

# Truth

## COMMUNITY CHURCH

Teaching God's People God's Word

### **God's Holiness, Sin, and You**

1 John 1:8-10

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Good morning GraceLife. It is encouraging to see so many people out on a holiday weekend.

I was thinking this morning in connection with this message. It is amazing how light can alter your perception of reality. I have resigned myself to the reality that I look better with the mirror light off than on. Your house looks better at night than it does under the morning rays of sun. Romance is easier by candle light than under a fluorescent bulb—and on and on we could go.

You get the picture. The underlying reality in all of those things and many others that you could think of, the underlying reality is exactly the same. I am who I am regardless of whether mirror light is on or not. Your house is either clean or dirty regardless of whether the sun is shining on it. And young people in love, well, it's not going to do any good to try to talk to them anyway.

But the presence of light shows what is real. That simple principle can do wonders to help you understand spiritual reality and biblical truth. When you become a Christian and start walking with Christ, you inevitably start to recognize sin that is in your life that you have not seen before. As the word of God and the Spirit of God illuminate your understanding about the holiness of God in the presence of unapproachable light, you start to see the corresponding darkness in your own soul in a way that you have not done before.—that's very, very important. Because as people walk with Christ and start to see sin and get convicted of sin in their life, it is easy to ask the question, "If I was saved, I wouldn't see all this sin."

And you start to question the reality of your own salvation. But that's the wrong conclusion to draw. You should expect to see sin in your life as you walk with the living

God. You should expect to see sin in your life as you draw closer to the holy Christ. In fact, the passage that we are going to look at this morning tells us that you have to recognize that reality, embrace that reality rather than run from it, it is not a ground for questioning your salvation. Seeing sin in your life is what should happen as you grow in the knowledge of the holy, and our passage today helps us understand that.

1 John 1:5-10, and we are going to focus particularly on the last three verses here. But let me read the whole passage to try to kind of reset the context in your mind, building on what we said last time. 1 John 1 beginning in verse 5:

*This is the message that we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice 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 us from all sin.*

Stop right there for just a moment and take note of that. If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another and one of the consequences of walking in the light is that we recognize sin from which we need to be cleansed. Walking in the light convicts of your sinfulness. It does not mean that you live a perfect life or that you suddenly have not spiritual defects or sinfulness within you, quite to the contrary, this passage is very clear about this. Walking in the light brings us to the recognition that we need the blood of Jesus His Son to continually cleanse us from all sin. Verse 8:

*If we say 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 that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

This passage teaches us that a Christian inevitably responds to the holiness of God by openly confessing sin instead of denying it. And as we go through certain themes in the scripture, we can see why that must be the case. Some one who has submitted their life to the lordship of Jesus Christ, some one who has embraced the authority of the word of God, comes face to face with certain themes that dominate all of the scriptures and explain the incarnation of Christ, the purpose of the incarnation of Christ. And you cannot be a Bible-believing Christian without recognizing sin both in the world and in your own life. Some one who denies sin is simply saying that they do not believe the Bible and they are saying "I'm not a Christian."

This is all by way of introduction. I am going to give you three themes to think about that will set the stage for what lies ahead in the rest of the message, so there are three introductory themes here:

## **1. The Bible Teaches the Universality of Human Sin**

Ecclesiastes 7:20 says:

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*Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.*

Isaiah 3:6 says:

*All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.*

Romans 3:10-12 says:

*There is none righteous, not even one, there is none who understands; there is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good; there is not even one.*

Summed up most familiarly perhaps in Romans 3:23 that:

*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

With that basis beloved, you can easily see that any one who claims to be good enough for God, that they have lived a good enough life to merit heaven when they die, they are obviously wrong, they are mistaken in their spiritual understanding, they are denying the scripture with what they say because the Bible is so clear about this.

