

Lesson #8

**MAINTAINING OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD**

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous  
to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

***1 John 1:9***

- I. If Anyone Sins**
- II. Sinning After Being Saved**
- III. The Lord Having Borne All Our Sins**
- IV. The Need for Confession**
- V. An Advocate with the Father**

# Maintaining Our Fellowship with God

## IF ANYONE SINS

After we are saved, we should sin no more. John 5 records the incident of the Lord Jesus healing one who had been sick for thirty-eight years near the pool in Bethesda. After the man was healed the Lord met him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; sin no more so that nothing worse happens to you" (v. 14). John 8 speaks of the Lord Jesus forgiving a woman who had committed adultery. He said to her then and there, "From now on sin no more" (v. 11). Once we are saved, we are charged by the Lord to sin no more! As saved ones, we surely should not continue in sin.

## SINNING AFTER BEING SAVED

Since a Christian should not sin and should not continue in sins, is it then possible for a Christian not to sin? The answer is yes! It is possible for Christians not to sin because we have God's life within us. This life does not sin. It cannot tolerate any trace of sin. This life is as holy as God is holy. The life within us makes us very sensitive to sin. If we walk according to the sense of this life and if we live by this life, we will not sin.

However, it is possible for Christians to sin. We are still in the flesh. If we do not walk according to the Spirit and live in life, we can sin at any time. Galatians 6:1 says, "Brothers, even if a man is overtaken in some offense..." First John 2:1 says, "My little children...if anyone sins..." It is possible for Christians to be overtaken by sins. There is still the possibility of sinning. First John 1:8 says, "If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves." Verse 10 says, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar." Hence, our experience shows us that it is possible for Christians to fall accidentally into sin.

Will a saved person who has fallen accidentally into sin still perish? No! The

Lord said, "And I give to them eternal life, and they shall by no means perish forever, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28). In other words, once a person is saved, he is saved forever. "They shall by no means perish forever." Nothing can be surer than this! First Corinthians 5 speaks of a brother who had committed fornication. Paul said, "To deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" (v. 5). Even though the flesh of a believer who sins may be destroyed, his spirit will still be saved.

Does this therefore mean that after a person is saved, it does not matter whether he sins? No! If a person sins after he is saved, there will be two terrible consequences. First, he will suffer in this life. If you sin after you are saved, you will suffer the consequence of your sin. The person in 1 Corinthians 5 was delivered to Satan. This is a great suffering. After a person has repented and confessed to the Lord, God will forgive him and the blood will cleanse him. With some sins, however, there are further consequences that one must face. Although Jehovah removed David's sin of taking Uriah's wife, the sword never departed from his house forever (2 Sam. 12:9-13). Brothers and sisters, sin is like a venomous serpent; it is not an amusing plaything. If you are bitten by it, you will suffer.

Second, if a man sins he will be punished in the coming age. If a Christian sins and does not deal with it properly in this age, he will have to deal with it in the coming age. When the Lord comes again, "He will repay each man according to his doings" (Matt. 16:27). Paul said, "For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done through the body according to what he has practiced, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

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## Verses

### John 5:14

*After these things Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, Behold, you have become well; sin no more so that nothing worse happens to you.*

### John 8:11

*And she said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.*

### Romans 6:1-2

*1 What then shall we say? Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?  
2 Absolutely not! We who have died to sin, how shall we still live in it?*

### Numbers 19:1-5

*1 Then Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying,  
2 This is the statute of the law which Jehovah has commanded, saying, Tell the children of Israel to bring you a red heifer without defect, in which is no blemish [and] upon which a yoke has never come.  
3 And you shall give it to Eleazar the priest, and someone shall bring it outside the camp and slaughter it in his presence.  
4 And Eleazar the priest shall take some of its blood with his finger and sprinkle its blood toward the front of the Tent of Meeting seven times.  
5 And the heifer shall be burned in his sight; its skin and its flesh and its blood, with its dung, shall be burned.*

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Besides these two terrible consequences, there is another immediate result of sin—the breaking down of fellowship with God. To a Christian, fellowship with God is a most glorious privilege. Such fellowship is the greatest blessing he can have. However, if he sins, he will immediately lose his fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit within him will grieve for him, and the life in him will feel uncomfortable about his sin. He will lose his joy as well as his fellowship with God. Formerly, when he saw God's children, he was warmly attracted to them, but now he no longer feels that warmth; there seems to be a barrier between him and them. Formerly, prayer and Bible reading were sweet. But now they have lost their sweetness; he can no longer touch God. Formerly, he treasured the church meetings very much; when he missed one meeting, he felt that he had suffered a great loss. But now the meetings are tasteless to him; it no longer makes a difference whether or not he goes. When he sees God's children, he wants to run away instead of meeting them. Everything has changed.

