

BIBLICAL CONFESSION IN ITS PROPER CONTEXT

Part 1 – The Lord’s Day 24th April 2022.

Scripture readings: 1 John 1, 2:1-17, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 5:1, Matthew 3:5-8, Nehemiah 9:1-3, Acts 19:17-20, James 5:14-16, Romans 10:9-10, Titus 2:11-15, 1 Corinthians 11:23-31

FIRSTLY, INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE CONTEXT OF 1 JOHN 1:9?

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

IS THIS STATEMENT BY THE APOSTLE JOHN ABOUT DAY-TO-DAY CONFESSION OF OUR SINS AS CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS? OR IS IT ABOUT CONFESSION OF SIN IN ORDER TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN? OR IS IT BOTH?

POPULAR SERMONS & BOOKS ARE OFTEN POPULAR BECAUSE THEY ARE NOVELTIES: *The reason teenagers often rebel against their parents, is – just to be different! Likewise, people hear a sermon that puts a different spin on the Scriptures, and they say, “Wow! What a great preacher this man is! He has special insight!” Recently a sermon was circulated on social media, claiming that 1 John 1:9 is generally taken out of context by the majority of Christians. The preacher claimed that this verse has been commonly used to teach a kind of piecemeal, doling out of salvation, as we confess our sins – as if we are continually falling out of favour with God, and then clawing our way back into fellowship with Him through confession.*

He made a very valid point about the error he was addressing, but then he attempted to refute the error by claiming the context here is about becoming a Christian, not about Christians continually confessing their sins.

HE CLAIMED THE CONTEXT WAS IN VERSES 8 & 10 EITHER SIDE OF VERSE 9:

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to 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. *Hence, he pointed out that those who say they “have no sin”, or that they “have not sinned”, are not Christians – and so, he claimed that verse 9 is the invitation to the sinner, saying in effect, “Come to Christ and confess your sins and be saved!” Or to put it in other words: He said that Verse 9, about confessing sins and being forgiven, is not about day-to-day confession of sins by Christians, but is rather an invitation to sinners to be saved.*

You might think, “Well, does it really matter which it is, so long as we are confessing our sins and being forgiven?” The answer is, “Yes it does matter, because if we understand this verse wrongly, we can unwittingly contribute to a dangerous false doctrine.”

SADLY, THE PREACHER’S ATTEMPT TO CORRECT THE CONTEXT FAILED, BECAUSE HE ONLY INTRODUCED ANOTHER CONTEXT ERROR INTO HIS ARGUMENT. (No wonder

Christians are confused – especially when they continually trawl the internet and bookshops for new material to devour, which almost invariably contradicts the Scriptures. If only they would put their efforts into the genuine, honest study of the Scriptures, they would be far better equipped! By the way, I wasn't trawling the internet to find this sermon – it just popped up on my Facebook feed, and if it popped up on mine, no doubt, it popped up on a lot of other people's Facebook pages as well, so this stuff is out there, and it is being fed continually to the masses, and thousands who are not part of a solid local Church, receiving systematic instruction in sound doctrine week by week, think they are learning something whenever they are exposed to something new like this.)

EVEN MORE SADLY, MANY ARE DECEIVED, BECAUSE THEY ARE LAZY AND DON'T "PROVE ALL THINGS": 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

How do you prove all things? You measure them against the Scriptures – not just a verse of Scripture, but all the Scriptures! Therefore, let us observe,

THE CONTEXT OF 1 JOHN 1:9 IS MORE THAN ONE VERSE EITHER SIDE OF IT: And it normally takes some diligence to research a question thoroughly enough to get the right answer.

If we take even the entire chapter as the context, we may unwittingly accept that our friend's sermon on the context of verse 9 is accurate:

THAT which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen *it*, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)

3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, **that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.** (*You can assume these people are not yet in fellowship with God*)

4 And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:

7 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. (*You can assume these people are not yet walking in the light, so they need to be saved*)

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to 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.

