

An In-Depth Study of the First Letter of Apostle John

[Part 2]

1 John 1:8-10 [NIV] *“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.”*

The sinner’s self-deception is the main subject that the apostle John continues to attack in this part of his sermon.

The person who says they are **not** a sinner, their self-deception may mean two things:

This person considers that they are not responsible for the sin committed.

It is all too easy to find all kinds of excuses behind which we can hide from reality.

We may blame our sin on heredity, our environment, our temperament or our physical condition.

We may claim that we have been misled by others and that caused us to sin.

It is natural to our Satan-influenced human nature to seek to avoid the personal responsibility for our sinful actions or thoughts.

Genesis 3:9-13 [NIV] *“But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

This seeking to avoid responsibility has been a human reaction from the very beginning of human history.

A person may insist they are **not** a sinner because their actions or thoughts have **not** caused anyone any harm, **not** even to themselves.

The apostle John cuts right across all this self-deception.

It is the apostle John’s insistence that when a person sins, acts contrary to God’s standards of conduct, defences, excuses and self-justifications are completely irrelevant.

The only response that will resolve the situation is humble and penitent confession to God and if need be to other people harmed by our sinful actions.

A person may believe that they have not in actual fact sinned.

This attitude of mind is very common among human beings.

In fact such people resent being called sinners. I have seen people so enraged by such a statement by a preacher that they have walked out of church meeting.

Their mistake is that they think of sin as the kind of thing that everyone sees and which gets into the newspaper.

Such people forget that most sin is a *“failing to hit the mark.”*

The Greek word is *“hamartia”* meaning a deviation from a prescribed law of our Creator God.

This is an action by omission or commission in thought, word or deed.

Jesus Christ gives us a very clear example of this type of sin.

Matthew 5:27-28 [NIV] *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

We need to apply this principle to other aspects of our life.

To fail to be as good a father, mother, wife, husband, son, daughter, workperson as we might have been is to sin.

In any event the person who says that they have not sinned, is in effect doing nothing less than calling our Creator God a liar, for God has said in His Holy Spirit inspired word, the Christian Bible, that all humanity has sinned.

Romans 3:23 [NIV] *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”*

No human being has ever lived a life that could earn them the glorious position of being given eternal life.

The apostle John is also condemning the person who claims that they are so far advanced in knowledge and their spiritual life, that sin has ceased to matter.

The true essence of Christian life is first to realise our sin, then to go to our Creator God for that forgiveness which can wipe out the past and for the cleansing which can allow us to live a new life.

Both of these are totally dependent on our accepting Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

This acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Saviour is not just a one-off experience but a continual attitude of mind.

The apostle John then says a very surprising thing from a human viewpoint.

John says that we can depend on God in His righteousness to forgive us if we confess our sins.

From a human, logical point of view, we might think that in His righteousness God would more likely condemn than to forgive.

The fact is that because God is righteous, He never breaks His Word, and we find that scripture is full of promises and examples of God’s mercy towards a person with a broken, contrite and penitent heart.

Psalms 51:16-17 [NIV] *“You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”*

It is the heart, the driving force of our reason to live that God looks at.

Psalms 34:18 [NIV] *“The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*

God sometimes uses the pain of disappointment or trouble to lead us to Him for help.

Isaiah 57:15-19 [NIV] *“For this is what the high and lofty One says, he who lives for ever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. I will not accuse for ever, nor will I always be angry, for then the spirit of man would grow faint before me, the breath of man that I have created. I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his wilful ways. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the LORD. “And I will heal them.”*

As God extends His forgiving grace towards us, as we humble ourselves before Him, it will lead to our praising Him for Who and what He is.

Isaiah 57:20-21 [NIV] *“But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.”*

This peace of mind will **never** come to those sinners who do **not** humbly confess their sins to their Creator God.

After this profound statement, that the Creator God makes through His spokesman Isaiah, God gives a very clear command to the spiritual leaders He has set over humanity.