It is a serious thing for a person to sin after he is saved! We must never be loose in our conduct. We must never tolerate sin and must never give ground to it.

But what do we do "if anyone sins"? If a Christian becomes careless and sins by mistake, if he is overtaken by sins, what should he do? How can he come back to the Lord? How can he recover his fellowship with God? This is a very important subject, and we have to study it carefully.

## **THE LORD HAVING BORNE ALL OUR SINS**

To take care of this matter, we must first realize that the Lord Jesus has borne all our sins on the cross. All the sins which we have committed, as well as those we are committing and will commit during our whole life, were borne by the Lord on the cross.

However, on the day we believed in the Lord, under God's light we only saw the sins that we had committed before we had believed. A man can only be conscious of the sins which God shines His light upon; he cannot feel the sins which he has not yet committed.

Therefore, the actual sins the Lord Jesus bore on the cross are more than the sins that we see. The Lord Jesus bore all of our sins on the cross, but we see only the sins which we have committed. ...We must realize that even the sins that we are not conscious of are included in the Lord Jesus' redemption.

Perhaps you were saved at the age of sixteen. Suppose you had committed a thousand sins during the first sixteen years of your life. You might have said at the time you believed in the Lord, "I thank You. My sins have been forgiven because You have taken away all my sins." In saying that the Lord had taken your sins away, you meant that the Lord had dealt with your one thousand sins. What would have happened if you had been saved at the age of thirty-two instead? Proportionally, you probably would have committed two thousand sins by the age of thirty-two. You might have said the same thing: "O Lord, You have borne all my sins." If you were saved at sixty-four years of age, you would have said the same thing: "O Lord, You have borne all my sins." It is quite clear then that the Lord has dealt with the sins that were committed during the first sixteen years of your life as well as the sins that were committed from age sixteen to age sixty-four. The Lord dealt with all of your sins on the

## **THE NEED FOR CONFESSION**

We have covered the side of the Lord's work, which is redemption and the removal of our sins. What should we do on our side?

First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In this verse the word we refers to believers, not to sinners. When a believer sins, he must confess his sins. Only after he has confessed his sins will he be forgiven. When a believer sins, he should not ignore it or cover it up. Proverbs 28:13 says, "He that covers his sins shall not prosper:/but whoever confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy." When a believer sins, he must confess his sin. Do not give sin a nice name. Do not excuse yourself. Lying is a sin. When you lie, you should confess that you have sinned. You should not say, "I have said a little more (or less) than I should have." You should say, "I have sinned." You should not

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## **Numbers 19:6-10, 12-13**

*6 And the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet [strands,] and cast [them] into the midst of the burning of the heifer.*

*7 Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp; but the priest shall be unclean until the evening.*

*8 And he who burns the heifer shall wash his clothes in water and bathe his body in water, and shall be unclean until the evening.*

*9 And a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and place [them] outside the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the assembly of the children of Israel as water for impurity; it is a sin offering.*

*10 And he who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes and be unclean until the evening. And it shall be a perpetual statute to the children of Israel and to the stranger who sojourns among them.*

*12 He shall purify himself with it on the third day and on the seventh day, and then he shall be clean; but if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he shall not be clean.*

*13 Whoever touches a dead person, the body of a human being who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of Jehovah; and that person shall be cut off from Israel. Because the water for impurity was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him.*

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explain it away or cover it up. You should confess that you have committed the sin of lying. You must condemn lying as sin.

...Colossians 1:21 says, "And you, though once alienated and enemies in your mind because of your evil works." Sin alienates us from God. What does it mean to confess our sins? It means to come back to God's side and to acknowledge that what we have done is sin. We have come back to God. We are no longer with sin. We are standing opposite of sin and calling sin a sin. This is confession. Only those who walk in the light and who have deep feelings and a repulsion for sin can have genuine confession. Those who are callous to sin, who consider it natural to sin, are not making any confession when they merely acknowledge something with their lips in a heartless way.

