

Friday: Double Cure...

Read: 1 John 1:9-10 ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just 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.

Reflect:
Why confess our sins? Because no matter what our sin is (and please...don't think about the "unforgiveable sin"; if you'd committed that you wouldn't be asking forgiveness, or even be concerned about it, anyway...), God (Jesus) is faithful to forgive **and** cleanse...

To "forgive" means that a debt has been paid. In other words, our wrongs against God are no longer held against us. Sin has distorted our relationship with God. All of those not in a covenant relationship with Him are His "enemies" (Rom5:10) due to the gap between them and a holy God. When God forgives us we are relieved of that debt we cannot pay... What a relief!

Yet when we confess we are also "cleansed". This word indicates purification takes place – like the removal of a stain from the body. Not only is a debt lifted (forgiveness) but sin's defilement is removed. In fact, it indicates that even the power of that sin is broken. How about that – even a reduced (or removed) desire for that sin occurs when we "confess". God is faithful!

Respond:
How does your sin keep you from serving God as you would like?

Do you really believe God doesn't hold your sins against you?

Do you believe that the power of a certain sin in your life can be broken?

Are you willing to "confess" to others? [Please note, as with sanctification (which is a continual process), so too is confession. Also, I'm not talking about in front of the entire congregation – but I am talking about doing it...]

Pray: Pray for Prairie View Christian Camp; another mission New Life supports. Pray for Bob Griffin and Larry Hayes – elders of New Life. Continue praying for this Sunday's grocery give away. Continue to pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

Saturday: Fix Your Eyes...

Read: 1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Reflect:
When it comes to sin in our lives it seems some people are "too hard" on themselves. They think that if they punish themselves then they won't continue to sin...or perhaps they need to punish themselves because they've been disobedient. Others could care less that they've sinned. Neither extreme is good; both are addressed here...

For those who are too easy on themselves with sin – we need to remember "propitiation". It's a word that means "atoning sacrifice". It's the idea of turning away the wrath of God that is directed toward sin. Sin creates a debt we can't pay...Jesus paid it for us – in a gruesome manner...

For those who punish themselves – we need to remember "advocate". It's the idea of Jesus pleading our case before God. Jesus as our advocate doesn't mean we never sinned; it means He paid the price for our sin. We don't need to punish ourselves more – but we do need to confess...

Respond:
Which is your default stance with sin – harshness or leniency toward yourself?

Verse two sounds a lot like John 3:16 does it not? But don't forget John 3:18.

What are you doing today to prepare for worship tomorrow?

Pray: Pray for the National Missionary Convention; a mission New Life regularly supports. Thank God Jesus is both propitiation and advocate. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag – deacons of New Life. Pray those the Holy Spirit is prompting to come to New Life tomorrow will be obedient and come.

It's a Process...

June 7 – 13

I really don't like going to Wal-Mart. It's not that I don't like crowds of people (although I often stay to myself in large groups) and it's not that I can't find what I'm looking for (they seem to have most things)... I suppose it could be wrapped up in one word – efficiency. That side of town is so busy; I would much prefer to avoid it all together if I could. (Side note – in fact, I think what fed my aversion to Wal-Mart is that while a student in Manhattan the intersection close to the Manhattan Wal-Mart would literally add about five minutes to my drive...so I avoided it...)

Yet recently I broke down and went to Wal-Mart. It was a Sunday afternoon and Wal-Mart had what was "needed" for a gathering. Since I value my time I'm a lot less hesitant to ask for directions/help now (most of the time)...so I asked a lady, who looked like she should know what is going on, "Where are _____?"

She said they're in the back (some were up front but apparently what I needed was back in electronics) and that she'd take me there. On the way I commented they looked busy. She agreed and said it was slow in the morning but picked up around noon – then looked at me and said "When all the people got out of church."

I said (mostly sarcastically – but I think I hid it well), "Well, at least they were pleasant right?" She said (among other things) that was not the case. I asked how she responds to that reality...she said it makes her angry.

By that time we'd arrived at our destination – she showed me the area I needed to look in and headed off to break. I so wanted to continue the conversation with her...to ask more questions (not appease our hypocrisy). In fact, the other day I went **back** to Wal-Mart (perhaps a record for me – twice in a month) because I needed some things I knew they'd have (and other stores were likely closed). I don't remember getting the lady's name, I doubt I'd be able to describe her to you now – but I was hoping I'd see and recognize her in order to strike up a conversation again...

Why is it Christians have such a bad rap? I suppose because many have earned it. In fact we're all guilty of contributing to "the label" at one time or another (OK, likely multiple times). Yet I can't help but think it is because we don't take the process of sanctification seriously. It seems as if we think "holiness," and dare I say "perfection," are unattainable...so why try.

First off, we should not "try" – we should strive for sanctification and "perfection". We should strive because God commands us to be holy (Lev11:44). We should strive to be "perfect" because God is (Mt5:48). Yet it seems many do not see those as attainable – so no effort is mustered. Perhaps in the future a whole series on sanctification is in order. For now I hope this week's insert dealing with sin will assist you (and me) in our process of sanctifying ourselves for God's glory. Those in a covenant relationship with God are already "justified" – but that is only the beginning of the sanctification process.

Monday: Our Example...

