

Main Idea: In 1 John 1:8-10 we find God’s amazing promise of forgiveness. In this message we’re going to learn two things, one, what His promise is, and two, how to experience the reality of it.

- I. We learn God’s promise of forgiveness.
 - A. God chooses not to hold our sins against us.
 - B. God does this because of Jesus.
 1. Our forgiveness rests on what Jesus did (1:5-7).
 2. Our forgiveness rests on what Jesus is doing (2:1-2).
- II. We learn how to experience the reality of this promise.
 - A. Here’s how not to deal with sin.
 1. Some people deny the principle of sin (8).
 2. Some people deny the practice of sin (10).
 - B. Here’s how to deal with sin (9).
 1. The remedy involves our responsibility.
 2. The remedy involves God’s character.
 3. The remedy involves God’s activity.

Make It Personal: Since God has given us this promise...

1. Hide it in your heart.
2. Put it into practice every day.
3. Share it with others, for they need it too.

This is our third message in a series I’m calling “*Promises to Live by in the Crucible of Suffering.*” When you are in the middle of suffering, and all who are seeking to live for Jesus Christ will face suffering, you have resources to sustain you, *divine* resources. The Living God has given you something to enable you to honor Him as you endure difficulties and trials.

He has given us His promises. God cannot lie, and in His Word He has recorded a host of promises, guarantees that He calls on us to embrace and live by. In this series I am preaching on the promises that He has used to fortify my life. I want you to know these promises, and hide them in your heart, and put your weight on them when you face the certain difficulties of life.

Two weeks ago we looked at 1 Corinthians 10:13 and contemplated God’s *promise of a way of escape.* We learned that God will never give us more than we can bear, but will always provide us with a way of escape so we can stand up under the testing or temptation.

Last week we considered Romans 8:28-30, *the promise of a good outcome.* We can be sure that if we love God and are called according to His purpose (which are two characteristics of a true Christian), then we can expect a good outcome in two areas: in our suffering (Rom 8:28), and in our salvation (Rom 8:29-30). The Lord promises to order and orchestrate all things in our lives to produce a good outcome, namely, that we will resemble His wonderful Son, Jesus the Christ. And He will never let go of us, for those whom He has predestined and called and justified, He has also glorified. It’s as good as done. We have His promise.

This morning we’re going to consider a third promise from 1 John 1:8-10, *the promise of forgiveness.* At first, you might think that this promise doesn’t fit in a series on suffering. Actually, it fits very well, for when we suffer, and especially when the suffering turns into a season of suffering, we don’t always respond in God-pleasing ways. Quite frankly, sufferers often respond in sinful ways while in the crucible of suffering.

** Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

I know I do. I know that God is in control of all things in my life, and that He has promised a good outcome, and invites me to trust Him. But I don't always do that. To the contrary, I often complain and question and resist. Rather than demonstrating love for Him and others, which He commands, I turn inward and become self-absorbed and self-consumed, which in essence is self-idolatry. Rather than submitting to His good purposes, I act like my own purpose is better. Rather than walking in Jesus' steps and exhibiting joy and blessing to others, as the Lord did and which He promises to enable me to do, I become consumed with myself and expect others to do the same. I say things I shouldn't say to those closest to me. I snap at my wife. I become curt with a person on the phone. I express unrighteous anger. I don't pray as I should nor bring my praise to the Lord as He deserves. I become consumed with what I don't have rather than thankful for what I do have.

I'm prone to justify the things I have just described, to excuse them under the thought that "when you're going through what I'm going through, it's okay to express the flesh once in awhile." But the truth is, what I've just described displeases my Heavenly Father greatly. Jesus did not respond that way to suffering. These are sinful attitudes and actions and require immediate attention. And that's why I am so thankful that God in His mercy has given us the promise we're about to consider.

During times of suffering, I need it. You need it too.

In 1 John 1:8-10 we find God's amazing *promise of forgiveness*. In this message we're going to learn two things, one, what His promise actually is, and two, how to experience the reality of it.

I. We learn God's promise of forgiveness.

We find the promise in verse 9 of 1 John 1. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." There's the promise. If we confess our sins, God says He will forgive us and purify us. We're going to unpack this verse more carefully in a few minutes, but I want you to see the bottom line reality of it at the outset.

