

The Sinner's Saviour

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: 1 John 1:8-9

Henry T. Mahan Tape Library
Zebulon Baptist Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501

Website: <http://www.sovereign-grace.com/13thstbap.htm>

Online Sermons: <http://mahan.sermonaudio.com>

...John chapter one. Somehow I feel that the message tonight is going to be a very special blessing to somebody—I hope to most everybody. I am speaking on the sinner's Savior, the sinner's Savior. In 1 John chapter one beginning with verse eight, now listen carefully, John said, "If we say..." It is not true, but, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Verse nine, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now if we say that we have not sinned we make him a liar and his Word is not in us. Now little children," verse one chapter two, "these things I write unto you that you sin not. And if any man sin," that word is "when." There is no question of it occurring. It is a matter of when. "When we sin we have an advocate. We have an advocate, a mediator, an intercessor, one pleading our case and cause with the Father who is none other than Jesus Christ the righteous."

Now true believers... I am not talking about church members or doctrinalists. I am talking about true believers. True believers. People who have a true saving interest in Christ. They have many things in common. I jotted down six. There are many, many, many more. But here are six things that I believe every true believer has in common.

First of all, they believe and love the Word of God. The Word of God is the foundation of their faith. They love the Word of God. They cherish the Word of God. They are much taken with the Word of God. They delight in the Word of God. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.

And then, secondly, every believer, all believers have this in common. They fear the Lord. They fear and reverence and worship the living God. They know he is almighty, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. And they know the living God and they fear and reverence and worship the living God. They fall down before him in submission, in reverence, in obedience, in true worship.

Thirdly, they all cast themselves wholly and completely without reservation, they cast themselves on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. It is not only the Scriptures alone and grace alone, but in their redemption it is Christ alone. I have no hope but Christ. I have no foundation but Christ. I have no redemption but Christ. I have no righteousness but Christ. I have nothing, nothing, nothing to recommend me to God but Christ. He is all

and in all and we cast ourselves on the mercy of God in Christ Jesus wholeheartedly and completely. That is true of every believer regardless of denomination or whatever.

And then, fourthly, they love one another. Our Lord said that. “By this shall all men know you are my disciples. You know you are my disciple and I know you are my disciple, but others will detect it and see it.” They will give evidence. They do love one another. And they pray for an increase in that love. They want to love him more and love one another more. And they pray for an increase in faith, in humility, in patience, in love, in daily grace. They want to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. That is their desire, to be more like him in thought and word and attitude and conversation. They want to be like Christ.

And, fifthly, every believer, all believers have this in common. They have an understanding—while not complete, for we know in part and we preach in part—but they do have an understanding of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in redeeming their souls. They have an understanding.

As John said in verse 20 of chapter five, “And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true and that we are in him that is true even in his Son Jesus Christ and this is the true God and this is eternal life.” We see the wisdom and power of God in Christ. We see the righteousness and justice, mercy and peace of God in Christ. We have some understanding how that in Christ a holy God could be just and justifier of those who believe in Christ.

And that understanding grows. But we have that understanding. That is what brings us to him because we know outside of him there is no justification and no forgiveness. But we see how that God in his righteousness and mercy in his truth and love can justify a sinner in Christ.

All right, sixth, and this is where I am going tonight. All believers have a struggle and a constant conflict inwardly and outwardly with the old nature, with sin and with the flesh.

Over in Galatians chapter five Paul wrote these words. Now I am talking about every believer has this in common just as much as a love for the Word, just as much as a fear of God, just as much as a confidence in Christ, just as much as their love for one another, just as much as their understanding of the person and work of Christ. They have a conflict going on within them at all times, a conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.

In Galatians five verse 16 Paul said, “This I say unto you. Walk in the Spirit and fulfill not the lust of the flesh.” That is what that says. “And fulfill not the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth or warreth against the Spirit. And the Spirit warreth against the flesh.” And these, that old man in you and that new man in you, that man born from Adam and that man born from God, they are contrary one to the other. One can’t do right and one can’t do wrong. One can’t do good and one can’t sin. And they are contrary, opposites.

So, because of this conflict and this warfare, you cannot do the things that you would either way. You can't be as perfect as you would like to be and you are restrained by the new man from being as evil as you could be.

