



# VICTORY

**Sin and the Believer in 1 John**

**Patrick J. Griffiths**

# **Sin and the Believer in 1 John**

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# An Introduction

In the study of the Bible several initial thoughts might prove helpful. First, the Bible came to us from God. It is an inspired book. In fact, it is the only book ever written by God through human instrumentation. Second, the Bible tells a single *Story*. This *Story* has six broad “acts”: God, Creation, Rejection, Redemption, Re-Creation and Joy through Worship. Third, at the center of this *Story* is Jesus. He is God’s means of rescuing the fallen, reversing the curse and restoring everything back to its original design. Fourth, in reading the Bible different approaches can be employed. They are as follows.

1. Historical theology looks at theological thought within its historical **development**. It provides a snapshot of thought. It speaks to what people thought during a specific period within church history.
2. Biblical theology considers thought as presented by a **single book** of the Bible or by a **single author** such as the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts or the 13 Letters written by the Apostle Paul.
3. Systematic theology seeks to take all of the various categories touched on by the various books and **catalogue** common themes.
4. Finally, dogmatic theology gives **labels** to groupings and presuppositions made by Systematic theology such as Dispensational or Covenant Theology and Reformed and Arminian Theologies.

Our study of 1 John has as its platform biblical theology. Two of our topical studies, however, expand on the literature exclusively found in 1 John and incorporates the

larger evidence given by systematic theology. Those two studies are CONFESSIOIN and SIN AND THE BELIEVER.

Nothing we encounter in our handling of these two studies falls outside of biblical orthodoxy. Each of them provides a thorough reading of various New Testament passages. Although it might prove daunting, the return on this small investment is notable.

So enjoy. May the following readings drive you into the text and then through the text to Jesus. Truly, He is beautiful.

# Sin and the Believer in 1 John

<sup>1</sup> *“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;  
<sup>2</sup> and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins;  
and not for ours only,  
but also for those of the whole world”* (1 John 2:1, 2).

## THE Story

The cross conquered sin. The woman’s seed crushed the serpent’s head. The people of God have been delivered from the penalty, power and presence of sin. Victory is ours and the end is glorious. This study seeks to show and celebrate the believer’s relationship to sin.

Pastor John wrote decades after His Lord and Savior had physically walked the earth. He was, however, well versed in the *Story*. Our Lord’s response toward sinners was always gracious and filled with mercy, but for those who refused to own their sin he was direct and unyielding. Jesus chastised the religious establishment because they refused to own their own sin and Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 23). Yet Pastor John also knew of Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2); he knew of the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1ff); he knew of the prodigal sons (Luke 15:11-32); he knew of Barabbas (Mark 15:7); he knew of the thief on the cross (Luke 23:42), Peter’s denial (Matt. 26:74) and of the apostle Paul’s horrific past (1 Tim. 1:15). He knew of God’s vast and unfathomable grace and how loving He is. He was known as the friend of the outcast and downtrodden (Luke 7:34).

“The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, **Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!**” (Luke 7:34).

Remember what John the Baptizer said concerning Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). **Jesus did what He said He would do.** It is against this backdrop Pastor John wrote.

## **AN INITIAL COMMENT**

In 1 John 2:1-2, John addresses sin in the life of the believer with this statement of fact:

<sup>1</sup> “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; <sup>2</sup> and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world” (1 John 2:1, 2).

God’s declared will is that we do not sin. Yet despite this clear statement, our experience proves to be contrary to His declared will. We do sin. What is to be a biblical response to known sin in the believer’s life? I mark it as known, because if the sin is unknown or we are ignorant of it, there can be no real response to it.

Because the true believer is the object of the Father’s love, certain results inherently follow. Because true believers are the recipients of the Father’s love there will be a loathing of sin and a love for the brethren.

I will comment initially to the structure of 1 John 1:5-2:2. Pastor John initially addresses the principle of sin in 1 John 1:5-10. No one can be saved who denies the principle of sin



in their own life. Unless and until they “own” their sin, they cannot be saved. First John 2:1, 2 moves the reader from the principle of sin to point in time sin in those who recognize their own inherent sinfulness. His response is for his audience to be encouraged by the truth of Christ’s Advocacy before the Father in their behalf. He is the only means of placating the Father’s just sentence against sinners.

Pastor John will elaborate even further in 1 John 2:28-3:10. Here his primary thought is the powerful outworking and application of the Father’s love on and in and through His people. The Father’s love pushes out sin and pulls in His people. Passages like 1 John 2:28-3:10 have been used in several different ways. **First**, some would read such a passage as a means of determining whether one is or is not a Christian. It is as if my moral purity secures the Father’s love. Those that adhere to this reading would say He loves me **because** I do not sin. Hence, it is used as a litmus text whereby we know we are Christians **because** we keep ourselves from sin and we love people. Such thinking produces significant anxiety and uncertainty in the godly. **Most people who fight against sin and for joy in Jesus are IN JESUS.** Another way people read this text is to separate one’s initial salvation from one’s ongoing activity. They would say a failure to hate sin and love others is to lose one’s reward and standing in heaven, but still gain access to heaven. You will not go to hell, but you will also have nothing to show for your life in heaven. Such thinking produces a false distinction between my position in Christ and the outworking of His life in me and through me to those around me. The life of Christ in His people is one of the very reasons Jesus came.

“By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent

His only begotten Son into the world **so that we might live through Him**" (1 John 4:9).

As Pastor John has done earlier, he is drawing a distinction between those within the church and those who have left the church. Pastor John is not saying Christians do not have to work in the areas noted of fighting against sin and loving one another, but Pastor John is saying both of those activities are natural for children of the Father.

If I showed you a picture of an alligator, every one of us knows what that thing will grow up to become. He is alligator born, he is alligator breed and when he dies he will be alligator dead. Why? Because the seed of the alligator is within him. We also know that if you plant a specific and particular seed you will get a specific and particular product. Nothing can change that. Pastor John knows this. Those who have God as their Father are born of God and His seed remains in them and they produce a pushing against sin and a pulling in of Christ's body, the church. If everything else in our world produces after their kind, why is the seed of God different?

