

**Study Notes: 1 John 1:8-2:2**  
**July 5, 2020: “The Sin Problem”**  
**Prepared by Reverend Robert W. Rice**  
**Pastor, Muncy Baptist Church**

***If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.***

- After making the foundational statement that God is light (1 John 1:5), John explored how the problem of sin relates to this statement, as well as how sin can be dealt with. He already made the statement that the blood of Jesus, alone, can purify us from sin (1 John 1:7), but now he has moved on to discuss how we can find the cleansing power of Jesus’ blood.
- Using an “if-then” statement, John discussed an inappropriate way to deal *with the problem of sin*. It does not work to simply make the claim that we are without sin. This claim is from a false teaching that stated that it was possible to not engage in sinful behavior. That statement is false and full of deception. The fact that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God is a foundational truth which runs throughout Scripture (Proverbs 20:9, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Isaiah 53:6, Romans 3:23).
- The problem with saying we have no sin is that it keeps us from seeking after the truth and from seeking after Jesus Christ. This is the very attitude that the religious leaders of Jesus’ day displayed, and it had kept them from accepting Jesus (see John 9:41).

***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***

- John’s second if-then statement provides an appropriate way to deal *with our sin problem*. In order to deal with our sins, we must confess our sins so that Jesus may forgive and purify us from sin and its effects. The idea of confession is tied closely to the idea of repentance, which is the very message that Jesus brought when He came to this earth (see Matthew 4:17).
- Much like the foundational truth that all have sinned, the idea of confession and forgiveness is also a truth that runs throughout Scripture (Exodus 34:7, Proverbs 28:13, Romans 5:8). In making this statement, John explained that confession (and forgiveness) is what leads to fellowship with God.

***If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.***

- Once again, John began an if-then statement with an inappropriate way to deal *with sin and its consequences*. This statement directly addresses a false teaching that claimed it was possible and necessary to live a sinless life in order to have fellowship with God. To make the claim that you have not sinned, is to call Jesus a liar and to deny the word of God.
- The New American Commentary explains, “The claim to be ‘without sin’ probably arose from John’s opponents’ understanding that fellowship with a holy God required one to be sinless. Verses 8 and 10 are essentially parallel: the heretics argued that the condition for fellowship with the Father is sinlessness. Therefore they claimed to be sinless. Yet in this very claim they rejected God’s word (1:10; i.e., the truth God has revealed in Jesus, 1:8), deceived themselves, and made God out to be a liar. Sinlessness is theirs by virtue of life in Christ alone. It cannot be located merely within themselves.”

***My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.***

- John's purpose in writing about the problem of sin and the solution that comes through Jesus Christ, was not written as a license to sin (as some false teachers taught), but as an injunction to follow his earlier command to walk in the light (see 1 John 1:5-7).
- However, John recognized that we will still sin, and wanted us to know that we have an advocate in Jesus Christ. In identifying Jesus as the advocate, John pointed to the ministry that Jesus has on our behalf; interceding with the Father and taking the penalty for our sins, while granting us His righteousness. The New American Commentary provides a nice summary, "In short, Jesus is now in the Father's presence as the eternal High Priest, who, having atoned for the sins of his people, now stands as their effective Advocate to ensure that their sins do not disqualify them from fellowship with the Father."
- John further leaned on the righteousness of Jesus by identifying Him as the Righteous One who provided the atoning sacrifice for our sins. The Righteous One is an allusion to the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah in Jeremiah 23:5-6 and Isaiah 53:11.

***He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.***

- The idea of *atonement* is the idea of cleansing from sin, which comes from the Old Testament practice of sacrifice. Christ was the sacrifice that cleansed us and gave us a right relationship with God.
- The New American Commentary further explains, "The considerations above require that at the very least, Jesus' 'atoning sacrifice' involved the propitiation of God's wrath by taking on the punishment due for the sins that needed removal (expiation). Fellowship with God is possible because the sins that caused offense to God have been removed through Jesus' atoning sacrifice, so that God's wrath no longer abides on those who have fled for refuge in the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."
- John's closing statement often gives scholars pause, because on the surface it could be interpreted to mean that Jesus' work on the cross provides salvation for the whole world, even if they don't believe in Jesus. However, John did not intend to say that Jesus' work on the cross provides this benefit to everyone, but that it could and would be enough to provide this benefit to everyone, if they would follow the steps of action that he laid out in the verses of Scripture. As the New American Commentary notes, "Universal in *provision* is not to be equated with universal in *application*."