## **2. The Bible Teaches the Wrath of God Against Sin**

Not just sin in general, but your sin—the wrath of God rests upon sinners. John 3:36 says:

*He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*

Romans 1:18:

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*

Hebrews 10:31:

*It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Revelation 20:15:

*If any one's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown in to the lake of fire.*

You see, God's holiness as expressed in His moral law, found in the 66 books of the Bible. God's holiness reveals His righteousness and the light of His holiness, the light of His righteousness if you will, using a metaphor here, the light exposes the darkness of the human condition, compared to when the holiness of God is lifted high and His law is lifted high and we bring mankind and we bring individual man in to comparison with that high standard of light and holiness and righteousness. Sin is exposed just like the dirt on your counter is exposed when the light hits it from the morning sun—it is inevitable, you cannot miss it when you have a proper perspective on the holiness of God. If you factor that out, you lock yourself in to darkness.

And it is in light of the holiness of God, in the sinfulness of sinners and His wrath upon sinners, in the inevitability of eternal judgment upon sinners, that is the only context in which you can rightly understand the incarnation of Jesus Christ. That is the only context in which you can understand why the Son of God left the glories of heaven in order to walk on this earth in order to ultimately die on the cross, it is because of the holiness and wrath of God against sinners and the divine plan to rescue sinners from that judgment by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Luke 5:32, Jesus said:

*I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance*

Luke 19:10:

*The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

1 Timothy 1:15:

*Christ Jesus came in to the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.*

Unless the holy Son of God had intervened on your behalf beloved, you would be lost and doomed to eternal judgment and eternal destruction at the hands of a righteously, wrathful God whose holiness and character and person you have spurned and rejected up until the time of your conversion. If Christ had not interceded on your behalf, you would be most miserably lost—miserably lost, doomed and damned. And the only way that you have a proper perspective on all of those truths, the linchpin, the cornerstone of all of those things is the unsurpassed holiness and excellency of God Himself, the one who is righteous and can tolerate no sin in His midst, the one who as Habakkuk said, “whose eyes are too pure to approve evil.”

All of those truths, the universality of sin, the wrath of God, that Christ came to save sinners, all of those truths flow from the holiness of God, there had to be a means by which sinful man could be reconciled to a holy God and the only means of that was the

Lord Jesus Christ. There was nothing that you as a sinner could do to save yourself, you were lost in the deepest and most profound sense of the term.

If you are here today beloved and you don't know Christ, believe me, better stated, believe the word of God when it says and teaches that you are most miserably lost and doomed apart from Christ, with the holiness of God, it could be no other way. And the fact that His holiness is not talked about much in other circles and the fact that it is never thought about and the media and things like that does not make the reality go away. Sooner or later, you will be confronted with the holiness of God and God's holiness exposes your sin, it exposes your rebellion against the person of God and against the person of Christ, it exposes your indifference to Him, your failure to love Him. All of those things and ten thousand more besides are all exposed when they are put in to the light of the holiness of God.

Now beloved, what that should do for you, what that should do to any sinner that is here that does not know Christ, what it should do to you as a Christian, is to drive you, compel you, cause you to flee afresh to the person of Jesus Christ. If you don't know Christ, you should go to Him for salvation in the first instance and say, "Oh, deliver me from the wrath that is to come, that is upon my head, save me from it."

And speaking to you as a believer here this morning, the holiness of God should repeatedly cause you to recognize that you still have remaining sin in your soul even though God has saved you eternally from the consequences of your sins. A true recognition, a clear view of His holiness should cause you to recognize remaining sin and then confess it as a regular part of your spiritual growth. Those truths define your ongoing response to sin in your life and it is laid out for you in the passage that I just read.

Two points that I want you to go away with today:

### **1. What the Holiness of God Should Do for You**

Speaking to you now as a Christian. The holiness of God should cause you to recognize your sin. If you are here and you claim to have been a Christian for any length of time at all, you should be conscious of the fact that your life is still falling short of the glory of God. You should recognize that there is sin in your life and that you want to deal with it because the light of the holiness of God exposes that kind of darkness.