A. God chooses not to hold our sins against us. That's what His Word says. If we *confess our sins*, He will *forgive our sins*. To forgive, in essence, means, "to let go, to send away, to not to hold against." That's what God says He will do if we confess our sins to Him. He will *not* hold against us the sins we have committed.

On what basis can a holy God choose *not* to hold our sins against us? He cannot simply overlook sin. That would be a violation of His justice. "The wages of sin is death." So says God Himself in Romans 6:23. So when there's sin, there must be payment for that sin, and the payment must be death. So on what basis can God forgive us of our sins? How can He choose *not* to hold our sins against us?

The amazing answer to this eternally significant question is that...

B. God does this because of Jesus. He doesn't just let go of our sins. He lets go of them because they've already been punished.

Our text has a context. The promise of 1 John 1:9 must be seen in light of the message of the rest of 1 John. The apostle John wrote this epistle somewhere between AD 85 and 95. He wrote it just a few years after the Holy Spirit guided him to pen the Gospel of John. And what was his purpose for these two books? John tells us. He says he wrote his gospel with an evangelistic purpose in mind, so that non-Christians would come to know and believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, and have eternal life (John 20:31).

But what about his first epistle? He says he wrote 1 John, not for an evangelistic purpose, but to provide Christians with assurance. He states his purpose at the end of the letter in 1 John 5:13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life." The Lord not only gives us eternal life, but He wants those of us who have received it to *know* that we possess it.

So 1 John is all about assurance, knowing for sure that you have eternal life. Can a person know that for sure? John says he can. How? Not by recalling a salvation event (like the day you raised your hand in a service), or by checking the date on a prayer card, but by looking for God-produced evidence.

That's what 1 John is full of, evidences that a person has been born again and therefore is eternally secure. John says, "I write *these things*...so that you may know." What things? The things that John wrote in the preceding five chapters of this letter provide the key to our assurance. You'll find the word "know" throughout John's letter, and each time you see it, you'll find a tangible evidence that a person knows Christ and is therefore eternally secure. For instance...

1:7 We can know our sins are cleansed if we walk in the light.

2:3 We know we know Him if we obey His commands.

2:5 We can know we are in Christ if we walk as Jesus did.

2:29 If we do what is right, we know we have been born of Him.

3:14 We know we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers.

3:18-19 We know we belong to the truth when we love in deed and truth.

3:21 We have confidence before God if our hearts do not condemn us.

3:24 We know Christ lives in us by the Spirit He gave us.

4:6 Whoever knows God listens to the message of the apostles.

4:7 Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

4:13 We know that God lives in us because He has given us His Spirit.

4:15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him.

So that's the message of this letter. You can know that you have eternal life, and the Lord wants you to know, for He doesn't want His children wavering in doubt. If you know and love Christ, then you can know you have eternal life.

But does that mean we don't sin anymore? Not at all. The evidence of our salvation is not the absence of sin, but what happens when we do sin. That's the point John addresses at the outset in chapter one.

Christians deal with their sin God's way. They don't want to sin, and they do all they can to avoid sin, but when they sin, they deal with it, and we'll see how in just a moment.

And what does God do? He extends His *forgiveness*. On what basis? John makes it clear that...

1. *Our forgiveness rests on what Jesus did (1:5-7).* And...

2. *Our forgiveness rests on what Jesus is doing (2:1-2).*

What did Jesus do? He *appeared*, says John in 1:2. The eternal Christ appeared, and we have seen Him and testify as to what we have seen. "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1:5-7)."

There's the basis of our forgiveness. It's the blood of Jesus, the blood He shed when He went to the cross and died as our substitute. Our forgiveness isn't something we

deserve or earn. It rests on what Jesus did when He provided a payment on Calvary's cross. Was His payment sufficient? Yes! How do we know? Because of what He did on the third day after He made that payment. He came out of that tomb alive!

But it's not just what He *did*, past tense. Our forgiveness rests on what Jesus is doing in the present. And what is Jesus doing? John tells us in 2:1-2, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who *speaks to the Father in our defense*—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

If you are a sinner like me who responds wrongly to suffering, there's good news. Right now, Jesus is in heaven and is speaking to the Father in our defense. What's He saying? "Father, I know he just blew it, but he is trusting in Me and I paid the penalty for what he just did. There is no need to judge him for it. My sacrifice took care of his sin. He is asking for forgiveness. Please grant it for My sake."

