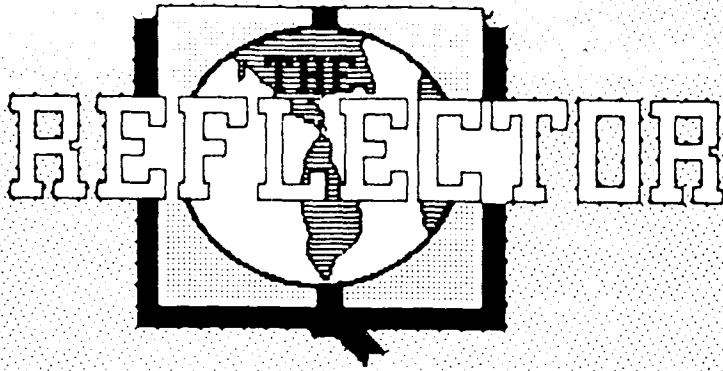


DECEMBER 1985



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"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" - 1 John 1:9

I am reading and hearing a lot lately about the need to confess our "sinfulness" with 1 John 1:9 as the proof text. This bothers me, because this is not what the verse says. There is a difference in confessing sins and confessing sinfulness. "Sins" suggest specific, concrete acts. "Sinfulness" a quality of character or a proneness to sin.

Guy Woods makes a good point on the word as used in this passage in his commentary:

"The word 'sin' of verse 8, an abstract concept of wrong, becomes 'sins,' individual and specific acts of wrong-doing in verse 9. It follows, therefore, that the sins we are to confess are the specific and particular manifestations of the sin which all sincere believers of the Word know in their hearts they possess." (A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles, Guy N. Woods, Vol. VII, p. 219).

Most brethren will agree that the forgiveness or continual cleansing that we all need is conditioned upon the confession of this verse. The problem is with what is to be confessed. Is it our proneness to sin or the sinful quality of our character? Or is the sins that our sinful quality of character caused us to commit?

Whatever is confessed in the verse, God has promised to forgive and cleanse. If the "sins" that we confess is really our

sinfulness, then the "sins" that He forgives is really our sinfulness. So, as we "confess our sinfulness" we would be forgiven and cleansed of that characteristic. Question: After one confesses whatever he confesses and is cleansed of whatever

does he still have what was confessed after the cleansing has taken place?

*Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.* If it is his sinfulness, does he still have his sinfulness?

If the "sins" we confess is actually our "sinfulness" and the "sins" that are cleansed (washed away) by blood of Christ is actually our sinfulness, then that gets mighty close to what the "sanctified holiness people" used to tell us - that we have our sinful nature destroyed in Christ and are no longer sinful.

When a Christian confesses his "sins", as 1 John 1:9 teaches, and is cleansed he no longer has those sins. They are gone. Washed away by the blood of Christ. He is no longer unrighteous, but righteous. Not by merit, but by grace. But he still has his sinfulness - his proneness to sin. So, it is quite certain as he lives in the flesh that he will commit further sins and need to confess them and be forgiven. But, he no longer has those sins that have been confessed and forgiven.

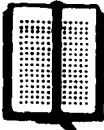
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"Sin is not hurtful  
because it is forbidden

But it is forbidden

Because it is hurtful.

--Benjamin Franklin



The Ethiopian treasurer was a religious Bible reader. On his way home from worship in Jerusalem, he met Philip the evangelist. Before long the treasurer asked to be baptized in water. You can read the story in Acts 8:26-40.

Why would this man make such a request? Why would anyone want to be baptized in water? Is there any good reason why one should not be baptized in water?

Seeing water, the treasurer asked, "What hinders me from being baptized?" (v. 36). He had been reading about Jesus without knowing it. (v. 32). He was honest enough to admit his lack of understanding and gladly accepted Philip's help. Philip began with the very passage in Isaiah that the treasurer read and preached Jesus to him.

The words in Isaiah were speaking of Jesus, but the treasurer wondered if Isaiah was speaking of himself or some other man. Philip took this scripture for his text and preached Jesus to the man. Somehow the man got the idea from all of this that he needed to be baptized. Wonder why? Do you suppose there is something in the preaching of Jesus that includes baptism? Do you suppose there is something such preaching that suggests baptism in water? The treasurer got that idea somewhere. Reckon it might be that Jesus taught something about being baptized?

Before ascending back to heaven, Jesus had told his followers to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). Also, "Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..." (Matt. 28:19). In preaching to the treasurer, Philip was carrying out this commission. In requesting baptism, the treasurer was responding to the commission just as the Lord had in mind. The Lord expected his message to be carried

to Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). By the time Philip and the treasurer met, by the providence of God, the gospel of Christ had already been preached in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. It was now on its way to the end of the earth - at least to Ethiopia.

The treasurer responded to the preaching like they had in Jerusalem and Samaria. In Jerusalem 3000 were initially

baptized for the remission of their sins after they heard Jesus preached. (Acts 2:36,41). The number grew daily (v. 47). In Samaria, both men and women were baptized after hearing Christ preached. (Acts 8:4-13). Now this man hears Christ and wants to be baptized. Do you suppose that the promise of the "remission of sins" (Acts 2:38) or Jesus' saying the baptized "will be saved" had anything to do with it?

