

# The Book of 1 John: A Road Map to Holiness

*by Bro. John Duncan*

The book of 1 John is a road map to Holiness. Ironically, one of the main verses used to defend "sinning Christianity" comes from this book (1 John 1:8) while all its other verses teaching holiness are ignored. Some people just have a misunderstanding on these verses, while others have a vested interest in believing in "sinning Christianity:" they hope to condone their own sinful lifestyles with the Bible.

To come to a good understanding on any given doctrine, we must study all the verses of the Bible dealing with that subject, especially within that same book. The next step is to figure out what all these verses mean when put together. It is imperative to let the Bible interpret the Bible. I like to think of studying the Scriptures as we would draw a card from a deck of cards, one truth at a time. I will use this "deck of cards" illustration to explain my answers.

Let us first examine the controversial Scripture, 1 John 1:8-9:

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we **CONFESS** our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness."

**A. 1st Card** - No one can claim to be without sin (1 John 1:8).

**B. 2nd Card** - The very next verse (1 John 1:9) says that He will purify us from ALL unrighteousness. If ALL unrighteousness is gone, how many is left? Zero.

If I have 5 grains of sand on my hand and I blow them ALL off, how many are left? Zero. If I wash the dishes and I take ALL the grease out, how much grease is left? Zero.

**C. 3rd Card** - We are faced with a **contradiction**: Card #1 and Card #2 seem to convey opposite truths. On one hand, Card #1 says that you can not "claim to be without sin" but on the other, Card #2 says that you can have "all unrighteousness" cleansed, therefore leaving you with no sin remaining. Can you "not claim to be without sin" and yet have no sin left?

Something happened in between verses 8 and 9. Look carefully above. It is called "confession" (caps, underlined). You cannot say that you have no sin before confessing them to Christ (repentance). I have witnessed to people who thought that they were good people and that they never sinned their whole lives. Therefore, they thought they did not need Jesus.

**D. 4th Card** - The very next verse further clarifies it for us: "**If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**" (1 John 1:10). We make Him

a liar if we say that we have never sinned, because "all have sinned." That's why we need to be saved.

Let's go back a couple of verses to get the context (1 John 1:6-7):

"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 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."

**E. 5th Card** - We can't walk in darkness (sin) and have fellowship with God (v. 6). Furthermore, if we say that we have fellowship with Him - If we call ourselves Christians - and live in sin, we lie and do not the truth. ***Right here you can see that "sinning Christianity" is a false doctrine.***

**F. 6th Card** - If we walk in the light (truth), the blood of Jesus cleanses from ALL sin (v. 7). Again, ALL means ALL. If ALL sin is cleansed, how much is left? Zero.

The next verse further shows us that we are NOT to expect sinning:

"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:" (**1 John 2:1**).

What is the Apostle John's purpose to writing these things? (answer above)

- A. That you may sin
- B. That you may NOT sin

If you correctly answered "b," which interpretation of 1 John 1:8 is in more harmony with John's goal for writing this letter?

Also note that 1 John 2:1 says "**if**," not "**when**" (underlined and capitalized above). Let me ask you a couple of questions:

1. "**IF** I have a car wreck today, I hope not to get hurt." Is this car wreck:

- a. inevitable
- b. a possibility

2. "**WHEN** I drop a ball, it will fall to the ground." Is the law of gravity:

- a. inevitable
- b. a possibility

Likewise, 1 John 2:1 shows us clearly that sinning is a possibility in a Christian's life ("**IF** any man sin..."), but not an inevitable event (not "**WHEN** any man sin..."). 1 John 1:8 shows us that sinning is inevitable in a sinner's life (before confession and salvation).

I am not claiming to be "without sin." I used to be a drunkard, a fornicator, etc., before I got saved. But after I confessed my sins to Jesus and was born-again, I was cleansed of all sin. Now, by the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God, I am "walking in the light, as He is in the light," and the blood of Jesus Christ "cleanses me from ALL sin." I am not expecting to sin, but IF I sin, I have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, and I am no longer "walking in darkness."

To say that 1 John 1:8 means what most modern-day professing "Christians" say that it means is bogus. If you look at the whole context, it CAN NOT mean that we are always going to sin. The verse in itself is sandwiched between verses that teach the exact opposite!!!

If you read on into this book of 1 John, you will find out some radical statements against "sinning Christianity" such as:

- 1 John 2:3-6: "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. **He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.** But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."
- 1 John 2:29 "If ye know that he is righteous, **ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.**"
- 1 John 3:4-10: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: **whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.** Little children, LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. **He that committeth sin is of the devil;** for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. **Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;** for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: **whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God,** neither he that loveth not his brother."
- 1 John 5:2-3 "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. **For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.**"

The apostle John warned these early Christians to LET NO MAN DECEIVE YOU! (1 John 3:7). The reason for such admonition is that John knew that deception was coming our way. My friend, that deception is here in our day.

Modern-day false doctrines:

- We all sin everyday in "word, thought, or deed."
- No one can stop sinning by the grace and help of God.
- We are only humans and humans sin.
- We all sin every day.

If you hear these lies coming from your church's pulpit, FLEE for your own soul's sake and follow holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. 12:14)