**The Old Sin Nature in Salvation - BD04\_01**

 Shall we bow in prayer? “Our Father, we ask Thee now as we look into the Word of God to give us understanding which only God the Holy Spirit can give us. We pray that You will glorify Thy Son through what we learn for we pray in Your name, Amen.”

 We continue now this morning in the series of studies concerning basic Bible doctrine, looking particularly now at the subject of the place of the old sin nature in salvation. Now this series in basic Bible doctrine is based upon certain propositions which perhaps we ought to mention so that you’ll understand a little bit where we are going. We have completed an examination of one basic factor which is the wall that exists between God and man which separates man from God. How God proceeded to reconcile man to Himself by removing this wall block by block. Now this series of doctrinal studies is based upon certain propositions. One, that God exists as an eternal person. Now you can’t arrive at the reality and the existence of God by either rationalism which is the processes of your mentality. Nor can you arrive at the reality of God by empiricism which is the scientific method of weighing, tasting, touching, and so on. You can only arrive at the reality of God through faith in His revealed Word. The Bible never explains God, it simply proceeds with the fact that He is.

Now you may sit here and have some doubt about the reality of God. Now we have youngsters in our academy once in a while, I had a girl come this week and said, “I find a boy in my class who doesn’t believe there’s a God.” She’s concerned as to how she can prove that He exists. Well there are certain proofs, rational proofs, that a Christian might accept. But the unsaved does not arrive at the knowledge of God by rationalism or by the technique of empiricism. It only comes by believing what the Word of God says. So this morning you may say, “I don’t believe God exists.” You’ll have to say that on the basis of your rationalism, on the basis of your empiricism you don’t believe He exists. But then you wouldn’t find that out except on the basis of faith.

This course is structured on the belief that God exists eternally. Second, this course is structured on the fact that God reveals Himself. If God exists, then it’s only fair that He should make Himself known to us. There’s no way that we can know God except through the revelation which He has given to us of His Word, the Bible. So that brings us to the third proposition in that God reveals Himself to us in a way that we can understand. God does not reveal Himself in a disorganized way. God is an organized person and He reveals Himself through organized, structured statements. This revelation is in propositions of truth which we may summarize in statements of Bible doctrine. The fourth place, we base this course on the fact that God has a plan of action. This study of basic Bible doctrine is spelling out that plan of action for you. This plan includes you as a human being.

Now this being true, that God exists as an eternal person, that God reveals Himself, that He reveals Himself in a way that we can understand what He is saying, and that God is revealing a plan of action that He has for our lives. We owe God a hearing. God is not asking you to join in something and we’re not asking to join something. God’s not asking you to pay something, and we’re not asking you to pay something. God is not asking you to say something, in a ritualistic magic way, and we’re not asking you to say anything or to indicate anything publicly. God is not asking you to buy something, we’re not asking you to buy something. We’re trying to convey to you that God has a plan and the name of that plan is grace. Everything that God does is in grace. It’s in giving to us that which He desires we should have. God asks nothing of you. You have nothing of merit to give Him, but He does ask for a hearing to what He has revealed so that you can be informed of His plan and how you fit into it.

Now this is going to be very hard for those of you who are religious people. The religious crowd is the crowd for whom there is the least possible hope of being able to give God a hearing. You’re tied up with so many of your religious prejudices which are based on certain denominational lines. Please remember that religion is a creation of Satan. It is a deliberate plan to blot out your awareness of God’s plan and how you fit into it. Religion is a substitute in a form of rituals for the reality of God’s plans as expressed in Bible doctrine. Satan therefore makes us very resistant and antagonistic to God’s plan, His plan of grace. So now you’ll have to decide how much of a hearing you’re going to give God in this service, how much of a hearing you’re going to pursue, maybe through using the tapes, through re-study, and to go further into what the Word has to say. You’re going to decide on how open you are to a hearing. If you’re a religious person all bound up in your denomination and your church ritual, there’s going to be very little hope for you.

