

1st JOHN BIBLE STUDY

1 John 2:3-6

Lesson #5

Introduction

Last week, in lesson four, we discussed verses 1 & 2 of chapter 2. Our particular emphasis was on the issue of the opening words where John said that he was writing these things to the saints so that they would not sin. These same verses also speak of Christ as our Advocate, our “paraclete” who represents us before the Father. We spoke briefly on this also, but our main emphasis was on the exhortation and admonishment not to sin. The reason we made more of the issue of not sinning, rather than of Christ as our Advocate, is not by any means to be interpreted as a statement of our feeling of the importance of the two, but because we seek to restore a measure of balance to the teaching of these verses.

Virtually every sermon we hear on these verses makes very much of the issue of Christ’s advocacy on our behalf, and all but ignores the issue of not sinning. In fact, the problem we were addressing is the tendency to use the advocacy of Christ as a means to minimize the significance of sin in the life of believers. And John wasn’t doing any such thing when he penned these verses, so we felt the necessity to add some much needed balance to the equation. In fact, a thousand more sermons, by a thousand preachers, would be needed to rightly restore any real balance in this issue.

The issue of sin isn’t now, nor ever was a popular topic. People would rather not hear about it. And if we can simply push it into the background, and speak only of the advocacy of Christ on our behalf, then we can live comfortably as we wish and keep our consciences from nagging us too much in the process. Add to that the practice of pushing other things into the foreground of importance and we have the formula for 19th, 20th and now 21st century Christianity. C.H. Spurgeon warned of the downgrade of Christianity, and it cost him his ministry. A.W. Pink spent a lifetime being expelled from every group and denomination he tried to fellowship with, because he would not compromise on the truths of scripture. The same with Jonathan Edwards and many more. People just don’t want to hear about sin.

But sin is the central issue of importance in the holy scriptures. From Genesis 3 until the end of the book, the whole overriding issue is that of sin, and its methods and consequences on the life of mankind. Of course it speaks of love as well, love is the whole motivator of God to create the universe. It is for love that He created humanity as a mate for His beloved Son, and worshipers of Himself. And when it speaks of love, it always, without exception, ties it directly to behaviors. To God, love always, without exceptions, means obeying His commandments, and any profession of love that includes within it an acceptance or practice of any of those things that He has forbidden, is not love for Him, it’s at best self deception, and at worst deliberate dishonesty. Love can be genuine enough, but still not for God. With a heavy heart I can say that sinners appear to love their sin every bit as much as believers love their God. It’s not whether or not you truly have love, it’s who is that love **for** that’s the real issue. And without any doubt, these verses will answer that question for us, so that none need be deceived. So, let’s read our verses and begin our study.

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)

If We Keep His Commandments

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

1 John 2:3-6 (NASB)

Verse 3:

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

I can't imagine a more simple and straightforward statement than what we've just read from the holy Scriptures. Where is the question, where is the debate over the meaning of this simple statement? This is a straightforward cause and effect statement. It isn't complex, nor cryptic, nor mysterious. It says that we have a visible means by which we can come to know if we ourselves actually know Him. Obviously, the use of "know Him," means a close and intimate and thorough understanding, not just a casual knowledge of His existence. In other words, if we know His character, and His integrity, and His affections, and His Holiness, then something will happen to us by which we can know for certain that our knowledge of Him is genuine.

And what is this amazing and unmistakable characteristic by which we can know for absolutely certain if our knowledge of Him is true and Holy Spirit inspired? If we can accurately answer this question, then there's no reason for any human being on the planet earth to ever be deceived as to their relationship with God. And what is this priceless piece of information that the whole world has sought after for six thousand years? Certainly it must be something monumental, some great and noble accomplishment, or some incredible act of charity, that separates one from the ordinary masses of humanity, like Christ's sacrifice on the cross, or the martyrs who died heroically for their faith. Is that what this verse tells us?

No, it's not. In fact it's not even close. **This verse tells us, in no uncertain terms, that the sure and certain indicator of one's genuine knowledge of Christ can be determined by whether or not they keep His commandments.** The cause is the true knowledge of Christ, the result is a life of heartfelt and joyful obedience to those things that He's told us He wants us to do and not to do. Our pleasure and delight, our desire and passion, is to follow Him in joyful obedience. This is the one and only means that we have, in this present age, to demonstrate our love for Him, and our appreciation for His indescribable gift of forgiveness of sin and eternal life of righteousness. We are both motivated and constrained by our love for Him. We are motivated to do those things that we know pleases Him, and constrained to abstain from those things that we know will grieve Him.

