

Session 1

September 5, 2021

SURE OF FORGIVENESS

1 John 1:5–2:2

It was Benjamin Franklin who glibly stated, “Nothing is certain except death and taxes.” While that rings true to most of us, there are some other certainties when it comes to God. Faith in God is not a blind leap, but a willful decision based on evidence and born out through generations of changed lives. What a blessing to know that we can count on God and His word! The next few lessons remind us of some certainties we can count on...beyond just death and taxes. The first is the certainty of forgiveness for those who repent. But this certainty does not come because of our repentance; rather, it is guaranteed by the person and work of God.

The character of God insures our forgiveness (vv. 5-7). No book of the Bible is more simple, more straightforward, or more applicable than the epistle of 1st John. While John the Beloved was a devoted follower of Christ, he was first of all a simple fisherman. The Holy Spirit inspired him in his customary simple language and short sentences. But *simple* should not be confused with *gentle*. This little book carries quite a punch! The primary declaration of verse 5 is the *purity* of God. He is entirely light, and as such, is entirely devoid of any darkness at all. The argument that follows is quite logical: if we say we walk with Him, yet remain in darkness, then we are lying! Why? Because our darkness would violate the purity of His character. It should be noted that the verbs in these verses indicate continual present action. The idea is not that one sin keeps us out of heaven, but rather the continued lifestyle of darkness contradicts the constant character of God as light. We can't have it both ways! Simply put, walking in darkness cannot coexist with walking in the light. The good news is that God desires us to walk with Him in the light and has made that possible through the sacrificial blood of Christ that “cleanses us from all sin” (v. 7). For reflection: *If the character of God guarantees that forgiven sin must stay forgiven, what implications does that have for the eternal security of the believer?*

The justice of God insures our forgiveness (vv. 8-10). The Greek word translated “confess” in verse 9 literally means *to say the same thing*; or *to agree with*. Hence, confession is admitting to God what He already knows! The apostle Paul reminded us that “*all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). To confess that we have no sin, then, is to lie. To confess that we are indeed sinners may be an ugly truth, but it is truth nonetheless. The good news is that when we confess our sins, Christ is both *faithful* (willing) and *just* (able) to forgive our sin, (remove the consequences) and to cleanse us (purify us) from all that defiles us. Hence, not only the *character of God* guarantees our forgiveness, but the righteous attributes of God assure it as well. For reflection: *Why do you think John added the phrase “His word is not in us” in verse 10? What does His word have to do with all this?*

The advocacy of God insures our forgiveness (2:1-2). Chapter 2 begins with the voice of experience. Six times in this little book, John addresses his readers with such tenderness. He is the aged elder, and they are his spiritual progeny. Clearly, his desire is that believers not sin at all. But the voice of experience tells him two things. First, even the most committed follower of Christ still has a sin nature that wars with the spirit (see Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:14ff). Simply put, Christians aren't free from sin; they are forgiven! Second, when a believer sins, Christ is our

advocate (literally, *comforter*, *helper*, or *intercessor*), who steps in on our behalf and represents us. How can He do this? Because He is “the propitiation for our sins” (v. 2). The word *propitiation* has several shades of meaning. It includes the idea of *mercy place*, as well as *atoning sacrifice*. In any case, He is the *recipient of our judgement* as well as the *bestower of mercy* to us. Again, our forgiveness is guaranteed because He Himself paid for it! For reflection: *If Christ is the propitiation “for the sins of the whole world” (v. 2), does that mean that everyone is going to be saved? Why or why not?*