My number two son recently said to me, “I can see how churches that have a ritualistic liturgy in the services use that liturgy.” He said, “If it wasn’t for that liturgy where you have to stand up and down and respond back and forth, you’d fall asleep in the service.” So it’s a device to keep everybody awake at best until the exercise of religion is over for the day. You may be distracted this morning so that your spiritual reception is hindered. The reason for your distraction will be because of your old sin nature. That’s what we’re going to look at this morning. You have to learn the technique for receiving divine viewpoint which expresses the plan of God. You have to learn how to overcome the problem of your sin nature which is going to try to substitute religion and stand in the way of your receiving what God has to say.

So far, we have studied reconciliation which has been God removing the wall that separates us from Him so that now, potentially, we have been matched up to His standard. Like you take a watch and you set it to a standard chronometer. These blocks have been removed. When we were in the slave market of sin, God removed it by redemption. The penalty of sin which is spiritual death, He removed by expiation, wiping out our sin through the death of Christ. Because our physical birth gives us an old sin nature, God solved our spiritual death by regeneration. Because the holiness of God was against us, His justice was satisfied by propitiation. That is the satisfaction for our sins with the death of Christ. His demand of perfect righteousness was solved by the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to us so that we are declared justified. Our position in Adam which condemned us in the fallen race has been solved by removing us from Adam and placing us in the eyes of God in Christ.

Now let’s take a look therefore at the nature of mankind, this wall having been removed. If you are willing, you have crossed over the line and you have entered the plan of God through salvation. But, you took something with you when you crossed that line which is very, very bad. If you could, you would have left it on the other side of the wall. Because you couldn’t, you had to take it with you. That is the old sin nature.

When a baby is born, he is born with an undeveloped soul. A baby has self-awareness at a very minimum level. He has a mentality which has a potential like you of varying degrees, but he has no learning. His volition is governed strictly by his physical needs for food, for comfort, and so on. His emotions are in a very primitive state of expression. His conscience has absolutely no values and no standards in it whatsoever. Please remember that the Greek word for “conscience” means, “co-knowledge, joint knowledge.” Your conscience is a set of values and of standards which are set as a result of instruction which has been given to your mind. Your conscience is part of your mind. This establishes the directions of your life. This directs your perceptive side of your mind. So a baby has no conscience. This is developed by society, by his parents, by what he is surrounded with, by the school he goes to. Or, our Bible doctrine, which gives you a true and a good conscience. But there’s one thing while a baby is born with all these undeveloped phases of his soul, he is born with one very developed part of his being. That is the old sin nature. Everyone is born with an old sin nature except Jesus Christ- Hebrews 4:15.

Now because a baby is born with an old sin nature, he is born spiritually dead. He inherited this through his father and he is born on the wrong side of the wall- Ephesians 2:1, Romans 5:12. Now in time, this child begins sinning in his own right because the old sin nature begins directing him in negative responses. So this is a disease that we are born with. The Bible calls it under various names. In Ephesians 4:22 and Colossians 3:9 it calls it “the old man.” “Old” because it originates from the old Adam, the first Adam. That’s why we have the expression “the old sin nature” because it comes from our old relationship to Adam. Sometimes the Bible refers to the old sin nature by the word “flesh” -in Romans 7:18, Ephesians 2:3, and Galatians 5:16. It calls it “flesh” because the old sin nature resides in our human body. A baby, through the procreation of his father, inherits the old sin nature physically. Sometimes the old sin nature is called the “heart” as in Jeremiah 17:9 “desperately wicked.” Or in Matthew 15:19, Matthew 24:34, Mark 7:21- the “heart” referring to the old sin nature.

Now in the New Testament, whenever you see the word “sin,” the noun “sin” singular, it’s usually referring to the old sin nature. The book of Romans regularly uses the word “sin” in this way meaning “the old sin nature”- Romans 6:6, Romans 7:17-18, 1 John 1:8. Now all of sin in your being comes from this disease, this termite in your spiritual being that you inherited, the old sin nature. There are two types of sins that you should be acquainted with. Sins- what the old sin nature produces. These are from the old sin nature.

