

Session 3

## *An Exposition of I John*

### *I John 1:9–2:7*

#### Scriptures

*I John 1:9*

*Romans 8:8*

*Psalms 32:5*

*Psalms 66:18*

*I Corinthians 1:9*

*Psalms 119:90*

*Psalms 103:14*

*Romans 5:20*

*I John 1:10*

*I John 2:1*

*I Peter 2:22*

*I John 2:2*

*Isaiah 53:6*

*I John 2:3*

*Matthew 22:36–39*

*I John 2:4*

*I John 2:5*

*I John 2:6*

*I John 2:7*

*I John 1:9* *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

By nature, man is born in sin and under its power. His righteousness is viewed by God as nothing more than filthy rags.

As far as God is concerned, there are *none righteous, no, not one, none that doeth good, no, not one*. Together, then, both Jew and Gentile *are all gone out of the way and together become unprofitable*.

The single greatest thing for a man to overcome is his belief that in his flesh, or more appropriately, by his flesh, he can be justified by God. The Word of God flatly disputes this.

*Romans 8:8* *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

Since it will never be by man's own merits that he can gain both fellowship and union with God, then it must come on the grounds of divine mercy. But for mercy to be given, there must first be a confession of sin.

*Psalms 32:5* *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

Without exception, in Scripture, in every age, and in every generation, forgiveness of sin demands that confession of sin precedes it. Thus, if a man desires divine forgiveness for his sins against God, then he must openly confess them and not deny their existence.

If sin remains unrepented of and men reject God's command to repent, then it is certain that God will not hear their prayer when called upon.

*Psalms 66:18* *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me.*

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Ps. 66:18*

*If I regard iniquity in my heart*—literally, "If I have seen iniquity in my heart." That is, If I have indulged in a purpose of iniquity; if I have had a wicked end in view; if I have not been willing to forsake all sin; if I have cherished a purpose of pollution or wrong. The meaning is not literally, If I have "seen" any iniquity in my heart—for no one can look

into his own heart, and not see that it is defiled by sin; but, If I have cherished it in my soul; if I have gloated over past sins; if I am purposing to commit sin again; if I am not willing to abandon all sin, and to be holy.

*The Lord will not hear me*—That is, He will not regard and answer my prayer. The idea is, that in order that prayer may be heard, there must be a purpose to forsake all forms of sin.

Without confession of sin and willingness to depart from it, all hope of receiving forgiveness is lost.

Consequently, God will neither pardon nor give mercy to those who continue to engage in sin without repentance for it.

For true forgiveness and pardon to be granted, there must be acknowledgment of the wrong done as well as a genuine desire not to do it again.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I John 1:9

*If we confess our sins*—Pardon in the Scriptures, always supposes that there is confession, and there is no promise that it will be imparted unless a full acknowledgment has been made. Compare Psalm 51; Psalm 32:1–11; Luke 15:18 ff; Luke 7:41 ff; Proverbs 28:13.

*He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.*

Because God is *faithful*, then provided there is genuine and sincere confession of sin, His promise to sinners is twofold: (1) He promises forgiveness; (2) He promises complete cleansing and thorough removal of sin.

In all things concerning the Christian and in every promise made to him, including the promise of forgiveness and removal of sin, the hope of fulfillment rests on God's faithfulness.

***I Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.***

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I Cor. 1:9

*God is faithful*—That is, God is true, and constant, and will adhere to his promises. He will not deceive. He will not promise, and then fail to perform; he will not commence anything which he will not perfect and finish. The object of Paul in introducing the idea of the faithfulness of God here, is to show the reason for believing that the Christians at Corinth would be kept unto everlasting life.

It is the nature and character of a holy God that what He has promised He will perform. This holds true regarding both His blessings and His judgments.

Those who are certain that God will judge should equally be certain that He will forgive.

Likewise, those who are certain that He will forgive must not forget that God's faithfulness demands judgment for unconfessed sin as well.

God's faithfulness to His people is seen throughout Scripture: He will not let them be tempted above which they are able, and He will likewise protect from evil those He has called to Himself.

Where sin, temptation, and the evil one dwell, there God's faithfulness is the strong abiding force that prohibits the called from being completely overtaken by sin.

God's faithfulness also extends much further than just to one person or a group of individuals. In fact, His faithfulness has extended, and will continue to extend, to every generation born on the earth.

Because of the faithfulness of God, there is not one generation or one group of people whom God has ever let down, if men heed His commandments and seek to do His will.

***Psalm 119:90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.***

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Ps. 119:90

*Thy faithfulness*—The accomplishment of thy promises.

