

SESSION 1

SURE OF FORGIVENESS

Leader pages on pp. 102-105

THE POINT:
WE ARE FORGIVEN
WHEN WE CONFESS
OUR SIN AND WALK
WITH CHRIST.

1 JOHN 1:5–2:2

^{1:5} This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him.

⁶ If we say, “We have fellowship with him,” and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth.

⁷ 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 us from all sin.

.....
⁸ If we say, “We have no sin,” we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

MEMORY VERSE

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

¹⁰ If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

.....
^{2:1} My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one.

² He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.

KEYWORDS

Confess (1:9) – To confess means “to say the same thing,” “to agree.” In this verse, to confess specifically means to agree with God about our sin.

Advocate (2:1) – An advocate is a person who “helps,” who “provides aid.” Jesus is a legal counsel to defend Christians,

particularly from His position in heaven.

Atoning sacrifice (2:2) – The words mean that God has provided His grace through Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross so that people can be accepted by God.

WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE FORGIVEN OF OUR SINS?

Can we be sure of anything? Some philosophers will tell you we can't. After COVID-19 arrived last year and shook up our lives, nothing seemed certain.

We can have assurance, though. God desires for every believer to have assurance of salvation. Sadly, many Christians struggle daily with doubt as it pertains to their eternal destiny. Some even believe it's impossible to know with certainty that a person is eternally saved. At other times, believers who are not sure of their salvation find themselves plunged into the depths of doubt and despair, uncertain of whether or not God has truly forgiven them. Others allow their own self-condemnation to smother the assurance God desires for them to have.

But we can be assured of assurance! The apostle John stated this clearly in 1 John 5:13: "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." We have God's assurance of eternal life even as we have the assurance of our forgiveness.

Turn from Darkness // 1 John 1:5-7

The character of God is the foundation for our forgiveness. When John wrote, "God is light," he described the very nature of God. Since He is light, "there is absolutely no darkness in him" (v. 5). To describe God as light refers not only to His holiness, but also to His moral goodness. In His perfect righteousness and goodness, God determines the terms for our forgiveness. God's terms are clear: we are forgiven when we confess our sins and commit our lives to walk with Christ.

We are forgiven when we turn from darkness to light. John underscored this by looking at this truth from two sides.

- **Darkness.** "If we say, 'We have fellowship with him,' and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth" (v. 6). The idea of walking refers to a person's way of life. If anyone lives a life of continual, unrepentant sin and claims to be forgiven, he is tragically mistaken.



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The gospel's powerful work in our lives is what moves us from darkness (sin) to light (salvation). "He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves. In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). The ones whose lives have been transformed by the power of the gospel are transferred to the kingdom of the Son and their sins are forgiven!

- **Light.** "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 us from all sin" (v. 7). When we turn from darkness and walk with Christ, we are assured of forgiveness. To walk in the light is to live a life consistent with the will of God. Of course, this does not mean we are perfect, but that the trajectory and the purpose of our lives has become the pursuit of God.

WHEN DOES IT FEEL THE MOST DIFFICULT TO WALK IN THE LIGHT?

Tony Evans wrote: "Every week, people have the habit of taking clothes to the cleaners that have been soiled. The job of the cleaners is to freshen them up and get them smelling good again." As Tony Evans said, "Jesus has a cleaning service. He picks up dirty people who have allowed, for one reason or another, their lives to take a turn down the wrong path. And at his cleaning service, Jesus knows just what to do to wash you and make you clean again."² Jesus is the One who "cleanses us from all sin." This is the beautiful message of the gospel: Jesus gave His life to save dirty sinners like you and me. If your life pattern is turning from darkness and pursuing holiness, then don't doubt God's forgiveness toward you.

Confess Our Sin // 1 John 1:8-10

In verses 5-7, John gave a darkness and light contrast to stress we are forgiven when we turn from darkness to light. In verses 8-10, he used a similar negative and positive pattern:

- **Deception.** "If we say, 'We have no sin,' we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (v. 8). Failure to admit sin is a mistake of the highest order. Why would a person fail to recognize and confess sin? Many can't see their own sin because of self-righteousness and self-deception.



