

TRUTH SEEKERS' DIALOGUES

LIFE | TRUTH | FAITH | STRUGGLE

Do I Have to Confess my Sins in Order be Forgiven?

Truth Seekers Dialogues

...wrestle with difficult areas of faith, life and practice in a conversational format. They flow out of many conversations with others as we struggle to apply the Truth to life and live in a way that is pleasing to our Father in Christ. All of the dialogues deal with the most difficult or controversial areas of Christian faith and practice. We believe the dialog format is the best way to deal with these issues as it calls us to contemplate Biblical Truth in the context of the fellowship that the Spirit of Christ seeks to cultivate amongst us as His people.

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The Issue

- Q I have a question about 1 John 1:9 which says, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins..."* Does this mean that we have to confess all our sins in order to be forgiven?
- A This is a very good question and one that can be controversial. I assume that this is causing you some trouble if you are asking the question.
- Q Yes it does. I mean, if I am really honest with myself, I sin a lot. So I would spend most of my time confessing sin. Also, what if I forget one? Does that mean it won't be forgiven?
- A You are getting right to the heart of the issue. Some people say that this verse is referring to confessing our "known sins" - sins that we know about or feel some sense of guilt over.
- Q But isn't sin, sin no matter whether I am aware of it or not. God knows. And John doesn't seem to make a distinction here between "known" and "unknown" sin. That just seem to confuse the whole issue.
- A I would agree.
- Q The real problem I am having is that this sounds like that there is something that I have to do in order to complete my salvation. Don't we believe and place our confidence in the reality that Jesus did everything that is necessary to be done for our salvation?
- A Well let me start by saying that sin is a very serious issue. But let me also say that I am completely convinced that Jesus has dealt with our sin problem definitively, once for all, in His work on the Cross. I'll tell you what, let's just start with 1 John because I am convinced that John is not telling us that confession *causes* the forgiveness of our sins in any way. He is talking about a different relationship all together.
- Q OK, I can't wait to hear this.

The Context

- A First of all we need to understand why John writes this letter. If we read through the whole letter we hear that false teachers had come into the community. These teachers apparently denied that Jesus was the Messiah who had come as a real human being (see 4:1-6). As a result they also denied that He was the Son of God (see 2:22-23). Remember, when anyone rejects either Jesus humanity or His Deity—His "Godness"—the rest of their teaching is flawed as well.
- So because they denied the fundamental truths about Jesus this had led them to untrue understanding about themselves and their relationship with God. From what John says these false teachers may have either been saying that

they had reached a state of “sinless perfection” or that what a Christian does has no bearing on their spiritual lives.

In 2:26 John says, “I am writing these things for you concerning those who are trying to deceive you (lead you astray).” A little later he tells this assembly, “do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Remember, everyone who is alive is being influenced by some spirit: either the Holy Spirit sent from the Father and Son or the “spirit of the world,” the spirit that is now “empowering the sons of disobedience” (see Ephesians 2:2). Every human teacher or leader is being led by one of these two realities. Does that make sense so far?

- Q Yeah, that makes sense. The last part about the spirits that are leading teachers and leaders is something that I have never really thought about before. I may have to ask a few questions about that.
- A I thought that might raise some questions. Let me just touch on how John deals with this issue in this specific letter. Take a look at this:

“By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses Jesus as the Christ who has come in the flesh is from God, 4:3 but every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God, and this is the spirit of the anti-christ, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world.”
[1John 4:2-3]

Everyone who has the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ dwelling within them knows who Jesus truly is and confesses this—speaks about this truth publicly. The spirit of Antichrist opposes this truth. There is THE Antichrist who is coming. But now, his satanic work is already present in our world in the false teachers, the false prophets who are working to lead people away from the way of true life that Jesus gives us.

So now, in this letter, John is giving the church a set of tests that will reveal whether someone is a true teacher or a false teacher who is working according to this deceptive and treacherous spirit of antichrist.

