

July 26, 2011
Anti-Christ's Potent Strategy:
Convince People They Haven't Sinned

***"For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.
Therefore, he who rejects this instruction
does not reject man but God, Who gives you His Holy Spirit"***
(1 Thessalonians 4:7,8).

Throughout the Bible we find our Father calling for *purity, holiness and righteousness* in those who belong to Him. These virtues reflect the ongoing work of the Spirit of Christ in His people, and set apart His own from the frantic pursuit of self-gratification and fleshly appeasement that the world so doggedly pursues. Yet, so many self-professed "Christians" we encounter bring up their sinful attitudes and actions like they're some kind of small, personal problems — things they don't see any need to eliminate. They have no idea how their worldly-oriented point of view quenches and grieves the Holy Spirit (if, indeed, He is indwelling them), nor how the name of Jesus is brought down before unbelievers by attitudes and actions that violate God's Word and His character. If you realize that you are habitually giving way to besetting sins you refuse to forsake, please pause right now before our awesome God and repent (Hebrews 12:1).

Our gracious Father has made sure that His own can know *His* view of tolerated sin in our lives. His Spirit and His Word have made sure of that! The Apostle John offers a particularly intense presentation of the difference between people's deceived view of sin that can *cohabit with fellowship* and our Father's perspective on sin's utter darkness which *prevents authentic fellowship* with Him. Weigh in your spirit these excerpts from the Book of 1 John, and ask yourself if you've been using the term "fellowship" in ways that have nothing to do with union with our holy Lord.

"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.

- ***And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.***
- ***If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.***
- ***But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.***
- ***If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.***
- ***If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***
- ***If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives"*** (1 John 1:3,6-10).

We hope you recognize how weighty these proclamations are. By our Father's own holy standard, we *can't* have fellowship with Him or His Son Jesus, nor with each other, if we hold onto the darkness of sin. Authentic fellowship must start with our Father and Jesus through walking in the light of a repentant life cleansed from "all unrighteousness." Only then can we share true fellowship with one another. How far the biblical meaning of "fellowship" has fallen in westernized, *self-focused* Christendom! It appears that as long as people feel good about themselves and each other and have a fun time together, that's "fellowship". Yet how few examine their own hearts, attitudes and actions for sin before our Lord so that they might *agree with HIM* how heinous these sins are (the definition of 'confession'), and then *turn away from them* in order to follow His ways by the power the Spirit has given each of Christ's own.

"Fellowship" among those who call themselves *Christian* (which is an identifying term meaning *one who follows Christ*) is awash with those who have deceived themselves that they *have no sin*. And, from the world's perspective, they look pretty good by comparison. (After all, what's a little bitterness or slander or idolatry when others are stealing and murdering?) Yet because so few explore with the *mind of Christ* His Word so they can even recognize what pleases Father and what repels Him, *compromise with the world's ways* is rampant among self-professed Christians. No wonder contemporary Christianity is powerless and impotent in the face of the darkness that is covering this nation.

If we refuse to identify and repent of what *our Father* considers sin according to His Word, we deceive ourselves, and *"the truth is not in us."* Please, take the time to meaningfully read all three of John's brief but powerful letters and note how often he uses the words "true" and "truth." Many deceive themselves when they refuse to ascertain if they're sinning against our Father. John's description of them is painfully apt: *"His word has no place in [their] lives."* Recognizing when you sin and confessing it to Him in genuine repentance is the vital link that keeps you living in truth and in authentic fellowship with our Father and Jesus, and with one another.

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So many we hear from have been duped by false teachers who say that God's righteous and holy Law has been done away with. These blithely mouth, "We are not under the Law, but grace!" But what *misuse* of Father's grace that we in Christ are no longer under the *curse of death* for our violations (Galatians 3:13). Rather, by His Spirit we can live to please our Father in the ways He has set forth in His Word. In Christ we *can* love our Lord more than we love fleshly gratification, and show that love by our actions.