*Thus far, John does seem to be appealing to his audience, so that they might be saved and have fellowship with him and other believers. But if we read on, **chapter 2** gives us a clearer picture of where John is coming from:*

MY little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of the whole world.*

*Note the words, “my little children”, and “we”, in chapter 1. Clearly, John is addressing professing Christians, even Christians whom he knew well – the language is quite intimate: “my little children”. In fact, it is evident that John’s epistle is written to the Christian Church, and his example of ministry here, shows that **the Christian Church needs continual instruction, both in the gospel of salvation, and in heeding the Commandments of God.** We need to be reminded that we must continually confess our sins to remain in good fellowship with God – and if we don’t, if we stubbornly maintain our right to behave sinfully, then we will suffer for it. Some people act piously, and say they will refrain from the Lord’s Supper because they aren’t in close fellowship with God. A Christian should be ashamed to say this! It is imperative that we maintain close fellowship with God, by confessing our sins, as soon as we are aware of them! We are all made of the same dust – we are all fickle and sinful, and the only way to deal with that is to confess our sins always, and to be continually meditating in the Word of God. Meditating is not only in locking ourselves away for hours, but at all times throughout the day, even as we do our work, or as we rest in our beds. It isn’t about how many chapters you’ve read today, or what new things you have learned – it’s a question of, “Have you learned the basics?” And, “Have you applied those basics to yourself in your real, daily life?” Do you think about Scripture? Do you think at all? Or is your life just a flurry of constant activity?*

As Paul exhorted the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 13:5 – “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith”), so John does the same here:

3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.

4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. *So here, there is a warning, giving us discernment to know what a real Christian is, because he calls “a liar” the man who says he is a Christian but doesn’t keep the Commandments. But then, in Verse 6, he urges Christians to keep the Commandments – “ought ... to walk”.*

7 **Brethren**, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

8 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.

9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now.

10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

*Again, the apostle addresses the Church as “brethren”, and doubles his exhortation to the Church to be **discerning**, about who is a real Christian and who is a fake. True Christians love one another – not because they are commanded to, but because it is in their very born-again nature to do so, yet they must work at it daily.*

IF THERE IS ANY REMAINING DOUBT ABOUT THE CONTEXT OF 1 JOHN 1:9, HERE JOHN MAKES IT PLAIN FROM V. 12:

12 I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake.

13 I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.

14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

This is not an appeal to sinners to be saved! It is solid instruction for the whole Church of God, a body of believers, overcomers, who know God and whose sins are forgiven! But they need continual instruction, exhortation, and correction – and so do we all. There are many foolish people who think the written Word of God is either optional, or at least fairly fluid – they think, if you have the Spirit, you aren’t so reliant on the Word. This is the Devil’s lie! The Word of God is everything! And this is why the present-day Church is such a mess, feeding on the contradictory opinions of men, instead of the pure unchanging Words of God! We have no need to wonder and wander about, and despair, if we prayerfully and honestly search the Scriptures, we shall find the answers we need, every time! God has promised! But you may not find that answer in five minutes.

*Again, as Paul exhorted the Galatians (Galatians 5:1, STAND fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and **be not entangled again** with the yoke of bondage), likewise John brings the same warning to the Church:*

15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

The clear implication here is that believers, by nature, do not love the world, but they do need to be instructed and exhorted, so that they don't weaken under the constant pressure of the world on all sides.

Hence the context of all things is easy enough to find, if we prayerfully and honestly search the Scriptures. It is neglect of the Scriptures that is the real killer.

*God willing, next Lord's Day, we'll continue to pursue this subject of Biblical confession a little further, but today, we've seen **the true context of that verse I John 1:9**, and I trust that we have seen how careful and prayerful we need to be in handling the Scriptures, and guarding against all sorts of errors.*

When we build our lives on errors, be they ever so subtle, we are like a man who builds a wall of bricks, and begins to stray off the plumbline, and the wall gradually bends or tilts out of line. And maybe nobody notices the error, but years later, the wall crumbles and falls, all because of that tiny error of alignment. We must remember that the Devil's lies pay us back in compound interest, and that failure to confess our sins always leads us into much trouble and suffering, and we even bring those troubles and sufferings on those around us, so, by God's grace let us learn the lesson, and let us help and encourage one another to keep in close fellowship with the Father and the Son, in the Holy Ghost and in the Scriptures. God help us to do so for thy glory! Amen.

