

*<sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-9 NKJV)*

Let me begin by saying that if you don't believe this passage is for believers, that's okay. This is not a salvific principle. It is not something you or I should ever break fellowship over. John is just saying that if we don't admit that we sometimes "miss the mark" (Greek meaning of sin) there will be real problems in our fellowship with the Lord and with each other.

You will remember on Sunday we began our reading of 1 John, studying about a group named the Gnostics. It was an attack that was coming from within the church itself and John the Apostle was answering the challenge. Some Gnostics had come to believe that they could live the Christian life in sinless perfection. They held the belief that they were spiritually perfect, so to speak, in Christ. They argue that their bodies sinned, but their spirits did not.

In the last couple of years, I've become aware that there are some who believe this passage or even 1 John was written to unbelievers and not believers. There are several reasons that this does not seem to be the case.

- 1) John is very clear in saying "if WE say...". He is including himself along with all believers and remember he is responding to the Gnostics who denied that they had sin in their lives. They believed that their spirits were made perfect in Christ and that they no longer had a sin problem. We means "we". It doesn't mean "you".
- 2) The way an unbeliever is saved is NOT by confessing his or her sins. We come to Christ by trusting in his finished work on the cross. We become Christians by "believing in Him" (John 3:16), "confessing with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believing in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead" (Romans 10:9-10). That is what saves us from eternal separation from God (hell). Confession of sin is not the means to be saved. Hence, this is not telling the lost how to be saved.
- 3) No where else in scripture is salvation discussed as confessing our sins, so we can logically deduce that this passage is talking about something else, and the context of the entire chapter is to believers who were denying their battle with sin. This denial of sin was disrupting their fellowship with other believers and with the Lord.

- 4) We must remember that the Bible wasn't divided up into chapters and verses until centuries after they were written. The very next verse reads, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." John isn't calling unbelievers "my little children". (1 John 2:1)

When I was a little boy in a Bible church, the pastor explained very well how these two verses fit into our walk with Christ. He introduced what he called the principle of "rebound". He suggested that sin, meaning "missing the mark" in Greek, was like missing the basketball hoop. He said confession was like the ball hitting the back board and "rebounding" the believer back into the game (the Christian life). I have avoided the term "rebound" because in my mind it trivializes the damage done by sin. It hurts the believer and it grieves God (Ephesians 4:30) The real point he was emphasizing is that once we become Christians our standing as a child of God is permanent. I've been discussing this for the last month. Our standing as being "righteous and justified" before the Father never changes. Once saved, we cannot lose our salvation. However our "state of being" at any given point may change. This means we might be walking in the Spirit when all of the sudden we "miss the mark" and we're suddenly walking in the flesh. By that, I mean that our "holy or godly living" (as urged by Peter and Paul) sometimes gets out of wack. We walk according to the flesh instead of the Spirit. Our pastor would say that we learn to "rebound and keep moving"! That means we don't dwell on our sin and get knocked out of the game. We REBOUND like missing the basket on a basketball court, and we continue in the game. I quote him,

*After salvation the sin nature remains a relentless adversary, tempting the believer to sin and live in carnality. When the believer sins, fellowship with God is destroyed, the filling of the Holy Spirit is temporarily lost, and spiritual progress ceases. Rebound is the simplest yet most incredible concept in the spiritual life. Rebound defeats sin. Guilt, anguish, remorse over past failures vanish knowing that God forgives and forgets all past sins. Rebound is our access to intimacy with the Lord, the gateway to divine power in our lives, our license to serve the Lord. Rebound opens the door to the wonderful freedom the grace of God offers to every believer in Jesus Christ. <sup>1</sup>*

Let's unpack what he is saying here. After salvation, we still have our sin gene. Although we are now indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we are not always "filled with the Holy Spirit". That means we're not letting the Holy Spirit lead, guide, and direct us and have His way in our life. That is different than the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that never leaves us after salvation. "Rebound", or I will call it "restoring sweet fellowship" is a simple process of agreeing with God as to our sinful conduct, and once again receiving His reassurance that it is paid for, forgiven, and over with. This sin we become involved with has no effect on our access to heaven and eternal life, rather it affects our fellowship and intimacy with the Lord. It affects it BECAUSE OF SOMETHING WE'VE LET GET IN THE WAY. God doesn't move from us, we move from Him.