Our Father put *1,050 commands* in the Newer Testament, besides the hundreds of instructions in the Hebrew Scripture. *All* are founded on the greatest command: to *love*

the Lord our God with all that is within us, and to *love* our neighbor as ourselves (Luke 10:27). *Love* is the underlying motive for the commands Father has enunciated. When we sin, we're showing that we *aren't* loving God or our neighbor. God's commands help us to recognize sin from HIS perspective, in other words, as *utterly sinful* (Romans 7:13). Therefore, He makes clear in His Word that which constitutes a righteous and pleasing life toward him and toward one another.

Many of His commands reveal what *He* considers to be sin, a violation of His parameters for a Spirit-led, obedient-trust life. Keep in mind that the opposite of His law isn't grace, but lawless-ness—living outside His parameters! God's Law, which actually means His teachings about righteous living, still applies to our lives. *His wisdom* surrounds His commands; therefore we are wise to pay attention to them. By His Spirit we no longer are slaves to our sinful nature; we don't have to give way to our fleshly desires. We now have *His* power to strengthen us to live as He wants us to out of loving regard for Him!

If you still think that God's law, which details both sinful violations as well as proactive loving enactment, is invalid for Jesus followers, then consider this. Why would John keep pressing home the point regarding habitual sin: "*The man who says, 'I know Him,' but **does not keep His commandments [God's laws] is a liar, and the truth is not in him***" (1 John 2:4). As in the apostle's time, there's a tendency in man-centered, westernized Christendom to separate a person's belief system from his actions and lifestyle. That's why so many within certain denominations candidly assure people that they're "saved" even if their lives continue to overflow with sin *after* they've "prayed the sinner's prayer"! But look at the unalterable Word of God and HIS perspective on this palatable yet deadly lie. As the apostle warns, "**No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God**" (1 John 3:6,9; see also John 14:21-24; 1 Corinthians 7:19; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6; James 2:8-11).

Again, why would a Jesus follower want to live according to the teaching/instructions/*commands* of God's Word? Because we evidence our LOVE for Him in our responsive obedience. Our desire to please Him by the outworking of His commands in our lives is *our response to His love* for us (1 John 4:19). The Spirit circumcises our hearts so that our motives for obedience are pure (Romans 2:29). Then our lives exhibit the "*obedience that accompanies our confession of Christ's gospel*", and God is praised for that obedience (2 Corinthians 9:13)

You don't keep His commands so that He will *love* you more—He has already shown you the extent of His love by bearing the death penalty you deserve for your sin! Nor do you walk according to His commands to win praise from others about what a "fine Christian" you are. Drawing attention to yourself brings our Father no glory. (See our Hebraic Article: *The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*, for discussion on the pitfall of "legalistic perversion", which means trying to *earn acceptance and favor* from God through your own good actions.)

A concluding thought:

You can tell from recent news broadcasts that something *awful* is taking place in this nation at a rate no one could have foreseen. In the last 40 years God has mourned the murder of more than 50 million unborn babies in this nation alone, and multiple millions more worldwide. So few of His people have actively come alongside the desperate moms to encourage them to choose life for their children so that eager childless couples might joyfully adopt them. Homosexual "marriages" are now being sanctioned throughout this nation, blaspheming the covenant union God established to depict His relationship first with His wife Israel (see Jeremiah 31:32) and then with Christ's bride, the collective called-out Church (see Revelation 19:7). Like so many over the ages, those who are called by His Son's name have sidestepped the holy, set-apart pathway He's called His people to. And now out of His severe mercy Father is allowing us to collectively feel what it's like when we lose our first love for Him and forsake His good and righteous commands. And still, the call for repentance is rarely heard...

We wish we could offer you some encouragement about the future of this nation. While we wholly trust in our Savior's promise to be with His own in the midst of any and all our trials, we feel a profound foreboding of terrible things to come. Our chief desire is that our love and trust in Jesus would remain steadfast, and that our love and service to others will not grow cold as evil continues to dominate the United States. The old worship song comes to mind as our comfort and peace: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face! And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." Amen!

Journeying with you in His faithfulness,
Mike & Sue