

THE CHRISTIAN AND SIN

1 John 5:18

Intro: I have said many times, and I probably will continue to say it many times more until the Lord takes me home, that the greatest problem for every person in every generation in the whole world, is SIN! Ever since Adam and Eve sinned, things have been going wrong everywhere. There would be no death if there were no sin. There would be no sickness if there were no sin. There would be no other sins if Adam had not plunged the human race into sin by his first sin. There would be no wars if there were no sin. Sin is a matter of such great magnitude that it was sin which made it necessary for the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, to come to the earth to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin and sinners, or there could be no fellowship with God, and would be no fellowship with God. If we are going to talk about the Gospel, we have to talk about sin! If there were no sin, the Gospel would be totally unnecessary and meaningless. One thing that you can say about every person who has ever lived on the earth, is that he or she is a sinner. There are no exceptions to that statement except for our Lord Jesus Christ.

I looked up the definition of sin that is given in my dictionary, and this is what it said: Sin is “to violate the divine law by actual transgression or neglect.” Actually that is a fairly good definition if by “divine law” the one, or ones, who wrote out that definition meant *the Bible* – the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments. And the definition suggests that we can sin by what we do, as well as by what we don't do. The dictionary calls what we don't do, “neglect.” Bible teachers have often spoken of *sins of commission* and *sins of omission*.

But there is another way to look at sin. Paul wrote in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” He was linking us with Adam's sin. Adam was our representative head before God, and so when he sinned, we also were brought under the judgment of God. It is Biblical to say that when Adam sinned, we all sinned. But at the same time Paul was indicating that God created all of us for His glory. We were created in God's image and likeness, and we and all of creation were created for God's glory, to live to glorify God. Anything that falls short of that is sin. And that is why sin is called missing the mark. The mark is the glory of God.

We can still take this subject a step farther when we say that sin is

anything that is in violation of the character of God and the will of God. This is what the Apostle John was saying in the first chapter of this first epistle which bears his name when he said in verse 5,

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).

“Light” speaks of God’s purity, His moral perfection, that He is totally without sin of any kind. And if we are to have fellowship with God, it has to be on the basis of what He is, not what we are. He doesn’t need to change. In fact, He cannot change because He is God. But we need to change. Something needs to be done about our sin, and that is where the Gospel comes in. Again I refer to the Apostle Paul and this time what he wrote about the Gospel in Romans, chapter 1, verses 16 and 17, where we read, “For I am not ashamed . . .” We find the same truth in 2 Cor. 5:21, “For He hath made Him Who knew no sin . . .”

God destroyed every human being at the time of the flood except for one family, Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives. Why? We are told in Genesis 6:5, “And God saw that the wickedness of man . . .”

So if you claim to know God and to have fellowship with Him, and yet you walk in darkness, that is, your life is characterized by sin, you lie, and “do not the truth.” You see, the truth is not just something that we believe (although that it included), but it is what we “do.” See 1 John 1:6.

The Apostle John was writing to people who professed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, and he was pointing out that one way you can know that you are saved is that you walk in the light and not in darkness.

I am afraid that this is the very place where a lot of professing Christians are deceived. When a person is really saved, their lives undergo a complete change. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17. Christians are not perfect, but they are different. They are changed, and changed permanently. Someday we are going to be perfect. That is another message that I want to bring that we as Christians need to know, but for now we are changed, and the longer we know the Lord, and the more we live in fellowship with the Lord, the greater that change is going to be.

I want you to see that the Apostle John was dealing with the subject of “The Christian and Sin” right from the very beginning of this most impor-

tant epistle.

Now let us go to our text in 1 John 5:18 and see what the Apostle John wrote there about “The Christian and Sin.”

You can immediately see that there are three parts to this verse:

- 1) “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.” This is the first statement.
- 2) The second is: “But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself.” There may be some ways in which the text can be made clearer.
- 3) Third, “and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

Now let us consider them in order.

I. THE FIRST STATEMENT: “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not.”

Notice the certainty of what the Apostle John was saying. He was writing as an apostle and with the inspiration afforded him by the Spirit of God. Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17. It is not that we hope that this is true, or that it is true with some of the Lord’s people, but not all. But this is what we “know” about everyone who has been born of God. They were troubled in those early days by people who had identified themselves with the people of God, but had not actually been born again themselves. Cf. 1 John 2:19. And that is a problem today. Instead of asking people if they are Christians, or if they go to a church, we need to ask them if they have been born again. You can ask a lot of church members this question, and they won’t know what you are talking about. The Apostle John was only making this statement about those who have been born again, those who are the possessors of a new life, divine life, God’s life, eternal life.

