

1st JOHN BIBLE STUDY

1 John 2:1-2

Lesson #4

Introduction

Now we're into the second chapter of 1st John, verses 1-2, which are really an unbroken thought beginning in chapter 1, verse 5 and continuing on through chapter 2, verse 6. If we were asked to kind of summarize the overall points of John's letter so far, through the first chapter, we would have to say that it's essentially about three main subjects: first, about the true humanity of Christ Jesus and the authenticity of His gospel; (vv.1-4) and then second, about the perfection of God Himself (v.5), and thirdly, instructions about how to discern between those who are truly in fellowship with Him, from those who say they are but are lying. (vv.6-10)

We discussed that confession of our sins is a characteristic of genuine fellowship, and along with that, the responsibility of rightly identifying what actually is and isn't sin. We offered a definition that identified sin as all those things that God declares in His scriptures, and for man to modify or edit that list is to usurp the sovereign authority of God, and thereby endorse and practice sin. We agreed that a true believer cannot disagree with God over what is and what is not sin. We also acknowledged, as does the scriptures, that man still does disobey God on occasions, but the true believer will confess that disobedience to God, and agree that it's sin, and seek wholeheartedly to repent. They'll never defend it, or attempt to justify it, when it's plainly in violation of God's clear declaration.

When the churches begin to hold debates over whether the things that are clearly defined by God as sins, actually really are sins, then Christ has been removed from the headship of that church, and man now sits as His usurper. And so far as being a recognized church in the eyes of God, it has only the name, but is pronounced dead (Rev 3:1) and any possibility of acceptable worship is completely forfeited by voluntary and intentional defilement. It would be preferable to God to put a chain across the front door and stop the useless meetings that He detests. As God told the prophet Malachi: *10 "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, [of the Temple] that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you," says the Lord of hosts, "nor will I accept an offering from you.* Mal 1:10 (NASB)

And why did God make such a pronouncement? Because the people actually thought that they could readily ignore, and disobey His commandments, and still have fellowship, and even offer worship at the same time. But God will not accept worship from, nor attend to the prayers of, those who are knowingly disobeying His commandments. For instance, You cannot have a female as your pastor, and offer acceptable worship to God at the same time. You cannot have a fornicator or adulterer as your pastor, and offer acceptable worship to God at the same time. You cannot have a practicing homosexual as your pastor, and offer acceptable worship to God at the same time. **He will not permit it.** Period, end of discussion. It is God alone who defines sin, and His definitions stand forever.

There is no such concept in the scriptures as debating these issues in a public forum. God declares, and then man either obeys or disobeys, and the consequences are well defined in scriptures from Genesis 3 through Revelation 22. This idea that we should invite these people to our churches and open up a dialogue with them over the merits of their behaviors is completely foreign to the scriptures. This is purely secular thinking. Introduced by the unregenerate members of our churches. It makes perfect sense to them. They call this loving, to ignore or tolerate disobedience to God's commandments among their membership, and it is loving, but clearly love of the world, not love of God. Love of God is defined as obedience to His commandments. So, if your definition of love involves disobedience, then your love is not for God but for the world. Your love probably is genuine, but it's Not for God, it's for Satan's corrupted world system.

When a Christian church becomes just like the world, and thinks like the world, and talks like the world, and behaves like the world, then the Lord declares it dead, and posts the sign "Ichabod" over the door, because all of His holy glory has departed from that organization, and now it carries only the stench of death, where the sweet aroma of life might have once emanated. (2Co 2:14-16) Listen to me now, If you aren't willing to obey God, and are determined to continue to justify and practice those things that He detests and forbids, then stop pretending to worship Him; close your church doors and stay home instead, because it only makes Him angry and provokes His wrath, according to the prophet Jeremiah.

30 "Indeed the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have been doing only evil in My sight from their youth; for the sons of Israel have been only provoking Me to anger by the work of their hands," declares the Lord. 31 "Indeed this city has been to Me a provocation of My anger and My wrath from the day that they built it, even to this day, so that it should be removed from before My face,

Jer 32:30-31 (NASB)

If we aren't willing to obey Him, then we should at least stop mocking Him with a pitiful, self serving, phony worship.

