

Faith-N-Focus : *E-quip Your Faith*

Bible Study Curriculum *"What Is Sin?" (Part Two)*

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Sins of Omission”

Introduction

A child needs proper care and nourishment to grow into a healthy adult. Although parents might not do anything purposely to harm a child, yet a child's development can be impeded through willful neglect. For example, though a child may not suffer violent abuse, he/she may suffer physical consequences through malnourishment. Moreover, physical neglect can impede a child's development, not only physically, but also mentally and emotionally. In a similar way, *sins of omission* prohibit spiritual growth and may even destroy the believer. In this lesson, we consider spiritual neglect and its consequences in our lives.

Key Verse

“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (Ja. 4:17).

Lesson Summary

Essentially, a *sin of omission* means willful neglect of God's will. It is a failure to fulfill some aspect of duty or responsibility in our relationship with Christ. A sin of omission is more than imperfection; rather, it means that one chooses to neglect one's spiritual responsibility in the faith. The Parable of the Talents is a great example of a sin by omission (Mt. 25:14-19, 24-30). Whereas, the servants who received the five and the two talents worked and gained an increase, the one who received one talent from his lord did nothing to increase it. Rather, he buried it until his lord returned. His slothful actions indicated spiritual negligence – the failure to act faithfully in what he had been given. He knew his lord was a shrewd businessman, but still he did not act responsibly toward his lord. His lord was wroth and judged him. The wicked and unprofitable servant was cast “into outer darkness” (v. 30). His sin resulted from omitting to do what he knew was right to do. When we know to do right, but fail to do it, we sin (Ja. 4:17). In essence, we choose to do wrong by refusing to do right. Our conscience, when tempered by the Word and Spirit, directs us to do what is right. Going against the conscience leads us into sin (Ro. 14:23). Therefore, we should pay close attention to our conscience, avoiding anything that looks evil (1 Th. 5:22). As Christian believers, we can avoid sins of omission by always doing what we know to be right. Thus, godliness is not only abstaining from evil, but also doing what is good and right in the sight of God. One of the common sins of omission among professing Christians is forsaking the house of God (He. 10:23-25). When the apostle Paul called the saints to faithfulness, he specifically admonished them to be faithful in church attendance (corporate worship). For obvious reasons, corporate worship is essential to our spiritual growth and the development of our faith. In fact, forsaking the assembling of ourselves together in the house of God is one of the first indicators of backsliding (see lesson four, May 24).

Scripture Study

Neglecting one's responsibility – Mt. 25:14-19, 24-30

Doing what one knows to do – Ja. 4:17; Ro. 12:9; 14:23; 1 Th. 5:22

Forsaking the house of God – He. 10:23-25

Conclusion

As servants of the Lord, we should do everything we know to do in order to please the Lord. Satan does not always tempt us to openly transgress, but he often more subtly tempts us to become spiritually negligent. As we will see in our next lesson, the love of God motivates us to please the Lord in all things and to keep his commandments.

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“Sins of Commission”

Introduction

When speaking of “commission,” we have two related ideas in mind. First, commission means “committing an intentional act.” Clearly it refers to a choice one makes. Second, commission indicates “the commitment of one’s will and desire.” Therefore, commission implies that one has committed himself/herself to a particular course of action. As such, a *sin* of commission suggests an action against God or one’s neighbor.

Key Verse

“He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 Jn. 2:4).

Lesson Summary

In Exodus, God gave his law to Israel in Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-17). These commandments summarized God’s holy expectations and requirements for all of humanity, especially for his church. The first four commandments specifically address our relationship to God; the last six commandments explain our relationship to one another. The principles established by this law of God define a holy code of conduct for God’s people. Reasonably, God requires his people to live according to his commandments. Yet Jesus taught that keeping the commandments was far more demanding than merely maintaining a holy conduct. In fact, Jesus taught that keeping the commandments of God was actually an expression of Divine love in action, God’s love working in and through us (Mt. 22:37-40). Thus, the commandments of God are commandments of his love. They build on a loving relationship with God. A *sin of commission* simply means breaking a commandment of God. It is violating a law of God – disobeying the clear teachings of Scripture. Most often, when we think of sinning, we think in terms of *sins of commission* or acts of rebellion, in contrast to sins of omission or even to the inward principle of sin itself. Sins of commission are most often transgressions of the law – breaking one of the commandments or prohibitions of God’s law (1 Jn. 3:4-5; Lu. 18:18-21). These acts indicate that one’s relationship is not right with God (1 Jn. 3:6). In fact, John emphatically states that those who profess to know Christ, yet break his commandments, are liars (1 Jn. 2:4). Therefore, sins of commission are spiritually destructive, bringing damnation on the soul of the professing Christian. Truly, a sin of commission means transgressing or violating the love of God (Jn. 15:12). To love one’s neighbor is to keep the commandment of God toward one’s neighbor (Ro. 13:8-10). And thus, breaking the commandments of God expresses an unloving act against one’s neighbor and even more so against God himself. Thus, the motivation for keeping the commandments of God is love. Our love for Christ is measured by our obedience to his commandments (Jn. 14:21-24). When we love the Lord, keeping his commandments flows from an inward desire to please the Lord in all things (1 Jn. 5:3).

