

Are Believers Still Sinners?

Sunday, November 11, 1989

1 JOHN 2:1

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

I have a question, and this question is the title of my message: “Are Believers Still Sinners” Are Christians still sinners? Do people who know God and love God and are saved by the grace of God still sin? If you want to follow along in your Bible, turn to First John Chapter Two.

Not long ago, I brought a message on this program, entitled “The Oneness of Believers.” Do you remember that, the “Oneness of Believers?” The text was taken from Ephesians Chapter 4: verses 4 through 6. The apostle said, *“There is one body,”* that is one church and one body of Christ. *“There is one Spirit”* who quickens, who regenerates, who calls and who comforts. *“There is one hope of your calling”* and that hope is to be made like Christ. It is a blessed hope to be made like Christ.

“There is one Lord,” King of Kings and Lord of Lords, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer. *“There is one faith.”* I hear people talking sometime of others, saying “He is not of the same faith as we are.” There is just one faith. That is the faith of God’s elect. It is the faith that Peter defined, when he said; *“We believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* That is the one faith. Christ said, *“Upon this rock I will build My church.”*

There is one baptism. *“We are all baptized by one Spirit into the body of Christ.”* He says, *“There is one God and one Father of us all who is above all and is through all and who is in you all.”* That is oneness.

Besides this, all true believers and children of God have other things in common. They are very much alike. All believers are very much alike. They may come from Tim-buck-to or Louisa, Kentucky, but they are all alike to some extent.

First of all, all believers have a sincere love for and a confidence in the Word of God. Oh, yes they do! They reverence, love, enjoy and believe God’s Word. The Bible is their only rule of faith and practice. Wherever you find them, they say; *“Thus saith the Lord.”* They believe what God has spoken and they believe the word of God is true.

Secondly: They fear, reverence, and worship the living God. Where you find believers, you will find them worshipping God somewhere. Like David said, *“I was glad when*

they said to me; let's go to the house of the Lord." He said, *"I would rather be a doorkeeper in God's house than to live in the tents of the wicked."* Believers do not forsake the assembling of themselves together. If there is someone worshipping God in their area or vicinity, that is where they are going to be. They fear God and they love God. They reverence God and they worship God.

They all believe and love the Lord Jesus Christ. No, their faith is not perfect, but it is in Him! Their faith is not perfect but is perfectly in Him alone. Faith is not perfect in anyone or in anything else. Peter said, *"To whom shall we go?"* There is nowhere to go. There is no one to whom we can go. *"To whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal life. We are convinced that you are the Son of God."* Every believer believes that; I know it.

They all hate sin. Believers hate sin in them or in anyone else. They hate sin and long to be just like Christ. Believers want their deeds, words, conduct and conversation to glorify God. They want that and they long to be a good witness of His grace and a good steward of His grace. Every one of them wants to be like Christ; they hate sin; they despise it. They do not love sin.

All believers everywhere, have an inward struggle with a sinful nature and every believer has a conflict with the flesh. That's right! Paul said it best in two scriptures. Paul declared this problem in two different scriptures better than I could ever hope to put it. He said, in Romans 7:21, *"I find the law, (or a rule), that when I would do good, evil is present with me. I delight in the law of God."* That is what I am saying, believers love the law of God; they love Holiness. They love truth, they love purity, and they love beauty.

The scripture says, *"I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind."* Warring against this love for Holiness and love for truth. *"I find that when I would do good, evil is present with me. The things I would do, I do them not. The things I would not (think, do or say, too often) I do. O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"*

In Galatians 5:17, he said it again; *"The flesh lusteth (warreth) against the Spirit."* For the flesh, (that old sin nature), the old man that is born of flesh is flesh. What is this Spirit? It means to be born of the Spirit. *"That which is born of flesh is flesh; that which is born of Spirit is spirit. This flesh lusteth (warreth) against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh."* They are enemies. *"These are contrary one to the other. So, you cannot do the things that you would."* This means either way. Your spiritual nature, that law of mind

in you that wants to be like Christ says, "I will be perfect." That old nature says, "I will not be perfect; I will not."

