



Sermon Title: Embracing Forgiveness (1 John 1:5- 2:2) – Part 3.

Note to Group Leaders:

Make sure each group member has a copy of the 'If...then' format for their personal use. Each will need to have room to write out the rest of the verses.

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. What is an experience you had when growing up with 'mud'? Was this an act of disobedience? What happened?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. What further information in this week's sermon did Pastor Henry give about Greek Gnostic philosophy?

2. In 1 John 1:6-10, he lays out his 'message' (1:5) by using 'If...(then) sentences. Fill in the following using the words from the verses (you will need a bigger sheet of paper):

v. 6 If we claim ...	(Then)...
v. 7 If we ...	(Then)...
v. 8 If we claim...	(Then)...
v. 9 If we ...	(Then)...
v. 10 If we claim...	(Then)...

What do you observe about these statements (repeated words; themes; contrasts, etc.) How does John speak against the aspects of Gnosticism with these verses?

3. Pastor Henry said that we by nature want to hide our sin and we don't want God to look at what we are doing. Then we experience the consequences, that of guilt and shame. We look for human solutions to resolve these issues. Discuss some of the human solutions. What doesn't work about them?

4. "The Apostle John implies in these verses that there is a Godly solution to the problem of guilt and shame in our lives, and a human solution." How did King David demonstrate both solutions? (Psalm 51:5; 32:3-5)

5. In what way do 1 John 1:7, 9 describe God's solution? How does God define: confession, repentance, forgiveness, cleansing?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. What was new for you in hearing the definitions of confession, repentance, forgiveness and cleansing? How will this affect your relationships with others this week?

2. How can our Group pray for you?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

2 Samuel 11:1-17

David and Bathsheba story

Psalm 32:3-5

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. ⁴For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. ⁵Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin. . . **51:5** Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

Isaiah 64:6

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.

Matthew 26:28

²⁸This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

1 John 1:5-2:2

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷But 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. ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. **2** My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

This week's writers:

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In his letter to the believers of that day, John spells out the characteristics of a true follower of Christ. John essentially gives three tests that reveal this: 1. What do you believe about Christ? 2. How are you living like Christ? 3. How are you loving like Christ? 1John 1:1-4 addresses the first question. Verses 5 - 10 and Chapter 2: 1-2 begin to address the second question - How are you living like Christ?

Dallas Willard tells the story of his granddaughter who has been found playing in the mud and has been cleaned up and told not to do it again. A day later the girl goes back to the mud and once again gets covered in it. Realizing she has been disobedient, she orders her grandmother not to look at her. Willard goes on to say that this little child is much like us when we do wrong. We too want to cover up our sin. This has been in our nature since Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden and then tried to cover up and hide from God.

How do we deal with feelings of the guilt and shame that sin creates? John implies that there is a Godly solution and a human solution. John refers to this in v. 8 when he writes, "If we claim to be without sin." He is referring to our sinful nature or predisposition to sin. Gnostics believed that a person can reach a state of enlightenment and closeness to God so that their sinful nature is eradicated, therefore incapable of sinning.

In other words, you can deny having a sin problem. You can even rename your sins and call them mistakes, failures or dysfunctions. But, unless and until you are willing to face your sin and call it what it is and take ownership for it, you are fooling yourself and cannot be set free from the guilt and shame you experience. Another human solution to deal with guilt is to rationalize away sin. (v. 10) Gnostics believe that it is only the spirit that matters and so it doesn't matter what you do with your body. People also try to justify their sin by comparing their spiritual lives with others and down playing their sins. In verse 6, John points out that we cannot separate the spiritual from the material, or belief from behaviour. When John says God is light, he reminds the Gnostics and the early Christians, as well as people today that light isn't just about knowledge but it is about behaviour. Truth is not just something we know- it is something we do. And so, some people try to rationalize away their guilt by comparing their spiritual life and priorities with others. Or, they will redefine morality by questioning the relevance of parts of the Bible for today and by stating that false guilt is being perpetuated by the outdated standards it presents.

True guilt is a gift from God. Just as pain warns you of physical danger to your physical body, true guilt warns you of dangers to your soul and spirit. It alarms you when you injure your soul and your relationship with God and others. Unless you acknowledge it and treat it, your soul will begin to slowly die. John is not talking about perfection here. He is talking about the direction you are pursuing - that your heart and life need to be aligned with Christ (the light) - always moving in His direction. King David illustrates what happens when you try to use human solutions to deal with the guilt and shame caused by sin. (2 Sam: 11 and Ps. 32). THERE IS NO HUMAN CURE FOR OUR GUILT AND SHAME.

John says that God has a solution: we can go to God and confess our sin to Him. (v. 9) Genuine confession is to take ownership for our sin; to acknowledge that I made the decision to sin. In Ps. 51 King David does this. We learn that David didn't just sin against God - he sinned against his wife, his family, against Bathsheba, and Uriah. He sinned against his generals and even his nation for betraying their trust. Sin always has consequences and often it hurts many others. If our confession is to be authentic, we need to feel that and understand that. In the end though, sin has only one target and that is God who is at the center of everything and every relationship. When we hurt someone, we hurt God.

If we remember that, the way we live our lives will be forever changed. When we sin, we violate God's holiness and Lordship. True repentance is required. Repentance is more than grieving over sin and confessing it to God. It is turning away from that sin and turning to the one who can make it right; the One who can forgive us, cleanse us and give us new life going forward.

Forgiveness is not forgetting, not excusing but forgiveness is a decision to give grace. Forgiveness releases someone from their debt and obligation. (Compare with the 'forgiveness of a bank loan). Forgiveness is the miracle of a new beginning. John promises us that with God all risk is removed. (v. 9) Because of Christ's death on the cross we can depend on this promise - if we confess, He will forgive. One more thing - John says that He will purify us from all unrighteousness. Purify means to cleanse and cleanse means to remove what doesn't belong. One author has written that while forgiveness releases us from guilt; cleansing removes our shame. While forgiveness takes care of our past; cleansing makes possible our future.