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APPROVAL SHEET

**THE CONFESSION OF SIN IN 1 JOHN 1:8-10
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE
CONTEMPORARY CHURCH**

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ABSTRACT

There can never be excessive praying because the Bible admonishes Christians to pray without ceasing. The contemporary Christian therefore has the dire need for effective prayers. This, lamentably is not the case because of the foremost enemy to prayers sin. Sin constitutes such a barrier to our fellowship with God and must not be toyed with. Considering that God is omniscient and omnipresent, sin committed in the most secret of places is bare in God's sight.

The remedy for sin is nothing other than confession and repentance from such. God is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from all possible unrighteousness if we acknowledge our sins and turn away from these. It is only then that our prayers will cease to be offensive unto God and instead become sweet smelling savour to him who is able to restore us to himself. Confession of sin is indispensable for every growing Christian.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSION

Sin, from the fall of man in the garden of Eden, through the Old Testament and the New Testament to these times, remains the greatest hindrance to fellowship between God and His epitome of creation man. God hates sin and does not tolerate sin. The soul that sins must die-eternally separated from God. In fact all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God-Romans 3:23. The very reasons why John writes inter alia comprises this truth - we have missed God's mark or standard. We need to acknowledge it. No one can claim to be without sin.

More than presenting a verdict on conviction of sin, John is presenting the possibility of forgiveness for sin. God is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse from all sin if only we confess our sins.

The Greek word for confession remains "homologeō" which is; agreement or accordance with what is said about our situation. John says we can not be perfectly sinless - we all need to be more humble to acknowledge sin in our lives.

In 1 John 1:8-10 the call goes to the church in Asia Minor. They needed to get an understanding of the love of God for them, much more they needed to acknowledge their lamentable sinful situation. They needed to be delivered from the contamination of heretical gnostiic teachings on sinfulness and sinless perfection.

John, the Apostle means it when he states in verses 8 and 10 that:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves
and the truth is not in us..... if we claim we have
not sinned we make Him out to be a liar and his word
has no place in our lives.

The acknowledgement of sin was a *conditio sine qua non* to receive God's forgiveness. "If we confess our sins" means; acknowledging sinfulness then humbly asking God to forgive and cleanse from these sins.

John's writing was an encouragement for the brethren in Asia Minor to accept that God alone can be regarded as perfectly sinless. John was appealing virtually to the brethren to reject all teachings contradicting the true knowledge of God which is acknowledgement of the fact that man is sinful and needs God's forgiveness.

We will not *strictu senso* limit John's letter to the early churches of Asia Minor; the letter appeals even more urgently to the contemporary Church with characteristics similar to the first and second century Gnostics. In the contemporary Church, there are many alleged Christians who like the original recipients of John's letter implicitly claim that they have no sin. This is why they will never think of confessing sin though "confession of sin would have been a natural part of prayer pattern....."(Harrison,1985). John's message in verses 8 and 10 of our passage should spur the contemporary Christian to greater honesty in relating with God and man, "First, he tells us the saints may deny indwelling sin and past offences, thus deceiving himself and betraying his ignorance of the Bible, and making God out to be a liar....." (Rogers, 1940, p 63).

Among those who could be justifiably tagged contemporary gnostics of the modern church are some church leaders. These have exalted themselves above the level of the other Christians and have substituted preaching against sin for nothing but fine talk. They fear hurting those in the church who may be financial bulwarks even if these are rebelliously living in open sin .

.....authentic Christianity does not make people feel better just as they are. It talks about starting again, being changed, and a number of other inconvenient things, all of which demand admitting that you are not so great the way you are. There is a real reason for people to be offended by the church because its message is bound to offend as well as to heal (Brown, 'nd', pp. 13-14).

This attitude of assumed sinlessness could not but generate hypocritical praying to harmonise the fine "talks" substituting for sermons. From Psalm 15, Psalm 66:18, Proverb 20:13, Isaiah 59:1-2, 1 John 1:9 and other passages, we know that God does not commune with anyone harbouring sin. "Prayer is guided by right living as well as by right thinking . True prayer means behaving in a way that is worthy of God's company" (Houston, 1989, p.7).

The contemporary church in its liturgy needs to heed the warning of John in 1 John 1:8 - 10. Those churches that claim holier than thou" attitudes need to retrace their steps to our verses under consideration. We may need to underline as we conclude that the Church urgently needs to acknowledge God's love for her. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross was for the salvation of the Church from the bondage of

sin. The raison d'être of the Church will therefore be under legitimate interrogation if neither sin nor the love of God is acknowledged. Once the Church comes to acknowledge God's love then it will be preached without hesitation because

God's judgement on us is always at the same time his love. He judges us to redeem us. We are free to live the authentic life only when we can acknowledge that our present life is one of pretense. God's word to us that we are sinners is meant to raise us out of that phony and death dealing existence in which we attempt to escape from Him.... (Bailey, 1972, p. 84).

