

Going to God: Sin that Separates, Repentance that Reconciles, and the War between

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear, but your iniquities have separated you from your God.” Isaiah 59:1-2

As the small groups meet to treasure God together tomorrow, I know what will prevent some of us from doing so, and this passage makes it absolutely clear: Our sin.

The great reality of Jesus crucified and risen is this: He suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. The great problem with sin is not first that it brought sickness into the world. The problem with sin is not mainly that you lost the ability to live forever. The problem with sin is NOT that you now face suffering in this life; those are all symptoms of the one main, chronic effect:

Your Sin separated you from God, and, if you do not continually turn from it, keeps you separated from God.

When I sin against my wife, and therefore, against God, I buy into the lie that Sin is superior to Him. When I Sin and lust in my heart, I am acting out of my unbelief in God. Does this make me an unbeliever? Not necessarily. 1 John makes two startling claims that we must understand in order to know our condition.

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” 1 John 1:8
“If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word is not in us.”
1 John 1:10

These verses make it plain: we still sin. However, consider what John also says:

“No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him” 1 John 3:6

Which then is it?

A simple look at other translations and the Greek text shows us that in 1 John 3:4, 7, 8, 9 and 10, the word is “practices”. That is to say, it seems this text does not say anyone who commits just one sin cannot be born again, but that those who make a “practice” of their sins cannot be born again. This, I believe, is why John gives us the sentence in 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

All sinning is evil and wicked, and all of it should be stopped...AND, there is a sinning that is practiced, that is, it is repeated...maybe every day, maybe every week...that if not repented of and killed, it will kill us by blinding us to God and His glory.

We are NOT a perfect people, meaning we have a sinless state. But we are a Repentant people; a grieving-over-our-sin people. A hating-of-that-which-blinds-us-to-God-and-His-glory people. I believe that there are only two types of people in the world...those who sin, and those who sin and repent. Sinners, and repentant sinners.

It does not matter whether it is lying, lust, anger, bitterness, rage, homosexual desires, covetousness, or greed; anyone who makes a practice of sinning is not born of God (1 John 3:9). The question we must ask ourselves is: Am I in love with my sin? Do I even believe it is sinful? Do I hate my sin? Am I fighting against it daily? Do I abhor that which separates me from knowing and seeing and treasuring and enjoying God? Or have I made peace with my sin?

The sorrowful and ugly reason so many struggle to see God, is because their ongoing sin blinds them (Matt 5:8). I am stunned too often by my own blindness, and it leads me to question: Am I Alive? Am I His?

Brothers and Sister, we cannot make peace with our ongoing sin. As John the Baptists said to the pharisees, "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Luke 3:8), or Paul speaking to King Agrippa, "I preached that they should repent and turn to God, and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds." (Acts 26:20).

A life of holiness begins with Repentance. That does NOT mean say sorry and go about our day...it means we turn from, stop, kill, hate, abhor, make war on our sin. Repentance produces fruit...it produces action...but not apart from the Sovereign power of God: we are not alone in this fight. "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but *If by the Spirit* you put to death the misdeeds of the body you will live. *For, those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.*" Romans 8:13,14

By the Spirit we put to death our sin...and this is how we know we are the children of God. Children of God fight. Children of the Devil do not. Children of God LOVE their Father, and HATE when their sin gets in the way of them GOING to HIM! Children of the devil prefer going to their sin than to God, and therefore make little or no effort to kill their sin. This is How we know we are His.

Therefore, encourage one another, lift one another up, be gentle with each other, help your Brothers/Sisters, and spur one another on with these words: For the sake of going to God,

MAKE WAR ON YOUR SIN!

Brothers and sisters, it does not get any more serious than this. I hope that some of you will speak these words to me this week. O how we need each other in this battle. He is Better!
Jesus is Better!