

So That You May Know

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

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

107. Distinguishing Between Sin and Righteousness- Part 6

WAOY Thursday 10/25/07

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, I was showing you how John was linking our sins being taken away from us with the sinless Righteousness of Jesus Christ in verse 5- and so today I want to look at what John taught about the attributes of the redeemed soul by looking at verses 6-10.

Now the summary of verses 6-10 is found in verse 10, so let's read that verse again:

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.

John says here in this verse that “**by this**” the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious. In other words- John is teaching here that that which defines who is saved and who is not saved; that which distinguishes between the lost person and the saved person is what he describes in these four verses.

So, if we are going to know the difference between a lost person and a saved person- we need to know what John taught in these four verses- don't we? So, a quick scan of verses 6-9 of **1John 3** tells us what? What is John discussing in these four verses? He is talking about sin and the relationship that sin has with the saved soul.

So, let's go over these verses one at a time. Let's read again verse 6:

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

Now the first two words of this verse is “**No one**”. And these words were very important in the first century because the average person in the Middle East at that time thought that only Jews could be saved. And so, John is reassuring the Gentile believers that- although they were not born as physical Jews- that because they are saved- they are spiritual Jews. They may not have had the foreskin of the flesh circumcised- but they have had the foreskin of their heart circumcised.

So, these words, “**No one**”, shows that John was talking about all of those who are born again- both male and female; both Jew and Gentile; both rich and poor- that something is true about all of those who are saved; that all of those who are saved have the same quality about them. Well, what did John say was that one quality that all who are saved have in common with each other? Let's continue to read verse 6:

No one who abides in Him sins ...

John says, whoever is saved- does not sin. Wow! Now on the surface, it *appears* that John is teaching that whoever is saved must

walk in sinless perfection. It *seems* that John is teaching here that whoever is saved must reach a place of being perfect and that being saved means that you no longer sin. That's what it *looks* like John is saying here. But is that what John is really saying here? No, it is not. But how do we *know* that it is not what John is teaching here- because it sure looks that way.

We know that John is *not* teaching that Salvation is the absence of sin for several reasons. And I want to go over each one with you.

First of all, those of us who believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God also believe that there are not any contradictions in Scripture; none; not one.

And that means that if John is teaching in **1John 3:6** that saved people no longer sin at all- it would be a contradiction to what John taught in **1John 1:8**, which says:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

And if John was teaching that Salvation meant sinless perfection in **1John 3:6** then that would contradict what Paul taught in **Romans 3:23**, which says:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

So, the Bible is consistent from **Genesis** to **Revelation** and contains no contradictions. God the Holy Spirit moved upon 40 men over a 1500 year time frame to pen down 66 Books containing inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative, relevant, and eternal Words that came directly out of the Mind and Heart and Mouth of the Creator of the Universe- so these Words do not contain any errors or contradictions and they are not able to contain any errors or contradictions.

But the Bibles that we hold in our hands are the product of human effort to *translate* those original inspired Words into English and many times- there are translation "difficulties" due to the fact that there are no English words to correspond to the Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic Word that God gave. So English phrases have to be given or sometimes even entire paragraphs have to be given so that the reader can get a glimpse into what the writer actually wrote.

But even at that- without studying to get the proper context of the Words that were written- we still won't get an accurate picture of what the Bible is saying to us. In every verse- we need to know things like:

- ✓ Who was doing the talking?
- ✓ To whom was he speaking?
- ✓ What is the historical setting of the event that is described?
- ✓ How are the verbs used- are they passive or active?

... and so on. Now I realize that many will say, "*Man, this is a lot of hard work*"- but beloved- God is in the details and this is why there are so many off the wall interpretations out there today- people simply do not put enough effort into understanding what God has said and what God *meant* by what He said. After all, we're talking about the most important Words contained in the most important Book in the world- so as followers of Jesus Christ- we have a duty and an obligation to take as much time as necessary so that we get this right. And if you skip over these things- you may well get an entirely different meaning from a verse than the writer intended.