Isaiah 58:1-2 [NIV] *“Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to my people their rebellion and to the house of Jacob their sins. For day after day they seek me out; they seem eager to know my ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.”*

Is this what is preached in the Christian churches today?

Or do we find a façade of Christian living that is **not** motivated by a humble and contrite heart?

Isaiah 66:1-2 [NIV] *“This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Where is the house you will build for me? Where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things, and so they came into being?” declares the LORD. “This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word.”*

Do Christian fellowships “tremble at God’s Word” today?

Do many **not** even know what God’s Word, the Christian Bible, says about how they should be conducting their lives as Christians?

1 John 2:1-2 [NIV] *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence, Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

The first thing we should notice in this passage is the great affection that the Holy Spirit working in and through the apostle John has for all Christians.

As the apostle John writes this sermon he must have been an old man.

He must have been the last survivor of his generation who had walked with and talked with our Saviour Jesus Christ in the days in which He walked the earth as a human being.

Too often human old age gets out of sympathy with youth.

This is **not** so with the apostle John who was reflecting the compassion that his Master and Saviour, Jesus Christ, had towards all human beings, both young and old.

Again the apostle John is writing to tell the people **not** to sin.

The apostle John does **not** lash them with his tongue but seeks to love them into repentance and to seek the forgiveness for their sins and to ask for the help of the Holy Spirit in their lives to resist future sins.

Christianity above all else is an ethical religion.

Christians are confronted with the demands of their Creator God, most accept these commands yet then universally fail to keep them perfectly.

This erects a barrier between God and human beings.

Isaiah 59:1-2 [NIV] *“Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.”*

Our Holy Creator God will **not** look on unholy sins, nor will He listen to our self-justifications.

If we read the rest of this chapter we will find it a very vivid description of human society down through human history.

The apostle John tells us very clearly that the only way back to a relationship with God the Father is through Jesus Christ, and His atoning sacrifice.

It is possible to use the two facts referred to in this passage of scripture, to consider that sin doesn't matter very much.

- a) Sin is universal; all humanity has sinned;
- b) We can receive forgiveness through accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Such deluded human thinking is very dangerous. Why?

- 1) A Christian is a person who has come to know the Creator God and the inevitable accompaniment of such knowledge must be obedience, because of Who and What God is.
- 2) A Christian claims that Christ lives in them yet there is **no** evidence of the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9 [NIV] *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.”*

In fact, without this indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ [Romans 8:9], we cannot be a Christian for the word Christian actually means “a little Christ.”

How many “Christians” realise this fact in churches today?

[To help you clarify your present condition I suggest you read our articles on this website under the main heading of “Holy Spirit”]

Being a Christian involves our imitating Jesus Christ in our lives.

Knowledge involves obedience and union involves imitation.

Therefore in a Christian life there can **never** be any inducement to think lightly of sin.

For sin cuts us off from the only Power that will enable us to live a Christian life, and in the end receive the gift of eternal life.

The tremendous thing about Jesus Christ, the Son of Man as well as the Only non-created Son of God, is that He has never lost His interest in, or His love for human beings.

Hebrews 4:14-16 [NIV] *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do **not** have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin. **Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.**”*

Jesus Christ has personally experienced exactly what it is like to be a human being.

Philippians 2:5-8 [NIV] *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, **being made in human likeness**. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross!”*

This was a choice that Jesus Christ made because of His deep love and compassion for every human being who has ever lived.

How are we to respond to this great love and mercy?

Romans 12:1-2 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, **this is your spiritual act of worship**. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

Two things are accomplished by such an act of surrender to our Creator God.

- a) We worship God in the **only** way that will be acceptable to Him as a Holy God.
- b) We will through yielding to the work of the Holy Spirit in us have our thought patterns and the actions they generate in us a child who is in the “*likeness*” [character] of God Himself.

A new being whom God will desire to have in His presence for eternity.