One type of sins are sins of the mind. These are certain attitudes of the mind- attitudes of ill-will. They include pride, jealousy, bitterness, hatred, vindictiveness, unforgiving spirit, guilt feelings, fears, worry, anxiety, self-pity, anger, mental immorality, covetousness, greed. All of these things are mental attitudes that a Christian possesses, or an unsaved person possesses. Now these are the most devastating of all the sins that you’ll find. People have a tendency to think that the outward expressions of sin are the worst kind- wrong. There is no outward sin but what it first began as a mental sin. It is the sins of the mind that are the most devastating of all sins. Because these are the ones that are the most destructive to our lives and to our happiness.

Now everybody experiences at some time or another this category of sins. Sins of the mind. Sins of ill-will. If you are sitting here this morning and you can honestly say to yourself that you have an attitude of ill-will, of mental antagonism toward anybody, or maybe toward God because of your situation, this is a sin. You are out of fellowship and you’re going to get exactly zero out of this service. You may get something in your mind, but you will get nothing in your human spirit. Now all of the open expressions of sin- James 1:14-15 tell us that all open expressions stem from what we first have in our minds.

Now there’s a second type of sin. That is the outward sins. Or we may call it the “overt expression of sins.” Two types- first, sins of the tongue- maligning, judging people’s motives, slandering, falsehoods, gossiping, intimidating somebody, deceiving, and so on. James 3:5 speaks about the tongue as setting up a fire that will burn everything down- good, bad, or indifferent. It’s a vicious element. But remember, that the sins of the tongue are triggered by sins of the mind. Then there’s a second class and that is sins of the body- murder, adultery, drunkenness, stealing, law-breaking, and so on. Again, these all begin as a result of mental attitude sins.

Now there are many outward acts that people like to call “sins.” But you can only call sin what the Bible calls sins. People have certain taboos. They equate these with sin. It’s wrong. You have taboos, and all of us have taboos for one reason or another. Often these are no more than expressions of our personal preferences. We once sat in a board meeting here in Berean memorial church, and one of the board members had stated that empty coke cases had stacked up in the supply room. You know when we run these camp outs and we order extra cokes and the soft drink companies have a way of coming and if you order three cases, you may have ten empties, they’ll take three empties and leave seven. It doesn’t look good for them to come back with seven empties when they’ve only sold three. So these accumulate, and pretty soon we’ll have maybe 30 cases of empties there. He sat there and was disturbed because we hadn’t gotten around to catching the coke man and having these empties returned. He said, “Now that’s a sin!” I don’t like to cause trouble in board meetings, I’m one of the sweetest guys around here, so I didn’t say, “Where does it say in the Bible that empty soft drink bottles are a sin? Because now they have throw away bottles, so that’s throwing away your sins. Just think how elating that is, to be able to drink non-return bottles and throw away your sins like crazy- smashing them all over the place and liberating yourself!” Now he had a taboo against empty soft drink cases and bottles.

You may have opinions of what’s wrong just because of your background, the way you were reared. The results of your experiences, your personal convictions of Bible doctrine might lead you to conclude that certain things are wrong. If the Bible does lead you to conclude that on the basis of certain principles something is wrong, it would be sin for you to do that thing. It wouldn’t be sin for somebody else to do it, but it would be for you. Romans 14:22, “Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth, and he that doubteth is condemned if he eat.” This was in matter of meat which was offered to an idol, perfectly good, but it bugged some weaker Christians to eat meat which had been once on an idol’s altar. “He that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith, for whatever is not of faith, is sin.”

So if some doctrine leads you to think that there’s some things that you shouldn’t do, keep it to yourself as God’s direction to you because it would be wrong for you to do. You see, taboos are more a matter of taste and good judgment when you stop and think about it. If the Bible doesn’t say it’s sin, you can’t call it sin. Some Christians think it’s a sin for women to wear slacks. Now I grant you that no woman should wear slacks without having a rear-view mirror. It might give her a different perspective or opinion as to whether she should or not. But it’s not sin, it’s just bad taste. Immodest clothing, certainly violates a Biblical principle. The Bible says, “Women dress modestly.” If you don’t, that’s a sin. But it’s a personal decision, you see, as to whether you’re dressing modestly or immodestly.

