

Holiness or Hell- Which?



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We are living in a period of time when many religious people do not believe that people can live holy. The dictionary says that holiness means being free from sin. We read in Hebrews 12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Many church members are blindly going along believing none can live holy. They say, "It is not possible to live holy in this life." Let us see what the Bible says. Luke 1:74-75 tells us: "That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." According to this Scripture, we are to live holy right here in this life.

In Titus 2:11-12 we read these words: "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." This teaches the honest heart that he will have to live godly in this present life. In everything we do or say, we are to live holy (or free from sin). First Peter 1:15-16 states: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

There is such a great need of holy conversation today among the religious. Many people can be heard cursing, telling smutty stories, and using vulgar language, yet claiming to be Christians. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:21-22: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." Living holy in Christ Jesus simply means living free from sin. In 1 Corinthians 15:34 the Apostle Paul wrote, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not." In John 5:14 Jesus, speaking to the crippled man who was healed, said, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."

Sin not is God's standard! We read in 1 John 2:1, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." In verse 6 he wrote, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Peter tells us in 1 Peter 2:21-22 that Christ walked without sin or guile. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 2:19, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Thus, it is clear from these Scriptures that God requires a sinless life. Paul, in writing to the Romans, said: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2).

The holiness opposers will pick up texts like Ecclesiastes 7:20 to justify their living in sin. Let us look at this Scripture to gain understanding of its true meaning: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." That was true of that particular time. This was approximately 977 years before Christ. At this time sins were just atoned for, not washed away. They came with their sin offering—a lamb, an ox, or whatever they could bring—and it was killed at the brazen altar and the blood was sprinkled upon the horns and poured around the base of the altar. Not until after Jesus came was any man able to live free from sin. This was His purpose for coming into the world. Matthew 1:21 says, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Holiness opposers will refer you to Romans 3:10, which says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." If you will carefully read on down a few verses, you will find out that he is not talking about Christians but unbelievers. Look at verse 11, which says, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." This could not be a child of God because he is seeking after God. Every verse will tell you that he is not talking about Christians. Look at verse 14: "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." Then verse 17 says, "And the way of peace have they not known." Therefore, these people were never saved.

Another text that is often used against holiness is 1 John 1:8, which reads, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." John wrote this for the benefit of the Jews who said they did not need to be born again. It is also for the moral man, the self-righteous and virtuous individual, who sees no need

of being saved from sin. This Scripture is dealing with our spiritual condition before we came to Christ. This verse is actually dealing with man's carnal nature. Look back at verses 6-7: "If we say that we have fellowship with him [in other words, call yourself a Christian], and walk in darkness [live in sin], 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." So, verse 8 *cannot* be interpreted as saying that everyone sins regardless of whether they have been born again or not.

First John 3:9 states, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." As long as you have Christ dwelling within, you do not desire to sin. This does not mean that you will not be tempted with sin, but, thank God, you will not have to yield to that temptation. In 1 John 3:8 we read, "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." If we are not able to live free from sin today, then Jesus failed in His mission. Since we know He did not fail, then the holiness opposers must be wrong!

Let us look again at 1 John 1:7. It says, "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 the blood cleanseth us from *all* sin, could there be any left? We read in Isaiah 59:1-2: "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Then, Psalm 66:18 tells us, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." John 9:31 says, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

First Corinthians 6:18 states, "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body." Ezekiel 18:20 states, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The body may carry out the act of sin, but the soul is guilty of sin whether the body carries out an act or not. We learn this from Jesus' own teaching. In Matthew 5:28 Jesus said, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." When a sin is committed in the heart, that person is a sinner though he may never carry out the act.

In 1 John 3:15 we read, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." He may never physically or verbally threaten his brother. He may only have bitter hatred in his heart. Again, the soul is sinning even when the body cannot carry out a single act. You can be a liar and not tell the lie with your mouth. As soon as you resolve, "When I am asked about this matter, I will lie," then you are a sinner. Sin is resolving to do wrong. A man may decide in his mind, "If I ever get a chance, I will steal that thing." Although he may never get a chance to actually steal the article, he is yet guilty of an evil thought.

Luke 15:7 tells us, "I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." People who are saved (born of the Spirit of God) do not need to repent of sins. They have already done that. Proverbs 28:13 states, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Again, the Scripture is telling us that we must forsake our sins to obtain mercy from God.

Often we hear the term "sinning Christians." There is no such thing! The word *Christian* means "Christlike with-in." So, one who follows Christ and adheres to His teachings is a Christian. If you could find a "sinning Christian" then you could also find an honest thief and a truthful liar. The very fact that one lies makes him untruthful; the very fact that a thief steals proves that he is not honest. Therefore, one who sins cannot, while sinning, be a Christian. A Christian does not commit sin. If he commits sin, he is a sinner. It all comes down to this: it is either holiness here or hell hereafter.

When God made man in the beginning, He said, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). The soul of man was made in the image of God—holy. We read in Colossians 3:10, "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Holiness is the minimum standard for God's people. First Thessalonians 4:7 says, "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." Finally, Jesus said, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). Jesus was holy, and He was our perfect example. God provided for us to be holy by sending His Son, Jesus, to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

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