Read: John 17:19¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

<p>Reflect: Jesus already asked God to sanctify the disciples in the truth (v17). When we understand that to “sanctify” something means to set it apart – with the underlying connotation of “for service” – it is important to notice how “the truth” governs our sanctification.</p> <p>I’m certain we all “set apart” things every day for use in some way. If you pack a lunch – you “set apart” your food for that meal. If you plan how your money is spent (e.g., budget) – you “set apart” money for certain areas of life. Likewise, we often “set apart” portions of our day for certain activities – e.g., sleep, family time, work, Bible study, prayer, etc.</p> <p>The very fact that Jesus “sanctified” (i.e., “consecrate” in v19) Himself means that we too can be sanctified. In fact, we already are sanctified if we are “in Christ”; once we are a new creation (2Cor5:17) we are to work for God’s glory (Eph2:10). Yet merely because we are set apart for service to God does not mean the ongoing process of sanctification (i.e., the rest of our lives) is effortless, but it is worth it.</p>	<p>Respond: Certainly you noticed v18 up above. How important is that to our sanctification process?</p> <p>How has your “set apart” time for God been going lately?</p> <p>What is an area of your life you are submitting to God in your sanctification process right now? Is anyone helping you?</p>
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Pray: Pray for the CEA; a mission New Life regularly supports. Thank God for the privilege of worshipping Him yesterday – pray His Spirit will continue the work of yesterday throughout this week. Pray for the Youth Group as they prepare to leave for “Know Sweat” next week. Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).

Tuesday: Perspective...

Read: Matthew 26:39-³⁹ he fell on his face and prayed...“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”...⁴² for the second time, he went away... “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”...⁴⁴ he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again...⁴⁶ Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

<p>Reflect: Sanctification takes effort – it’s not for the faint-hearted. Fortunately we will not be required to endure what Jesus endured during His sanctification. His service to God included being brutally tortured and murdered. That doesn’t sound like a walk in the park to me...</p> <p>Yet why is this important? It’s important because we should not fool ourselves into thinking sanctification is effortless. It can be a joyful experience (Heb12:1-2) – but it isn’t easy. Yet that’s OK, everything in life takes effort. With no effort...we die.</p> <p>We’ve all put forth effort in a variety of areas in our lives. School takes effort – in fact for those who don’t like school...sometimes it takes effort to do poorly. Raising children takes effort – they don’t come with instruction labels. Even eating takes effort – yet that is often “work” many do not mind doing... I wonder, do we even think “sanctification is possible?”</p>	<p>Respond: Does the thought of Jesus having to put forth effort in His obedience to the Father strike you as odd? If so, why?</p> <p>Am I missing something – or doesn’t everything in life take effort? The key becomes whether or not we see it as worthwhile...</p> <p>What’s the best thing about being a Christian for you?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Lincoln Christian Seminary, Manhattan Christian College, and Ozark Christian College; missions New Life supports. Pray for the unity and purity of New Life. Pray for this coming Sunday’s grocery give-away. Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).

Wednesday: Acknowledgement...

Read: 1 John 1:7-8⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he 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 deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

<p>Reflect: “Fine”. It’s a four letter word...it ought not to be used. “How are you today?” “Fine.” “What about you?” “Fine.” And two people with burdened hearts and minds due to their own sin start to talk about the weather...</p> <p>Granted, telling someone we’re “fine” when in reality on Monday we looked the other way as we walked down the street instead of looking at a needy person (because then we’d have to acknowledge they’re there...and maybe do something) isn’t saying “we have no sin”. Yet it keeps the façade going that things are really, well, “fine”.</p> <p>We ignore our sin to the detriment of the body of Christ. Stated another way, our sin does not affect only us...it affects others around us as well. That statement isn’t to throw us into despair – but the reality is that there is no such thing as a private sin. When my sin throws me out of sync with God (notice <u>me</u> – God doesn’t change because of our sin...He’s still there), others are affected. Yet there is hope; by being “in the light” we can be “cleansed”.</p>	<p>Respond: Do you think it’s possible to say “good to see you today” instead of “how are you doing” if you don’t mean it? Is it wrong? Certainly at times you really do care...and other times it is only a habit...</p> <p>Are you aware of your sins of “omission” (e.g., care for the poor, widows, etc.)?</p> <p>Do you have a sin you’ve been trying to ignore? What can you do about it?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools; two missions New Life supports. Pray for sensitivity to your sins of omission – and the desire to change the problem. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of sin in your life. Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).

Thursday: Confession...

Read: 1 John 1:9-10⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just 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.

<p>Reflect: I’ve talked about “dirty little secrets” of the church before. Today we look at another one. In doing this I must be honest that since learning this truth I have not always been faithful in applying it to my life. In other words, I too fall prey to the “fine disease” that plagues Christianity.</p> <p>I’m sure you noticed v9 says “if we confess”. The grammar indicates this is a continual act on our part – one we may or may not do. I suppose it is well known that we all try to hide from our sins (or hide them) at one time or another... Yet who are we fooling?</p> <p>The overlooked part is what “confess” means. If I were to confess something to you...are you expected to read my mind? I didn’t think so. Furthermore, in addition to it being verbal (i.e., out loud), did you notice I’m confessing to someone? There are other places where “confession” and “sins” are linked (cf. Mt3:6; Mk1:15; Jas5:16; Acts19:18) – those are all verbal (i.e., out loud) and front of people too. So...why is it ignored?</p>	<p>Respond: Do you have people close to you, with and to whom you can confess sins?</p> <p>Do you see any way “confession” can be a ‘one-to-one’ thing with God? (cf. Mt10:32; Jn1:20; 9:22; 12:42; Rom10:9,10; Tit1:16)</p> <p>Will you seek someone out to whom you will confess your sins?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Cookson Hills; a mission New Life supports. Ask God to engrave the truth of these verses on your heart and mind. Pray for Brent McCrory; preaching minister at New Life. Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6) and the boldness to do so.