

The Cross and Christian Living

#7

1 John 3:4-10

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Most Christians, when thinking of the death of Christ, do so in terms of forgiveness of past sins. Christ is related to initial salvation but not present salvation. Yet the death has present effects as well as past effects. It is essential to sanctification as well as initial salvation. The Cross is a necessity to Christian living.
- B. Paul tells us that one of the major purposes of the Cross is to purify a chosen people to be conformed to Christ. **Titus 2:14: ...“who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”** And this is exactly what the Apostle John is telling us in **1 John 3:4-10**. *The death of Christ applied will change the life of every true child of God.*
- C. In context, the Apostle John has been speaking about the second coming of Christ but now he speaks of the first coming and links the necessity of righteousness with His first coming. John applied the moral test of salvation once again. What is this test? Christ came in His first advent to remove sins and to destroy the works of the devil. If holiness of life does not show up to some degree in a professing Christian, then the death of Christ is ineffective and cannot accomplish its purpose. But the death of Christ is effective; therefore, holiness of life must be the evidence or result of true salvation.

II. THE CROSS PRODUCES PROGRESSIVE VICTORY OVER SIN 3:4-7

- A. **“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.”** – This verse tells us that sin is lawlessness. It is the human heart in rebellion to all authority, especially the sovereign authority of Almighty God.
 - 1. Rebellion of the human heart is the source of all man’s major problems. This is why this world is in such a mess today. There is a spirit of revolt abroad. There is a widespread refusal to acknowledge authority in our day. These are revolutionary times and lawlessness is the spirit of our age. The problem is that there is an attitude within every man, resulting in lawless acts by every person.

Billy Graham said, “We stand at the heart of a world revolution. Our world is on fire and man without God cannot control the flames. The fires of greed, hate, and lust are sweeping uncontrollably around our globe. We live in the midst of crisis, danger, fear, and death.”

2. Lawlessness takes many forms today. The sin of lawlessness is seen in the modern beat generation. Young people who are reacting against traditions, the conventions in which they were brought up, and who, in seeking freedom have flung over the traces are doing only what they want to do. They are defying human and divine authority.

Perhaps you are thinking that you are no lawless person and you are a good citizen. But there is respectable lawlessness as well. This rebellion to God is seen in hatred of others, prejudice, haughtiness, in cattiness, in exclusive clubs and selfish cliques--in quarreling parents and resentful children, in bitter feuds within the home, in broken homes, in the sky rocketing divorce rates, in neglected children. Why? Because men want to please themselves and do what they want when they want. They want no restraints, no rules, no laws in this life. And above all they do not want to be in subjection to God. Any attitude of lawlessness is sin.

How many times have each one of us said openly or to ourselves, "I'm going to do what I want, and I don't care what happens; I'm going to do what I want!"

- A. ***"But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin."*** -- Christ came into this world to do what no human being can do -- to take away sin.

Man today is trying everything to curb lawlessness. They have tried psychological treatment, legislation, education, poverty programs, strict law enforcement and hundreds of other things but man nor the world gets much better. There is no human answer to this dilemma. There is only one who said he could take away sin and curb the sin in men -- Jesus Christ. Christ alone can change the nature of man. He can change a person on the inside.

General Carlos Romulo, for many years the Philippine Ambassador to the United States, stated the case precisely, "We have harnessed the atom, but we will never make war obsolete until we find a force to bridle the passions of men." The cause of man's sin is rebellion.

- C. ***"And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning."*** -- The person who is characterized by abiding in Christ is not characterized by constant sinning in rebellion to God. It is not his habit of life. To abide in Christ is to obey his commands. **John 15:10: "If you obey my commands you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."** Abiding in obedience, results in freeing the Christian from the bondage and the power of sin, so that he can live godly and Christ-like. *Bondage to Christ means freedom from sin.*

- D. ***“No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.”*** – The person, who is characterized by a life of rebellion to God and His holy will, is an unsaved man.
- E. ***“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.”*** – The test of true salvation is the evidence of righteousness being produced in the professing Christian. This does not mean that a Christian is perfect or that he cannot sin (because all Christians do acts of sin at times). The point is that Christ and sin are irreconcilable. Thus sin and Christ in the Christian are incompatible. Christ died to take away sins and He is taking away progressively the sins of every true child of God. Thus a Christian cannot go on living and loving a life of sin. The Apostle John says, ***“Do not let anyone lead you astray.”*** There are two extremes to avoid. The Bible does not teach sinless perfection or eradication of all sin. The other extreme is to believe in eternal security in such a way so as to minimize the necessity of perseverance. *A man once saved can never be lost. But a saved man can never be the same again.* Eternal security wrongly taught can produce lethargic Christians or make people think they are Christians when they really are not. Let no man deceive you. The Bible teaches the necessity of holiness of life for the true child of God.

