

1 John and 2 & 3 John

Lesson 3 (1 John 1 & 2)

“How Can a Holy God Have Mercy on an Unrighteous Man?”

“Hell, sin, the Lake of Fire, I don’t believe in it. Don’t tell me that a God of love (you do say that He is a God of love of love, don’t you?) would let any man go to Hell. Hell? Sin? I don’t buy it.” You had better buy it because if you don’t, you are going to end up there.

Let’s pray:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, we bow before thee and we ask of thee today to reveal to us the holiness of a Your Being that requires the payment of the wrath upon sin. O, God, I ask you to expose any false teaching that we are swallowing that’s loaded with cyanide that will lead us to death. Lord, expose it and show us that, "Woe be unto those who call evil good and good evil." Show us the reality of your righteousness and holiness that must have sin propitiated. If not, Father, show us the just penalty of sin, which is Hell and the Lake of Fire. Anoint now so we will know the teaching that comes from You. In Your name we pray. Amen.

In 1 John 1, we see the issue of sin and people walking in it. We will look at the book of First John, at the issue of sin, and the way God deals with it and the necessity for God to be propitiated when man sins. In Isaiah, chapter 5, notice some “woes.”

Isaiah 5:18 – Woe to those who drag iniquity with the cords of falsehood, and sin as if with cart ropes; who say, “Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the purpose of the Holy One of Israel draw near and come to pass, that we may know it!”

These people were dragging sin behind them but were being warned over and over again that a just and holy God must deal with sin. They were saying that God has not dealt with it. “Prove that a holy God is upset that we are walking in sin, and that God will deal with it. You’ve been telling me about it for years now.” The prophet cried, “Woe be unto those who call evil good, and good evil.” A holy, righteous God cannot tolerate sin; He must judge sin. Isaiah 5:18: These people were saying that He had not dealt with it yet, had He? The cyanide that they were taking was a slow acting one until it had rotted them away and there was no chance for recovery.

Isaiah 5:20-24 – Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight! Woe to those who are heroes in drinking wine and valiant men in mixing strong drink, who justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right! Therefore, as tongues of fire consumes stubble and dry grass collapses into the flame, so their root will become like rot and their blossom blow away as dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 5:25 — On this account the anger of the Lord has burned against His people, and He has stretched out His hand against them and struck them down. And the mountains quaked, and their corpses lay like refuse in the middle of the streets. For all this His anger is not spent, but His hand is still stretched out.

They did not want to listen to God’s word or hear truth. They wanted to walk in their own darkness and glory in their own shame. They did not even call it shame because they called evil good and good evil. Now (in our time) they say that He is the God of the Old Testament. The God of the New Testament is different; He’s a God love. The God of the Old Testament is a God

of wrath. They do not want to hear about the God of the Old Testament. They think that God has changed. But, we know that He is the same yesterday, today and forever. If He is the same yesterday, today and forever, how can He be a God of love and a God of wrath?

We need to understand that our God is a God of love but is holy and righteous and must also be a God of wrath. His holiness and righteousness demand punishment of iniquity, of sin.

Isaiah 5:25b — For all this His anger is not spent, but His hand is still stretched out.

The wrath of God is right now upon every person who refuses to bow the knee to Jesus Christ and come to Him and believe in and submit to Him and walk in the light as He is in the light. At the same time the hand of God is stretched out, saying that He is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9) but that all should come to a knowledge of Jesus Christ and have life.

What brings me to God that I may have life? It is a knowledge that I am a sinner and need desperately to be saved. It is the knowledge that within me there dwells no good thing and therefore I cannot save myself, try as I may. I cannot be good or righteous or holy so I need to go running to God. There I find Jesus, the propitiation of my sins but also the sins of the whole world.

1 John 1:6-10 – If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth, but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

1 John 2:1-2 — My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

In 1 John, verses 6-10, John is talking about people who were deluded, who were taking a form of poison that would lead to death. They say that they had fellowship with God but were lying. They were deceived and were calling God a liar. They were calling evil good and good evil.

Christendom will always have its enemies. 2 Corinthians tells us that those enemies appear to the body of Christ as angels of light and 2 Peter, chapter 2 says, as false prophets seeking to lead people astray by feeding them a false doctrine. In John's time, there was a group of people who had crept into the church who claimed they were not sinners. They said they were made of spirit and matter and that which is spiritual is good and that which is matter is evil. Therefore, the physical does not affect the spiritual so nothing they did physically affected them spiritually.

1 John 1:6 – If we say that we have fellowship (share in common) with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

There are many parallels between the Gospel of John and the epistles of John. Obviously there would be because these two books have the same author.

John 3:16-17 — For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

John 3:18 — He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

God did not send the Son to judge or condemn the world. Jesus came to say that you are a sinner and that He is our Savior so that you do not have to spend eternity in Hell. He came that the world might be saved.