Pastor John has given us a world that has two parts. You are either confessing your sin and need of the Savior or you reject sin as non-consequential and thus see no need of a Savior. The bottom line for Pastor John is rather simple, **"If God is your Father, then you are born of Him and you look like Him."**

## **Sin and the Believer in 1 JOHN 3:1-12**

"Many commentators struggle as to where this section begins: with 2:28, 2:29, or 3:1. Beginning the present section

at 2:28 allows the three addresses to the readers as “Children” (2:12, 2:18, and 2:28) to stand in parallel, so this is the most logical solution. There is also a problem with where the section ends, with interpreters frequently proposing 3:3, 3:10, and 3:12. The best choice among these is 3:10, because the last two verses of the section, 3:9-10, form an inclusion with the first two, 2:28-29, with many of the same themes repeated: remaining or abiding, being fathered by God, doing righteousness (2:29) versus not doing righteousness (3:10), and the manifestation of the Son of God (2:28) compared to the manifestation of the children of God (3:10). Within the section, all of 3:1-3 is a parenthesis in which the author reflects on what it means to be fathered by God, a subject he has already mentioned at the end of 2:29. The flow of the argument is then resumed by 3:4, which is in opposition to 2:29.”<sup>1</sup>

There are two primary ideas in this paragraph. First, there is a statement concerning the Father’s love (vv. 1-3). Then there is a statement concerning the believer and his relationship to sin (vv. 4-12). We will begin with Pastor John’s statement concerning the Father’s love.

#### I. The believer and the Father’s love (vv. 1-3)

Those whom the Father loves are described by four descriptive statements.

- A. The Father’s love identifies the recipients of His love as His children (v. 1a [“we are called the children of God”]).

Because the Father has given us His love, we are identified as His children. It is interesting to note the idea behind

“called” [**kaleo**]. In the historical context of the word, to name is to own. God calls us His children and in so doing He owns us. We are identified as His.

- B. The Father’s love separates the recipients from the world (v. 1b [“the world does not know us”]).

The world’s hatred of us is because of its hatred for God. Because of our identification with the Father there is alienation from the world. A love from God draws us away from a love for the world.

- C. The Father’s love guarantees the glorification of the recipient (v. 2 [“we shall be like him”]).

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be (Future Indicative). We know that when He appears (Aorist Passive Subjunctive), we will be like Him, because we will see Him (Future Middle Indicative) just as He is” (1 John 3:2).

When the reality of His appearance comes to pass so shall our ultimate glorification. This is in direct keeping with the thoughts of Paul in Romans 8:29, 30.

<sup>29</sup> “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. <sup>30</sup> Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29, 30).

The Father’s love will efficaciously complete what it sets out to do.

D. The Father's love purifies the recipients of His love (v. 3 ["every man purifies himself"]).

He is clear in 1 John 3:3 as to the certainty of our activity (3:3) – “just as, so also.” The issue isn't necessarily your behavior [because there are plenty of non-confessing people who live pretty moral lives]. The issue is whether or not you are born of God. Those who are born of God push against sin and pull in others. The one who is loved by the Father seeks to habitually (Present Active Indicative) imitate His Father.

The idea behind “purify” is that of making ceremonially clean (John 11:55; Acts 21:24, 26; 24:18). It is the desire of God's people to abstain from sin and to live in obedience to the Father. It is our ambition as true believers to manifest our position in Christ as ones who are purified. **Yet it is imperative we understand the basic truth of not working to become but working from being. We work for purification because we are pure. We are not working to become anything other than what we already are.**

First John 3:4-12 address the issue of our sanctification. It flows from verses 1-3. For the sake of clarity we will outline it under a distinct idea.

II. The believer and sin (vv. 4-12)

In the first chapter some in John's audience denied sin's presence altogether. **By denying its presence, they hoped to deny its reality.** Pastor John stressed two points. First, the believer is marked by a walk reflective of the Lord Jesus (1:7). **God's parenting produces offspring that look and act like Him.** This is inevitable. Second, the believer agrees

with God's principle that all are sinners and in need of the Savior ("confession" 1:9). John notes four aspects of sin which should result in our hatred of it.

#### A. Sin's Definition (v. 4)

The one who practices (present active participle) sin is without law. Sin is without law. Sin is in opposition to and in rebellion against all authority. Sin declares its autonomy from all things. Sin will not bow its knee before the authority of Christ. Sin knows nothing of surrender. This is not descriptive of the believing. Those who agree with God place themselves under His reign over them.

"To commit sin is thus to place oneself on the side of the devil and the antichrist and to stand in opposition to Christ."<sup>2</sup> How can we who claim the name of Christ live in rebellion to His authority? Think about the language of Romans 6:6-14.

<sup>6-11</sup> "Could it be any clearer? Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life—no longer at sin's every beck and call! What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did. <sup>12-14</sup> That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life. Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time—remember, you've been raised from the dead!—into God's way of doing things. Sin can't tell

you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God." [Rom. 6:6-14, The Message]

Friend, believers are no longer under the authority of sin. They are no longer tenants living under the tyranny of sin.

## B. Sin's Destruction (vv. 5, 8b)

"You know that **He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin**" (1 John 3:5).

"the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. **The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil**" (1 John 3:8).

Through our Lord's perfect life and sacrificial death He took away sin and destroyed the works of the devil. Jesus took upon Himself our sins in order that He might take them away (John 1:29; 1 Peter 2:24; Heb. 9:29).

"The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, '**Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**'" (John 1:29).

"and **He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross**, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

"so **Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many**, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him" (Heb. 9:28).

Calvary destroyed the devil's power.

"When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him" (Col. 2:15).

“Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, **that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil**” (Heb. 2:14).

Does it not seem incredible that we would participate in that which our Lord came to destroy?