There are two different ways in which you recognize sin. First of all, you recognize sin in your inner nature, and this is where I want to spend probably the most time this morning because it is a less recognize aspect of our problem with sin—sin in your nature. Because the truth of the matter is that if we just bumped in to each other on the street and we entered in to a light discussion of sin, we would probably discuss sin in terms of individual actions or individual attitudes that violate God's law and character, and it would be good and right for us to do so because that is an aspect of sin as the Bible defines it.

Our actions disobey God, we have the sinful desires as Jesus explained to us in the Sermon on the Mount, sinful desires would also violate the law of God. But here is the thing beloved, you cannot think about those individual acts and those individual sinful desires apart from a larger context, those things don't just happen, there is a reason why they happen. But if you compartmentalize the issue and say this act was sinful and that desire was sinful and never connect the dots to make the larger picture, you are missing the most important point. You are missing the thing that will most drive you in humility to the person of Christ and to seek His help and your sanctification. Because some one who understands God's holiness recognizes that there is more than just those actions and attitudes, there is something fundamentally wrong inside. Look at 1 John 1:8, John says:

*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us*

No sin, singular, it is a noun. This verse here is talking about having sin in the sense that you have a sinful disposition, you have a sinful nature there is a sinful aspect to your nature—let me put it that way. Speaking of the unconverted, Ephesians 2:3 says that:

*They are by nature children of wrath.*

Their very nature invokes the wrath of God. Quite apart from the manifestation of that sinful nature in actions or particular attitudes, their very nature, their fundamental nature is a rebellion against God that calls forth His wrath. Yes, they commit sins, they commit sins all the time, but we can't think about that in isolation because those sins flow from a simple nature, the whole fountain of life is polluted amongst them and in them.

But beloved, even as a Christian, you yourself have a bent toward sin even as a new creation in Christ. Turn to Romans chapter 7. There is something inside even the most mature Christian that distracts him, that pulls him away from the pursuit of holiness that he must overcome, that he must recognize, that fights against his holy desires. Paul says in Romans 7, beginning in verse 15, "What I am doing, I do not understand..." He is writing as an apostle, he is writing as a mature believer here, he is speaking in the present tense. This is the reality that he knew as he was writing the letter to the Romans that he still expounds 2000 years later:

*What I am doing, I do not understand, for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the law, confessing that the law is good*

He says, these things that come out of me, I recognize the wrong and as I recognize the wrongness, I am simply affirming the law as I go. Verse 17:

*So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh, for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. The good that I want I don't do, I practice the very evil that I do not want. (Now look at what he says here in verse 20.) But if I*

*am doing the very thing that I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good, but I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man. But I see a different law in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.*

He is saying something inside is wrong, there is a bent toward sin, that something that is wrong is the principle of sin in you, that explains why your love toward God grows cold, that is why you don't always do the right, it is because something in you that pushes you in that direction.

The apostle Peter had that in mind when he wrote in 1 Peter 2:11, he said:

*Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.*

Something wrong inside, something sinful, something in the nature, woven in to the fabric of our existence as Christians. Peter uses imagery that paints those sinful desires as soldiers waging war against us as we pursue holiness.

Beloved, here is the point, as you pursue the holiness of God, as you pursue sanctification, as you seek to walk with God and you grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and you find that there is conflict that keeps you from pursuing it, that seems to pull you back, that you fall in to, just as an illustration, when you had a really great quiet time and in 10 minutes later you are yelling in anger at somebody, you say "Well, may be I'm the only one that that's ever happen to," all of those things show forth that our present's existence here, our present nature is not perfected yet, there is something tweaked inside and we recognize that more than the individual acts, that there is something wrong and that wrongness is the presence of remaining sin in our nature.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones with his typical insight said this: "The question that should confront us all is not simply whether we have committed actions that are wrong. No, the most important question is why did I do it? What is it in me that make me think of it and play with the suggestion? And there is only one answer, there is something perverted in my essential being. Something in me gives rise to evil and inequity."

