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1 John 1:8-10 - Fellowship Intrinsicly Pure

1 John 1:8-10 “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”

We find ourselves in 1 John. Sin is not a word that we oftentimes associate with the birth of Christ; oftentimes, we don't even bring up the word sin. Yet, it is the naming of the Christ child that is directly connected to sin. If you remember, specifically in Mathew 1:21,

“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

That was the reason why He was named Jesus, Savior, the One who saves. So, what is He saving us from? Well, sin. I know that the perception is, “I need to be safe from some physical malady or problem or issue in my life; forget about sin.”

One of the great passages, in fact, Connie and I were talking about it not too long ago, in Mark 2:3-12. In which you have this paralytic and He's actually put down the roof of the house of Christ in Capernaum, they cut a hole in the roof because there's so many people wanting to be healed. They put this paralytic down and Christ says, “your sins are forgiven.” Of course, people go, “Well, it's not the sins that we're worried about. The guy is a paralytic and needs to be healed.” Then Jesus poses this interesting question, “Which do you think is harder, to heal the man of the sickness or to forgive his sins?” But we know that all He had to do was speak and the man was healed, and He walked up, and he was miraculously healed. Jesus would have to die for his sins to be forgiven. Which do you think is easier? Scripture begins to reveal to us the marvel of the work of Christ and why He came; He came to save sins.

1 John 1:9. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

So, this wonderful promise that He makes is underlined in this conditional clause “if”. In fact, 1 John 1:8-10 all start with that little word “if”. We can be forgiven. Why is it people don't come to Christ to be forgiven? Why is it that they think “that's not really a necessary thing,” or maybe their thought is that “it's impossible for my sins to be forgiven.” What is it about the whole thing that causes us to lie, causes us to deceive ourselves? In many respects, not even admitting that we have sin. The passage starts off this way, in 1 John 1:8,

“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

Of course, the word “sin” in the Greek comes from a word that means *to miss the mark*. It means *to go astray from the way of perfection*, more specifically *going away from God's way*. So, the question that you really have to ask yourself is, are you going God's way in every area of your life? You'd have to come up with the conclusion “No, I'm not. I'm not going God's way. I've strayed away from His way.” That would be sin; straying away from perfection as Romans 3:23 so aptly puts it,

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”

Well, that's the question. Now, when confronted with such a question, it's easy to begin to make excuses or to point your finger at somebody else, or to say, “I'm not guilty;” to even deny the validity of the charge against you. “No, I'm really a good person. I'm a really good person.” Scripture says once you go into that realm, you're just in the realm of lies. You're not being truthful. See the whole thing about salvation is you have to come clean. You have to be truthful but it's pretty hard. We recognize this throughout Scripture. In fact, the Bible, in particular in the Old Testament, begins to uncover all these issues in our lives. You begin to realize that wow, I lie to myself in a lot of different ways. It all started, but wouldn't you know it, in the garden. So, we have to go all the way back to the garden. If you look with me in Genesis 3, and you remember that one sin that Adam and Eve had faced. At that time, there weren't a whole lot of commandments. Fundamentally, it was “Don't mess with that tree.” Why they were even hanging around it, I don't know. It's just the nature of man like Paul says in Romans 7:15, the things that You tell me not to do, that's the very thing I want to do. So, “Keep off the grass.” I want to walk on that one. Genesis 3, you begin to see the temptation that draws the woman. What is interesting to me about the passage is that it says in Genesis 3:6,

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate...”

I mean, it had all kinds of promises to it. The passage goes on and it says in Genesis 3:7,

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.”

For the first time, they saw evil. Up to that point, they only saw good; but now they had the knowledge of evil as well. I've often wondered, I'm not exactly sure where they got the idea that it was an apple tree that was the part of the sin. Of course, it may have been the computer back then and they decided to go with it, but it seems as if it was probably the fig tree. And to me, the irony of it all is that they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves. I can just see God going, “Have you messed with the tree?” Then they go, “Tree? What tree?” Ok, so it's clear that there's obvious denial within the passage and in Genesis 3:8,

“They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

Well, isn't that one of the first things we do with our sins? We hide ourselves. God is ominous. He's powerful. He's scary if you think about it, especially if you do something wrong.