### C. Sin’s Distinction (Vv. 6-8a, 9)

Sin is very distinct. It is a qualifier of people. **Sin is a trespasser in the life of the believer and a tenant in the life of the unbeliever.**

“Whosoever abideth (**present active participle**) in him sinneth (**present active indicative**) not: whosoever sinneth (**present active participle**) hath not seen him, neither known him. 7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth (**present active participle**) righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 8He that committeth (**present active participle**) sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth (**present active indicative**) from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit (**present active indicative**) sin; for his seed remaineth (**present active indicative**) in him: and he cannot (ου δυναμαι [**present indicative**]) sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:6-9, KJV).

The passage is very clear. Those who are marked by sin are not of God. Those who are marked by righteousness are of God. Sin **identifies** the unsaved. And **identity** is the issue. We considered identity in verse 1, “We are called the children of God.” It isn’t that the children of God cannot commit an act of sin; it is that sin is no longer the child of God’s identity.



“The life of the child of God is not characterized by sin (1 John 3:9). The life that is still dominated by sin is still controlled by the devil and has never been born again (1 John 3:8). John recognizes a continuing sin nature, and the **possibility of isolated acts of sin.**”<sup>3</sup>

Burdick notes this principle, “the general rule, then, is that the Christian does not habitually practice sin, and the person who does continually engage in sin has never come to a saving knowledge of the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

Our passage again draws us into the realm of positional sanctification and practical sanctification. Positionally we do not sin for we cannot sin. Apparently we have the ability to say no to sin because of our position in Christ and through the enabling ministry of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it is possible for us not to practice sin.

There will always be periods of struggle against temptation in one’s fervor and love for Christ, but we cannot deny the reality of our standing in Christ.

It is for this reason we pray to not enter into temptation (Matt. 6:13). And it is for this reason God will not give us temptations we are incapable of addressing (1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 12:1-10; 2 Pet. 2:9).

#### D. Sin’s Demonstration (vv. 10-12)

Sin is demonstrated or displayed along two distinct lines. There are two families that identify all of humanity, the family of God and the family of the devil. **The offspring of each bear the family name and will resemble their father.** Those who are born of God are like God in that they are not

marked by sin. Those who are born of the devil are like the devil in that they are marked by sin. Two thoughts are offered. First, sin is seen through the practice of unrighteousness (v. 10a). And finally, sin is seen through the hating of one's brother (vv. 10-12).

Let us go back to our seed picture. Over the last couple of years my wife and I have grown acorn squash. We plant acorn squash and we get acorn squash. The interesting thing about this squash is the way it looks. Some of the squash looks exactly like you would expect it to look. Others of it look like bowling balls. They're huge and round with very few ridges. This year some of our acorn squash has the shape of zucchini. I would swear its zucchini, but its squash! How do I know its squash? I know its squash and not zucchini because I planted acorn squash and when I cut it open no matter what it looks like on the outside, on the inside its squash. Sometimes this is what the Christian looks like. You would have a hard time guessing what they are, but at the end of the day when they are "cut open" they are Christians. Believe me, there is a great day of cutting open when we will all stand before God and be shown for what we are, but how tragic that in this life we left others wondering what we actually were.

Listen to the words of Elmer Towns as he summarizes Martin Luther's understanding of personal holiness.

"Like his doctrine of justification, it is theocentric—as God justifies man, God also sanctifies man. By faith, man appropriates the active process of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, which in turn purifies the man, frees him to fulfill good works, bringing glory to God. Man's

sanctification is never to the glory of a man, as though man could glory in any holiness of his own. Even in sanctification, Luther's watchword becomes paramount: *solī deo glōris.*"<sup>5</sup>

It is because believers are the recipients of the Father's love they are able to live lives unmarked by sin. This does not deny sin's reality, but it does deny sin's authority. From this platform let us consider what the larger record contained in the New Testament says concerning sin and the believer.

## **Sin and the Believer in the NT**

I am personally convinced the Christian life is NOT to be one of frustration, but victory. This does not mean life will be easy or that everything will now work to our immediate comfort or circumstantial happiness. However, it does mean that in the midst of our greatest defeat we can still have the confidence of God's unconditional acceptance and efficacious empowerment as conquerors. Throughout John's writings, he notes how our Lord's intent is that we have joy (John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; 1 John 1:4).

**"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that our joy may be made full" (John 15:11).**

**"Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full" (John 16:24).**

**"But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves" (John 17:13).**

**"These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete." (1 John 1:4).**

It is for this reason God created us in His image. God's desire in creation is for us to experience and know the joy He has within Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Creation is the platform for this relationship to exist.

Our Lord speaks to this idea when He extends rest and peace surpassing all human achievement and understanding to the weary and heavy-laden.

<sup>28</sup> **"Come to Me**, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30)

As those who are now living in Christ and thus "under grace," what does such a relationship look like in the life of the believer on a moment-by-moment basis? Should grace impact the way I currently live the Christian life? Does grace matter? Think about this. What is the difference between my "joy" prior to accepting my sin and Jesus as my Savior and after I accept my sin and Jesus as my Savior? What is the difference? The first difference is the relationship I now have toward sin. And the second difference is the relationship I now have with Jesus. Jesus dealt with my sin because I couldn't and still can't. Notice what I am saying. I am not saying you don't deal with it, but I am saying that it isn't you dealing with it; Jesus is. It is the same principle behind commandment keeping. I do not keep His commandments; He does. But this looks like me keeping His commandments. The same is true with my fight against sin and for victory. My fight against sin and for

victory is being done by the Holy Spirit who imputes to me the victory of Jesus. You might think this is simply saying the same thing, but it is not saying the same thing. I live a holy life because I live the Christ life. I have victory over sin because Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. He came to take away sin. This does not discount the seriousness of my sin or all sin, but it does treat my sin and all sin as addressed and defeated in the gospel. But let me show you why I believe this is true by approaching the subject matter through a series of questions and responses to the questions.

