

So That You May Know

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

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

115. Distinguishing Between Sin and Righteousness- Part 14

WAOY Tuesday/Monday 11/27-12/03/07

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 were examining verse 9 and I want to take one more look at the verse today- so let's read verse 9 again:

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.

Now we have already discussed how what John says here actually works. But let's review it again.

When we are lost- our nature is corrupt and fallen and thus our loves and desires and wants and lusts are all fallen as well. And since we do not and cannot choose contrary to our wants and loves- our choices reflect that fallen condition. And so while it is true that a lost person has a will- that will is not “free”. His will is in bondage to his fallen nature. So a lost person will choose- but he will never choose God or the things of God if left to his own devices.

As we saw last time- the Apostle Paul taught in 1Corinthians 2:14 that a lost person *cannot* accept the things of the Spirit of God. He does not have the power or the ability to accept the things of the Spirit of God. Well, why is that? Paul went on to teach that he cannot be he will not. So a lost person does not have the power or the ability to come to Christ and to repent and to believe in the Truth of Scripture in and of himself. And he cannot because he does not want to. And we saw that this is what is called, “Moral Inability”. And it is the condition of all lost people.

And so left to themselves- no lost person would ever be convicted of Sin; no lost person would ever even desire to repent and therefore left to themselves- nobody would ever be saved. That is the horrible extent to which the Fall has ruined Mankind.

And so if anybody is going to be saved- God has to sovereignly intervene in their lives to sovereignly violate their sinful fallen wills and sovereignly override their evil hearts and sovereignly insert Himself into their lives and sovereignly interrupt their plans and sovereignly make Himself known to them.

And why does God have to do all this sovereignly or by Himself? Because the lost person doesn't want to love or serve God and the things of God are foolishness to him. And why is that true? Because he is fallen. Now I realize that most people don't teach this- even though most people used to teach this about 150 years ago. But the reason that most people don't teach this today is because we have minimized the radical and negative effects that the Fall had on Mankind.

Now most people in the modern Church believe in the Fall- but they don't understand that it has been as devastating to Mankind as the Bible says that it has. And so their understanding about Salvation is that lost people simply need to exercise their so-called “free will” and choose to suddenly love and serve God.

But as we have seen- the will is not free. It is in bondage to our fallen nature and the manifestation of our fallen natures is seen in what we love and what we desire and what we crave after. And lost people carve to sin; they desire to walk in rebellion to God; they enjoy transgressions; and they love darkness rather than light.

Now lost people don't love the repercussions of their sin- they don't enjoy sickness or jail time; they don't enjoy their empty hearts or their misery or death. But they continue to sin in spite of these repercussions because even though they're getting kicked in the mouth by a very wicked devil- they are choosing what they love the most and what they enjoy the most and what they carve after- and it isn't God.

And so being lost is a darkness that goes way beyond simply not having enough information to make a rational decision. Therefore- true Salvation is a miracle and not a decision at all. You can't give people enough catchy phrases and cute slogans and you can't use psychology on them to get them to love God. Because to suggest that Salvation is simply a decision brought about by the exercise of the human will implies that lost people have the capacity in and of themselves to suddenly stop loving sin and start loving God- and the Bible says that lost people no longer have that kind of power- they lost it in the Fall.

So because the nature is fallen and corrupt- the loves are also fallen and corrupt. And because the loves are corrupt and fallen- the choices are all wrong and sinful choices. Because we choose what we love. So, all of the choices of all lost people are made to better themselves so they can sin more. And so in that fallen condition- no lost person would even voluntarily choose to love and serve God.

And so the problem with Mankind is really not in our sinful choices nor is it in the fact that we love darkness rather than light. The real problem lies in the fact that all lost people have a fallen nature. And so if God is going to save *anybody*- He must change their nature. And because our condition is so horrible- God must change our nature- *first- before* we could have even the desire much less the power to love and serve God.

And so after God changes our natures- our loves change. And because our loves change- our choices reflect that change. And then the person will voluntarily choose to love and serve God. But *why* did that person suddenly choose to stop loving sin and start loving God? Why did that person suddenly stop following his carnal lusts and start

following Jesus? Because God has already changed his nature. And so, our love and our service to Jesus is simply a response to the sovereign Work that God has already done inside us.

And so if *anybody* is going to be convicted of their sins; if *anybody* is going to repent of their sins; and if any lost person is going to trust in Jesus and in His finished Work- then God must change that person's nature and God must change his nature sovereignly- all by Himself- and God must change the lost person's nature- first.