- Q OK, that helps a little bit and I can see how this is a much larger topic than what we want to deal with here. So let's bring that back to first John 1:9; how does all this relate together?
- A Let me just say that 1 John 1:5-10, which includes 1:9, are part of the tests that John gives this church so that they can distinguish between false teachers and true teachers.
- Q I am following you. Let's keep going.
- A The first question that I want us to think about is, “Who is the ‘we’ referring to in chapter 1.1-10? Take a look at the first several verses:

“This is what **we** proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what **we**

have heard, what **we** have seen with our eyes, what **we** have looked at and our hands have touched (concerning the word of life– 1:2 and the life was revealed, and **we** have seen and testify and announce to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us). 1:3 What **we** have seen and heard **we** announce to you too, so that you may have fellowship with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ). 1:4 Thus **we** are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” [1John 1:1-4]

So, who do you think the “we” is here?

Q Well, it looks like the “we” are people who have seen and touched the Word of Life. I am assume that this “Word of Life” is John’s way of referring to Jesus. So this would be people who have actually seen and touched Jesus. Clearly John is one of the “we” so maybe the “we” are those who were still alive who had seen, heard and been with Jesus when He was on earth.

A That is a great answer and I think we are on the same page. John is writing to a community of Christians in Ephesus in 90’s AD. He is probably the last living Apostle who actually heard and saw Jesus while he was on the earth. The community that he is writing to has never seen or heard Jesus personally. Remember the Apostles were the “witnesses of the Resurrection” who were entrusted with the revelation of the true Gospel.

John, then represents the Apostles, those who were entrusted with true message of Jesus. So if the “we” are the true Apostles of Jesus here, who would the “you” be in these same verses?

Q Well the “you” would clearly be the members of the church that John is writing to, right?

A Yes. That is right. Now take a look at the use of these pronouns in 1:5-10:

“Now this is the gospel message **we** have heard from him and announce to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. 1:6 If **we** say **we** have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. 1:7 But if **we** walk in the light as he himself is in the light, **we** have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1:8 If **we** say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1:9 But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. 1:10 If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.” [1John 1:5-10]

So who does the “we” refer to in these verses? Is there any reason to think that John changes the use of the pronouns for verses 5-10?

Q Well, it would make sense that the “we” refers to John and the other Apostles. He continues to distinguish between “we” and “you” in these verse. I understand what you are saying, but what is the point?

- A Now that is the question. The point here is that John is giving a set of tests to distinguish false teachers or false prophets and true teachers who follow the example of the true Apostles. The true Apostles or teachers say that they have fellowship with Christ and they walk in the light thus practicing the truth. True Apostles and teachers walk in the light thus showing that they have true fellowship with one another being cleansed by the blood of Jesus. True Apostles and teachers speak openly about the fact that they still sin because Jesus is faithful to do what He has promised. *Does that make sense?*
- Q Yes that makes sense, but I am not sure that I understand how all of this fits together. It still sounds like life we confess our sins, Jesus will forgive us.
- A Jesus is and will be faithful always to forgive us, there is not doubt about that. However, lets do little more work and then see if we can really understand what John is saying here.

What is the meaning of fellowship?

- A Let's talk about the Apostles just a minute more since understanding who they were and what they were doing is very important for this context. Take note of what John says in 1:3: "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you, so that you too may have *fellowship* with us, for indeed, *our fellowship is with the Father and with His son Jesus Christ.*" Think about that and then see if you can tell me what it means.
- Q Well it seems that John is saying that he, and the other Apostles had seen and heard the Lord Jesus. Now they have passed on what He said to others, the church particularly. John wants the church to hear this so that they may have fellowship with the Apostles because they have fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is almost like John is saying if the church has fellowship with him and the Apostles, they will also have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Is that close? Is that what he means?
- A I think that is exactly what John is saying.
- Q Well, is John then saying that the Apostles mediate between God and His people?
- A In a certain sense, yes, I think he is. But it is not a mediation the way it has come up in some branches of Christianity. I think that what John is saying is that anyone who believes and trusts in their message—the Gospel of Jesus—has fellowship with them and God because this is the way the Father reveals the Son. So the Apostles had a personal relationship with Christ, received his Message and then proclaimed that message to others so that they too might have fellowship, share life with the Father and the Son. Does that make sense?
- Q Okay, that makes sense. It is really about the Apostles who have proclaimed the one true Gospel, like Paul talks about in Galatians.

A Exactly.

Q Say a little more about the word “fellowship.” What does he mean by that?