What are you trying to say preacher? I am saying this; that person is still a sinner who believes the gospel of Jesus Christ and truly believes it and loves God. He truly believes His Word, worships God, hates sin and longs to be Holy. That person is still a sinner. He is a sinner saved but he is still a sinner. He is a sinner redeemed by the grace of God but he is still a sinner.

Now, men may despise this statement but it is true, nonetheless. Religious people may not be able to reconcile it. How can you reconcile such a thing? I am not trying to reconcile it; I am just preaching what God says. Preaching what I know and what you know, it doesn't matter if men want to soften this statement or clarify this statement. They may even tell me that it is dangerous to make this statement or they may refuse to make this statement. I'm still saying, the person who believes the gospel of Christ and is truly born of the Spirit of God is still a sinner.

Yes, the true believer does sin; he sins every day. In fact, John said in First John Chapter 1:8, (this is written to believers), *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."* In other words, if we say we have no sin, we are liars. In verse 10 it says, *"If we say that we have not sinned."* If you come to the end of the day and you say, "I have not sinned today in word, thought or deed," you make God a liar because God said you do sin. Making a statement like that declares His Word is not in you. God says, *"There is none that doeth good and sinneth not."*

Now, like I said before; the believer does not love sin; he loves Holiness. The believer grieves over his sin. Do you not find that true? He lives in a constant state of repentance. He is always repenting; he's always coming to Christ; he is always weeping over his sins; he is always grieving over his sins. He would rather be perfect. He would like to be perfect and he would like to be without sin.

No believer will deny his sin. He will not lie about his sin nature. He will not deny his sin and he will not excuse it. He will not blame it on somebody else. He won't justify his sin. He knows it is his. David said, *"My sin is ever before me."* He didn't blame it on anyone else; it was his sin. That is the way the believer is; he won't deny sin. He won't excuse sin, justify it or blame somebody else; he knows it is his.

He knows *"In his flesh dwells no good thing."* He knows, *"In the flesh no man can please God."* Yes, the believer is still a sinner. I will tell you this; (now you listen to me); this is very important what I am about to say, if we do not understand this principle,

if we don't understand and accept this fact, that the believer is not perfect; He is perfect in Christ. He is perfect in the Holiness of Christ. Thank God for that. He's complete in Christ but He is not perfect in the flesh. He doesn't go a day without sin. He doesn't go a day without a conflict of sin. He is never without sin, sinful thoughts and attitude. If you don't understand that and face that or admit it, one of two things will be the result.

You are sitting out there and you are saying, "I'm a believer and I am a child of God but I don't understand what you are saying. I just can't believe that believers sin." If you don't admit that and you don't face that fact or understand it, then one of two things will happen. You are either going to lie to yourself, lie to others or lie to God in claiming you are without sin. If you claim to be without sin, you are lying to yourself and you are deceiving yourself. If you say you have no sin, you deceive yourselves. We are lying to ourselves, if we say we have no sin, we are lying to other people. *"If we say we have no sin we make God a liar."* This is dangerous!

The other alternative is this: You may realize that you are a sinner and yet not admitting that a believer sins. Then, you are going to be driven to despair and depression and think that you are not saved. How can I be saved and think like this? You think that way because the rest of the people, who deny they are sinners think that same way.

You might say, "How can I be saved and say the things that I say sometimes?" Everybody who is saved says things that they should not say. God knows you are a sinner. The Bible says that you are a sinner. Admit that you are a sinner and seek mercy. He says, in First John 1; *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Do you understand what I am saying? If a believer does not get a hold of what I am saying, if he does not understand that true believers sin, he will throw up his hands and quit. Where are you going to put David, Abraham, Lot, Solomon, Peter, and Paul? They were all sinners. They were all believers but believing sinners. If you don't face this, you will either be a liar or you will think you are not saved. You will throw up your hands and quit.

