

62-01-01-The Heart In Confession

confession, self-deceit

1John 1:8-10

Confession opens our hearts for divine cleansing.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

–My last sermon was about *the heart in contrition*—how “*a right heart condition is a contrite heart condition.*” This one’s **title** is “The Heart In Confession.” **Text:** 1 John 1:8-10, *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.*

–*Sin is dark and depressing. It smothers spiritual life by contaminating the place where God wants to make His home: the human heart. Sin’s only cure is the forgiveness provided by Christ’s work on the cross, but we get access to that forgiveness through confession.*

– **HOM.idea.** Only by seeing sin for what it really is, and saying what we see, can we receive the forgiveness that will cleanse our hearts.

### **I. What Happens When Sin is Held Within?\***

- A. \*It blocks *divine pardon*– Prov 28:13, He who conceals his sins does **not prosper**, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. [Adam & Eve tried *hiding behind fig leaves, bushes and excuses* instead of *nakedly and openly confessing to God.*] (It *didn’t* work then; it *doesn’t* work now!)
- B. \*It creates *spiritual illness* that only God can heal– Psa 41:4, I said, “O LORD, have mercy on me; **heal me**, for I have sinned against you.”
- C. \*It *damages both the inner heart and the outer testimony*– Jer 17:1, Judah’s sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the **tablets of their hearts** and on the **horns of their altars**. [The marks of sin God sees *inside the heart sooner or later* show up in the *outer life.*]
- D. \*It *makes prayer ineffective (unless it’s confessional prayer)*– Psa 66:18, If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

**TRANS:** God’s remedy is 1John 1:9, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.* The *poison of sin has an antidote: forgiveness.* But there’s an *obstacle* to taking the medicine. We *don’t like confessing that we’ve done something wrong.* Yet it’s **the only way to open our hearts for divine cleansing.** When we try to avoid confession, it *reveals another obstacle...*

## II. The Problem of a Deceitful Heart

- A. Basically, we can deceive ourselves into thinking we haven't done anything wrong— **Jer 17:9** (NKJV), The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? – (NIV = “beyond cure”).
- B. Sin is curable, but self-deception is “beyond cure”— **v.8a**, *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves...* – **We deceive ourselves**,\*
1. \*If we try to rationalize sin away [**Explanations & excuses** for our sins are like a murderer throwing a blanket over his victim. The crime will be discovered, when the corpse begins to decompose. Christians who try hiding their sin will eventually begin to have a distinctive foul odor. The only cure for the stench is to pull off the blanket, confess the sin, and have God remove its rotting presence from our lives through forgiveness and cleansing.]
  2. \*If we try to diminish our sin by comparing it with the sins of others (“But I was only driving along with the traffic, officer.” – [**Other reckless drivers** aren't to blame for your own spiritual speeding.]
  3. \*If we try to blame others for it (a very old human practice):
    - a. Adam blamed both God and Eve— **Gen 3:12**, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”
    - b. Eve shifted blame on Satan. (“The devil made me do it.”)
    - c. When God asked Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” he said, “Am I my brother's keeper?” (In other words, “Let him fend for himself.”)
- C. Sin is curable, but unbelief is “beyond cure”— **v.10a**, *If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar... We call God a liar, if...\**
1. \*Our reason overrides God's Word: “God can't mean white lies it, when He says not to lie.” (or “The Bible says it, but we know \_\_\_\_\_.” – filling in the blank with Satan's “Hath God said...?”)
  2. \*We reject God's evaluation: “God's wrong about me! What does He know? He's never walked in my shoes!” (But He has!)
  3. \*his word has no place in our lives (**v.10b**). (“Belief is a private matter, open to opinion and personal interpretation.”)

**TRANS: Self-deception** is “beyond cure” [Frederick II of Prussia on a tour of prison inspection, was met by the cries of prisoners protesting their unjust imprisonment. While listening to these pleas of innocence, he noticed a lone prisoner in a corner unconcerned by the commotion. \ “Why are you here?” the king asked. “Armed robbery, Your Majesty.” \ “Were you guilty?” \ The man openly confessed, “Yes, Your Majesty. I entirely deserve my punishment.” \ At this Frederick summoned the jailer: “Release this guilty man at once. I won't have his presence corrupting all these other fine, innocent people living here.”] That story may or may not be true, but one thing is certain: in the kingdom of God...

## III. The Heart is Opened for Cleansing by Confession

- A. The key to confession is light— **1 John 1:5-7**, This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 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, purifies us from all sin. (God's light shows us our sin, so we can make a true confession— **Psa 90:8** (NKJV), You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.)
- B. We need God's searchlight shined on specific sins— **Psa 139:23-24**, Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (“What about general confessions?” – These help, if they remind us of specific sins that we end up personally confessing.)
- C. In God's light, the more specifically we see, the more clearly we can “confess our sins.” [**Charles Finney**: “Self-examination consists in looking at your lives, in considering your actions, in calling up the past, and learning its true character. Look back over your past history. Take up your individual sins one by one, and look at them. I do not mean that you should just cast a glance at your past life, and see that it has been full of sins, and then go to God and make a sort of general confession, and ask for pardon. That is not the way. You must take them up one by one. It will be a good thing to take a pen and paper, as you go over them, and write them down as they occur to you. Go over them as carefully as a merchant goes over his books; and as often as a sin comes before your memory, add it to the list. General confessions of sin will never do. Your sins were committed one by one; and as far as you can come at them, they ought to be reviewed and repented of one by one.”]

### **CONCLUSION:**

–**Confession opens our hearts for divine cleansing.** [From a hymn by Horatius Bonar: “I lay my sins on Jesus, \ The spotless Lamb of God; \ He bears them all, and frees us \ From every guilty load. \ I bring my guilt to Jesus, \ To wash my crimson stains \ White in His blood most precious, \ ‘Til not a spot remains.”] –These verses in 1 John help us ask some heart-searching questions: Have we been honest with ourselves and with God about our sins? Are we seeking or avoiding the convicting light of God's Word? Are we ready for God to search our hearts so we can see our secret sins in the light of His countenance? Are we ready to make a true confession?