

"41 "For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward. 42 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. 43 "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, 44 [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] 45 "If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell, 46 [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] 47 "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell, 48 where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED. 49 "For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 "Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another." Mark 9:41-50, NAS95.

Last week we concluded with this thought,

The strength of the sin does not have to be instructed; it doesn't have to serve an apprenticeship; sin so easily besets us. To know what is the most disturbing response to any condition we are in of joy or sorrow comes easily to the law of sin. It can make us mad, or resentful, or sorry for ourselves, or bitter, or lustful, or stingy. It can sow seeds of doubt in our lives. It can make us indifferent and apathetic.

Remaining sin is the biggest enemy within every single Christian.

So, no amount of explaining to people the "but I say unto you" laws will make the non-believer have the Spirit within them that gives them the nature to obey the internal. The unregenerate heart is wicked and telling it to not lust or to not be angry is useless. (Obeying the internal is itself imprecise phrase; the internal is a given for those who are indwelt by the Spirit. But, sadly, that internal new nature will not be 100% our nature until glory.) Because we are new creatures, we have that new nature in us, even as the flesh does what we do not want it to do. The emphasis needs to be on this: here is who you are in Christ; here is how you are meant to live in Him; here is how living in Him should be manifesting itself. If it is not manifesting itself that way, look to Him. The battle (to quote a recent Reid Ferguson sermon in Gal. 5) is not the flesh vs. the law but the Spirit vs. the flesh. The flesh cannot overcome that which it loves: sin. The Spirit in us will prevail."Ed T

2. THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IS TO RESIST SIN TO THE POINT OF DEATH.

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So Jesus uses a very extreme example, we call it hyperbole to show us how much we should hate sin.

But hating sin is not enough. A mere attempt to keep external law is not enough. Loving Christ first is the goal. Growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ is the way to mortifying-overcoming sin. It is because of the supernatural internal change that we are able to do what we are commanded out of love.

We have indicatives and imperatives. What we should look like and what we are to do. Neither is possible apart from Christ and His indwelling Spirit.

If a man's mind and heart are not set on righteous things now that he is a believer, and he doesn't sense a war going on between the law of his heart/mind (aka the indwelling spirit) with the law of sin in his members, then John is pretty blunt in 1 John and Paul in Romans to say he does not belong to Him.

Imputed righteousness is more than a covering.

It's more than a declaration that you won't be held responsible bc Jesus' innocence is credited to you. – Jesus BECAME sin and we BECOME righteous.

The fact that the law of sin in our flesh is not fully dead yet does not minimize the fact that we have been reborn with a righteous nature – and the majority of our behavior should reveal it.

The Law of righteousness in our mind is alive, active, and leading us triumphantly. The law of sin in our members is kicking and screaming as it dies...but who will save us from it? Thanks be to God through Christ Jesus our Lord. My members may still be enticed by that sin law as it dies, but now there is no condemnation now for those in Christ Jesus...who came and condemned sin in the flesh SO THAT the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us who walk by way of the Spirit.

I think we generally have the issue backwards.

It's not that our sanctification is progressing, but primarily that our sin nature in the flesh is dying. If anything is progressing it's our understanding of our new self, made

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from the seed of God, filled with His Spirit who is our union with Christ and our
righteous nature.

The NT Scriptures don't 'restrain' us like a law, as some would have them doing.

They inform, educate, teach, and enlighten us about the law/spirit/righteousness
within. They confirm for us what we already sense is right – and they only do this for
true saints. They do not serve as a law, they serve as a message of 'truth' about He
who indwells us already, and a means of distinguishing between the Law of
righteousness in our mind/heart, and the Law of sin still kicking in our members.

A people who are righteous do not need a law in the traditional sense to compel them
to do or not do. A written law would only describe their inherent nature- it tells us who
we are. The Life we live now in the flesh is by faith, faith that his payment was
sufficient, faith that He is God, and faith that I AM reborn of the Spirit and He WILL
fulfill righteousness within me. Not that he will enable me to choose right, but that He
has given me a nature that inevitably prefers right and will join the fight with this body
of death until it's dead.

We are no longer married to commands – we are married to Him. Righteousness lives
within us in perfect consistency with the written word - which is now an informer, not
a commander. That kind of traditional law is no longer necessary for those who are in
Christ. The nature produced by our rebirth from the Spirit makes us want to know and
want to act righteously. We love the word bc it can educate us about the family way.
Before the Law, in traditional form, imposed itself upon us in outward acts, and pinned
us in. Now as informer it confirms what we desire inwardly to be true and right. It is no
longer a Law for us. If it must function for someone as a Law, that person probably
does not have Christ.

This is "already" in the "already/not yet" in the sense that we are "ruled" or
"governed" from the heavenlies through the Spirit who is at work in us. This is the
"already" of the promise in Jeremiah 31:34, which, IMHO, is a grand part of the entire
Jer. 31:31-34 that tends to be forgotten, ignored, or – in the case of paedobaptists –

Under the Old Covenant, it was an external law that informed His people about Himself. Now, with the law written on the heart (vs. 33), that kind of governance or knowledge that aligns the will with its Creator is internal. John tells us in 1 John 2:26-27 that this is already a reality in those who have been "anointed by the Holy One" (1 John 2:20). 1 John 2:26-27 is an allusion to Jeremiah 31:34. Christ has anointed us with His Spirit which "abides in (us), and (we) have no need that anyone should teach (us). But as His anointing (notice the emphasis on the indicative reality here, not the Word or laws;) teaches (us) about everything - and is true and is no lie, just as it has taught (us) - (we are to) abide in Him." The "Holy One" of verse 20 is one and the same as the Light-Advocate of 1:5/2:2, the Holy Standard by which all righteousness (and unrighteousness) is measured. It is that Judge-Advocate-Standard that has anointed us with His Spirit... uniting us to Himself through the Spirit. Summary: John understands the "knowledge" that has been placed in us (vs. 26-27) as Personified in the Holy One (vs. 20).

Let's look at two key verses from the letters of Paul that explain this duty: Romans 8:13, "if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live" Colossians 3:5, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." What is indwelling sin? Paul is specific, "I'm talking about sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed." Christian, these sins belong to your earthly nature. Such sins are latent in every single regenerate heart. We can huff and puff that we are not capable of sinking so low: " But Paul built his life and his strategy on one peculiar fact - his own infirmities.

It is well for us to build our lives upon the same platform, our spiritual weakness and our remaining ability to be tempted. What are we to do with whatever belongs to our earthly nature? Paul says, "Kill those sins! Mortify them." Don't explain and don't condone; don't nourish, don't cherish and don't tolerate. You are indwelt by Jesus

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Christ. You are a new creation in him. You are a son of God. Be what you are. Live according to what you are. You have no right to live like someone over whom the Lord Jesus Christ has no influence at all. How can you as someone who has been redeemed from sin by the death of the Lamb of God continue to make excuses for sin? It is it is ridiculous and illogical. It does happen, but you must get into a mind set where you never think of sinning as being tolerable but something that you hate more as you love Christ more.

So the relentless battle with remaining sin is the context of these words of Jesus in the words of our text,

"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'" (vv.43-48).