A That is the next question that I wanted to deal with; you beat me to it. In 1 John the issue of fellowship is not small matter. In general the term “fellowship” carries the idea of sharing something in common. In the New Testament, when believers “fellowship” with one another this usually means that they are “sharing life together.” In the same sense, when we have fellowship with God, this generally means that we have been called to share in His life. So the idea of fellowship, when used of man’s relationship to God speaks about us sharing His life, sharing His way of life.

Q That is a lot more powerful idea than the way I have understood it. I hear people talk about “breaking fellowship with God” when they sin, or are disobedient. The way you are explaining it seems to make fellowship something much more serious.

A I don’t want to get us too far off track on this, but I do believe that having fellowship with God is very serious. I believe it speaks to our unbreakable, saving relationship with Him, purchased with Jesus’ blood and sustained by Jesus’ grace.

For John fellowship with God is established and maintained by the true proclamation of the Gospel – the message that was entrusted to the Apostles. This fellowship is a sharing in God’s life. Does that make sense.

Q Yes it does. But I have a question: When I sin, does that “break fellowship” with God?

A Let me simply say that the Bible never uses this language. I can’t find any reference to “loosing” or “breaking fellowship” with God because. I think this is because the writers who use this term use in a more serious way. Again, for them, fellowship is sharing in God’s life. To loose that would be like loosing salvation.

A great test of this is 1 Corinthians. In that letter, Paul writes to one of the most immature and sinful communities around. But not once in the letter does he charge them with breaking fellowship or loosing fellowship with God. In fact, he begins the letter by saying,

“... the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— 1:7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, 1:8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1:9 **God is faithful**, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. [1Corinthians 1:6-9 ESV]

Even though this church was immature and sinful, Paul was confident in one thing: **God would be faithful** to sustain them, blameless in the day of judgment, because He had called them into fellowship with the Lord Jesus. I think John is going to make the same argument in the passage we are looking at. The completion of our salvation is *responsibility of our Father*, not ours. He is the One who will be faithful even if we are faithless.

- Q That is really powerful and I want this to be true, but I have never really thought about it that way before. That does seem to be exactly what Paul is saying. I am going to have to chew on that a little. But it worries me because it seems that you are saying our sinfulness is irrelevant, that it really doesn't matter whether we sin or not because God is faithful.
- A That is a great observation and something that we need to be absolutely clear about. Our sin does matter. We know that the Holy Spirit is "quenched" or "grieved" by sin, especially sin that causes disunity in the Body of Christ like Paul talks about in 1 Thessalonians 5:19 and Ephesians 4:30.
- Also, we are now "new creatures" who have the ability to say "no" to the power of sin. We don't take God's grace for granted. We don't take His mercy for granted. Sin is death and corruption; we can't live in it anymore because we are now people of light.
- We also do not focus on our sin; we focus on God the Father working faithfully in Christ through the power of the Spirit to do in us what we cannot do on our own. But that is getting right to the truth that underlies everything that we are talking about: God is the one who deals with our sin problem through the work of our Lord Jesus. We simply receive what He has done for us.
- Q Okay, I see where you are coming from now. I can accept that. In fact, that is just awesome to realize how great God is and how much He has provided for us.
- A Yes it is. Should we move on a little further.
- Q Yeah, I am ready.

The Light and the Darkness

- A The next thing I wanted you to take note of is in line with what we just discussed. What do you think John mean in verse 5 where he says, "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness."
- Q John is using "light" to refer to who God is since he says God IS light. It makes me think of God's glory, His visible, radiant presence that was in the Tabernacle and the Temple in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- A Wow, that is good. I have not really thought of it that way before. That is a better way of explaining it that I was thinking about. Keep going.
- Q "Light" then might be a way of summarizing all God's perfection - He is true, He is good, He is just, He is loving, He is gracious, and so on.
- A I think that is right. For us, also, I think "walking in the light" implies living our lives out in the open, not trying to hide, not trying to cover ourselves up, not trying to hide our own sinfulness. We are honest and transparent about who we really are. Does that make sense?

Q Yeah, it does.

A So then what is the darkness?

Q Well, the darkness would then be all that is not part of who God is. This would be lying and treachery and hatred and evil and such.

A I think that is right on the mark to. So what is John saying about God?

