

Clean – 1 John 1:9

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Clean

1. I like being clean!
2. One of the great pleasures I enjoy is working really hard in the yard and then taking a shower.
 - a. I'll mow and edge the lawn, dig up the flower beds,
 - b. pull weeds and fix the sprinkler heads
 - c. I just love getting all sweaty and caked with grass clippings and dirt
 - d. just so I can climb in the shower, turn on the hot water, and wash it all off!
 - e. it just feels so good to be clean!

B. Today

1. What feels even better than being clean on the outside is to feel clean on the inside;
2. To have the confidence that our sin has been forgiven and we can stand before God, clean!
3. It's of that that we want to talk about this morning.

II. TEXT

A. Set Up

1. While John deals with several subjects in 1 John, they all have something to do with our *relationships*; first with God, and then with one another.
2. In vs. 5-10 of chapter 1, John says that *sin hinders* our relationships.
 - a. rather than deny our sin, we need to admit it,
 - b. bring it to God and ask that He remove it.
3. V. 9 tells us how we go about this . . .

B. V. 9

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

1. While forgiveness isn't something we can *earn*, it is *conditional*!
2. John tells us the *condition* placed on forgiveness here – We must *confess* the sins we want to be forgiven of.
3. Now, let me make this absolutely clear – confession isn't the *basis* of forgiveness.
 - a. what makes forgiveness *possible* is the work of Christ on the Cross.
 - b. in His death there's *atonement* for our sin – for *all* sin.
 - c. but the value of what Jesus did at the Cross only accrues to those who *receive it by faith*;
 - 1) the kind of faith that *admits* sin,
 - 2) sees how wicked and wretched it truly is,
 - 3) and then looks outside itself for help and deliverance.
4. This is what it means to *confess*.
 - a. the word means *to agree* or *acknowledge*.
 - b. when we confess our sins, we are *agreeing* with God about them
 - 1) we agree that we have sinned *those specific sins*
 - 2) we agree with Him about how evil and deserving of judgment those sins are.
5. In this one verse John is summing up the first 4 Beatitudes
 - a. Jesus said “Blessed are the poor in Spirit” -
 - 1) we have to begin at the place of realizing our spiritual bankruptcy before God;
 - 2) sin has robbed us and left us poor in the things of the Spirit

- b. “Blessed are those who mourn” – which means we *grieve* over our sin
 - 1) we don’t rationalize or ignore it,
 - 2) we don’t redefine it as an *alternative lifestyle*
 - 3) we lament how our sin has blinded and hurt us and others
- c. “Blessed are the meek”
 - 1) the meek are those who realize they don’t have what it takes to remove their own guilt and shame.
 - 2) they’ve come to the end of themselves and their own efforts at being righteous.
- d. finally, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness”
 - 1) realizing righteousness doesn’t arise from within themselves but rather comes as a gift from without – it becomes their passion to obtain that gift.
 - 2) just as their physical body craves food and drink, their spirit craves freedom from sin.
- 6. All of this is contained in the one phrase, “If we confess our sins.”
- 7. Friends, if we would be forgiven, we must confess our sins; we must agree with God that we have sinned and that those sins are deserving of judgment.
- 8. Let me suggest that when you confess your sins, *be specific*.
 - a. I wonder sometimes when we ask forgiveness if it isn’t *too general*.
 - 1) “Dear God, please forgive my of my sins.”
 - 2) “Love to! Which ones are you referring to?”
 - 3) “Well, all of them would be nice.”
 - 4) “Sure, but why don’t you be specific now so that you can have absolute confidence I’ve forgiven those sins. Come on Lance, what sins do you want Me to forgive?”
 - 5) then I hem and haw as I try to think of some specific sins –
 - 6) and you know what, I suddenly realize nothing comes readily to mind!
 - 7) I mean, I’m not sinless – far from it; but when I think about specific sins, I realize I’ve gotten so good and rationalizing and excusing my sins that I have a hard time pegging anything specific I’ve committed recently.
 - 8) so I say, “Okay, Lord, forgive me for – a- lying.”
 - 9) “Which lie Lance?”
 - 10) “You mean there was more than one?”
 - 11) but you know what, I can’t even remember a specific lie.
 - a) I’ve probably exaggerated, stretched the truth a bit and so I mention that.
 - b) and God says, “Oh yes, exaggeration! Now we’re getting somewhere. Which exaggeration are you speaking of exactly, the ones you said on Monday, T, W, Th, or F?”
 - b. I find this kind of probing by the Spirit of God, this kind of *conviction*, extremely unsettling.
 - c. it’s unsettling because it reveals *how callous I’ve become* to the reality of my own sin.
- 9. But it’s what happens when I fail to *abide* in what this verse says.
 - a. you see, God doesn’t want us to save up our confession of sin for one day a month when it’s time to take communion and we have that time of personal reflection and deep soul searching.
 - b. it shouldn’t even be limited to one time a week.
 - c. it should be daily, even hour by hour
 - d. we ought to be so sensitive to the things of the spirit that the very moment we stumble, we’re convicted and confess our sin, seeking cleansing from it’s hideous stain.
- 10. Confession of sins is necessary for maintaining continual *fellowship with God*.
 - a. sin is what *breaks* that fellowship
 - b. and just like Jesus, we ought to be so jealous and zealous for our contact with God that the moment it’s hindered, we confess and repent that so we can be restored to fellowship with the Lord.
 - 1) remember how Jesus was in agony in the Garden and how He prayed that there might be some other way?

