

Last week I poorly tried to make several points about the first chapter of I John.

1. Jesus Christ is introduced not as a man, but an object. He is introduced as the object of salvation. The reason is that the only way to be justified before God is to be placed in him by faith. This was true of Abraham, of David, of Christ's disciples, of us today, and of the little children that I John addresses in the future.
2. He is giving eyewitness testimony to disciples that he has never met.
3. Again and again throughout this letter, John repeats what Christ said in the Gospel of John.
4. In chapter one, he is speaking to the remnant as a whole. Beginning in verse 6, he uses the inclusive 'we' to the end of the chapter.

As for the last point, confessing sins, we are going to look into that a bit more this morning.

The first reason is that there is so much bad doctrine from every corner concerning verses 6-9, that I think it's important to really clarify who is confessing and why.

I was browsing YouTube this past week, and went on to the site of a grace church that I often watch or listen to. The preacher there is very good and I agree with him most of the time. I saw a series called: *Peter, James and John Weren't Talking to You*. There was one whole message on I John, so I decided to watch it. The normal pastor wasn't teaching, and I don't know if this was a guest speaker or someone from the church, but what he said really surprised me. I'm going to play about a 2 ½ minute clip of this, and I want you to pay close attention to what he says.

He says of those who don't rightly divide and hang on to I John likely have a salvation issue. He then goes on to describe a salvation issue that he has – not his own, but about salvation in general terms.

1 John 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

1 John 5:5 Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

1 John 5:10 He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.

1 John 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

If these aren't the foundational verses you use in I John to understand personal justification before God, then you are contradicting the Gospel of John and you are contradicting the first four chapters of Romans, along with Romans 9.

Personal justification before God is always, always, always a gift from God because you have believed what He said to you at the time you are living. Big Period. There are no exceptions.

The second reason we are going to look closer at verses 6-9 is that, in my opinion, if you don't know what sins are being confessed in chapter one, you can never clear up the seeming contradictions about sin in the rest of the book. Because the sin that is referenced later on is the same as is being confessed in chapter one.

1 John 1:5-10 ¶ This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **6** If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: **7** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. **8** ¶ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **9** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Last week I gave you some references where this national confession of sins had taken place in time past. We're not going to tediously go through each one, but I want to look at some verses from each one. Start in Ezra 9.

The first one, in Ezra 9, along with the one in Nehemiah 9, happened after the return of Israel to the land. Ezra and Nehemiah can be confusing because they aren't in chronological order. First, Ezra is sent to Jerusalem by Cyrus to rebuild the temple. He begins rebuilding it, but is stopped when the enemies of Israel in the surrounding land write to the king. The king, Ahasuerus, responds and forces Ezra to leave off building the temple.

Nehemiah, who has become the cupbearer of the king, Artaxerxes, is sent to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. He accomplishes this task. Then come the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah concerning the house of the Lord that has remain unbuilt. Finally, Darius gives the command and Ezra finishes the temple. Now, we don't know how many kings are involved here, and I never trust the scholars. Every name given is not the name of the king, but a royal title.

After the temple is finished, and Ezra begins appointing priests for it, he finds out that some of the men he is appointing have intermarried with the people in the land – Gentiles.

At this point, the prayers recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah are prayed, according to the commandment given in Leviticus 26:40-46 and II Chronicles 7: 12-16.

Ezra 9:5-7 ¶ And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, **6** And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto

the heavens. **7** Since the days of our fathers *have we been* in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, *and* our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and to confusion of face, as *it is* this day.

He goes on confessing the sins of the fathers, then we get to

Ezra 9:14-15 Should we again break thy commandments, and **join in affinity with the people of these abominations?** wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed *us*, so that *there should be* no remnant nor escaping? **15** O LORD God of Israel, thou *art* righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as *it is* this day: behold, we *are* before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

He ends with confessing the particular sin that he wants God to forgive the people of, so that God can provide them physical, earthly blessings. And to keep them from again being cursed and scattered. Notice how he is placing the righteousness of God above all else.

Now, we circle back to Nehemiah 1. Nehemiah is the cupbearer of king Artaxerxes, and he is brought word that those who returned to Jerusalem, having not yet finished the building of the temple, are now in affliction from the surrounding provinces. Nehemiah then, as any righteous Jew would, assumes it is because they are not keeping the law. This is probably true, because the law wasn't read to the people until after the temple was finished. That is when they find in the law that they should keep the feast of tabernacles.

So Nehemiah, of course, begins confessing the sins of the fathers. Then, because he wouldn't be privy to what sins were being committed in Jerusalem, he makes a plea:

Nehemiah 1:8-11 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, *If ye transgress*, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: **9** But *if ye* turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, *yet* will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. **10** Now these *are* thy servants and thy people, **whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power**, and by thy strong hand. **11** O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, **who desire to fear thy name: and prosper**, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

His plea is: there may be sin happening in the land, but the leaders there and here wish to fear Your Name, and prosper. Give us blessing, Lord, because we want to put you first. And notice how he uses God's own words in the plea. He is asking God to remember the law of Moses, and he uses it in his plea.

He is then sent to the province to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem by Artaxerxes.