*Is unto all generations*—Margin, “to generation and generation.” From one generation to another. The generations of people change and pass away, but thy promises do not change. They are as applicable to one generation as to another; they meet every generation alike. The people of no one age can lay any exclusive claim to them, or feel that they were made only for them. They are as universal—as much adapted to the new generations that come upon the earth—as the light of the sun, ever-enduring, is; or as the fountains and streams, which flow from age to age.

The Greek word for *forgive* is #863 *aphiémi*. Its definition from *Strong's Concordance* is “to send away, leave alone, permit.”

*HELPS Word-studies* defines the word as “properly, send away; release (discharge).”

From this definition we can see how forgiveness mirrors the scapegoat being sent away into the wilderness, symbolically revealing how God had removed sin from Israel (Lev. 16:8–10).

The Greek word for *cleanse* is #2511 *katharizó*. *Strong's Concordance* defines it as “to cleanse.”

*HELPS Word-studies'* definition is to “make pure (‘clean’), removing all admixture (intermingling of filth).”

While forgiveness provides for separating sin from the sinner, cleansing entails its complete removal. Hence, if a man sincerely, genuinely, and deeply regrets and therefore repents of his sin, then God will honor His promise to forgive him and cleanse him from all unrighteousness.

It is the character and nature of a holy God to forgive and provide mercy for those bound by an unholy nature contrary to divine holiness.

Because God is man's Creator, He fully knows his weak and feeble condition. Because the Lord knows the constitution of man's fallen and weak nature, He has promised to show divine pity to the penitent.

***Psalm 103:14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.***

Mercy is often connected to pity, and because of God's pity, He gives mercy for sin.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Ps. 103:14

*For he knoweth our frame*—Our formation; of what we are made; how we are made. That is, he knows that we are made of dust; that we are frail; that we are subject to decay; that we soon sink under a heavy load. This is given as a reason why he pities us—that we are so frail and feeble, and that we are so easily broken down by a pressure of trial.

*He remembereth that we are dust*—Made of the earth. Genesis 2:7; Genesis 3:19. In his dealings with us he does not forget of what frail materials he made us, and how little our frames can bear. He tempers his dealings to the weakness and frailty of our nature, and his compassion interposes when the weight of sorrows would crush us. Remembering, too, our weakness, he interposes by his power to sustain us, and to enable us to bear what our frame could not otherwise endure. Compare the notes at Isaiah 57:16 [*For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.*].

Human history has proven since the very earliest of time that sin abounds in all men. None have ever lived who did not sin repeatedly, often, and daily.

The Lord speaks of the unsaved as *sinner*s, simply because this defines who and what they really are.

If God never provided sufficient grace and mercy for sin, then all hope for heavenly union with Him would be lost.

Consequently, without divine pity and grace, men could never be properly reconciled to God.

***Romans 5:20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.***

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, Rom. 5:20

*The offence*—The offence which had been introduced by Adam, that is, sin. Compare Romans 5:15.

*Might abound*—Might increase; that is, would be more apparent, more violent, more extensive. The introduction of the Mosaic Law, instead of diminishing the sins of people, only increases them.

*But where sin abounded*—Alike in all dispensations—before the Law, and under the Law. In all conditions of the human family before the gospel, it was the characteristic that sin was prevalent.

*Grace*—Favor; mercy.

*Did much more abound*—Superabounded. The word is used no where else in the New Testament, except in 2 Corinthians 7:4. It means that the pardoning mercy of the gospel greatly triumphed over sin, even over the sins of the Jews, though those sins were greatly aggravated by the light which they enjoyed under the advantages of divine revelation.

***I John 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.***

Whenever a man denies his sin, it is evident that God's Word does not live in, nor is it adhered to, in his soul. By this it is easy to discern whether men have either confessed or denied their sin.

Practically, denial of sin and holding the truth are set in contrast with one another in order that sinners may know that embracing one will exclude the other.

Whenever the truth of God's Word truly resides in believers of Christ, then confession of their sin will follow.

But if a man denies his sin and will not agree with God that he is a sinner, then he cannot possess any true relationship with God, and neither will he possess any true affection for the truth.

This is because no one can truly and genuinely hold the truth of God's Word in his heart, love its purity, and rejoice in its message while denying the uncleanness that lives within himself.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I John 1:10

*We make him a liar*—Because he has everywhere affirmed the depravity of all the race. Compare the notes at Romans 1; 2; 3. On no point have his declarations been more positive and uniform than on the fact of the universal sinfulness of man. Compare Genesis 6:11–12; Job 14:4; Job 15:16; Psalm 14:1–3; Psalm 51:5; Psalm 58:3; Romans 3:9–20; Galatians 3:21.