- I. What place does sin have in the life of the believer under grace?
  - A. The reality of sin in us
    1. Sin is always present in this body of flesh

Because of our old nature, sin is always with us. There is a side of us that is always acting carnal, natural and unregenerate. Such a thought is clearly presented in such passages as Romans 7, 1 Corinthians 3 and Galatians 5.

It is necessary to define what is meant by “this body of flesh.” The body is morally neutral. It is the vehicle used by the immaterial part of man to express itself. It is in this way we are using it in the expression “the body of flesh.” Yet the Scripture also speaks of the flesh being sinful and antithetical to all that is spiritual. This is man’s fallen nature or what the Scripture refers to as “the old man.”

“Knowing this, that **our old man** is crucified with *him*, that

the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6).

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation **the old man**, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22).

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off **the old man** with his deeds" (Col. 3:9).

Romans 6:6 tells us our "old man" has been crucified with Christ. This is an aorist passive indicative. Here the aorist is punctiliar in action. It speaks of a completed past action. The passive voice identifies the object as being the recipient of the action. This completed past action now makes it possible for "the body of sin" to be destroyed. This is an aorist passive subjunctive; speaking of its potentiality. To have something judicially true does not mean it will be experientially true. For one to *enjoy* the "old man's" destruction there must be the knowing, reckoning, and presenting process of Romans 6. It is vital we see the one as being certain and the other being inevitable though not automatic. This is the need to see our stories in light of His *Story*. It is only as we see our story inside of His *Story*, that we then can experientially enter into His joy.

The second aorist middle infinitive of Ephesians 4:22 functions as an imperative. The demand to put off the old is because it is always corrupt (present passive participle). There is no hope for its "salvation." Colossians 3:9 continues this thought by stating "the putting off" as being something done in time but with abiding results.

No matter how long we have been a Christian or how godly we may appear to be, we still have residing within us our

“old man.” There is always a tension within us or what some have called “the war within.” It is for this reason one will often hear of an older Christian who has fallen prey to their “old man.” Such events are sad and sorrow-filled, but they are not surprising. Every Christian is always capable of committing the most grievous actions and heinous events. The Scripture is clear that such acts should not characterize the life of God’s people. No believer should be living in a pattern of sin (1 John 3:9). Yet sin in the life of the believer still happens.

The potential for such events is always there but as one matures in their knowledge of Jesus Christ and the embracing of Him, the actuality of such things happening should be greatly reduced. It is possible to have daily victory over “the flesh” by learning to practice the reality of one’s position. Such a truth will be examined later in the study. Not only is sin a present reality, but it is also a temporary foe.

## 2. Sin is a temporary foe in this body of flesh

While in this body, the flesh and the Spirit will always have contention. Neither one can exist in harmony with the other (Gal. 5:17). Yet the flesh is only temporary. The demise of the “old man” is certain because of Calvary. The final blow experientially in the losing of the old man will happen in the unfolding of either death or the rapture and the Bema seat judgment. It is at the Bema Seat Judgment we will have the “official” eradication of sin’s presence in the believer. Thus in the midst of our current struggle with our “old man” we should never lose sight that it is not eternal and will be finally lost at the Bema Seat Judgment.

## B. The relationship of sin to us

### 1. Sin is a defeated foe (the penalty of sin)

The death of Christ has defeated the foe of sin. Sin's defeat is viewed as a past fact.

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHOSE LAWLESS DEEDS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN, AND WHOSE SINS HAVE BEEN COVERED" (Rom. 4:7).

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

"When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions" (Col. 2:13)

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12).

Romans 4:7 tells us our sins have been forgiven us (aorist passive indicative). In Ephesians 4:32, God Himself has done the action of having forgiven us (aorist middle indicative). In Colossians 2:13 the action of forgiveness is an aorist participle. Such an action is a past fact with ongoing present results. We are standing in a forgiven state. This same truth is emphatically stated in 1 John 2:12 with the perfect passive indicative. God's forgiveness to us is a one sided agreement. **We sin; He brings His forgiveness.**

The sentence against sin has been pronounced and the execution of the sentence is certain. In the death of Christ, sin has been defeated. The charges of sin against us have been abolished. God will no longer credit it to our account (Rom. 4:8).



## 2. Sin is judicially dead (the power of sin)

A believer has his old self crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6). The purpose of this co-crucifixion was “in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.” Our co-crucifixion is a historical fact. There was a point in time when our old self was crucified with Christ. At the cross, Jesus Christ did something to our old self.

In Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ,” we have an event that happened at a point in time but its consequences continue to this day. Again, like Romans 6:6, we are the recipient of the action. **“I was and continue to be crucified with Christ.”**

In Colossians 2:20, “You are dead with Christ,” also speaks of a completed and finished action. Thus, there is an element within us that had died and is dead in Christ.

It is because of our identification with Christ the flesh has been “crucified with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24). Such truth becomes apparent when reading Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:1-4 and 1 John 4:17.

As noted earlier, I believe our co-crucifixion with Christ was a “judicial” action whereby I am declared dead, though my old self is still very much alive. Its full or complete death will come at the Bema Seat where what is **real judicially** will be **realized experientially**. Although we have perhaps made much of real versus actual, John Murray brings out this idea in the following statement.

The freedom from the dominion of sin of which Paul speaks is the **actual** possession of every one who is united to Christ. It is not merely **positional** victory which every believer has secured (cf. pp. 84ff.). When Paul says in Romans 6:14, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you', he is making an affirmation of certainty with respect to every person who is under the reigning power of grace and therefore with respect to every one who is united to Christ. This victory is received by faith in Christ and in effectual calling. It is not achieved by process or by prolonged effort directed to that end. It is the once-for-all gift of God's grace in uniting us to Christ in the virtue of his death and resurrection. **But it is not simply positional; far less is it potential; it is actual.** And because it is actual it is experimental. To speak of freedom from the dominion of sin in terms other than the actual as, if we will, experimental is to indulge in an abstraction which has no relevance to the question at issue. It is true that there are differing degrees in which the implications of this freedom from the dominion of sin are realized in experience. In other words, there are differing degrees in which the 'reckoning' to which Paul exhorts in Romans 6 is applied and brought to expression in the life and experience of believers. But the victory over sin is not secured by the 'reckoning'; it is secured by virtue of union with Christ in that initial faith comprised in effectual calling and is therefore the possession of every believer, however tardy may be his advance in the path of progressive sanctification.<sup>6</sup>

The full reality of His finished work will not be “felt” experientially until our death or His coming/our resurrection (1 John 3:2).

