

So That You May Know

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

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

102. Distinguishing Between Sin and Righteousness- Part 1

First Broadcast on WAQY Wednesday, October 17, 2007

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 begin a new section of our study and look at what John taught about "The Distinction between Sin and Righteousness. So, let's read **1John 3:4-10** 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 in this Epistle, John illustrates three different contrasts that we need to know. The first Contrast is made between Righteousness and Sin here in the verses that we just read. The Second Contrast is made in **1John 3:11-18** between true Love and Hate and the third Contrast that John makes is found in **1John 4:1-6** between Truth and Error.

And these are three contrasts or distinctions or three lines that John draws in the sand which puts a difference between that which is holy and that which is profane; between that which is acceptable to God and that which is not acceptable to God; and between that which proves that we belong to Jesus and that which proves that we are yet in our sins.

Here John is faithful to bring up the very same subject that Ezekiel prophesied about in **Ezekiel 22:26**:

Her priests have done violence to My law and have profaned My holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the profane, and they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they hide their eyes from My sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

Now many people in the modern Church believe that the single worst thing that a preacher can do is to offend another person. Many believe today that we have the very same “rights” as Christians that we do as Americans and that we have the “right” to live and to operate and to believe whatever we choose- and that when anybody challenges what we believe; or challenges something that we have said; or challenges our behavior- then that person is judging us- which of course has come to mean that the person who is doing that- is wrong.

But in reality- the worst thing that a preacher can do is to teach or to believe something that God did not say. The greatest sin that a minister can fall into is to be too fearful to speak the Truth- to be so concerned about the reaction that people will have to what God has said- that it paralyzes him where he doesn't say anything. Hiding some or all of what God has said or changing the meaning of what God has said out of concern that Truth might offend somebody is cowardice. And it dooms people to hell. Nobody will ever repent and trust in Christ unless they know that God has already pronounced damnation upon them. So, if you love God and if you love people- you will warn them to flee from the Wrath of God that is certain to come against all unrepentant sinners.

So, in that sense- Judgment is not a bad thing- it is a good thing- a very helpful and productive thing- as long as judgment is based upon Divine Truth and not merely opinion.

Now it is very popular today to believe that as long as we sincerely believe in something- that the sincerity that we place upon that thing is what gives it credibility and validity. Of course, that is simply nonsense. Everybody is entitled to an opinion about things that are not eternal. We can have differences of opinion about politics or money matters or yard tools- but when it comes to Divine Truth; when it comes to Gods' Word; when it comes to Supernatural Revelation, beloved- opinions do not matter in the least. Your opinion does not matter, and my opinion does not matter. The only opinion that matters when we are talking about Truth is God's Opinion.

So no, we do not have the "right" to believe whatever we want to about Salvation or Heaven and Hell or Sin and Righteousness or about Jesus Christ or about God or about the Church. Those issues have already been settled forever and so they are not up for debate. Divine Truth has already been settled by the Sovereign Owner and Creator of the Universe. So as children of God- we do *not* have the "right" to be wrong- we do not have the right to believe and teach wrongly about an issue that God has already explained in His Word.

And with all due respect to your sincerity- you may be as sincere as you can be about something and still be as wrong as you can be about it. Sincerity means a lot with a lot of things- but all the sincerity in the word will not make something that is false to be true. Sincerity will never make sin to become righteous. Sincerity will not cause Jesus to be something or someone that He was not, and sincerity will not make Salvation a product of human action.

Sincerity will not take one soul out of hell and sincerity will not place one soul into Heaven. Only Truth and belief and obedience to that Truth can do that.

Now the overriding philosophy of our age is that Truth is relative; That Truth is flexible; that Truth is whatever I want it to be and what pleases me or what makes me feel good about myself or what changes over time. So today- far too many people look at Truth as being the same thing as opinion or interpretation.

And this has become so popular that believing and teaching and proclaiming unalterable, objective, Propositional, Absolute, Divine Truth with authority is seen as being wrong or arrogant and that true humility is really nothing more than being uncertain about eternal matters.

So, defending Truth and standing up for Truth causes you to be seen as legalistic; and dictatorial; and autocratic; and mean spirited; and unloving; and even unchristian- everything except what it really is- which is- faithful.

But believing that Truth is objective as opposed to subjective is not being legalistic, beloved- it is being faithful. Proclaiming and defending what God said in His Word is not being dictatorial nor is it being unloving- it is being right, and it is doing exactly what Jesus commanded that we all do.

