

“Summer of Sin, The Apostle John, part 2”

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Father in Heaven it is so true, it is in You alone! And it's to You that we turn now. We are about to open Your word. And with great expectation Lord we have come anticipating that You are going to be mighty and powerful in our midst. We believe Your promises Lord, and we believe that hearts will be healed and lives will be changed, and miracles will take place as You teach us and instruct us through Your word. We pray Heavenly Father that Jesus will be lifted up, and every single person here will walk away with Him in their heart. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

We began our series on sin a number of weeks ago, “Summer of Sin.” We started studying about Cain and Abel where the first mention of the word, sin, occurs in the Bible. And in that study we learned that the core of all sin, the root of all sin, and the mother of all sin is unbelief. Not trusting God and that gives birth to the pride and to the lust, and to the coveting. And, as we continued the series, we went to the Wisdom literature and we studied from Solomon's perspective. And we learned that as Solomon contrasts the wise man and the foolish man, he is talking about sinful lives. A wise man considers God and brings Him into all of His ways. A fool does not consider God, and consequently a fool will have relationship problems in the home, in the neighborhood, with their work and in society at large. Where a wise man will be able to navigate through life with God's blessing.

Then we went to the Apostle Paul and we studied in chapter 7 the book of Romans. And we looked at his struggle, and we realized that that's our struggle. That's not pre-Christian, that is Christian, that's what it is to be a Christian, struggling against the sinful nature. And of course the good news is that the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. Last time we were together, we looked at John, the Apostle John and his concept of sin. And we learned that the other authors have thus far spoken of sin in a general sense. Sinful nature, we are sinful people, but in the 1st chapter of John, he doesn't talk in that sense. He talks about sinning in the singular. Then when you confess, you confess your sins, confess what you did. And we related that to marriage and relationships, and how our relationship with God is build on honesty and integrity between us and the Lord. And if we want victory over sin we have to be specific. Well what sin are you, or are we committing? What sin do we need victory over?

Today we'll take another study in the Book of John, and then next week we will study about the “Unpardonable Sin” and then after that we'll go back to Acts chapter 3, trusting that we understand what sin is. You see if know what sin is, we will understand better what our Savior does. Let's go to 1st John chapter 5, a very difficult passage in the Bible. Very hard to understand, language that we normally don't use, concepts that are hard to grasp, ideas that well, you'll see. John writes this, 1st John, 5 verses 16 and 17. He says: “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.”

Does that not sound a bit odd? Have you read, have you heard that the wages of sin is what? Is death! But yet John is saying that there is a sin that does not lead to death. But what kind of sin could that be? Maybe that's type of sin we want to be involved in than? You know, we just get in that round and we'll be okay! Now in order to understand this passage, we need to understand what John says about sin in his letter here, then we'll be able to come back and apply what he says through this passage. But before we leave here and move to another section in the book of John, look at verses 14 and 15. This will give us the context of verses 16 and 17. John says this: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, what ever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."

The context is prayer! Praying for people, apparently in sin; praying for people who have sinned. One person you pray for, another person apparently, don't bother. Well, who is that person? What kind of sin is that? How do we know if the person is in that sin? These are important questions. This is an important passage. Let's look at John and how he deals with sin in 1st John 2 verse 1. John says this: "My little children..." now this is an 85 or an 86 year old man writing. He is probably the last living person who saw Jesus alive, who walked and talked with Him. And so he is writing to the church, tenderly, "my little children, this things I write to you that you might not sin, and if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." Verse 2, "And He Himself is the perpetuation for our sins and not for ours only, but also, for the whole world."

John says, church, children, beloved, I am writing this so that you don't sin. But if you do sin, you have a Savior, His name is Jesus. Now, how does he use the word sin here? If we go to the Greek, we are going to look at the tense. In the Greek the tenses are very important. In the English they are important, but we just kind of grew up speaking them, and we don't even think about them. Of course, in this part of the country we can say "were and was" and it doesn't matter. You know, we just switch them back and forth. But in the Greek it's very particular. And here it is the "Eros" tense. And the "Eros" tense is indicating a particular and definite act. So, when we read: "My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin," John is saying that there may not be a particular or a definite act of sin in your life. He is not talking about a general sinfulness, he is talking about what we identified the last time we were together, as being the individual sin. That's what he is talking about.

