

Friday: Step Four B): Cleansing...

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...

Reflect:

So...what do we do about the sin(s) in our life we continually repeat? Are we doomed to continue them? The answer lies (partly) in understanding what it means to be “cleansed” (this also ought to help us understand why confession with someone else is necessary).

The word “cleansed” indicates purification takes place. This word picture starts to develop when we see “cleansed” used in connection with leprosy (Mt8:2; Mk1:40) and cleaning dishes (Mt23:25-26), as well as a close connection to changing clothes (Gen35:2). When we consider those uses (and some others) we see this word connotes an obvious change. This is analogous to a removal of a stain from one’s body; i.e., the breaking of the power of sin in one’s life!

Does this sound too good to be true? Here’s another question, have you tried it? But please note, without our continual pursuit of godliness, even a sin which has been “broken” can return. Case in point, “Hi, my name is Brent, and I’m an alcoholic...” 12-Step programs are wildly successful; a person continues in them as long as needed. It is a pity the church has not taken confession (and the accompanying, appropriate, accountability) seriously.

Pray: Pray for King Solomon Christian Service Camp and the National Missionary Convention; missions New Life supports. Pray for Bob Griffin and Larry Hayes, elders of New Life; pray they will continue to take confession seriously. Pray for protection from sin and strength during times of testing.

Respond:

What is a particular sin from which you long to be free?

Please note, I am not saying if you do not confess with another your sins will not be forgiven. Yet I am saying the Bible says Christian accountability (with accompanying confession) will help us to “overcome” sin.

How can Community Groups assist us in being obedient to 1Jn1:9? If you are not in a Group, will you seek someone for help?

Saturday: Step Five: Remember Jesus...

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:

As I have said in the past, when it comes to sin in our lives it seems we are often either “too hard” or “too easy” on ourselves. Both of those extremes find a reality check in these verses. We do not need to punish ourselves before God will forgive us (however, if the Holy Spirit leads you to enact your own discipline by all means be obedient), nor do we need to lightly shrug off sin (although it need not burden us – we can be forgiven).

When you are prone to take sin too lightly, remember “propitiation.” It is 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...

When you are prone to be too hard on yourself, remember “advocate.” It has at least two concepts. One is the idea of Jesus pleading our case before God. Another is Jesus being called in for assistance or help. Jesus paid the price for our sin...we do not have to; He also has come to our aid...we are not alone. His work will not be undone, will we do our part and (properly) confess?

Pray: Pray for Strong Tower Ministries and LCREF; missions New Life supports. Pray for Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, and Mike Haag, deacons of New Life; pray they will continue to find a godly balance in dealing with sin in their lives. Pray for our worship tomorrow at the Church Building. Thank God for desiring all sinners to come to Him.

Respond:

In what ways would you like to serve God? Is a struggle with a certain sin(s) holding you back from this?

What are you doing today to prepare for worship tomorrow?

Has this Guide been helpful?

Sin...Forgiveness...

March 21 – 27

Over the last several weeks we have been focusing on our need to “Remember...” The initial sermon in this series (1/10) included a few thoughts concerning Christmas Day. At the time we were only half a month removed from it and I wondered aloud with all of us if Christmas was merely a day in the past with our only reminder of it being credit card bills (which is perhaps sadly the case for many Americans)...OR do we realize the Christ Event (which includes what we celebrate on Christmas Day) has the power to not only shape our present but chart a course for our future....

As we all know, Easter is just around the corner. In addition to being the second major chocolate candy holiday of the year for us in America (Valentine’s Day is the first), it is also toward the end of the “Christ Event” (i.e., Jesus’ birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension). The upcoming celebration of Easter is vital because it is integral to the forgiveness of our sins.

Sin; wow what an ugly word. As little as it is talked about in our culture a person would think it is a “four letter word” (instead of only having three letters). Sin is serious business. It is described by a variety of metaphors in the Bible... (some of what follows is taken from Ryken’s *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*)

- like a stalking creature at a door (cf. Gen4:7)
- like strong cords which wrap up a person (cf. Prov5:22)
- like a slave driver (e.g., Ps119:133; Jn8:34)
- like an executioner (cf. Rom7:11)
- as the mother of all death (cf. Jas1:15)
- (the list does continue...)