BIBLICAL CONFESSION IN ITS PROPER CONTEXT

Part 2 – The Lord’s Day 1st May 2022.

In commencing this study last Lord’s Day, we dealt with the context of 1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and we saw that it was necessary to look at the whole epistle of 1 John, to be certain of the full context of this verse – to see what the apostle’s intention was in saying this.

We saw that some modern preaching, which tries to, almost childishly, simplify the Scriptures, by categorising them into – ‘This one is for unbelievers, and that one is for believers’, can be very misleading, and even harmful to the faith of those who are not carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, because it teaches people to handle the Scriptures incorrectly, and to read in the Scriptures what isn’t even there! So, the very subject of ‘confession’ in Scripture needs to be looked at in a much wider context. Hence,

SECONDLY, THERE IS CONFESSION THAT PERTAINS TO REPENTANCE:

WHEN WE FIRST COME TO CHRIST, WE DO CONFESS OUR SINS,

As did those who heard John the Baptist preach, for example: Matthew 3,

5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan,

6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

As did those who stood with Nehemiah, in a day of national repentance and restoration of national worship: Nehemiah 9,

NOW in the twenty and fourth day of this month the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them.

2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

3 And they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

As did the converts when the apostle Paul preached for two years at Ephesus: Acts 19,

17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.

Repentance and confession of sins is necessary at conversion, as we see in these examples, where the people needed to turn from their sins of bigotry and hypocrisy in

religion, of intermarrying with the Heathen, and of full-blown Heathen idolatry in the case of the Ephesians. All these things are unacceptable, and must be confessed as sin, otherwise the so-called ‘converts are kidding themselves, as were the Pharisees and Sadducees in the first example, who came to be baptized but had not repented.

SO, CONFESSION OF SIN IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSION, BUT AS WE NOTED IN OUR STUDY OF THE LAW OF GOD, DURING RECENT WEEKS, THIS CONFESSION DOES NOT SAVE OUR SOULS, *it is part of what we do, when the Spirit of God convinces us of sin, and gives us a new heart to believe on the Lord Jesus, but contrary to popular Arminian preaching, confession of sin is not a **means** of salvation, it is actually the **result** of salvation already given by God’s grace, it is our response to God when, like the man who found treasure in a field, and sold all he had to buy it – we see Jesus for Who He is, and instantly, we confess our own sinfulness and repent.*

CONFESSION OF SINS IS TO GOD, NOT TO A PRIEST – CHRIST IS OUR HIGH PRIEST! *Roman Catholicism has made a doctrine out of confession to priests, but this has no basis in Scripture. **1 Timothy 2:5**, For there is one God, and **one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.** (Not angels, not Mary, not other men, or priests!) When a priest requires you to confess your sins to him, he is usurping Christ’s place as the “one Mediator between God and man”. This is a gross evil – it is not even a Christian concept, there is nothing in Scripture to support it.*

CONFESSION OF FAULTS TO ONE ANOTHER IS AN ONGOING NECESSITY: *This is about loving one another in the body of Christ. If we are not willing to confess our fault to our brother when we have offended him, then we can hardly claim to have the Spirit of Christ in us. **James teaches on this: James 5,***

14 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:

15 And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

THE CONTEXT HERE IS: “Is any sick among you?” *The first thing to do when we are sick, is to call the elders for prayer. (Of course, we firstly pray for ourselves, and often that is all that is required, but if our case is particularly desperate, or our own faith is weak, then the first thing to do is call the elders – the fellowship of the Church strengthens us and increases our own faith.)*

But James implies here that sometimes, our sickness is brought upon us because of our “faults”, and further, it is implied that those faults have been offenses against somebody else. So, in personal relationships, we need to be careful to respect one another, and when we do, the Lord blesses us with good health and answers our prayers. This is an entirely different matter from the Roman Catholic concept of confessing our sins to a priest.