John is telling us as Christians that "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." When the Holy Spirit convicts us (pricks our conscience not

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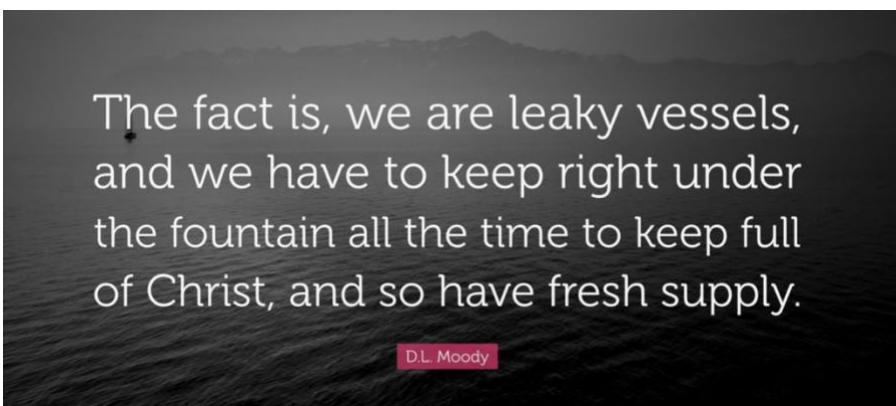
<sup>1</sup> Rebound and Keep Moving, RB Thieme

condemns us) that something we've thought, said, or done is wrong and is sin (ie. we've "missed the mark" of who we are in Christ), we simply agree with God (**homologeō** = same word, we agree) and say, "Lord, I've stepped out of who I am in you and what you desire of me. I receive the forgiveness that you paid for me on the cross." The verse then tells us that He is "faithful and just" to forgive us our sins. That means He is loyal and just to do not hold our sins against us. They've been paid for at Calvary. As I said Sunday, He perpetually cleanses (καθαρίζει = *katharizei* = "cleanses") us from all unrighteousness.

Some might think, "If I'm truly saved, why do I still mess up?" That's the problem with the idea of "sinless perfection". When you come to Him, He washes you and seals you, but He does not remove your propensity to sin. There is a difference between forgiveness and sinless perfection. **The enemy wants you to doubt what Jesus did because of what you do. Don't exalt what you do above what Jesus did on the cross.**

It is logical to ask, "Well if Jesus paid for my sins on the cross, why would I ever have to be forgiven again". That reminds me of the guy that went to a marriage counselor for counseling because he had no intimacy in his marriage. The counselor asked him, "Well, do you tell her regularly that you love her?" He answered, "Well, no. I told her that I loved her when we got married, and if I change my mind, I'll let her know." That's a problem of fellowship, not of standing as the husband in the relationship. I know it's a funny example, but it shows how ludicrous it can be to not simply confess your shortcomings to a loving, forgiving Father who desires to be in sweet fellowship with you.