You say, "But you don't know what I've done this week." No, I don't. But I do know what Jesus did and is doing for those who believe in Him. He shed His blood for whatever you have done, and He is speaking to your Heavenly Father in your defense.

"So that's it? There's nothing I need to do about my sin?" Actually, there is. This promise has an "if/then" structure. God promises to forgive you *if* you do something. And that brings us to our second point.

We've seen God's promise of forgiveness. Now let's talk about how to experience the reality of it in our lives.

II. We learn how to experience the reality of this promise.

How should we deal with our sin? We find the answer in 1 John 1:8-10. In these three verses we learn, first, what *not* to do, and second, what we *are* to do.

A. Here's how not to deal with sin. Verse 8—"If we claim to be without sin." Verse 10—"If we claim we have not sinned." Here's how *not* to deal with our sin, by making false claims about it. That's exactly what was happening in John's day as it is in ours.

Don't miss the significance of the words "if we claim" in verses 6, 8, and 10. Apparently, the church at Ephesus was being hampered by individuals who distorted gospel truth by *minimizing their sin*.

For instance, in verse 6 John describes a person who claims to have fellowship with God, while at the same time living a life marked by sin. What's true of such a person? John says he is a *liar*. According to verse 6, "If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth."

A person who refuses to face his sin and deal with it God's way is in serious trouble. He's like the emperor who wore no clothes. You can kid yourself into thinking you look just fine, but the facts are the facts. If you are clothed in sin, you are in trouble.

Apparently, some church members in John's day were minimizing their sin by making false claims about it. The tragic reality is we're prone to do the same thing today. And the consequences are severe—not just for the individuals who do it, but for their families and their churches and their society.

Friends, if we want to experience God's remedy for sin, the first thing we must do is refuse to make false claims about it. Let's probe this a little further. What kind of claims must go? John identifies for us two claims that he confronted.

1. *Some people deny the principle of sin (8).* We meet them in verse 8, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Apparently,

John knew some people who were claiming that their lives were not touched by sin. They were above sin. They denied that sin existed in their nature.

Some do that today and assert that they have achieved a state of sinless perfection. What exactly were the people John had in mind saying? Their exact claim? “To be without sin.” Literally, “We are not having sin.” Sin is in the singular. Here it refers, not so much to particular sins, but to the inherited principle of sin. That’s what some were claiming they did not possess, the principle of sin.

But the Bible teaches that we are born in sin and thus inherit a sin nature. We enter the world at odds with our Maker. We are not neutral blank slates, but *sinners*.

What makes me a sinner is not just that I’ve committed sins. It’s more basic than that. The reason I sin, fundamentally, is because I am a sinner. I am born with a bent, a leaning that takes me away from God and towards sin. I *have* sin.

I could illustrate my point vividly if I invited five two-year-olds to the platform right now, and put one toy in their midst. What would happen? Would each instinctively say to the others, “You play with it first and I’ll go last.”? Hardly. Why not? Is the problem that their parents taught them to be self-centered? No. The problem is that they have inherited a *sin principle*.

We are born depraved. We *have* sin. Granted, if we have put our trust in Christ and His crosswork, we’re free from sin’s penalty, but not from it’s presence. Lehman Strauss put it this way, “The Christian is no longer in sin, but sin is still in him.”

But what if we claim otherwise? What about people who deny the principle of sin in their lives? According to John, if we do that two things are true: one, we deceive ourselves; and two, the truth is not in us.

Please don’t water that down. It’s tragic, yet true. It’s possible to be a self-deceived professor of Christ. It was true in John’s day as in ours. What’s the problem? Some people, instead of accepting God’s remedy for their sin, foolishly claim to be without sin. They deny the *principle of sin*.

Others make a second faulty claim which John confronts in verse 10, “If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” What’s this denial? It’s not just about the *principle* of sin, but the *practice* of it.

2. *Some people deny the practice of sin (10)*. The claim in verse 10 is different from the one in verse 8. It’s a perfect tense verb. It has to do with specific sinful acts. It’s a claim not only to be free from the principle of sin, but from specific sin acts.