- 2) what was it that so shook Jesus that He would ask that the appointed cup might pass from Him?
- 3) it wasn't the *physical* agony He was about to endure.
 - a) He knew His sufferings, while intense, would be brief and soon over.
 - b) no, it wasn't the *physical* pain that so troubled Him.
- 4) what drove Jesus to such extremity was the prospect of having His communion with the Father broken for a short time while the sin of the world was placed on His shoulders.
- c. if we had that kind of hunger for maintaining fellowship with God, we would resist temptation far more effectively and when we did fall, confess our sins immediately!
- 11. It's important we make a distinction between *relationship* & *fellowship*.
 - a. *relationship* speaks of *how* people *relate* to one another in terms of their *roles*.
 - b. *fellowship* refers to how close or intimate people are.
 - c. the relationship between Lynn and I is husband and wife.
 - 1) that *relationship* doesn't change
 - 2) we made a vow to one another and the Lord and no matter what, we are going to remain true to that commitment.
 - d. but our *fellowship* can vary from day to day based on how each of us is doing and even if we're in each other's presence.
 - 1) if I go to a conference and am gone for a couple days and neglect to call her, then we have no fellowship during that time.
 - 2) if one of us mis-communicates and the other's feelings get hurt, there may be some tension between us for a time – and fellowship will be awkward.
 - e. the important thing to realize is that our relationship hasn't changed; we are still husband and wife – but our fellowship has been damaged, and as a result, the *benefits* of the relationship are not enjoyed.
- 12. Our *relationship* with God as Heavenly Father does not change; we are His sons and daughters.
- 13. But our *fellowship* with Him is affected by sin.
 - a. when we sin, we damage communion with Him because God cannot tolerate sin – it's a violation of His holiness
 - b. sin is an offense to God, and just like any offense that we make against someone we have a relationship with, it has to be confessed and forgiven in order for fellowship to be restored.
- 14. When we confess our sins and are forgiven, then we re-enter the place where we can enjoy the *benefits* of being the children of God.
- 15. Just recently, there have been some teachers who have said this verse was not intended for Christians; that it speaks to non-believers and tells them how they can be saved.
 - a. but such a view fails to take into account who this entire letter is written to
 - b. over and over, John says, "My beloved brethren."
 - c. the whole context and tone of the letter is to Christians
 - d. those who say this verse doesn't apply to believers fail to grasp the difference between relationship and fellowship; they see them as one and the same, but they are not.
- 16. In fact, we see this in the ministry of Jesus.
 - a. you remember how when Jesus was washing the disciples feet he came to Peter.
 - b. Peter said, "No Lord, you will never wash my feet."
 - c. No doubt thinking he was so clever in refusing to let Jesus humble Himself like this when the other disciples had said nothing and just let the Lord wash their feet.
 - d. but Jesus' reply was a mild rebuke of Peter
 - e. He said, "If I do not wash your feet, then you have no part with me."
 - f. to which Peter replied in his typical impetuous manner, "Well then, don't just wash my feet, but give me a whole bath!"
 - g. note Jesus' reply, "No Peter, you don't need a bath, you are already clean. All you need is your feet cleansed."
- 17. What Jesus was saying was this – Peter was already one of the disciples; his *relationship* to Jesus