Now maybe I should apologize for using such strong language, but the scriptures use this language when the situation demands it. And our situation clearly demands it now. Many, if not even a majority of churches that call themselves evangelical are filled with members, and even sadly sometimes leaders, who ignore the authority of scriptures to rigidly define sin. With their words they'll affirm the authority of scriptures, then with their actions they'll turn right around and blissfully ignore whichever provisions they deem expedient, and justify it by meaningless words.

This epistle of John shines the light of truth on that practice, and says over and over again, in numerous and diverse ways, that all those who disobey any of God's commandments as a routine practice, are living in self deception, and in fact, have no fellowship relationship with Him at all. They are not saved says John. The life of God is not operating within them as it must, if in fact He's truly resident. This is how we ourselves may come to know for sure if we have, or have not, been regenerated by the Spirit of God. If we voluntarily seek to keep His commandments by our own desire.

Now, I don't want the introduction to get too far ahead of the scripture verses, so lets read our text verses for this lesson. To establish the right context, I'm going to start at chapter 1, verse 5; and continue through chapter 2, verse 2:

5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

1 John 1:5-10 (NASB)

So That You May Not Sin

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

1 John 2:1-2 (NASB)

Verse 1a:

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

After just having read (1:9) we can easily get the impression that sin is simply a forgone conclusion for the Christian, and that we needn't concern ourselves too much with it, all we really have to do is make sure that we keep up with our confessions of it, and all is well. And while there is some degree of truth in this, it puts a slant on the issue that isn't by any means implied in the verse. And for this very reason, to make it abundantly clear that sin is not being minimized, or made acceptable by his previous statement, John adds this clear pronouncement that he's writing these things to them so that they will NOT sin, not so that they will think that it's okay to sin, as long as they confess it.

1st John 1:9 was not given to us to minimize the significance of sin, but to emphasize the enormity of Christ's intervention on our behalf. But I have witnessed the preaching of this verse where the listeners were clearly left with the impression that the preacher was doing just that, minimizing the significance of practicing sin. As if sin was impotent to harm those who are willing to confess it, even though they know they'll probably do it again next week. This is the application of the error described by Paul where He asks his listeners if we are supposed to intentionally indulge in sin so that the gracious forgiveness of God can be exhibited by it. (Rom 6:1) And what was Paul's own answer to that question? *2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?*

We must never get the idea that sin has lost its ability to harm us. Yes, we have been redeemed from its fatal effect of death, by the atonement of Christ Jesus, but the affect sin has on everything it touches remains the same. Sin is the ultimate equal opportunity employer. It discriminates against none, and shows no favorites. It harms the weak and it harms the strong, it harms the rich and it harms the poor, it harms the healthy and it harms the sick.

It harms the kind and virtuous, and it harms the mean and selfish. It has no mercy and recognizes no rules, it will kick you when you're down or when you're standing, it will attack you from behind or from in front, in stealth or in plain view. It preys on the weak, and ignorant, and sickly, with no pity or regard for their plight. Sin is a stone cold, heartless, killer; and its burning desire is for us, all of us, with no exceptions. Sin is tireless and relentless, it never takes a day off and it never goes on vacation. It never declares any truce, or temporary cease fire. It is the universe's original and ultimate weapon of mass destruction, nothing ever made by man will ever match it for sheer destructive power. Its death count is already in the billions and still counting, and it was first implemented by mankind himself, through Satan's clever deception of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Sin is **not** our friend as Satan suggested. It will never make us happy and fulfilled as he still promises. Sin is a parasite that sustains its life by sucking out its host's life. That's why the scripture says that the WAGES of sin is death. It could say the result, or the consequences, but instead it uses the word wages. Have you ever wondered why this word was used to define the outcome of practicing sin? Its probably because wages aren't a penalty, they're the just and fair compensation for a service rendered; and death is the just and fair compensation that we receive for a lifetime of voluntary efforts to sustain the life of sin, at the expense of our own.

The parasite of sin pays us with the currency of progressive death for our voluntary sustained efforts to keep it alive. And every week, every month, every year, we see those results accumulating like wages. We're a little older, a little weaker, a little less energetic than we were the year before. Because sin is progressively doing its work on our bodies and mind's everyday. And we will eventually die from its cumulative effects. The only reason mankind ages and dies is because sin has been released into the world, and its effect on mankind is sure and certain death. Just as God warned Adam and Eve that it would, if they introduced it into creation by intentionally disobeying His commandment that He had given them.