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. **We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is**” (1 John 3:2).

The Bema Seat is a confirmation of God’s faithfulness in keeping His Word to complete that which He began (1 Thess. 5:24; Phil. 1:6).

<sup>23</sup>“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>Faithful is He who calls you, and **He also will bring it to pass**” (1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

“For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it** until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6).

The Bema Seat is a time of tremendous celebration. There will be no regret or inward man-centered focus. All attention will be on Him in that blessed and glorious day.

Sin and its allies will no longer have dominion over us (Rom. 6:9, 14; 7:1-5). We are no longer a subject within a kingdom over which sin rules. We no longer have to obey its dictates. It no longer has control over us. We may choose to sin and thus to place ourselves under its authority, but such does not have to be the case. Although the passage is extensive, let us consider how Pastor Eugene Petersen captures this thought in his reading of Romans 6 in *The Message*.

6<sup>1-3</sup> So what do we do? Keep on sinning so God can keep on forgiving? I should hope not! **If we've left the country where sin is sovereign, how can we still live in our old house there?** Or didn't you realize we packed up and left there for good? That is what happened in baptism. When we went under the water, **we left the old country of sin behind**; when we came up out of the water, **we entered into the new country of grace – a new life in a new land!**

3-5 That's what baptism into the life of Jesus means. When we are lowered into the water, it is like the burial of Jesus; when we are raised up out of the water, it is like the resurrection of Jesus. Each of us is raised into a light-filled world by our Father so that we can see where we're going in our new grace-sovereign country.

6-11 Could it be any clearer? **Our old way of life was nailed to the cross with Christ, a decisive end to that sin-miserable life – no longer at sin's every beck and call!** What we believe is this: If we get included in Christ's sin-conquering death, we also get included in his life-saving resurrection. We know that when Jesus was raised from the dead it was a signal of the end of death-as-the-end. Never again will death have the last word. When Jesus died, he took sin down with him, but alive he brings God down to us. From now on, think of it this way: **Sin speaks a dead language that means nothing to you; God speaks your mother tongue, and you hang on every word. You are dead to sin and alive to God. That's what Jesus did.**

12-14 **That means you must not give sin a vote in the way you conduct your lives. Don't give it the time of day. Don't even run little errands that are connected with that old way of life.** Throw yourselves wholeheartedly and full-time – remember, you've been raised from the dead! – into God's way of doing things. **Sin can't tell you how to live. After all, you're not living under that old tyranny any longer. You're living in the freedom of God.**

We are no longer living under the reign of sin and death, but

are now living under the reign of grace! John tells us what he has written he wrote in order that we might not sin (1 John 2:1). However, he adds “but if any man sin” showing the potential inevitability of sin in the life of the believer.

All of the necessary requirements for us to have victory over the power of sin in this life have been provided.

3. Sin will be permanently removed (the presence of sin)

The joy of this truth has already been noted. As believers who live lives of constant struggle and longing, it is essential we realize that victory has already been secured and we are now only waiting for its full implementation.

C. The rule of sin over us

1. We are dead to sin

Because of our standing in Christ, we are dead to sin. This is the truth claim of Scripture. What does it mean, “To be dead to sin?” **We are no longer legally obligated to obey sin’s dictates.** No longer does sin hold sway over us. We now have the right and power to say no to its sinful demands.

2. It no longer has dominion over us

Sin has no legal right to tell us what to do. Sin has no authority to make demands on our life. Because we are dead to sin and alive in Christ, it no longer has reign over us. We are the subject of a new master.

D. The implications of Calvary for us

### 1. We are in Christ

Often we fail to understand what it means to be “in Christ.” Such a truth communicates a new position and identity. Because we are “in Christ” we have a new life (Rom. 6:5), a new hope and a new master. By being “in Christ” all that is His is now ours. We are joint-heirs with Jesus. The Father has imputed to our account the very righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:6). Because of being “in Christ,” we now have immediate and direct access before the Father (Rom. 5:1). Whereas there was once animosity and wrath there is only peace and satisfaction (Rom. 3:24, 25; 5:1). By being in Christ we are beloved children in whom He is well pleased (Eph. 1:4-14).

### 2. We are the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit

It will often stagger the mind when one considers that God, the Holy Spirit, has chosen to reside within these jars of clay (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 4:7). Such condescension on His part is an act of indescribable grace. How the infinite has chosen to reside in the finite, the Creator within the created, is truly an expression of the inexhaustible riches of grace. Yet we have within us, all that God is in the totality of His being. What a shocking truth. We have gone from Emmanuel, “God with us” (Isa. 9:6; John 1:18) to God in us.

### 3. We are the sure work of the Father

This is the hope we now live with. God is going to complete the work He alone has begun. The work of God in us and through us will not fail (Phil. 1:6; 2:12, 13; 1 Thess. 5:23, 24).

**What we could not merit nor maintain God Himself in grace will finish.** The consistent message of Scripture is the work of God in us will not be disappointed. The Bema Seat is a universal declaration of God's success and faithfulness in bringing to pass that which He had begun.

#### 4. We are heaven dwellers

**The life we currently experience is not our reality.** We have been deceived by the tangible nature of the temporal and the appeal of our senses into believing that what we currently are in this world is our reality. Yet the Scripture tells us what Christ was we currently are in this world (1 John 4:17). The Scripture tells us we have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless we are alive in Him (Gal. 2:20). The Scripture tells us we are currently seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Col. 3:1-4). **Jesus Christ is our life.** We do not deny what we are in this world, but such must be seen through the grid of the Christ reality. We have been deceived into drawing too sharp of a distinction between what we are in Christ and what we are in this world. The truth is that what we are in Christ is what we are in this world. This world does not dictate the reality of our condition. Such a statement has already been established in Christ. This world is the platform or stage for the reality of our position in Him to be played out and seen. Moreover, at the end of the performance He will receive all of the accolades and glory.