- was one of Master and servant.
- a. that relationship meant that Peter was saved!
 - b. but as Peter walked around following Jesus, his *feet* got dirty.
 - c. just as Peter had already taken the big step of leaving all to follow the Lord, he needed to let the Lord wash away the filth he picked up daily off the streets.
18. Like Peter, we have been born again and we are now the children of God – that is our *relationship*.
 19. But as we follow Jesus, walking daily through this world, our feet get soiled; not literally, but figuratively.
 - a. the muck and mire of this fallen world gets splattered on us.
 - b. just driving down the road, some sensual image on a billboard can splash into our eyes.
 - c. some polluted speech comes through the radio and splashes into our ears.
 - d. the lost that we come into contact with every day can toss a bucket of moral gunk on us.
 - e. and though we may be good at ducking and dodging and bobbing and weaving our way through the day, it's inevitable that some of the world's filth is going to splatter us.
 20. Confessing our sins means coming to the Lord and saying, "Lord Jesus, please wash my feet!"
 - a. look, that spot there, that's the lustful thought I had when I saw that billboard.
 - b. and that smear there, that's the envy I felt when I saw the pastor got a new car.
 - c. and this splotch over here, that's the selfishness I had last night when You told me to wash the dishes for my tired wife but I played deaf and didn't do it.

B. He Is Faithful & Just

1. So, what happens when we confess? What's the result?

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2. When we confess our sins, God is *faithful* to forgive us.
 - a. we can depend on God to be true to his word and to his promises to forgive us.
 - b. you see, He is not *reluctant* to forgive – He's ready, willing and able to forgive.
 - c. this is something each and every one of us needs to make sure we understand.
 - d. what does it say here? He is faith to do what? FORGIVE!
3. Some of us here this morning have a difficult time grasping the reality of God's forgiveness for the simple reason that *we* are not forgiving of others.
 - a. the way we deal with the offenses that others have given us is to harbor bitterness and resentment toward them.
 - b. we look for an opportunity to get even.
 - c. we think the verse, "Vengeance is mine!" is something *we're* supposed to say.
 - d. some people are so unforgiving, they actually live with an eye to *look* for offenses.
 - 1) they read everything others say as a put down or intended curse
 - 2) they're so wrapped up in bitterness they turn completely innocent things into major attacks.
 - e. such people find it difficult to grasp the forgiveness of God because they think this is the way God looks at them
 - f. they're trapped in a prison of unforgiveness
 - 1) a man had talked overtime on a long-distance call from a pay telephone booth.
 - 2) the operator cut in and warned him several times to deposit more money, but he just kept on talking.
 - 3) finally, annoyed at the operator's interruptions, he shouted some obscenities and slammed down the phone.
 - 4) a few seconds later, he was back on the line; this time calmer.
 - 5) He said, "Operator, please let me out of the phone booth--I'll pay, just let me out!"
 - 6) in his anger, he had tried to exit the phone booth by *pushing* on the door, and if you

remember how the doors on those old booths worked you'll remember they open by *pulling* on the handle in the middle of the door.

- 7) this guy thought the operator had somehow locked him in the booth.
- 8) he paid the charges, and then the operator reminded him how to get!
- g. those who are unforgiving are trapped in a double walled cell.
 - 1) their unforgiveness of offenses and slights hurt *them* far more than the ones they are withholding forgiveness from.
 - 2) but they are also hindering their receiving the forgiveness of God.
- h. people poisoned by this kind of bitterness are not eager to forgive.
4. But God IS eager to forgive.
 - a. the proof of that is the Cross!
 - b. God is so ready and wants to forgive us so much that He went as far as He could and sent His own Son to die for our sins.
 - c. and now, He waits for us to turn to Him quickly in confession so we can be forgiven.
- 4a. Several years ago, a businessman found out about an elderly widow who was unable to pay her rent.
 - a. feeling pity for her, he went to some of his friends and asked them if they would be kind enough to contribute something to help her.
 - b. they responded, and he got two months' rent.
 - c. he then went to the widow's house to deliver the money.
 - d. although he knew she was inside, when he knocked he got no answer.
 - e. he knocked again and still no answer.
 - f. he knocked a third & fourth time, still no answer.
 - g. not knowing what else to do, he returned to his business.
 - h. a couple of days later, he saw her downtown on the sidewalk looking destitute.
 - i. He approached her and said, "Ma'am, some friends of mine and I found out about your situation. We want to help. We got enough money together to give you rent money for two months. I came to your house to give it to you this week, but I knocked several times and got no answer."
 - j. she said, "Oh, I thought you were the landlord coming to evict me."
- 4b. God is not out to *punish* us. He wants to *pardon*.
5. I think sometimes when we sin and the conviction of the Holy Spirit is *quick*, we think to ourselves that we can't confess and repent *right away* because it may seem *insincere* to the Lord.
 - a. like the child who sneaks a cookie after mother said "No,"
 - b. and *while he's still chewing* he runs into the living room to confess his little act of theft.
6. We tend to think of God as like a human parent who when he or she is disobeyed there's a period of anger, and maybe it would be better to wait till some time has passed and they have cooled before we confess.
7. The difference is that God's anger does not rise and fall with our disobedience.
 - a. He knew we were going to fall before the temptation every entered our minds
 - b. He never 'catches' us in sin – He knew all about it in advance.
 - c. and if we think back we'll realize His Spirit was right there when the temptation came, trying to convince us not to yield.
8. God is *faithful* to forgive, ready willing, and able to forgive!
9. Not only is He faithful, He is *just* to forgive.
 - a. when He forgives, He acts on the basis of His justice,
 - b. not on the basis of how we think He feels about us.
 - c. Christ has *satisfied* God's righteous demands on us, so that now God is bound to forgive all who believe in his Son.
 - d. when He was hanging on the cross, the Son's request was, "Father forgive them."
 - e. He wasn't just asking for those who had placed Him there that day
 - f. He was praying for all those in all history who placed Him there!