Several years ago I met a man who made such a claim. I was working in a factory as a summer job, when this fellow told me he was a Christian, and that he believed in sinless perfection. He claimed he hadn’t sinned in the previous seven years. As I talked with him I discovered an interesting detail. To keep his sinless streak alive, he had to redefine sin. He had a few ‘mistakes’ along the way, but he hadn’t ‘sinned.’

Alright, it’s time to define our terms. Just what is sin? We find two helpful definitions of sin in 1 John.

First, sin is *transgression*. 1 John 3:4 states, “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” Sin, then, is any violation of God’s Word. God sets the standard, not us. We have sinned when we deviate from and fall short of His holy standard.

Second, sin is *unrighteousness*. We’re told in 5:17, “All wrongdoing is sin.” Sin is wrongdoing. Sin is unrighteousness. Any unrighteous thought, word, or deed is a manifestation of sin.

That’s what sin is. It’s transgression. It’s unrighteousness.

Now what's true of a person who claims that his life is free from the practice of sin? John again mentions two sober implications of such a claim. One, we make Him a liar; and two, His word has no place in our lives.

This is worse than the first false claim. If we deny the principle of sin, we're deceiving (or lying to) ourselves. But if we deny the practice of sin, we're making Jesus a liar!

Let that sink in, dear friend. If you are refusing to face and admit the specific sins that are in your life, you in essence are saying by your refusal that Jesus' death was unnecessary. You are saying that you don't need what He said you need and came to provide. So you're making a liar out of Jesus. He says you are a sinner. He says your sin needs to be addressed and removed, which is why He sacrificed His life on the cross, to be your *sin-bearer*.

You see, it boils down to this very basic question. Why do I need a Savior like Jesus? The answer is quite simple. I need a Savior because I am a sinner. That's true for you, my non-Christian friend. But it's also true for you, my Christian friend. You and I are still sinners, and the moment we stop taking our sin seriously we are in big trouble. The Philips Modern English puts it in these terms, "If we refuse to admit that we are sinners, then we live in a world of allusion and truth becomes a stranger to us."

Are you living in a world of allusion?

The wonderful truth is that God has provided us with a remedy for sin. But it will do us no good as long as we are refusing to take seriously our need for this remedy. Friends, we must face the facts. We have sin. And we sin. We're deceiving ourselves if we deny the principle of sin and the practice of sin.

Now the good news. We have a God-given remedy for sin, and we see it clearly in verse 9.

B. Here's how to deal with sin (9). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

I would remind you that John is writing primarily to Christians (see 5:13). As Christians, what do we need to do when we sin? Not deny it. Not minimize it. But confess it.

Could it be that the lack of power in the Church today, and in our own lives, is due to the neglect of this activity? As we unpack 1 John 1:9, we discover three things about God's remedy for our sin.

1. *The remedy involves our responsibility.* "If we confess our sins." The Greek verb for "confess" is *homologeō*. It comes from two smaller Greek words, *homo* meaning "the same," and *logeō* meaning "to say."

To confess, then, means to say the same thing as another. Confession of sin means that we are saying the same thing about our sinful thought or deed that God says about it.

A counselor was trying to help a man who had come forward in an evangelistic meeting. "I'm a Christian but there is sin in my life. I need help." The counselor showed him 1 John 1:9 and suggested the man confess his sins to God. The man prayed, "O Father, if we have done anything wrong." The counselor stopped him. "Just a minute. First, it's not 'we,' so don't drag me into your sin! And secondly, it's not 'if,' so you'd better get down to business with God!"

He's right. We're not confessing our sin when we offer some vague, abstract general prayer. When we confess our sin, we must be as specific about it as God is.

Let's take this a step further. There's something that should be happening in our lives if we're truly gripped by sin in our lives or in the lives of those we love. It's a word we don't use very much these days, yet a word that appears 48 times in our Bibles, and it's terribly needed when sin is present. It's called *anguish*. It's not popular to talk about anguish, for we'd much rather hear a sermon about joy, but it's actually a key to our joy.

Last week at the OARBC conference, the keynote speaker preached a series of messages on prayer, and in the Monday evening session he played a video recording of a sermon by David Wilkerson entitled "A Call to Anguish." Pastor Wilkerson was a gospel preacher for fifty years, wrote the book, "The Cross and the Switchblade," founded the addiction recovery program called Teen Challenge, and founded and pastored Times Square Church in New York City. He died in a car crash last year.