When the timeline catches up to Ezra in chapter 9, we see another prayer of confession. This one is prayed by the Levites: there are eight of them mentioned by name. Again, they

begin by confessing the sins of the fathers and continue through the history that brought them into captivity. There are just a couple verses I want to look at here.

Nehemiah 9:16-17 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, **17** And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and **in their rebellion** appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou *art* a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

God had parted the Red Sea, given them bread from heaven, gave them water out of a rock, and promised them blessings and a land. One would think that the level of supernatural events that they had witnessed would make them trust in their God.

But they rebelled. They wanted to return to bondage.

Nehemiah 9:25-26 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. **26** Nevertheless they were **disobedient, and rebelled against thee**, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.

God eventually did give them all those blessings he had promised. But they rebelled. They followed other gods. When you look down through their history up until this time, their rebellion almost always began with forsaking the true God and following other gods.

Now here, in my opinion is where they make another mistake. Ezra had confessed the sins of the fathers and their current sin. Now, it seems to me, and I may be wrong here, but rather than just throwing themselves on the mercy of God, they add to the burden that their fathers couldn't keep.

Nehemiah 9:36-38 Behold, we *are* servants this day, and *for* the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we *are* servants in it: **37** And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we *are* in great distress. **38** And because of all this we make a sure *covenant*, and write *it*; and our princes, Levites, *and* priests, seal *unto it*.

They enter into another covenant with God. It seems almost foolish, that if the first covenant that they had entered into was unkeepable to their ancestors, that entering into yet another one would be absurd.

But it seemed that they knew exactly what they were doing:

Nehemiah 10:29-31 They clave to their brethren, their nobles, **and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord**, and his

judgments and his statutes; **30** And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: **31** And *if* the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, *that* we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and *that* we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.

They knew that an oath was a curse, because if you make an oath with God, according to Moses' law, you better keep it. And I believe that is what came back to bite them.

But before we get to that, let's look at Daniel's confession.

Daniel 9:1-4 ¶ In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; **2** In the first year of his **reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.** **3** And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: **4** ¶ And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

The reason Daniel begins making his confession is because he was a reader. He understood that the land had to have its' Sabbaths. He also had a copy of the letter that Jeremiah had sent from Jerusalem after Jeconiah had been carried away captive. We also have a copy of that letter and we can see what he wrote to them.

Jeremiah 29:10-12 For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. **11** For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. **12** Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

The reason that Daniel started to immediately confess the sins of Israel when he understood that was that the seventy years were about up, was because he had another book, the book of the law of Moses. And he could read in

Leviticus 26:39-42 And they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; and also in the iniquities of their fathers shall they pine away with them. **40** ¶ If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; **41** And *that* I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: **42** Then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.

And there you have it. You have to confess your iniquity and the iniquity of your fathers. That is how Israel could again receive blessing. And even though Daniel doesn't get the chance to finish his confession, he gets his plea exactly right.

Daniel 9:17-19 Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. **18** O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. **19** O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

Who does Daniel put first in his plea? For Your sake. God and for the sake of Your city, and for the sake of the people called by Your name.

You see how these confessions bring the people back to focusing on God, His mercy, His righteousness. Even in Nehemiah 9 they do this in between the passages we read. That confession of sin always exposes their rebellion against God and put the focus back on Him. That is the entire purpose of the confession – to see that no one can stand before God and it is only through His mercy and grace that they have anything at all.

Now the final one, which isn't a confession, but an accusation of what needed to be confessed.

Remember when I said that I thought that what the Levites did in Nehemiah was a mistake? The reason I believe that is because it took the focus on God that Ezra had made, and put it on a promise to God that they were making. And I believe the result of that promise is what Jesus constantly exposes and what is part of the accusation of Steven.

Steven begins the accusation way back with Abram.

Acts 7:2 And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

He continues the history up until the tabernacle in the wilderness, then he skips over a huge amount of time until Solomon built the temple. Then he says this.

Acts 7:48-53 Howbeit the most High delleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, **49** *Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest?* **50** Hath not my hand made all these things? **51** ¶ Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. **52** Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: **53** Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

The sin of the leaders of Judah had become worshiping the law and the temple. Their own righteousness in the worship of these things almost ignored the One who had made and given them these things. That is why Steven calls them stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears; they had forsaken the God that made them and given them the law and the temple in favor of the religion that He had given them. The religion had become their God and the God that they were supposedly worshiping had simply become an abstract idea.

That is why they rejected Christ. They valued their religion above the one who gave them that religion. Christ continually pointed them back to the book they supposedly revered so much, only for them to ignore it.

So what does all of this have to do with I John, you ask. What is the sin that Israel needs to confess to be given the blessing of the kingdom?

It is their rejection of their Messiah. When they are confessing their sins and the sins of their fathers in I John, the main sin that they will have to focus on is that they missed their Christ when he came, and that anyone who came after him is an anti-christ.

And that sin is the one that is bleeding throughout the book of I John. I will leave you with this to ponder this week:

1 John 2:1 ¶ My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

Why would this sin be any different than the sins they were just confessing in the previous verses? The sins of their fathers were rebellion against God. Their own sin is to reject their Messiah once again. Why would the sin in 2:1 change to any sin that is committed?