Now in his letter, John at the beginning stages is concerned about two things regarding sin. Both of these lead to the same condition and that is, taking sin lightly. One on one side, one on the other, both positions take sin lightly. He addresses this, look at 1st John 1 verse 8. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." Here is how sin can be taken lightly on one side. If we say we have no sin, we are not speaking the truth. All of us have sin. Are you with me? How many of you sinned this last week? Those of you who didn't identify just sinned now. Well, all of us have sin, all of us are involved, it is a universal problem. This can lead to complacency. It can lead to, "hey, we are all sinners, oh well" maybe you heard this in your marriage, or heard in other marriages, where somebody says "hey that's just the way I am, you'll have to live

with it.” Oh, well... Now that’s an irresponsible response to somebody trying to correct our negative behavior. And John is concerned that when it comes to sin that we would have the idea because all of us are sinners. “Oh, well, you know, it’s just the way I am, that’s the way it goes, we are all in the same troubled scene together” and we take sin lightly.

There is the other side of taking sin lightly and that’s found in the verse we started with in this section. Look at 1st John 2 verse 1. “My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin, and if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and He Himself is the perpetuation,” (or payment) “and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” The whole world is forgiven, that’s what it says. Hey, we are all forgiven, oh well. Sin, oh well, we are all forgiven. It’s what the dime store theologians call, “cheap grace.” Hey, we are covered, oh well, we are forgiven. So on this side, you know, hey we are all sinners, “oh well, it’s just the way we are” on this side, we are all forgiven, “oh well, we are all forgiven.” You see the danger?

So, John wants to point out the seriousness of sin. He continues in chapter 2 by identifying 2 concepts; verses 3 and 4 is the 1st concept. “Now by this we know that we know God if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him” and does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.” The first concept that will help us not take sin lightly is: if we know God we will obey God. There is obedience involved. If you know God, the way it’s demonstrated, you obey God. That’s not a light thing. The next thing that he identifies is verses 5 and 6. He says, “But whoever keeps His word, truly the work of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” So there is no “Oh well, that’s just the way I am, I am a sinner, oh well we are all forgiven.” No, if we know the Lord, if are in the Lord, we will seek to obey the Lord and we will seek to imitate the Lord. We will walk, even as He walked. This is serious decision making.

Now that helps us to understand a little bit about what John is saying about sin here. That sin in Eros tense is a particular and definite act. Now let’s go to a very troublesome passage, another troublesome passage here in John. It’s chapter 3. I am going to read chapter 3 verses 6-10, I’d like you to follow along. Verse 6, “Whoever abides in Him does not sin.” Now, before we go any farther, let me ask you, does that describe you? Is that your testimony today? Because I am in Him, I don’t sin? These are troublesome passages, you’ll see, it gets harder. Verse 6 continues. “Who sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.” Verse 7, “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin,” that’s what the Bible says. “Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest. Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.” “Whoever has been born of God does not sin! For his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.”

Does that describe your experience? You know brothers and sisters, when I was a young pastor; somehow I got a hold of some bad theology. Some of you may have it too? It was this concept and it's fostered by passages like this. And I used to preach that the ultimate goal is that before Jesus comes there will be a whole generation of people standing there who are no longer sinning. Then Jesus can come. It is called, sinless perfection. And that's what apparently John taught too. "Don't say you are in God if you sin!" And all of you identified that you already sinned. So how does it work? And as a young pastor, man, I used to preach passionately about overcoming sin. And I will never forget Dorothy's funeral. Dorothy was a saint. Older woman, in her eighties, she died. Dorothy was so kind, she was everybody's grandmother. She would spend hours at our local community service center; we called it a Dorcus back then. She would help people who were down and out, troubled, oh she just took them, she just loved them. And, some of these people, you could hardly stand to be around, but not Dorothy, I mean, she was just like a Mother Theresa to them. She was kind and unselfish, she would share her time, her energy, anything she had she would give if somebody needed it. As a young Pastor, she would encourage me. You know, pastors, they get criticized from time to time. I am glad none of you do that, but you know, as a young pastor, you get discouraged, and she'd be right there. "It's okay Jerry, it will be alright." Men, I loved Dorothy. She loved her sons, she loved their wives and their children, her husband, she was a Godly woman!