Q That God is perfect and glorious and there is no corrupt or impure thing in Him.

A Exactly. And he reveals this clearly; he does not hide who is really is.

Q I see that.

A Something else here we need to take note of: John does not deal in “shades” of truth. John often uses analogies of absolute opposites like we have here: light vs. darkness. He will also speak about life vs. death and truth vs. lie. John does not speak in shades of “grey.” For him, it is simple: things are either the truth or they are the lie. We are either alive or we are dead. Does that make sense?

Q Yes it does. What is point then?

A Well let me ask you the question. Take a look at verse 6. What would it mean in if someone walks or is “in darkness”?

Q I think John gives the answer right in the same verse. They are lying. They are not living according to the truth. They are not thinking or acting the way God Himself would act. They are not living out in the open for all to see.

A Right. So in this context then, if someone says that they have fellowship with Jesus and yet keep on “walking in the darkness” —in lying and deceit—how should we “label” these people?

Q OK, I think I am starting to see your point. These would be the false teachers, the false prophets that John is warning the people about.

A Exactly. John is giving them the evidence they should look for to come to some conclusions on who is true and who is false. If that makes sense, we can move to the next issue.

Q Yeah it makes sense, but let me ask one question. Does living in the Light mean that we are living in complete obedience and faith in God all the time?

A I don't think it can mean that fully in the context. I mean John clearly wants us to live in faith and truth and obedience, but the whole point in this context is that even we sin, even if we fail to do this, we have an advocate with the Father, the Lord Jesus (1 John 2:1). Does that make sense?

Q Yeah it does.

A Let's move on to the next issue then.

Q Let's go.

“If...Then”—Conditional Sentences

A In this whole passage we have five sets of conditional, “if... then” statements. Let's take a look at that one more time and separate them out.

1:6 **If** we say we have fellowship with him
and yet keep on walking in the darkness,
[then] we are lying and not practicing the truth.

1:7 But **if** we walk in the light as he himself is in the light,
[then] we have fellowship with one another
and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1:8 **If** we say we do not bear the guilt of sin,
[then] we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

1:9 But **if** we confess our sins,
[then] he is faithful and righteous,
forgiving us our sins and
cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

1:10 **If** we say we have not sinned,
[then] we make him a liar and his word is not in us.”

In English grammar when you hear an “If . . . then” statement, what do you think?

Q Well that usually means some type of a cause and effect relationship: “If I hit you, then it will hurt.” Or something like that.

A That is generally what we think. But take a look at these verse very carefully: are these really giving us a cause and effect? Look at verse 6. Does saying that we have fellowship with Jesus and continuing to walk in the darkness CAUSE us to lie and not practice the truth?

Q That is a tricky question. I think it is really the other way around. Our saying one thing but acting in another way would be caused by us lying and not practicing the truth. Is that right?

A That is the way I think about it to. But let's keep going. Look at verse 7. Does our “walking in the light” CAUSE our fellowship and the cleansing of Jesus blood?

Q That would make Salvation conditional, based on something we have to do, right? I don't think that can be what John is saying. I mean if Jesus blood only cleanses those who are walking in the light - thinking and acting like God, we would all be in trouble.

An if we are already walking in the light, then why would we even need the cleansing?
Is that the point.

- A I would agree. You see the problem then. John uses the same construction throughout all these verses; the way we read one verse affects all the others. If we have to confess our sins to get forgiveness, then we have to walk in the light, live our lives the way God does, to receive cleansing. That is a big problem.
- Q Wow, this is really starting to get to the point. So why did John say these things this way?
- A A better question would be, why did the translators translate the passage this way? I say that because there are many different ways to use “if... then” statements both in English and in Greek, the language John is using.
Check out this statement: “For **if** we believe that Jesus died and rose again, **then** God will also bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.” [1 Thessalonians 4:14] Think about that for a minute. Is this a cause and effect relationship? Is our believing that Jesus died and rose again the cause or the condition for the resurrection of those who have “fallen asleep in Christ”?
- Q No, it can't be. God raising the dead in Christ is not conditioned on our belief in that truth; He will do that whether we believe it or not. Right?
- A I would agree. So what is Paul saying in this passage?
- Q Will I think he is saying that if we believe and are confident that God raised Jesus from the dead, then we can also be confident that He will raise those who are now dead in Christ. He is saying “if” we believe this, then it makes sense that we can also believe “that.”
- A I think that is exactly what he is saying. In this case Paul is setting up the grounds in the “if” part to come to the conclusion in the “then” part. Does that make sense?
- Q Yes, I am getting it, but can you help me understand it a little better?
- A Ok, check this out: “He said to him, ‘**If** they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, **then** neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’” [Luke 16:31 ESV].
- Q OK, I am starting to see this clearly now. In this case, just because these people don't hear Moses and the Prophets doesn't cause them not to be convinced, even if someone is raised from the dead. The “if” gives evidence that backs up the claim that they would not be convinced even if someone were raised from the dead. Yes?
- A You got it. What we are seeing is that there are many different types of conditional sentences in English and in Greek, for that matter.. It seems that in 1 John 1, the clauses follow a similar pattern rather than a cause>effect pattern. In this case, the “if” does not give the cause and the “then” the effect; instead the “if”