John 3:19-21 – This is the judgment, that the Light (Jesus) has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.

So Jesus is the Light.

John 1:8-9 — (speaking of John the Baptist) He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

Men don't want Light *for their deeds were evil*. They love their evil deeds and want darkness. If they come into the Light, their deeds will be exposed as evil. They would then have to acknowledge that their deeds were evil and that they were sinners, transgressors of God's Law. But, if they were walking in evil, they would not go to the Light because it would expose their deeds and show that they are evil. They claimed to be walking in the Light but they were not, because darkness and Light are incompatible. Either they were in darkness or were in Light. These are two opposite realms. They may say that had fellowship with God but were lying.

What is God saying to you in all this? You may say that you are a Christian and belong to God but if you are walking in darkness, it does not matter what you are saying — God says that you are lying.

Notice two “ifs.”

The first “if” is:

1 John 1:7 – But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

The word *cleanses* is in the present tense in the Greek — the blood keeps on cleansing. In other words, as in the Gospel of John, that when I walk in the Light, I come to the Light so that my deeds might be exposed so that I will know whether they are wrought in God or not. Then I can see if some deed of mine is of the flesh. I can then confess it and forsake it and can keep on walking in the Light. As I do, that Light constantly exposes my sin and I am continually cleansed from my sin. I do so because I desire to walk in the Light, to have fellowship with God, to please God and belong to God.

The second “if” is:

1 John 1:8 – If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

First of all, we can say that we are walking in fellowship with God but we are lying because we are walking in darkness. Secondly, we say that we have no problem with sin.

“Have no sin” is in the present tense. If I deny the fact that I have no sin, then I am deceiving myself because I am living in a body of flesh where sin is a problem. The flesh lusts against the spirit. See the book of Galatians. It is speaking to Christians.

Galatians 5:16 – But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

This is saying that as long as you are in this body of flesh, you are going to have a problem with it. You may have victory as long as you walk in the Spirit. But the flesh will constantly be pulling you the other way and saying, "Give me, Give me, Give me." The Holy Spirit in you will be saying, "No! Holy, holy, holy." So you are in a conflict. You cannot walk any way you please. You have to choose to walk by the Spirit because the flesh and the Spirit are in constant conflict with and in opposition to one another. To say that you have no problem with sin, that you can walk and live any way you want is deception. That is why Paul said, "I groan and long to put on that heavenly tent from above. I long to get out of this physical body." He said that because this body is made of flesh and it has to die so that it can be redeemed also just as your spirit and soul are redeemed.

1 Corinthians 15:53 — For this perishable must put on imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. For when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying, "Death is swallowed up in victory."

1 John 1:8-9 – If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I'll never forget when Joan came to Reach Out. (She is in charge of our tape ministry now.) I was in Washington when I met her. I asked her to tell me about her Christianity. I found out she did not like to read the Bible, which she thought it was boring, and did not understand it. I told her then that she was not saved. She said she had done what she was supposed to do. I told her that whatever she did, it did not take. When I went to Washington again, I asked her how she was doing. She said that she was not doing any better. The next time I went there, I asked her to come to Reach Out. She came and God saved her in front of the Red Food Store in the parking lot. When we got into the store, I asked her if she knew what today was. She said, "It's my birthday." I said, "Happy Birthday." I rolled a can of something down the aisle, and as she picked it up she said, "I'm born-again."

She was so changed that when she got off the plane on her way home, her mother looked at her and before she ever talked to her, knew that her daughter was different. Her mother got in her car and drove all the way from the state of Washington back to Reach Out. She said, "I've come to get what Joan has." I told her that that was wonderful. I told her that Jesus came to die for her sins. She said that she was not a sinner, that she had been good all her life. While we were driving from Atlanta, where I had been teaching, to Chattanooga, I took the Ten Commandments and I just cut her to shreds with them until I left her bleeding. She was then sitting, leaning against the back seat of the car, and tears were just streaming down her face. I had given her the true Gospel. She had to see that she was a sinner. Then, seeing her sin, she had to see that God had to be merciful to her, a sinner, and that God had to redeem her and take care of that sin. When she saw her sin, she invited Christ to come into her life. I think it was not ten days later that a phone call came to Joan from her dad. He told her that he had just backed over her mother with their boat and our motor home. He had found the boat or the motor home, whichever it was, over her body. She died, but she stepped into life because she saw that she was a sinner:

1 John 1:9 — If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The word *confess* in the Greek is *homologeō*. It means to say the same thing, to speak the same word about you, about your sin, about your condition.

