

Sin vs. Holy Living

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In the 1932 World Series during the fifth inning of the third game, New York Yankee slugger Babe Ruth raised his hand and pointed two fingers toward center field. On the next pitch, Babe Ruth hit a ball from Cub pitcher Charlie Root to the location Babe Ruth pointed to in the outfield stands for a homerun. Some say its true and some say it was a false story. I guess it depends if you are a Yankee fan or not. Sometimes sports athletes say things to bring excitement to the game or to motivate their team. Politicians make strong statements all the time to strengthen their narrative. On November 3, 1948, the Chicago Tribune stated that Thomas Dewey had won the election for president over Harry Truman. Actually, Truman won by a good margin. When things like this happen, it brings excitement. Babe Ruth made a strong gesture toward the outfield and the Chicago Tribune made a strong statement about the election of 1948. The Bible makes strong statements as well and sometimes we hear them so often, they no longer stay strong statements. We start to treat them like any other statement we hear or read on a daily basis. For example, we read this Scripture last week from 1 Peter 1: 15, "But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be his children – is holy. For he himself has said, 'You must be holy because I am holy. (NLT)' This is a truly strong statement that Peter is making to the Church and the Church of today that no longer believes this statement or just reads it with no emotion. Last week, we talked about using compassion as a dip stick in measuring how healthy is our holy living. We can't run away from this holiness thing. It's in Scripture and we must understand holy living must be part of our lives. So, now we must start looking at some of the ingredients of holiness. Today, we'll look at an ingredient that actually can blow apart holy living. We must look at it because it sits at the door of holy living and that is "sin". I remember one time in cooking class in High School where I put in a wrong ingredient while making cookies. I don't remember what the bad ingredient was, but my cookies turned into something that could no longer be called a cookie. Sin

is a bad ingredient that will transform holy living into something that can no longer be called holy living. So, let's take some time and look at this issue through Scripture.

Let's turn to 1 John 3: 4 – 10 where we read this, “⁴ Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's^[a] seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (ESV – Biblegateway.com).

To better understand holy living, sin needs to be looked at. In fact, John makes a very bold statement in verse 4 where he states that everyone who sins breaks the law because sin is lawlessness. We look at sin as doing wrongdoing against God. As I looked at the different translations used here and looked at some commentaries, I see that “sin” here is a deep word. Not only does this mean personal sin, but also means living a sinful lifestyle. A sinful lifestyle comes from the original sin we were born onto because of the first sin in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. From the very beginning, we are born into a sinful lifestyle. Our human nature is bent toward sin and the things of this life. So, John is telling us from this translation that a sinful lifestyle breaks the law of God and it is lawlessness. In fact, we can grow into such a state of total lawlessness such was seen in Sodom and Gomorrah. If you want to see a good example of this today, such look at the L.A. riots that went on last weekend and throughout the week. Some people see no wrong in how these demonstrations got out of hand. We're all born in the beginning stages of sin. Paul tells us this in Romans 3: 23, “For all have sinned: all fall short of God's

