

Subject: *Straight Talk about Sin*

Scripture: *1 John 1:5–2:2*

Sin is the topic most people want to avoid. A person can't be saved until he is willing to repent of his sins. A person can't be in fellowship with God until he is willing to repent of his sins. I heard a recent message about sin called "The Leprosy of Sin." Like leprosy sin spreads and like leprosy sin separates. Sin is the most serious problem we ever face because it has the most serious consequence: death.

- **Romans 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death...*
- **James 1:15** *Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

Sin is deceptive and sin is deadly. It thrills and then it kills. It fascinates and then it assassinates. Sin will take you farther than you want to go. Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay. Sin will cost you more than you want to pay. The apostle John is giving straight talk about sin. He tells us six things that I pray God will write upon your heart.

1. We must view sin in the light of God's perfect character (vs. 5)

John was an eyewitness of Christ. He tells us about what He heard and saw in Christ. He was that eternal life in human flesh. He is perfect and without sin.

Light represents absolute moral purity and perfection. Light also represents truth. Darkness represents sin and evil. Darkness also represents falsehood and error.

We will never understand how bad sin is until we understand how good God is. We will never see how sinful we are until we see how holy God is.

- **Isaiah 6:3** *And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.*
- **Isaiah 6:5** *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

When Jesus worked a miracle on the Sea of Galilee Peter said, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." Peter saw the holiness of Christ and saw his own sinfulness. We have a shallow view of sin because we have a shallow view of God. We are not conscious of sin because we are not conscious of God.

We compare ourselves to other people and usually feel pretty good, when we ought to compare to ourselves to God. Imagine looking at a flock of white sheep on a green hillside in the summer. We would say, "Look at those pretty white sheep." But imagine looking at the same sheep standing on a snow covered hillside in the winter. We would say, "Look at those filthy dirty sheep."

The way we view God changes the way we look at ourselves. Notice that John makes an absolute statement in verse 5, and then follows it with a series of "if" statements (vs. 6-10).

2. We cannot be in fellowship with God and live in sin (vs. 6)

John wrote with a pastor's heart to warn them about false teaching of that time. There was a false teaching known as Gnosticism, based on the Greek word for knowledge. This was based on the idea that the spirit world was good and the physical world was evil and between the spirit and the physical world there were several levels of beings between God and man.

Gnosticism taught that Jesus was somewhere in between and denied that He was both God and man. Gnosticism taught that only those who were enlightened with special knowledge could understand this. It taught that only the spiritual was important, not the physical.

John understood the potential problem for Christians who believed this false teaching. They said that since the physical wasn't important, but only the spiritual, they could believe in Christ and then do whatever they wanted with their bodies.

Now we don't deal with that kind of false teaching, but there is still a lot of false teaching that a person can be a Christian and live any way he wants. Some have tried to redefine sin and remove all absolutes of right and wrong so that we can live the way we want to and ease our conscience. We have tried to redefine life and say it doesn't begin inside a mother's womb. We have tried to marriage and say it no longer needs to be a man and a woman. We say whatever works for you works for me. But it won't work for God.

3. We can be in fellowship with God by holy living and constant cleansing (vs. 7)

Our part is the holy living (walking in the light) and living in moral purity. His part is the constant cleansing. The blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing us from all sin. What can wash away my sins? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

- **Proverbs 20:9** *Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?*

4. We must be honest and confess our sins to God (vs. 8-10)

If we deny our sin, John says we do three things: we deceive ourselves (vs. 8); we forfeit God's forgiveness and cleansing (vs. 9); and we make God a liar (vs. 10).

We must admit our sin and confess it (literally, say the same thing God says). That is we agree with God that our sin is wrong and we turn from it. Sin is offensive to God. Sin breaks God's law and it breaks His heart. The sin that breaks God's heart ought to break our heart. We must be so broken over our sins so that we are broken from our sins.

- **Proverbs 28:13** *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.*

Our part is to confess and forsake sin. God's part is to forgive and cleanse sin. He is faithful and just (righteous) to do His part.

5. We must strive to avoid sinning (2:1)

The truth about confessing sin and being forgiven is not a license to keep on sinning or to treat sin in a careless and casual way. Sin is serious. It is terrible. It is costly. How could something that cost Jesus so much bother us so little? Jesus forgave the woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:3-11) and then He told her to stop sinning. Here is something we can all remember to keep us on the holy highway.

- **H – Heed God's Word, Psalms 119:11** *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*
- **O – Obey God's Command, 1 Peter 1:16** *Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*
- **L – Look for Christ's Return, 1 John 3:2-3** *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*
- **Y – Yield to the Spirit, Galatians 5:16** *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

6. We must trust Christ to satisfy God's justice against sin (2:1-2)

Sin is a violation of God's character and His holy law. *1 John 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.* God runs His universe on the basis of unchanging moral laws. He is the ultimate judge of right and wrong. John concludes this section by reminding us, if anyone sins (and we do) we don't have to worry about a thing because Jesus takes care of it for us. He is our Advocate (defense attorney). Satan is our adversary and the accuser of the brethren. Jesus pleads our case based on His righteous life and sacrificial death. Jesus Christ is the righteous one and He is the propitiation (sacrifice that satisfied God's justice and turned away His anger).

- **Romans 8:33-34** *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Imagine that you are in heaven's courtroom and the evidence is about to be presented against you. Satan is about to begin his case against you, when all of a sudden Jesus steps in to say, "Satan, you are the enemy of God and His people, and I know what you want to do. You have a long list of sins you want to bring against this person. I know that all of this is true. There is no denying it. But I lived the perfect life that he could not live, and then I died in his place and took the punishment that he deserved. So now his penalty is paid in full and no charge you attempt to bring against him will stand in this court." This is in fact what Jesus does for His people, but actually Christ doesn't need to say a word on our behalf. His finished work of atonement on Calvary says enough. Songwriter Lidie Edmunds understood this when she wrote:

*My faith has found a resting place not in device nor creed;
I trust the ever-living One, His wounds for me shall plead.
I need no other argument, I need no other plea;
It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.*

It is no wonder that John spoke of full joy before this section about sin (1:4). What could bring greater or deeper joy than knowing that our perfect and holy God forgives all our sins and that Jesus' blood turns away God's wrath from us?