

Simply Christ
Gospel Newsletter
Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

August 30, 2022

If We Say We Have No Sin

Thirty years ago, a minister who preached for us on a regular basis was in one of our Campmeeting services. Bro. Leroy Surface was ministering, and showing by the scripture how the blood of Christ was shed to purge sin from our heart and minds. He went to the words of Jesus to show that sin in the heart is equivalent to the act of sin. Jesus said, *“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”* Matthew 5:27-28. As the service was closing, the visiting minister was upset and left quickly. As he departed, he turned to the person at the church desk and protested, **“It’s not sin until you do it!”** We never heard from that minister again.

Jesus’ message was that sin in the heart is equivalent to the act of sin. Not only did he speak of lusts as being equal to adultery, but he told the scribes and Pharisees they were like *“whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.”* Matthew 23:27. He also told them they were like cups which were washed on

the outside “...but within they are full of extortion and excess.” Matthew 23:25.

These words of Jesus stripped the Pharisees of their delusion of righteousness. Jesus confirms this, saying, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, **they had not had sin**: but now they have no cloke for their sin.” John 15:22. His words, “they had not had sin,” spoke of how perfectly they kept the Law of Moses, but his words concerning sin in the heart tore their cloke of self-righteousness away. This was the root cause of their great hatred towards him.

The Jews of Jesus’ generation had no concept of a “sin nature” and as a whole, did not believe themselves to be sinners. The Apostle Paul confirms that the Jews had this righteous image of themselves as he reminds Peter of their upbringing under the Law of Moses. He told Peter, “We who are Jews by nature, and **not sinners of the Gentiles...**” Galatians 2:15-16. Paul told us all how perfectly he kept the Law of Moses before coming to Christ, saying, “...touching the righteousness which is in the law, (I was) blameless.” Philippians 3:6. Like most Pharisees of that day, Saul of Tarsus did not believe himself to be a sinner. What finally brought him to Christ was the realization that even though he kept the letter of the Law perfectly, he was still desperately sinful within.

The Apostle John addressed a similar pharisaic resistance to the gospel. He wrote of those who professed to know God, but denied that Jesus is the Christ. He called such a profession a lie,

saying, *“Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father.”* ¹John 2:22-23. If they did not believe that Jesus is the Christ, they were walking in darkness, and not in the light. John says to them, *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”* ¹John 1:6.

Not only did these who walked in darkness claim to know God while rejecting Jesus as Christ, but they, as the Pharisees had done, rejected that they had any sin to be cleansed from. To these, John says, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* ¹John 1:8. Just like the Pharisees which Jesus spoke to, these believed their ability to keep religious law made them righteousness. They rejected that the sinful desires of their heart bore witness of their true condition. John told them they were only deceiving themselves. He tells them *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”* ¹John 3:15.

John’s message was not that God’s people are still sinners, but rather that the only way to be cleansed from sin is through the blood of Jesus Christ. Only those who walk in the light of the gospel of Christ are cleansed from sin in their heart. There is no other way. John says, *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”* ¹John 1:7.

Few people today would say, "We have no sin." In fact, almost everyone claims to be a sinner. Yet, very few will acknowledge that their true spiritual condition is revealed by the content of their heart. John writes, *"For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."* | John 3:20-21. If lust is in your heart, you stand before God as an adulterer or fornicator. If hatred is in your heart, you stand before God as a murderer. Only through faith in the blood of Christ can such things be taken away. Only then, will you possess a pure heart with confidence toward God. As Paul reminds us, *"Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."* | Timothy 1:5