Scripture Study

Commandments of love – Ex. 20:1-17; Mt. 22:37-40

Breaking the commandments – Lu. 18:18-21; 1 Jn. 3:4-6; 1 Jn. 2:4

Transgressing the love of God – Jn. 15:12; Ro. 13:8-10

Keeping the commandments – Jn. 14:21-24; 1 Jn. 5:3

Conclusion

Our motivation for pleasing the Lord and keeping his commandments is God’s love. Walking in holiness and obedience to God’s commandments means that we abide in Christ’s love (Jn. 15:9-10). We avoid sins of commission through serving the Lord and one another in love (Ga. 5:13).

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Degrees of Sin”

Introduction

What is meant by “degrees of sin?” In higher education, various levels of learning may be achieved. Recognition of these educational achievements is awarded through conferring “degrees.” The idea of a degree in this sense suggests a classification or category, but also a level or magnitude. In another sense, a skyscraper has many levels or floors, but they are all within the same building. A person could be living or working on the ground floor, or on the top floor of the building. As education has degrees and buildings have levels, sin also has degrees or depths of degradation and corruption.

Key Verse

“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Ro. 1:32).

Lesson Summary

As we learned last month, sin is willful disobedience to the Word of God, whether by omission (neglect to do right) or by commission (wrong actions). In any case, the Bible clearly teaches, “All unrighteousness is sin” (1 Jn. 5:17). Yet all sin is not the same in the sense of degree. While all willful disobedience has the same nature, sin nevertheless has degrees or depths (levels) of wickedness associated with it. First of all, sin has a seductive and deceptive nature (He. 3:12-13; Ro. 7:11; Ep. 4:22). It approaches us in subtle ways because it is in principle rebellious and destructive. Logically, subtle sins of omission ultimately lead to rebellious sins of commission. In this way, sin deceptively takes an individual deeper and deeper into its clutches, from negligence to outward rebellion. Gross immorality in the life of a professing Christian does not erupt overnight. Sometimes, it may appear so, but gross immorality originates in the heart and then expresses itself outwardly in overt action (Mt. 5:21-28; Mk. 7:20-23). For example, when a man commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, he was first an adulterer in his heart and had already been committing adultery in his heart before he committed the act with her. In other words, sin exists in one’s heart before it is ever evidenced openly through one’s actions. Finally, sin is degenerative in its influence. Again, it typically does not begin with extreme defiance to the law of God, but it starts out with smaller infractions. Sin and disobedience increase into greater and greater decadence, ultimately resulting in destruction (Ge. 6:5-7; Mt. 7:26-27; Ro. 1:26-28, 32). We can never afford to take sin lightly because it has deadly consequences (Ro. 6:23; Ja. 1:15). Consider: sin infiltrates the heart through the “spirit of disobedience” (Ep. 2:2). Unbelief also opens the heart to sin (He. 3:12-19). Sin in the heart produces willful disobedience; disobedience leads to moral decadence; and moral decadence leads to utter destruction.

Scripture Study

Sin is deceptive – He. 3:12-13; Ro. 7:11; Ep. 4:22; 6:11; Gen. 3:1

Sin begins in the heart – Mt. 5:21-28; Mk. 7:20-23; He. 3:12-19

Sin is degenerative – Ge. 6:5-7; Mt. 7:26-27; Ro. 1:26-28, 32

Conclusion

Sin has degrees or depths of wickedness. It corrupts the heart through the spirit of disobedience and unbelief, produces spiritual neglect and transgression, results in open rebellion to the commandments of God, and ultimately leads to destruction and death.

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Bible Study Curriculum *"What Is Sin?" (Part Two)*

Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Personal Sin and Backsliding”

Introduction

As we learned in last week's lesson, sin approaches us in subtle ways just as Satan himself is subtle. He is sly and tricky in his tactics. No Christian should ever presume he/she is incapable of falling into sin. Rather, the Bible clearly tells us to be on guard against the devil and his wiles (1 Pe. 5:8; Ep. 6:11). While Satan works to keep sinners enslaved in sin, he also seeks to turn the heart of God's people away from righteousness.

Key Verse

“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Pe. 3:17).