In the same way that we acknowledge that righteousness is in fact a person (God), we must also understand that sin is likewise a person (Satan) who is its father and sustainer. To stay alive, he must be fed a steady diet by his followers. If the food source dries up, the parasite dies. But there seems very little danger of that ever happening unless an outside influence is introduced that's powerful enough to resist this destructive weapon. And we know that there is such a force available, because it showed itself in the form of a man a couple of thousand years ago. This force became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory and His power. And although death had no power over Him, He nevertheless voluntarily submitted to its sting solely on behalf of us humans, as our direct substitute, because of His great love for those of us who have been given to Him by His Father as an eternal mate.

And this gets us to the second half of this verse, that concedes the fact that even when we're commanded to abstain from sin, and we have every reason to obey that command, we are still too weak to perfectly and flawlessly withstand the unrelenting assaults of sin, that ever tempts us to disobey our Father's and our Savior's commandments. And with a repentant heart of sorrow and shame, we come to Him and confess our sins, and under those circumstances He is willingly our righteous Advocate before the Father, ever living to intercede on our behalf, to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Christ did not suffer and die a painful and humiliating death so that we could continue to indulge in the practice of our sins with impunity. Nor so that we could write our own ticket, and make our own set of commandments, and omit some of the one's we don't like, and insert others that don't even exist, in whatever manner we feel are best for us. This is not the gospel according to Jesus Christ, despite the popularity of that teaching in this present day and age.

We make everything else **but** strict obedience to His commandments appear to be the primary issues. We use love, tolerance, prosperity, health, wealth, self-esteem, and even evangelism as substitutes for the biblical teaching that obedience to God's commandments is His interpretation of love. And John is going to drive that truth home over and over

again in this epistle until we just can't ignore it, or pretend we don't understand it. It's not a secondary issue, it's the primary issue, and all else is either authenticated, or exposed as false, by this single aspect. A million new professing converts every year, are of zero value, if they don't end up keeping His commandments. If we love Him, we will keep His commandments, and that means ALL of His commandments. We will not practice, or approve of, or ignore any of those things that God has defined as Sins, simply because the secular world finds them acceptable. Of course they do, that's precisely why He has regenerated the heart's of His elect, so that we won't also still find them acceptable ourselves.

If we do, then either God's work of regeneration isn't effectual, or, we haven't really been regenerated and transformed, there's no other options available. You can't be regenerated and unregenerated at the same time. You can't have the mind of Christ and the mind of the world at the same time. And this is why I said emphatically last week that you cannot possibly disagree with God over what is and isn't sinful and be one of His redeemed at the same time. You certainly may still be tempted by sin, but you won't disagree with God over its sinfulness, just over your own flawed ability to resist it.

I think this is where we sometimes make mistakes. We think that the temptations of our flesh nature are an indicator of our true heart's desires. Nothing can be farther from the truth. In fact, it is the conflict between the temptations of the flesh, and the regenerated heart's desires, that cause the discomfort and conflict in the first place. Paul describes this well in Romans chapter 7. The unregenerate heart has no conflict with itself over what it desires. It simply doesn't want to get caught doing something illegal and have to suffer the consequences. *(Okay, some unbelievers do occasionally regret their actions)*

John is telling us first, that we're not to practice sin, but knowing the weakness of our flesh, he proceeds in the very same sentence to tell us what we must do when we fail, and assures us that even though we are plagued with repetitive failures, nevertheless we have an Advocate before the Father who is righteous on our behalf, and always willing to intercede for us in our weakness. And this brings us to the next verse:

Verse 2:

2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

I know that you remember that the background context of this verse is that we confess our sins and seek repentance of them, not deny that they really are sins so we can continue to practice them. When we meet that condition, then He Himself is the propitiation for our sins. No matter how many times we hear this, we still never get over the innate tendency to think of ourselves as the object of discussion. We think of how clean and perfect Christ's propitiation makes us. But that's a false concept and we should know it. We are only sinless by virtue of substitution, not by virtue of actuality. We are really never declared "not guilty," that would be an outright lie, we are declared "justified", meaning "paid in full" for our guilt by the application of the merits of another, who actually is "not guilty." And we are declared "righteous" solely upon the imputed merits of another, and completely disregarding our own.