True love is not just an abstract thought or feeling, it is a powerfully subjective emotion. It was love that caused the Lord Jesus to follow His Father's request to die a brutal and humiliating death on behalf of unrepentant sinners who weren't even seeking Him. It was love that empowered those martyrs to face death, with their families and even their children, rather than deny their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To know Him is to love Him, as a popular old song title once said. And to love Him is to willingly and desirously obey Him, says John in this epistle, and also in his gospel.

Our obedience is the way that He's provided us to show Him our love, and the way we present our worship to Him. It isn't out of obligation, or done for any personal expectations of gain, it's done because we can't help ourselves. Our affection for Him is the driving force of our lives, and even while we're in these corrupted bodies of flesh, our love for Him heavily outweighs that flesh, and overwhelmingly directs our actions toward obedience, in spite of the occasional failures of sin. If we have come to truly know Him, then we will be powerless to resist our affections and passion to honor Him by our obedience to His commandments. This is the inescapable results of that knowledge, because it is the Spirit of Christ that works this process within us. And this is going to be made clear in the next verse:

Verse 4:

4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

I wonder if we truly understand the ramifications of this verse? Does it really actually mean what it says? If we take it literally, at face value, then it says that the absence of that driving passion to obey Christ, that we just discussed in the prior verse, means something definitive. And what does it say that it means? Actually it says that it means two things. First, that this person is a liar when they declare that they know Him, and then, even more importantly, it says that the truth is not in them. Do we understand what that means? In this context it cannot mean anything else but that the Spirit of Christ does not reside within them, or else they wouldn't be capable of living in perpetual disobedience to His commandments. It is an inescapable fact that what John is saying is that the perpetual practice of those things that are contrary to the commandments of God manifest the absence of the holy Spirit in that person. True believers cannot, because they will not choose to live a sustained lifestyle that freely and perpetually practices disobedience to God's commandments.

Like it or not, that's what John says in this verse, but I don't know if I've ever heard anyone else state it quite as baldly as I'm doing right here. But what are my choices? Shall I pretend that I don't understand it? Shall I brush over it quickly before it has a chance to sink in? And what will that accomplish, but to perpetuate, and even endorse, the contemporary minimalization of sin within perceived Christianity. And to further the tolerance of sin in predominantly unregenerate churches under the banner of love and unity.

In just the same manner as obedience to His commands is the means to know with certainty that we have come to truly know Him in verse 3, John says in verse 4 that a lifestyle of deliberate disobedience is the means by which we may know with certainty that we **don't** truly know Him, and furthermore, that we're not really indwelt by His Spirit. Is it possible that we're overstating the boundaries in this verse? Maybe John doesn't really mean what we're inferring. Well then, what else can he mean when he says that the truth is not in that person? Was it not the Apostle John himself who told us that Jesus was the truth, (Jn 14:6) and that He was in us and we in Him. (Jn 17:22) Who knows better than the Apostle John the meaning and implication of not having the truth resident within them? He would not have used this terminology unless he intentionally meant exactly what it implies. There is no other way to interpret it. Remember my earlier warnings about the absolute black and white statements of John in this epistle? If we believe that he means precisely what he says, then there's no room for debates or conjectures.

Based on these verses, we have the means to judge ourselves objectively as to our true status. (2Cor 13:5) How does one judge themselves unless he has some criteria upon which to make that judgement? And John gives us that in the clearest terms anywhere in the whole of scriptures, right in this epistle. Has your heart been regenerated, and your thinking transformed into Christlikeness? Do you entirely agree with Him as to what constitutes sin and what does not? His Spirit will not disagree with itself within your heart. If He is resident, although your flesh wages war against it, your spirit will wholeheartedly agree with His Spirit on those things that are sinful. And you will not, and cannot ever disagree with His will and take the popular and secular worldview of what is and isn't sin in the eyes of God.

When a church thinks it's loving to ignore a known commandment of God, no matter how insignificant they feel it might be, they demonstrate by their actions, who their love is truly for. Love may well be thoroughly genuine, but not directed toward God. Who, in the name of love for Jesus, would intentionally dishonor and disrespect Him by intentionally disobeying Him? Listen to the writer of Hebrews concerning those who continue to sin after hearing the truth:

26 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." 31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Heb 10:26-31 (NASB)

Now you tell me, is this how we demonstrate our love for Jesus, to trample underfoot the Son of God, to regard His shed blood as just some common thing of insignificance, and openly insult Him by visible disobedience to Him? If this is our idea of loving behavior then we better take a second look, and think it through to its conclusion. How would you like to be loved like that? Would this make you happy? Then why in the world do we feel like intentional disobedience to Him for the sake of appeasing sin in our lives, and in our churches, is something loving and Christ honoring?