But at her funeral, it donned on me, Dorothy hadn't overcome sin. You see that week, she gotten a tiff with a lady, down at the Dorcus. Well we used to say, sin in the church begins in the choir and in the Dorcus. Get the musicians, or the ladies. Any ways, that's what we used to say. Dorothy gotten a tiff with the lady, got angry at her. Exchanged words, she told me about it, said she was sorry. She died a few days later. Now, I was troubled. My theology was bothering me. Because by that time in the ministry I had about 20 funerals that I performed, and none of those people were going to heaven according to this passage. And some of you have been in discussions about passages like this, or a concept or idea that I presented, and at least a discussion like this, you know, you have John and Sue. They are married, and they get in an argument and Sue huffs off to the bedroom, and slams the door, and John runs down to the garage and gets in the car, and slams the door, and puts it in the gear, squeals the tires, rushing down to the road, and crash! He dies. Poor John, he is dead. Poor John, he is going to hell. Last act, right, he was rebellious against God. What happens to John?

Or worse! You got a teenage daughter. She is 14 going on you name it? She wants to go to the party, and you know she can't, she shouldn't, and you say no. And you go to bed, she sneaks out, she gets up with the boys and they are drinking beer and wine, and they are running around in the car, crash! She dies. Poor girl, she is dead. Where is she at? She is going to hell. According to this standard and according to that theology that I had at one time; what does John mean? The Bible is clear here; "Who ever abides in Him does not sin!" Don't say you are in the Lord if you are sinning. That's what it is saying. But yet, he wrote other places that, don't say you don't sin or you are a liar. Well, what does John mean? Aha, I am glad you are struggling with the issue.

What does sin mean in John 3, 6-10? Sin in the Greek is used in a different tense. In the Eros tense it is talking about a defined, definite action, boom. Here it is in the present tense, and it indicates continuous, constant, habitual action. So it is demonstrating sin as being a way of life. Let me describe it to you from the New International Version, verse 6 says, "No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or know Him." There is the continuity; it is the way of life. It is the pattern; it is what the person is known as. In the Amplified Version it says: "No one who abides in Him, who lives and remains in communion with, and in obedience to Him, deliberately and knowingly, habitually commits or practices sin! No one who habitually sins has either seen or known Him, recognized, perceived or understood Him as He has had an experimental acquaintance with Him"

It is saying in this passage that the sin that is described there is a way of life, to the point that the person is associated with that way of life. The sin that we read about earlier is the occasional failure of an individual making a bad choice. So John is saying, "Look, there is a sin that you are not going to be involved in if you are walking with the Lord. It's cured by obeying Him and trying to imitate Him, of course having Jesus as Your Savior!" So let's go back to John 5 with this background, knowing that there are two types of sin that John talks about. The occasional misdeed, the mistake even the chosen will, but the person who comes back and repents, verses that person who is pall-mall into sin. 1st John 5 verse 16: "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death."

The sin not leading to death is a fall! It is a failure, it is a bad choice. Notice this: in verse 16 it says, "If anyone sees..." sees it happen. Now, who do they see that it happens to? His brother! Who is the brother in the scriptures? Do you remember the story of Jesus, Mark records it. How Jesus healed the man who was demon possessed in church, and the whole community came out to be healed that night, and it was creating quite a scene. And the religious leaders were in opposition to Jesus, and they were bearing down on Him. Mary and Jesus' brothers showed up. And it said they came to take Him home. Do you know why they came to take Him home? They said He was out of His mind! That's right; Jesus' family was embarrassed by Jesus. They were embarrassed because the religious leaders were against Him, and He didn't seem to care about that and so they said, He is out of His mind. "Don't worry about it, we'll get Him home, hey, it will be okay, we'll take Him home."