#### 5. We are overcomers

Pastor John consistently describes the Christian as an overcomer. Such a truth is not a future hope but is to be a present reality. We are overcomers. It is not something we

hope to enjoy. It is something we are enjoying. We can be called overcomers because of our position in Christ. How tragic that many have allowed the devil to rob them of this joy. In so doing we have chosen to live lives of defeat. We cannot be robbed of what is ours in Christ. We can fail to enjoy it, but it cannot be taken from us. We are to enjoy all that God has provided for us as His child. We must never let anything rob us of this satisfaction.

Our initial question asked and sought to answer, “What place does sin have in the life of the believer under grace?” Our second question is the following.

## II. What does our sin do to us?

This question is always intriguing. When I hear someone say, “What happens when I sin?” My immediate response is to ask, “What does not happen when you sin?” In answering that question, the rest has a tendency to answer itself.

- A. There is a providential judgment against sin which is corrective.

God has chosen to establish natural laws against sin’s expression. **Sin will always cost you more than you wish to pay, take you further than you wish to go and keep you longer than you wish to stay.** There are natural laws established by God that determine the reaping of what is sown (Gal. 6:7, 8). There is an inherent demerit to all sin. The Scripture tells us, “that the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23) and that “the soul that sins shall die” (Ezek. 33). No one can sin and get away with it. Everyone shall pay the consequences for sin whether in this life (for the believer and



unbeliever) or in the life which is to come (for the unbeliever).

- B. There is a sense of disappointment for failed responsibility.

With reference to the believer, there is a sorrow that happens in the failure to meet the perceived image of Jesus as seen in Scripture and in the committing of any sin. In the believer, sin always brings remorse. All believers recognize the innate inability to perform the good (Rom. 7:18). For those who see the cross and Christ clearly, there is a daily reckoning of human inability either to perform well or abstain from evil. The reality of human inability causes those who see Jesus to offer themselves up to Christ's work and that of the Holy Spirit to empower them for obedience on a daily basis. No one who knows their flesh ever puts any confidence in it to live the Christian life. What hope the Christian has lies solely in Christ and His grace dealings with them.

- C. There is an initial straining and potential severing of human relationships from expressions of sin.

There is always a straining of relationships between believers when one has sinned against another. Such offenses need to be dealt with immediately. Each is to act toward the other in a gracious manner. Never should such a condition exist long term. The offending party needs to make sure that any necessary restitution has been made. Whether it is as simple as saying we are sorry, or where physical harm has been committed restoration is offered, with the offended party immediate and unconditional

forgiving and forgetting needs to take place (Eph. 4:32). To act toward another in this fashion is to treat them in grace and to depend on God to meet the necessary needs (1 Cor. 6).

- D. There is the potential for unnecessary bondage to a pattern of sin.

Christians are not to live in sin (1 John 3:9-11). Such patterns are a sign of unbelief. Such behavior is completely incompatible with their position in Christ. Yet some out of weakness to the flesh or because of Scriptural ignorance have fallen prey to a pattern of sin (Gal. 6:1). We say such bondage is unnecessary. No Christian need live in bondage to sin. No believer "living in sin" wishes to be there. Victory is not only possible; it is our right. How to gain victory over daily sin will be discussed later. This brings us to our third question.

### III. What does our sin do to God?

- A. God hates sin regardless as to its source or kind.

God hates sin. Such a simple statement can cause us to overlook the gravity of such a statement, but nonetheless God hates sin. **Our sin is serious enough for the Father to send His only begotten Son to be the Savior of the world.** Regardless as to where it is found, God always hates sin. In the unbeliever he is the object of God's present wrath and is simply waiting His future wrath. In both the unbeliever and the believer there is a providential price tag to all sin. Though the believer will never experience the wrath of God against sin, it does not mean it is any less serious.

The omniscience of God demands His knowledge of all sin. Yet because of the believer's standing in Christ, **God the Father will never credited to his account sin and thus cannot deal with him in any other way than that of one who is as righteous as His only begotten Son.**

God no longer 'sees' either our deliberate disobedience or our marred performances. Instead He 'sees' the righteousness of Christ, which He has already imputed to us.<sup>7</sup>

Nothing you ever do will cause Him to love you any more or any less. He loves you strictly by His grace given to you through Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

B. There is a rebuking that comes through the Word by the Holy Spirit.

As a believer is exposed to the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will take that Word and rebuke him when necessary (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; 4:2). Such a rebuking is intrinsic to the Word. God is not imputing such sin to the believer, but the Holy Spirit through the medium of the Word is working in the believer to put off the old man and put on the new through the renewing of his mind (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23). This leads us to our fourth question.

IV. What should we do with our sin?

A. Acknowledge our sin by agreeing with God concerning it (1 John 1:5-2:2).<sup>9</sup>

Through the instrumentation of the Word, the Holy Spirit is

working in the believer for the acknowledgment of sin. Such an acknowledgment is an agreement with God concerning sin in the believer's life.<sup>10</sup> No believer can avoid such an acknowledgment of sin. The confession of sin is to be seen just like any other fruit of the Spirit. This is the working of the Holy Spirit in the life of all true believers. There are several erroneous views concerning confession. **First**, there is a casual or flippant mouthing of or verbal assent to sin in general. This type of confession does not recognize the gravity of it. Confession needs to be daily only if sinning (premeditative and quantifiable) is daily. To make confession a part of every prayer session is to pray like a Gentile (Matt. 6:7). **Second**, there is a morbid introspection that belabors the point of seeking to be exhaustive in the listing of any known, unknown, potential, or other expressions of sin within the human heart. Jesus dealt with sin so that you and I would not have to. Our sin must be placed under and in the gospel. **Third**, there is seeing the confessional act as somehow necessary to securing the forgiveness and good favor of God. Such a view sees such an act as man-centered and self-motivated. Thus, we should see sin for what it is.

