

1st John 2:1-6

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. 3 Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments. 4 Whoever says, "I have come to know him," but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; 5 but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: 6 whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked (NRSV).

I am planning a five part series, from now until Mother's Day, on John's first letter in the Bible. The Bible emphasizes the covenant, what God requires of the covenant, and Israel's efforts to honor their commitment. God does not break covenant with the people even though the people repeatedly break covenant with God. The source of our problems is sin. It is a topic that has been preached about since day one. The most preached about subject is the condemnation sin, which is usually all the bad stuff that people do. However, sin is any transgression from the will of God. Therefore, sin is also any failure to help those in need.

Jesus teaches love more than anything else. Even when he was in Jerusalem and was about to be persecuted he taught that the ones that obeys is the one that loves Jesus, and if you love him, you will obey him. This means a lot more than having a public confession of faith and pledging loyalty only to pick and choose which lessons to follow. It is obvious if we claim to have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness it is a sinful deception. It is not as obvious if we claim to have fellowship with him and fail to help anyone in need. We are to live by the whole truth of Jesus.

It is John's objective that we are to be free of sin. If you disobey one of the commandments that is obvious direct disobedience. But anything that pulls you away from God is sinful. It is not a matter of if you sin because the truth is we all do. What we get is Jesus to advocate on our behalf and speak to God in our defense. Jesus will defend us in front of the judge. He vouches for us as if to say "You're OK, I know you. I have come to represent you. I have paid the fine for you. Here you go, you are free." We all get Jesus Christ, the righteous one, in our defense as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. This is not just yours and mine; this is for the sins of the whole world. In the Old Testament times, if you sin, you pay atonement for that sin and the worse the sin, the greater the atonement. It has been known since Cain slew Able that a blood sacrifice is more pleasing to God. Jesus paid the price for the world because the Son of God is the only sacrifice that is valuable enough to cover the sins of the whole world. Now, our goal is obedience to the word of God. It is when you accept the love of God that you live by the love of God. People will know you are a Christian when you treat them like Jesus would treat them; with love, kindness, and respect. It is one thing to preach it and teach it, but I invite you to imagine it. Imagine you are Jesus and try to see other people through his eyes. To be a Christian is to be like Christ. With Christ as our role model, we are to be role models for others.

When my son was little he had eaten some white powdered donuts. He wasn't supposed to have any until after supper. I knew he had snuck into the other room to eat some donuts. So, I called him to me and he denied it. Standing there in front of me was this sweet little angel looking at me ever so sweet and innocent with white powder on both of his pants legs. It is one thing to eat donuts before supper but the real offense to me is lying about it. Where did he learn this sin at such a young age? Maybe he learned it from me, maybe watching TV, maybe he didn't learn it but it is natural part of being a human being.

When it comes to sin and righteousness, some people are self justified and point their fingers at others as being a sinner. This is blame displacement a concept of transferring your feelings of guilt. Their logic is one of judging the degree of sin so that one's own sin is less offensive to God. But anyone's sin is no worse than another. The Bible does not classify degrees of offence. There is no classification or definition of a worse sin. The reality is sin is sin. The worst case scenario is to reject God and remain in a state of transgression. The self righteous define sin as somebody else doing it but you cannot love God and hate God's children. You cannot love the Lord and reject others by placing sin on them. What Jesus preached against the most was the hypocrisy of the self-righteousness. All sin requires a sacrifice, the consequences of the sin, and the penalty for the transgression. The blood of Jesus saves all of us. The nature of your sin does not change the ability of Jesus to forgive. The number of your sins does not change the ability of Jesus to forgive. What matters is your willingness to turn to Jesus, follow his lessons, and seek forgiveness. God forgives because of love and the only way to forgive a world full of sin is with the Lord's own blood sacrifice.