soul to hearing God.

Here is where lectio and modern day ‘Christian’ Gnosticism share a similarity. Christian Gnosticism is the belief that one must have a "*gnosis*" – a somewhat mystical inner knowledge obtained only after one has been properly initiated. Only a few can possess this mystical knowledge. Naturally, the idea of having special knowledge is very appealing and makes the “knower” feel important and unique in that he/she has a special experience with God that no one else has. The “knower” believes that the masses are not in possession of spiritual knowledge and only the truly “enlightened” can experience God.

The dangers in opening our minds and listening for voices should be obvious. Being so eager to hear something—anything— gives Satan and his minions inroads into the minds in such ways that invite disaster. We must never forget that Satan is ever on the prowl, seeking to devour our souls ([1 Peter 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%205.8)) and can appear as an angel of light ([2 Corinthians 11:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%2011.14)), with his deception coming upon our open and willing minds.  
  
Lastly, the attack on the sufficiency of Scripture is a clear distinctive of lectio divina. Where the Bible claims to be all we need to live the Christian life ([2 Timothy 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim%203.16)), lectio’s participants deny that. When John said, “God is Light and there is no darkness in Him,” this is what he was addressing as well – that there is no need for additional and new revelation. John slams that door shut – saying there is only One Light and it’s not in you. It’s God. He is the Light. When someone walks with God, draws near to God by faith, that Light exposes sin in their life. What IS in the life of a believer is:

***“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom..***.” Colossians 3:16

“**If we say / claim that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice / live by the truth;**

***If we say***…this is referring to the professing Christians– all talk, but no reality. All profession, but no possession. All they do is “say” but they continue to practice darkness / live in sin.

6, 8, 10 – that’s the one who says –

7, 9 – that’s the true believer – he professes to be a believer and he *lives like* *it.*

The fact of *living like it* doesn’t gain him salvation, but it reveals true salvation. The real Christ has dramatically changed and transformed his life. If you say you believe God is light, you’re going to walk in the light. If you say you believe, but walk in the darkness you are a liar. This means that every time you tell someone you are a Christian, you are lying. Practicing sin (walking in darkness with no confession of or repentance of sin) is a mark of not having been born from above.

This is serious –*Walk* is a metaphor that talks about your lifestyle. The direction of your life. The progression of your life. It’s in the present tense – it’s talking about your continual walking. The darkness refers to ungodly living and it refers to believing the lies of the false preachers and teachers. John says they are lying. Which is to say…every time they give their testimony, sing a hymn, teach a lesson, pray…they lie. Their whole life is a lie. John is sorting the wheat from the tares. This is the kindest thing John could do because he wants them to know that their lifestyle betrays their profession of faith in Christ.

***“And do not practice the truth”*** indicates a lifestyle…their daily regular pattern of behavior.

“John does not pull punches – it’s black and white – you’re either in or you’re out –

you’re in the light or in the darkness – no one is in the gray – not with John!” – Dr. Steven Lawson

***“the truth is not in us” -***

Where there is no truth, there has been no regeneration of new life – for Christ is the Way, the Truth, the Life.

***“If we confess our sins” -***

The Bible makes it clear – somebody who is truly converted, before they ever come to genuinely believe the gospel, has a sincere and error-free assessment of their own sinful condition. Those who deny the reality of their sin demonstrate the lack of genuine salvation. Regenerated people confess their sin readily and as a pattern of life. Unregenerated people tend to conceal their sin and want to suppress the seriousness of it. But truly regenerated people won’t practice sin.

Confession of sin is absolutely basic to salvation. And yet again there are people who teach that you don’t have to confess your sins to be saved, but instead all you have to do is believe in Jesus. How wrong that is.

**Psalm 32:5** - I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will **confess** my transgressions to the Lord”; And You forgave the guilt of my sin.

**Psalm 41:4** – “As for me, I said, “O Lord, be gracious to me; Heal my soul, for I have **sin**ned **against** **You**.”

**Psalm 51:4** – “**Against** **You**, **You** only, I have **sin**ned And done what is evil in **You**r sight, So that **You** are justified when **You** speak, And blameless when **You** judge.

**Psalm 119:11** – “**You**r word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not **sin** **against** **You**.

**Proverbs 28:13** – “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who **confess**es and forsakes *them* will find compassion.

**Daniel 9:20** – “Now while I was speaking and praying, and **confess**ing my sin…”

**Romans 4:25** – “He who was delivered over because of our **transgressions**, and was raised because of our justification.”

Anybody who denies their sinfulness and will not confess it cannot be a Christian.