- B. Repent of it and thus put off its presence and pattern (Eph. 4:22).

Though crucified, we are still called upon to lay aside the old self (Eph. 4:22).

“That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, **which is being corrupted** in accordance with the lusts of deceit” (Eph. 4:22).

Though the old self is crucified and has been laid aside (Col.

3:9), it is still in a process of perpetual corruption (Eph. 4:22), thus the necessity to lay it aside.

“Do not lie to one another, **since you laid aside the old self** with its evil practices” (Col. 3:9).

We can understand Colossians 3:9 in the larger context of truth that would allow us to say, “Put off the old man, because you have put off the old man,” or as we are prone to say, “Practice your position.” It is the same idea as found in 1 Corinthians 5:7, “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, **just as you are in fact unleavened.**”

The laying aside of the old self by the believer is an “already/not-yet” truth. Although it has been crucified (and is dead), and has thus been laid aside (Col. 3:9), it is still being corrupted (Eph. 4:22). In Colossians 3:9, the language suggests the action of dying is **judicial** meaning the sentence against it has been pronounced or declared. The judicial pronouncement is real. It is now a matter of executing the sentence against it.

The validity and veracity of acknowledged sin is the turning from it and the putting off the old man. The integrity behind the confession of sin is seen in what follows. Confession is a fruit of the Spirit but also produces a fruit. True confession is intricately wrapped up in repentance. No one has truly confessed who is not also genuinely repenting.

C. Make no provision for its future manifestation (Rom. 13:14) by mortifying its deeds (Col. 3:5).

Our body of flesh is a vehicle of expression for our fallen nature. Thus we must control what our body of flesh does

in the expression of our innate depravity (Rom. 6:19) by yielding to what we know is true.

The fleshly body is a garment (2 Cor. 5:1-7; Jude 23). It is for this reason we are not to yield to our sinful nature, but rather to present our bodies to God and to mortify the members of our body (Rom. 6:19; 12:2; Col. 3:5). It is in and through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are to be putting to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). We are to make no provisions for the flesh in the expression of its rebellion through our physical body (Rom. 13:14).

For believers, sin is still present in them. It reveals itself as “we present the members of our body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness” (Rom. 6:13).

It is for this reason believers are exhorted to present their bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), and in so doing they yield their members as instruments of righteousness to God (Rom. 6:13). Such yielding or presenting is the reaffirmation of placing our story inside of His. Such statements acknowledge that “without Jesus we can do nothing.”

In Romans 12:1, “To present your bodies,” is an aorist active infinitive. Here (similar to Ephesians 4:22) it carries a commanding force. The same word, “Present/Yield,” is found in Romans 6 and 12. In the action of offering ourselves up as a living sacrifice, the believer is yielding the members of their body as instruments of righteousness to God. It is for this reason the believer is to “consider the members of their earthly body as dead” (Col. 3:5). There is nothing “mystical” in the action. Such an affirmation is simply placing one’s life in the larger context of God’s *Story*. When you remember how your life is the outworking of His

*Story*, you are yielding and submitting and presenting your life to His. It is similar to our Lord's Prayer when He said, "Your kingdom come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Such a prayer places His kingdom above our own and His will over our own. This is what Paul means in Romans 6 and 12.

The strength of Colossians 3:5 (an aorist active imperative) is built on the foundation of 3:1-4. **Whatever we once were, we no longer are.** The most natural action for those who have died with Christ (2:20) and have been raised with Christ (3:1) and whose lives are hidden with Christ in God (3:3) is to consider the members of their bodies as being dead to sin (3:5).

It is for this reason the believer is "not to provide for the flesh in regard to its lusts" (Rom. 13:14).

There is an accumulation of imperatives throughout Romans 12 and 13 with 13:14 giving a summation of the whole process, "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh." Verse 14 parallels verse 12. The language can change but the meaning is the same.

Another area where the Spirit's work is seen is in the absence of premeditated sin. All true believers are persistently doing battle with their fallen nature. Everyone needs to realize that the flesh will take every possible advantage provided in order to regain mastery over its host body. Though it is impossible to be sinless, it is equally impossible not to be sinning less.

- D. Seek to live in newness of life (Rom. 6:5) by knowing, reckoning and yielding.

Victory can only be experienced as one is practicing the reality of Romans 6. This is the classic passage on implementing one's position into one's practice. Yet what does this **mean**? How do we walk in newness of life? How do we live the Christ life? There appears to be three "steps." Such steps must not be viewed as formulaic. Although we use the word "steps" we must not see them as rigid or unyielding. **Such means are simply offered as a way of staying in the *Story*, of being reminded of the gospel.**

1. We should know the biblical truth of our union with Christ (v. 6).

It is a present active participle. Do we have the fact of our union with Christ squarely planted in our mind? Do we understand how sin no longer has power over us because we are dead? This is information oriented. We are gathering facts.

2. We should reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ (v. 11).

Both the exhortation (reckon) and the prohibition (let not sin reign) are present active imperatives. We must reckon or consider ourselves to be dead to sin, but very much alive to God in Christ. This is the truth of Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:1-3. Consider the information we know to be true to be true! If we have died with Christ, then we are dead to sin. If we have been raised with Christ, then we can walk in newness of life. However, there is one more "step" we must take.

3. We should yield our body as an instrument of righteousness (v. 13).



It is a present active imperative. Finally, we must yield or present our body to God as a living sacrifice. We must place ourselves at His disposal. We must trust Him for everything. Just as we came to Him for salvation, now we must come to Him for sanctification. We cannot yield ourselves to sin, to feed its appetites and desires (Rom. 13:14). We must abstain from fleshly lusts (2 Pet. 2:11).

Consider the progression of thought in sitting down in a chair. We see the chair (know), we see someone sit in the chair (consider) and now we sit (yield). This is what we must do daily. Paul gives one final reason as to why we must not live in sin.

