

The Threat of Sin to Fellowship

#2

1 John 1:5-2:2

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Sin in the Christian life is an objective reality and without an understanding that sin exists, was paid for by Christ and can be forgiven, a Christian will be a miserable creature. A poor understanding of the power of sin in the Christian life could lead to despair and discouragement!
- B. Every true Christian longs for fellowship with his Lord and the only threat to this fellowship is sin. What can a Christian do about sin in his own life? Sin produces guilt and all Christians sin, so what can be done about the problem of guilt in the life of the believer?
- C. As you remember from last week, much of the Epistle of 1 John was written to refute the heresy of Gnosticism. One of the fundamentals of Gnosticism was that all matter is evil. This led to two extremes: 1). One group believed that the body was evil because it was material but the soul, being spiritual, was free and sinless. Therefore, feed the body evil because it is sinful. This view led to those who professed Christ as Savior but did not keep the laws of God – they are called Antinomians. 2). The other group believed the body should be highly disciplined and regimented so as to keep its evil under control. This led to legalism and different forms of human sinless perfection.
- D. The Apostle John writes to show how to distinguish a true Christian from the false, professing Gnostics, who claimed to know Christ.

II. FELLOWSHIP IS NOT LAWLESSNESS 1:5-7

- A. ***“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”***
1. God in his very nature is light – He is not a light but is in his very essence and character light. This statement was made to refute the Gnostics.
 2. Light is symbolic of truth. These Gnostics could not claim all knowledge if they really knew that God was the ultimate truth. [If they would place themselves under God, the true light, they would see their own ignorance.]
 3. Light is symbolic of purity and holiness. These Gnostics had a low concept of God; therefore, they had low morality and no desire to do God’s law.

Many folk today do not want to hear about God and Christ because light reveals their immorality, and “men love darkness rather than light.” The light of a million suns would not equal the light of God’s holiness. When you see God’s holiness, you see your own sinfulness.

- B. **“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness.”** — John is talking about habitually walking in darkness with no desire to please the Lord in the daily life. If a man says, this is a profession that one believes in Christ and is participating in the life of Christ. But a person’s verbal profession must be matched with the conduct of his life. These antinomian Gnostics believed that a person may be living in sin and compromising with it, and at the same time have fellowship with God.

These mere professors wanted fellowship on easy terms but they made a gap between 1). belief and practice, 2). theology and morals, 3). religion and ethics and 4). words and action. They didn’t practice what they preached! They said, “It doesn’t make much difference how one lives as long as he believes.” This is pure nonsense!

- C. **“We lie and do not live by the truth:”** -- Those who claim to be Christians but live habitually a life in darkness, lie, in that their own lives prove them a liar. Also they do not obey the truth of Christ as laid down in the Word of God.
- D. **“But if we walk in the light as he is in the light,”** -- The Christian’s fellowship is characterized by walking in the sphere of the light of God. The Christian is in the light the moment he believes but his whole life is one of progressively walking in the light of God.

Supposing you were in jewelry store but it was pitch black. You wanted to see the beautiful merchandise but the store was dark and you could do nothing but grope and stumble over things as you walked around. Then the store owner turns on the light and you find yourself in the light and can now see many of the displays but others are hidden in the counters and other places. You are in the light but you must walk in the light from place to place in the store if you are going to see the displays. The moment a person is converted, he has established a relationship to God and is in the light, but he must also walk in the light if he is to see all the beauties of God and Christ. This is temporal fellowship with God.

1. To walk in the light, is to be sincere, open, honest and transparent before God. It is to have everything open, exposed to God or anyone else that is interested. Our lives are to be an open book.
2. Christians should examine themselves and take a long look at themselves. They should put down their defenses and facades and let the light of God shine in the life so He can begin to clean us up from the filth of sin.

- E. ***“We have fellowship with one another”*** -- The result of walking in the light is intimate fellowship with God which results in fellowship with other Christians.
- F. ***“And the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*** -- Because the Christian is in the light, he knows that Christ’s death will continue to cleanse him from sin as he exposes his life to the light of God. Whatever the sin, Christ will cleanse it and take away the guilt.

III. FELLOWSHIP IS NOT ERADICATION 1:8-9

- A. ***“If we claim to be without sin,”*** -- John is speaking of sin, the sin nature, not sins. Some Gnostics were claiming that they had no inherent indwelling sin. They may do a few wrong acts but basically they are good as to their nature. Yet the Bible teaches that all men have a sin nature inherited from Adam.

This heresy is with us today in the form of 1).Christian Science, 2). Unity and 3). Religious Science who say that sin really doesn’t exist but is an “error of the mortal mind” or a “figment of the imagination.” This is also found in 1). Theosophy, 2). Hinduism and 3) Buddhism in various forms. In essence they deny the existence of sin and the basic sinfulness of man. There have been some radical Christians, mostly in the holiness groups that have believed in complete eradication of the sin nature after salvation. A notable advocate of this view was Charles Finny.