gives the *grounds* and the “then” gives *conclusion*. Take a look at this chart:

“if ... then” : cause > effect

“if ... then” : **grounds** > **CONCLUSION**
 [*effect* > **CAUSE**]

In this type of sentence you can think of the cause>effect being reversed: effect>cause or better said, grounds>conclusion.

Q OK, I am tracking along, but help me to see this more clearly in the text.

A Well lets translate the verses in such a way that makes this relationship more explicit. Take a look at this:

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness,
it is because [or *it can be concluded that*] we lie
 and do not practice the truth;

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light,
it is because [or *it can be concluded that*] we have fellowship with one another,
 and the blood of Jesus His son cleanses us from all sin.

Does that help?

Q Yes it does, but it really changes the way I think about these statements.

A Exactly. Let's add one more verse:

8 If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin,
it is because [or *it can be concluded that*] we are deceiving ourselves
 and the truth is not in us.

Q Ok, let me try this on verse 9:

9 But **if** we confess our sins,
it is because [or *it can be concluded that*] he is faithful and righteous,
 forgiving us our sins and
 cleansing us from all unrighteousness.

A I think you are getting the hang of it.

Q Wow, I just noticed something that I have not seen before. I have always thought about this verse saying, “If we confess our sins, he will forgive us...” But what it says is really “If we confess, he is faithful and just...” This verse is really telling us something about Jesus - that HE is faithful and just. My confession cannot CAUSE Jesus to be faithful and just; that is who He is! I have never really seen that before. So I John saying that true teachers can confess their sins because Jesus is faithful and just, with the result that he forgives and cleanses their sin? Is that the point.

A Yes I think it is. But hang on. Let's take a look at one more thing and then we will put it all together.

What does the word “confess” mean?

A A critical question for this whole discussion is based around how John uses this word “confess” in his writings. Because of our tradition, most people just assume that John is talking about confessing our sins to God. I think he is speaking about something else, but let me prove it to you.

In the writings of John he uses this word “confess” 10 times (3x in the Gospel, 5x in 1 John, 1x in 2 John and 1x in Revelation). In each case the usage and meaning seems to be the same. Take a look at a couple of examples:

John 1.20 “Now [John the Baptist] **confessed** and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.”

John 9.22 “His [the blind man healed by Jesus] parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone **confessed** Jesus to be Messiah, that person was to be put out of the Synagogue.”

John 12.42 “Nevertheless, at the same time many even among the leaders believed in Jesus. But because of the Pharisees they would not **confess** their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue.”

1 John 2.23 “No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever **confesses** the Son has the Father also.”

John 4.15 “If anyone **confesses** that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him, and he in God.”

Revelation 3.5 [Jesus speaking] “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never erase his name from the book of life, but will **confess** his name before my Father and His angels.”

So analyze this for me. How is John using the word?

Q Well in the Gospel the word seems to talk about “proclaiming” or “speaking in public” about something. John makes a public statement about not being the Christ. 9:22 refers to people confessing, speaking openly about believing in Jesus. In the letters it seems to be the same: it is speaking out about belief in Jesus. Revelation is interesting because it talks about Jesus “confessing” our name before the Father! This would have to be a “public” declaration too, I think.