Making the idea of yielding or walking as conditions to be met is like telling someone to go to sleep. We can understand what sleeping is, but it is not necessary to sleeping. We can command someone to sleep, but commanding them will not put them to sleep. We can only go to sleep when we simply relax. Once we relax, we go to sleep. We go to sleep without trying to go to sleep. Therefore, it is with yielding, walking, or being led. **When we try, we make it something that it is not. It is only when we rest in Him that we do what we are designed for.**

- E. Since we are living in the Spirit, now seek to be led by Him (Gal. 5).

It is unfortunate many feel as if they must resign themselves to the power of the flesh. We have made the flesh our reality when our reality should be the Spirit. We are called upon to live our lives in this earthen body according to our position in Christ. Such a call has validity because of the present

impact of positional truth into this current realm. We can no more not be led than we can not be living in the Spirit. **As Christians, victory is indigenous to walking in newness of life.**

Two statements summarize our relationship before God as it relates to our identity in Christ. **First**, we cannot undo by our actions what He has done. **Second**, what we merit by grace, we cannot maintain by works. Think about what this is implying.

- He declared us right in justification.
- He restored relational peace through reconciliation.
- He removed all judgment through propitiation.
- Every action He has done made it possible for us to have fellowship with Him.

This is not an exhaustive listing, but it does begin to show us how far we have fallen in practicing our position as it relates to the renewing of our minds. All that we have before the Father is merited by grace. All that He has done through the incarnation and substitutionary sacrifice we cannot undo through our actions. If these things are true, which we have no reason to believe otherwise, then how does this work in the area of our sinning?

## CONCLUSION

Recognizing that it is His working in us and through us, we choose to stand in His Son. We choose to live in the fullness of His forgiveness. We choose to live in His limitless love. We choose to accept a more than abundant grace. We desire to live the Christ life. Friends, this is the good news. Jesus crushed the sin issue and that is the most fundamental issue in the human condition. You are a sin generating sinner and Jesus is the sin destroying Savior.

We are free from condemnation because Jesus through His death condemned sin. If we face His wrath, then the death He died was insufficient. The law is powerless to condemn sin in the flesh. It is powerless to liberate the sinner from the power of the flesh. The incarnation enabled Jesus to condemn sin in the flesh.

The sacrificial death of the Son of God, therefore, was the means by which sin was condemned. He took upon himself the punishment that those who violated God's law deserved.<sup>11</sup> The work of Christ on the cross freed believers from both the penalty and the power of sin.<sup>12</sup>

He sees me in Christ risen, forever beyond the reach of condemnation. And though we are often slow to hear, and our spiritual vision is most defective, the blessed fact remains that God has pronounced the believer free from condemnation whether he fully rises to the glorious fact or not.<sup>13</sup>

In spite of the fact that the Christian is in a continuing struggle with the law of sin in his members, there is no verdict of condemnation against him. There is no charge, no indictment, no judgment, and no penalty - because he is 'in Christ Jesus.' As Robertson comments, 'This is Paul's Gospel.' This freedom from condemnation means freedom from past sins and pardon for future sins.<sup>14</sup>

If this pardon from condemnation does not reach into our current practice, then we do not understand what it means.

Consider the life described and prescribed above. It is a life that is marked by Christ. This is attractive. In addition, this is the kind of life that pulls the unsaved to the person of Christ. Until we see the shallowness of life lived apart from Christ, we will never see the sufficiency and satisfaction of life lived in Christ. May we hunger after all that God has already secured for us in Christ.

# ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> <https://bible.org/seriespage/exegetical-commentary-1-john-228-310>

<sup>2</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles Of John*, 176.

<sup>3</sup> BSac, 114 / #456, Oct-Dec. 1957, Willard M. Aldrich, "Traits of the family of God." [emphasis added].

<sup>4</sup> *The Epistles of John*, 53.

<sup>5</sup> BSac, April-June, 1969, vol. 126 #502, p. 122, Elmer L. Towns, "Martin Luther on Sanctification."

<sup>6</sup> "Studies in Theology, Reviews," in *Collected Writings of John Murray*, 4 vols. (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 4:284.

<sup>7</sup> Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, (NavPress:Colorado Springs, 1991), 39.

<sup>8</sup> Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, 73.

<sup>9</sup> First John 1:9 is somewhat problematic. Although I look at it as a verse for believers the larger context (1 John 1:5-2:2) is probably speaking to unbelievers.

<sup>10</sup> For further study consider the short booklet, "Confession in 1 John," by Patrick J. Griffiths.

<sup>11</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 403.

<sup>12</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 404.

<sup>13</sup> H. A. Ironside, *Romans* (Neptune NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1979), 95,96.

<sup>14</sup> Clifton J. Allen, *The Gospel According to Paul: A Study of the Letter to the Romans* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1956), 86.

# Studies in 1 John

## 7 of 11

The cross conquered sin. The woman's seed crushed the serpent's head. The people of

God have been delivered from the penalty, power and presence of sin. Victory is ours and the end is glorious. This study seeks to show and celebrate the believer's relationship to sin.

In 1 John 2:1-2, John addresses sin in the life of the believer. God's declared will is that we do not sin. Yet despite this clear statement, our experience proves to be contrary to His declared will. We do sin. What is to be a biblical response to known sin in the believer's life? I mark it as known, because if the sin is unknown or we are ignorant of it; there can be no real response to it.

Because the true believer is the object of the Father's love, certain results inherently follow. Because true believers are the recipients of the Father's love there will be a loathing of sin and a love for the brethren. Pastor John initially addresses the principle of sin in 1 John 1:5-10. No one can be saved who denies the principle of sin in their own life. Unless and until they "own" their sin, they cannot be saved. First John 2:1, 2 moves the reader from the principle of sin to point in time sin in those who recognize their own inherent sinfulness. His response is for his audience to be encouraged by the truth of Christ's Advocacy before the Father in their behalf. He is the only means of placating the Father's just sentence against sinners.

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