

1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar, and his Word is not in us.

^{2:1}My children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin. If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus, dear brothers and sisters in Christ. I remember a commercial from the 80s and 90s or Doublemint gum. It boasted extra flavor and extra fun. And the commercials always had sets of twins doing things together, to emphasize that their gum's flavor lasts twice as long as other gum on the market. Now, I haven't had doublemint gum in quite some time, but I don't remember it being any better or any longer lasting than any other gum. And though I don't have any scientific proof to back up that claim, I would guess it was just a clever, and memorable marketing campaign.

Such is often the case when it comes to the words of one company trying to outsell their competition. They'll say anything to get you to buy their product, to convince you that what they are saying, what they are selling, is true. And so we have the *caveat emptor* slogan: If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Thankfully our God isn't selling anything and what he does give us doesn't come with any buyer beware warnings. God's Word makes us doubly sure — of our need for his forgiveness, and, that we have it.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. Pretty simple to understand and the Bible makes it clear. We are sinful.

Paul writes in Romans that **all have sinned and fall short of God's glory.** King David in the Psalms said, **"Surely I am sinful from birth."** And, bad to Paul who explained it this way: **Sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people because all sin.**

And the Bible is full of *examples* of this truth. Even God's chosen leaders and people who carried forth his promise, the main characters in the Bible, were sinful. So-called heroes of faith: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac,

Jacob, Moses, David, Peter, Paul, They all have accounts recorded about them that show that they were sinners.

And then, there's the outcome. One of the most depressing chapters of the Bible is Genesis 5, when the reality of sin in God's once perfect creation was first recorded. **Adam lived 930 years, and then he died. Seth lived 912 years, and then he died. Enosh lived 905 years, and then he died.** And then he died, and then he died, and then he died. One day those 4 words will be spoken of each of us, because each of us is a sinner.

And to make us doubly sure, we know we are sinners, even without the Bible telling us. We have a conscience that turns guilty when we sin — that voice, that weight, that feeling in our stomachs when we know what we did was wrong. Who of us hasn't felt it, that deep and nagging need to be reconciled to each other and to God when we sin. Sure, God's Word tells us we are sinful, but John says here that when we hide our sins, we're not just trying to deceive God. We are deceiving ourselves, because we know the truth. David describes it in Psalm 32, **"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.**

God's Word makes us doubly sure. We're sinful. Clearly it lays out that on our own we have no chance. There is no solution. I can't work harder, I can't do more, because I can't be perfect, like God demands. God's Word makes us doubly sure that we should be punished for our sins, cast out of God's presence forever.

God's Word has convinced us that there is no escape, that we are only lying to ourselves and making God a liar when we cover up our sins or overlook how lost we are. And for good reason. To leave us no choice but to confess our sins. And, indeed, what other choice do we have? We can only deceive ourselves for so long and we're never going to deceive God. And besides which, it's doubly pointless because look what John says here: **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."** That's the solution! Who would have thought. Not covering up, not overlooking, but confessing, our sins, to God, to each other, to your pastor, together, here in church, out there in your lives. Confess your sins. Confess your sins, and you will be saved.

God's Word makes us sure! **If we confess our sins God is faithful** — Isn't that ironic? God is faithful, even when we have been unfaithful. When we have followed not God's way but the way of sin. When we have

done as we wanted to do, not as God would have us do. Unfaithful. When we have been unfaithful to those around us, uncharitable in our assumptions, arrogant in our actions, presuming to know what our neighbor is going through, selfishly putting ourselves before others — altogether unfaithful — God is faithful to you and to me, to his promise to forgive us.

and just — He doesn't just snap his fingers and poof our sins are gone. That would not satisfy his justice. They aren't being over looked or covered up, but taken off of us and placed on Jesus, who paid their price in full.

For Jesus came into this world to live, suffer, and die for our sins. And to replace our sins with his perfection. That's what Jesus appeared to his disciples Easter Sunday evening to show them, and tell them, and bring them to understand. He opened the scriptures to them so that they could understand the big picture of everything they had experienced over those three, at the time, horrible days — as they saw Jesus betrayed, beaten, convicted, crucified, and buried. But now they understood. Now it was clear. Blood had to be shed to pay the price of their sins, and ours. And that's what Jesus did. That's what we celebrate Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The completion of God's plan of salvation!

While I understand it, I don't deserve it. My sins are great, sometimes done willfully as my sinful nature takes the reins — and I let him. And I think and I say and I do what I know I'm not supposed to think and say and do. Is Jesus' life, death, and resurrection for me? Or is it just for those who make a good effort? For those who *really* believe, and show it and live it?

God's Word makes us doubly sure! **My children, I write these things to you so that you will not sin. If anyone *does* sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.**

If anyone does sin. Anyone! He's not talking only about the *really* faithful Christians. Not just the ones who *really* believe or are *really* showing they are making an effort. But anyone! Everyone! Jesus is an advocate for anyone who sins. What is he doing as our advocate? Interceding. Standing at the right hand of God the Father on our behalf, stating not he record: "For these sins too, Father, I have died. For this one too I have lived perfectly."

For **He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the whole world.** So that you can be doubly sure, God's Word

makes it clear: Jesus died for the sins of the world. Do you live in the world? Jesus died for you!

What a wonderful truth. What a treasure! Do we even know what a treasure this is? Imagine not having it. Martin Luther described life without this truth as living with a *Monster of Uncertainty*. And so many Christian Churches feed this monster, robbing God of the glory due him, robbing people of certainty and comfort and perhaps even salvation altogether. Such churches lead their people to constantly have to ask, "Have I done enough?" Others lead their members to ask, "Have I made my decision for Christ? Did I really mean it?" Still others are left to ask, "Am I really one of the saved? Did Christ really die, for me?" And rather than lead their members to the foundation, the cornerstone of Christ, these churches direct them to *their* deeds, *their* decisions, or *their* conversion experience, where there is no real or lasting comfort or certainty. Just imagine not being sure. Imagine that for yourself. Imagine it for your children. How frightening. How hopeless such a life would be.

Thank God that through his Word we have been delivered from this Monster of Uncertainty. God is faithful and just and forgives us, yes, even us, even you, even me. Thank God that his Word doesn't just make us sure, but doubly sure today, tomorrow, and forever. Amen!