If we ever begin to think of ourselves as having been made equally as righteous and sinless as Christ our Advocate, then we're on dangerous ground. We often hear someone say that they are as sinless as Jesus, because the Father sees Christ's righteousness not ours. That's right, He sees Christ *instead* of us, not us as His equals. This is an important distinction, as it maintains the Headship of Christ in the plan of God, and prevents us from overestimating our own significance. It is Christ alone who gets the glory for perfect righteousness, and we need to be very clear on that. This verse says that it is "He Himself" who is the propitiation for our sins, because we ourselves have nothing of worth whatsoever to add to that equation.

And it also speaks to the efficacy of that propitiation. There is but one existent life anywhere in the universe, and in all creation, that is a suitable substitute, a suitable appeasement of the wrath of God, on behalf of the sins of mankind. And Christ Jesus is that Man. The Father has made a single provision; to honor and glorify His Son, He has designated a sole source supplier of this gracious gift of atoning propitiation for all mankind, in all ages, for every nation, and race, and ethnic group, that comprises created humanity, for all time. There is but one Savior for all humanity in the whole world, and He is Jesus Christ the Righteous. Although He never visited North America, or South America, or Europe, or the far East, or almost all the people groups of the world, He is nevertheless the one and only Savior that God the Father has assigned as the propitiation for the sins of mankind. He alone is the way, and the truth, and the life, and no one ever comes to God

the Father apart from the right and proper acknowledgment of both His divine and human nature, and as the one and only beloved Son of God. (Jn 14:6; Act 4:12)

We often hear the secular world, and especially other religions, argue that the exclusivity of Christianity is unfair, and even arrogant. That everyone has the right to choose their own path to God. This idea is understandable when one is ignorant of the whole truth of the matter. If one has only the human perspective to draw from, then this is the logical conclusion.

But what of the divine perspective? Why don't we all understand that forgiveness of sin is not by any means a right that every person is owed. It is a precious gift that no one deserves, no mortal human being who ever lived. If it's granted, it is solely at the discretion of the grantor. And under these conditions, He has both the authority and right to dispense it according His own conditions. Consider how it would reflect on Jesus, the beloved Son of God, to have been asked by His Father to suffer pain and humiliation for the sake of humanity so that there might be provided a means of propitiation, and then turn right around and provide several others means that had nothing whatsoever to do with His pain and suffering. Wouldn't this be a monumental disgrace to Jesus, to suffer all of that, and then be told that it's just one of many ways the Father has provided for salvation? No, never ever will that happen.

The work that the Father asked His beloved Son to do, the pain and disgrace that He had to suffer on behalf of mankind, was a one and only proposition. This is, and was, the only means God the Father ever intended to provide for mankind's redemption, and it's His way or no way. To allow any other means is to disrespect and dishonor His beloved Son, and count His work as just a common thing among many. Anyone who is even casually familiar with the scriptures, knows the bond of love between the Father and the Son will never permit such a happening. If we understand the divine perspective, then we can see that the objections of human reasoning are selfish, prideful, arrogant, and unforgivably disrespectful to the Son of God, who paid so dear a price to make redemption possible at all. No where else in the whole world has there ever been another means of redemption, nor will there ever be one in the future. Or, Christ would be dishonored at a cosmic level. Nor is there any human who has ever earned, or deserves the right to expect it, on his own terms.

God's grace alone has extended this offer to the whole world, by which He means everyone without any kind of distinctions between them. Obviously he doesn't mean everyone in the whole world without any qualifications or exceptions of any kind. It's understood that he's speaking of the believers in Jesus throughout the whole world. Where the Old Covenant was primarily with the chosen people of Israel, the New Covenant is extended to every nation, and tribe, and language, and ethnic group throughout the whole world. Jesus Christ, the eventual offspring from the family line of Abraham, is the hope and blessing of all the nations of the earth, as was first prophesied to Abraham, even before there ever was a nation of Israel. (Gen 12:3)

As obvious as this use of the term, "the whole world" is, it seems that there's still some who misapply it. As Arthur Pink points out in one of his books, one can either infer that it means everyone in the whole world without any exceptions, or that it means everyone in the whole world without any particular (ethnic) distinctions between them. We know that it's contextually limited to something less than total humanity without any exceptions of any kind, because few, if any, really believe in universal salvation of believers and unbelievers alike.

