

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 13- The First Line **1John 3:4-10**

105. Distinguishing Between Sin and Righteousness- Part 4

WAOY Tuesday, 10/23/07

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" through the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to continue to look at what John taught about "The Distinction between Sin and Righteousness. So, let's read **1John 3:4-10** again together:

4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.

9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Now on the last broadcast we were going over what John meant when he said that Jesus Christ was manifest to "**take away sins**", so I want to go into that area again by looking closely at verse 5 again:

You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

So, in this verse, John is reminding us that the reason that Jesus can take away our sins- is because Jesus was absolutely sinless. Because Jesus walked in sinless perfection- our sins can be taken from us forever. Now just how does that work? How does the sinless perfection of Jesus Christ relate to our sins being taken away from us forever? Listen closely- because this is going to curl your hair.

From the beginning- God's plan for Salvation has been the same. All that anybody has to do to go to Heaven is to be just as Righteous as God Himself is Righteous. That is all he has to do. Another way of looking at this is to say, that the only thing that a person has to do to go to Heaven is to be just like God. Now that is very simple, isn't it?

But when we are talking about this- we must remember what walking in sinless perfection actually means. Sinless perfection means that you have to be *perfectly* righteous, and you have to be *continuously* righteous. That means that you cannot sin at all in any way, and you cannot ever sin at all even one time. As soon as you commit one sin- you are no longer sinless, and you are no longer perfect. So, in order to go to Heaven- you must be perfectly Righteous, and you must be continuously Righteous in thought, word, and deed 24 hours every day and 7 days every week.

Now while this concept may be simple to understand- the painful reality of sin makes this simple concept to be absolutely impossible for human beings to do- because we are all sinful. Now I have met some pitiful people in my life who actually believe that they do not sin anymore- but the fact that they think that way only shows how their minds are not working properly.

The fact of the matter is that human beings sin. Everybody sins. And everybody sins all the time. So, if you and I were to stand right next to God and the contrast between His perfect Righteousness shined against our sin- we would be able to see that not only do we sin- but we sin constantly. And that is the purpose of the Law. The Law of God cannot save anyone unless they perfectly obey it. The Law of God represents God's perfect Character and Nature and as we compare our lives to that Law- as we stand next to that perfect Law- we can see that we fail in one or more points every single day of our lives. And it is in that sense that the perfect Law that God gave to us becomes a curse to us- because as we compare our lives to that holy and perfect Law- we

see just how greatly we fail to live up to it. Here is how Moses put this in **Genesis 6:5**:

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

So, we can see that not only do we sin- but God says that every single intent of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually. So, we can see then that fallen Humanity is in real bad shape. All of Humanity is sinful and we are such a slave to sin that God said that every single intent of the thoughts of his heart is never anything but sinful and it is nothing but sinful all the time. So that's not just bad- that is real bad.

And God gave us the Law so that we could clearly see just how sinful we really are- so that no one would be deceived into thinking that he is good; so that no one would be puffed up by his own self- righteousness into thinking that he is righteous in God's Eyes; and so that no man would ever think that he is perfect before God.

This is why it is so ridiculous and insane for anyone to believe that a human being can *earn* Salvation by what they do. For anyone to think that he can make himself to be righteous- or for a man to think that he can keep himself righteous is to either disbelieve just how sinful God says that we are, or it is to simply be arrogant to the point of being ridiculous or it is for him to change the definition of what sin is.

Sin is doing anything; or thinking anything or believing anything that is not just like God. So, any time we act in a way that is not like God- we have sinned. But sin goes deeper than that. Any time that we even think about something in a way that God would not think- we have also sinned. And any time that we believe anything that is different from what God has said- we have sinned. So, in the course of one day- if we are going to be honest- we can see that we sin multiple times every single day.

Now keep in mind- those of you who are working real hard to earn Salvation- that as you struggle to become righteous- you rise- you are working real hard not to sin, and you rise- and you have achieved some degree of success through your efforts. You may actually go three, four five, maybe even ten minutes without sinning- but the very moment that you sin in either thought, word, or deed- you don't just stop your ascent up the mountain of God- you fall back down to square one- and

you have to start all over again. Even if you went eight hours without one sin- and then you sinned- you would have to start all over again and it is as though you never even tried at all- because you're back at square one.