***“so that you may not sin” –***

Even though a Christian must acknowledge and confess sin, he is not powerless against it. Fulfilling the duty of confession does not give license to sin. Sin can and should be conquered through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Romans 6:12-13** – “*Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,**and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”*

**1 Corinthians 15:34** – “*Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God.*

Believers have an acute awareness of sin in their life because they have an acute awareness of the holiness of

God. They are aware of sin in the world, but more than that they are aware of sin in their own life. Pharisees

are more aware of sin in others lives, but a true Christian has a heightened sense of awareness of sin in his life.

***“Advocate” –***

John 16:7 translates this word to be “Helper” but a more modern concept is the term ‘defense attorney.’ Satan prosecutes night and day believers before the Father due to sin (Rev. 12:20), Christ as our High Priest guarantees not only sympathy but acquittal!

***“Propitiation” –***

The word means “appeasement” or “satisfy” – The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross satisfied the demands of God’s holiness for the punishment of sin.

***“for the whole world” –***

***World*** – this is a term referring to mankind in general, not to every single individual. It’s like when we say the world of sports, the world of medicine, the world of authors, the world botany. It communicates a generalized grouping of a particular kind. John was saying Jesus Christ actually paid the penalty for those who would repent and believe - for the whole world [the sphere] of beings toward whom God seeks reconciliation and has provided propitiation. (Titus 2:11) Christ satisfied fully the wrath of God eternally for the elect who believe. Christ’s death in itself had unlimited and infinite value because He is Holy God. His sacrifice was sufficient to pay the penalty for all the sins of all whom God brings to faith. But the actual satisfaction and atonement was made only for those who believe.\* (as a home study, look up John 10:11, 15; 17:9, 20; Acts 20:28; Romans 8:32, 37; Ephesians 5:25 and record these verses in the space below. The pardon of sin is offered to the whole world, but received only by those who believe. 1 John 4:9, 14; John 5:24)

This is exactly what Jesus taught – **John 8:12** – Jesus said, “*I am the Light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.”* If you have believed in the One who says I am the Light of the world, then y*ou will not, will not, will not* walk in darkness. You *will not*, *will not,* *will not* be able to live in any sin. You will be deeply convicted of sin, never softening it, or making it seem normalized by giving it a different name like “mistake” or “messed up” or “no one is perfect” or “everybody sins.” But the mark of a true Christian is confessing sin to God. Genuinely hating it as He does.

**How much does God hate sin? And does He continue to hate after we are regenerated? Or does His grace obligate Him to feel differently toward a true believer’s sin?**

**2 Samuel 6:6-7** *- “When they came to Nacon’s threshing floor, Uzzah reached out to the ark of God and took hold of it because the oxen had stumbled. Then the Lord’s anger burned against Uzzah, and God struck him dead on the spot for his irreverence, and he died there next to the ark of God.”*

Regardless of how innocently this may have been done, touching the ark was in direct violation of God’s law and was to result in death (Numbers 4:15). This was a means of preserving the sense of God’s holiness and fear of drawing near to Him without appropriate preparation.

**Acts 5:1-4 –** *“But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property. However, he kept back part of the proceeds with his wife’s knowledge, and brought a portion of it and laid it at the apostles’ feet.*

*Then Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the proceeds from the field? Wasn’t it yours while you possessed it? And after it was sold, wasn’t it at your disposal? Why is it that you planned this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God!*

Ananias must have promised the Lord, and perhaps publicly, that he and his wife were giving the whole amount received from the sell of their land to the Lord. Their outward sin was lying about how much they were giving to the church, but the deeper, more devastating sin was their spiritual hypocrisy based on selfishness. They lied to the ever present Holy Spirit in him and in church.

What happened next? Did God respond in any way to their sin of trying to lie to the Holy Spirit and to Christ’s Bride, the church?

*“When he heard these words, Ananias dropped dead, and a great fear came on all who heard.**The young men got up, wrapped his body, carried him out, and buried him.”*

The people of the church learned the seriousness of living in truth and holiness. Today, so many believe they can call themselves Christians and live in sin before a holy God.

**Just How Critical Is Confession?**

The verb, “confess “ is done initially when we enter the kingdom. No one ever passes through the narrow gate

into the kingdom without confessing their sins. Jesus only died for one kind of person – a sinner. To come into

the kingdom of God *is….*

**Luke 18:7-14**

*Will not God grant justice to His elect who cry out to Him day and night? Will He delay to help them.**I tell you that He will swiftly grant them justice. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He find that faithon earth?”*

### *The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector*

*He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else: “Two men went up to the temple complex to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.**The Pharisee took his stand[*[*c*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+18%3A7-14&version=HCSB#fen-HCSB-25700c)*] and was praying like this: ‘God, I thank You that I’m not like other people —greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.’*

*“But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, ‘****God, turn Your wrath from me—a sinner****!’ I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other; because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

– Jesus tells this parable concerning the prayer of entrance into heaven. “God be merciful to me, **the** sinner.” Jesus responds how? Does he tells him, “Oh you have too bad of a self-image. You’re being too hard on yourself. You need to go to a Christian counselor because it’s not as bad as you think it is. It just goes back to your parents, the way you were brought up.” No, **verse 14** stands as exhibit A to confess your sin in order to enter into the kingdom. We confess our sin at the moment of entrance into the kingdom of Heaven. That is judicial forgiveness. That is a one-time confession to God. That is eternal forgiveness of your sin.