That is why we have sinful thoughts, sinful desires, sinful imaginations. Not only do I do wrong, but my nature is sinful—that's the point. There is something within us that is twisted and that does not naturally pursue the things and person of Christ. And when you sin even as a believer beloved, those sinful actions and sinful attitudes are simply a symptom of a deeper problem inside. And here is the point, when you focus on the holiness of God and meditate on the holiness of God and you see that clearly and you embrace it in your heart, you simultaneously see that there is still something inside you that falls short, that urges you against that and that is where the struggle with sin comes in.

What I am saying to you this morning beloved is that recognizing your sinful nature is an inevitable effect of understanding the holiness of God. When you see how worthy and glorious and righteous He is and you are clothed in your right mind so to speak, you say, “It would only be right for me to always love this God with the greatest possible passion and the greatest possible energy and to love Him, to never question Him and to always obey Him.” That would be the only right and proper response to pure unadulterated holiness expressed in the uncreated maker of the universe.

Then you reflect back and look at your life and say, “But I don’t always live that way, there’s a gap between what’s right and where I live—why is that? Why is it that my highest and most holy desires aren’t always expressed in my life?” It is because perfection remains to be completed at the consummation of our salvation yet to come. While we are still here in this life, we have sin within us that diverts us a way from that which we would love the most—that’s the idea. We don’t deny that reality as Christians, we understand it and we confess it.

So, coming back to our text here in verse 8, when some one would say as the false teachers in John’s day wanted to say, that’s why John can say so dogmatically:

*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

When some one says something like that, some one says, “I’m a good person, I’m good,” oh, give me a break, I mean, please, let’s just stop that nonsense—that’s a total lie. You’re deceiving yourself, there’s no truth in you when you talk that way—none. The Bible speaks to this far too clearly, far too many times to come to any other conclusion.

I had to think about that when I was at a ceremony this past week where some one was speaking to college students. There was a secular event and that’s fine, but talking about you can pursue your dreams and you are all good and all of that—that’s just not true. I understand why a secular person has to say that, how are you going to raise funds if you are talking about the sinfulness of man and that you are all the way down and doomed to God’s judgment, that kind of cast a dark pall on the event, but beloved not for us, we can’t talk that way, we can’t think that way. And for you as a person heading toward judgment with God, you cannot think that way, saying, “I’m good enough, there’s nothing really sinful about me.” You will find out soon enough and the consequences will not be pleasant.

In light of the biblical testimony about sin, any one who denies sin is absolutely self-deceived, he does not have God’s truth within him because God’s truth as expressed in the gospel goes counter to all of that. And so when some one talks about how good they are, understand that he is simply saying he is not a Christian. Those two things are equivalent statements—“I’m good enough, I’m not a sinner,” you are simply saying I’m not a Christian—that’s what this passage means here in verse 8. No matter what a person like that may say about knowing God, he does not know God because if he knew God, he would admit his sinful nature, he would recognize it, he would confess it.

We said that holiness of God causes us to recognize sin, it causes us to recognize our sinful nature. Secondly, recognizing the holiness of God causes us to recognize sin in our actions, not that actions were unimportant, but that just was not the focus of what we were saying. Look at verse 10, let's skip over verse 9 and come back to it as the way that Christians respond to sin. But in verse 10 it says:

*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

Now this statement is a slightly different statement, not denying the sinful nature like verse 8 does, it is a different denial, it is denying sinful conduct. The perfect tense here in Greek indicates that I stand before you now, having never sinned. I have heard people say that, I remember a friend from high school who said that and I knew the truth, I knew he was lying to me. He said, "No, I've never sinned." People say that, people believe that about themselves. And in light of what we said in the introductory comments, the universality of sin and all that the Bible says about that, for a person to say I have never sinned is the same thing as saying God, you are a liar.

Look at what it says in verse 10, that statement calls God a liar because God has said most definitively in His word that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." All without exception, none who are righteous, none who do good—zero, zero. And for some one to come along and talk about their intrinsic goodness is simply to look the holy God who dwells in an unapproachable light, who no man can see and live, to look Him in the face and say "liar, liar, I'm not sinful, I don't care what you said, I know that I'm not a sinner." It is a testimony to the grace of God that that kind of outright blasphemy is not instantly incinerated with the lightening bolt from heaven because it is a frontal assault on the truthfulness and character of God in addition to being a completely deceived view of self. To deny sin puts you in open conflict with God who says you have sinned.