Lesson Summary

The Bible warns the Christian against drawing or turning back (He. 10:38-39; 2 Pe. 2:21-22). Logically, if backsliding were not a possibility for the Christian, the Scriptures would not speak in such terms. As we consider this topic of personal backsliding, we should remember that the Scriptures give us this assurance: Jesus Christ “is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). Thus, backsliding is a choice which an individual makes for himself/herself. Certainly, it is not the will or desire of God for the believer; rather, backsliding results from the believer yielding himself/herself to temptation, and becoming willfully disobedient (2 Pe. 2:18-20). In Hebrews 3:12, the writer sounds the alarm for the saint of God, saying, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” In verse 13, he warns against sin's deceit. After warning the saints in chapter three, the writer later compels them not to “sin wilfully” (He. 10:26). Willful disobedience tramples the Son of God afresh, treats his blood as unholy, and despises the Spirit of grace (He. 10:29). For this reason, those who backslide are ones “who draw back unto perdition” (v. 39). They are like dogs who lap up their own vomit or sows who return to wallow in the mire (2 Pe. 2:22). The story of Cain's life illustrates backsliding (Ge. 4:1-8). Cain and Abel brought their offerings to the Lord. Because Abel's offering was accepted by God and Cain's was rejected, Cain became angry and envious of his brother (Ge. 4:3-5; 1 Jn. 3:12-13; He. 11:4). Jesus explained that murder begins with anger in the heart (Mt. 5:21-22). Cain should have repented of his evil anger and envy toward his brother. But instead, he seethed in his anger, allowing sin to have dominion (Ge. 4:7). When it became full blown, he carried out the wicked desire of his heart, murdering Abel. Because Cain did not repent but yielded himself to temptation, he became willfully disobedient and brought destruction on himself.

Scripture Study

Backsliding is an individual's choice – He. 10:38-39; 2 Pe. 2:21-22; Jude 24

Drawing/turning back – He. 3:7-12; 10:26-31, 38-39; 2 Pe. 2:18-20

Example of Cain – Ge. 4:3-5; Mt. 5:21-22; 1 Jn. 3:11-15

Conclusion

No doubt, you have heard the old adage, “Prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Being alert and watchful is preventative against personal backsliding. As true Christians, we should guard our hearts against the wiles of the devil and the deceitfulness of sin. However, if an individual backslides, true repentance is the only cure.

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Zion Assembly Church of God – Sunday School Services

“Corporate Sin and Backsliding”

Introduction

For public safety, we use warning signs to alert people of danger. For example, if a bridge is out, a sign might read, “Danger: Road Closed.” If something is spilled on the floor, to avoid a fall, a sign might read, “Caution: Watch Your Step.” For the safety of God’s people, the Scriptures describe a number of significant warning signs of corporate backsliding. In this lesson, we will discuss a few key indicators of this problem and suggest how to seek the restoration of the church.

Key Verse

“Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” (Mal. 3:7).

Lesson Summary

Let us consider three symptoms of corporate backsliding. First, in the apostle John’s vision, Jesus Christ called the church of Ephesus corporately to repent (Re. 2:5). Why was the church called to repent? The church of Ephesus was guilty of forsaking her first love (v. 4). This was the first symptom of their abandonment of Christ. Forsaking our first love indicates a loss of affection. This call to repent was not merely for some of the individual members, but to the church collectively. When the church forsakes her first love of Christ, she is guilty of backsliding, and needs to repent and return to the Lord. Second, the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy of a coming departure from the faith, saying, “For the time will come when **they** will not endure sound doctrine . . . and **they** shall turn away their ears from the truth” (2 Ti. 4:3-4). Who are “**they**?” Timothy, as Paul, was a prominent and influential leader in the church of Ephesus. In fact, Paul assigned Timothy to abide in Ephesus for the purpose of instructing the church and confronting false doctrine (1 Ti. 1:3-4). His assignment to confront corruption continues in 2 Timothy when Paul again charges him to confront false teaching with the Word of Truth (2 Ti. 4:1-4). Logically, “**they**” indicates the church corporately and perhaps more specifically the church of Ephesus. Corporate backsliding becomes more evident when the church rejects God’s Word and replaces the truth with false doctrines and ungodly practices. Third, the Word of the Lord by the prophet Jeremiah perfectly depicts the nature of corporate backsliding. Jeremiah declared how Israel had forsaken her relationship with the Lord and turned to other gods. Israel had forsaken “the fountain of living waters” (Jer. 2:11-13). Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as this fountain of living water (Jn. 4:10, 14; 7:37-39). When the church corporately rejects the leadership of the Holy Ghost, she is left desolate and spiritually dead, which was the ultimate end for Israel and Judah. Now, how do we seek restoration in the face of corporate backsliding? The Lord gave King Solomon three objectives in seeking to correct this problem: 1) humility, 2) prayer, and 3) repentance (2 Ch. 7:13-14). Based on these directives, restoration obviously compels us to action. It is primarily a spiritual undertaking, not a physical one. The responsibility for corporate restoration always falls on the shoulders of the faithful members of the church (Jude 3).

Scripture Study

Forsaking our first love – Re. 2:1-5

Forsaking the Word of Truth – 2 Ti. 4:1-4

Forsaking the fountain of living waters – Jer. 2:11-13; Jn. 4:10, 14; 7:37-39

Seeking restoration in the house of God – 2 Ch. 7:13-14; Jude 3

Conclusion

While backsliding within the church occurs little by little as the members of the church fall away from a loving relationship with God, it becomes more obvious when the government and leadership of the church are corrupted and begin to teach false doctrines and practices inconsistent with God’s Word and Spirit. At that point, the “spirit of the church” is corrupted and a falling away from the truth has occurred in the house of God.