

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

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Good morning Life Fellowship and happy Mother's Day to all of the moms out there. Before we get into the message I just want to thank the Lord for moms. I am a long time mama's boy myself. I love my mom and I talk to her every week. During this time of quarantine I have been talking and facetimeing with her several times a week. So I want to say to all of the moms - the would be moms, the want to be moms, the moms whose kids have left home, the aunts who act like moms, and the big sisters who in some ways kind of are a mom - thank you very much for the important ministry that you have in our homes. You are a delight to our church and have an important role that you play in the kingdom of God. This is your day and we honor and respect you.

Now we are going to go to the message, and I have to tell you that this is not a Mother's Day message. In fact Ben and I were joking a little bit this week about it, as this is kind of a tough message as we continue in our series of the book of I John, but we wanted to stay in our routine of studying through these Scriptures systematically. If you will remember last Sunday's message was on the first four verses of I John Chapter 1. And today we are going to examine the last half of I John Chapter 1.

But before we read it together I just want to call to your attention again some facts about this passage and what John was doing. The whole letter that John wrote is so that we may know. There are some things that he wants to put in black and white so that we can be certain of, and that we are to focus on. Today our theme is going to a little bit about life and our journey.

You know John liked talking about life. If you go to the book of John Chapter 1, his gospel epistle, it begins with this whole concept of life. It says, "***In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of the world. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.***"

And then it goes on in the next few verses, verses 6 through 10, where John starts talking about the power of that light. Now we are in John's letter to the church, his first letter of the three that we know as the pastoral epistles of John, and he talks about light again. You know all throughout Scripture we see this illusion that life is a journey. It alludes to our path. It alludes to direction on the road. The Psalmist said, "***Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.***" In Proverbs it says, "***In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight.***"

There is just a constant emphasis that life is a journey and that God is giving us light for the journey. He is giving us illumination for it. My long-time assistant of seventeen years, a lady by the name of Cindy Smith who is now in Heaven, used to have

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

this little phrase she would say to me whenever I felt overwhelmed, or a little discouraged. She would always be able to tell when I was feeling that way, and she would walk by me and say this: *“Dan, remember this, God gives you light for the stair that you are on, so don’t worry about the ones that are at the top of the staircase, just look at the stair that you are on.”*

And that is true of the gospel, and it is true of the working of God in our lives. He gives us illumination to give us light as we need it. We don’t know what eternity is going to be like, we don’t know everything about God there is to know, we don’t know why bad things happen, there are just a lot of things we don’t know; but God gives us light for the stair we are on. God gives us light for the journey that we trod.

We also know this, that the journey that God wants us to take is a journey toward Him, toward reconciliation. It is a journey toward eternal life. And we also know that not everybody travels on that road. There is another road that the Bible sometimes calls the narrow road. It is the idea of a road to damnation, and another word for damnation is the word perdition. Several years ago there was a movie that I think starred Tom Hanks, and it was called, ‘The Road to Perdition,’ and it mentioned a city that was named Perdition. But the term perdition is actually the state of final spiritual truth, it is the loss of the soul, it is damnation, it is the future state of the wicked, and it is the utter destruction or ruin that means the end of that journey.

Now I know those are really positive thoughts for us on Mother’s Day, but this is an important element that we have to understand. We are on a path this morning. And either we are on a path toward God, or we are on a road away from God. You are on a path toward Heaven, or you are on a path toward hell. And when we study this passage that we are about to read, we will see that every other verse deals with the consequences of being on the right path or on the wrong path.

So we are going to look at that, and as we get into the meat of this letter, John is saying we need to make sure we are on the right road. And this is the conduct we should have on this road. If hell is a road, then the cobblestones that pave it are myriad. It has been said, *‘the road to hell is paved with good intentions,’* and certainly that is an idea, because many people think that on their own they can find the way to eternal life. But that is not true. Good intentions do not take you to Heaven. Those good intentions could also be cobblestones of pride, anger, adultery, theft, violence or hatred.