Now as clear as that is- some people still don't get it. They think that if only they would put forth more effort- they could achieve sinless perfection. So, they try harder. These people really put their hearts and minds into what they are doing. They are very industrious people. They get up early and they stay up late. They pray a lot; they fast a lot; they do great things for people because they are trying to earn enough righteousness through all their labor- so they can be worthy enough to go to Heaven.

Martin Luther was on this treadmill for a while back in the 16th century. He was taught by the Roman Church that a man had to earn righteousness through his labor, so Martin labored diligently. He scrubbed the rocks in the monastery until they shined. He prayed for hours; he fasted till he couldn't walk straight. He worked and worked and worked at it. And then he would have a sinful thought; he would lust in his heart; he would covet; he would have ought in his heart toward another brother and he knew that he had lost it all and had to start all over again.

One day a man asked him, "*Brother Martin, don't you love God?*" And Martin Luther had just realized that he had failed again, and he blurted out in exasperation- "*Love God? Love God? No, I don't love God- I hate Him. He demands perfect obedience from me and yet I cannot give it to Him. The more I try - the more I see sin in myself.*"

Now he didn't know it, but Martin Luther was being led by God's Spirit at that very moment to come to a place of utter helplessness- so that he could see the light. Soon after that event- Martin was reading the Scriptures and he came across this passage in **Romans 1:17**

BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

And suddenly, the Light of God entered into his soul and Martin Luther understood what **Galatians 2:16** was talking about when Paul said:

nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but

through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

And the understanding of what Paul meant in that verse led him to understand what John was talking about in the verse that we are studying today:

You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

And at that very moment, Martin Luther, who had worked so hard for years to earn his own righteousness, quietly fell to his knees and fully trusted in the finished work of Jesus Christ to be sufficient to provide him with all the righteousness that he needed in order to go to Heaven.

But it didn't stop there- but because Martin Luther had been gloriously saved by Grace through Faith alone- Luther began to preach and teach this great Truth about what it means to be justified by faith alone apart from the works of the Law. And that became the rallying cry in Latin of "Sole Fide" "By Faith Alone" that began to spread across Europe and set the world on fire as the Protestant Reformation reclaimed the Biblical Truth about Salvation by Faith alone that the Roman Church had hidden for years.

For nearly 500 years- Salvation by Faith alone was taught and proclaimed as being the Gospel- but I fear that this Truth is falling on hard times in our day and we have to be careful that we maintain that Truth and we have to rise up and teach and proclaim to the world – that only Jesus saves and he only saves by Grace through Faith alone.

We need to remember that it was the fire that was ignited by the Protestant Reformation which compelled men to seek after the Lord. These men became known, and the Puritans and God used these men to write down volumes of insight into Scripture that had not been seen by the world since the days of Augustine. Those of you who use a Strong's Concordance today or a Matthew Henry Commentary know that these two men and the great works that they produced which has helped so many of us better understand the Scriptures were Puritans.

Those brave souls that crossed the Atlantic in row boats and settled this land- we call them the Pilgrims – were off shoots of the Puritans and came over here to dedicate this land to the propagation of the

Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the only reason that this land was settled.

America's greatest Theologian- Jonathan Edwards and the prince of Preachers- Charles Spurgeon were both Puritans and so we who lead in the Church today are indebted to these men and they knew that they were indebted to Martin Luther who in a tiny cell in a monastery rediscovered the great revelation that we are saved by Grace through Faith in Christ alone and not by the works of the Law.

Jesus alone and singularly lived a perfectly sinless life and Jesus alone never thought one sinful thought; never said one sinful word, and He never had one single sinful intent of his heart and Jesus never failed in one single act of his life to be sinless. And it is that sinless, spotless righteousness of Jesus that is imputed to the unworthy believer through the agency of Faith alone which makes us able to stand in God's Presence and pass through his Judgment and enter into Heaven with Him forever!

So truly, John as right and Jesus Christ

... appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.

Well, I have to stop right here, but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.