glorious standard. (NLT)” So, at the very beginning we are born into sin. We are born into the sinful lifestyle. Then, there is personal sin. This is more known after we have given our lives over to Jesus. John tells us in 1 John 2:2 about sin after we allow Jesus into our hearts, “My dear children, I am writing to you so that you will not sin. But if you do sin, there is someone to plead for you before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who pleases God completely. He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only our sins, but the sins of the world. (NLT). So, John is telling us that after we allow Jesus into our hearts, our past sins are forgiven. The past sin of disobedience against God. Now, our human nature that was once under the rule of the sinful lifestyle, is now directed by the Holy Spirit living inside us and we now no longer want to sin. That is why John makes that statement about not sinning, but if you do sin..... So, I want to make this very clear here, after we make the choice with the help of the Holy Spirit, to allow Jesus into our heart and mind, we are not to continue to sin willfully. Again, verse 4 that we read earlier from John is very bold, “Everyone who sins breaks the law, in fact, sin is lawlessness. (NLT)” Sin is disobedience against God period. John makes it very clear in verse 6 of chapter 3, “⁶No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. (ESV)” What’s the big deal you may ask? 1 Peter 1: 15 states, “But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be his children – is holy. For he himself has said, ‘You must be holy because I am holy. (NLT)” Sin destroys holy living. Some may say that Jesus’ death on the cross will take care of the sin we keep doing. Another way to say this is Jesus gives us a free pass. John destroys that thought with verse 8 where he stated, “The one who does what is sinful is of the devil. Because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. (NIV)” When we sin, we are lining ourselves with the devil. Our culture takes sin lightly, but we can’t. John makes another strong statement in verse 9, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them, they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. (NIV)” God’s seed is His Spirit living within us when we allow Jesus into our heart and mind which then controls our human nature where it no longer wants to be sinful. God’s seed starts to produce fruit in

our lives that changes our character and thinking into holy living. If we're controlled by His Spirit, our human nature is controlled by His Spirit which will cause us to not want to sin.

Now, if we do sin and it can happen even when we don't want to, we now have someone who can stand in our gap and save us. John states in verse 5 of chapter 3, "But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. (NIV)" John is talking about Jesus. John makes another bold statement by saying Jesus had no sin in Him even when He walked this earth fully God and fully human. Since Jesus was with no sin, He became our perfect sacrifice on the cross and He carry our sin on that cross. So, when we ask forgiveness for sin or forgiveness when we do wrong against God and mankind, Jesus will step in and put that sin onto the cross where He died. Plus, that cross was washed down by His sinless blood. So you see, it is possible to live a holy life through Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Just doing good deeds will not help you with holy living. There is no middle ground here. Our culture is full of sin and we must not take part in that sin. We must live in our culture, but we must not take part in its sin. Again, sin and holy living does not mix.

We may ask why is holy living so important? John answers that question in 1 John 2: 3-6, "³ And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. ⁴ If someone claims, 'I know God,' but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. ⁵ But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. ⁶ Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did. (NLT)" If we obey His commandments or we can say not wanting to sin, we truly show how completely we love Him. Holy living shows our love for the Trinity – God, Jesus, and Holy Spirit. We now have knowledge of God's law through His Spirit and when we do voluntary disobedience to that law, it leads to a severed relationship with our Lord. If we continue with that voluntary disobedience, it shows our love for the Lord is being destroyed through that continued sin. I caught two people having sex in a pavilion at the park some years ago. The male subject told me I was destroying his marriage of 40 years by giving him a ticket for disorderly conduct in the park. I told him his marriage was

destroyed way before I came along. He knew it was wrong because he didn't take this lady friend home to meet his wife. They met in secret at the park to do their thing. So, did he really love his wife of 40 years? If we continue to sin because we want to, then our love for God is weak or completely dead. Remember what John said earlier about lining up with the devil. That's not good. So, we don't want to sin because of our love for the Lord.

Finally, when we realize that holy living is showing and living out our love for our Lord, then we can see the fruit this holy living produces. John makes this statement in verse 10, ¹⁰ "By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (ESV – Biblegateway.com). When we don't want to sin against God and start to grow in holy living, then we'll see our compassion grow toward the people around us. We had talked about compassion last week as a dip stick in checking how our holy living is doing. Sinful living affects our compassion level greatly. Remember, real compassion from Jesus propels us to go beyond just feeling sorry for someone. Sin blocks the flow of Jesus' love in our lives and we won't be able to have real compassion for people as we should. When this happens, we're not showing love toward God. So, in closing, let's make sure we give Jesus our unconfessed sin and ask Him to help us to not sin in the time we are living in. Ask that He gives us a heart and mind that rejects sin and only wants to live out His love for us and for others. This is part of holy living.

NLT Life Application Study Bible. Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996