So what about the Christian and the sin question? If you are a Christian today you know you struggle with sin. I certainly know that I struggle with it. I know that even as I was preparing this message this week when I took some time to sit out on my deck one evening as the sun was setting, and as I was enjoying the beautiful evening sitting there I

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

started taking inventory of my life. And I realized that there were sins that I had allowed to creep in such as attitudes, patterns, sins of omission and commission that I hadn't been bringing to the Lord the way that I should.

You know we don't like to talk about sin. We don't like to talk about it because of the consequences. We don't like to talk about because it reminds us of our failures and our frailty, but yet God has a plan for how we as believers are to deal with sin. And that is going to be in this passage as well. Just because we are a believer doesn't mean that sin no longer has any impact or effect on us. Sinning for the believer obviously does not have the same consequences after salvation; but it doesn't make sin moot though in trusting Christ. There is still that sin nature we have to deal with.

So there were just a few questions that the earliest Christians were having to navigate their way through as they were working out the first generation of the church. So what do you do as a Christian who sins? Do they have to get saved again? Do they need to be baptized again? How do you work out this theology of the risen Savior? John in this passage weaves an incredible illustration that both warns against the dangers of sin in the life of a Christian, and also gives us the remedy for dealing with sin in our lives as believers.

So let's look at I John Chapter 1 beginning in verse 5 and read it together. ***"This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 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 all sin. If we say 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. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."***

As we look at these six verses, notice that in every other verse you will see a truth for believers and a truth for unbelievers. Now we are going to look at those first this morning as we study the road to perdition. I think it is important to remember that one of the rules of hermeneutics, as I mentioned last week, is to look for words that God is repeating, because when He repeats Himself, when He uses the same words over and over again, He is doing it for emphasis. Three times in these six verses we see the phrase, ***"if we say."***

Now this is a rhetorical argument device; this is a way that authors, lawyers and public speakers often use to present truth. They ask hypothetical questions or they set up hypothetical scenarios, and this is what John is doing for the readers of his letter. He is

## THE ROAD TO PERDITION That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2 Dan Burrell

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saying if you say this, or if you say that, and then he makes a point afterwards. So three times he uses the phrase, *“if we say.”*

So let's look at those beginning in verse 6, and we are going to see incremental steps that in many ways are examples of the road, or the footsteps, the pathway to damnation, or the road to perdition. The Scripture says: ***“If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.”*** When we look at this John is saying, *‘We are living a lie if we say we are walking in the light, if we say we know Christ, but in the rest of our walk we are walking in sin, we are walking in darkness. If you do that, you are lying.’*

That is the first step, and that is the step of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is when we are actively living a lie. Now let's say this, and let's make sure we all understand this - lest we think more of ourselves than we should - we are all hypocrites. Every single one of us is a hypocrite and you are looking at one right now. We have to admit it. None of us are capable of living the life that is completely free from sin. Now hopefully sin is a diminishing presence in our life; hopefully next year I will be sinning fewer times than I did this year, and even next week I am hopefully sinning fewer times than I sin this week.

But we all need to admit the fact that we are sinners, and as sinners any presence of sin in the life of one who calls themselves a Christ follower is also a warning sign of hypocrisy. Now the word hypocrisy has an atypical word to it and that is sincerity. Now many of us know people who are hypocrites who say one thing and then act another way. And they are in effect telling a lie about the power of sin and about their commitment to Christ whenever these two divergent values show up in their lives. *‘Yes, I love Jesus, but also I live like the devil at times when I commit these sins.’*

So the opposite of the word hypocrisy is the word sincerity. And sincerity is when we are genuine, when we don't have this pattern of back and forth of vacillation between, *‘I love Jesus and yet I am a sinner. I love Christ and yet I do wrong things.’* Instead sincerity is the idea that *‘what you see is what you get.’* In fact the word sincere is an interesting word. It is a Greek word and it comes from this concept of sin meaning, *‘not’* or *‘without’* and the rest of the word meaning *‘wax.’*

The way we got this word is interesting because often there would be markets that you could go buy your household wares at, like a Bed, Bath and Beyond section of the local village market. And there would be different purveyors of things that you would need. One of the shops would usually have clay pots that had been made. And these clay pots were made out of clay and then heated in a kiln. Some of the pots were for decorative purposes, and other pots were used for cooking and for storing things in.