Believers are the children of light (Eph. 5:8) and the children of God (1 John 3:1). They are no longer outsiders but members of God's family. In a family one should behave in a way that is worthy of the family. You are a child of God, and you should know sin. You should have the same attitude towards sin as your Father. The way the Father considers sin should be the way you consider sin. Confession in God's house comes when His children take the same attitude as their Father towards sin. They condemn sin in the same way that their Father condemns sin. They take the same attitude as their Father with regard to sin. When a child of God sins, he should condemn sin as sin just as the Father does.

If we confess our sins this way, God "is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." When we sin and when we know our sin and acknowledge it as sin, God will forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. God is "faithful," which means that He must honor and fulfill His own words and promises. He is also "righteous," which means He must be satisfied with His Son's redemptive work on the cross and must recognize it. Based on His promise and based on His redemption, He has to forgive us. He is faithful, and He is righteous. He must forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We have to pay attention to the words every and all in 1 John 1:7 and 9. "Every sin" and "all unrighteousness" are fully forgiven and cleansed. The Lord has done this. When the Lord says "all," He means all. We should never change it to something else. When He says every sin, He means every sin, not just every sin committed before we believed or every sin committed in the past. He has forgiven us of all sins.

### **AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER**

First John 2:1 says, "My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin." Following this it says, "And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." "With the Father"—this is a family affair; it is something that happens after we are saved. We have already believed and have become one of God's many children. Now we have an Advocate with the Father, who is Jesus Christ the Righteous; "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins." Through the Lord Jesus' death and by His becoming the propitiation for our sins, He has become our Advocate with the Father. These words are spoken to Christians.

...He has accomplished redemption on the cross. Based on His accomplished work, we can be cleansed. If we sin by accident, we should not be disheartened by our sin; we should not wallow in it or remain in it. When we sin, the first thing we should do is confess our sin to the Lord. God says that it is a sin, and we should acknowledge it as a sin. God says that this is wrong, and we also should say that it is wrong. When we ask God to forgive our sin, He forgives our sin, and our fellowship with Him is restored immediately.

In the eyes of God, no brother or sister should sin. However, if anyone sins by accident, the first thing to do is deal with it immediately before God. He or she should take care of the problem of sin immediately. Never delay. Deal with it as soon as possible. You must confess immediately. Tell God, "I have sinned!" Our confession is our judgment of ourselves. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

When a child of God sins and does not confess his sin but instead remains in his sin,

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### **Numbers 19:17-19**

*17 And for the unclean they shall take of the ashes of the burning of the sin offering, and running water shall be added to them in a vessel;*

*18 And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip [it] in the water, and sprinkle [it] on the tent and on all the furnishings and on the persons who were there, or on the one who touched the bone or the one slain or the one who died or the grave.*

*19 And the clean person shall sprinkle on the unclean on the third day and on the seventh day, and on the seventh day he shall purify him. And he shall wash his clothes and bathe [himself] in water and shall be clean in the evening.*

### **1 John 1:7-2:2**

*7 But 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 cleanses us from every sin.*

*8 If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*

*9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

*10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

*2:1 My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous;*

*2 And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for [those off] the whole world.*

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he loses his fellowship with God. There will be no further fellowship between him and God. There is a leak in his conscience, and he will not be able to stand up before God. He may still have a little fellowship with God, but that fellowship will not be pleasant. Indeed, he will suffer. When a child who has done something wrong comes home, he will feel that something is not right because his father will not speak to him. He cannot have an intimate fellowship with his father. He knows that there is a barrier between him and his father. This is the pain that results from a loss of fellowship.

There is only one way to recovery—it is to go to God and confess our sins. We have to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has become our Advocate and has borne all our sins. We have to confess our failures and shortcomings before God in a humble way. We have to look to Him so that we

will no longer be proud or loose when we set out on our journey again. We have to realize that we are no better than anyone else, and that it is possible for us to fall at any time. We have to ask God for mercy and strength to go on step by step. Once we confess this way, we will immediately recover our fellowship with God, and the joy and peace that were lost will come back.

Finally, we should point out once more that Christians should not sin. Sin results in suffering and loss. May God have mercy upon us, keep us, preserve us, and lead us on in the way of unceasing fellowship with Him!