Fortunately there is a remedy for sin – forgiveness (and cleansing). Yet as we saw a few weeks ago (cf. 3/7), forgiveness is a foreign concept for many; primarily because there is really nothing like it in our culture. Among other things forgiveness is pictured as...

- a covering (e.g., Ps32:1; cf. Gen7:19)
- a lifting or carrying away (e.g., Isa54:3; cf. Exod34:7)
- a voluntary release or leaving a place (e.g., Mk2:5; cf. Mk11:6; Jn4:3)
- a cancellation of a debt (e.g., Col1:14; cf. “jubilee” in Lev25:10,11,etc; “release” in Deut15:1,2,3,9)
 - (This last example is significant because by and large debts are not simply “cancelled” in our culture – hello mortgage and auto loans.)

Yes, sin is serious – we need to remember this. Yet God has taken all necessary steps to deal with sin. Furthermore we must “Remember...” it does not separate a Christian from God (cf. Rom8:37-39). However, it does ensnare us and hinder our life (cf. Heb12:1). Therefore we need to be decisive in how we deal with sin...not only to be forgiven, but to have the power of sin truly broken in our lives. This will allow us to be free from its bondage so we can live more fully for God’s glory... (cf. Mt22:37-40; Rom13:8; 1Jn4:11-12)

Monday: Step One: Acknowledgement...

Read: 1 John 1:7-8 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 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: Oh how to start... a) I'm OK...and you? b) I'm just a sinner saved by grace... c) If I were any better I'd be twins... d) Not a problem, it's all under control... e) [loud sigh] "FINE." These are but a few examples of clichés often used in greeting one another. Yet that random sampling highlights pervasive thoughts in our culture – things ranging from a) an ignorance of sin, to b) a denial of it, and/or c) a confusion of our identity. What to do...</p> <p>Firstly, if you know a non-Christian who is struggling with sin – do not point it out to them. They do not know what we know and what business of ours is it to hold them to a standard of which they are unaware? Secondly, if you are in Christ you are a "saint" (e.g., Rom1:7; 1Cor1:2; etc.). Thirdly, as a "saint" who is held to a different standard (cf. Phil1:27; 3:20), we dare not deny sin in our lives (e.g., 1Jn1:8).</p> <p>We ignore our sin to the detriment of the body of Christ, which in turn hinders God's desire for humanity (i.e., blessing). Stated another way, our sin does not affect only us...it affects others around us as well (i.e., no "private" sin). Yet do not despair. By acknowledging our sin we become more aware of our need to be "in the light," which leads to being "cleansed." Praise God!</p>	<p>Respond: What is your default answer when asked how you are doing? How truthful is it?</p> <p>Are you aware of your sins of "omission" (e.g., care for the poor and widows, lack of love for the brothers, etc.)?</p> <p>Do you have a sin you have been trying to ignore? What can you do about it?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for Ryan Nelson and "33 Church" in Olathe; he is the latest church planter hired by the CEA. Thank God you have been made a "saint." Praise God for our time of worship together yesterday at the Church Building. Continue to pray for workers in God's Kingdom (Mt9:36-38).</p>	

Tuesday: Step Two: Confession...

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...