1 John 1:9 is a promise. I believe it goes with salvation because when you come to Jesus Christ, you must see yourself as a sinner. It not only is for the day of salvation but it is for the rest of the days of my life. Even though I am delivered from the power of sin, I am still able to commit sins. When I do, where do I go? I go God, to the "fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins." If I step over to the side of God and really look at myself and I say, "God,

you are right. This is sin, not holiness or righteousness. I agree with you. It is sin and is worthy of my death and is punishable by death. If I confess my sins, God is faithful and just to forgive my sins and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. The blood of Christ keeps on cleansing me from all sin. It means, as a Christian, if I confess my sin but am not even aware of others that I have committed, I am forgiven of all of them because I am walking in the Light as He is in the Light. Therefore, the blood of Jesus continues to cleanse me from all sin.

The New Covenant said that God would take away their sins; their iniquities He will remember no more. (Ezekiel 36.)

1 John 1:10 – If we say that we have not sinned, (aorist tense – a snapshot in time, a completed action) we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

If we say that we have never sinned, we make God a liar and His Word is not in us. We are calling evil good and good evil.

Romans 3:9-12 – What then? Are we (Jews) better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become useless. There is none who does good; there is not even one.”

He goes on to describe how horrible we are with the use of our throats, lips, with our feet and all the sin and iniquity we have done. Then John concludes that:

Romans 3:23 — for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

High above is the glory of God, absolute holiness, and absolute righteousness. Man is down here – no matter how hard he tries, on his own he can never attain to the absolute righteousness and holiness of God. All have sinned. If I then say that I have not sinned, then I make God a liar and I don't need a Savior. And if I don't think I need a Savior, I will not seek one and then end up in Hell, in the Lake of Fire because I believed a lie.

If I admit that I am a sinner and fall short of the glory of God and also that God is righteous and holy, how can He take me, a sinner, to heaven? He said that He is of pure eyes that cannot behold iniquity.

Hebrews 12:14 – Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.

How can a sinner ever be holy? The answer is in the doctrines of salvation through the aspect of the holiness of God.

1 John 2:1-2 – My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, (“sins” in the Greek is in the aorist tense, one point in time) we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

He is saying that when you sin you have an Advocate with the Father.

Advocate is Paraclete in the Greek that means Holy Spirit. (It is used in John 14 and 16 meaning “helper.”) In this scripture it is used as a legal term, one who comes to your defense or one who pleads your case.

So, if I sin, I have an Advocate, someone who pleads my case before the Father; that is Jesus Christ the righteous. He will plead the case of someone who has acted unrighteously. The Righteous will plead the case of unrighteous. How can a righteous man who hates sin, who died for sin, ever defend a man who acts unrighteously.

Notice two doctrines: redemption and propitiation.

1. Redemption is what God does, who takes us who are sinners and buys us out of the slave market of sin, and sets us free so we do not live in sin any longer. This is the way God deals with us on a man-ward level.
2. Propitiation – This is the way God deals with us from a Godward aspect. How can a holy and righteous God be merciful to a sinner, an enemy of God, without violating His righteousness? Propitiation is that doctrine that shows how a holy God can be satisfied. It means to atone, to cover, to satisfy. God must be satisfied because he is holy.

Holy – Qadesh, pronounced Kodesh. It means to divide. God is so holy compared to man that He is divided, separated from man. Man is unholy but God is like the Holy of Holies. He could not be any more holy.

Isaiah 6:3 – And one (the seraphim) called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.”

Isaiah 57:15 – For thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy, “I dwell on a high and holy place, and also with the contrite and lowly of spirit, in order to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

In this scripture, He says of Himself that He is high and exalted and lives in a high place in order to revive and dwell with the contrite and lowly spirit. Man is low, undone, unclean, and unrighteous and God desires to revive that lowly man.

1 Samuel 2:2 – There is no one holy like the Lord. Indeed, there is no one besides You nor is there any rock like our God.

In other words, there is no one who is holy like our God is holy. He is perfect in His holiness. What propitiation does is that Godward act of God that satisfies or vindicates His character. It is God’s action on behalf of man so that His holiness and His righteousness will not be desecrated. If God wants man to dwell with Him, He can’t take man in an unholy condition. He must satisfy His holiness: make man holy in a proper way. Thus, He must judge and punish sin. The righteousness of God demands judgment of sin.

Romans 3:24-25 — ... being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed.

Picture the cross on which Jesus Christ hung. Jesus Christ on that cross became the propitiation for sins of the whole world. He became the atonement, the satisfaction, or the payment in full for all of our sins. What about all the people up to the time of Jesus Christ who died? How can God let those people go to Heaven? He let Abraham and Elijah go to Heaven. Elijah and Moses came down from Heaven and to make a tabernacle. How could God overlook Abraham and Moses and Elijah, who were all sinners and let them go to Heaven? When Jesus Christ died on the cross and shed His blood, He covered all of the sins from the past all the way from Adam and Eve to the cross, and all the future sins to the end of the ages.