Genesis 3:9. "Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?'"

It's like you could hide from God, really?

Genesis 3:10. He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

Genesis 3:11. And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

"I was afraid." One of the first things that hits us when we do something wrong. Well, God has actually placed a conscience within us. Romans 2:15, you have a conscience within you. A sense of right and wrong. You do something wrong, and even when you're just a little tike, you knew that you ought to hide it or hide yourself or do something to run. You hide yourself because you're afraid. The first thing in our mind isn't naturally, "You know what? I need to come clean with this. I just have to admit it. I'll just go before God and say, 'You know what? I messed up. I did something wrong. I did something terrible.'" Because wait a minute, you're just way too afraid to admit it. As the passage goes on, what's interesting is not only does Adam and Eve begin to try to hide from this, but then, as Adam is questioned, he then turns and blames his wife. He not only blames his wife, but he blames God because he says, "the woman you gave me." See, "I was ok until you gave me a woman, and then she messed me up." Of course, it's not like he had any choice in the matter; but the picture is interesting. Then she blames the serpent, and we just have a blame game. But isn't that the way we handle sin? You try to hide your sin at first. You're afraid, you're scared, you don't want to admit it. You might even throw out some excuses, you rationalize, you do all kinds of things to cover it up. You try to hide your shame yourself; and the graciousness of the passage as it goes on is God slaughtered the sheep or lamb and covered them. We begin to see the first picture of God's desire to cover them up. We would picture that God just wants to expose us, but God wants to cover you up; and that's His heart.

When you come into the second story in Genesis 4 and you have this guy by the name of Cain, *the gotten* one, that is born. The parents are Adam and Eve. Up to a point, I guess he's feeling pretty good about coming to God and bringing his first fruits; but on this particular occasion, we understand that he didn't. In fact, the way that the passage reads in Genesis 4:3,

"So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground."

"It came about in the course of time." The best way to describe that particular phrase is *at the end of days*. The best way to interpret it is that he was very lackadaisical about coming to God with the sacrifices, and he fundamentally gave God his leftovers. If you go into the book of Malachi, you begin to see God coming before his people, and He goes, "You're sacrificing your

lame, you're sacrificing you're broken, you're sacrificing your leftovers to Me. Should I be accepting of this? I mean, you wouldn't do that to your governor. You wouldn't do that to the dignitaries. Why would you bring your leftovers to Me?" Now, there's nothing in the passage that says that they had to bring the offerings; but it was a sign that they wanted to have a relationship with God. So, they brought their offerings. However, Cain didn't want to bring his best and he got tired about it. Here again, Malachi 1:13 says that you come before the throne and you say, "How tiresome it is that I have to do this." And Cain was feeling that way. There's an interesting contrast in Genesis 4:4,

"Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;"

In other words, he brought the best and it says because of this, God had regard for the offering of Abel. Now, he had regard for the offering of Abel because, why? He gave his best. There was an interesting picture with Abel that he really loved God. If you really love somebody, you prepare the best for them, you don't just throw things on the table. It's a sign that you really care for them. There's nothing that says that Cain was cursed within the text because he didn't bring the best. It just says that God was pleased and had regard for Abel's offering. Don't you think it's interesting that jealousy and bitterness starts creeping into Cain and he wants to kill his brother? "That stupid brother of mine makes me look bad." That's the first thing on his mind. He's got to get rid of this guy because he's making him look bad. Often, I think of people, why do they get so angry when somebody else is doing the right thing? Because it makes them look bad. So, they get hostile, angry and upset because somebody made them look bad. That's what sin does. It's interesting the way we respond.

