

Cleansing From All Sin

by Aaron Hills

God is light, and we must walk in the light to have fellowship with Him and be cleansed from all sin.

Scripture: 1 John 1:5-10

Topics: "Christian Purity", "Incarnation Of Christ"

Description

Aaron Hills preaches against the heresy of the Nicolaitanes and Gnostics, who denied the true incarnation of Christ and His atoning death, promoting a belief that one could be purified in soul while indulging in vice. John's first epistle serves as a defense of Christian purity from sin against Gnostic purity in sin, emphasizing the importance of walking in the light of God for fellowship and cleansing from all sin through Jesus Christ. The epistle presents a series of antithetical ideas, contrasting Christian truth with the false teachings of those promoting salvation in vice rather than from sin.

Transcript

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

"If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us." -- 1 John 1:5-10.

A great heresy arose during the closing years of the first century. It threatened the utter Subversion and destruction of the Christian religion. Peter wrote against it (2 Peter 2:12-19). Jude wrote a blistering message against it (4, 10-19). Paul foretold it in his parting address to the Church of Ephesus (Acts 20:18-35) and in his Second Epistle to Timothy (3:1-8). John hurled his fiercest invectives against it in his first epistle, of which our text is the preliminary summary. Even Jesus condemned it in His message to the churches (Rev. 2:6 and 14-16).

These false teachers were variously called Nicolaitanes and Gnostics. They went everywhere infesting the churches, denying the real incarnation of Christ and the reality of His atoning death. Their primal dogma that all evil resided in matter and did not affect the soul, was a heathen notion imported from Eastern Asia. Under its baleful influence even church members imbibed the idea that they could be purified in soul by a mental knowledge of God, and could then indulge their bodies in any form of vice . without spiritual detriment. A gross licentiousness resulted, consecrated by a false profession.

Irenaeus says of them: "They assert that they themselves will be saved, not by practice, but because they are spiritual by nature, and that, as gold, though mingled With mire, does not lose its beauty, so they themselves, though wallowing in the mire of carnal works, do not lose their own spiritual essence; and therefore, though they resort to the banquets which the heathen celebrate in honor of their false gods, and abstain from nothing that is foul in the eyes of God or man, they say that they cannot contract any defilement from these impure abominations, and they scoff at us who fear God as silly dotards."

In other words, these vile heretics taught that "a man might be an outrageous violator of moral law and yet be a pure and holy saint." It was a subtle error most pleasing to carnality, and struck a deadly blow at Christian morality. The aged apostle wrote this epistle as a defense of CHRISTIAN PURITY FROM SIN against Gnostic purity IN SIN. He says: "These things have I written concerning them that seduce you" (1 John 2:26).

There is a constant series of burning antithetical ideas, issues between the true view and the Opposite error, stated in the most intense language. John put all the earnestness of his Christ-like soul into it, because he saw that the foundations of Christian purity were involved and Christianity itself was at stake.

1. -- Then consider the text as a whole. There are six verses in all, with three antithetical or opposing ideas, two verses to each. The first verse of each pair of verses states the Christian truth of pardon, purity, and full salvation. The second verse of each pair is not a description of Christian character at all, but is a stunning blow at the doctrine and practice of these vile teachers who are seducing Christians from morality, and by their practice were uniting professed sanctity with unspeakable depravity.

Let us consider these verses by pairs, and the truth will appear. In the fifth verse the apostle teaches that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." In other words, God is light. His children will be children of the light and of the day. They will walk in the light of moral purity, and will be without darkness, like their Father.

Verse six gives the antithesis, -- a blow at the seducers: "If we say (he meant, If YOU say) that we (you) have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness (as your false teachers say and do), we (you) lie and do not tell the truth." That is, "You simply cannot have fellowship with a holy God and practice vice as you are doing; and if you say that you do, YOU LIE." It was terrific plainness, and he simply softened it by saying "we" instead of "you," to make the castigation a little more acceptable.

Take the next pair of verses. Verse 7 gives the blessed hope of salvation: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another (we and God), and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." This is the way of full salvation and complete deliverance from all sin. Walk in the light of God in faith and obedience, and He will cleanse our hearts "FROM ALL SIN" Sin of every kind will be taken away.

Verse 8 is the antithesis -- another fearful blow at heresy: "If we (you) say that we (you) have no sin (and no need of a Savior from all past sins, as your vile teachers would have you believe), we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (you deceive yourselves and the truth is not in you)."

You Nicolaitan Gnostics affirm that your wicked vices are not wrong, and that when you practice them you commit no sin; but you are simply deceiving yourselves. You will not get rid of your sins by denying them, but by confessing and forsaking, and by praying for an application of the cleansing blood of Jesus.

Look now at the third pair. Verse 9 gives us again the blessed truth of full salvation: "If we confess our sins He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This verse tells us how one may walk in the light of a holy God, and obtain justification and sanctification and complete deliverance from all unrighteousness of heart) . God has a perfect cleansing for us all.