So, what do we draw from that? What is the conclusion from that for some one that says they have not sinned? Look at the end of verse 10, "we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." Any one who says such things obviously does not have the word of God in them, they don't understand the first thing about spiritual life. It is damnable, but it is also very sad because until the person comes to confess sin, comes to recognize sin, they cannot be saved. It is impossible for a person who protests their own righteousness to be saved. There has to be a fundamental change, there has to be a work of the Spirit of God in their hearts to turn them away from that because Jesus specifically said "I have not come to call the righteous..." those who perceive themselves to be righteous, "but sinners to repentance." Until you sacrifice this protestation of your self-righteousness, until you acknowledge your sin in the presence of the holy God, you cannot be saved—you are doomed.

And so, on the one hand, you can hold on to your pride and self-deception and say "I've never sinned" and you can carry that luggage straight to hell because that's where that ticket leads. Your indifference to sin shows a total failure to recognize the holiness of God because His holiness inevitably causes you to perceive your sin—inevitably.

Turn over to the gospel of Luke, chapter 5, I just want to illustrate this for you, not necessarily a point on illustration of the point, but it is where I want to go this morning. Luke chapter 5, you remember the story well. Luke 5, beginning in verse 2:

*Jesus saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake, but the fishermen had walked out of them and were washing their nets. And Jesus got in to one of the boats which was Simon's and asked him to put out a little way from the wind and He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon "Put out in to the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." (Simon was trying to help the Lord out here in verse 5.) He said "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as you say and let down the nets."*

So these professional fishermen had fished all night, caught nothing and Jesus bids them put out the nets one more time and see what happens. Verse 6:

*When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish and their nets began to break, so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats so that they began to sink.*

From nothing all night at the hands of the professional fishermen to a haul so great that the boats could not bear the weight of it—all at the word of Jesus. And how did Simon respond to that? Verse 8:

*When Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet saying "Go away from me Lord (I like the translation better "depart from me Lord) for I am a sinful man," for amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken.*

See here is what happened, that display of miraculous power at the hands of Jesus Christ illuminated Peter's understanding about Christ's holy presence, the only one who could do something like that, who could speak a word and bring a haul of fish where there had been none before, was God Himself. And such a display of miraculous power spoke to His great holiness, His great power, His great righteousness, and all of those things coalesced in Peter's mind in a moment, and in that moment when he saw the holiness of God, he immediately saw his own sinfulness by contrast and the only thing that he could say was "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."

Listen, Peter had not suddenly turned in to a sinful man, he had not suddenly turned in to a more sinful man at that moment, in that what ever short period of time it took to raise up those fish, he had not suddenly descended in to some one he was not before. He was the same man before the fish as he was after the fish. Or I should have said the other way, same man after the haul as he was before the haul. Here is the point beloved, the presence of holiness unfolded before his eyes and understanding made him recognize the

sin that had always been there, but which he had overlooked—that is the way holiness affects the sensitive hearted Christian. When you meditate on the pure holiness of God, undistracted by the cares of this world, you see the holiness of God and it brings to light things about yourself that had always been true, but which you simply had never recognized—that is the inevitable affect of it beloved.

As we apply the 1 John 1:10, we can see that some one who says he has never sinned, has not understood the first thing about the character of God. Go back to 1 John:

*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

Some one who wants to talk about their own goodness has never seen God's holiness or they would never talk that way.

Now beloved, let me say this and apply it in terms of Christian teachers and Christian leaders that you follow—this is a point of discernment. A Christian teacher, a Christian leader who never convicts you of sin in any way, shape or form, who never talks about issues of God's holiness, sin and repentance, coming judgment, where you just don't hear those things from him, that is the man who has never seen the holiness of God—I'm sorry, but is just the truth. When you see these things, you have to speak up, you have to, you are compelled to speak of the holiness of God and the sin of man and coming judgment if you have understood and embraced these convictions in your heart. And so when you see a man flippant towards sin or talking about himself incessantly, or some one who makes you always laugh and feel good, here's a piece of advice. When you see somebody like that, turn around and run, run away from a man like that, don't follow him like that beloved because if they saw the holiness of God, these other things would flow in terms of what they say in their ministry.