- g. He was praying for you and me.
- 10. God can forgive us – not just because we ask, but we ask because Jesus Christ has paid the price for our sin and HE has asked the Father to forgive us.
- 11. When we ask forgiveness, we are not asking on the basis of our own request.
- 12. Rather, we are asking to be *included* in Jesus' request that God forgive those He died for.

C. Forgiven & Cleansed

- 1. Oh friends, isn't this amazing?
- 2. If we confess our sins, God is faithful, and just, to forgive us!
- 3. That word 'forgive' means to "send away."
- 4. When God forgives us, He sends our sins away.
 - a. He takes the guilt and lifts it off us,
 - b. and hurls it into the depths of the sea.
- 5. The sins He forgives, are the sins we've confessed.
- 6. But then, John goes even further and says that God 'cleanses' us from **ALL** unrighteousness.
 - a. His Spirit *purges* our hearts of the sense of shame.
 - b. He *purifies* our conscience.
- 7. Besides the sins we're aware of and confess, there are many we *fail to see*.
 - a. when we are faithfully confessing the sins we're aware of and walking in the forgiveness that God so readily gives -
 - b. then fellowship is intimate and the Spirit is free to work in us and root out the *sources* of our sin.
- 8. Hebrews 8:12 tells us that the sin God forgives, is the sin he FORGETS!
 - a. you and I can stand before God, CLEAN!
 - b. when we confess our sins, God forgives and cleanses us.
 - c. so in our confession, we need to go *all the way* and agree with God about our sin
 - 1) fist that we have committed it and that it is deserving of judgment
 - 2) but don't stop there – go on and agree with God that Jesus has paid for that sin
 - 3) and that no, because of what God has done with your sin – YOU ARE FREE FROM IT!
 - 4) Confess your forgiveness and that are you are CLEAN!

III. CONCLUSION

A. God's Eraser

- 1. One day a little girl was watching a plane do skywriting.
- 2. The big letters delighted her but she noticed that the plane didn't get any more than 4 or 5 letters done when the first was blown away.
- 3. Turning to her friend she said, "Maybe God has an eraser!"
- 4. Indeed He does – it's called the blood of Christ.
- 5. Look at v. 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 Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

B. Take Out The Trash

- 1. Each of the people of our household has specific chores to do.
- 2. One of them is to take out the trash.
 - a. in the kitchen, we have a broom closet that holds two trash cans
 - b. one for recycling and the other for refuse
 - c. they usually get full every other day.
- 3. More often that not it seems that when I open the door, the cans are over full; they need to be dumped.
- 4. It's happened a few times that something that got thrown into the trash should have taken outside

right away.

- a. we came home one night after being gone all day to a terrible stench in the house.
 - b. it didn't take long to narrow it down to the leftover salmon we'd had for dinner the night before that had been dumped in the trash.
 - c. it reeked and it took quite a while to air out the house!
 - d. but the key was taking the trash out and putting it where it belonged.
5. In the same way, we need to take out our moral and spiritual trash right away.
- a. we can't let it accumulate and stink up our lives

 - b. Christian – take out the trash daily!