Verse 10 gives the third antithesis -- another blow at the doctrine of these corrupt teachers: "If we say we have not sinned (as these seducers say), we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us." In others words: "If you Gnostics, or any that accept your doctrines, say you have not sinned, while you are wallowing in shameless orgies of vice, you make God a liar and His Word is not in you."

II. -- If now we write the first verses of these three pairs together, and then write the second verses together, the correctness of our interpretation will be more apparent.

Verse 5: "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

Verse 7: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Verse 9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." These three verses are the Gibraltar of the Christian faith, an epitome of the gospel of full Salvation. Jesus has made ample provision for us to be justified and sanctified, pardoned and cleansed, from ALL SIN and ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS, and thus made clean and holy. It is not salvation IN sin, but salvation FROM sin, of every form and degree. It is what we al must have to get to heaven. The other three verses, antithetical to these, are a scathing denunciation of the teaching of the Gnostics, who were corrupting the churches by teaching that people could be in a saved relation with God and yet be living in drunkenness and licentiousness. Notice how they read, and think of the pronouns as being in the second person, instead of the first, and all will be plain.

Verse 6: "If we (you) say that we (you) have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we (you) lie and do not the truth."

Verse 8: "If we (you) say that we (you) have no sin, we (you) deceive ourselves (yourselves) and the truth is not in us (you)."

Verse 10: "If we say we have not sinned (as these seducers say while practicing all sin), we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us."

Just such antithetical passages fill the entire epistle, and show to a demonstration that the beloved apostle was writing against the teaching and practice of Antinomian heretics who were teaching a salvation IN vice rather than FROM vice. John himself said, "These things I write concerning them that seduce you." The above grouping of these verses makes this Scripture perfectly plain, and robs it of all its seeming

contradictions.

III. -- It is amazing that any Christian teachers should wrest this eighth verse from its connection and divinely-intended meaning, and apply it to holy children of God who profess sanctification. It is a warning to wicked deceivers and their followers who are described as "having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin," "which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam." But one preacher applies these words to the best of Christians thus: "What can be clearer than the statement, 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us'? To say we have not sinned, or to say we have no sin, is to show ourselves destitute of God's truth." What a wretched interpretation it is to take these words, hurled against vile seducers of the bride of Christ, and force them to teach as a divine revelation that the bride herself, with all the heavenly 'Bridegroom's sanctifying indwelling, and the cleansing of the Holy Spirit, cannot herself be pure and clean!

We should like to ask this brother and his fellow-preachers a few questions:

(1) When a sinner has experienced the works of grace described in verses 7 and 9, that is, when he has been pardoned, and afterward cleansed from "ALL sin" and "ALL unrighteousness," how much sin has he left in himself to lie about?

(2) When God has thus pardoned and cleansed one of his obedient, trusting children, and that child gladly testifies for the glory of Jesus to his cleansing, does this saint of God lie in saying, "I am now, by the grace of God, without sin"?

(3) Does an inspired apostle flatly contradict himself with a single pen full of ink by writing that we may be cleansed from "all sin" and "ALL unrighteousness," and yet we still have sin in us until the last breath of life? And does he teach that to testify to the Holy Spirit's cleansing would be a lie?

If the King of England should pick up a filthy, ragged London beggar, take him to his own bath-room and wash him thoroughly, and burn up his rags and clothe him with the best of garments, would the beggar lie if he should then say, "By the grace of the King, I am now without filth and without rags"? Of course not! And no more does a child of the King of kings falsify when he extols the grace of his heavenly Father.

(4) Do those teachers who declare that "we must have sin in us to the last hour of life" fitly honor the great salvation of Jesus? "All unrighteousness is sin. But the apostle, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declares that "the blood of Jesus cleanseth us from ALL sin and ALL unrighteousness."

Adam Clarke well says: "To attempt to evade this and to plead for the continuance of sin in the heart through life is UNGRATEFUL, WICKED, and even BLASPHEMOUS; for, as he who says he has not sinned makes God a liar, so he that says the blood of Christ either cannot or will not cleanse us from all sin in this life, GIVES ALSO THE LIE TO HIS MAKER." God help us all to keep back from such awful sin!

Thank God, the old gospel will stand in spite of those who oppose Bible holiness and plead for the life-long continuance of sin in the heart! No wresting of Scripture from its connection, and the avowed purpose of the writer, can rob weary souls of their blood-bought right to be cleansed from every stain of sin. The seventh verse and the ninth verse tell us of a complete deliverance. There is a double necessity and a double cure. Sin exists in two forms; actual Sin which must be pardoned, and inherited indwelling sin or depravity which pardon cannot reach. It needs to be cleansed away. And if we confess and forsake our sins they can be pardoned. And afterward, if we abhor our pollution of nature, our indwelling sin can be

cleansed. The immutable Word of God declares (verse 9): "If we confess our sins, God is faithful to His promise and just to His atoning Son to FORGIVE us our sins and to CLEANSE us from all unrighteousness."

Jesus is "an uttermost Savior." His precious blood can and does cleanse from ALL SIN. And those who have the blessed sanctification of the Holy Ghost can testify to freedom from sin without lying.

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