

# So That You May Know

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

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

#### 103. Distinguishing Between Sin and Righteousness- Part 2

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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 you and I live in a day when the issue of Sin has become very confusing to many people. Just what is and is not a Sin; just what constitutes sinful behavior used to be crystal clear to the people of God and especially to the leaders of the Church.

But two major things have worked together to create and sustain this confusion about sin- the advent of television- which makes sin look attractive and the replacement of biblical morality with an American

morality- which condones and even promotes certain behavior which Scripture condemns.

The reason that television and movie producers have more impact over our minds and hearts today than the Word of God does is because the Bible- the study and teaching and learning of God's Word- has fallen out of fashion in the modern Church.

In order to attract large crowds today- many Churches have bowed to the reality that the Bible bores most people, and this is why Prayer meetings and Bible Studies are the least attended services of the modern Church. Today, motorcycle riding clubs and pottery classes have replaced line upon line; and precept upon precept study of Scripture and so- called "christian" comedians have replaced God's people weeping between the porch and the altar.

The result of the Church adopting an "entertainment model" of Church rather than a "worship model" is that today people honestly do not know what sin is. We must remember, beloved that having our ears tickled is no substitute for having our hearts convicted and laughing at foolish jokes will not cause us to hate sin.

According to the Barna Research Group- 85% of all young people who are raised in Church abandon their faith by the time they go to college. Now christian parents sending their children to secular universities has always caused problems- but that number has never been that high- and that number didn't get that high by accident.

Unless God's Word is being taught and preached and explained and learned- sin remains a mystery. Lets' read again verse 4:

**Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.**

John tells us here that sin is defined as being lawless. So, Sin is a violation of God's Law. Sin is a transgression of or an insult to the Law of God. So, what is the Law of God? The Law of God are those absolute Truths which reflect the very Character and Nature of God, and which are clearly spelled out for us in Scripture.

Now listen very carefully to what I am going to say so that you can get this- because this is real important. You need to know this if you are ever going to have a biblical understanding of sin. Sin is wrong- we all agree with that. But *why* is sin wrong?

Many teach today that sin is wrong because of what sin does to *us*. And that is true – to a point because sin absolutely *does* affect us in a negative way. But that is *not* what makes sin to be wrong.

But Sin does do a lot to us. Sin creates an emptiness in your heart. Sin costs you a lot of money. Sin ruins marriages and homes and hearts and lives. Sin takes you where you never thought you would ever go; and sin causes you to do things that you never thought you would ever do; and sin keeps you there longer than you ever thought you would stay.

Sin is cruel and it is heartless, and it is mean, and it is deadly. Sin makes murderers out of tender little boys and makes prostitutes out of sweet little girls. Sin robs children of their parents and robs parents of their children. Sin keeps mother and fathers up all night worrying about their children. Sin causes people to lie so often about so much that they don't even remember what the truth is anymore. Sin is really, really awful and we need to learn how to hate sin; and how to be revolted at it and we must never ever get so caught up in music or television or movies where we can sit and laugh at sin- because sin isn't funny.

But even though all of that is true- *none* of that is what makes sin to be wrong. Sin is wrong because sin offends God- period. Sin insults the Holiness and Righteousness of an infinitely glorious God. Sin mocks God. Sin belittles God's Glory. Sin challenges God. Sin rebels against God to His Face. Sin shakes his angry fist at God- daring God to respond.

And so, God is good to judge sin. God is faithful to always have the same response to every sin- He hates it, and He condemns it, and He judges it. I have met people who thought that they had a special deal worked out with God where they would go to Church on Sunday and in return God would allow them to live like hell all week long. Let me be the first to tell you that no one has that kind of arrangement with God, beloved.

God is Omniscient in that He knows everything. He knows what you do and what you say and what you think. And God is Omni-Present in that He is all over the world at the same time so there is no place to hide. And God is Omnipotent in that He is big enough and strong enough and powerful enough to judge all sin.

Every human being who is alive today or who will ever be alive or who has ever lived will stand before a holy and righteous God to give an account of their lives- what they did and what they said and the thoughts and intents of their hearts.