- B. ***“We deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us”*** -- To deny the existence of sin is pure self-deception. He can’t fool God or others; he is just deceiving himself. To deny that one has no sin is to deny one’s need for a Savior; he does not have the truth of Christ.
- C. ***“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*** -- The proper Christian attitude to sin is not to deny it but to admit it and to receive the forgiveness which God has made possible.
 1. The Christian is to confess his known sins to God. Confess means “to say the same thing.” True confession is to: 1) look at sin as God looks at it, 2) name it and forsake it. It is not just “forgive me, Lord,” but “I became angry, Lord, and this is sin and displeases you and I don’t want to do it any more.”
 2. The Christian is to continually confess his sins, not to a priest or a pastor, but to God, who alone can forgive. In my own thought life I may confess a given sin many times in a day, especially if it keeps coming back.
 3. God is faithful to His promise to show mercy, and righteous or just based on the death of Jesus Christ. It does not say “loving” and “gracious” but “faithful

and just” because God sent His Son to die for every sin that a Christian would ever commit’ therefore God must forgive.

4. Upon confession of our known sins, God tells us that He takes care of our unknown sins, which are many, for He “purifies from all unrighteousness.”

IV. FELLOWSHIP IS NOT PERFECTIONISM 1:10

- A. **“If we claim we have not sinned,”** – Now the heretic is claiming that he doesn’t do any acts of sin. He is perfect. Today most holiness groups believe in perfectionism, but, in order to do so, they redefine sin. John Wesley believed in a form of perfectionism for he believed it possible for a person to reach a plateau in his life where he would sin no more. Wesley never felt, however, that he had arrived.

I am always reminded of the words of D.L. Moody when someone came up to him and told him that he had reached the place where he no longer sinned. Mr. Moody, in his practical way, said, “Well, I’d like to ask your wife about that!”

We had a wonderful Christian landlady who belonged to the Assembly of God Church. She would always tell us that she never sinned anymore – drinking, smoking, dancing, immorality, etc. Yet it was nothing for her to get so mad at her husband that she would throw a plate or something at him. She had a warped concept of what sin really is.

- B. **“We make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”** -- To deny acts of sin is calling God a liar, for “all have sinned and come short of God’s glory,” and God’s Word is not lodged in the heart either by ignorance or unbelief.

V. FELLOWSHIP INVOLVES NOT DOING ACTS OF SIN 2:1-2

- A. **“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.”** – John’s burning desire was that true Christians would not commit any acts of sin. Believers, by the power of the Spirit, should strive for holiness and perfection although it will never be attained in this lifetime.

Here John solves two questions: 1) If we can never in this life be done with sin, why strive after holiness. The answer is that we can become progressively more holy and like-Christ as we walk in fellowship with the Lord. 2) If confession can put one back into temporal fellowship, why dread falling into sin? The answer here is that sin displeases our Lord and has damaging effects upon the Christian and the Christian must be disciplined. The great goal of the Christian is not to sin! Sin breaks the Christian’s temporal fellowship with Christ and the joy of one’s salvation is lost.

B. ***“But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins:”*** – The Apostle John was a pragmatist and knew that Christians at times would do acts of sin. He tells us that when a Christian sins God has made a provision for this sin in the death of Christ. Christ is our advocate or defense lawyer, pleading his perfect and complete death before the throne of the Father.

God’s holiness, justice and righteousness demand that God judge sin, but Christ in His death appeased or satisfied the holy righteous demands of God against sin. Now God cannot judge Christians because He has judged Christ in their place.

Christ does not plead the Christian’s innocence but His own death which has brought a perfect salvation to the believer in Christ.

God deals with his children as a Father not a Judge. Christians will be disciplined for their sins but never will they be eternally judged for them because Christ has been that judgment for them.

C. ***“And not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”*** – Christ’s death is effective to all true Christians but is potentially available for anyone in the world who will trust Christ for salvation.

Explanation of “Whole World”

Unlimited: Christ made an atonement for the whole world in a provisional sense. Christ is a propitiation for “our sins” (Christians) and the sins of the whole world (all mankind).

Limited: Christ died for all in the world who will believe (the elect).

1. The “our” refers to converted Jews. Thus propitiation was not only for converted Jews but the Gentile world as well. Christ died for both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Him.
2. All other passages limit propitiation to those who have faith in Christ (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17, 1 Jn 4:10).
3. The term “whole world” must be given a limited meaning (1 Jn. 5:19). The whole world only includes the world of the ungodly, not the world of the elect. Also see Rev. 12:9 – there will be the saved who will not be deceived (Rev. 7:9).
4. The world can be given a limited meaning (Col. 1:5-6; Rom 1:8).
5. This concept contrasts Israel with the world (Jn. 11:51-52)

VI. CONCLUSION

A. Are you sure you are a Christian? Do you know you have an Advocate? Do you desire to walk in the light? Are you assured that if you were to die right now, you would go to heaven? Do you experientially realize that Christ died for your sins

and rose from the grave to declare you righteous? If you answer “no” to any one of these questions, you probably are not a Christian at all.

- B. Jesus said, “Come unto me all ye that are weak and heavy laden and I will give you rest.” He also said, “Whosoever cometh unto me I will in no way cast out.” But He said a person must come to Christ by believing in him personally, for He is the only way of salvation. He said, ***“I am the way, the truth and the life: no man comes unto the Father but by me.”***