An act of love toward sin is not an honor to Christ, it is disrespectful, dishonoring, and downright hateful to Him. When we demonstrate a love for the Satanic world system, we inescapably demonstrate our contempt for Him, and all that He's done for us. And this is a fact irregardless of whether it's our intention or just our ignorance. We'll see that in much more detail when we get to verses 15-17. But now let's move on to the next verse:

Verse 5:

5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:

In these verses John, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is telling us that our actions are reliable indicators of the true thoughts and intents of our hearts. They are the results, not the cause of our knowledge and affections for Jesus Christ. And this is because it's the work of the holy Spirit, working within the believers, that both directs their will and then drives their

actions (Phi 2:13) Concerning the operation of sanctification and obedience to Jesus Christ, Peter tells us:

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

1 Peter 1:1-2 (NASB)

Those who were chosen by the foreknowledge of God the Father were also divinely decreed by Him to obey Jesus Christ, and to do that, the Holy Spirit was assigned by the Father to see to that operation. This is why it doesn't fail to happen, because it's the work of the Spirit, and not solely dependent on man's innate abilities or inclinations. Even though the Spirit uses these very same; the regenerated and transformed abilities and inclinations of the recipients in the process of His working out their salvation, in time and space. (Phi 2:12) John couldn't possibly make such a sweeping statement if it depended solely on the good intentions of human nature. That's not a very reliable instrument for the propagation of godliness, as history has proven.

To make these statements in so plain, and matter of fact manner, demands that something absolutely reliable is working behind the scenes. Not every man will behave predictably, either for good or for evil, unless there's a consistent force acting upon him. The sinner has an unrelenting force of evil acting upon him in the person of Satan, and beyond that his own fallen nature leads him in a predictable manner. No bad tree can bear good fruit said Jesus, because He knew that the tree can only bring forth from that which it has within it. (Mat 7:17-18) No unregenerate heart can consistently obey the commandments of God because it hasn't the capability within it.

But, conversely, every good tree will bear good fruit, it cannot do otherwise, because of that which it has within it. This is why those who know Him, and thusly love Him, also cannot help but obey Him. It is both reliable and predictable, because it is the perfecting work of the Holy Spirit, operating within the children of God. And the Spirit doesn't fail to do His designated work in every child of God, without exceptions. This is what John means by *the love of God being truly perfected*. What is the perfected love of God - the obedience of His children? This is God's work saints. Because we're also directly involved, we might think we're doing it entirely of our own initiative, which we are in a sense, but even that initiative is the work of the Holy Spirit acting upon our spirit and producing that result. (Phi 2:13) We love and obey Jesus because the Holy Spirit instills that motivation within us, and then we choose, of our own will, to do that which is His will. Jesus told His disciples: you think you chose Me, but in fact I chose you. Meaning that He chose long beforehand that they would choose to follow Him when He called them. We can only see and perceive the human side, so we think we're in complete control, but the truth is, that God's sovereignty has predetermined our decisions long before we were ever born. And we choose to believe, and to do those things that He's set in motion by divine decree from before creation.

Now don't let this make you a fatalist, rather let it inspire you to godliness and good works, as it will to all those who are His children. Seize every opportunity to prove the goodness of God by obeying His commandments with joyful exuberance. Because this is what He has told us pleases Him, and it's how we can worship Him in spirit and in truth. We are commanded to work out the daily details of our own predestined salvation with fear and trembling, as well as with joy and gladness. (Phi 2:12) And this is how we can know that we are in Him, if all of this is happening in our heart's and our mind's. If we wholeheartedly agree with God about what is sin, and truly desire to keep His commandments, every single one of them, both because we agree with them ourselves that they're good, and, because we know that it honors Him when we do so. Nevertheless, with or without agreement or understanding, obedience is still mandatory.

By this we may reliably know whether we are, or we aren't, truly in Him and He in us. If we keep His commandments because we want to, then He is in us, if we don't then He isn't. Now, at this point I cannot help but acknowledge that there will be many who fail this test, who know that they don't agree with God over what things are sinful, but still want to be counted among the saved, the chosen children of God. Those bound for heaven.

