

REACHING REAL FULFILLMENT AS A CHRISTIAN
"Part II: Understanding And Handling Believer's Sin"
(1 John 1:7-2:2, 28-3:10b; 5:16b-18a)

Introduction: (To show the need...)

Well, can a believer lose his salvation due to spiritual failure or sin?

Well, if a believer who has walked with God for years commits a sin, does he slip back in maturity to babyhood and have to make up lost ground or go to Hell?

(3) This past week, a missing teen from Burlington was found dead in the trunk of her brother's vehicle. He is now charged with her murder. Will the murderer, whether it is this youth or somebody else, ever be able to be forgiven by God, or has this deed made such a sin an "unforgivable" sin?

(We turn to the "Need" Section of the message...)

Need: "If God saves us from sin when we accept Christ as Savior, what happens if one who THOUGHT he was saved then sins after making a 'commitment' to Christ?! Is he still saved, or was he never really saved? How can we tell? What should he do NOW? Why?!"

- I. **1 John was written that Christians might be happy, 1 John 1:3-4.**
- II. **Well, God is righteous, and enjoying a relationship with our righteous God demands that we also live righteously, 1 Jn. 2:29!**
- III. **However, there is much confusion about the believer's sin that needs to be cleared up. We do so with a question & answer format:**
 - A. **Question:** "How can I know for sure if a certain act is indeed a sin?" **Answer:** 1 John 3:4 defines sin as lawlessness. Thus, we define sin as any violation of the Scriptures.
 - B. **Question:** "I believe in Christ. If I sin, WHY do I sin, and what happens to my salvation status when I do sin?!" **Answer:** The Christian retains his pre-salvation sin nature after salvation, 1 Jn. 1:8. As such, he still unfortunately sins, 1:10. This is due to his body not yet being redeemed which event occurs at the Rapture, Rom. 8:23. The fact that the believer still dies proves that his nature to sin stays with him, 1 Cor. 15:21! Once saved, one is sealed by the Holy Spirit even though he performs acts of sin, Eph. 4:30. Paul actually writes in the Greek, "**stop** grieving (present imperative to state a command due to a **current** negative condition!) the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you **are sealed** unto the day of redemption."
 - C. **Question:** "If I do sin as a Christian, what must I do about it?" **Answer:** We ought to confess it to God for divine cleansing, 1 Jn. 1:9. Christ's atonement on Calvary totally absorbed God's wrath against our sin (propitiation); thus, Christ as our Advocate can plead the believer's cause to God to gain his forgiveness, 1 John 2:1-2.
 - D. **Question:** "Why confess my sins? What incentive is there to do this?" **Answer:** (1) Jesus died to take away our sins, making it only fitting to honor that great work by confessing our sins, 1 J. 3:5. (2) Knowing that we are going to face God at the rapture keeps us wanting to avoid embarrassment upon seeing Him, 1 Jn. 2:28. (3) God can punish the believer with physical death for sin, making confession really desirable, 1 Jn. 5:16b! (4) Knowing that we will share in Christ's glory at the rapture encourages us to want to be pure now to align with that future status, 1 Jn. 3:3.
 - E. **Question:** "My problem is that I am not sure I believed to be saved!"
 1. We can tell if we are saved by the lifestyle he leads:
 - a. In 1 Jn. 2:29 and 3:6-10b, the words "doeth" or "commit," etc. come from *poieo* in the Greek N.T. (UBS Gr. N.T., p. 817-818).
 - b. This word focuses on what is produced rather than on the action in the process; if John wanted the latter, he would have used the word *prasso*, Syn. of the N.T., p. 361-364.
 - c. In 1 Jn. 2:29 and 3:6-10b, John states that believers produce lives that are righteous where the unsaved produce lives of unrighteousness.
 - d. If we thus sin as a lifestyle, we are lost and must be saved! If sin is an interruption of living, we are saved but must confess it to God, 1 Jn. 3:3; 1:9.

2. We can test our salvation by the Incarnation Confession test: unbelievers cannot confess as their belief that Jesus is God come in the body where believers **do** this, 1 J. 4:1-3!
- F. Question: "Can I commit the 'unforgivable sin'? What about it?!" Answer: Mtt. 12:24-32 records not an unforgivable sin but a sin that wouldn't be forgiven **if sustained**. That sin cannot be done today as it involved seeing Christ work and believing that His miracles came via Satan! **Besides, a number of those who were guilty of this sin were saved**, cf. Jn. 19:6 & A. 6:7b; A. 7:56ff & 1 T. 1:13!
- G. Question: "Can I avoid sinning as a Christian?! How?!" Answer: 1 John 2:1 states that we can avoid sinning! We sustain a lifestyle without sinning when we apply Scripture to living, cf. 1 Jn. 1:7b (last week's message) and Ps. 119:11.

Concluding Application: (1) **We must believe in Christ to escape Hell and gain Heaven, John 3:16; 1 Jn. 3:6-10!** (2) **If we have believed in Christ and EITHER do a sin or fail to measure up to what we or another party thinks is truly a "saved" status, (a) check to see if sinning is our lifestyle typical of the unsaved or an interruption typical of the believer, 1 J. 2:29; 3:6-10b. (b) Also, take the Incarnation Confession Test of 1 Jn. 4:1-3 as given above, and (c) accept Christ if these indicate the need! (2) If we pass these tests, rest upon the promises of God's Word and handle sins by confession, 1 Jn. 1:8-2:2! (3) Sustain contact with God by continually applying Scripture, 1 Jn. 1:7b!**

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message...)

Or not even being considered a Christian for not speaking in tongues, we read in 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Later in the same chapter, in 1 Corinthians 12:30 (NASB) we read in rhetorical questions expecting negative answers: "All do not have gifts of healing, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?" Obviously, **not all at Corinth spoke in tongues although all were partakers of the Holy Spirit**. Thus, one is saved whether or not he can speak in the **Biblical** gift of tongues!

And negative results of this judgment, Paul writes (NIV): "It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; **he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.**" Thus, Christians who have led lives of sin and uselessness to God will suffer loss of reward, but not loss of eternal life! Thus, those who have not reached maturity will still be saved, for salvation is by grace from beginning to end!

For that very reason was I shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience **as an example for those who would believe** on him and receive eternal life." Since Paul's salvation is an **intentional divine example** of Christ's **willingness to forgive**, this girl's murderer **will** be forgiven and made a child of God **if he believes in Christ!**