And so, any variation; any transgression; any rebellion; any disobedience to any of God's Laws- even one time is sin. And that includes unseen things like our thoughts and the intentions of our heart.

And this Truth is universal to every single human being on earth it has the very same affect- to make all men guilty before God as sinners. Now why in the world would a loving God want everybody to be guilty before Him? So that all we may know that we are lost- so that we may repent and be saved. This makes everybody from every nation and every language and every culture to be equal- because we are all sinners. And because we are all sinners- we are all unrighteous. So, the simple way to think about Sin and the affect that sin has upon the entire human race is this:

### **God is Righteous and we are not**

Rich men may be rich- but rich men are also sinners and transgressors of the Law and so in God's eyes- a rich man is no more righteous than a poor man. His wealth did not change his status with God as a sinner. The lesson to be learned here is that you can do lot of wonderful things with money- but you cannot buy your way out of sin.

Now Education is a wonderful gift of God. But educated people are sinners as well. And the lesson here is that you cannot educate yourself out of sin. You cannot move your way out of sin- so location is not your problem. You cannot speak your way out sin; you cannot sing your way out of sin; you cannot praise your way out of sin; and you cannot wish your way out of sin. The only way to get out of sin is to repent your way out.

Popular people are just as sinful as unpopular people. Women are just as sinful as men. Young people are just as sinful as old people. Black people are just as sinful as white people. Jews are just as sinful as Gentiles. So as far as righteousness goes- all men are the same- God is righteous and we are not.

So, the problem with human beings is not a lack of wealth or possessions or fame or popularity or knowledge or family- the problem with us is our lack of righteousness. And the reason that a lack of righteousness is a problem is because no one can go to Heaven unless they are perfectly righteous and continuously righteous.

Look- every single human being on earth can go to Heaven as long as they are perfectly righteous and as long as they are continually righteous in thought, word, and deed- 24 hours every day and seven days every week... or unless the spotless Righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to them by Faith alone.

Now here is something that you may not have thought of before. It is better to do good than to *not* do good. It is better to *try* than it is *not* to try. It is better to *strive* than it is to just sit there. You see, there is a righteousness that we have as human beings; a type of goodness that we all have that is wonderful. So, every time that we do something good- we add a certain degree of righteousness to ourselves. Every time we are honest or noble or good in the human sense of goodness- we develop and add to our own person human righteousness.

You see, the Bible teaches very clearly that human beings do in fact have a righteousness. So, the problem is not that we don't have *any* righteousness- the problem is that our righteousness doesn't rise to the level of being perfect and continuous. We do possess a goodness- but our goodness isn't good enough to qualify us for Heaven.

When we *can* do something that is noble- we *should*. When we *can* do something that is kind- we *should*. When we have an opportunity to do something honorable- we should. If we *can* do something righteous- we should- but we must understand that even while we are *doing* something that is righteous- we are still not *becoming* righteous ourselves. And that is true because we still sin.

For example- while we are being noble in that situation- we are still coveting something else in our hearts. While we are acting out of humility over here- we are still acting out of lust over there. While we are performing goodness in this situation- we are performing wickedness in that situation. So, the net result of all of our goodness and all of our righteousness is that even when we do good and righteous things- we are at that very moment still guilty of sinning in other ways- thus we still cannot lay any personal claim to being perfectly and continuously righteous.

600 years before Jesus was born- the prophet Isaiah talked about this in **Isaiah 64:6&7:**

**6 For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.**

**7 There is no one who calls on Your name, Who arouses himself to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us And have delivered us into the power of our iniquities.**

God spoke through Isaiah to tell us that even when we do good- even when we do noble and kind things- because sin is so pervasive in our lives- our personal, human righteousness has only risen to the level of being a filthy rag- certainly not what God requires to go to Heaven.

So what John is teaching here is that we must have a clear and biblical understanding about Sin so that we may see how great a gift Salvation really is. We must believe that we are all sinners and that no matter how hard we try and no matter how long we work at it- our personal human righteousness is never going to rise to the level that God requires for Heaven so that we may marvel at God's Grace which caught our falling soul and rescued us from the flames of hell.

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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