III. THE CROSS PRODUCES PROGRESSIVE VICTORY OVER THE DEVIL 3:8-10

- A. ***“He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning.”*** – Above we discovered that the nature of sin was lawlessness but now John tells us that the origin of sin was found in the devil himself. Satan committed the first sin in the universe. He was a beautiful angel of God and the most important angel. He decided that he wanted to be God and he said, ***“I will be like the Most High.”*** He exerted his will against the sovereign will of God. He was in rebellion to God and His purposes. Five times he said, “I will.” When man is sinning, he does just what Satan did. He declares his independence of God and opposes God and His sovereign will. The one who is habitually sinning is simply allowing the character of the Evil One to be reproduced in him. Behind all the mess of this world, there must be more than men. There is a master-planner of evil and could be none other than the Devil himself. **Eph. 6:12: *“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*** What is the business of the devil? To get you to develop a spirit of rebellion and independence. To say, “I want what I want and I don’t care what anyone else wants. I don’t need God.”
- B. ***“The reason the son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work.”*** – An unsaved man, according to the Bible, is a slave to sin and Satan. He’s bound in the chains of evil forces. But Christ came to set the Christian free from bondage. He literally came to untie, unloose the works of the Devil, as though they were actual chains around us. Satan was defeated at the cross but he is still waiting his

sentence. He is presently out on bale with much influence over men. But the Christian is being progressively delivered from the bondage of Satan in his experience. **1 Jn. 4:4:** *“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”* Satan is a powerful force in this world but Christ has defeated him; therefore the Christian can defeat him.

- C. ***“No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains I him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God.”***—This is one of the most controversial verses in the whole of the Bible. Some, who don’t know Greek, take the King James literally to mean that once saved a Christian does not sin anymore. Usually these folks think of sin in terms of gross immorality and speak of small evils as personality problems, psychological defects or personality weaknesses. However, if this interpretation is right then the Apostle John has contradicted himself in his own epistle. For he says that all men have a sin nature and do acts of sin. **1 John 1:10:** *“If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”* **1 John 2:1:** *“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One”.*

The real key to this verse is found in the present tense in the Greek which speaks of continuous or habitual action. The one who is truly born from above does not habitually commit sin as a pattern of life. The reason is that God’s seed is in him. The “seed” refers to the new nature or the divine capacity given by God. It is this new nature from God that gives the Christian the desire, leaning, propensity to live a holy life. A Christian cannot sin without a struggle or without a sense of grief so powerful that ultimately, despite his struggles, he will be brought to repentance and a forsaking of sin. Sin is no longer natural to the believer. Though for a time he may slip into it rather easily, nevertheless it is now contrary to his new nature from God. There is an incongruity and incompatibility between sin and Christ in the believer.

It is possible for both a sheep and a pig to fall into a mud hole, but the difference in their nature immediately becomes evident in their reaction. The pig is perfectly happy. He rolls over on his back, singing “Home Sweet Home”. But the sheep is very disturbed, troubled, unhappy and miserable, and earnestly desires to get out. The unsaved man loves sin but the saved man, while he may sin, can never love it or really be happy in it.

- D. ***“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are:”***—In the Apostle’s thinking there are just two classes of people in this world. There are those who believe in Christ and prove it with their lives and those who reject Christ and produce no righteousness for God. This does not mean that unsaved men are created by the Devil but that they reflect the character of the Devil in their rebellion to God.

- E. ***“Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.”*** – The Apostle makes the issue crystal clear that the one practicing righteousness as a habit pattern of life is the true child of God. Also the true Christian is recognized by his love for the Christian brethren.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. God is making everyone of His children more Christ-like through the effective power of the Cross. He will and is purifying a people for Himself.
- B. Without Christ, there is no hope for salvation, the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and there is certainly no answer for the mess of the world in it's' lawlessness and rebellion. Christ can give you answers to life and insight into yourself.
- C. Jesus said, ***“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”***