And so they came to Jesus and they said: "Hey Your mother and Your brothers are outside." Do you remember what Jesus said? He pointed to the crowd and said: "Here are my mother and my brothers. Those who obey God! Who is a brother in the scripture, another servant of God, right? So notice this: "If anyone sees a brother sinning a sin," you see a brother sinning a sin. Do you notice that the sin of death is not seen, nor is it a brother that sins that sin. So you have a brother who has fallen, a brother who has failed. The Bible says, you pray for that person and God will hear the prayer, and He'll work powerfully in their life towards forgiveness. That's amazing, that is good news! That

means you can pray for your spouse, you can pray for your children, you can pray for your friends.

The concept is really like rock climbing. Now I don't rock climb, and don't ever intend to rock climb. I don't like the idea of holding on by your fingernails and toenails to the side of a hill or a mountain saying, "Isn't this grand? Isn't this wonderful?" But I have a son who is into it, so I know a little bit about it. I learned enough that I quit asking questions because it scares me to death that he does it. But he and his friend Stephen, they go out rock climbing. And they have ropes, and they have these things called anchors. They go up so high; they pound an anchor into the stone. They make sure that is solid, they run the loop through it. And then one of them stays there letting out rope while the other one climbs up the side of the mountain or a rock face, I should say, to find another place to drive an anchor. He puts the anchor in, and then the other one climbs up, and all along they are holding a rope that they are tethered to; and if one above should slip and fall, the one below, I don't know how it works entirely, but apparently you can pinch those ropes in such a way that the person will kind of fall. He won't go all the way down, he may slam along the side of the rock face, but he is not going all the way down. There maybe pain involved, but not death and destruction.

That's the picture of brothers in Christ, trying to work our way, along the path that goes to Heaven. We are there to support one another, to encourage one another, we help each other along the way, and when one slips, we hold the rope. We are praying for them. Yes, they maybe hurt from the choice they had, but it's not unto death, do you understand? And it's a fantastic picture. It's a powerful promise! You see, the sin that is unto death, is not a brother. In the book of Revelation, it describes people, who are deliberate, habitual, intentional, high handed, defiant, presumptuous, "I don't care what God says," to the point that they are hateful to God, hateful to His people, unrepentant, uncaring, unloving, unforgiving, without excuse before God, right? That's what it says. And it doesn't matter what God does, those people are not going to change sides. That's the sin unto death. Your child that is struggling as a teenager is not sinning unto death. They are struggling as a teenager. Pray for them, God hears that prayer.

Your spouse who is trying to get it together because they've been hurt by the church, maybe abused by pastors or deacons, or teachers, what ever, they are not sinning unto death. They are struggling; they are trying to get it together. And this passage is the passage of encouragement. Pray for them, God hears that prayer. God hears that prayer! I am so grateful to understand that in Christ all of our sins are forgiven. I am so grateful to understand that in Christ, I can pray for a loved one, a friend, family member who is struggling and God hears that prayer.

Today, I have a little different appeal. My appeal today is, to ask you if you are willing to stand with me and to pray with me for someone that you are concerned about; it maybe you, it's okay, it maybe a friend, it maybe a lover, it maybe a child or another family member, or a work associate. But I believe that God is wanting to work miraculous to be miraculous on behalf of you and your prayers. And so I am going to ask you to stand, and we are going to pray.

Father in Heaven, we thank you for the promise that is inherent in these passages that You'll hear the prayer, and deliver a brother. Lord at this time we are going to claim that promise, and we are going to ask that You will listen to the people that we present to You at this time. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.