A Excellent. And notice: the word is never used in the context of a prayer or petition being made to God. In fact, the only person that “confesses” something directly to God is Christ Himself in Revelation 3.5!!! In all the cases, the word is used for some public declaration to other humans.

Q So this “confessing” is not necessarily something we do to God, but openly to one another?

- A Yes, I think that is exactly the point. Remember who the “we” is in this context: the true Apostles who represent Christ and His true Message. A true teacher will speak openly, they will not try to hide their own sins. They do this because they are completely convinced that Jesus is faithful and just, that He has and will forgive and cleanse them completely. As they do this they serve as an example to the rest of Christ’s people: this is who we are. We are people who live in the light, we don’t try to hide, even in our sinfulness. We can do this because our hope and faith are in the One who is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse us. Does that make sense.
- Q Yes. But it is freeing and scary at the same time.
- A What do you mean?
- Q Well it sounds like you are saying that we should speak openly about our sins and that terrifies me. I don’t know that I want to do that.
- A It is a scary thing. But I think it is scary to us because we have not experienced living in community that is totally captivated by Christ’s grace and love. Maybe we don’t really know how to deal with one another. Maybe this is scary because we have not learned how to let Jesus really take all of our burdens, even our shame. What do you think?
- Q Yeah, I agree.
- A Take a look at another passage that deals with this:
- So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great effectiveness. [James 5:16 NET]
- James admonishes us to confess our sins to *one another* so that we can pray for one another and be healed. This is what Jesus desires for us. Not just to have the guilt and debt of our sins removed, which is forgiveness, but for us to be healed, completely cleanse of our *sinfulness*. As we speak openly to one another and share with one another, we can pray for one another and seek healing.
- Q So you are not saying that we should get up in the middle of church every Sunday and confess!?
- A Absolutely not. I believe we just need some trusted brothers or sisters in Christ in whom we can confide. And we don’t have to get into all the gory details of our sins. We share the same problems and the same sins. This take wisdom.
- We learn to do this by the true teachers among us who show us how to do this by speaking openly about their own sins and sinfulness. They give us the example and that is what John is saying here. True teachers, who follow the Apostolic example and message speak openly about their sins because of their confidence in Jesus’ faithfulness. They live in the light, not trying to hide anything.

Q OK, I see your point. We have really covered a lot of ground. Can we bring it all together and summarize it all so I can be sure I understand.

A Absolutely.

Bringing it All Together

A I'll tell you what; let me give you a translation of these verses that will bring together all we have talked about so far:

“This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet live our lives in the darkness, it is evident that we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we live our lives in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, it is because we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, it is evident that we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we publicly acknowledge our sins, it is because He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, then it is evident that we are making Him a liar and His word is not in us.” [1 John 1:5-10]

Q That really brings a whole new perspective to this passage. So, let me make sure I am clear: we don't receive forgiveness based on confession our our sins. We are able to speak openly about our sin because of who Jesus is and what He is doing and will do for us.

A Yes. I am confident that this is the right way to think about things. And let me just add one more thing. I believe that “walking in the light” means that we live our lives completely in the open—we don't try to hide from others or from God. As we “pray without ceasing,” like Paul admonishes us, we should want to be open and honest with our Father about our own failings and sins. When we sin, the Father calls us to be satisfied with what Christ has done for us to free us from both the guilt and the tyranny of sin. And we should not “cover over our sins” but speak to our Father about them.

However, we don't stop there. After we give praise to God for His work in and through us, we should then ask him to provide opportunities for us to grow to maturity by replacing the sin with service, “presenting our members to Him as weapons of righteousness” like Paul talks about in Romans 6-8. This is more in line with *repentance*. God is not just interested in our “confession,” He is also interested in our “putting off the old person”—formed by the Old Way of Life, so that we can “put on the new person”—who is being shaped according to Christ's image, His truth, goodness and glory.

As I pray and talk with the Lord, I talk about my sins and sinfulness with Him and give thanks for what He *has already done* in the hope of what He *will do*—not just forgive, but also cleanse and heal. And I ask Him to do that very

thing. I ask Him to transform me so that I want these things for myself as well.
Does that all make sense?

Q Yes it does. It is freeing actually.

A I hoped it would be.

Q Can we talk more about some other questions I have later.

A Anytime.