We wouldn't agree with all of our brother's theology, but I believe he is right on in what he says about our need for anguish. He preached this sermon about ten years ago, and I want us to watch about seven minutes of it as we contemplate how we're responding to the sin in our lives. Here's the transcript:

And I look at the whole religious scene today and all I see are the inventions and ministries of man and flesh. It's mostly powerless. It has no impact on the world. And I see more of the world coming into the church and impacting the church, rather than the church impacting the world. I see the music taking over the house of God. I see entertainment taking over the house of God. An obsession with entertainment in God's house. A hatred of correction and a hatred of reproof. Nobody wants to hear it any more. Whatever happened to anguish in the house of God?

Whatever happened to anguish in the ministry? It's a word you don't hear in this pampered age. You don't hear it. Anguish means extreme pain and distress. The emotions so stirred that it becomes painful. Acute deeply felt inner pain because of conditions about you, in you, or around you. Anguish. Deep pain. Deep sorrow. The agony of God's heart.

We've held on to our religious rhetoric and our revival talk but we've become so passive. All true passion is born out of anguish. All true passion for Christ comes out of a baptism of anguish. You search the scripture and you'll find that when God determined to recover a ruined situation... He would share His own anguish for what God saw happening to His church and to His people. And He would find a praying man and take that man and literally baptize him in anguish. You find it in the book of Nehemiah. Jerusalem is in ruins. How is God going to deal with this? How is God going to restore the ruin? Now folks, look at me... Nehemiah was not a preacher, he was a career man. But this was a praying man.

And God found a man who would not just have a flash of emotion. Not just some great sudden burst of concern and then let it die. He said: "No. I broke down and I wept and I mourned and I fasted. And then I began to pray night and day. Why didn't these other men... why didn't they have an answer? Why didn't God use them in restoration? Why didn't they have a word? Because there was no sign of anguish. No weeping. Not a word of prayer. It's all ruin.

Does it matter to you today? Does it matter to you at all that God's spiritual Jerusalem, the church, is now married to the world? That there is such a coldness sweeping the land? Closer than that... does it matter about the Jerusalem that is in our own hearts? The sign of ruin that's slowly draining spiritual power and passion. Blind to lukewarmness, blind to the mixture that's creeping in. That's all the devil wants to do is to get the fight out of you and kill it. So you won't labor in prayers anymore, you won't weep before God anymore. You can sit and watch television and your family go to hell.

Let me ask you... is what I just said convicting to you at all? **There is a great difference between anguish and concern.** Concern is something that begins to interest you. You take an interest in a project or a cause or a concern or a need. And I want to tell you something. I've learned over all my years... of 50 years of preaching. If it is not born in anguish, if it had not been born of the Holy Spirit. Where what you saw and heard of the ruin that drove you to your knees, took you down into a baptism of anguish where you began to pray and seek God. I know now. Oh my God do I know it. Until I am in agony. Until I have been anguished over it... And all our projects, all our ministries, everything we do... Where are the Sunday school teachers that weep over kids they know are not hearing and are going to hell?

You see, a true prayer life begins at the place of anguish. You see, if you set your heart to pray, God's going to come and start sharing His heart with you. Your heart begins to cry out: "Oh God, Your name is being blasphemed. The Holy Spirit is being mocked. The enemy is out trying to destroy the testimony of the Lord's faithfulness and something has to be done." There is going to be no renewal, no revival, no awakening, until we are willing to let Him once again break us. Folks, it's getting late, and it's getting serious. Please don't tell me... don't tell me you're concerned when you're spending ours in front of internet or television. Come on. Lord, there are some that need to get to this altar and confess: "I am not what I was, I am not where I am supposed to be. God I don't have Your heart or Your burden. I wanted it easy. I just wanted to be happy. But Lord, true joy comes out of anguish." There's nothing of the flesh that will give you joy. I don't care how much money, I don't care what kind of new house, there is absolutely nothing physical that can give you joy. It's only what is accomplished by the Holy Spirit when you obey and take on His heart.

Build the walls around your family. Build the walls around your own heart. It will make you strong and impregnable against the enemy. God, that's what we desire.¹

Friends, is there sin in your life? Is there sin in the lives of those you love? It's foolish to deny it. What's needed is honest and heartfelt anguish, the kind of anguish that brings us to on our knees before our God and prompts us to truly confess our sins to Him.