SOME MAKE A SIGNIFICANT PLAY ON THE WORD TRANSLATED “FAULTS”, AND MAINTAIN THAT FAULTS ARE NOT SINS. *The reality is that the Greek word translated faults, can also be translated as sins, or transgressions – according to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance, the meanings of this Greek word (paraptoma) are: “fall, fault, offence, sin, trespass”. Hence, we must do our research thoroughly, and not just accept somebody else’s dogma, which isn’t based on fact. And as is always the case, the greatest importance in this matter, is not so much the individual word, but the context of it. The English translators have chosen the word ‘fault’ here for good reason, because if I have offended, abused, or wronged somebody, then it is my ‘fault’ – it is not only a sin, but it is also my fault. The wonderful thing about the King James Bible, is that it is so well-translated, that just reading it provides the meanings of the words. Yes, use a dictionary, if you don’t know the meaning of a particular word, but firstly, just read on, and the meaning is normally made clear in the context – often the meaning is clarified by a different word in the same text; very often the prophets repeated things in slightly different words. The wisdom and glory of God are seen in this by all who love the Scriptures!*

VERY OFTEN WE MAKE THE MISTAKE OF STUDYING BY REACTION, INSTEAD OF CAREFUL RESEARCH: *e.g., it is not necessary to prove that faults aren’t sins, in order to show that the Roman Catholic system of confession is wrong – you can’t get Roman Catholic priesthood out of this verse, no matter what word is used to translate paraptoma! If my reason for studying the Scripture is merely that I hate the Catholic priesthood, then perhaps emotion, rather than sound reason, is driving me? I should approach the Word of God as a sheep that follows its shepherd to pasture or clear water, to just drink it in as God’s sustenance for my soul. And as I do, my mind is clear, and I discern between good and evil. This privilege is God’s gift to all His children.*

NOR ARE CONFESSION & REPENTANCE A ONCE-ONLY THING – THEY ARE ONGOING: *It is obvious that when we first come to Christ and believe in Him, we confess our sins and repent, but then true Christians are people who daily recognise their inherent sinfulness, and who daily confess their sins to God. In fact, many faithful preachers over the years have noted that, the longer you live in the faith, the more you realize how sinful you are. Far from being snared by that false ‘Holiness’ doctrine, whereby some teach that you are improving our holiness every day, the opposite is true – while we ought to be learning to overcome sin more and more, in reality, the closer we walk with God, the better we see ourselves for what we really are, and this is a humbling experience. This is not to say we shouldn’t be improving, but that we ought to always remember our own sinfulness and weakness, so that we depend on God, not ourselves and our supposed achievements. When John Wesley and his friends, met together in what they called, “The Holy Club”, they would compare notes on how holy they had been since they last met, and how much more holy they were than the last time – this is not only ridiculous, but it is humanistic, it focuses on self, not on God! We must not look at ourselves but to Jesus, Who is our righteousness! Therefore,*

THIRDLY, THERE IS CONFESSION THAT PERTAINS TO SALVATION: CONFESSION OF FAITH IN CHRIST: Romans 10, 9 That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus**, and shalt **believe in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. **10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.**

*IT IS TRULY GOOD NEWS, THAT THE MAJOR PART OF CONFESSION IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, IS NOT CONFESSION OF SINS (AS IMPORTANT AS THAT IS), BUT THE CONFESSION OF FAITH IN CHRIST! This is where our greatest joy and victory are realized! Paul lamented his own sinfulness, and cried out (Romans 7:24), “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” And immediately, in the next verse he burst out in that glorious confession, that saves and continues to liberate the soul: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” In fact, both the salvation of a soul, and the ongoing joy and victory, hang entirely on this kind of confession. Confessing our sins is necessary, but that alone will never liberate us! We must be continually confessing Jesus Christ our Lord! And here are just two verses of Scripture (Romans 10:9-10), which don't need any lengthy study to find out their context – in this case, they are the full context! They are two verses of Scripture that every believer should know by heart, because they fully convey the most important truth of all, about what salvation is and how it occurs: 9 That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus**, and shalt **believe in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. **10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***

May God give us grace to appreciate them always! Amen.

BIBLICAL CONFESSION IN ITS PROPER CONTEXT

Part 3 – The Lord’s Day 8th May 2022.