“Sinneth not.” If it were not possible for Christians to sin, 1 John would never have been written. Why then did John say that a person who has been born of God will not sin if indeed he cannot sin. Well, he didn’t really say that one born of God cannot sin, but he said that one born of God will not be living in sin. He cannot continuously live in sin and be comfortable about it. He treats his sin like a plague, and wants to be freed from it. And this has to do with what Jerry Bridges calls, “respectable sins.” That is, they are not the sins that are going to put you in jail (unless they get totally out of control), but they are sins that we can cover up in a fairly good manner, although sooner or later they will show themselves.

Sins like pride, anger, dishonesty, and a host of others. Sin in any form is going to be a source of grief to everyone who has been born of God, people in whose lives God has made a great change.

Another verse found earlier in this epistle, which is very much like the one we are considering, is 1 John 3:9. And there he made the same statement that he makes here, and it means the same thing, but in 3:9 he went on to say why one born of God cannot continuously live in sin. And it is found in these words, “for his seed remaineth in him.” The him must be the person who is born of God, but whose seed was John talking about when he said, “his seed remaineth in him”? Whose seed? This was evidently John’s way of describing what it means to be born of God. The seed of eternal life becomes ours by the new birth, and since it is the nature of seeds to grow, this life we have has been placed in us, and remains in us, and it produces a life which is opposed to sin in any and every form. You see, to be “born of God” means that we have God’s life in us. When we were born into this world, we received life from our parents, and we grow as that life grows. The same principle applies when we are born into the family of God. We have His life in us, a life which is opposed to sin whatever it may be. So the person who is truly born of God, with the life of God in him, cannot any longer live in sin. The new life is going to prevail over the old life, and this will be evident more and more as we as the children of God walk in fellowship with the Lord.

But now let us go back to 1 John 5:18, and look at the second statement.

II. THE SECOND STATEMENT.

The KJV reads, “But he that is begotten of God keepeth himself.” Now there is a sense in which we keep ourselves, or should keep ourselves from sin. In fact, look at verse 21 in this same chapter.

But there is another possibility in this verse. It is that when the Apostle John was referring to our Lord Jesus Christ when he said, “But he that is begotten of God.” Our Lord Jesus Christ is according to John 3:16 God’s “only begotten Son.” That is, the Lord Jesus is uniquely God’s only begotten Son. He has always had that relationship with the Father. And in a special way it was manifested openly through the incarnation of our Lord, when He, the Son of God, also became a Man without ceasing to be the Son. And we know from John 10, for example, that one of the ministries of the Lord Jesus is to keep us. You find this also in our Lord’s

great prayer in John 17. So the Lord providentially keeps us, restrains us, sets roadblocks in the way, builds hedges about us, and a multitude of other things including pricking our consciences, to keep us from sinning. And it takes a very brief look at our lives to see many times when the Lord Jesus Himself has keep us from sinning.

I have said to you before that I am just as amazed that the Lord has kept me as I am that He saved me to begin with. I am one of six boys in the Custis family, and my Dad used to say that he wouldn't take a million for any of us, but he wouldn't give two cents for another one like us. I understand now better than ever what he meant. My Dad did a lot of joking, but he was making a point worth making. Our Lord saves us, and He keeps us. No one is going to get us out of His hand, and no one is going to get past Him to do us damage.

But what is the danger?

Let's go on to the third statement.

III. THE THIRD STATEMENT – “And that wicked one toucheth him not.”

I doubt if you need me to tell you that “that wicked one” is the Devil and Satan. He is our Accuser and our Adversary. And he with his demons is constantly seeking to, not only defeat us with sin, but he wants to lay his hand on us and keep us under his power. If he could he would take us away from the Lord forever.

So it is not just touching that the Lord was concerned about, but laying hold of us to pull us down, and, if possible, to take us away with himself to hell.

The only other time this verb is used in the NT is in John 20:17. John was not telling Mary Magdalene that she couldn't touch Him, but that she was not to hold Him back from returning to the Father.

Concl: So you see the protection we have against sin. We have the life of God in us, drawing us toward holiness and away from sin. We have the Word of God to expose sin, to show us what sin is. We have the Lord Jesus as our Keeper, and we know that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

1 John 5:18 (6)

As we leave this verse for now, let's go back as we leave to dwell on those three words, "And we know." Can you really say this? Do you know this, and are you depending upon this as being true as we begin a new week in a hostile world with the god of this world who is determined to make us fall, and still with a part of our being that is responsive to temptation. We can take this verse with us day by day, depending upon its truth, and knowing that believing this we will never be ashamed.

Remember: Christ died to save us from sin's penalty, from sin's power, and ultimately from sin altogether. One is past, the second is present, the third is future, but it is just as certain as what God has done for us in saving us and in sanctifying us. Glory is just ahead!