A hymn writer put it this way talking about believers. "I need thee, precious Jesus, for I am full of sin. My soul is dark and guilty. My heart by nature vile within. I need the cleansing fountain where I can always flee. The blood of Jesus most precious is this sinner's perfect plea. I need thee, precious Jesus for I am very poor. I am a stranger and a pilgrim and I have no earthly store. I need the love of Jesus to cheer me always on my way, to guide my doubting footsteps, to be my strength and my stay. I need thee, precious Jesus, for I am very blind. I am a weak and a foolish wanderer with a dark and a sinful mind. I need thy constant presence to tread this thorny road, to guide me safe to glory, to bring me home to God."

Now here is my first point tonight. The believer, every believer, no matter how much he loves Christ, no matter how strong his faith, no matter how long he has been saved, no matter how long she has been a believer, the believer is still a sinner.

Now it matters not if men despise that statement. It matters not if men cannot reconcile that statement. It matters not if men think that a statement like that encourages sin. It matters not if men wish to clarify it and explain it and tone it down. The believer is still a sinner. And he still sins. And that's so.

The believer doesn't love sin. He loves God and he loves truth. He hates sin. He would like to be without sin. David said, "I will be totally satisfied when I wake with God's likeness." He grieves over his sin, mourns over it like Paul who said, "Oh, wretched man that I am. When I would do good evil is present with me. What I would do I do not. What I would not do I do. Oh wretched man that I am."

The believer grieves over his sin and mourns over his sin and he never excuses his sin. He will never justify his sin. He justifies God in his condemnation of his sin. And he feels that he is the chief sinner.

Paul said, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of I am the what? Chief."

But he knows and God knows and every honest person knows that every human being, every man, woman, boy or girl is a sinner. The Word of God says there is none good, no not one. The Word of God says there is none that doeth good and sinneth not. The Scripture says man at his best state, at his highest point of goodness is altogether vanity. Is that right? The Word of God says we all do fade as the leaf. Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

And then look at our text here in 1 John chapter one verse eight. "If we say we have no sin, if we say we have no sin, if we say that we are not sinners we deceive ourselves. We don't know ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we lie about that we will lie about anything."

Verse 10. "If we say we have not sinned we make God a liar and his truth is not in us."

So the believer is still a sinner.

Now listen carefully to me, very carefully right here. You need to hear what I am about to say. Everybody here needs to hear. I need to hear. A striving for holiness and a striving for perfection in this flesh in this body without an understanding of human nature, without an understanding of the old man, without an understanding of the love of God and the free grace of Christ, of God in Christ Jesus would do one of two things to you, one of two things. What did I say? I said a striving for holiness, a striving for perfection, a striving for higher ground, a striving for betterment spiritually in this flesh without an understanding of the nature of this flesh and the condition of this flesh and the love of God and the free grace of God in Christ will do one of two things to you. It will make you a lying Pharisee or if it doesn't make you a lying Pharisee it, secondly, it will drive you into depression. And drive you into an overwhelming despair and guilt. That's right.

And what I am saying is this. A person who loves Christ, who is saved and he wants to be holy, he wants to be without sin, he wants other people to think highly of him. He wants to be more like Jesus. He wants to walk in holiness and righteousness and beauty and truth and he strives after that. And he does not always keep in mind that that is an unattainable goal in this flesh. Perfection is unattainable in this flesh. Holiness before God is unattainable in this flesh except in Christ. And if he strives for that he is going to have to do one of two things. He is going to have to lie and keep on lying to himself and to others and to God or else he is going to realize it can't be done and he is going to fall into a pit of depression and despair and carry around a sense of guilt where he can't raise his head, can't lift his voice and can't even praise God and can't find any rest or peace or joy. Or I have seen both things happen to people according to the time.

I have seen the same person, depending on the time, and depending on the circumstances I have known people to manifest both extremes. I met them at one time and they are higher than a kite, higher than Mount Everest, just about as holy as you can get, without sin. And then I meet them the next time and they are in despair and depression and guilt all depending on the circumstances.

But...now watch this. But a good understanding of what sin really is, of the nature of sin and of the nature of men and women, a good understanding of the mercy and grace of God to sinners in Christ, a good understanding of the fact that we have an advocate, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin, that in Christ we do have a perfect righteousness, with a proper understanding of the righteousness of God in Christ you can have peace as you are, at whatever stage of growth you may be, with whatever amount of faith you have, whatever weaknesses or shortcomings you may have you can still have peace in Christ. You can have rest. You can have joy even in this body of flesh. That's right.

Paul said, "Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord." He said, "We are the true circumcision who worship God in the Spirit. Rejoice in Christ and have no confidence in the flesh."