To this I say wonderful. Now we are ready to make use of chapter 1, verse 9, by confessing this situation to God and pleading for His tender mercy to grant you repentance of heart, and a love for the truth. If you're willing to accept that your thinking is wrong, because it isn't in conformity to His thinking over sins, then my dear and beloved brother or sister, you are but a hair's breath from true salvation. Confess this to God and plead for His gracious gift of saving faith, that regenerates the soul and transforms the mind. You are desperate at this point so you might even humbly remind Him of His tender promise to turn away none who come to Him on these terms, acknowledging that He is your Lord and your only

Savior. Do this I beg you if you're so inclined by the Holy Spirit. Why my dear friends, why would any of you be lost to the fires of hell, when salvation is so sweet to the soul and so close at hand? Do not be deceived, make your calling and election sure this very moment. Confess your sins and plead for His gift of saving faith.

The foregoing wasn't planned, it just sort of erupted on its own, and from it you can see that the heart of a preacher is itself subject to all those things he preaches, and the sweetness of God's tender mercy, and the magnificent manner in which He works in the hearts and minds of all those whom He calls, compels us to occasionally repeat that call for all mankind to know God, and hear His proclamations of mercy to those who will repent and believe, and, to pay heed to His dire warnings to those who love their sins too much to respond.

Now, I'm going to say it one more time before I move on to the next verse. The love of God is perfected, that is made functional and operative, by producing a mind that is in conformity to Christ's in regard to sin and godliness. When God's love has done its work, when we see the results of it manifested in those who have it, it's recognized by the characteristic of obedience to His commandments. Anything and everything that calls itself Godly love, and yet acts in disobedience to His commandments is a Satanic lie, plain and simple. Now, moving on to our last verse:

Verse 6:

6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

This is simply a summation of the preceding verses. John has made some sweeping statements that lay down a set of criteria by which every professing Christian may irrefutably determine his or her authenticity of faith. The problem isn't in interpreting these, it's in having the courage to believe and accept them at their face value. If they're true, then the vast majority of nice church going folks find themselves failing the tests. The vast majority of church members don't agree with God on **all** of those things that He's proclaimed as sins.

The prevailing practice is to pick some and ignore others. Someone has called this cafeteria Christianity. You go down the line and pick what you like and pass over what you don't. But when Moses came down the mountain with two stone tablets, he didn't have a multiple choice pick list for the Jews to choose from, he had a set of rules that God had established as His absolute minimum requirements. The principle was either obedience or disobedience, not which items we obey and which we ones we don't. That's why violating any one of them was the same as violating all of them, because in the violation of any one, the principle of disobedience to God is established. (Jas 2:10)

Either we comply or we rebel, and the specific provision doesn't really make much difference. The idea that some are important and others are not is entirely wrong. Of course, some are more heinous than others, and some more offensive than others, but all things commanded by God are His laws, and a violation is a violation, regardless of which particular provision it is. The principle is whether we're willing and desirous to keep all of His commandments, because we know that any disobedience grieves His Spirit, and we will not do that to Him who loves us and gave Himself for us.

If we say that we abide, meaning live our lives, in Him, meaning in conformity to His Spirit and His desires for our lives, then we ought to conduct ourselves in a consistent manner as He did. This isn't a suggestion, as much as it's an observation. We "ought to" do something can be inferred to mean that we should, by some kind of obligation, or that we should by some kind of rule of cause and effect. In this case both are applicable. We most certainly are obligated by circumstances to obey the commandments of our Lord, simply on account of the most wonderful works He's performed on our account, and it's only fitting that we demonstrate our gratitude.

But even more than that, we ought to walk in the same manner as He Himself walked because we have been born again of His Spirit, we are a new creature in Christ, the old things that held our affections have passed away and all things have been made new in the heart and mind of those who have been redeemed. (2Co 5:17)

I can't help but keep coming back to the point that the heart that has been regenerated and transformed is made to conform to the likeness of Christ. And while our behaviors are still maturing, nevertheless our heart attitudes and our affections, and our sense of right and wrong are much more rapidly changed. I'll admit a short period after conversion might be needed to sort out the immense changes that we've undergone upon regeneration, and I myself didn't immediately see everything exactly like I do now, 35 years later, but I did immediately recognize that any differences

between my thoughts and the scripture's teachings were entirely my error, not the scriptures. And the remedy was to humbly ask God for understanding, not argue with Him over the merits of His commandments. I understood immediately that my obligation, and my heart's desire, was to learn everything I possibly could about God and His desires, and my obligation was to thoroughly obey Him, whether I fully understood His reasons yet or not. I immediately realized that He was God and I was not, and any differences of opinion, or conflicting thoughts, were my error not His.