In Psalm 32, the psalmist begins to talk about the effect of sin in your body. He says this, "I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away." (Psalm 32:3) The thought is, if I could just suppress it, if I could just ignore it, if I could just pretend like it doesn't exist, or maybe I blame somebody else, or maybe I could even deny the reality of sin. Let's just erase the absolutes, no more absolutes. "If we could just erase those," people think, "Well, I could feel ok," but they still feel guilty. They know what's wrong. There's something inside of them that, like Isaiah 57:20 says, they're like the surf of the sea that can't be quiet. They toss and turn. Why? Because sin in and of itself is destructive. Christ wants to free us from all the pain and the sorrow. As you go through the Old Testament in particular, you begin to see that God calls certain ones to give pictures of hope. For instance, you have a picture of Noah, and God says, "I'm going to preserve humanity through this individual." So, he brings in his family and you see the eight people go in the ark and they are preserved through the destruction of the world. You go, "Finally, we have preservation of a household." Well, Shem, Ham, and Japheth go, and they began to populate the Earth and shortly after that; let's see, Tower of Babel is built. Then you see all kinds of sin begin to permeate. We go, "I thought we were preserving something." And the answer is we were, but we failed. You see, God calls somebody like Abraham out and He says, "What we're going to do with you is we're going to provide a great thing," but we realize that no matter how

great the man was and how great his faith was, he couldn't continue the provision. Moses couldn't continue the law. The law couldn't make anybody better. It could hold people back from doing what was wrong; but it seems like the more of the law, the greater the problems that ensued out of the rejection and the rebellion man was trying to fix. And God was calling them to do this; but in every case it was important to see the failings of man and you begin to see and read in the Old Testament the frustrations of Moses. In fact, on many occasions he goes, "These are Your people, not mine. I don't think I can handle them anymore." God is demonstrating no matter how great the desire, no matter how great the pursuit.

You even have a man named Joshua, and he's leading the people into the promised land; but the promised land doesn't end up to be too promised.

By the time you come to the book of Judges, every man does what is right in his own eyes, and he just can't seem to handle any kind of success. He begins to get arrogant and hostile, and before long things are worse than they've ever been, and the book of Judges begins to reveal that. All the way through Scripture, we see the failures of man to try to make things right; but they can't. So, out of that comes the promise of the Messiah. Now, we know that all the way at the beginning of Adam and Eve, the promise was to Eve that One is going to come and He's going to crush the head of the serpent. He's going to win, and the desire was, "maybe it's this guy, maybe it's Moses, maybe it's Abraham," but we begin to see them fail one after the other and realize it has to be more than just man. It has to be the power of God. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive, but we don't want to confess. We're scared. We don't know what's going to happen. I mean, if I admit that I've done something wrong, how will that make me look? I mean, I've got to protect all of these things, and besides the fact, God is just plain mean. You start reading the laws and wow, He has really high standards and I don't think I could ever meet them. So, what we want to do is erase the standards and get rid of them.

As you read the prophecy that is given to us, I think it's remarkable, to the best of my knowledge, up to the book of Isaiah the prophet, you would have no idea how the Messiah would come to Earth. You'd have no idea; but Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 9:6 for the first time. Somebody asked me this the other day, they go, "Why would God come as a child?" Well, I can tell you about the context in the book of Isaiah. In fact, in Isaiah 57 it will probably convey the point a little stronger. God begins to display His anger over the children of Israel, and you go, "Why?" Here's the reason why, they're killing their children. They're murdering their children. They're putting them on an altar and they're sacrificing them to the God of Molech. Would you not be angry about that? The passage starts off and it says in Isaiah 57:1,

"The righteous man perishes, and no man takes it to heart;
And devout men are taken away, while no one understands.
For the righteous man is taken away from evil,"

Where is the righteous man? I mean, people start doing evil, and wickedness starts permeating the earth, and before long, everybody gets silent about what right is. In fact, one of the

statements that's made in Isaiah 5 is, they "call evil good, and good evil." They just confuse everything. So the question is posed. Where's the good guy? You can't find him. The power of the unrighteous begin to show their ugly head.