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

You would want a pot that would be used for cooking or storing to have plenty of integrity. But what happens often during the course of making the pot, or heating the pot in the kiln, is there would be a crack that would emerge in it. Now most of these pots would eventually have a glaze of some kind put over them, which would be kind of a sealant of sorts, and it would also beautify the pot. They could be glazed with different colors and so forth. You could also make that pot look good by using wax on it before the glaze. You could spread wax over the crack in the pot and then glaze it over and you would not know that it had a defect, or a crack in it until you put something hot in it, or something cold in it which would cause the clay to expand or contract and the pot would shatter.

A perfect pot wouldn't have that problem, but if there was a defect in the pot, often they would put wax on it and then glaze over it so it would look perfect. They would conceal the crack with wax. And when they put a sign in front of a display that said, 'sincere' meaning without wax, it told the buyer that these pots had integrity. They weren't cracked or broken, and they hadn't been repaired; they were good for hot and cold purposes. So sincere meant that it was a good pot. It was authentic. We understand that word means it is without wax, or that this person is the same on the inside as they are on the outside. You can trust them, their words, their methods, their motivation and their intentions are right.

When we think of hypocrisy we think of someone who covers up their sin, who says one thing but does another. It is someone who talks the talk but doesn't walk the walk. Rather than cover our sin, Scripture is telling us that we need to be honest about it. But let's be truthful, we are all going to struggle. We all backslide. We all need to ask God for forgiveness. And we have to request reconciliation in fellowship so that we can be right with God and in turn right with each other.

We are going to talk about that process of restoring that fellowship, receiving that reconciliation in just a moment, but I want us to see this pattern about our tendency to be hypocrites. We need to restore this brokenness, we need to address the consequence of our disobedience, but until we admit that we struggle with sin, we are not going to address it, and we are not going to deal with it.

That is why John puts this in this passage. He says, '*Look, I want you to walk in the light. And if you are going to walk in the light you have to be honest.*' One of the ways you could find out if a pot had wax on it was to hold it up to the light because light shines through the wax as it is a transparent filler. And when we look into the Scripture and into the character of Christ and then hold ourselves up to that, we will see our cracks, we will see our hypocrisy, and we will see our sin as it really is.

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

First of all we have to be willing to admit that we struggle with sin. There are various signs of hypocrisy, and I just jotted a few down but it certainly isn't an exhaustive list. Sometimes hypocrisy is shown by having a greater care for our reputation than we do for our character. In other words we want people to view us in a certain way, and as long as we have an audience we will act like a Christian. But when the audience walks away and we are with people we feel safe with, or when no one is looking at us, then we revert back to our natural state. That is hypocrisy.

I have heard many times about when you have young children that something always seems to happen as you are rushing around getting ready for church, resulting in some kind of a meltdown. Maybe one of the kids has a fit, or you have a spat with your spouse. And this happened many times at my house as well. As a pastor I didn't ride in the same car with my family to church because I had to be there early, but there seemed to be this joke that many families told me about. And usually after fussing with each other all the way to church when they pulled into the church driveway, they would put on their plastic smiles so they would look like they were saying: *'Hi everybody, we love the Lord. Let's all hold hands as we go into church.'*

What is that? That is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy means we are trying to present a covering, an image that isn't real, and we care more about what people think of us and how they see us than our actual character. Sometimes we can have a critical attitude toward the sins of others while dismissing our own. It is the idea that I hate your sin, but I am quite comfortable with mine. I don't want you to do that, but I always have a reason I need to do that.