People are regularly coming to me and saying, “I don’t like the way Mrs. So and so dresses in church.” Sometimes I don’t like it either. She’s immodest, in bad taste, poor judgment, she’s worn a dress that’s just been washed too many times and it shrunk too much, it’s time to change it. But you see, it’s again, it’s your responsibility before God as to what is sin or not sin and don’t get it confused with your taboos and your judgments in the matter. The hot pants are going to create a whole new world of problems of taboos. You might say that will be called a “hot subject” alright. But again, you see, this is going to be not a matter of sin, but it will be a matter of cheapness, of poor taste, of lack of very good judgment.

Cosmetics are not sinful. Some of our sincere, Bible- oriented ministers who say, “I never saw a woman who wears makeup who ever testified for the Lord.” Cosmetics are not sinful. You might use it so that you look like a clown, and that’s cheap, but it’s not sinful, it’s just bad taste. You may want to avoid some things because it offends Christians spiritually. That’s what was the problem here in Corinthians about this meat which had been offered to an idol. So you avoid it. The Berean youth clubs have certain policies, not because we think that certain things may be sinful of themselves, but because of what the organization is, and what our desires are, the goals that we’re going to achieve, and the people that we have to work with, we think that there are certain things that are to be left alone. So for that reason, we adjust ourselves to the needs of weaker Christians or unbelievers. This is legitimate in Scripture, but it’s not sin. Some people think it’s terrible to have fun. Some Christians are the sober, intense kind and when they see a relaxed mental attitude in another Christian, that’s a sinful thing. Some people come to a Berean banquet and have a traumatic experience over it because they’re just that sober, intense kind, and they’re uptight.

**Smoking**

Smoking isn’t a sin. It’s poor judgment. I was in a youth camp in the East one time and a Dallas seminary fellow got up and he tried to convey this idea that smoking in itself was not a sin. God might convict you that it’s bad for your body, then it would be sin for you. It’s poor judgment. It’s bad taste. Even though cigarettes say it’s a good taste, it is bad taste. The preachers who were in that camp, they rose up against the director and this poor guy had to get up and explain himself the next day to the staff at the next breakfast the next morning. It may be poor judgment. The Holy Spirit may lead you against smoking, but in itself, the Bible doesn’t call it sin, so you can’t call it sin. Now you may be obnoxious to others from their viewpoint of their taboos, but you can’t be declared to be sinful. You have a privacy of your soul that nobody can invade as you deal with God.

The old sin nature is the source of all of our sin. We’re talking about real, Bible sins. There are sins of the mind, your mental attitude-the worst kind. There are outward, overt sins, which will fall into sins of the tongue and sins of the body. Now let’s take a look at this thing, the old sin nature, a little closer. Let’s draw our old diagram in the shape of a diamond again and we’ll call this the old sin nature. Now the old sin nature has certain qualities to it. First of all, it has an area of weakness and it has an area of strength. The area of weakness expresses itself in specific sins. The area of strength expresses itself in human good. The area of weakness, Mark 7: 21-23, “All these sins, out of the area of the weakness of your old sin nature, was born at the cross.” 1Peter 2:24.

For example, lusts, the Greek word is “epithumia” which means “an intense desire.” There are various types of intense desires that form categories of sin. There is lust for praise. I’m afraid that in the average church, most church work is done on the basis of lust for praise, because the preacher is forever standing up and complementing this person and that person. You really should have so many fine things being done around the place that you could never get caught up with commending what people are doing that you are happy to see them do for the Lord. One of our young men came in yesterday and he handed me a book of 50 coupons, 50 one dollar coupons of one of the big department stores. He said, “I kept going into this place and writing my name and dropping it into a box, and you know they called me and I won $500 at this store. Here’s a $50 book that I want you to invest and bring youth club someplace.” Now that’s a good thing. It’s only one example. It’s a very commendable thing. It’s a right thing that he should have done. He responded to the Spirit of God.