Scripture readings: 1 John 1:9, Romans 10:9-10, Titus 2, 1 Corinthians 11:23-31, James 5:14-16

Previously in this study,

- **We dealt with the context of 1 John 1:9, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and we saw that it was necessary to look at the whole epistle of 1 John, to be certain of the full context of this verse – to see what the apostle’s intention was in saying this.**
We saw that some modern preaching, which tries to, almost childishly, simplify the Scriptures, by categorising them into – ‘This one is for unbelievers, and that one is for believers’, can be very misleading, and even harmful to the faith of those who are not carefully comparing Scripture with Scripture, because it teaches people to handle the Scriptures incorrectly, and to read into the Scriptures what isn’t even there, and to make private interpretations of them (which is strictly forbidden: 2 Peter 1, 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.)! It might be a shock to some, to realize that all the Scriptures were written to the Church – NONE of it was specifically written to unbelievers! Wow! Since the beginning of time, it has always been the case, that God’s people are the people He has spoken to and provided prophets to guide them, and as His Church has been gathered, at any given time, outsiders who wanted to join themselves to God’s people were welcome, but of course there were conditions, mainly that they humbled themselves and submitted to God’s Word like everybody else did. Even so today, when the Church of God is gathered, the Word is to the Church, but others who want to come and submit themselves to the Word of God are welcome to join in – we sign a hymn, “All to Jesus I surrender”, and if anyone doesn’t sing that song, he doesn’t belong with those who do, but if he is humble and willing to learn what it means, then he is welcome. But one of the problems churches have today, is that every man thinks he has the right to invent his own god and invent his own way in which he worships him – they will say, “Oh, but I don’t agree with that doctrine”. Well maybe you should join the Buddhists or the Spiritualists, or the Roman Catholics, or the Methodists, or whatever it is that flicks your particular switch? Because you are not a Christian if you beg to differ with the Scriptures. So, along with the apostles, we “cease not to teach and preach Jesus Christ”, and from the Scriptures, not from the latest and greatest book to come out of the U.S.A., therefore, ‘confession’, like any other subject in Scripture, needs to be looked at in its full context.
- **We also saw that there is confession that pertains to repentance: confession of sins to God, not to a priest, confession of faults to those we have wronged, and that this is part of an ongoing Christian lifestyle common to us all;**

- *We saw that above and beyond these kinds of confession, there is a **confession of faith in the Lord Jesus** – this is the confession that brings salvation (confession of sins does not bring salvation but confession of faith in Christ does): **Romans 10, 9** That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus**, and shalt **believe in thine heart** that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. **10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.***

Let us continue today, to observe one more aspect of confession:

FOURTHLY, THERE ARE WRITTEN CONFESSIONS OF THE FAITH KEPT BY ALL THE GREAT PROTESTANT AND REFORMED CHURCHES: Confessions of Faith are brief summaries of the doctrines of the Christian Faith, which help us to keep all things in context (Remember, our question at the beginning was about context!). The Reformed Churches (i.e. the Protestant Churches) have always majored on this, and they have produced for the benefit of all, some wonderful confessions of faith, such as the Westminster Confession of Faith 1646 (Church of England & the Presbyterians), the London Baptist Confession 1689, the Savoy Declaration of the Congregationalists, and other similar Confessions – these are detailed yet concise summaries of the Christian Faith, to keep the saints on the right path. It never ceases to amaze me, the appalling ignorance of modern Christians about these centuries-old Confessions! We live in a generation which is so buried in information, that it can't seem to find the Truth – Truth that our Protestant forefathers took the trouble to write down clearly for us centuries ago.

TO MANY, THESE GREAT DOCUMENTS ARE FORGOTTEN, IGNORED, CHANGED, OR TREATED AS OLD-FASHIONED OR UNIMPORTANT: Never before has so much information been available to so many people, yet the fatal characteristic of them is that they are hell-bent on reinventing every wheel – they have jettisoned all that our forefathers have learned, and must learn everything again for themselves, yet they never actually learn it, because they are running in circles after nonsense, instead of recognising the truth they have in their own hands, if only they would look at it. If any family or Church has in its possession the King James Bible and Westminster Confession of 1647 or the Reformed Baptist Confession of 1689, and has some respect for the Lord Who has provided them, they cannot stray too far from the faith! It is when Churches and denominations stray from the main tenets of the Faith, that even preachers tend to run off at tangents, as we see in the example at the beginning of this study on 1 John 1:9. Churches are like towns without law enforcement – they soon lose their Christian integrity, and become places where unbelievers congregate.