Now what many people in the modern Church do is to try to spiritualize their neglect of conducting proper exegesis and they say that God showed them the meaning of a verse or Passage in a dream or directly to them in prayer. And while that may sound very holy- but in reality- God the Holy Spirit didn't show them anything. These people are simply lazy, and they try to cover up their lack of proper attention to God's Word by trying to make themselves look spiritual.

Now while there may be hundreds of different applications to a single verse or Passage of Scripture- there is only one single meaning of every verse in the Bible. And so, it doesn't matter what that verse means to me or to you- the only thing that matters is what the writer of that verse had in mind when God the Holy Spirit moved upon him to write it. And you can't guess at it or use human logic or reasoning. Only by engaging in proper exegesis of the Scriptures can you uncover that one single meaning.

Now many times, there appears to be a contradiction in the Bible. But in reality, what appears to be a contradiction is actually either a translation problem or the definition of words needs to be examined

more deeply. You also have to spend a lot of attention to the tense of the verbs that were used.

And that is why in any serious study of Scripture- we need to go back to the original languages to see what a word or phrase or term actually means. Many times, especially in Greek- the *location* of a word in a sentence could change the meaning of the word. If certain Greek words come before certain verbs- the meaning of that word could be exactly the opposite if that same word was used before that particular verb- so going back to the original languages helps us in many cases to overcome what seems to be a contradiction.

So, by using the tools that I just talked to you about- we can see here in **1John 3:6** John used a present participle of the Greek word for sin. Now what that means is that what John was actually saying here in this verse is that those who are saved- do not continue in sin as a normal course of their daily lives.

So, John was *not* contradicting himself in this verse and John was *not* teaching that Salvation means sinless perfection. John was teaching that saved people do not dwell in sin on an *ongoing* basis- even though they can and do periodically fall into sin on a *temporary* basis.

Now this truth goes to the very heart of Salvation. We are not saved because we stopped sinning. God didn't save you because you quit smoking or because you quit lying or because you quit cheating on your wife. Now it is good that you don't smoke, and I am glad that you don't lie, and I am very proud that you are faithful to your wife- but none of those things saved your soul. Those things are good, and it is better that you don't commit those sins than you do commit them- but Salvation did not come to you because you stopped doing those sinful things. In fact, Salvation didn't come to you because you stopped or started anything.

Salvation is not brought about because of our engagement with morality, and we must be very careful- especially down here in the South- not to equate Salvation with morality. There are many moral people in the world who do noble and good things every day- yet who are as lost as a goose. Mormonism is an outwardly moral religion- yet they teach against the Deity of Jesus Christ, and they teach that God was a man, and they teach against Justification by Faith alone- so the only way that a Mormon can be saved- is if he is a real bad Mormon and either doesn't understand or doesn't believe what his organization

teaches. Many Muslims are moral people in many ways- as long as you don't count raping women; cutting people's heads off and blowing people up.

So, people should live moral lives out of a love for God and a desire to please God after they are saved. So, morality comes into play as result of already being saved- not to earn your Salvation. Without admitting that you are a wretched sinner who is hopeless and helpless to save yourself and without repenting of your sins and without fully trusting in the finished work of Jesus Christ alone for Salvation- moral people will go straight to hell when they die.

There is only one way to Heaven, and it isn't through the route of morality. It is through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Now I realize that some of you may think that I am saying that it doesn't matter whether we are moral or not. I didn't say that, and I don't believe that. Living for God according to the Word of God after you are saved is the unmistakable fruit of Salvation. In other words, talk is cheap. We have to know, beloved, that everybody who "prays the prayer" didn't get saved. Everybody who walks down the aisle didn't get saved. Everybody who shook the preacher's hand didn't get saved.

But if you really did get saved- then you will walk with God and you will obey Jesus Christ as a normal course of your life. Now you may not always be successful in obeying; you may not always be successful in walking- but you will always desire to- and when you do temporarily fail- you will quickly repent and get on top of that mistake and go again for Jesus- because now you are a new creature.

And that is what John was teaching here- that those who are saved do not dwell continually in sin- but these souls have both the power and the desire to serve God.

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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