*And his word is not in us*—His truth; that is, we have no true religion. The whole system of Christianity is based on the fact that man is a fallen being, and needs a Saviour; and unless a man admits that, of course he cannot be a Christian.

***I John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:***

Because of their sin and their own inability to enter God's presence in a state of sin, sinners need an *advocate*, someone to plead their cause to God. This advocate is *Jesus Christ the righteous*.

The Greek word for *advocate* is #3875 *paraklétos*. *HELPS Word-studies* defines the word as “(from 3844 */pará*, ‘from close-beside’ and 2564 */kaléō*, ‘make a call’)—properly, a legal advocate who makes the right judgment-call because close enough to the situation. 3875 */paráklētos* (“advocate, advisor-helper”) is the regular term in NT times of an attorney (lawyer)—i.e. someone giving evidence that stands up in court.”

As an advocate, Jesus gives divine evidence in God's heavenly court that His death for sin is sufficient to appease divine judgment for it.

He who sins, God's Word states, must die. Because of Christ's death for sin in taking the place of the sinner's death, God's judgment has been fulfilled and His punishment for sin exercised.

By paying the cost for sin, Jesus, as an Advocate, pleads that divine judgment has been met, and the justice of God was upheld.

The Son of God is more than able to enter God's divine presence and plead mercy for the penitent. It is here that we observe the great importance and significance of Jesus Christ's ministry as the sinner's advocate.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I John 2:1

The nature of his advocacy may be stated in the following particulars:

(1) He admits the guilt of those for whom he becomes the advocate, to the full extent charged on them by the law of God, and by their own consciences. He does not attempt to hide or conceal it. He makes no apology for it. He neither attempts to deny the fact, nor to show that they had a right to do as they have done. He could not do this, for it would not be true; and any plea before the throne of God which should be based on a denial of our guilt would be fatal to our cause.

(2) as our advocate, he undertakes to be security that no wrong shall be done to the universe if we are not punished as we deserve; that is, if we are pardoned, and treated as if we had not sinned. This he does by pleading what he has done in behalf of people; that is, by the plea that his sufferings and death in behalf of sinners have done as much to honor the law, and to maintain the truth and justice of God, and to prevent the extension of apostasy, as if the offenders themselves had suffered the full penalty of the law. . . .

(3) as our advocate, he becomes a surety for our good behavior; gives a pledge to justice that we will obey the laws of God, and that he will keep us in the paths of obedience and truth; that, if pardoned, we will not continue to rebel. . . .

*Jesus Christ the righteous*—One who is eminently righteous himself, and who possesses the means of rendering others righteous. It is an appropriate feeling when we come before God in his name, that we come pleading the merits of one who is eminently righteous, and on account of whose righteousness we may be justified and saved.

For the believer, the grounds for being both forgiven and made righteous by God reside in the holiness, righteousness, and obedience of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was in all respects holy and without sin.

***1 Peter 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.***

*Who did no sin* reveals the true character of the Savior. On the grounds of Christ's perfect righteousness, fallen man is redeemed. Because Christ is holy, righteous, and without sin, His people can be made those things through Him.

The eminence of the Son of God's own pure and holy righteousness is what provides the means of His being able to impart righteousness to those who believe upon Him.

***1 John 2:2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.***

The Greek word for *propitiation* is #2434 *hilasmós*. *HELPS Word-studies* defines it as "properly, propitiation; an offering to appease (satisfy) an angry, offended party. 2434 (*hilasmós*) is only used twice (1 Jn. 2:2, 4:10)—both times of Christ's atoning blood that appeases God's wrath, on all confessed sin. By the sacrifice of Himself, Jesus Christ provided the ultimate 2434 *hilasmós* ('propitiation')."

At its core, sin breaks, disregards, and sets at nothing divine will. In sin, men know the will of God but abandon it in favor of doing their own will instead.

***Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.***

He who does not go God's way goes his own way. Thus, if Christ did not seek out sinners, then men would forever remain estranged from Him.

The fallen nature of the sinner is never to initially turn to the Lord for forgiveness but rather to hide from God and deny that sin was ever committed.

Adam and Eve's behavior in the garden after sinning against the Lord illustrates this point (Gen. 3:8–14).

It is both right and righteous that God is greatly displeased with sinners, and men should not try to diminish the truth that His anger exists towards all who transgress His laws.

But because Jesus Christ took the place of both sin and the sinner, then Christ's death is the substitution for the sinner's death.

Through His Son's death the Lord deems that the penalty for man's sin has been met and God's justice has been satisfied.

*I John 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*

Those who have come to truly know God will keep His commandments. One also who has been cleansed of his sin and has come to know the Son of God will willingly, joyfully, and with great desire keep God's commandments.