I would go on and on and around this place if I were commending the constant stream of dedication to the Lord’s work. But there are some Christians that won’t move off the dead center unless you’re praising them. I learned early in the ministry that the basis upon which you appeal to people to draw them into the Lord’s work in the first place is the basis upon which you will have to continue appealing to them to keep them. So if you don’t appeal upon Bible doctrine, you’re dead. You’re forever going to have to compliment people, grease palm them, pat them on the back, and reassure them that there’s something really special.

Now there is something else about your old sin nature. It has not only these various lusts, praise, or other lusts like power for things, and physical lust. This is the basic motivation incidentally of the old sin nature, this intensity of desires. There’s an area of strength here. Isaiah 64:6 calls these “our righteousnesses” and they’re filthy rags in God’s sight. All of these have been rejected, and Titus 3:5 said they’ve been rejected, these works of righteousness. God dispenses with all human good because it comes from the old sin nature, and He doesn’t accept it.

Now there are two basic trends also. We have a trend toward lasciviousness on the one side- Ephesians 4:19 and Jude 4. This produces a wicked image of the playboy type of sensuality. It acts wild and it’s unruly in order to shock. Then there’s another side and this is the asceticism side. This produces a good front. But again, in all of these, God rejects what comes from either side. The asceticism, Hebrews 6:1 is of the reformer type. The active do-gooder and the morality champion. So good, you see originates from Satan as well as sin. The old sin nature finds social, religious, and political expressions for this tendency toward asceticism and human good.

Now everybody is dominant on one side or the other. Some of you are sitting here this morning and you are dominant on the lascivious side. If you let things go, you’re a real fireball and a real hell-raiser. On the other side, some of you are the more ascetic type and you are forever rolling your eyeballs upward and putting on a very good front. You will visit somebody and have a very delightful conversation and have an opinion quite the contrary. We’re putting on these fronts that asceticism draws out of us. Now the point that we are interested this morning is the control of this thing.

How are you going to control this old sin nature? When Jesus Christ was received as Savior, one thing that God didn’t touch in you was this old sin nature. You were born with a fully-operational sin nature. When you cross over the line where the wall of separation has been removed into eternal life, you take the fully-operative old sin nature right with you. It’s very important that you understand that. To the extent that you develop your sin nature in your life up to that point you take it right into the new life with you. The old sin nature operates after salvation, just like it did before, and you can’t do a thing to change it.

Now at the point of salvation, all of your sins are forgiven by Christ’s payment on the cross. So you enter this circle of salvation. Here’s this inner circle of fellowship. The moment you’re saved, here’s where you go. The cross of Jesus Christ takes you right into salvation and right into that inner circle of fellowship with Him. Now all sins from the old sin nature at salvation have been forgiven because they have been covered at the cross of Jesus Christ. God removes the power of the old sin nature by regeneration. He gives you a new, divine nature in place of the old sin nature. Now human good has had no part in this. There’s nothing that you did, it was only divine good. Religion tries to crank out human good from this old sin nature. God loathes it. In 1 Corinthians 3:12-13 tells you as a Christian that everything that you do that’s human good, God is going to burn when He judges you at His judgment seat someday for your rewards in heaven.

People who become Christians and who don’t understand that they take this old sin nature with them, right into this inner circle, are the ones who become hypocrites in the spiritual life. Because they learn to start covering up the old sin nature, to making it look refined. Organizations that like to use people who are VIPs for testimonies in public relations have a tendency to create an impression on people that they should dignify your old sin nature. They give the impression that “now I’m going to be something really godly.” Have you ever stopped to realize how many years the apostle Paul spent with his mouth shut? Where God put him aside until he learned enough Bible doctrine to get up and make a testimony and have something to say? But instead, we like to get the football captain, the beauty queen, the successful businessman, the socialite who has become a Christian, and right away we put them up to give us a testimony.