Now the believer is still a sinner. Now let me show you how he is a sinner. The believer is still a sinner. This believer and every believer out there is still a sinner. And don't be afraid of that. Don't be afraid of saying that. If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves. If we are afraid to say, "I am a sinner, I have sinned today..." What? Can't you say that? I have sinned. If you can't you had better not come to God. If you are not a sinner you don't need an advocate. Who needs a lawyer? A criminal. Who needs an advocate? A sinner. Who needs a mediator? One who sins.

So the believer is a sinner, first of all, from the imperfection of his nature, the imperfection of his nature. I'll tell you what kind of nature we have. The believer has a nature that is in such condition that he will sin as long as he lives. There is only one time you will ever fully, totally quit sinning and that is when you die graveyard dead as Joe Carr would say. Sin pollutes the best thing that I do. Sin mars my repentance. Sin mocks my tears. Sin corrupts my faith. Sin invades my prayers. The best thing I ever did, the best deed I ever did apart from the merit of Christ only increased my guilt before God.

Is that hard to take? But it is so. The highest degree of goodness to which any man can attain has so much creature infirmity in it as to be worthy of God's eternal wrath because of our nature. Our nature is evil. And, secondly, the believer is still a sinner not only in his nature, but in that he constantly sins in his every day life. If anybody here in this congregation tells me tonight that you live a single hour today, a single hour let alone a day without a thought of sin, without a word of sin, without an act of sin either in commission or omission...it is not what you did. It is what you didn't do.

You say, "I didn't do anything wrong today."

You didn't do anything right either. You didn't love God with all your heart. You didn't love your neighbor as yourself. And if you say that you went one hour of this day without sin I'll tell you, you don't know yourself and you don't know God and you don't know the holiness of God because the very thought of foolishness is sin. I am telling the truth. The old Adam can do nothing but sin. He is sin. And the new nature cannot sin. It is born of God.

Thirdly, the believer is still a sinner. He is still a sinner because of the imperfection of his nature. He is still a sinner because he constantly sins, constantly sins in his every day life. He is still a sinner, thirdly, from his own personal, peculiar infirmities.

What am I saying? I am saying this. Will you hear me? We are not all alike. I know there are a lot of religionists, especially legalists that want to make every believer just alike. And you can't do it. You can't do it. One man's strength is another man's weakness. And one man's weakness is another man's strength.

Is not pride sin?

Well, you say, "I'm not proud. I'm humble."

Is not shortness of temper sin? We are supposed to be meek and long suffering, but we are like July Fourth firecrackers.

Is not unbelief a sin? I thought unbelief was a sin. Nobody here guilty of unbelief?

Is not gossip a sin?

Is not envy a sin?

Well, what about jealousy. Is that not a sin? Crueler than the grave the Scripture says. That is pretty cruel.

Is not laziness sin?

Is not covetousness sin? Paul said it is like idolatry.

Is not indifference sin?

Is not greed sin?

Is not lying exaggeration...is that not sin?

Is not lust sin?

Is not selfishness sin?

What about pouting?

What about evil thoughts?

Oh, when we start thinking along that line it is like the woman got up one morning. She told her husband, she said, "I woke up this morning with only one nerve left and dog, if you haven't got on that." Just one.

Oh, Mr. Spurgeon said, "Sinners in the name, sinners by nature, but thanks be to God I am a sinner saved by grace."

Is that hard for you to say? It is not hard if you are truthful. That's the reason Barnard used to say, "Honest people don't wind up in hell." But the hardest thing in the world is to get people to be honest before God, honest before the Word, honest before Christ and honest before one another. We would heap rather put on a show. We would whole us make people think we are more than what we are and better than what we are and know more than we know and do more than we do. And God despises that. That's hypocrisy.

If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us.

It says here in chapter two verse one, "My little children these things I write unto you that you sin not." I am not encouraging sin. I have told you believers hate sin. They don't love sin. But they don't deny it either. And while it does not reign it does remain. And a man who says it doesn't deceives himself and calls God a liar.

Well, my second point is this. Now listen carefully to this. This is going to be heavy and hard, straight, though and truthful. All right, the believer is still a sinner. He still sins. Not a day goes by, not an hour goes by that he does not sin. But, secondly, our sins...our sins, will you hear this? Whatever they may be, do not, I repeat, do not, cannot deprive us of a saving interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Cannot. That's so. It says here if any man sin we have an advocate.

It doesn't say if any man sin he forfeits his advocate. It says he has one. I get so tired of people, they do something wrong. They will come and say, "I reckon I am not saved."