But, if you do have an understanding of this nature and this flesh, you will know that this old man that is with us and will stay with us until we put it in the grave. You will have a good understanding of the mercy of God and the love of God in Jesus Christ. You will know that Jesus Christ is our righteousness, and that Christ is our acceptance. You will know that Christ is our Holiness and that Christ is our sin offering and His blood does cleanse us. You will understand that when we fall He lifts us, when we sin, He forgives us, when we fail, He pardons us. God loves His children.

Are your children perfect? Well, when one of them does something wrong, do you kick them out? Oh, no! If one of your children does something that he is not supposed to do, is he no longer your son? Do you take his name away from him and say, "You are now, John Jones; you are not mine anymore?" Are you better than God? *"If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall the Heavenly Father give gifts to His children."* *If your child asks for bread, would you give him a stone? If he asks for meat, would you give him a serpent or a scorpion?"*

God's children are His children. If we understand the mercy and grace of God, we are going to have some peace. We will have peace with God and we will have peace in the heart. I will tell you another thing, we will have compassion on other people also.

How does a believer sin? Does he go out here and get drunk? No, the average person when you mention sin thinks of drunkenness, adultery, killing, lying and stealing. Let me ask you this; is not pride, sin? Is not anger sin? Is not lust sin? Just because you don't do these things doesn't mean that it is not sin in you. Christ said, "To think it is sin."

You have heard it said of them by old time, *"You shall not kill. I say unto you, to hate in your heart is to be guilty of murder already."* Is not jealousy sin? Is not selfishness sin? Is not covetousness sin? Is that not sin? Are not gossip, laziness, exaggeration, and evil thoughts sin? Well, of course they are.

That is how a believer sins. He sins because of the imperfection of his nature. Sin is not just an outward act. Sin is not just an outward act of evil; sin is an attitude. Sin is a thought. A thought of foolishness is sin. Sin is a desire. Sin is the lack of perfection and the lack of Holiness. I will tell you this, if a man or a woman were to tell me today that he lives a single day without a thought of sin, a word of sin or a deed of sin, I would tell him that he does not know God, himself, the Bible or salvation. There is no way!

The fact is; a believer is still a sinner; there is no question about it. The believer has a constant conflict with the old nature. That does not deprive him of a saving interest in Christ. Our Lord came to save sinners. *"He came to seek and to save the lost."* He is called *"the friend of sinners."* Go through the New Testament. Everywhere you see my Lord, you see a sinner.

John wrote, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sin."* He is faithful to His Word, faithful to His promise, faithful to His covenant, faithful to His Son, faithful to His people and He is faithful and just.

How can God forgive my sins? Christ paid for them. Christ's blood cleanses them and Christ is my Substitute. *"He is just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* There is no sin that the blood can't cover. There is no sin that the blood cannot put away. *"If we say that we have no sin, we make God a liar and His Word is not in us."*

All the way through Chapter One right up to Chapter Two, to whom do you think he is speaking? He is speaking to believers. These are the same people that He has been talking to back in the first chapter. He says, *"My little children, these things I write unto you, (all of these things that I have said), that you sin not."*

I encourage you, walk in the Spirit. Don't walk in the flesh. Strive against that old nature. Strive against that old flesh. Strive against that old sin. Mortify that flesh and put down that lust, envy, pride, anger and jealousy; put it down! Push your flesh down and mortify it and press it down. It will be a constant battle. It will constantly come up again because you are still in the flesh and you are still a person. *"I write unto you little children, that you sin not, but if any man sin, (if you do), we have an advocate with the Father."* I think that word "*if*" ought to be said, "When."