DIGGING DEEPER OUR ADVOCATE

An advocate is a person who speaks in favor of, argues a case for, and defends on behalf of someone else. In our day and time, there are child advocates whose primary role is to look after a child's best interests. Essentially, they make sure that the needs of a child are met. As children of the King, we also have an Advocate. Our Advocate is Jesus Christ (John 14:16-21). He serves many roles in this capacity. He's our High Priest, our lawyer, our comforter, and our friend to name a few. He walks with us, having paid a spiritual debt for our sins, lifting us up, pleading our cases before God. Every time our Savior advocates for us, we receive the same judgment: NOT GUILTY! He makes us righteous before the Father. There is no other One like our Advocate, Jesus Christ.

How does knowing that Christ is your Advocate impact your Christian walk?



- **Self-righteousness.** A self-righteous attitude says, “I’m not that bad; as a matter of fact, I’m pretty good compared to some people. Therefore, I have nothing to confess.” When sharing Christ with a young man, I asked him if he had ever sinned. He stated without hesitation, “No!” I asked him if he had ever lied, stolen, or lusted. His answer reflected the self-righteousness of our day. He said, “Of course I’ve done those things, but I thought you were talking about murder and adultery. You know, stuff like that.” Before our conversation was over, he saw how he had broken the entirety of the law of God; sadly however, his pride still would not allow him to confess to God.
- **Self-deception.** Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the Potomac River on January 13, 1982, killing 78 people. Even though they knew better, the pilots convinced themselves that further de-icing of the plane was unnecessary. They were tragically wrong. People deceive themselves when they try to justify and make excuses for their sins. To deny one’s sin is to call God a liar.
- **Confession.** The opposite of deception is confession. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (v. 9). We are forgiven when we look at our sin in light of Christ’s righteousness and willingly confess our sin for what it is: wickedness against God Himself.

IN WHAT WAYS DO WE SOMETIMES DECEIVE OURSELVES ABOUT OUR OWN SIN?

You have no reason to doubt forgiveness when you confess your sin and walk with Christ. The trustworthy character of God secures the promise of forgiveness. I’m sure you have heard it said that a promise is only as good as the person giving it. Consider then, who is making this promise? God is “faithful and righteous,” and His promises are true.

Depend on Our Advocate

// 1 John 2:1-2

John assured his readers, “If anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous one” (v. 1). The word for advocate literally means “one who is called to come alongside another.” It’s the counselor for one’s defense in a court of law, a person who intercedes for someone else. I can think of nothing more encouraging than to know Jesus is the One who stands up on our behalf. You have no doubt of forgiveness when Christ is your Advocate.

The foundation of Christ’s advocacy is the blood He shed for our atonement. The reason for atoning is to appease an offended party. Jesus, through His death on the cross, satisfied the righteous indignation of God. However, we are not to perceive God as some pagan deity who is reluctantly appeased because of blood being shed. On the contrary, God the Father provided the sacrifice Himself; thus, He satisfied His wrath by giving His only Son to die in our place. Furthermore, Christ willingly gave His life as our substitute.

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Therefore, when we sin, Christ pleads our defense based on His finished work upon the cross, which the Father lovingly gave and received. This truth is truly good news! Christ died for the sins of the world. The extent of His atoning sacrifice is for everyone who believes—regardless of skin color, ethnicity, or economic status. He died so that people from every tongue, tribe, and nation could know Him and praise Him.

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT JESUS IS OUR ADVOCATE AND AN ATONING SACRIFICE?

Patients often need blood transfusions after severe accidents or during surgery. Better than any artificial blood, the blood of Jesus saves everyone who receives it. Those who come to Christ face no compatibility issues, and they will find no scarcity of supply. When you find yourself in doubt, depend on Jesus as your Advocate and your atoning sacrifice, the One who shed His own blood for you.

Turning from darkness, confessing sin, and having Jesus as our Advocate and the One who shed His blood to atone for our sins leaves no room for doubt. Therefore, we can be certain

of forgiveness because we have confessed our sin, and we walk with Christ.

DID YOU KNOW?

Botham Jean was sitting in his home on September 6, 2019 when he was shot and killed by Amber Guyger. She mistakenly thought Botham's apartment was hers. A tragic accident took place and a 26-year old lost his life. He was known by others as a church going accountant. What made this case extraordinary was what took place at the sentencing hearing. Brandt Jean, Botham's younger brother, forgave the defendant. He boldly stated through tears, "I know if you go to God and ask Him, He will forgive you. I want the best for you because I know that's exactly what Botham would want for you. Give your life to Christ. I think giving your life to Christ is the best thing Botham would want for you."³ What a powerful example of forgiveness! Because of his forgiveness, he was awarded the 2019 Ethical Courage Award by the Institute of Law Enforcement Administration in Plano, Texas.