The indictment is given in Isaiah 57:5,

"Who inflame yourselves among the oaks,
Under every luxuriant tree,
Who slaughter the children in the ravines,
Under the clefts of the crags?"

Slaughtering children, really? I can't think of anything more evil than that. Slaughtering children. So, God, in His compassion and His love demonstrates in Isaiah 8. He turns to Isaiah and He says, "Isaiah, you have kids, here's what we're going to do. We're going to tell the people that there's going to be a sign given to them."

Isaiah 8:16-17. "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will even look eagerly for Him."

Now, those two verses are basically saying that they're not going to understand what Scripture is telling them, so bind it up, and I'm going to speak to them through prophecy of children.

Isaiah 8:18. "Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion."

The testimony is bound, the word of God is bound, but what we're going to do is we're going to speak to you through prophecy. Now, what this does is if you believe that God is going to talk to you at a very crucial time, and they're going to have many crucial times with all the attacks of other nations, if you believe, God is going to talk to you through the signs of children. Guess what you're not going to do? You're not going to kill the children.

Isaiah 9:2. "The people who walk in darkness
Will see a great light;
Those who live in a dark land,
The light will shine on them."

Isaiah 9:3. "You shall multiply the nation,
You shall increase their gladness;
They will be glad in Your presence
As with the gladness of harvest,
As men rejoice when they divide the spoil."

Then you read that wonderful text, Isaiah 9:6. Underline it with me.

“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

He gives the prophecy for the first time, and God goes, “Yeah, now try to kill Him.” And all that time they began to look for the Messiah now being born.

Why would he be born in a manger? That's a bizarre thing. Why would he be born in Bethlehem? Well, the prophecy comes out of Micah 5, which tells us that the One whose beginnings were from eternity past would come out of Bethlehem. What's the context of Micah? The context of Micah is this, that the shepherds- God's people that are shepherding God's people, have been leading them astray; and they've been slaughtering and abusing and misusing them. These are the shepherds that have been living in Jerusalem. They've been living in the big cities, so to speak, and they're the dignitaries, and they're taking advantage of all of the people. God says, “Ok, this is what we're going to do. We're going to go back to Bethlehem.” Now, if you remember, there was another guy born in Bethlehem. His name was David, and he was a shepherd boy. It was because he was a shepherd boy that he was called; because he was willing to sacrifice his life for sheep. He was willing to sacrifice, and God says, “This is a guy after my own heart. This is a good shepherd.” So, he goes back to Micah, and he goes, this is where the Messiah is going to be born; in the place where good shepherds live. Shepherds that will actually take care of their sheep. In fact, when Jesus is born, shepherds will be keeping watch over their flock, even in the nighttime; because this is where good shepherds live. It'll be a wonderful picture of that, won't it?

Luke 2 is the great fulfillment of this, isn't it? In Luke 2, we see that wonderful day in which it was time for the Savior to be born, and not a minute too soon. Because isn't it like the world to try to make things better and all they do is make things worse? So, by the time we come on the scene and the Messiah comes on the scene, Caesar Augustus is in charge. Obviously, trying to look out for his own good, we know that during his time, Josephus writes that the Jews are under great agitation. They're very upset with the fact that they're in bondage under Rome and they're fighting against it. So, he's got to calm everything down and take control. One of the ways that you take control is you do a census, and you start moving people around to where you think they need to go. You pull them away from their comfort zones and you put them back in someplace where they're not so comfortable, so they can't rally around and rebel. So, what do you do? You do a census so that they're taxed, but they have to go back to the place of their birth and people have to begin to move. Well now you're in control and you begin to dissipate all those rebellions.