Another sign of hypocrisy is a tendency to hold others to a higher standard than we hold ourselves. That makes us critical and that makes us judgmental. Sometimes it is a pattern of putting ourselves ahead of others, wanting things our own way, wanting people to think this of us. And to think it is all about me. Sometimes it is a talk of legalism with a walk of licentiousness. *'You should not be saying that. We don't do that.'* And we make these kind of big, bold, legalistic statements about how we present ourselves, and how we live out our faith, but when we are at home in private, or maybe on a business trip we live the antithesis of that, and that is hypocrisy.

Sometimes there is this significant disparity between our public image and our private conduct. And this is what John is dealing with. He says this will impact our fellowship with each other and it will impact our fellowship with God. And the bottom line is if you say you walk in the light but you walk in the darkness, if you say you are a follower of Christ but you live like the devil, know this - you are telling a lie and you are a hypocrite.

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Then John takes it up a notch. Look at verse 8 where again we see the words, “*if we say.*” “*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*” So if I say that I am walking in the light and I don’t, then I am a hypocrite. But the next level is if I say I just don’t sin, then I am starting to believe my own lie. I start believing that sin does not have any impact on me. And John calls us out for that as duplicity. Duplicity is walking with intentional denial about our situation when we almost have two personas, two lives, two attitudes, and when we think the rules don’t apply to us because we have this special dispensation.

And that is duplicitous; it is intentionally living a dual life in which we speak or act in two different ways to different people concerning the same manner. It is the guy who teaches a Sunday school class and is having an affair. It is the woman who speaks glowing words of praise and appreciation until she goes out with her friends and then she criticizes, back bites, gossips and tears down. It is the young person who says, ‘*Yes sir. Yes mom, whatever you want,*’ and then when they are with their friends they say, ‘*I hate my parents.*’ And there is this duplicitous life that says, ‘*I believe that I get to live above the rules. And I practice that.*’

This is more than casually slipping up or falling short; we are all going to do that because we are all at some level hypocrites, because we are all sinners. But this is beyond that. It is a lifestyle of deceit wherein we can become two different personas living in the same person without conviction or shame.

Let me say this to some of you teenagers, because I was a Christian high school teenager, and I went to youth group and all that. And some of you go to Christian schools, others of you are home schooled, and some of you are in Young Life clubs. And you know exactly what I am saying because you see it all the time. And in a lot of cases these young people have their parents fooled because they can do this really well. I did this really well. I memorized my Bible verses; I quoted five verses out of I John Chapter 1 when we started this message; do you know when I learned those? I learned those verses in high school where we had to memorize long passages of Scripture. I could quote Scripture for minutes at a time without taking a breath because I was in a Christian high school. I knew how to lead someone to Christ, and so did my friends.

But do you know what happened? A lot of my friends had decided at some point they were going to live the duplicitous life, that they were going to have this public persona that was something they put on sometimes, while at other times they had their private persona. They had the one persona they put on at the Christian school, or when mom and dad were around, or when they were at youth group. And then they had the other persona with their friends. And in today’s culture young people you know what I

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

am saying is true. There is the one you let your mom and dad see and the Christian school teachers see, and then you have the one that is on social media, that is making Tik Tok videos, that is on Instagram, or is when you are under the bleachers at school, or in the back hallways. It is the persona you have when you are just chatting with your friends. You wouldn't even know these two people are the same person, because you have developed two personas.

Adults, you see it all the time. It is the pastor who is preaching the gospel and then behind the scenes he is embezzling money from the church, or he is having an affair. It is the businessman, it is the housewife, it is the athlete that we look at without seeing their dual personas. But one day the light will shine on them and we will realize that we never really knew this person. They have learned not only to live a lie, but they have now believed the lie. They believe they won't get caught. They believe the rules don't apply to them. They believe they are special. Satan has convinced them that they can live the dual life.