So the question is, what is that contextual limitation which is rightly implied in this verse? This is the beginning of the fulfillment of that promise made by God to Abraham in Genesis 12, that one of his descendents would eventually become the hope of the gentiles throughout the whole earth. And its limitation is to those who repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This is the inclusion of the gentiles *of the whole world* into God's promises to Abraham.

And respecting the efficacy of that propitiation, it is one-hundred percent effective towards all of those for whom it was predestined from before creation. Not one less, and not one more. God chose His elect before He ever began creation, and the atonement of His Son was entirely for them, everyone of them by name, and wasn't done as a big blanket over everyone, who is then free to choose for themselves if they want it or not. The sovereign God of the Bible doesn't work like that, even though it seems like the logical way to us, and the scriptures everywhere make that abundantly clear to all who are willing to see it. We are innately prone to think more highly of ourselves than we should, and to overestimate both

our capabilities and our self-importance in the grand plan of God. This causes us to derive many false conclusions concerning our interpretations of scriptures. And the semi-Pelagian concept of Arminianism is just one of those many false conclusions.

Now I still have a great deal that I want to say on these issues that we've discussed in verses 1 & 2, but they'll all come up again because of the repetitive nature of this epistle. So I'll offer a brief conclusion and leave the rest for a later lesson.

Conclusion:

We came off of chapter one, verse nine with a most encouraging word of forgiveness to those who know and love the Lord Jesus, but also know that they just aren't able to escape the occasional lapses into sin. When this happens we are sorely ashamed of ourselves, and ponder why we did it, when it's contrary to everything we desire in our heart and soul. We're tempted to doubt our salvation and regeneration at these moments; but these verses from John's epistle are just the encouragement we need to run to Jesus with teary eyes and confess our sins, with pleadings for the strength of repentance.

But sadly, the situation in our churches over the last century has gone from bad to worse. We're so worldly that we don't even understand the meaning of most of the scriptures, and our leaders either don't know themselves, or intentionally edit out anything that's controversial for the sake of keeping the peace, and then they call this Christian love. Our churches freely accept the concepts of the world, and reject, or more often, just ignore God's definitions of sin. We don't even seem to think we're in a war with sin, we think that Jesus has ended that war, and now sin is simply a minor inconvenience, and applies only to unbelievers. We've used 1st John 1:9 as a license to indulge our worldly lusts with alarming flagrancy. And it was precisely to prevent that, that John gave us these two verses that we're examining now. He says that he's written these things so that we will NOT sin, not so that we'll think that sin is unimportant.

But failure, confession, and repentance is the normal Christian life saints, and we thank God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, for their never ending grace and patience with us, as we learn and grow by every failure. It is God's intentional and pre-designed way, that He's wisely chosen, to make us ready to occupy our place in His eternal kingdom of perfection. It's only those who were directly affected by a war, who are grateful to see it end, so our Father has placed us in a losing war with sin during our days on this earth, so that we will rightly see and appreciate that eventual kingdom of sinless perfection that He's prepared for all of those who love Him. He has promised to win that war for us, and bring us out victorious.

And this is why there must be a new heaven and a new earth, and we must have new undefiled and imperishable bodies, because these bodies we inhabit now, and this whole creation we live in, has been defiled, and isn't considered by God to be repairable. They must be completely replaced to be counted suitable for eternal righteousness. And this is why we'll never be able to find perfection in this age, because God didn't intend that we should, but rather that we should learn from our time here that sin utterly ruins whatever it touches, and everything spoiled by sin must be completely replaced. It's the losing war with sin, battle by battle, that we're here learning about, and that's God's primary point of teaching. If we miss that then our entire education time has gone for nought. If we cease to identify and resist sin, and accept the world's definitions, and think we can find an agreeable compromise, then our education and preparation has ceased entirely.

And for this reason, and numerous others, we are never to take sin lightly in this age, even though we can't entirely defeat it. If sin isn't abhorrent to us, and sorely grievous to our heart's, then we haven't learned the lesson that God intends we should learn, and we're not ready to take our place in His righteous kingdom. The next couple of verses we're going to study is a practical application of this very principle. And they will expose our true feelings and affections without any room for doubts or compromises. They are as black and white as any in the scriptures, so I'm looking forward to getting into those next week. In the meantime, To Him be the glory everyday. Amen.

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