IF THE PREACHER IN QUESTION HAD BEEN WELL-GROUNDED IN THE REFORMED AND PROTESTANT FAITH, HE WOULD NOT HAVE MADE THAT ERROR OF CONTEXT WHICH WE ARE EXAMINING TODAY, and he would not then have been guilty of leading others astray.

*He would have understood, that right handling of Scripture is not about a contrast of, ‘gospel vs. holiness’, or ‘salvation vs. instruction in Christian living’, not about ‘This verse is for Christians and that verse is for the unconverted’, but that all Scripture together is given for all men (Even when Jesus addressed the seven Churches of Asia in **Revelation 2 & 3**, His Words to the Churches were addressed to “**He that hath an ear, let him hear**”! Not even every person in the churches had an ear to hear the Word of God, yet it was given openly to all, if only they would hear!).*

AS CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS, WE ARE PROFESSING TO BE BELIEVERS OF SCRIPTURE – IN FACT, “SCRIPTURE ALONE”! *There are many seemingly good and wise people out there who do not know that the Bible, and only the Bible, is God’s Word to man, and there is NO OTHER Word of God to man in existence! Can you see how stupendous this is, and how terribly wrong the world is, and how terribly wrong many professing Christians are, to think God has spoken to many different peoples through many different prophets and mediums, and the Bible is only an imperfect little part of all revelation?*

The Bible itself tells us there is NO OTHER REVELATION, other than Scripture! *Peter said, We have a “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Peter 1:19) – more sure than the visions and miracles Peter had seen!*

Paul said, “all scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction...” (2 Timothy 3:16) – If you read that carefully you will know that he was saying NOTHING ELSE is profitable! Because “doctrine, reproof, and correction” cover it all! Why does the Christian Church not believe in the absolute perfection and sufficiency of Scripture, all Scripture, and only Scripture (because that is what Scripture says)?;

*The ‘gospel’ is not just a ‘gospel of salvation’ (merely to get sinners over the line and into heaven), but the gospel embraces the whole glorious Person of Christ (even of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost), and the whole breadth, length, and depth of the eternal kingdom of God, and God’s salvation is not just a ticket to heaven, but an all-embracing gift which delivers to the recipient, all the benefits of the kingdom of God, as we are made heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, and most importantly, if only he had given heed to these most fundamental of all truths, the preacher would have been equipped to avoid one of the most common errors of all the churches, that confession of sin (or repentance) is the means of salvation – No! It is not the means, but the fruit or evidence of salvation, in the lives of those who already believe on the Lord Jesus, because the confession which saves the soul, is not the confession of sin, but the confession of Jesus Christ, the Lord from heaven – which we looked at it last week: **Romans 10:9, If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.***

• **SOME RELIGIONISTS TALK ABOUT A SALVATION EXPERIENCE WHICH NEEDS TO BE FOLLOWED BY SO-CALLED ‘DISCIPLESHIP’ AND ‘FOLLOW-UP’** *so that souls are not lost again to the world (These people underestimate what God can, and does do, in all those He calls and sanctifies to Himself! If God awakens a soul, He also guides and keeps that soul – “no man can pluck them out of His hand”);*