Years ago I was in Cuba, and I was cashing some American dollars into Cuban CUC which is a currency that international people use there. I was at a bank and was getting ready to transfer money, and there was a man standing at the window next to me who spoke English. I found out later he was from Canada. We were talking as we each exchanged our money, and then we walked away and began counting our money. Then he looked at me and asked me if I had a *chica* and I said, 'What is a *chica*?' And he said, '*You know, you know, a chica.*' I still didn't know what he was talking about so he finally said, '*a wife.*' So I told him that I had a wife at home in America. And he said, '*No, no, do you have a chica here?*'

Come to find out there is a certain element of men who were able to travel back and forth to Cuba who have a family at home as well as a family in Cuba. They could take care of their family in Cuba for a hundred bucks a month, and then they would just come down and visit whenever they wanted. They literally had two families. And the family in their home country didn't know about the family in Cuba. Why did that happen? They were living the dual life. They were living duplicitously.

And sadly many Christians get to a point that way. John is telling them not to get to that point because it is a road to destruction, a road to hell. It is the person who knows the truth, but not only do they not believe it applies to them, but they are content to pretend to be one thing in public and another thing in private. It is the man who comes to church carrying his Bible and he talks about the Lord, and then when he is at home he is a monster. He is the person who curses and yells as he plays this dual role which

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

confuses his family. And when the Holy Spirit chooses to make it public, the truth will come out in the light.

Maybe it is a woman who is critical of others in the way they live, but at home she is an alcoholic, or an addict of some kind. She can keep herself together in public but in private her life is a mess and she doesn't want the two worlds to collide. Maybe it is a young person that goes to South Lake, or Lake Norman Christian School and they win the Christian character award. Their Bible teacher is thrilled thinking they are going to go into ministry someday, but you know you are going home and watching porn, or cheating on your tests, or there is something going on in your life that if the two world collide it would make a mess out of everything you have so carefully crafted. That is duplicity.

There are steps in the road to duplicity. Sometimes it is rationalization, *'Well, you know what, I am really busy. I am really tired. I am really stressed. I had a bad background.'* We make these rationalizations, and Satan is great at helping us do that. Sometimes it is just self-deception, *'The rules don't apply to me. I can get away with it. God doesn't care about this in my life.'* And then eventually it comes to acceptance where it is just the way we live our lives. *'I can't live my life the way the Bible teaches.'*

That's right - you can't - except for the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it is possible to see this as normal, the way it is done. And yet, all of us know that deep down inside it is wrong, but we have adapted the rationalization of the survivalist, and we have convinced ourselves that we can navigate our lives in such a way that we can be Christian and be carnal. We can have a public image and a private life that are 180 degrees apart. We no longer sense conviction over our sin, we no longer even feel guilty, we can go back over and over again to the same sin, the same habits, the same patterns, until they become part of our character. And John is telling us to watch out because the road to hell begins with hypocrisy and it shows up next in duplicity.

And then there is a third step beyond this dulling consequence of unconfessed sin, and this failure to repent. This state wherein sin no longer is exceedingly sinful, and many times it doesn't feel sinful at all. Can it get worse than this? Yes, it can. Look in verse 10 where the Scripture says: ***"If we say we have not sinned,"*** even though we all know good and well that we do, but ***"If we say we have not sinned,"*** and continue to live this life, what we are doing is, ***"we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."***

Why do we say that? It is because what we are saying by implication is that God is okay with our sin, that God doesn't punish sin, that our unholy acts are not an offense to Him, and when we do that we are saying, *'Don't believe God. Don't trust God Him. His word doesn't matter.'* That is the same sin that Satan committed with Eve in the

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

Garden. And when we do that we make God a liar, and when we do that it is that third step which is apostasy. We say, *'God is okay with my sin. There are no consequences to sin. I can live however I want and I am not going to have to pay for it. God doesn't really care and there are no consequences.'* And when we believe that and live like that we are saying, *'God doesn't matter. I can live any way I want to. His word doesn't apply. I am my own God.'* And when we do that it is apostasy.