For the truly saved, subjection to divine will is neither arduous nor difficult. It is not a burden but a blessing for the redeemed to yield obedience to God. It is He Who has saved them, and they will manifest no resistance whatsoever in yielding their entire lives to Him.

The two most significant commandments given by Jesus Christ are revealed in Matthew's gospel:

*Matthew 22:36–39 Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*

<sup>37</sup> *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

<sup>38</sup> *This is the first and great commandment.*

<sup>39</sup> *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

The greatest evidence that a man has truly kept Christ's Word is if he abides in God's love, directed toward both God and the people of God.

Hence, those who genuinely and sincerely love God will equally, and with a similar affection, love His people.

Ultimately, it is by the possession of divine love that men can accurately gauge if they are true disciples of Jesus Christ or not, since he who does not love neither knows God nor has any true relationship with Him.

*I John 2:4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

For the second time, the apostle reveals whom God considers liars: (1) those who refuse to confess themselves as sinners; (2) those who falsely claim and assume to know God and yet do not keep His commandments.

Thus, he who denies the presence of sin in himself is a liar, just as he who claims to know God but does not keep His commandments is also by divine revelation defined in Scripture as a *liar*.

There is no ambiguity on this point, and none should be looked for—that he who professes to know God but does not keep His commandments is a liar.

The Greek word for *liar* is #5583 *pseustés*. *HELPS Word-studies* defines the word as “properly, a liar; a person who falsifies, misrepresents (distorts, misleads).”

To lie and seek to deceive others about one's true relation with God proves that spiritual regeneration has never taken place. For none can truly love the Lord and at the same time fail to keep His commandments.

Thus, there are none, not even one, who truly know God, who will not keep His commands.

This sin is specific to those who either have no interest in the Lord, or falsely claim relationship with Him but actually have none.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I John 2:4*

*He that saith, I know Him*—He who professes to be acquainted with the Saviour, or who professes to be a Christian.

*And keepeth not his commandments*—What he has appointed to be observed by his people; that is, he who does not obey him.

*Is a liar*—Makes a false profession; professes to have that which he really has not. Such a profession is a falsehood, because there can be no true religion where one does not obey the law of God.

***I John 2:5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.***

The Greek word for *perfected* is #5048 *teleioó*. *Strong's Concordance* defines it as “to bring to an end, to complete, perfect. . . . Usage: (a) as a course, a race, or the like: I complete, finish (b) as of time or prediction: I accomplish, (c) I make perfect; pass: I am perfected.”

True obedience to divine law gives its fruit in the perfection of love in the obedient one.

If God's Word is kept by His people, then God's own love will be perfected in them.

Love is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, and all who are truly led by this Spirit will manifest fruit in their lives.

The increase and expansion of God's love in the Christian's heart causes him to know that he is in God and that God is in him. Ultimately, love and obedience cannot be separated.

Therefore, whenever there is an absence of divine love in those who profess to know God, there cannot nor ever will be any true obedience to Him.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible, I John 2:5*

*In him verily is the love of God perfected*—He professes to have the love of God in his heart, and that love receives its completion or filling up by obedience to the will of God. That obedience is the proper carrying out, or the exponent of the love which exists in the heart. Love to the Saviour would be defective without that, for it is never complete without obedience.

***I John 2:6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.***

If any claim relationship with Jesus Christ, the Scriptures reveal they should walk as He walked.

The standard for the Christian's behavior is therefore modeled in their Savior. Through Christ the believer has been born again, given a new spiritual heart, and become a completely new creature.

It is this spiritual transformation of becoming a new man through faith in the Son of God that allows for the believer to walk as his Savior walked.

So also, when men sincerely walk as Jesus walked, they will, like their Savior, be about the Father's business.

*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I John 2:6

*Ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked*—Ought to live and act as he did. If he is one with him, or professes to be united to him, he ought to imitate him in all things. Compare John 13:15. [*For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*]

When believers become imitators of Jesus Christ through pursuing His love and obedience to God, then they prove themselves as true followers of God.

***I John 2:7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.***

*Benson Commentary*, I John 2:7

“The new commandment,” says Macknight, “of which the apostle speaks, is that contained in 1 John 2:6. That Christ's disciples ought to walk even as he walked; and in particular that, as Christ laid down his life for his people, they ought to lay down their lives for one another, chap. 1 John 3:16. Thus, to walk as Christ walked, St. John, with great propriety, termed a new commandment, because, notwithstanding the precept to love one another was strongly enjoined in the law of Moses, consequently was not a new commandment, the precept to love one another as Christ loved us, was certainly a new commandment, and so is termed by Christ himself, (John 13:34,) and is thus explained and inculcated 1 John 3:16: He laid down his life for us, therefore we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