- **OTHERS TALK ABOUT A SALVATION EXPERIENCE WHICH NEEDS TO BE FOLLOWED BY A SPECIAL ‘BAPTISM OF THE SPIRIT’** which alone equips believers for life and service (How absurd, that God would draw His children to Himself, and give them only a tiny portion of His Spirit, a sort of ‘ration pack’ which really isn’t enough for them to live by! And then they might go on for years and not receive the fullness, and instead of gracing His Church with faith and joy, battle through years of striving and failing and defeat! This is not to say that trials and struggles are not common to all believers – some think they are defeated merely because they must engage in battle. Life is a battle. It is described as war in the Scriptures, hence all the wonderful illustrative true stories of Samson, and David, and Daniel – these men did not click their fingers or wave magic wands, they fought hard in daily life, and God was with them, even as He promised to be, and promises to be with us likewise today. But how pathetic, that churches have their ‘tarry meetings’, and prayer meetings, for hours and hours, in vain attempts to get the brethren filled with the Spirit! The apostles were told by Jesus to “tarry in the city” until the Holy Ghost was poured out (**Acts 1**), not to tarry for the rest of their lives, not to tarry for every generation to be filled! Pentecost happened! It is an historic fact! Look at **Acts ch. 2! That day, the whole Christian Church was baptized in the Spirit!** This is another subject, but briefly, if you lack anything of God’s power, you don’t need to wait for it, or go to a million meetings for it, or to get the most anointed guest speaker to pump it, blow it, or punch it into you! If you have believed on the Lord Jesus, then by all means pray often, and attend prayer meetings, but God’s Word to you who believe is like His word to the crippled man, “Get up and walk!”, like Jesus’ Word to Peter, “Walk on the water!” In other words, “Get on with daily life and duty, and God will be with you!” Christianity is not a fairy story that only Kenneth Copeland and a few of his rich friends have unlocked with a magic key!).
- Let us get the doctrine and the experience right, from the start! Confession of Christ the Lord is our salvation and our ongoing joy and power and victory as well, and if this is not the fulness of the Spirit, then there must be something wrong with our confession!

THE GOSPEL IS NOT SOME CHILDISHLY INACCURATE PRECIS OF WHAT SALVATION MEANS, IT IS “ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD” – FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION! Somebody will say, “Oh, but we need to get them saved first, and then teach them doctrine!” No! No! No!

- How can they be saved if they don’t hear sound doctrine?
- How can they believe in Jesus if they are not taught Who He is, and What He is, and what He said?
- How can they believe that Jesus is Almighty God if they are not taught what the prophets said about Him from the foundation of the world?
- How can they understand the New Testament, unless they are taught that it is the fulfilment of the Old Testament?

- *How can they believe that Jesus is Emanuel (God with us) if they are not taught that it was He, Who created all things visible and invisible?*
- *How can they think of Christ as having all pre-eminence, if they don't know that He is "from of old, from everlasting" (**Micah 5:2**), that He is the Creator, Prophet, Priest, King, and Judge of all creation?*
- *How can they believe in a Sovereign and Almighty God, if they are not taught that Jesus chose His own disciples, and that the Father gave them to Him, and that this is not a contradiction?*
- *How can your faith save your immortal soul if you don't know what you believe?*
- *How can faith save your immortal soul if you don't even know you have an immortal soul?*

NO! THE GOSPEL IS ALL THE WORD OF GOD, & ALL THE WORD OF GOD IS THE GOSPEL!

We have all, at one time or another, fallen for the lie, that God depends on us to save the world. It is not for us to dissect a man's brain to figure out where he stands before God, so that we know what to say to him. We are simply to do what God has commanded us to do. And how do we know? We prayerfully read the Scriptures every day, and then go about our daily duty. God will guide us! If we give somebody a Bible, as, by God's grace, I was able to do yesterday at the Markets, is it our responsibility to buttonhole that person and pry into all their personal affairs, and challenge every belief and aspect of that person's life, and try like the Devil, incessantly, to get that person to make the decision we think she ought to make, when we think she ought to make it? I watched the lady browse past the stall next door, and use some fairly ordinary worldly language, and then she started to browse at our table. I didn't think much of it, but I just invited her to take anything that was on the table, so she picked up a Bible, and then she turned to me and said, very politely, "Thank you Sir, and God bless you!" Do I believe God the Holy Ghost is able to get her attention, and lead her to read the Bible and be blessed? Yes I do! He is well able to do that. I'm not, but He is, for He is Almighty God, and there is only one means of saving a soul, and that is the Word of God, the "more sure word" Peter mentioned, and the "profitable" Word Paul spoke of.