If any man sin you forfeited your advocate. No, you haven't. If any man sin you have lost your advocate. No, you haven't. If any man sin Jesus resigns from being his mediator. That is not what that says. It says if he sins he has an advocate. Isn't that what it says?

It doesn't say if any man is righteous he has an advocate. It says if any man sins he has an advocate.

Now listen to this. All the sin a believer ever did, all the sin a believer can ever be allowed by God to commit cannot destroy his interest in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now your righteousness will keep you away from Christ, but not your sins, not your sins.

He said, "I didn't come to call the righteous. I came to call sinners."

In other words, the better you feel and the better you think you are, the further away from Christ you are. That's correct.

When I am weak, then am I strong. Actually Jesus Christ is my advocate only if I am a sinner. If any man sins we have an advocate with the Father. And Jesus Christ is constantly, continually my advocate. If any man sins we have an advocate. Not we had one. Or not we shall have one. He has one or he would have been snuffed out a long time ago. The Father is the judge. I am the sinner. And Christ is my advocate and he is with the father. He is not only with him, he is in him and seated with him.

Well, why would my sins change my Lord's relationship with me? Why would my sins of this day, whatever they were, whatever they are, why would that change my Lord's relationship? He loved me when I was a sinner. He chose me when I was a sinner. He

die for me when I was a sinner. He called me when I was a sinner. He loves me today with the same love.

Jim, it can't change. "I am the Lord. I change not. Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. The gifts and calling of God are without change."

It will astound you how many preachers not only preach, but believe in salvation by human merit. It just might surprise you how many of you have a whole lot of that left in you. The better I am, the more I pray and the more I read, the more I study and the more I abstain from this that and the other, the more God loves me.

Do you believe that? If you believe that, you believe in salvation by works. Salvation by works is a damnable doctrine. God's love for me never changes wherever I am and whatever I am and whatever I am doing.

Does that shock you? It is so. If grace is true, that's so. He chose me when I was a sinner. He chose me when I didn't know him, when I hated him and rebelled against him. And he died for me when I was wallowing in my sins. What makes you think he will change now?

Actually most people think that they have got better love than God because they never forsake their children no matter what they do. And you would have me to believe that God would forsake his because of something they do? Not the God of the Bible.

If my right to glory—listen to me—if my right to glory rested in any way on anything I did good or bad, before or after conversion, it doesn't matter, it would have already failed. Is that right, Cecil? Already paid for.

But my saving interest in Jesus Christ—now listen to me—and some of you can get some help. Comfort my people, he said. Some of you can get some strength and help here and you can get out of that closet and out of that despair and out of that self righteousness and out of that trying to obtain your own righteousness and start resting in Christ. My saving interest in God's glory rests on two things: his everlasting covenant and the merits of his blessed Son, 1000%. Grace that can be forfeited never was grace. Isn't that right? Mercy that can be taken away, I wouldn't have it on a silver platter. I wouldn't have it. that is not mercy.

I am going to show you mercy, but don't you slip.

I don't want that. Introduce me to something else. Let's try something else.

All right here is the third point. That's the first... The first one is this. The believer is a sinner. I am not talking about a wakened sinner or a conscious sinner or a...I am just saying an S-I-N-N-E-R—sinner and a sinner is to come short of the glory of God. A sinner is a transgressor of the law. A sinner is a sinner.

You say, "Yeah, but they are little sins."

They ain't no little sins.

"Yeah, but I...I..."

They ain't no buts about it. The believer is a sinner. But his sin, that true believer resting in Christ alone, his sins never deprive him of his interest in Christ. They can't. That interest in Christ didn't originate with him. It originated with Christ. It wasn't merited by him. It was merited by Christ. It wasn't accomplished by him. It was accomplished by Christ. It is totally one sided. We didn't love him. He loved us. He was reconciled to us before we ever knew him. And he is not going to be unreconciled.

And, thirdly, actually, this advocate he is talking about here...look at the text again, verse one, chapter two. "If any man sin or when a man sins, when a believer sins, he has an advocate. Right now he has an advocate with the Father." Actually, this advocate is provided on purpose because we are sinners. Who he is states the case. It describes him. It says this advocate with the Father, first of all, is Jesus. That shows his purpose. Jesus is the name of the one who became a man for my sake.

The angel said to Mary, Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus." Jesus here, "He is going to save his people from their sins." That is his purpose. That is his intention. That is why he came. That is why God sent him. That is why he is here on the earth. That is why Jesus is Jesus. He came to save sinners. He said, "I didn't come to call the righteous." He was the friend of sinners. He gave his life for sinners. He died for the ungodly.