God can't and does not command you to sin. He commands you not to sin. The apostle has to command us not to. That is what the Word commands us. Don't sin. Fight it, mortify it, suppress it, and strive against it. But, when a man sins; *"We have an advocate with the Father."*

What is an advocate? An advocate is a mediator. An advocate is a lawyer. An advocate is one that pleads your case, and who pleads your cause. We have an Advocate, we have a Mediator. When we sin, we have somebody that can go to the Father for us. His name is Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Let's take those words one at a time for a moment. This is good news. I couldn't wrap this message up without giving you this good news. We would all go out of here depressed, wouldn't we? *"My little children, these things I write unto you that you sin not; but, when you sin, (remember this); you have an Advocate with the Father."*

We have a Mediator. He is there right now. We have Him. *"We have a great High Priest."* We have a Saviour. We have a Justifier and we have a Saviour right now and He is with the Father. He is at God's right hand. His very presence is our acceptance. Do you know this? For this sinner whom Christ represents, and that sinner whom Christ represents, for us to be accepted of the Father, Christ doesn't have to say anything.

I hear people say, "He is pleading for us and praying for us." The Bible does not say that. The Bible says, "*He maketh intercession for us. He ever liveth to make intercession for us.*" All that He has to do to make intercession for us is to be where He is. He is in us and we're in Him. God has accepted Him and He is seated on the right hand of the Father. When I sin, the Father doesn't look at me. He doesn't look to me for perfection; He looks to my Representative.

I'll tell you this, you can go to court and the Judge isn't going to deal with you, he is going to deal with your advocate. He is going to deal with your lawyer. He isn't going to ask you a thing; he is going to ask your lawyer. You won't say anything either. That is the way of the believer.

Thank God, the Father doesn't deal with us; He deals with our Advocate. "*If any man sin, we have an Advocate and He is with the Father.*" Who is this Advocate? The answer is Jesus. Where do you find that word mentioned first, in the New Testament? You find it in Matthew One: "*Thou shalt call His name Jesus, (Saviour); He shall save His people from their sins.*" That's the one that is my Advocate, my Mediator. It is Jesus, the one who came to save His people from their sins. It is Jesus Christ!

Who is the Christ? He is the anointed. He is the appointed one. He is the approved Christ. He is the Messiah, the one that God sent. He is my Mediator. He is the Righteous. I wouldn't have any other Mediator. I have to have a Mediator that the Father accepts. The Father accepts Him and He is Righteous, Holy and without sin.

Do you see that? "*He who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.*" If any man sin, we have an Advocate who is with the Father who is none other than Jesus, Saviour, Christ, Messiah and Righteous, Jesus Christ the Righteous.

Watch this carefully. You know; sometimes when we read the Bible too hurriedly. We miss some great riches and treasures. "*My little children, these things I write unto you that you sin not, but, if any man sin, we have an Advocate.*" Did you hear that? What did it say? "*If any man sin, we have an Advocate,*" we have a Mediator.

It does not say that "If any man sin, he is lost." It does not say, "If any man sin, he will have to get resaved." It doesn't say, "If any man sin, he has forfeited his place in the Kingdom." It doesn't say, "If any man sin, he no longer has a Mediator." It says, "*If any man sin, He has an Advocate.*"

My friend, a man who is not a sinner, does not need an Advocate. A man who is not a sinner does not need a Mediator. Maybe that is the reason so many people in my day are not coming to Christ. They are not believing on Christ or looking to Christ. They are trying to find salvation in a church, a profession, or a baptism. Maybe they aren't sinners.

This fellow is a sinner! I need a Mediator. It does not say, "If any man be Holy, he has and Advocate." What does a holy man need with an Advocate? It doesn't say, "If any man be perfect, he has an Advocate." What does a perfect man need with an Advocate?

It says, "*If any man sins, we have a Mediator. We have an Advocate with the Father who is Jesus Christ the Righteous.*" Now, that is a man that needs a Mediator, the sinner. That is a man who needs a Saviour, a sinner.

I will tell you this; the gospel demands honesty. It is time for us to be honest before God. God does not show mercy to liars, those who deny they are sinners. No He doesn't. God is truth and we'll meet God in truth or we will meet God in judgment.