So we’re going to prove the value of Christianity by public relations, instead of by the reality of the statement of the Word of God. So we make over somebody who has been a resister to the Word. Our National Association of Christian Schools now has a brochure out on values of Christian school, and it’s written by somebody who is a resister of the idea of Christian school. Now I’m suspicious of a guy who didn’t have enough brains and enough spiritual insight to see the value of Christian schools right off the bat. But they go to people who have been resisters and have them write the values of Christian school instead of going to someone who’s got the discernment to see that it was a value all along. Just watch and see how often in your experience it is the resister who is elevated and honored, but the poor guy who had enough sense to go along and not be a resister to the Word, he is ignored. He’s the one who’s really got something to say.

Christians are encouraged to try to learn to hide and to cover up this old sin nature. They get into a local church. They find what goes and what doesn’t go, and so they fit in and they’re phonies because they are trying to live somebody else’s spiritual life instead of coming to doctrine and letting your life to be expressed as God has designed it for you. God has a way for you to neutralize this old sin nature. Turn to 1 Corinthians 3. The new Christian enters this place of inner fellowship, and then he discovers instead of a godly walk that he sins after he’s saved. This is a traumatic experience, especially for a religious person who finds himself helpless to do what’s right. So they’re tempted to conclude that they’re not really saved and so they try different ways of getting saved. So it’s necessary for you to learn how to recover from a spiritual stall.

When I was learning to fly an airplane, one of the things that Mr. Howard did very early in the game was to take me up to about 3,000 feet and say, “I’m going to show you how to make this airplane drop like a rock.” He pulled the nose up and pulled the nose up and pulled the nose up until you’re sitting on your back and everything begins to shudder and then “wham!” the nose falls down and you are falling. You have gone into a stall and the airplane is no longer flying and you have to know how to recover from a stall with the minimum loss of altitude. Now the reason he does that, is because he doesn’t want you to crash while you are learning how to fly. Sometimes when you go into a stall if you use the ailerons instead of your rudder, you will throw it into a spin and then you tighten into a corkscrew. That’s kind of exciting. One of the early things he shows you is what do you do to get out of that because you tend to do the wrong thing, you tend to want to pull it back to stop it instead of pushing it forward, which is what you have to do. It took me quite a while before I was flying by myself when I went up high enough and try three tailspins by myself, and I’ve never done any more since. I got it out of my system, but you have to know how to put it in and how to pull it out again.

Now, this is what you have to know spiritually. We’re talking about stalls. You Christians who get hit up by the business of sin in your life, you’re going to make no progress until you know how to recover from the spiritual stall that the old sin nature puts you in. You get into a stall because of a bad attitude, a bad flying attitude. That’s what they call the position of the airplane, they call it the “attitude.” When we have a bad sin attitude, you get into a spiritual stall.

Now this is what Paul is speaking about here in 1 Corinthians 3. He says, “And I, the apostle Paul, brethren, to you Corinthian Christians, fellow members of the family of God,” you don’t have to run around calling them “brother and sister” if you don’t want to, “I brethren could not speak unto you,” and that’s the sad thing for a pastor-teacher to be able to say I think of how many people who are important to me that I can’t speak to, that I can’t get across to spiritually, they’re closed up to real Bible doctrine. They’re all tied up with their rinky-dink religiosity and their “churchianity” and their ritual, and they don’t know the real thing that God has for them and Satan has hood-winked them. Paul said, “I couldn’t tell you people what God had for you because I couldn’t speak to you as spiritual.