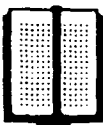
Baptism is not for everybody. It is for those who believe in their hearts that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (v. 36-38). Unbelief would have hindered the treasurer. Once he confessed his faith, Philip baptized him. There was no need to call the church together for a vote. This man was "answering a good conscience toward God" (1 Pet. 3:21), not man.

The treasurer went on his way rejoicing. He had reason to rejoice. He believed in Jesus with all his heart. He believed the promise made by Jesus to believers who are baptized. He knew he was saved. He knew his sins were washed away. He knew it because he believed the Lord, not because he had been given some better felt than told experience. Jesus had been preached to him. He had believed the preaching. He had done what the preaching prescribed. If Jesus was true to his word, the treasurer's sins had been taken away at baptism. (cf. Acts 22:16).

Would you like to have reason to rejoice like the treasurer? Would you like to be baptized like he was? "If you believe with all your heart, you may."

## IF YOU BELIEVE . . .

*Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.*



An army general, making a speech recently to an assembled group of military leaders, said, "All the technology in the world will never eliminate the need for a foot soldier."

Soon after reading the above quotation,

whom they have not heard, and they can't hear with a preacher. (Rom. 10:14). The power is still in the foot soldier. The Lord's army is not a machine, directed by armchair generals from an elder's room; it is a world-covering horde of saved-by-grace people who appreciate it.

We are personally glad that the eunuch, when he started home from Jerusalem, did not have to wait for Philip to get his degree in missionology, nor

## WE NEED FOOT SOLDIERS

we attended a number of meetings where church leaders gather - planning sessions, leadership seminars, elders' meetings, workshops, and the rest. We heard practically every plan imaginable proposed that would convert the world without our having to get out and do it personally. It is amazing what the human brain can come up with if we eliminate personal involvement.

We want our "programs" to convert the world. We advertise, and bring in the "experts" to enthuse us. We appoint committees and delegate authority - anything to keep from having to get out and eyeball a sinner and tell him that he is a sinner and that only Jesus can save him.

"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:21) And, He made preachers out of every one of us. We do not have an option. We are all - men and woman alike - under the greatest of all commissions. This was the choice of God, which demonstrates the wisdom of God - that they can't believe in

for the church somewhere to put him in their budget. We still need foot soldiers.

The Lord didn't lay the task of evangelism upon machinery; He laid it upon men. All the mass media, however helpful, cannot substitute for one saint communicating the one gospel to one sinner. That's the way the world will be saved - if it is ever saved. God did not give His commission to angels, or even to a committee, but to men - to individuals.

We do not need enthusiasm in the pulpit like we need commitment in the pew. We are part of our own problem when we should provide the solution - foot soldiers.

-Don McWhorter  
via The Graphic Evangelist

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It doesn't make any difference what brand of polish you use; you have to mix elbow grease with it to make it shine the shoes.

--The Speaker's Sourcebook

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**OUR SERVICES**  
**SUNDAYS:**  
**Bible Classes 9:45 AM**  
**Worship.....10:45 AM**  
**Worship.....6:00 PM**  
**WEDNESDAYS**  
**Bible Class...10:00 AM**  
**Bible Classes 7:30 PM**

I was recently asked by one of our correspondence course students whether the unsaved would be immediately aware of Christ's presence at His return or would only Christians see Him. It is not unusual to have this type of question raised these days. The denominational world to a great degree teaches a "rapture" doctrine and included in this is the idea that when Christ first returns that only the saved of the earth will be aware of His presence. We are told that people will mysteriously disappear off the face of the earth and that bodies will

## **WHO WILL SEE HIM AT HIS RETURN ?**

disappear out of graves. It is said that the people left on the earth, the unsaved, will wonder what happened. One prominent premillennial teacher has even halfway suggested that a partial, gradual rapture has already begun - in the Bermuda triangle. With all the teaching that is floating around today concerning this it is no wonder that we have people raising questions as to who will be aware of Christ's return.

To answer this and all questions, we must go to the Bible. We cannot rely upon human imaginations and fantasies. What does the Bible say concerning this matter? I think the Bible clearly points out who will be aware of the return of Christ. John says that "every eye will see Him", even those "who pierced Him". (Rev. 1:7) That suggests to me that there will not be anyone who will not be aware of His return. Jesus said that "all who are in the graves will come forth", not just the saved but "those who have done good" and "those who have done evil". (John 5:28,29) His return will also be of such a nature that it would be difficult for anyone to be unaware of it. We are told that He "will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God." I Thess. 4:16) I just don't believe anyone could be around when that happens and not be aware that something unusual is happening.

So we see that the Bible clearly teaches that when Christ comes again, everyone will be aware of His presence. Do not be deceived by those who would teach otherwise.

-- Edward O. Bragwell, Jr.