God must sovereignly change that lost person's nature *before* that person wants it changed. And God must sovereignly change that person's nature *before* that person even asks for it. And God must sovereignly change that lost person's nature *without* that person cooperating with God in this change. Now why is that? Because the lost person is fallen and he *cannot* do any of this precisely because he doesn't *want* to.

Now I was taught and I would imagine that most of you have been taught that we must believe in order to be born again. And that sounds good- except it is the very opposite of what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that the radical and negative effects of the fall were so powerful that we cannot believe until and unless God equips us first. We lost the capacity to believe or trust in God in the Fall. And so God must restore that capacity first- or else nobody would ever believe. And so the correct way to think about this is not that we must believe in order to be born again- but that we must be born again in order to have both the desire and the power to believe.

And the reason why this is not understood very well in our day- goes again to a faulty understanding of the radical and negative results of the Fall. Most of us have been taught, in one form or another, that lost people are spiritually "sick" and therefore they need to go to the spiritual doctor, "Jesus Christ" and they must allow Doctor Jesus to heal their spiritual sickness and they then need to take their spiritual medicine and then they will get well or be saved.

And so the whole concept that so many in the modern Church have been taught about Salvation is that lost people must take the first step and then Jesus will do all the rest. So in that teaching- lost people must initiate their own Salvation in some way- either by raising their hand or walking down an aisle or by praying a prayer or making a choice or making a decision- and then God will meet them half-way.

So lost people must do something first and then God will respond to that by forgiving and saving them.

And this is why the concept of human free will is so sacred to these people. Because Salvation itself is really nothing more than a human choice and a human decision and an act of the will of these people who are lost but somehow managed to keep their “wills” free.

And this makes sense on some level and a whole bunch of people believe it. The only problem with it is that you can’t find it anywhere in the Bible. And the reason you cannot find this scenario of Salvation in the Bible is because the Word of God doesn’t teach it- and never has.

The Bible says that lost and fallen people are not spiritual sick- but that they are far worse than that. Look at what Paul taught about the condition of lost people in **Ephesians 2:1**:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

So the Bible doesn’t teach that lost people are spiritually “sick”. The Bible teaches that lost people are spiritually “dead”. They’re not impaired- they’re dead. They’re not lacking information- they can’t hear at all; they can’t see anything; they can’t make any kind of choice as it pertains to God. Why? Because spiritually speaking- lost people are stone cold dead.

So lost people don’t make any choices concerning God- they can’t- they’re spiritually dead. So lost people do not have any spiritual life in them at all. None. Zero. There is no little “light” burning inside them that God can contact- the light went out in the Fall and all that is inside lost people is darkness; depravity; sin; wickedness; and rebellion. There are none who do good, and none are righteous. And on top of that- in that lost and fallen condition- lost people do not seek after God either.

And this is why God has to come to that lost person first- because he is dead in sin and cannot come to God. So God has to take the first step and then God also takes the second step and all the rest as well.

So I would suggest that the Fall was much more damaging than most of us imagined. And the result of the Fall being this radical and the result of the Fall devastating every aspect of the human being is that all of the choices that lost people make are based upon that fallen nature and the corrupt desires of their heart.

So yes, lost people choose all day long. They choose which color socks to wear and where to work and what to eat and who to marry and where they want to live. But all of the choices of lost people are *horizontal*- they pertain to this life and this world. But lost people do *not* choose anything *vertically*. In their fallen and lost condition- lost people will *never* choose anything that is in conflict with their nature- which the Bible says is ruined. So the result is that all of the choices of lost people are sinful and all of their desires and decisions are based upon a nature that is in hostile rebellion against God.

So I said all that to say this. When we are saved- we are forgiven- but we receive much more than just forgiveness. When we are saved- God re-creates us. He takes out of us that fallen and rebellious nature of Adam and He replaces it with a new nature that loves God. And with that new nature- we love God and the things of God and with those new loves- we choose to follow Jesus.

But it all starts with what God does and not what we do. It starts with God choosing some of fallen humanity to set His love upon them. And God does this before these people were born and before they did anything good or bad and in fact the Bible says that God chose to save some of fallen humanity before He even made the world. And it is to these chosen vessels that God comes- when they are deep in sin- and God changes their nature and they are born again s children of God.

So John teaches here that precisely because we have been born of God and because being born of God is the same thing as receiving this new divine nature- the power of sin over our lives has been broken and it has been broken forever and we have been set free to love and serve God in Spirit and in Truth.

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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