Now here’s the first word. It is the Greek word “pneumatikos.” “Pneumatikos” means not an inspired feeling, but simply a state of being controlled by God the Holy Spirit, our right spiritual flying attitude. Now the problem with these people he said, “you were carnal.” Now “carnal” is the Greek word “sarkinos.” “Sarkinos” means “fleshly” because it refers to the old sin nature. I couldn’t talk to you as people controlled by the Spirit of God so you learn the Word, I had to talk to you as carnal because you were under the control of the old sin nature. Here’s this Christian born again, he’s in this inner circle. The moment he sins for the first time, zap! He’s out of that inner circle and he’s under the control here of the old sin nature. God is through talking to him and God is through leading him. Can you imagine how many people in churches move around and that old sin nature controls all of their lives? No wonder their church experience is nothing. You are either spiritual or carnal at any moment. You are sitting right here right now, and you are either spiritual or carnal. It’s an absolute state, and you must be either spiritual or carnal to learn or not to learn basic Bible doctrine. If you are spiritual you learn, if you’re carnal you don’t.

So Paul says, “I had to treat you as babes. I had to give you milk, I couldn’t feed you solid food.” Verse 2, “For this time you’re not able to bear it and you’re still not able to bear it.” You can’t receive the deeper truths of salvation. So here’s the picture, he names in verse 3, “You are carnal.” Why? Because they are “envyings,” these mental sins, which lead to strife, conflicts, the opposite of relaxed mental attitude. “And you walk not as carnal, but as men.” This word “men” means as “unsaved men.” 1 Corinthians 2:14 calls it “psuchikos” which means “the natural or unsaved man.”

For what’s a spiritual recovery technique? Just summarizing it this morning because we’re going to go into it more deeply. 1 John 1:9, when you find yourself in a sin, you’re in a stall, you’re cut off from God, here’s how you recover. 1 John 1:9, “If we confess,” that is if we Christians confess, and that is the third-class condition in the Greek. “If” means “maybe you will, and maybe you won’t” it’s up to you. “If you confess your sins, you come into salvation by believing, by an act of the grace of God. You take God at His Word and believing is a mental move on your part. Don’t talk about believing in the mind and believing in the heart. You believe in the mind. That’s the only way you are saved. And when you as a Christian go into sin, you’re out of the inner circle, you are now in carnality. God brings discipline to encourage you to get into a recovery from this spiritual stall.

Now the recovery technique is “confess.” The Greek word “homolegeo” means “to name or to cite your sin.” No euphemisms, no putting on of nice expressions to make it sound better than it is, and you notice it doesn’t ask you to feel sorry for your sins. That’s not the issue, whether you feel sorry or not. The issue is not penance, the issue is telling God and admitting to Him that what He calls sin, you call sin too. You get over the notion that somebody gives you that you have to run around feeling sorry for your sin and shedding tears. We have some preachers who are forever calling upon God’s people to shed tears. “Confess” means “to cite.” It means to tell your sin to God. Every time you confess, it says that He is “faithful and just to forgive.” “Faithful” means He will do it every time you confess the same sin over and over again. “Just” means He’s covered it by the death of Christ. So He has a ground upon which He may forgive you, not to bring you back to salvation, but to bring you back to fellowship with Himself.

Now you say, “There are some sins I don’t remember.” That’s right. You do some things that you don’t even recall, and He says He cleanses us from all unrighteousness. That means that when you confess those, you know you have recovered from spiritual stall completely, and it covers the ones you don’t know about. May I stress that the confession is to God? You as a Christian you as a priest, you deal with God directly, not with people. Your priesthood is private. Now who of you are going to stand up this morning and show me where God says that you should ask Him for forgiveness? Who of you are prepared to say that God anywhere in the Word of God tells you to go and ask somebody to forgive you your sins?

Now there’s a group in Dallas out of Illinois that deals with the conflicts of youth. It’s become quite a big thing. I’ve been to two basic sessions and to one advanced session. It’s legalistically oriented. As the leader in the advanced course said, “There’s no difference between law and grace.” As I asked at the advanced session, “How would you go about teaching a family about God the Holy Spirit?” as they were demonstrating to teach the families truth. He admitted to me that this was a problem for them they haven’t worked out on how to do this. Here you can see from what we’ve said this morning that the key to the Christian life is knowing how to be related to God the Holy Spirit.