"Yeah, but I am saved now and not ungodly anymore."

Then what do you need Jesus for?

Your old nature is ungodly. If God ever let it go like he did some people in the Scriptures you would find out just how ungodly it is. It is only his restraining grace now that holds you in. You are potentially capable of anything that any man is capable of or any woman.

He is Jesus. All right. Notice the second word. He is Jesus Christ. He is the anointed. Jesus tells his purpose. Christ tells his authority. He was appointed to save you from your sins. God the Father anointed and appointed him, Terry, to come down here and put away your sins. He is the appointed advocate. He is the court appointed lawyer. And a man doesn't take that job on himself. There is nobody else in God's universe that is an advocate, that is a mediator and intercessor. He is appointed to this office. He is Jesus Christ.

but hold it now. Look at this. He is Jesus Christ the failure. Oh, no. He is Jesus Christ the reformer. No. He is Jesus Christ the righteous, holy, spotless. He said, "Yes, yes. Old Terry Elliot is unrighteous. And John Houseman and Tom Harding and Bill Borders and

all the rest of these sons of Adam. They are all unrighteous, but I am their substitute.” That is what my advocate said. “And I stood in their place and in their stead before the holy law and I perfectly obeyed it. And I went to the cross and their sins were laid on me. And I cleansed them and washed them and purified them and sanctified them and redeemed them and covered them completely from head to toe with my doing and dying. And I have given every one of them the robe of righteousness of God himself. And I will never, never forsake a one of them. I don’t care where they are or who they are. That’s right. That shows his ability. He is Jesus Christ the righteous.

Oh, my little children, abstain from fleshly lusts. Abstain from sin. Mortify the flesh. Crucify the old nature. It will be a daily undertaking. It will be a constant task. But when you sin, you have an advocate. It doesn’t say if any man sin not he has an advocate. That is what they want me to believe.

Now if you can...if you can live your life without sin Jesus will save you. If you sin you lose your salvation. If you sin, if you die before you repent you will go to hell.

No, I’ve got an advocate. I’ve got an advocate. I don’t even have to plead my cause. He does. And he does it without saying a word. He does it by his presence. He doesn’t say if any man be holy he has an advocate. It doesn’t say if any man be prayerful he has an advocate. It doesn’t say if anybody walks in the light he has an advocate. It says if any man sins he has an advocate. That’s good news.

Have you been waiting to hear that? That’s good news. Oh, I am so glad.

So when I have sinned...I don’t care if it is right now or tonight or tomorrow, the next day, next week, next month. When I have sinned and I come creeping to my closet with a guilty conscience and an aching heart and I feel I am unworthy to be called God’s son, I’d love to walk up and in your ear, “We have an advocate.” Huh?

I would like to take every believer that just gets in the valley of despair, despondency and that old heavy load of guilt and shake him and say, “We have an advocate.” You are not your own Savior. You are not your own mediator. We have an advocate. Straighten up. Praise God. Thank God. Walk in peace with God. Rest.

Sure, grieve over your sins and mourn over your sins and confess your sins, but greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. And where sin abounded grace did much more abound. Isn’t that right? That’s the key. There it is right there.

When any man sins we have an advocate. I will tell you this. That will make your eyes dance with joy and your heart leap with joy and your soul be at rest and your conscience quieted down and your heart love Christ. Wouldn’t it? It would make you tender and compassionate toward others. It would make you quit trying to find out who is saved and who is not saved.

Old John Newton said, “When I get to heaven I am going to miss a lot of folks I thought would be there and I am going to see a lot of folks there I didn’t think would ever make it. But the thing that is going to shock me is to find me there. And do you know the reason I’ll be there? Because Christ is there. He has entered within the veil and occupied it.”

We have an advocate. Come on now. We have an advocate with the Father. And do you know who it is? Jesus Christ the righteous. Sing praises to his name. You ain’t never going to be but a human being and a man. That is all you are ever going to be until God makes you like Christ. And you are not ever going to be anything but a woman until God makes you like Christ. And your best position is down on the bottom. That’s right, down there in the dust. Make your headquarters there and remember you are less than the least of all the saints. And you start climbing, watch out, watch out.

Folks that claim and strive for works usually trust in them. They do. Not in Christ.

All right. That’s so. Maybe you may feel like I have gone over here too far, but you can’t go over there too far when you exalt Christ. You can’t do it.

All right, Mike, Come and lead us in a hymn.