

THE BASIC FACTS ABOUT SIN

1 John 3:4-10

Intro: Do you remember how many Bible teachers have chosen to follow some teacher of 1 John, and I don't know who it was or when it was, that the teaching of 1 John is like a circular staircase. We start at the beginning of the epistle, and start climbing, not like on a regular stairway, but like a circular staircase where you are going around until you are just above where you started, and you find yourself dealing with the same subject, but on a higher level.

The Apostle John began this epistle by talking about sin. And now we find him coming back to that subject of sin again to add to and to strengthen what he had said before. Interestingly the first thing that he does in 1 John 3:4 is to give us a definition of sin.

I think that most people, whether Christian or not, have some idea about what sin is. But people who don't know the Lord usually don't want to talk about sin. Talking about sin troubles their consciences. And it more often than not makes them think about God, and that it is God Who judges sin. As I was thinking about my message this morning, I knew in choosing the title that I did, I was choosing a subject that most people would rather not think about. But my main purpose in speaking to you is not to have a subject that would be of interest to people who don't know the Lord. My audience are people who want to hear the Word, and that is the reason that they (or I should say, *you*) come to church anyway.

But here we are in church this morning, studying one of the books of the Bible, and we come to the subject of sin again, just like we did in chapter 1. Remember? And we are told that “sin is the transgression of the Law.” This is the biblical definition of sin. Let us look at it, and make sure we understand what the Apostle John was saying.

Let's start with the last word of the definition. What is “the law”? Well, originally it meant the Law which God gave to Moses in the OT. But as time went on it was gradually used for all of the Bible. The Psalmist said in Psalm 1, for example, that the happy man is the man who meditates in the law day and night. In Psalm 119, verse 97, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day long.” These people loved the Bible so much that they were thinking about it all of the time.

But let's ask another question: Where did the Bible come from? We know that it came from God. And why is it called a "law"? It is called a law because it is the responsibility of all people to obey it. It tells us how God wants us to live, but it also tells us how we are not to live. To state it another way, it tells us what to do and it tells us what we are not to do. And as the law of God, or the Word of God, it is unchangeable. It is just as important for people to know what is in the Bible today as it was when the Apostle John wrote the last books to be included in the Word of God.

But what is a transgression? Most of us know that it is talking about any violation of the Word of God.. That is what sin is. It is not doing what God has commanded us to do, and it is doing what he has told us not to do.

That is a very simple definition of sin, isn't it? Now God has put a lot of this truth in our hearts. We know instinctively that it is wrong to lie, or to murder, and many other things. But we find the whole story of sin in the Bible. Sin is any violation of the will of God which is expressed in the Word of God.

But God in His Word has told us that "there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Ecc.7:20). We see a lot of good people on the earth, but you will never meet anyone who has not sinned. And in Ezekiel 18:4, and 20, it says that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." So every person on the face of the earth is under the judgment of God because we are all sinners, sinners by nature, and sinners by choice.

Now this is where the Gospel was introduced by the Apostle John. See verse 5. "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sin." Now, who is the "he." This can only mean the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now we come to a very important word in our text. You have it here in verse 5. You find it again in verse 8. And finally it is used in verse 10. So this is a very important word in our text.

If I were to ask you what "manifested" means, you probably would say that it means that He appeared. He came to the earth as a Man. Four books in the Bible tell us about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into the world, born into the human race by a virgin. Yes, "manifested" means that He came. People saw Him. They talked with Him. They watched

Him do many miraculous things. But “manifested” means much more than just that He appeared on earth. It means that He showed by His appearance on earth Who He really was. He showed that He was a Man, but that He was more than a Man. He showed that He was God. And He showed that He had come to do something very wonderful about man’s sin. And He could do this, He specifically was sent to do this because “in Him is no sin.” Therefore He was fully qualified to take upon Himself the death penalty of all who would ever trust Him as their Savior. For three years the Lord Jesus lived in public where He was seen by everyone, *and yet no one ever was able to truly charge Him with a single sin.* He had come “to take away our sins.” And He did it by His death on the Cross when He died for those who believe on Him.

The Apostle John who also wrote the Gospel which bears his name,
And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

The Apostle Paul expressed the same truth in 2 Corinthians 5:21 with these words:

21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

But let us move on to verse 6.

Here the Apostle John went on to state a truth that is very important for all of us to know. Just because a person claims to be a Christian, or claims to be saved from the penalty of his sins, it does not mean that he has everlasting life. The Apostle John says that the reality of a person’s claim to be a child of God, has to do with the evidence of a change in his or her life concerning sin.

