

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John**

Chapter 5- The Call to Holiness

38. Our Advocate and Propitiation- Part 3

WAOY Wednesday 06/13/07; WOSM Wednesday 11/23/22

Welcome again, my brothers and sisters in Christ. We are continuing our verse by verse “journey” through the Epistle of **1 John**, and today I want to continue to look at what the Apostle John taught about “The Call to Holiness”. So, let’s read **1John 2: 1&2** again together:

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.*

Now the thrust of John’s message here is very clear- he has written the words that he has written to the end that those of us who read these words and those of us who believe that these words are inspired Words that we will not sin.

Now if you were to examine the way that John used his words here- you can see that the grammatical formation of his statements tell us some very important aspects about what he means.

We can’t walk up to John and ask him what he meant by what he said because John is dead. So, we are left with using the established rules of interpretation in order to discern not just what John said- but what John actually meant by what he said.

Biblical interpretation is a very serious matter and one that should not be approached flippantly. You may well be filled with the Holy Spirit, beloved- but that alone does not mean that you interpret Scripture correctly. Sincere and well- meaning people have butchered Scripture all throughout the centuries because they were unable or unwilling to interpret the Holy Scriptures properly- using the rules of interpretation.

Time in this broadcast will not allow me to go into all of the things that come into correctly interpreting Scripture – but suffice it to say that there are some basic rules that we need to remember when trying to get to what the writers of the Bible meant when they used certain words and phrases.

For example- one very popular method of studying the Bible today is for a group of people to sit around a table and read a particular verse or passage. A moderator or leader will then go around the table and ask a question that goes something like this, “*What does this verse mean to you?*” Then one by one the people at this “study” begin to expound on what they think this verse means to them.

What you get in that kind of group session is not true biblical interpretation at all. You’re not getting proper Biblical exegesis and you’re not going to arrive at what God meant. What you *will* get is a heavy dose of personal opinion and human reasoning and logic mixed in with what somebody heard a preacher say one time; combined with a little bit of what Oprah talked about last Thursday; mixed in with what Momma taught somebody as a child combined with the lyrics of a song.

Now I realize that most of the people who engage in this sort of “study” are very sincere people. But with all due respect to their sincerity- it really doesn’t matter what this verse means to you or me, beloved. It doesn’t matter what we think about a verse at all or how we might “feel” about a verse. The only thing that matters when studying the Bible is what God the Holy Spirit thought when He authored it. All that matters is what God meant by what He said through the writers.

Now if we lived in the first century and we had a question about what John meant when he was inspired to say that he wrote these things so that we would sin- we could get on a horse and ride over to Ephesus and go into the Church that was in Ephesus and ask John what he meant and he would tell us- and that would solve the problem.

But John is dead, and he has been dead for over 1900 years and so we can’t ask John what he meant. So, we are left with what John wrote. And although we have some challenges to overcome- we can absolutely arrive at the very exact meaning of what this great Apostle was saying by carefully examining his words.

But we have to overcome a few barriers if we are to do that

properly. For example, language is an ever evolving science that is in a state of constant flux. Words and the meaning and usage of words change over time- especially when going from one language to another language.

When this Epistle as written down- it was not written in English- it was written in Greek. But it wasn't just any kind of Greek- it was that type of Greek that was used by common people. Most all of the New Testament was written in this Greek. The Old Testament was written in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic. So, to really do justice to interpret the words of Scripture correctly- we should do one of three things:

The best option is that we should go to school and learn Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic and become so proficient in those ancient languages that we can read it and write it. And this was the option for the overwhelming majority of preachers and teachers all throughout the 2,000 year history of the Church. If you're going to interpret Scripture all the time you, need to have the tools to be able to do it correctly. Many schools today offer Greek and Hebrew courses online and it has never been easier than it is today to engage yourself in learning the languages that the Bible was written in.

The second option is to acquire software or books that do this for you. The problem with this is that- just like with English- Greek has certain peculiarities inherent in it that you need to know if you are going to understand the language and these books and software don't always give you that information. For example, the English language has a rule that says, "I before 'E' except after 'C'" and other rules that help us to decipher when to use what vowels with what consonants. Greek has the same kind of grammatical rules that you need to know if you are going to get the right meaning.

"But, Brother Blair, I don't have the time to go through all that"- some might say. And I completely understand the argument. But if we are not going to go about Bible interpretation *correctly*- then by default- we will go about it *incorrectly*. And the goal here is not to become an academic- but to understand what Almighty God has said- so that we can apply what God has said rightly to our lives.