Now there is a section in this course called, “Getting a clear conscience.” It is a very devastating section. It is causing Christians to do some things they have no business doing. Now we have indicated that when you confess your sin, you come back in here. Like David said, in his great sin, he said, “I have sinned against Thee, and Thee alone.” Sin is always against God, it is never against men and you never talk to men, you talk to God about the confession of your sin. Now this course says you must do it in sort of a ritualistic way. You must not go to a person and say, “I’m sorry for what I did,” or “I realize I did something wrong.” You must look at that person and say, “Will you forgive me?” And the magical words are, “Will you forgive me?” Well, inevitably somebody brings up in the course, “What if the person died?” And the syllabus says, “There are cases in which the only ones who were involved in an offense have died?” So what are you going to do? Well you’ve got to ask a person to forgive you. You’ve got to get this person to say, “Yes, I forgive you,” or you’re not released. “Many who have faced this problem,” it says, “have discovered a full freedom from guilt by confessing the offense to God in the presence of a mature minister, and hearing him reaffirm God’s forgiveness which is assured in Scripture (1 John 1:9)”

Now what does that sound like to you? That’s sincere psychology. And this course, incidentally, is based on psychology. This is psychology using Scripture as a vehicle rather than Scripture using whatever psychology incidentally has discovered. This is certainly not sound Bible doctrine. This is Roman Catholic confessional. And Mr. Johnson is going to build one for us back here so all you people that have never gotten forgiveness from somebody who has died, you can come and tell it to me. I’d like to know about it. And then I’m going to give you absolution. And we’ve got some holy water to go with it just to make you feel real free and clean. Now this is terrible. And I’ve had Christians come to me and have told me things as a result of attending this session and taking this misconception that ought not to have said to me. They ought to have kept it to themselves. I didn’t need to know about it.

Another section says, “What if they won’t forgive me? Well if you’ve been sincere in your repentance, if you have identified the basic offense, and if your request for forgiveness has reflected genuine humility, it is indeed rare to have him not forgive you. If such a case should occur, you must prove to him by a changed life and attitude that you really were sincere. Allow the Holy Spirit to convict him through your good works toward him.” Where do you get that from the Bible? 1 John 1:9? How you feel about it, how he feels about it has nothing to do with it. People cannot grasp grace, and when a person says there’s no difference between law and grace, he’s told you everything. The whole structure is defective. Because God says, “I’m doing everything for you, my dear child. I’m doing everything. You don’t give me a thing, and I don’t ask you for a thing. And, I forgive you. I forgive you. I forgive you. But I want you to agree with me that what went between us was wrong.”

So it’s false doctrine to run around asking forgiveness for our offenses. God says that forgiveness is structured upon confession. If we’re going to have a clear conscience, it is confession of sin that brings the clear conscience. As a matter of fact, the clear conscience is really, in the Greek, a “good conscience.” From the word that is translated in some versions as “clear conscience,” it is actually “good conscience” that the Scriptures have in mind. There are two words for good. One is “kalos.” This word means “good,” as suitable to its purpose. We have it used in Hebrews 13:18, “Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience in all things, willing to live honestly.” That is, a conscience here which is suitable to its purpose. That is, to living an honest life.

There’s another word for good in the Greek, and that’s “agathos.” This is “good” in the sense of being beneficial. 1 Timothy 1:19 uses this word. “Holding faith and a good conscience (a beneficial conscience) which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.” So conscience is good as it is suitable and beneficial. For your conscience to be good in terms of being suitable and beneficial necessitates sound doctrine in that conscience, fed to it from your human spirit. Confession doesn’t affect your conscience. Confession affects your spirituality. It is doctrine that affects the conscience.

So in contrast to good conscience, you may have a seared conscience. 1 Timothy 4:2 says, “Speaking lies and hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron. God calls upon us to have a good conscience, and a good conscience is one which is suitable and beneficial, and this means it has been fed with Bible doctrine so that conscience has been made suitable and beneficial. This is the conscience that we are to maintain.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1971