

So That You May Know

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

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

104. Distinguishing Between Sin and Righteousness- Part 3

First Broadcast on WAQY Friday/Monday, October 19/22, 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 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 took a good look at verse 4 and today I want to add verse 5 into our discussion of the difference between Sin and Righteousness- so let's read those two verses 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.

So, John is confirming a very basic but a very profound Truth that we all need to comprehend:

God is righteous and we are not

Anytime we get to a place where we think that we have “arrived” or that we have got this thing made- we need to realize the harsh and humbling fact that all people sin.

All, that is, except one Man- Jesus Christ- Who was fully God and fully Man and Who did not sin at all. Jesus was perfectly sinless in all of His thoughts, words, and deeds- never one time transgressing the Law. And nobody else can say that- no human born of woman can say that expect Jesus. Abraham sinned; Moses sinned; David sinned; Levi sinned; Joshua sinned; Isaiah sinned; Paul sinned; John sinned- you sin, and I have sinned. And this is one way in which Jesus is the “one and only of the Father” because Jesus did not sin.

So as soon as John reminds us of *our* sinfulness- he then reminds us of the fact that even though we have sinned multiple times in our life- Jesus was spotless and pure. And then John gives us really “Good News”.

You know that He appeared in order to take away sins ...

Now here is a very important concept about all of this. If all that God wanted Jesus to do was to die for our sins- He could have come down out of Heaven as a full grown man on Friday morning; died on Friday afternoon; rise from the dead on Sunday morning and ascend back up into Heaven by Sunday night. In that scenario- Jesus would have still died for our sins and that would have been enough- right?

But Jesus didn't do that- did He? So, if all God wanted from Jesus was that He die for our sins- why was Jesus born of a virgin? Why did Jesus live 33-1/2 years as a real, live Man? Why did God subject Jesus to ridicule and rejection for 3-1/2 years of His ministry? Why was Jesus baptized?

The reason that Jesus did all of this; the reason that Jesus did not come down on Friday and go back up on Sunday was because God wanted Jesus to do more than just die for our sins- much more.

Now when I say that- please do not misunderstand what I am saying. Jesus Christ absolutely died for our sins. Yes, indeed- thank God that He shed His precious Blood on the Cross so that my sins and your sins could be forgiven. I am a recipient of that holy Blood; I love the Blood; I talk much about the Blood; I sing about the Blood I preach and teach about the Blood- so do not think that I am minimizing the shed Blood of Jesus Christ- because I am not.

But Jesus did *more* than just die. He did *more* than allow sinful men to crucify Him. Jesus also lived. Jesus Christ lived approximately 33-1/2 years on this earth. And there had to be a very important reason for that- because it goes way beyond His Crucifixion.

You see, God doesn't do anything just to do it. God is wise and God is true- so when God does something it is very intelligent, and it is very important. Yet living here for 33 years is *not* directly connected to those few hours when Jesus was arrested; beaten; and nailed to a tree. Being led by the Spirit to be tempted by the devil and fasting for forty days is not directly connected to His Crucifixion.

You see, beloved, we have an even greater problem than being sinful. We are also unrighteous. And while the two are related- they are not fixed in the same way. The way that my sins are forgiven is *not* the same way that I am made righteous- and I need both- forgiveness *and* righteousness in order to go to Heaven.

Blood washed my sins away- but Blood only forgives me- it doesn't make me righteous. Blood makes me clean; Blood washes my sins away- and after I am washed- I am forgiven. Praise God- that holy Red Blood washes my Black heart and makes me whiter than snow.

At that very second- I am pure and clean- but I still lack something very, very important that John is talking about here in verse 5.

Notice the way John phrases these words:

You know that He appeared in order to take away sins ...

Notice that John doesn't say that Jesus appeared simply to *forgive* our sins. Now John understood forgiveness. He too had been forgiven because John was saved the same way you and I are saved. John has already used the word, "forgive" back in **1John 1:9**- so he completely agreed that all men need the Blood of Jesus in order to be forgiven.

But here, John is not talking about being forgiven- John is talking about having our sins “taken away”. Now this is very important- so listen closely.

