

Sinlessness Is The Key To Being Right Before God

Description

Sinlessness Is The Key To Being Right Before God

A study related to the SDA
Sabbath School Lesson for 2021, 4th Quarter
Present Truth In Deuteronomy
Week 9
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This week's lesson is entitled, "Turn Their Hearts," and discusses the need for repentance.

One of the discussion questions for Friday asks,

"What is the only way we can be right before God?" Sabbath School Quarterly Lesson, Friday, November 26, 2021

So, let's look at a few scriptures that answer this question. 1 John 3:7-10 reads,

⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. ⁸ He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

¹⁰ In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor *is* he who does not love his brother. – 1 John 3:7-10

So, according to 1 John, not sinning and instead doing righteousness is the only way to be right before God.

Many Christians have the mistaken impression that to be right with God, all we need to do is to claim Jesus as our Lord and Savior, and that this will cause God to see us as though we have the righteousness of Christ, even while still harboring sin in our hearts.

But being right before God is, in principle, no different from being right before anybody – your boss, your spouse, your child, your friend, etc. Can you imagine stealing office supplies then telling your boss that he should see you as righteous because you have the righteousness of Christ? Of course not. But some think that God is different in this regard – that He views the Christian as righteous even when they are not. In reality, God doesn't see less of our sins than other people do; He sees more of them. In fact, Scripture tells us plainly that God sees our sins and it rebukes those who think God doesn't see their sins (see Jeremiah 16:17 and Psalm 94:1-11, for example). Yet, it's common for Christians to think that God sees them as righteous even while they still sin in real life. It is thought that we can't help but sin in this life and that sin will somehow magically disappear from our hearts when we get to heaven.

Ellen White cleared up any misconceptions about this. She said,

“...the character you bear in probationary time will be the character you will have at the coming of Christ. If you would be a saint in heaven, you must first be a saint on earth. The traits of character you cherish in life will not be changed by death or by the resurrection. You will come up from the grave with the same disposition you manifested in your home and in society. Jesus does not change the character at His coming. The work of transformation must be done now. Our daily lives are determining our destiny.” Ellen White, *Adventist Home*, p. 16

Now some assume that humans are unable to be or become righteous. But this is not what scripture tells us.

Genesis 4:7 narrates a conversation between God and Cain after Cains offering was rejected. It reads,

⁷ If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you refuse to do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires you, but you must master it. – Genesis 4:7

God was offering Cain an opportunity to repent, to turn from doing wrong and instead do what is right. This is the standard for acceptance by God. God tells Cain that he must master sin.

Paul also communicated the same standard for acceptance by God. Romans 6:12 reads,

¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. – Romans 6:12

Notice that Paul says the same thing here that Ellen said, that we are not to let sin reign in our **mortal** bodies – the bodies we have before Christ returns.

Paul says further down in the same chapter that,

²⁰ ...when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. – Romans 6:20

In other words, if you sin, you are “righteousness free,” or to say it another way – not righteous. There is no allowance for sin before God. There is no conflation of the “righteousness of Christ” and any known sin in our hearts.

To have the righteousness of Christ is to have the same righteousness as Christ (1 John 3:7). It is not to have a fake righteousness, where we are not actually righteous but only considered righteous by God even though we still harbor sin in our hearts. Would that even be just? Would that scenario embody truth? No.

Now, it is true that all **have** sinned. Paul says,

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed... – Romans 3:23-25

All have sinned only because all have **chosen** to sin. But Paul does not say that all must continue to sin, or that all had to sin in the first place. Paul says quite the opposite, as we saw in Romans 6:12. Notice in verse 25 of Romans 3, Paul says that God will blot out all sins **previously** committed. Paul does not say that God passes over our sins, past, present and future, but only those in the past. This offer from God is very gracious indeed. But this justification, again, comes only when we stop knowingly sinning and stop falling short of the glory of God (verse 23). Only those sins that stay in the past because they have been repented of will be passed over by God.

Paul says in Romans 5:12 that,

¹² ... just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— Romans 5:12

We know that Adam's sin really started a cascade of disaster. Death spread to all men, again, because all sinned. But it did not have to be this way, as God told Cain. Cain could have mastered sin, but instead, he chose to be a slave to sin. It was his free choice. It is our free choice still today, and for eternity.

We choose who our master will be. Paul said,

¹⁶ Do you not know that to whomever you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, you are slaves to whomever you obey, whether sin, leading to death, or obedience, leading to righteousness? – Romans 6:16

We aren't automatically slaves to sin just by being human. No; we become slaves to sin by serving sin – by obeying it as our master. But if we stop obeying falsehood and instead obey the truth as it is in Jesus, we will no longer be a slave to sin and can instead live Jesus' righteous life. In the very next verse, Paul says,

¹⁷ But thanks be to God that you were slaves of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart the pattern of teaching to which you were entrusted, ¹⁸ and having been set free from sin, you became enslaved to righteousness. – Romans 6:17-18

Earlier, when speaking of taking up our cross, as it were, and dying the death of Christ in our own life, Paul said,

⁶ ...knowing this, that our old man was crucified together with him, in order that the body of sin may be done away with, that we may no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For the one who has died has been freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, because he has been raised from the dead, is going to die no more, death no longer being master over him. ¹⁰ For that death he died, he died to sin once and never again, but that life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ So also you, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its desires, ¹³ and do not present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who are alive from the dead, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will not be master over you, because you are not under law, but under grace.” – Romans 6:6-14

So, it is plainly declared that we don't have to have sin as our master. And, as we know, we cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). So, if we sin, we have sin as our master, and we thus don't have God as our master and so obviously, we can't be right before God. The only way to be right before God is to do what Paul said in the verses we've been reading – that is, we need to obey the gospel of truth and righteousness – to not let sin reign in our mortal bodies, but instead, to offer ourselves (our whole being) to God as one dead to sin, but alive, living the sinless life of Christ. We can't do this in our own strength, but all things are possible through Christ. He is a complete Savior and is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the throne of God (Jude 24).

Sinlessness is the key to being right before God. We must overcome our sin today. And overcoming sin is what the gospel is all about. For more on the true gospel of Christ, please see our study, “[The Lost Gospel of Christ](#),” by [Trent Wilde](#).