The confession of sin in 1 John 1:8-10 definitely has implications for the contemporary church which needs to acknowledge the love, mercy, compassion and faithfulness of God on the one hand and its sinfulness and urgent need to confess such on the other. In view of all these we hereby proffer these recommendations.

B. Recommendations:

These recommendations mostly apply to pastors and other worship leaders.

1. Clear Bible based teaching and preaching on sin in the life of the singular Christian and the entire Church. This preaching or the teaching could be through drama or other innovative yet captivating mode. The modern man is increasingly getting used to theatres/cinemas and more disinterested at orthodox preaching styles:

The idea of telling the good-News through dramatic means seemed dangerously near sacrilege.... perhaps it was puritan roots which tightly controlled what should be said, could be worn, or must be preached these ideas influenced this century's descendants to object to drama in church..... (Sherman, 1993, p. 273).

If drama can be used to expose man's sinfulness, this should be done.

Preachers have the urgent need to denounce sin, comfortable though his may be, sin is sin and should not be given a different name. Those who get a clear teaching on sin and persist therein will know they are living in outright rebellion . We must admit that our society has gone mad spiritually and morally - many youngsters born today in certain countries where gay rights are so much talked about will need and do need to know that this is sinful. Such a preacher could "be cut off from the cultural main stream" (Mohler, 1996, p.5) but "if God be for us who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31).

In the same vein, sermons on sins should be clear and not obscured by stories here and there. We must guard against stories that leave people comfortable in sin." I heard a nice talk this morning, but it wasn't a sermon. It contained a lot of nice words, but it did not present a word from God. The thing most needed - the thing most lacking...." (O'Connor, 1998, p.45).

The pastor should know that:

congregations today - both believers and non-believers aren't coming to our churches for ancient history lessons or short courses in Greek grammar..... people come hungry for knowing how God's word can help them to save their family, survive their job, keep kids off drugs..... (Duduit, 1997, p.17).

In preaching, the preacher should not expect to be heralded by all; he “must say what he knows the spirit wants him to say even if it is not going to be popular” (Kendall, 1992, p. 51).

2. **There is the need to carry out discipleship lessons for church members commensurate with their growth:** These lessons could help them understand sin at a deeper level and also its treatment.

There are people and groups of people in and around every congregation who are ready for something more demanding by way of discipleship than what is encouraged or even possible, within the structures and most of churches that are still playing and in some sense having to play the role of culture religion (Hall, 1995, p. 428).

There is the indispensibility of “genuine understanding for this generates genuine faith and genuine faith in him generates genuine experience. Without genuine faith, experience can be easily counterfeited by emotionalism....” (Guinness, 1976, p.89).

3. **Pastors or preachers should acknowledge sin in their own lives and desist from the habit of sinning.** The sin of the leader sows confusion in the life of the congregation. The preacher should not live in bitterness; he must forgive those who hurt him in accordance with the word of God in Matthew 6: 14-15.

To forgive is to give for, to give some actual definite good in return for evil given. One may say, ‘I have no one to forgive, I have not a personal enemy in the world.’ And yet if under any circumstances, any kind of a - served - him - right - thought springs up within you

over anything that any of God's children may do or suffer you have not yet learned how to forgive. (Cady, n.d., p.14).

4. **The actual need for confession of sin is there in our churches.**

People are burning in our churches to know that God cares for them and is willing to forgive them. Worship leaders can not continue to assume that their members are through with training. "The church member must never assume that he is through with learning and training." (Ackland, 1990, p.17). The need to lead the church to confess sin is important also due to the fact that not all those who come to the church may be Christians. "Some people.... turn to the church in search of a 'quick-fix' when their world goes awry. In the process they may or may not become Christians....." (Lantonia, 1998, p. 23).

5. **The Church must arise to the consciousness that sin is destroying many people in the world today:** We as a Church can not pretend to be comfortable. Jesus Christ died for the world, He is willing to forgive all who turn from sin and place their trust in Him. Unfortunately, "we're sitting in the church declaring our faith that God can do nothing and fail and yet we fail to do anything to change circumstances around us..... if the church would touch the life of the dope addict, then the dope pusher will be still. If the church would touch the life of wayward fathers and wayward mothers then wayward sons and daughters would be still. If the church would intervene and

prolong life with any kind of ministry, then the funeral home would be still” (Perkins, 1995, p. 53).

6. **The church should arise to intercede for those outside to come to realise the loathsomeness of sin and repent.** “We should never take an urge to pray lightly. It may make the difference between life and death to some other soldiers of the cross” (Hagin, 1980, p. 104).

Sin remains a dangerous offence against God and it is “an offence that is measurable, demonstrable and determinable in a factual empirical way.....whatever interferes with God is sin” (Duncan, 1975, p. 37). Sin actually is a “false relationship to God.....” (Pike and Johnson, 1956, p. 16). It is the responsibility of the worship leader or pastor to expose sin its repercussions but also its treatment as in 1 John 1:9.