The blood of Jesus Christ when it was shed paid for man’s sins and therefore, satisfied the wrath of God. The wrath of God demands that sin must be judged; it must be punished. God says that He is Holy and cannot tolerate sin. Therefore, My Holiness demands the punishment of sin. So, Jesus Christ went to the cross and was nailed to it, then (after He died) the spear was put in His side and the blood and water gushed out. God saw that blood come out of the sinless Lamb of God. It was that blood shed for the sins of mankind who acknowledge that they are sinners. That blood pays for that sin and a Holy and Righteous God is satisfied.

The word for *propitiation* is the same word for *Mercy Seat*. These two words are translated the same. The Ark of the Covenant is an ark that was made of acacia wood and was covered with Gold. Inside it are the Ten Commandments, the broken Tables of the Law, Aaron’s rod,

and a pot of manna. The lid of the Ark is the Mercy Seat. Cherubim are hovering over the lid. That Ark of the Covenant was the only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle. It represented the throne of God. The Shekinah glory, the pillar of cloud, was over that Ark of the Covenant. One day a year on the Day of Atonement, the priest would take the blood of a sacrificed bull and sprinkle it one time on the Mercy Seat and seven times in front of it to make atonement for his sins. Then he sacrificed a goat and sprinkled the blood one time on the Mercy Seat and seven times in front of it to make atonement for the sins of the people. If he went into the presence of God without the blood, without the confession of sin, and without acknowledging that God was a Holy and Righteous God, then God would strike Him dead.

On the day that Jesus Christ hung on Calvary's tree, He said to Mary, "*I ascend to the Father.*" Then He died and was buried. I believe He took His blood and walked straight into the portals of Heaven and sprinkled His blood once on the throne of God and seven times in front of it and all of the angels shouted, "Propitiated, propitiated, God is satisfied. God's Holiness and Righteousness have been vindicated by the blood of the Lamb, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!"

Beloved, listen to me. If you do not acknowledge the fact that you are a sinner and say, "I have sinned," and as Luke 18:13 says, "*Be merciful to me a sinner, pay for my sins in full. I cannot pay them.*" If you do not believe that and will not come to the Throne of Grace, then, precious one, you are lost. You will die and spend eternity in Hell because Jesus Christ is the propitiation for your sins, but not for your sins only but the sins of the whole world. Jesus' blood was shed for every single human being who has ever been born on the face of this earth. But it is only efficacious to those who will say. "God, I have sinned. I am a sinner and have walked in darkness and am coming to You as a sinner and am saying to You that I need an Advocate. I need my sins covered and atoned for and be forgiven. O God, will you forgive me?"

Anyone who takes the blood out of the Gospel or denies the sinfulness of man, or says that they can live any way they want to, and calls good evil and evil good, has laced the Gospel with cyanide. It is far more deadly than the death of those who died from cyanide, because this is an eternal death, a second death. If you do not come to God, meek and lowly, contrite and broken, poor in spirit, saying, "God, in my flesh dwells no good thing," then you are not ready to find Jesus, the propitiation for your sins. But if you will come to Him, His hand is stretched out.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you. We thank you for your word. O God, we thank you that it's a sure word. We thank you that it is a word that if we will study it, if we will learn it, no man can poison it, because Lord, anytime someone slips some wrong doctrine in, we'll know it if we know that truth because you say, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." You tell us that we have an anointing from on high, an anointing of the Spirit so that we know all things. You tell us, Father, that you have put your Spirit within us and that by him, you will cause us to know, O Lord, the things that belong to thee, and therefore, Father, to be able to discern the lies from the world, from the devil, from those, O God, that are deceived.

O Father, we thank you for First John. And, Lord, we want to plumb the depths of it. But Lord, I know that I can never do it in fifty-four minutes of teaching every week. O Father, I pray for the people. I pray that they'll do their homework diligently. I pray that they will not be weary in well-doing for in due season they shall reap if they faint not. I pray, Father, that you would show them that they are to esteem your words more precious than their necessary food, and to know, Father, that if any man speaks not according to the word it's because there's no light in them. O Father, but we can never spot darkness if we don't understand the light, so make them diligent to study to show themselves approved unto you, workmen that needeth not be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.

And then, Father, as they go forth, may they preach the gospel, the pure gospel in season and out of season. May they use it to reprove and rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, for we know that the time is coming when men will not endure sound teaching, but

they will heap to themselves teachers who will tickle their ears. O God, may we not tickle ears, but may we give forth the truth and may we stand on it. May we not be guilty of lacing the gospel with a poison that will send men to hell. In your name we pray. Amen.