See the three steps? We start with hypocrisy where we visit it sometimes and pretend and we rationalize. And then it becomes duplicity where we have this dual life living one way sometimes and another way other times. And then eventually we just walk away from it and say, *'God doesn't really matter at all,'* and that is apostasy. And apostasy's destination is hell. It is where God is of no impact in us and we reap in our hearts the reward of our disobedience. And it is an indication that we never had a relationship with God; we never had eternal life. We have returned to the old ways because true conversion never took place.

In apostasy we reach a state of total departure from our belief in the gospel, our submission to God, our confidence in Scripture, our allegiance to Christ, and even our identification as a genuine Christ follower. Sometimes we see people reveal this very publicly. In recent months we have seen this happen a couple of times on the internet. One was a man by the name of Joshua Harris, who had been a pastor of a church. He wrote a book titled, *'I Kissed Dating Goodbye.'*

He grew up being homeschooling by a mom and dad who were experts in the field, and they traveled the country telling parents how to homeschool their kids and train them up Biblically. My wife and I attended one of their sessions when little Joshua Harris was a young boy, and he told all about how wonderful his homeschooling was. He became a pastor at a very early age, he became famous writing books, and became very wealthy. And then one day something happened and he could no longer go beyond the hypocrisy and the duplicity where he was one persona in public and another persona in private. And he got up and announced, *'I don't believe this. I am done. I am walking away from it.'* He divorced his wife, and he is living a life completely outside of God and His standards, and he does not identify as a Christian anymore.

And you ask, *'How can that happen?'* The way it happens is when we begin rationalizing our sin on the road to perdition. It is a gradual step of hypocrisy, duplicity and then apostasy. Some of you young people like to watch the You Tube channel 'Ear Biscuit,' and you may remember the guys, 'Rhett & Link,' who are still on there. And Rhett & Link grew up in evangelical homes and they went to youth group. But not long

## THE ROAD TO PERDITION

### That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2

Dan Burrell

---

ago they both got up and recanted of their faith and said, *'I don't believe this anymore.'* It is called 'de-conversion,' and it is kind of a trendy thing on the internet.

But let me say this to you, it is evidence that they never were really children of God, that they had the knowledge in their head but they never believed it in their heart. And John is telling us to watch for that. We can get by for a while being hypocritical; you may even be able to get by for extended periods being duplicitous, but ultimately there comes a day when all of the wax is removed and you are seen for who you are. And at that point you may be in apostasy, where you make God a liar and reject His truth.

Apostasy is that point whenever we just don't care, we don't believe what God has said. We convince ourselves and others that God is either okay with our sin or that God is irrelevant to our sin. At this point we have a new God and his name is ours. We have become the ultimate arbiter of truth in our lives, and it is the height of arrogance. This tragic condition of rebellion is a dangerous state that leads to damnation. In effect we are saying, *'God didn't mean what He said,'* and we are daring God to take action in our lives. And if God doesn't produce the consequences of our sin either now or later then we make Him a liar, and we know that He is not. And ultimately we will reach that point where we stand before Him and give an account for how we have lived.

So the verses 6, 8 and 10 speak of the road to perdition. And I am sure you are thinking, *'Wow, Pastor Dan, that is certainly an encouraging journey for you to take us on Mother's Day.'* Well, I have some better news for you now, okay? And I want us to look at the odd numbered verses now, verses 5, 7 and 9. Look in verse 5 where it says: ***"This is the message we (including John) have heard from Him (Jesus) and proclaim to you (the church) that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."***

Here is the good news - we have a better way, we have clarity, and it is through the Word of God. We have the written Word of God, the Bible, and the living Word of God, Jesus Christ. Then let's look in verse 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 all sin."*** Now I want you to notice a couple of things though. There is still this idea that we need to be really, really careful that we don't conceal our sin. And there are two approaches to sin that we need to consider, and to ask ourselves today which we are doing.

