

# Are We Taking Sin Too Seriously?

by Pastor Dean H. Harvey

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**Text: I Jn 1:5-10** "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. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

**Introduction:** I had a discussion (a small disagreement) with a friend while I was in Texas. I got to talking about sin in Christians, and in the church. At first I thought he disagreed with my strong stand that we who are Christians should not sin. But he does think that we should not sin. However, he said something like this, "No matter what you say, we are going to sin at times," and he felt that to give a testimony that we were perfect (in heart, and in motive) was proud, and would only lead to embarrassment when we did sin, and it became known. (Even if it didn't become known outside our own consciences, we should be embarrassed before God.)

He pointed me to 1 John 1:8 "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." So I have been thinking about this for over a week.

We have a problem here, and we need to honestly look at what the Scriptures say, what they are trying to get us to do, and what should happen in our lives as a result of the truth.

## **I. FIRST OF ALL, ALL HAVE SINNED, AND ALL NEED TO BE FORGIVEN.**

Those of us who are Christians have realized that we were sinners before God, and worthy of hell. We have repented of our sins (which means that we have decided to turn away from them), and we have exercised faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which means that we have begun to live in accordance with His commandments. **AND WE HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN. THAT IS THE BEGINNING POINT OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.**

**A. (Matt. 1:21 NASB)** "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

**1.** Too many people probably think that this means that He saves them from the eternal consequences of their sins, I. E. HELL, instead of saving them from committing the sins.

**B. (Acts 3:26 NASB)** "For you first, God raised up His Servant, and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways."

**II. SECONDLY, WE ALL BROUGHT A LOT OF BAD HABITS, A LOT OF WRONG WAYS OF THINKING, A LOT OF BAD CIRCUMSTANCES (THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SINS), AND OFTEN A LOT OF BAD FRIENDS, AND MAYBE A BAD REPUTATION INTO THIS CHRISTIAN LIFE.**

**A.** I am constantly amazed at how long it takes some people, who come to this church, and hear all this truth, to change their habits and conform to what they know to be true.

**B.** I really believe that in lots of cases it is because they have heard so much that they are sinners, and they really can't help it. The church, which is supposed to expose sin and its consequences, has become the main entity to give an excuse for sin, and so encourage people to remain in their sinful life, while at the same time giving them assurance that they are going to heaven. Listen to this excerpt from the Statement of Faith of the Rockford Christian School as an illustration of what I am talking about:

**"We believe that Man was created in the image of God, that he sinned, and thereby incurred both physical death and spiritual death, which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature, and indeed sin in thought, word, and deed."**

**III. THIRDLY, THE WILL OF GOD (HIS PURPOSE IN SAVING US), IS TO MAKE US LIKE HIS SON JESUS IN OUR CHARACTER (Rom 8:29 NASB)** "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;" Jesus never sinned, and it is God's purpose for all of us to follow Him in His lifestyle, that of "not sinning."

**A. (John 5:14 NASB)** "Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, 'Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.'"

**B. (John 8:11 NASB)** And she said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more."

**C. (Rom 6:12-16 NASB)** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

**(2 Cor 12:21 NASB)** I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.

**(2 Cor 13:2 NASB)** I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again, I will not spare anyone,

**(Eph 4:26 NASB)** BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

**(1 John 2:1 NASB)** My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

**(1 John 3:4-10 NASB)** Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins (continually, or habitually); no one who sins (continually, or habitually) has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 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, that He might destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot (practice, or habitually) sin, because he is born of God. 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.

**(1 John 5:18 NASB)** We know that no one who is born of God sins (Greek present tense, [has the idea of continuously, repeatedly, or habitually] sins); but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.

**(Heb 12:10 NASB)** For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness (Holiness is the condition of a person who is not now guilty of any sin. His old sins have been forgiven, and he is not now sinning, therefore he is holy.)

**(Heb 12:14 NASB)** Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification (Sanctification equals holiness.) without which no one will see the Lord. (Heb 12:14 KJV) Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

**IV.** The other point which came up in our discussion was that Paul addresses the churches as "saints" (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:4 (slightly different wording); Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:3, 6 (slightly different wording); Timothy and Titus as "sons," and Philemon as "beloved brother."), and then he writes to all of them about sin in the church, so this is supposed to mean that Paul acknowledges sin in the Christian, and expects it.

**A.** It is a common habit to find the position which reinforces my life, and focus on that. But what are we to do with the long list of verses I gave you at the beginning of this sermon? How can we honestly know what the Bible says, and then do it?

## V. 1 John 1:5-10 NASB

And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light (holiness, righteousness), and in Him there is no darkness (sin) at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness (practice, or habitually live in sin), we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light (practice, or habitually live in righteousness or obedience, up to our present understanding) as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. Suppose that we are living righteously, obeying Jesus as we understand Him, and we sin, in a moment of impatience, or temptation, we revert back to our old habits of thinking and acting.

**A.** If we don't know it, or not aware of it, then this verse seems to apply to me. We would be automatically forgiven, and God would later bring light. This seems to me to be equivalent of the "sin of ignorance," or the "unintentional sin" of the Old Testament.

**B.** If we are aware of it, two things should happen:

- 1.** We should instantly feel guilt in our hearts, and
- 2.** We should therefore ask forgiveness from God (and if we have sinned against another person, from that person) for that particular sin.

- 3.** The result should be that we redouble our commitment to "walk in the light."

(v. 8 NASB) If we say that we have no sin (Greek present tense), we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Oftentimes we seek the lowest common denominator to protect ourselves from failure or disappointment. All of us can sin at any time, because sin is a wrong moral choice. We can never get to the place where we can say that we will never sin.

(v. 9 NASB) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (Are we cleansed from unrighteousness while we are still living unrighteously?)

(v. 10 NASB) If we say that we have not sinned (Greek past tense), we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

As we continue in 1 John 2 and 3, it is more and more obvious that the Christian is to live each day with the intent not to sin (2:1), to keep His commandments (2:3), to "walk in the same manner as He walked" (2:6) John is saying that sin and obedience to God are irreconcilable.

**Conclusion:** Sin is the enemy. It removes the believer from the light. It prevents fellowship with God, and breaks fellowship with others. If we sin, we are to confess and He will forgive and cleanse us from our sin (1 John 1:9), and if we sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous (1 John 2:1). But always the intent of the Christian remains the same--not to commit sin.