*If the Arminian Churches had only given attention to the fully-orbed faith of Christ and gospel of Christ, as per the all-sufficient Word of God, then they would have found that there is no need of a special service for Christians in the morning, and a special gospel outreach for sinners at night! (Or in a more modern context, a 'worship service' in the morning and a 'seekers' service' at night, to entertain unbelievers.) But they could be preaching Christ, and teaching all the Word of God, to sinners and saints alike, in every gathering. Wasn't it the very apostles of Christ who said that, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (**Acts 5:42**)? **They taught and they preached, every day, and what they taught and preached was "Jesus Christ"! And all Scripture is Jesus Christ!** Scripture is not about anything else but Him! "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever! Amen!" (**Romans 11:36**).*

MEN HAVE BECOME BUSYBODIES, INTERFERING IN GOD’S PURPOSES, taking it upon themselves to break up the Word of God and dole it out according to their own finite minds, and to dole out salvation to sinners like rations, and far worse, reinventing and retranslating it to make it more acceptable to unbelievers. This restricts the liberty we are meant to have in Christ and in His Church – it promotes an elite class of men who stand over God’s flock, rather than feed it. The gospel liberates every believer! The teaching of all sound doctrine liberates every believer!

AND THE GOSPEL TEACHES, NOT FAITH ONLY, BUT OBEDIENCE TO EVERY COMMAND AND INSTRUCTION IN SCRIPTURE: Titus 2,

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

13 Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

May God give us grace to maintain that true Gospel always, and to obey Him always (for obedience is part and parcel of the gospel!), and to rejoice with all who are of like precious faith!

THE HISTORIC CONFESSIONS, FRAMED BY OUR REFORMED FOREFATHERS, REMIND US THAT THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS NOT MERELY A CONFESSION OF SALVATION, BUT A CONFESSION OF JESUS CHRIST, Who is “Lord of all”, a confession that we believe in Him Who created all things and rules over all things, a confession that we are His, that He has bought us with the price of His own shed blood, so that, far from a document like the Westminster Confession of Faith being a great list of mere religious details that we can take or leave at will, it is designed by its authors to be a detailed explanation of what everybody’s faith in Christ actually means, in detail and in every-day life.

The fact that many professing believers today are unaware of what such historic Confessions contain, shows the shallowness of what is called ‘Christianity’ today, generally speaking.

ONE OF THE GREAT ERRORS OF ALL HUMANITY IS FORGETTING PAST HISTORY, FORGETTING WHERE WE CAME FROM AS A PEOPLE, IN SHORT, FORGETTING THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS. This is tragically illustrated in that the Lutherans no longer believe in the Augsburg Confession, the Church of England and the Presbyterians no longer believe in the Westminster Confession, and the Baptists no longer believe in their 1689 Confession! Everywhere in the Old Testament Scriptures, you see reference to “the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob” – do we realize that this was a Confession, maintained by the Hebrews in all their generations, which never let them forget where they came from, never allowed them to forget the God of their forefathers? Those who forget the past have no anchor for their souls.

We are part of a generation which is obsessed with everything that's shiny and new, a materialistic, carnal, sensual generation, which focuses on itself, and its own desires and pleasures and opinions. When our forefathers shed their blood to maintain these standards, is it too much to ask that we maintain a good confession today? We are the most privileged generation that ever lived. Who will stand up and fight to maintain those privileges? In Joshua's day, he stood up and declared, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" (Joshua 24:15). May God give us grace to do the same. Amen.

THE LORD'S SUPPER: 1 Corinthians 11,

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the *same* night in which he was betrayed took bread:

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake *it*, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

25 After the same manner also *he took* the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink *it*, in remembrance of me.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink *this* cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But **let a man examine himself**, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

I mention this today because it is a parallel to James' comment about praying for the sick, about the need, sometimes, to confess our faults to one another, so that God will hear our prayers, because sometimes the Lord chastises His people with sickness. This is not about forgiving the wicked, or being reconciled to somebody who is impossible to be reconciled with, it is about us doing our part, by confessing our own fault (if we are at fault) – if our sin is not specific to a person, then we can confess it to God alone, but if our sin is particularly against somebody else, then we must own up and ask for forgiveness from the offended party. Nor is this about people who take offense at the 'drop of a hat', it is about real offenses committed by us – that is our responsibility, the person who loves to take offense is not our responsibility. This is about our faults and our sins, not the faults and sins of others. May God help us to understand and do accordingly. Amen.