So, in a Biblical sense- there is no such thing as “my truth” and “your truth”- there is only Truth and in a biblical sense- Truth is absolute and it is eternal- or else it isn't Truth. That which is flexible and that which changes over time or that which means different things to different people isn't truth at all- it is simply conjecture.

Genuine, supernaturally revealed Truth- like we find in Scripture- never waivers; it is eternal; you can depend on it; it is not flexible; it does not change over time; it is not subject to majority approval; it applies to everyone; and it cannot be altered.

And Truth is the foundation of all that is and all that we believe and all that can be. So, if Truth cannot be known; if what God has revealed in Scripture cannot be understood; if it cannot be taught and learned; if it cannot be heard and believed; if the Truth of Scripture cannot be loved and obeyed and defended- then we do not have any basis at all for any aspect of Christianity.

If Truth is not objective and absolute and eternal; if Truth is relative- then everything means anything and therefore everything is meaningless. But if Truth is objective; if Truth is absolute and eternal- then it is possible to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. And if distinguishing between right and wrong is *possible* at all- then it is *mandatory* that we do so.

Separating Truth from Error is one of John's goals in writing this Epistle. Making a difference- as Ezekiel put it- between that which is holy and that which is profane is John's goal here. So, if doing this is unloving- then this Apostle of love was unloving. If doing this is legalistic than Jesus was legalistic. If doing this is dictatorial- then Paul and Peter and all the rest of the men whom God used to establish Christianity in the earth were dictatorial.

But Scripture reveals just the opposite. The Bible teaches that knowing Truth; studying Truth; investigating it; and using spiritual discernment to make a difference between truth and error is actually worship. It is a sign of love and devotion to God- to so highly value what He said that we are willing to study it; learn it; teach it; proclaim it; and defend it against any and all who would alter or change or warp it.

For example- John taught that Salvation involved more than praying a prayer or walking an aisle. John taught that being saved required that the one who is saved no longer walks in darkness. So what John was saying is that one of the lines that divide a saved person from a lost person is that the saved person walks in the light while the lost person walks in darkness.

But then John linked being saved and being in a right relationship with God with also being in a right relationship with those who are also saved. So, John drew another line in the sand teaching that saved people love the brethren while lost people love themselves. Then John taught that saved people do not always do right- but when they realize they have sinned- they confess their sin and ask for forgiveness. So, in teaching that- John was drawing yet a third line which divides between those who are saved and those who are yet in their sins.

Now this is how all this impacts us today. Since it is a fact that John taught these things- we are left with only two options. Either the Bible is not reliable, and we cannot trust what it says, and we need to just do the best we can without knowing or studying Scripture at all or else the Bible is the inspired, inerrant; infallible; authoritative and eternal Word of the living God.

If the Bible is the Word of God, then we need to be faithful to what it says. And if we are going to be faithful to what it says- we have to hold people accountable to what John taught about what it means to be saved- or else we really don't believe that the Bible is true, or we are just being rebellious.

So the faithful minister must always draw a clear line in the sand; he must blow a certain sound of the trumpet; he must clearly and fully articulate and make known the difference between that which pleases God and that which pleases Him not- so that the people can know what to do; so they may know how to live; and so they may know what God expects from them- lest they fall in condemnation.

The people may hear and obey, or they may hear and rebel- that part is between the people and God- but if the minister has been faithful to teach the Truth- if the line has clearly been drawn; if the trumpet has sounded the alarm- they have no excuse.

Many feel that the job of the minister is to be funny or to be clever or to tell jokes in the pulpit or to be a nice guy- but the real job of the minister is to faithfully and fully explain what God has said; to make clear what God demands from us; to cause the people to understand what pleases God- so that the people may be confronted with Divine Truth so those who will may repent and those who will not may be judged.

So since knowing truth and loving truth; and obeying truth is paramount to the believer- there are three things that the faithful minister must do so that God may be glorified, and the people of God can be edified:

1. He must make it clear and plain *what* God has said
2. He must explain or expound on what God has said so that the people may know what God *meant* by what he said
3. He must give practical information so that the people may *apply* what God said to their lives

This is best accomplished through a systematic, verse by verse; line upon line; precept upon precept study of each Book of the Bible. Without doing this- one or more of these three things will never be known or discussed.

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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