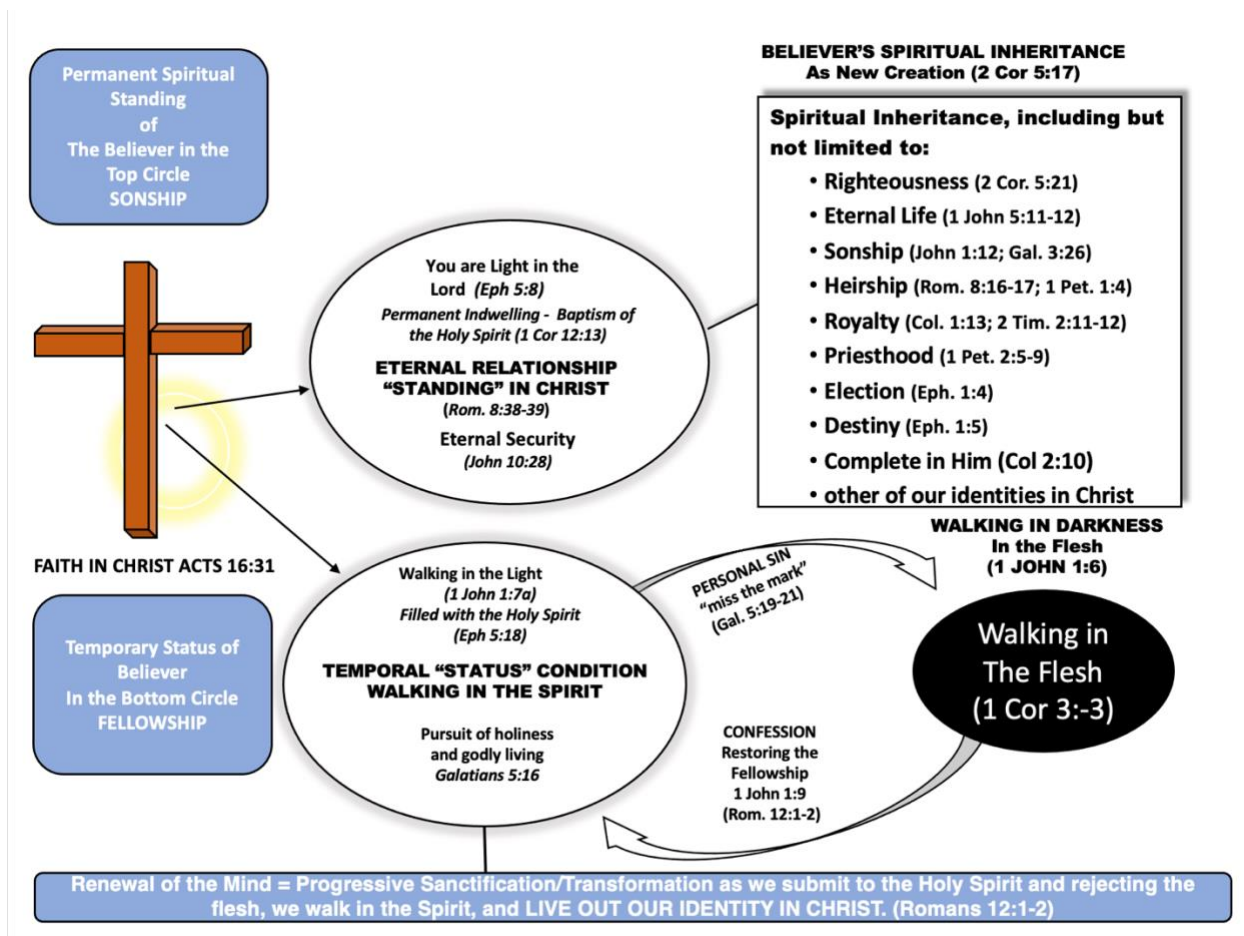
As I said at the beginning of this teaching, If you don't believe this passage is for believers, that's okay. I do after much study and reflection. This is not a salvific principle (something that sends us to heaven or hell). It is not something you or I should ever break fellowship over. John is just saying that if we don't admit that we sometimes "miss the mark" there will be real problems in our fellowship with the Lord and with each other. And scripture gives us an outline to move ourselves (open ourselves up to) back to



pursuing the will of God for our lives. The great pastor Dwight L. Moody said it well in talking about how frail we are in ourselves. He said, "The fact is, we are leaky vessels, and we have to keep right under the fountain all the time to keep full of Christ, and so have

fresh supply. He's saying that it is a constant decision to draw near to the Lord and submit to His direction for our lives.

1 JOHN 1:9 CONFESSON: Restoration of Fellowship



## VERSES CITED ON CHART ABOVE

Acts 16:31 "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.."

Ephesians 5:8 <sup>8</sup>For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

1 Corinthians 12:13 <sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

Romans 8:38-39 <sup>38</sup>For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup>nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

John 10:28 <sup>28</sup>And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

1 John 1:7 <sup>7</sup>But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Ephesians 5:18 <sup>18</sup>And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

Galatians 5:16 <sup>16</sup> I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Galatians 5:19-21 <sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, <sup>21</sup> envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 3:3 <sup>3</sup> for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?

1 John 1:9-10 <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

**Spiritual Inheritance, including but not limited to:**

- Righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21)
- Eternal Life (1 John 5:11-12)
- Sonship (John 1:12; Gal. 3:26)
- Heirship (Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:4)
- Royalty (Col. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:11-12)
- Priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5-9)
- Election (Eph. 1:4)
- Destiny (Eph. 1:5)
- Complete in Him (Col 2:10)
- other of our identities in Christ

1 John 5:11-12 And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. <sup>12</sup> He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

The other verses beginning with sonship can be looked up by the reader as there is no more room on this handout.

**COMPLETE IN HIM: <sup>9</sup> For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; <sup>10</sup> and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. (Colossians 2:10)**

**[You have all the spiritual resources we need to live godly lives]** But when we do sin, God's forgiveness is there again and again and again. We need only receive it.

Ideas used in the illustration were adapted by Pastors Faber McMullen and Larry Lengyel (Union Grove Baptist Church of Whitehall) from Diagrams of Rebound – RB Thieme Jr, Bible Ministries ©1997