How can forgiveness give you peace?

LIVE IT

How can you better focus on forgiveness when you confess your sin and walk with Christ?

Just ask yourself this question, "When have you experienced a time when the promises of God were not true?" All of us should respond with a resounding, "Never." So we can also trust the promise of Christ's forgiveness when we confess our sins. We have God's assurance of eternal life even as we have the assurance of His forgiveness. Place your focus on these options this week.

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- **Focus on freedom.** Spend time in prayer, focusing on Christ and the freedom you have through Him.
- **Focus on confession.** Every time you recognize you've sinned, stop what you are doing, immediately confess it to God, and ask for His forgiveness. Reread 1 John 2:1-2.
- **Focus on forgiveness.** Ask the Lord to reveal to you any unforgiveness you've held in your heart against someone else. If appropriate, speak forgiveness to that individual and spend time in prayer.

DAILY READINGS

1. I AM FREE // ISAIAH 55:6-7

"Your sentence has been pardoned." These are words that many incarcerated individuals long to hear. Guilty or not guilty, many prisoners are provided a chance to plead their case to a governing board. This board consists of people that can grant the prisoner a parole and an opportunity to re-enter the general population. The prisoner will stand before the board talking about how he or she has been rehabilitated and can be a productive citizen. The outcome is based on the judgment of finite individuals. But praise the Lord! We serve an infinite God who hears our honest, heartfelt confession and grants us freedom from our sins.

All we have to do is turn to God, confess our sins, and He will freely pardon us.

2. A LESSON LEARNED // PSALM 32:5

Toddlers will many times try to cover up their wrongdoing. For instance, they might sneak a cookie from the cookie jar. When asked, they will deny what they have done. But what they failed to realize is their little faces are covered with crumbs. As Christian parents, we will prompt our child to ask for forgiveness. This teaches them the correct response to sinful behavior—admit and confess. They will learn that the response to admitting and confessing will be forgiveness. Just as earthly parents forgive their children, so does our heavenly Father. All we need to do is admit and confess our sin to God. It's the same lesson we learned as children.

The bonus is we don't have to carry the burden of sin. We will be free to faithfully follow God.

3. ALL-FORGIVING GOD // COLOSSIANS 1:13-14

Many of us have done some things of which we are utterly ashamed. We sometimes hold on to these past sins because it seems impossible in our human minds that the Almighty God could forgive some of what we have done. But thank God we have the

assurance of forgiveness found in this verse. We are forgiven of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. Yes, it is hard for people to forgive, but our God is an all-forgiving God who loves us.

Because He has forgiven us, we have been brought into His eternal kingdom.

4. THIS LITTLE LIGHT // MATTHEW 5:14-16

Many of us learned the song, "This Little Light of Mine," many years ago. This song basically states that no matter where we are, we should be a light. We are to let this world know we represent Jesus Christ. We hide our lights when we don't speak up because we are ashamed of Christ. We hide our lights when we do what a sinful crowd is doing. We hide our lights when we don't tell others about the Christ we serve. The song refrains; "all in our homes, all on our jobs, everywhere we go." These phrases emphasize that even in the darkest places, people should see our light as we represent our Father. Our life just might influence someone else to want to know Christ.

Let your light shine so the rest of the world can see to whom you belong.

5. MADE FOR GOOD WORKS // EPHESIANS 2:10

Although mostly a lost art, there are still cobblers in various parts of the world. Cobblers are shoemakers who understand the essential nature of shoes; they protect our feet. Therefore, quality is essential to cobblers, whether they are building custom-made shoes or repairing worn-out shoes. Just as cobblers craft quality shoes, we are crafted by God. Anything God crafts is a masterpiece. We are extraordinarily made by a skillful Father. He lovingly made us to do His will, which includes serving Christ and building up His church. We were not made for our own works, but for good works. This knowledge should motivate what we do for God.

When we have this view, it becomes easy to keep the focus on Christ and not on ourselves.



My Notes

Name

Email

Session Number

Answer 4 Questions

What did You learn?

What Is God saying to you?

What are you gonna do about it?

**Do you have any questions
about the reading?**





My Notes

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