A man who projects himself, boasts of his gifts, boasts of his audience, look, he has not seen the holiness of God because you don't talk that way in the presence of God when you are conscious of it because God's holiness causes you to recognize sin in your nature and in your actions, it breaks you, it humbles you, "I'm not what I should be, I fall short of the glory of God, I'm a debtor to grace, I'm bankrupt, poor in spirit, I'm mourning for my sin."—that's what Jesus says at the start of the Sermon on the Mount:

*Blessed are those who are poor in spirit for theirs alone is the kingdom of God.*

*Blessed are those who mourn over sin for they and they alone shall be comforted.*

Beloved, the failure to recognize sin speaks to some one who does not know God at all. Not just what they deny, they talk about God's love, they talk about this or that. Listen, train your ear to listen to when they want to talk about sin. It is not just what they say. What they say could be good enough as far as it goes, it is what they do not say that exposes false teachers. Listen beloved, listen and discern.

Now having said that, in seeing it in a negative way in verses 8 and 10 that the holiness of God, remember, I should have said this earlier, all of this reason that we are talking about how this all flows from the holiness of God as 1 John said in verse 5, he said:

*This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

Holiness and fruit mark the character of God and what follows in verses 6-10 is his discussion of the implications of that statement. The holiness of God causes you to recognize sin in your nature and in your actions, but it does more beloved. It does more for you as a Christian, it provokes a response from you in the depths of your heart because it causes a true Christian to consciously turn from sin.

## **2. The Holiness of God Will Make You Repent of Sin**

This is very important on a pastoral level to understand instead of saying that we don't have sin. Look at what verse 9 says, he says "If we confess our sins..." it has the idea in the verb tense, if we are confessing our sins as an ongoing pattern of our lives.

*If we confess our sins, He (meaning God) is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Now what I am about to say is very important. I am always conscious of when I am preaching on these issues, not driving people to despair. And John's passage here is so balanced and helps us understand exactly what the proper response is. When you are conscious of having sin inside you, that there is something defective and wrong in your nature, you are aware of that and it weighs on you. And when you are conscious of the fact that you commit acts of sin, attitudes of sin, you don't do the good, you do do the wrong, what do you do with that? How do you respond to that knowledge and that reality—that's the question. How do you grow through that spiritually? What is it that God wants you to do?

Well, there is two extremes that you could fall in to, both of which would be totally wrong. On the one hand, you could deny it and say, "No, that's not true" or "It's not that bad"—that's the more likely way that a group like this would respond to it. "Okay, there's a little bit of trouble here, but it's not that bad, let's not get overheated on this okay? I watched you preach long enough, I know you're overly caffeinated, so I'm not going to get that worked up about it." So you effectively deny it even if you affirm the principle in general, but effectively you deny and say it's not that big of a deal.

On the other side over here, (this is I am more concerned to address) is that pastorally, I have talked with people like this, is that they fall in to utter despair, "I'm so discouraged and I see the sin and I don't know what to do with it, and why?" And they go on and on and just get totally despair and fall in to this morbid cycle of introspection that they can't get out of.

Beloved, both of those extremes are wrong and are not the way to respond. You don't minimize it on one hand and you don't fall in to utter despair on the other. Yes, you are a sinner, welcome to the club. But the whole point of Christian salvation is that God in Jesus Christ had dealt with it—that's the whole point of salvation. Christ came to earth to save sinners. God is a merciful God. And in 1 John 2:2 it says that "Christ is the propitiation for our sin." He is the atoning sacrifice who turned away the wrath of God that otherwise would have fallen on our heads.