According to 1 John 1:9, this is God's remedy for our sin. We are to confess our sins to God. That's our responsibility. But what if He writes us off? What if He says, "I'm tired of hearing your confession. No more forgiveness." He won't say that. How do I know?

2. *The remedy involves God's character.* "He is faithful and just."

Because He's faithful He's true to His Word. Hebrews 10:23 says, "He is faithful that promised." So if we confess our sin, He will forgive us. It's certain. It's His promise.

He is also just. Why is that significant? We know that because God is just, He cannot leave the guilty unpunished (Ex. 34:7). We know that the just Judge of all the earth cannot overlook sin.

So how then does He who is just forgive guilty sinners like us? The answer is *the Cross*. On the cross, He who is faithful and just made a provision for the removal of our sins. A just God must punish sin, and that's what He did on the Cross. He punished His own Son.

On the Cross, Jesus Christ made a substitutionary payment. He took upon Himself the sins of every person who would ever believe on Him. And in their place He endured the wrath of God.

The fact is, the sins we commit must be punished. The question is *by whom*. If you reject Jesus Christ, a just God must punish you. But what happens if you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord? What happens if you confess your sins to God in full dependence upon Jesus? 1 John 1:9 tells us. "And [He] will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." So...

3. *The remedy involves God's activity.* The word "forgive" means "to release or let go." That's what God does with our sin if we confess it to Him, trusting in Christ. He releases us from the penalty we deserve to pay. He lets us go free. He *forgives*.

Furthermore, He "purifies" us. He removes the stain of our unrighteousness that previously marked our lives. He washes us clean.

¹ "A Call to Anguish," by David Wilkerson, preached in September 2002 at Time Square Church; transcript taken from <http://amazingchrist.org/2009/08/a-call-to-anguish-by-david-wilkerson/>

So when we say the same thing about our sin that God does—that it's horrible and that only Christ can remove it—God takes it away from us. He removes our guilt. He restores us to Himself. And He offers pardon and cleansing to us.

By the way, if we are Christians, when we sin do we cease to be God's children? Do we need to be saved all over? No. But we do lose something when we sin. What's that? Our fellowship with God. Yet when we confess our sin, He forgives and cleanses us, and brings us back into intimate communion with Him.

It breaks my heart as a pastor to see the casualties of sin. I talk with people constantly whose lives are wrecked by sin, both Christians and non-Christians. What's so tragic is that it doesn't have to be that way!

I plead with you, my fellow sinner. Don't minimize the sin that's in your life. Don't ignore it. Don't deny it. Confess it, and God will forgive.

A *National Geographic* television episode filmed in the Australian Outback once depicted the lambing process of a large sheep herd. Dozens of ewes were giving birth to their lambs. But as often happens, several baby lambs were stillborn or died soon after birth. And on the other hand, some ewes died from complications, leaving helpless orphaned lambs. These orphans would soon die.

There seemed to be a simple solution. Pair up an orphaned lamb with a ewe whose lamb had died. But the ewe rejected the strange lamb.

Through years of experience, the shepherds learned how to deal with the problem. They remove the skin from a dead lamb and stretch it over a surviving, orphaned lamb. When that's done, the ewe sees the orphan as her own, and gives it her full acceptance and care.

What a beautiful picture of how God accepts us! He provided us with a covering, through the shed blood of His own Son. When we confess our sins and place our trust in Christ, God forgives us and accepts us as His own.

That's how we are saved. That's how as saved people we are to live.

If you're not a Christian, I want to ask you something. Would you like to experience God's remedy for sin? You can this very moment. Confess your sin and your sins to God. Accept the provision He made for forgiveness through Jesus Christ. And He will forgive you. You have His promise.

But this promise is for you, my Christian friend, particularly for you since 1 John was written for Christians.

Make It Personal: Since God has given us this promise...I urge you to do three things.

1. *Hide it in your heart.* Memorize this passage so you can take it with you wherever you go.

2. *Put it into practice every day.* If we're going to confess our sins, we need first to see them. So ask God each day to show you what He sees. And when you see sin, confess it. And then believe His promise, and leave your sin behind.

3. *Share it with others, for they need it too.* There are people in our lives who need this promise, too. Let's tell them the good news about *the promise of forgiveness*.