Under the Old Covenant- men were forgiven for their sins by sacrificing animals. But the problem with this inferior truth is that even though they were forgiven- they didn’t *stay* forgiven. Just as soon as they were forgiven- they went right back and sinned again! They were forgiven- but they were not made righteous; they were pardoned but they were not transformed.

So, the reason that Jesus’ Death is so much more valuable than the death of an animal as far as sin is concerned- is because with Jesus- sin is not just forgiven- it is taken away! You see, because Jesus died- I can be forgiven- but because Jesus lived- I am made righteous!

Now how does all this work? Look again at verse 5:

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

Notice here that John links the fact that Jesus takes our sins away to the fact that Jesus was sinless – not to the fact that Jesus died. Jesus did die- thank God that Jesus died and rose again!- but here John is linking our sins being taken away from us to Jesus’ sinless life- not to the Crucifixion.

This is what John was saying. Our problem ever since the Fall is that not only are we ourselves sinful- not only do we transgress the Law- but all human beings born of woman possess within them the very same nature that Adam had. And not only do we have the very same sin nature that Adam had- we are also personally guilty of the very same sin that Adam committed in the Garden- 6,000 years ago.

So not only are we lost- but we *enjoy* being lost. Not only are we separated from God- we *enjoy* our separation. Not only do we sin- we really like to sin. In our fallen condition- Jesus said- we *love* darkness rather than light. And we do that naturally and normally because it is our nature to do so. We don’t even have to think about it, and we don’t have to be taught to do it. If given a choice between God and self- lost people will always choose self.

And this is the very definition of what it means to be lost. Lost people have a nature that comes from Adam which loves “self” and sin

more than it loves anyone or anything else- including God. So, it isn't the particular sins that we commit that makes us lost- we are not lost because we sin- we sin because we are already lost.

And the only way for a lost man to be saved is for his nature to be changed. Until and unless the old man is replaced by the new man- we are still lost- no matter how much we may have improved our behavior.

Now lost people have the ability and the power to modify their behavior to some extent. Muslims can quit smoking and get off drugs without rehab and without hypnotism. Atheist can give money to charity. Buddhists can pray for hours and give to the poor. Hindus can fast. People who are on death row for committing unspeakable acts of depravity can tell you about honest and noble things that they did in their life which were genuine acts of kindness.

But while it is true that lost people can modify their behavior to some extent- They cannot change their own nature. Only God can do that. In those examples that I gave to you- all of those acts are good and nice and wonderful- but they do not constitute Salvation. In fact, in all of those examples I gave you- none of those people are saved- not one.

Now this is so critical- so please hear me. Salvation, dear friends is so powerful; and so huge that human beings cannot make it happen for themselves. Neither can lost people initiate it; neither can they cooperate with it; neither can they do one thing to make it happen.

Because Salvation is so much more than simply modifying our behavior; because Salvation is so much more than simply adopting good works; Because Salvation is so much more than simply being moral; because Salvation is in fact the transformation of the human fallen nature into one that is divine- therefore Salvation is a supernatural miracle; it is a wonder; it is the greatest and most important Act of God toward Man that ever was- and that means that Salvation is a Sovereign Act of God alone.

And Salvation does much more than wash our filthy sins away. Salvation goes down inside the human being and changes his nature. And now this person loves what he one time hated and he does what he one time would have never done and he loves God and he desires to follow God and then- in the greatest Act of Grace and Mercy that the word has ever known- a holy and righteous God takes the sinless, spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ and drapes it over the

undeserving sinner and God Himself takes away our sins forever and God makes a sovereign declaration that we are now righteous and at that moment- we are made fit for Heaven!

Now this Righteousness is not our own. This is not the result of our obedience and our efforts at loving and serving God. We are “made” righteous; we are declared to be righteous. The Righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to us. And so, the Righteousness that allows us to enter into heaven is not ours; it is an external righteousness; a foreign Righteousness; an alien Righteousness. It is the Righteousness of Jesus Christ that has been *credited* to us.

And we didn’t earn it and we didn’t do anything to get it. God imputes Christ’s Righteousness to us the very moment that Christ’s Blood washes our sins away. So, it is all by Christ- but just not all through His Death. We are washed and forgiven by Christ’s Blood that Jesus shed by dying but we are made fit for Heaven by God imputing the Righteousness of Christ to us that Jesus earned by living a sinless Life.

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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