And so, instead of this minimization of it or despair on the other side, here is what you do: you confess it. You confess it openly, honestly, transparently to God and you turn from it every time you are convicted, and for some of us, that is multiple times an hour. But you relentlessly, faithfully, patiently confess these sins, "Lord, I've sinned again. Lord, my settled understanding is that I'm a sinner against you." You confess it, you repent and then and as you are doing that, you renew afresh your trust in Christ who saves sinners and who saved you to the uttermost. You don't deny it and turn away from it, you don't fall in to morbid despair which would be another denial, a different denial of salvation, you confess it and you trust Christ all over again. Not to be saved again, but you renew your trust in Him and say, "Jesus, I believe that on the cross, you paid for all of my sins and that includes this one too." And with gratitude and humble submission and brokenness before Him, trust Him that His work on the cross was sufficient to cover all your sins.

Now let's unpack this a little bit in the five seconds that I have left here. John says:

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins.*

He is talking here not about the Catholic monstrosity and going in to a confession booth. He is talking about confessing your sins to God not to men. This passage is about fellowship with God, walking with God and in the particular context to verse 9, it is about God not some priest, "God being faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The source of forgiveness and cleansing is the one to whom you are confessing.

And so you confess, you lay your sins before God. It is talking about an ongoing life pattern of confession. As a settled matter, you admit that you are a sinner by nature and as you become aware of individual sins that flow from that nature, you confess them before God in repentance. Notice that it says "If we confess our sins..." plural, you got a lot to confess, you may not think so, but you do. Here is the point, when a Christian is confessing sin, this verse tells us and assures us on the authority of God Himself that He will forgive and purify us. He is faithful to His pledge that He made when He said:

*I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. (Jeremiah 31)*

He said their sin I will remember no more, I will forgive them, I won't hold it against them. But in the presence of the holy God, a holy, high and lofty God, you can come,

trusting Christ, confessing your sins and know that He will meet you with mercy and grace to forgive, to cleanse, to restore your joy and to not hold it against you, going forward—that is wonderful, wonderful grace. And notice the idea here is not that if you confess one sin, but if you forget something else, watch out. No, look at what it says at the end of verse 9, “He cleanses us from all unrighteousness.” The truth is if we really understood our sinfulness, we would realize we don’t see the half of it. And what we don’t see, this verse tells us God cleanses that also. He is cleansing us from sin that we don’t even recognize.

And so, this is confession, marking the life of the Christian. This is not the initial confession at the first moment of salvation. This is ongoing confession as an ongoing pattern of life, lived out before the holiness of God. We confess our sins to align ourselves with God’s view of our lives, to position ourselves for His favor rather than His discipline and to restore our joy—this is part of what it means to walk with Him. When David was confessing his sin in Psalm 51, he prayed:

*Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain me with the willing Spirit.*

So beloved, if you have been discouraged in your Christian walk, seeing there is so much sin there, understand that that is what is supposed to happen. A growing Christian should be seeing sin in his life because the holiness of God shining on that is exposing things to your mind that you have not seen before. Your response to that is not to ignore it or to harden yourself in it, but to confess it and to repent of it and to trust Christ for His promise of forgiveness. Because beloved as Christians, we are reconciled to this holy God. We are restored in to communion and fellowship with Him in Christ. Jesus truly did pay it all and in that we rejoice, trusting Him, trusting His work on the cross, trusting His ongoing promise to cleanse and forgive, we come to Him humbly and say, “I love you, I fall short, but I trust you when you say that you will forgive me of all sin, cleanse me from all unrighteousness and that’s what brings me here today.”

Let’s pray. *O Lord, we honor you and confess our sins before you. We are not before you, protesting our goodness as if there was something in us that would cause you to receive us—Father, perish the thought. No, we come before you as sinners, sinners by nature, sinners who commit sins and yet sinners who have heard the joyful sound, “Jesus saves, Jesus saves” and we put our faith in Christ and we trust in Him Lord, knowing that you are faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We greatly respect and honor your holiness this morning. We see our sin by contrast and we turn from it, trusting you for your promise to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is because of your faithfulness and it is because of the work of Christ that we can go forth in joy today and Father we do so. In Jesus’ name. Amen.*