Throughout your Christian life, you need parental forgiveness. He is no longer your condemning Judge. But now you have a seat at the table. He is now your loving Father feeding you, caring for you….yet you still have *dirty feet* – you walk in this dirty uncertain world of sin and flesh. Therefore, you confess so that your relationship with God is whole.

*“For if you forgive others of their transgressions, your Heavenly Father will forgive you.” Matthew 6:14*

There is a condition in which God in his parental forgiveness will forgive you…if you forgive others.

**If we regard iniquity in our heart, there will be distance and awkwardness in our relationship with God. Our prayers will be hindered.**

**Psalm 32** – As king of Israel – David committed adultery and had Bathsheba’s husband killed – if you try to cover up your sin, God will expose it.

**Verse 3** – “*When I kept silent about my sin”* (when I did not confess my sin; internalized it; suppressed it; acted like it didn’t happen) my body wasted away. My sin sucked the energy out of me. I lost my drive. My vitality. I went through life like I had leg weights on. “*through my groaning all day long” -* It wasn’t a fleeting moment of groaning … he woke up in the morning and thought of his sin. He went through his day and thought of his sin. He went to bed at night and thought about his sin. David was groaning instead of living in gladness.

**Verse 4** – “*Day and night your hand was heavy on me”* – Constant and continual, it was as though God was pushing down on him. His passion, his energy, his zest for life was drained away. THAT is always the result of failing to confess our sin to God.

**Verse 5** – *I acknowledged*…I did not hide…it got out in the light! I said, “*I will confess my transgressions to the Lord*,” and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

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**Psalm 51:1** – David says in Verse 1 - “*Be gracious to me, according to Your lovingkindness”*….a believer confessing his sin to God. He knew his sin was staring him in the eyes.

**Verse 4** – *“Done what is evil in Your sight”* - It wasn’t a mistake – it was evil in God’s sight. Sin is evil in God’s sight. Never less than that.

David didn’t say “*Well, I’m just living my life looking in the rear view mirror when I became justified through faith. Looking back at my justification. I don’t have to confess. In fact, I can commit more adultery. Have more people killed. Once saved always saved*.” That’s devil talk. That’s the hiss of the serpent.

A true Christian NEVER thinks that way…they think as David said – “*Against you and you only*….*God, you are justified when You speak and blameless when you judge*.”

**Verse 6** – “*you desire truth”* …you desire that I be truthful about my sin.

**Verse 7** – *“Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.”* – begging to be made clean, pure, holy.

**Verse 8** *– “make me hear joy and gladness”* – he is miserable. He is depressed. *“Let the bones you’ve broken, rejoice.”*

**Verse 9** *– “hide your face from my sins”* – forgive me

**Verse 10** – he prayed “*Create in me a clean heart”* because he has adultery, murder, hatred in his heart.

**Verse 10** – he wants a *“renewed steadfast spirit”* in him – his life has become weak – no energy or power

**Verse 11** – *“don’t cast me away from your presence”* – “God, you seem a million miles away – I used to read the bible and my heart would leap out of my chest. I’d pray and it seemed like you were in the room with me and now I pray and it feels you are another continent away. I read the bible and it just goes in one ear and out the other.”

**Verse 12** – he was utterly miserable. *“Sustain me”* – David had no means of sustaining himself.

**Verse 13** – “*then I will teach transgressors your way*” – He was ready to edify others!

**Verse 15** – David couldn’t even sing praises …in fact when I do sing, I’m just faking it.

**Verse 16** – I’m just going through the motions of so called “worship.” Unconfessed sin in your life makes anything you may offer to God unacceptable to him. God says I don’t want your sacrifices, I don’t want your offerings….I want YOU. I want your heart. I want things right between you and me.

God wants a broken spirit. He wants a broken heart. A heart that is broken over sin. Not one that is sealed over with concrete.

“**You thought you could hide it. But God keeps pressing in on it like a live nerve.**

**You will be miserable until you confess it.”** – Dr. Steven Lawson

There is not a person in this room who does not sin.

**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** He will send that sin AWAY the moment a child of God confesses it. God forgives it. God washes it away. And we don’t have to go back and go through that again. If we feel guilt, it’s not from God. It’s from the devil who is a grave digger who likes to keep bringing up past sins. Isaiah 1:18 – *“Come sit down with Him, counsel with Him. Though your sins are as scarlet they will be white as snow…white like wool.”* We may be slow to confess but He is always quick to forgive.

**“if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses / purifies us from *all sin*.**