I hope you remember that in the last part of chapter 2 the Apostle John had a lot to say about abiding in Christ. When God does a saving work in a person’s heart, there is going to be outward evidence of a change. And it has to be a change that continues. And what is the change? It is a change with respect to sin. When John says he “sinneth not,” he did not mean that it is impossible for a child of God to sin. What he meant by “sinneth not,” he meant that he no longer lives in sin. One who is truly saved is going to be constantly concerned about whether he is pleasing God in his daily life. There a lot of people who show and interest in pleasing God now and then, but the Apostle John warned all of us that

such a person is not saved. I heard of a church member who frankly told the people of his church that the men he worked with would be surprised to learn that he went to church. And when he was asked why they would be surprised, he said that it was because of the language he used at work. "The Apostle John said in verse 6, the latter part, "whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him (speaking of the Lord), neither known Him." True salvation does not enable us to live perfect lives, but it does produce in us a permanent change in the way we live.

In verse 7 the Apostle John stated in a very positive way the truth that he had been teaching in verse 6. The person who lives righteously is the person who is truly saved. What does it mean to live righteously. It means that the person who seeks to live like Jesus Christ lives on earth, Who always did the things that were pleasing to the Father, is the only kind of a person who knows Jesus Christ as his Savior. A person who has been made righteous before God, is going to persevere in living righteously before men.

The Apostle John is hitting this truth from all angles. In verse 8 he asks us to look at the man who continues to live in sin. He may profess to be a Christian, and even be a church member, but if he continues to live a life of sin, he belongs to the Devil, not to the Lord.

And this led the Apostle John to state another victory that our Lord won on the Cross. And it is here that we find the second appearance of our word "manifested." Remember that it not only means that He came to earth as a Man to deal with the problem of sin, but He did so revealing His full character that in becoming a man He continued to be in the fullest sense of the words, the Son of God.

Did you ever ask yourself, Why was it that the Devil tempted our Lord? He knew Who the Lord was, and that as God He could not sin. But he did not know if by becoming a Man, it had in any way changed His Deity. And he found out that it had not. Instead it seems that we can say that he learned that the Lord had come to destroy the works of the Devil. Here again we need a little help in understanding the verb "destroy."

It actually is the Greek verb to loosen, or to undo. The Devil appeared to be invincible. But the Lord by His death actually dismantled the rule and professed authority of the Devil, showing him to be the conquered one, and not the conqueror. The Devil is a defeated foe. He still goes about as

a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but the Lord by his death not only broke the power sin in the lives of His people, but He sealed Satan's doom to be cast forever into the lake of fire. Remember that hell was actually prepared for the Devil and his angels, the demons who revolted with him against the authority of God. This truth emphasizes the total sovereignty of God and the Lord Jesus Christ over all of the forces of the Evil One.

As we come to verse 9 we see further evidence for the change that the Lord makes in every person when they are saved. They cannot continue on in sin because when the Lord saves any person, he puts within that person "His seed," which is Christ Himself, Who is the believer's life, appearing first only in very small ways, but out of which the believer will grow and eventually be conformed fully to the likeness of Christ.

So as the Deity of Christ was fully manifested in His incarnation, so in the lives of those who are truly saved, it is gradually manifested, to be seen outwardly, the transformation that God works inwardly in the lives of true believers, showing more and more the work of God in conforming believers into the likeness of Christ.

Verse 10 shows that just as the Deity of Christ was confirmed in His humanity, so with believers the true evidence that we know the Lord becomes increasingly clear the more we move away from sin and devote our lives to living righteous lives before all the world. And the more we move away from sin, the more we will see of another evidence of our salvation which is love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. So the evidences of salvation begin to build up in our lives which are the greatest manifestations that we really know the Lord.

So how are we manifested to be what we claim to be. It is that we do not live in sin, but are conformed more to the righteousness of God through faithful obedience to the Word of God. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Salvation is a perfect work of God in the heart which is *manifested* outwardly in small but sure ways at the beginning, but more and more as we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Let me close with two passages of Scripture, both of which both of you probably know, but which all of us need to be constantly reminded. In

both of these the Word of God is likened unto a mirror, but a mirror that has a transforming effect upon our lives, *manifesting* more and more that we are the people of God.

The first is 2 Corinthians 3:18:

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

We don't need to know how this happens; we just need to believe that as we see the Lord in His Word, this is what the result will be. Our lives will *manifest* outwardly the change that the Lord has made in us inwardly.

The second passage is one many of us have just been memorizing in the book of James, chapter 1, verses 22 through 25. It, too, likens the Word of God to a mirror:

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

Both passages have to do with those of us who profess to know the Lord. We need the Word for two reasons:

1) To see the Lord as He is revealed in the Word, and to learn of Him. That is 2 Corinthians 3:18.

2) To be reading the Word daily to hear the Word, and then to obey it, or as James expressed it, as we *continue* in it, the inner transformation that God did in our hearts will be displayed more and more by the way we live.

Now let me ask a question for all of us who claim to know the Lord: Have you read the Word this morning? If not, get to it as soon as you can, and as often as you can. Parents, be faithful in reading the Word for yourself, but read it also to your family. Listen to the Word carefully as you hear it taught. Meditate on it. Memorize it. Let the Word be your life. And inevitably you will experience in your daily living the change that the Lord made in your heart when you first trusted in the Savior.