The first one is the sin of concealment. That is walking in the dark. Verse 5 asks the question if God is light and there is no darkness at all in Him, where are we walking? In verse 7 he says if we are walking in the light as He is in the light we have fellowship one with another. So the question is - are we walking in the light or are we walking in the dark? Walking in the dark is when we conceal our sin, by living in hypocrisy, by

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

---

living that dual life, or by simply making God irrelevant. We are walking in darkness apart from God without the benefit of direction toward safety or recovery and outside of help and hope we are in trouble. And that is a dangerous state to be in.

But then there is a second thing and we see this in verse 9. This is a verse if you have not memorized, let me urge you to do so. I memorized it years ago, and it says this: ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and He is just, and He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This is not the prayer for salvation; it is the prayer for reconciliation within our fellowship with Christ.

When my kids would do disobedient things when they were growing up such as not cleaning their rooms, or they talked back, or whatever, they didn't quit being my children, but it would affect our fellowship. If my kids had been causing problems all day long, they hadn't done their chores and then would ask me, *‘Dad, can we go for ice cream,’* my answer would be *‘No.’* *‘But dad, can't we go do something fun?’* *‘No.’* There was a consequence to their disobedience; there was broken fellowship. I wasn't doing that because I was angry; I was doing it because they weren't doing right. They were still my kids and I still loved them, but they had broken my fellowship and lost blessings because they were walking in disobedience.

It is the same way with God. So if we walk in sin and we realize it we have an option. We can cover it up and pretend that God won't notice, but He will. Or we can confess our sin, and when that happens fellowship is restored. And that is that great opportunity that we have to receive God's mercy in action. Confessing our sins allows us to renew our fellowship and to make it better with His forgiveness. And forgiveness always leads to restored fellowship in every relationship whether it is with your spouse, or with your business partner, or with the guy you are playing on a ball team with, or with your best friend. In your church setting and with God, forgiveness is that key. And forgiveness comes when we confess and we make things right.

There are some parts of reconciliation that we should desire to occur. We should desire forgiveness, to be restored. And when we bring offenses to God we need to bring them with that specificity. We need to say, *‘God, here is what I did wrong,’* rather than to say, *‘Well, if I have offended you in any way, please forgive me.’* That doesn't work. Have you ever tried that with your spouse; it just doesn't work, does it? *‘Well, I'm sorry you took it that way.’* Oh no, that doesn't solve the argument at all. What you have to do is step back and say, *‘Honey, I'm sorry, I was a jerk. I should not have said that. Please forgive me and I will do my best not to say that again.’* That is when you take the step to getting forgiveness and reconciliation.

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

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God offers forgiveness to us, but we need to ask for it. We need to remember our offenses. We need to grieve over our offenses. We need to be broken by them. We need to seek forgiveness. These are the parts of reconciliation that we should desire to occur so that we have that renewed fellowship. If we don't think we have sinned, we are not going to confess. If we don't care that we have sinned, we are not going to confess. And if we don't desire reconciliation, we are not going to confess. But if we do care about our fellowship, if we do care that we have hurt someone, if we do realize we have sinned, then the next step is to ask for forgiveness. And He is faithful and He is just and He will forgive us for those sins is what the Scripture says.

That is John's great emphasis in this passage. And if you are living with regular habitual sin in your life that you do not bring to God for forgiveness, then you are revealing the degree of your commitment to darkness; and you are revealing an absence of light in your life that the Holy Spirit and the Word of God should be providing. In other words there is something wrong. If you are living in sin and you never feel conviction, if you are living in sin and you have no desire to repent, if you are living in sin and you don't care that it hurts others, if you are living in sin then this verse is for you. And it is John's call to us. Don't travel the road to destruction. Don't travel the road of deceit. Don't travel the road to separation from God. Confess your sins and you will find that He is faithful to forgive.