Saints, we may not always understand His reasons, but when that's the case the problem is with us, not with God. Our only course of action is to obey His commandments completely, and without exceptions, or excuses, or arguments. He is sovereign and omniscient, and knows the circumstance before they happen, so we need not think that we must occasionally bend the rules, and make exceptions, due to various unforeseen circumstances on His part. God is honored by our unwavering obedience, not by our pragmatic solutions to everyday problems.

God will never say - well done you disobedient servant, your solutions were better than Mine were. Anything whatsoever that we do, regardless of our intentions, that's a violation of His commandments is a **sin against** God, not a **service to** God. We cannot honor God by any acts of disobedience, regardless of how loving we think it is to do so. As I said earlier, any act of perceived love that violates the commandments of God is a demonstration of Satanic worldly love, not Godly love. We cannot demonstrate our love for God by acts that disrespect Him by disobedience.

To honor God, assuming that we want to honor Him rather than ourselves, we must do so in accordance with His rules and means. And obedience to His commandments is the means that He's provided to us to do that. We have nothing else that He wants. He only asks us for our heart's, and we demonstrate that by our willing and unwavering obedience to His commandments, all of them, without picking and choosing.

I mentioned those verses in an earlier lesson where Jesus told His disciples that it would be better for them to tie a large stone to their neck and jump into the sea than to teach a young believer that it's okay to practice certain sins. (Mt 18:6; Mk 9:42; Lk 17:2) It is never, ever loving to tell a practicing sinner that what they're doing is okay with God, if it violates the commandments of scriptures, any more than it's okay to let your child repeatedly run out into a busy street without looking because you think scolding them is unloving. Sin hurts those who practice it, just like a moving car hurts a child who gets in its way.

Any actions that help perpetuate the practice of sin, or intentionally tolerate it, are not acts of godly love toward that person, they are reckless and dangerous encouragements for the precious saints of God to continue to do themselves harm by claiming that they have no sin when in fact it's clear that they do. (1:6,10) The loving thing to do is to humbly, and gently affirm the truth of scriptures, and encourage the sinner to confess their sin, repent of that action, and plead for forgiveness by our loving righteous Advocate. Only a truly regenerate believer will see this, to the false convert, it will be exactly the opposite in their mind's. To the false convert it's only about forgiveness, not about repentance.

If we say we abide in Christ, then there's a corresponding lifestyle that will either authenticate or discredit that claim. If we abide in Him then we ought to show it says John, both because it's our rightful obligation and heart's desire; and because His Spirit is operating in our spirit to constrain and motivate our attitudes, our beliefs, our affections, and ultimately our behaviors. The ultimate goal of God for mankind, and the means by which we honor and worship Him right now, is by being conformed in thinking and behavior to the image of His beloved Son. (Rom 8:29; Eph 4:13)

But we seem to think that worship is a style of music that we play and sing. I guess God must be confused, because He seems to think it's about how we obey His commandments. I wonder how He got so mixed up? Surely it can't be us that's wrong, can it? You obviously realize my sarcastic irony in this statement. But it's not an overstatement.

This coming Lord's day, countless churches will assemble together under the title of Christian church, with their female, or fornicator, or adulterous, or homosexual pastors or elders, and offer beautiful songs of worship to God, as if He were pleased with them, and would actually accept these empty gestures in place of obedience to His commandments. But according to His own words, **He will not do that**. Like an adulterous wife who welcomes her husband home with a kiss, so the adulterous church tries to greet Jesus Christ with pretty music, while she continues to indulge her sinful and worldly lusts at the very same time, claiming all the while "we have no sin." (1:6,10)

Please don't be deceived, there is no worship going on in any of these so called churches, there's only fleshly entertainment to soothe the consciences of those who aren't desirous to please God but rather themselves. And any deity that they may think they have, is one that is fashioned in their own carnal minds; and much more resembles that figure the scriptures describe as Satan, than the majestic and holy God of the bible. Saints, I'm not the one to tell anyone else where they should worship, but I can give you the biblical definition of what worship really is, and then you can judge for yourselves whether your church is really doing it or whether it's not.