It is interesting that in Acts 5 you read of a Judas, that during the second part of the census began to rebel. So, we know that there was a lot of rebellion going on and people were in

disarray. But in the midst of this, there was a couple that was not rebellious; and because they were not rebellious, God was going to direct them to the place that they needed to be. Bethlehem, where the Good Shepherd would be born, and it would be most evident. Now, the interesting scenario of this is that it gives us this picture of the fact that a Savior is going to be born. Who would rush to God to be their savior? The answer would be, probably not many people; because as you go all the way back to Exodus 20, what you see is the children of Israel are going to Moses saying, "You go up to God. He's too bad and powerful for us to mess with. Besides, we're sinners." So, what sinner wants to go before a powerful and ominous God? Nobody wants to do this. What do you think God would do to demonstrate that He loves you? He's not going to wring your neck. He's going to save you. What would be the sign that would have to be given?

Luke 2:8. "In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night."

Luke 2:9. "And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened."

Why should we be afraid of the glory of the Lord? It's the glory of the Lord. It's such a wonderful thing, but they were afraid. Do you know why? We're all sinners. I mean, if the glory of the Lord started shining right now, I'm sure we'd be rushing through our mind going, "Ok, what did I not ask for forgiveness for? Because the glory of the Lord is literally in our presence." So, they were afraid. It's natural they were afraid, and left to our own vices and devices, we would hide ourselves like Adam and Eve. We'd shun the light as they probably did; but the angel says, "You don't need to be afraid; for I bring you good news." That's the word "Gospel". What's the good news? You don't have to be afraid to admit the truth. You see, 1 John says, "if you confess your sins." That's a conditional clause. "Then he is faithful." He's faithful to do exactly what His Father had told Him to do, and that's forgive your sins, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do."

John 3 says, Jesus declared, "I didn't come to condemn you. I came to save you."

"Oh no, you're God. You're going to wipe us out."

So, here's the sign:

Luke 2:12. "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Do you know what God even did for us? God tied His hands in swaddling clothes. It's God in the flesh. He says, "What, you think I'm going to wring your neck? You won't even see My hands." And we have this baby in the most vulnerable position that could ever exist; and God says,

“See? I came to save you, not condemn you.” The whole picture of the birth of Christ says, just admit that you're wrong. It's ok. Why are we afraid to just admit we're wrong?

John 1:9. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Just admit it. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light, and for this wonderful moment, the shepherds come, and they gather around. What do you think they're thinking? “I think He loves me. I think He's not here to hurt me. He's here to save me.” The picture couldn't get any clearer than when you see Him on the cross.

Man still wants to argue about his sin. He still wants to defend himself. He still wants to try to make himself look good. I mean, hypocrisy is all over the place. Just admit it. The whole picture in the epistle of John is that God is Light; and what he demands from you is to be transparent. He doesn't demand you to be transparent at a threat to your soul. He calls upon you to be transparent when there's no condemnation any more to you. He says, “Just come clean.” And you say, “Well, God's trying to hurt me.” He's trying to free you.

Galatians 5:1 says that it was for freedom that Christ came, to set you free. You're not going to get better by holding on to it. You're not going to get better by suppressing it. You're not going to get better by making excuses for it or blaming somebody else. No where in that are you going to get better; but God will free you, you'll be able to breathe again, and you'll realize “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). What a wonderful day, the birth of Christ.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your loving kindness to us and for the fact that You came to earth. Even though you were equal with God, You didn't take that equality with God and grasp it; but You emptied yourself and became obedient to the point of death. Even the death on the cross. That, though You were rich, You became poor, that we might be wealthy in Your righteousness. This is about truth, and this is about truth setting us free; and this is why You came. “You should call his name Jesus. He'll save His people from their sins.” If you're struggling with things in your life- anger, anxiety, all kinds of sins that can easily beset us; God already knows. Just admit it. The wonderful word “confess” *homologeō* is conveying to us that we agree with Him. We're wrong, He's right, and He says, “Done. It's over with. I've paid the price and you can breathe again.” Enjoy the life that God has for you. Enjoy Christmas in a different way this year.