So what do we need to remember? Very quickly, number one - sin is the ultimate destroyer of relationship. If you have a broken relationship you need to look for the root of sin. There is something going on in a relationship that is not functioning, and it is going to be sin. So let's find out what it is. Is it an addiction, is it anger is it a habit, is it unkindness, is it a lack of love - what is it that is causing our relationship, our fellowship with each other to break down, and ultimately what is causing our relationship with God to break down?

I could always tell when my kids were misbehaving because they would avoid me. If they had been bad that day when I would come home from work they would not meet me at the door. Why was that? It was because there was a conviction that comes with knowing that fellowship isn't what it should be.

The second thing is this - toleration of sin whether through indulgence or denial of it puts us on the fast track to destruction. Oh, we may think because we don't get caught with it today, or the consequences of it this week, that somehow God is asleep, or He is not paying attention. No, what God is doing is being merciful to us, giving us the time to wake up and make things right.

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

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You know in any relationship the longer we tolerate the brokenness of that relationship the more difficult it is to make things right. And ultimately we have to get to that point where we break and we say, *'God, forgive me. How could I be so foolish? How could I be so stupid? Please forgive me. Make me right with you again.'* And the relief that comes at that moment is absolutely incredible.

That brings me to the third thing - in order to be cleansed of our sin we have to confess our sin. The opportunity is there, the invitation is out, God said to do this. But if we don't do it, then we never get the benefit of the restored fellowship. You know it is the height of arrogance to live in rebellion and to expect God to bless us anyway. I wonder how many blessings we miss on a regular basis because we simply don't take the time to restore our fellowship with God by confessing our sins, and asking for forgiveness. It is foolish to continue with unrepentant sin in our lives because ultimately we will answer to God, and in that waiting period we lose blessings and privileges that come with a right relationship with Him.

And finally, inasmuch as darkness cannot win over light, sin cannot win over grace. And that is the wonderful promise we have of God. There is no sin - make sure you understand this - there is no sin that you have committed that God cannot or will not forgive. His grace is sufficient for every sin that you have. I don't care how addicted you are, I don't care how long the pattern has been in place, I don't care how grievous the sin, even the thief on the cross found repentance moments before he went into eternity.

God loves us and He is willing to forgive us if we are willing to confess our sins because He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I don't know if you are like me or not, but here is what I do - I procrastinate confessing my sins. I fill my life with busyness and wants, religious rituals and so forth, and I rarely take the time to stop and give an evaluation of the things I have done that are offensive to God. So last week I had to take some time and think about some of the things that have been in my life that I needed to give over to God like habits and patterns, words, actions and attitudes. And I will tell you this, when I got done and asked the Lord to please forgive me, it was like in Pilgrim's Progress when he confesses at the foot of the cross and that big burden falls off and rolls down the hill. There is something great about confessing.

So John said, *'Don't be on the road to perdition. Confess your sins and enjoy the fellowship that comes with a right relationship, and experience the joy that comes with being right with God.'* And my challenge to you on this Sunday is before the sun sets tonight, or even right now, will you just get away for a few moments and say, *'God, bring to mind those things in my life that are wrong, that are wicked. Help me to see my*

**THE ROAD TO PERDITION**  
**That You May Know - I John Series - Week 2**  
**Dan Burrell**

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*hypocrisy, help me to end my duplicity and protect me from apostasy that I might end well and please you, and experience the full benefit of my relationship and my fellowship with you.' Let's pray together.*

*Father, thank you so much for your Word. Thank you for these words from John that have challenged us today. Keep us off of that road to perdition and destruction and Father keep us on the lit path of righteousness that makes other people see you in us. Father, bring to mind those things that are displeasing to you, that are harmful to us and to others, and that rob you of your glory. Help us to forgive others and to live authentic lives, sincere lives, lives that are free from concealment and coverings. And Father let us confess to one another and to you so that we might receive your grace. For it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.*

God bless you and thank you for joining us today.

*The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.*