John summarizes his previous verses that distinguish between the true believers and the false, with this very simple statement: *6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.* There's not a person on earth who can't understand what this means. The true are distinguished from the false by whether or not they consistently think and behave like Jesus thought and behaved. All those that don't are declared liars, **and show by their behaviors** that they not truly in Him and He is not in them.

But, for those who confess their sins, and agree with God in all His holy proclamations and commandments, and seek to repent of all disobedience; for these there is an Advocate before the Father, who is holy and righteous, and ready to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Conclusion:

The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 2:12 to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. This is difficult enough even when the goals and boundaries are clear and stable, but it can become very difficult indeed when we're faced with churches that, like Spurgeon said, are on the downgrade. When the teachings and practices begin to slip away from the scriptural model, and the boundaries keep moving wider and wider every year. When the things that the holy scriptures plainly call sin, and forbid us to practice, are redefined as individual's rights of choice, and pragmatism replaces faith in the name of efficiency and results. When quantity is perceived as superior to quality, and the gospel is reshaped to accommodate just about anything, as long as we're getting new baptisms. And such is the case in the churches, and has been from their birth.

The writer of Hebrews tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (10:25) but rather to encourage one another. But encourage one another to do what? To accept the intrusion of liberalism and worldliness into our churches in the name of love and unity? That's precisely what most seem to think it means, but in the very next verse that writer said:

26 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Heb 10:26-27

This writer's exhortation to continue to assemble together, and to encourage one another is a call for every church member to encourage the others to cease from sin. And again, quoting the Apostle Paul in his letter to Titus he says:

11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, 13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, 14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. 15 These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Titus 2:11-15 (NASB)

To my dearest true brothers and sisters, our order is to let no one disregard these teachings of scriptures. Do not allow those to go unchallenged, who redefine sin, and ignore sin, and call it love to disregard the commandments of our loving Christ, who gave Himself for us to **purify us** from **every** lawless deed. This will not make you popular in your church. I have often said out loud that the most dangerous thing you can bring into most churches is your bible, if you actually read it and try to follow it. Speaking, exhorting, and reprovng by the authority of scriptures got our Savior murdered, as it did most of His Apostles. It got some of the most famous and devout preachers removed from their churches throughout history, and it will most likely do that to you also if you refuse to compromise.

But nevertheless, try your best to stay in your churches for as long as you can. There is much benefit to assembling together with the saints, if that's what they are, and both you and they benefit from that relationship. To my dear younger Christian brethren, I wish I could tell you that church life was going to be a smooth sail on calm seas, but that's probably not going to be your experience. But remember, Christ said to deny ourselves and follow Him, and He also said that those

who hated Him would also probably hate us. And those who hated Him the most were the falsely religious, because He told them they were sinners. When you stand up in your church and humbly and meekly point out that what your church is doing is violating the scriptures, and is sinful and disrespectful to the Lord, you will not be thanked for your loving concern, you will be hated, and called names, and labeled a troublemaker. Eventually you will be told either to leave, or to stop speaking. I was once ordered to stop attending prayer meetings by an apparently unregenerate acting pastor of a Southern Baptist Church. The full time pastor had just been removed for sexual misconduct with a female church member.

At this point you have to make a tough decision. But if no one will stand up for the truth, and call sin, sin, then what is the purpose of the church? Everyone who seeks to live godly will be persecuted, most of us understand that, but what we're not expecting is that, that persecution will be mostly from our own churches. This catches us off guard, but it should not if we're familiar with the scriptures. The price of faithfulness to Christ will be rejection by the world, **and** by the false religious systems and their unregenerate leaders and members.

So what am I saying? I'm saying seek to join with a local church, and make every effort to stay in fellowship with it if at all possible, you'll benefit much from doing so, but if you're pressed to choose between the truth that honors Christ, and compromises that exceed your conscience, then you're not the first one to have been in that position, and you must decide who and what is your first love, and act accordingly.

Being faithful to Christ Jesus isn't at all what most people seem to think it is. It isn't an endless life of loving compromises of the truth to keep some kind of secular unity; it's a life of hard choices and sacrifices, called fruits, that either authenticate or refute the authenticity of our claim of saving faith in Christ Jesus. We cannot, and we must not, sit silently in our churches while they practice sin in the name of love and unity. We are called to arms as soldiers of Christ, to earnestly contend for those divine truths that were once and for all given to the saints. (Jude 1:3) If we love Him, we will keep His commandments, all of them, **whatever** the cost.

To Him be all honor and glory forever. Amen.

Narrow Gate Baptist Church, Miami
Robert Andrews, Pastor
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