The best example of what I am talking about is right here in this first verse that we just read. My English translation of this verse says that John wrote what he wrote so that we would not sin. Okay, simple enough. John doesn't want us to sin. But we *do* sin. Lost people who don't even know Jesus sin and those of us who endeavor with all our hearts to serve God sin- and we sin every day.

So, is John saying that if we would just hear what he says; if we would just obey what he said; if we would just put forth more effort and just try harder and put our minds to it- that we would stop sinning? Is that what John is saying here? No- it is not what he is saying here. Well, how do I know that that is not what John is saying here because it sure *looks* like that's what John is saying.

I know that John is *not* teaching that saved people can reach a place in the Spirit where they will not sin because of what John has already told us back in **1John1:8&10**:

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

Well then what does John mean when he says that he wrote what he wrote so that we would not sin? By looking at the construction of the verb that John uses in this verse- we can see that it has to do with "ongoing sin" or sin that is constant in our lives; or sinful behavior that is a "way of life" as opposed to certain *occasional* acts of sin.

So, by correctly using the Greek verb "to sin" and by using it in the way that John actually wrote it in this verse- gives us an entirely different meaning than we would get if we just took what we see in English and run off with it.

John is *not* teaching that saved people can become sinless. No human born of woman can ever walk in sinless perfection except Jesus Christ- Who actually did.

But John is teaching that consistently living in any way that is contrary to Scripture as a normal course of existence can be completely and totally eliminated by reading and accepting and obeying the words that John and the other Apostles wrote.

For example, Jesus said that if a man looks upon a woman to lust

after her- has already committed adultery with her in his heart. The fact of the matter is that every man on earth is guilty of that sin. And godly men who truly are saved deal with that issue daily with various degrees of success. So periodically falling into that sin is what John is talking about in **1John 1:8&10**. So, when that eye and the heart goes from simply admiring female beauty and crosses the line into lust- that person must then confess and repent.

But what **1John2:1** is talking about is *not* those occasional “acts” of sin. What **1John2:1** is talking about is a “lifestyle of sin” and a “consistent engaging” in sinful behavior as a normal course of existence.

For example, for man to move past simple lust in his heart and for that man to shack up with a woman to *fulfill* that lust is what John is saying can be completely and totally eliminated. In this case, this man’s sin of shacking up can be completely eliminated by the man submitting himself to the authority of what John and the other writers wrote and moving out. He can apply what John teaches and put an Internet filter on his computer so that he cannot get any pornography at all- ever. He can obey what John writes by cancelling sinful TV channels so that he cannot watch filth on television.

But even after he has moved out and got the filter installed and even after he has thrown the television set out in the yard- he may still periodically fall into particular acts of sin- but he will absolutely cease from living in sin as a normal course of existence.

Now I am not saying, and John is certainly not saying that those periodic acts of sin don’t matter- they do. All sin is a horrible insult to God, but I have gone over those acts of sin and the confession of those sins in detail in previous broadcasts. What I am concentrating on today is the difference between those periodic acts of sin and dwelling continually in sin.

The Bible clearly teaches that even though our spirit has been redeemed- our flesh and this sinful world and the devil have not been redeemed. And because that is true- even though we are saved- we are tempted and periodically that temptation overwhelms us, and we sin.

But the Bible teaches that those periodic lapses into sin are the exception and are not the rule for believers. People who teach today that Christians sin just as often as lost people are wrong about that. The Bible doesn’t teach that in fact the Bible teaches just what John says here- that if we read what John wrote, if we study what John

wrote; if we love what John wrote; and if we obey what John wrote – we will not live continually in sin.

You see, when you are truly born from above- your life will change; your actions will change; your desires will change; your loves will change; your friends will change; your priorities will change and your lifestyle will change.

Saved people spend their money differently than lost people do. Saved people laugh at different things than lost people do. Saved people don't think it is funny to hear somebody blaspheme Jesus Christ. That isn't a joke- it isn't funny- it is blasphemy. It isn't comedy- it is sin. Saved people don't take good money that God has blessed them with and give to people who are trying to tear down Christianity in the United States by buying their products. It isn't music- it is noise; it isn't art- it is sin.

Saved people work real hard not to dishonor God by continually engaging in a sinful lifestyle- but they still sin. So, John is not teaching sinless perfection here – but John is teaching that we should and we must not continually dwell in sin and if we do- we must know that we are not truly born again.

Remember, beloved that part of the unmistakable proof of Salvation is that God has given us both the will and the power to obey Him. So saved people already have the desire and the ability inherent in them to not continually dwell in sin and John is telling us here that that is why he wrote these words.

Well, I have to stop right here but please join me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of **1John**. May God help us all.

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