

Confession of sins

By Leon King

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. — 1 John 1:8-9 (KJV).

There are many, in our days, who believe there is no reason to confess sins to God. Some think that since we have been forgiven for our sins once for all, that it is senseless to confess our sins. The writer understands that, but believes the Scriptures teaches otherwise.

The wording of 1 John 1:8-9 is interesting. “*If we say that we have no sin...*” The Holy Ghost directed the pen of the Apostle John to use both the term ***sin*** and ***sins*** in these two verses. Is there any difference other than the fact that one is singular and the other plural? We are all sinners – even after we are born again and are converted - the sin principle remains in us even when we are born from above. It appears to me that John is pointing to the sin principle or sin nature when he uses the singular term ***sin***. It is not this principle that we are bidden to confess, but rather to confess our ***sins***. This points to the actual known transgressions. We commit sins because we are sold under sin. Adam transgressed by his sin and passed the nature of ***sin*** to all his posterity. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

But we are of the truth, little children. Those who are of the truth do not deceive themselves by thinking they have no sin. On the contrary, they know it and admit it to themselves, to God, and to others. Did not God

forgive us our sins for Jesus' sake? The apostle John says that very thing in the next chapter of 1st John.

1 John 2:12 (KJV) *I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake.*

The term "are forgiven" in this verse is, in the Greek language, in the perfect, passive tense. This means that our sins have been forgiven us in the past and are still forgiven us. So, why do we confess our sins based on 1 John 1:9 in order to be forgiven and to receive cleansing from all unrighteousness? Have we not already been cleansed? Have not our sins already been forgiven us for his name's sake? Have not our consciences been purged that there should be no remembrance of sins?

Hebrews 10:1-2 (KJV) *For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.*

Does this mean that the person purged can never again remember that he has sins? No, that is not the idea. He has made peace with God once for all through the blood of Christ. He has passed from death unto life and shall never come into condemnation. His conscience has been renewed and the truth of his once for all forgiveness from condemnation is taught him from the word of God. He will never again have to make peace with God. Peace has been made once for all by the one offering for sin. The question is this. Can a Christian violate his conscience? Yes, he certainly can. That is why Paul said, "*And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a **conscience** void of offence toward God, and toward men.*" – **Acts 24:16 (KJV)**. If Paul could never have violated his conscience, he would never

have spoken these words. It requires diligence to always have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

When Paul walked in the light, as he is in the light, he had fellowship Jesus Christ and with others, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleansed him continually from all sin and defilement. There was no need of confession since he had not violated his conscience. If he did not walk in the light, but walked in darkness, he violated his conscience and breached his fellowship with other believers and with God. His relationship remained intact. Having been justified by faith, he had peace with God – but his walk had broken the fellowship.

1 John 1:7 (KJV) *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son **cleanseth** us from all sin.*

The words "to cleanse," in 1st John 1:9, comes from the Greek word "katharizo kath-ar-id'-zo." This word is otherwise translated in our Authorized Version as: "cleanse 16, make clean 5, be clean 3, purge 3, and purify. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb "cleanse" as: "To make morally or spiritually clean; to purify or free from sin or guilt...To make clean, purify, free from dirt or filth." Let us notice some other passages that use the term "cleanse" or a form of that word:

2 Corinthians 7:1 (KJV) *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse** ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

How does one cleanse himself from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit? He is not born again – again. This is much like what is written in John 13. This is the foot washing chapter in the book of John. Peter said, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Thou shalt never wash my feet." (John

13:6-8). But Jesus said to Peter, *"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me... He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all."* (John 13:8,10).

The play on words in this passage is remarkable. The expression *"He that is washed..."* is in the passive, perfect tense. This means one that has been bathed in the past and is still bathed. The Greek word **louo** which is translated "washed" gives the idea of washing a dead body. Such a one needs not to be bathed again. He needs his feet washed but he does not need to be bathed if he has part and lot with Christ. The term "to wash his feet" comes from a different Greek word - **nipto**. This word means to cleanse or wash one's self. It never gives the idea of a bath. This is precisely the picture we have of our once-for-all forgiveness of sins or having been washed. That never has to be repeated – for to lay again that foundation is to crucify the son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.

Our feet (our walk) become defiled – and when defiled, we must wash or cleanse ourselves. We do that by confessing our sins to God. God is faithful to assure us of forgiveness of sins, but also cleanses us from **all** unrighteousness – even the things of ignorance. The following verse is presented in the same sense as 2nd Corinthians 7:1:

James 4:8 (KJV) *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. **Cleanse** your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

Christians are admonished to judge themselves. On the one hand, we are not to judge our work as the Lord's servants—but leave it till the day of the Lord when the thoughts of the hearts shall be made manifest—then shall every man have praise of God.

Yet, we are to judge ourselves in this life. When we judge ourselves, we pass sentence on our own ways or habits as being contrary to the will of God. The context of the following verse is in connection with the Lord's Supper, but the principle remains so in all things. In judging ourselves, we avoid the chastening hand of God. God chastises all his children—every son that he receives—but never condemns them.

1 Corinthians 11:31-32 (KJV) *For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.*