<p>Reflect: I would have to say most of us do not struggle with verse 10. We are aware of sin in our lives (even if we do not admit it to others). Yet I would also have to say most of us have some actions and thoughts which are sinful and we are unaware of it. This need not throw us into despair. If anything it is a cause for awe as we continue to grow in our understanding of God's mercy and grace.</p> <p>The reality is, most of us do struggle with verse nine. The grammar indicates confession is a continual act on our part. Quite possibly in our own prayer lives we confess sin to God. Yet is that what John is writing about here? Nope...</p> <p>Firstly (by looking at the word for "confess" and a related word also translated as "confess" we see), confession is always verbal – i.e., out loud (e.g., Mt7:23; 14:7; Lk22:6; Jn1:20; 9:22; Acts24:14). Secondly, there are always people present to hear what is being confessed; whether it be sin (e.g., Mt3:6; Mk1:5; Acts19:18; Jas5:16) or beliefs (e.g., Jn12:42; Acts23:8; Tit1:16). Therefore we have no reason to think here in 1 John the "confession" is merely between an individual and God. No reason except our own perceived comfort that is...</p>	<p>Respond: Do you see any way confession can be a 'one-to-one' thing with God (cf. also Mt11:25; Lk12:8; Phil2:11)?</p> <p>What is more comfortable, continuing a particular sin or mastering it (cf. Gen4:7)?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for God to continually be at work at LCS, MCC, and OCC; missions we support. Thank God Jesus will not keep quiet before the Father (cf. Mt10:32; Rev3:5). Pray for our Children's Worship time and all of the servants who make it a possibility. Continue to pray for God's people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29).</p>	

Wednesday: Step Three: A Reminder...

Read: Exodus 34:6 ⁶ The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..."

<p>Reflect: If you are like me, from time to time you may fool yourself into thinking you have no sin to confess. While I will certainly not dismiss the possibility of you walking very closely with God for a period of time... I would certainly be remiss if I did not call us back to the biblical standard (e.g., Eph5:1). God is our standard, not others around us (and certainly not non-Christians).</p> <p>Since God is our standard, we need to be merciful. We need to have deep feelings of compassion toward others; feelings which are aroused when we see others who are in trouble, suffering, weak, and vulnerable. We also need to be gracious. We need to have a predisposition to forgive others and desire them to be blessed – no matter what they may have done. We also need to be slow to anger and loyal to those who are following God.</p> <p>It sounds like a tall order...and it is. In fact it is "impossible" for us to always be/do those things. Furthermore it is "impossible" for us to be any of those things to the extent God is. Again, this is not to get us down, but to open our eyes to our need to be more like Him. When this happens we will clearly see things in our life which we need to confess.</p>	<p>Respond: When was the last time you wanted to get back at someone for how they wronged you? (cf. Ps103:8-12)</p> <p>When was the last time you let a brother or sister in Christ down? Have you asked for their forgiveness?</p> <p>What, in today's text, amazes you the most about God? Why is this? To whom can you speak of it?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for Shiloh Home of Hope and Emporia Christian Schools. Thank God He is all of what Exod34:6-8 says He is. Ask God to show you which aspect of His character you need to incorporate more into your life. Continue to pray for God's Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1).</p>	

Thursday: Step Four A: Forgiveness...

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...

<p>Reflect: Since God is our standard (cf. Wednesday) there should be no question we have some confessing to do (cf. Tuesday). After all, we do not want to make God into a "liar" do we? Obviously no...plus that is impossible. It seems what John means is if we claim to have no sin then we do not understand Who God Is...because we obviously fall short of His standard.</p> <p>To be forgiven means a debt has been canceled and a burden has been lifted. In light of how often we think of ourselves and our desires before God (cf. Mt22:37) – let alone others (cf. Mt22:38) – this must be a very heavy load. Yet God is faithful to do exactly what His word says; He will forgive us if we are "in Christ" and ask for it.</p> <p>The beauty of forgiveness cannot be overstated. Yet for the sake of what is to come I will begin to lay the foundation for what is "part B" of step four. I do this because if you are like me you have experienced the sinking realization of repeating the same sin in your life. In fact, quite often it is more than a sinking realization – it can be depressing (and even frightening).</p>	<p>Respond: Do you really believe God does not hold you your sins against you?</p> <p>If you could pattern your life after God's, what (specifically) would be more prevalent in your life? What (specifically) would be absent?</p> <p>What picture of forgiveness (cf. 3/7 sermon or partial list on this cover) is most helpful to you? Why? With whom can you share it?</p>
<p>Pray: Pray for the ministry of Cookson Hills (a Christian Children's home and mission New Life supports). Pray for Brent McCrory, the Preaching Minister of New Life; pray he will continue to humbly ask God for forgiveness. Continue to pray for open doors to share God's Word (Col4:2-6).</p>	