

Sin Not, But Walk In Christian Love.

Text: 1 John 2:3-11

Suggested Hymns:

341, 347, 345, 610, 337

1) Reminds God's Children Of The Foundation
Of Their New Obedience.

2) One Specific Application Of This Principle
To The Life Of Believers In Christ.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 John 2:3-11, ³ *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶ He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

⁷ *Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.*

⁸ *Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. ⁹ He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. ¹⁰ He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ¹¹ But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today is the Third Sunday after Easter. In Latin it is called *Jubilate*, which means 'be jubilant.' In the Introit for today we heard the words of Psalm 66, *Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth! ² Sing out the honor of His name; Make His praise glorious.*

And Psalm 100 is similar. *Make a joyful shout to the LORD, all you lands! ² Serve the LORD with gladness; Come before His presence with singing. ³*

Know that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

⁴ Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. ⁵ For the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting, And His truth endures to all generations.

This song God's children of all ages have made their own in a thousand variations. This joy of God's redeemed has its foundation and roots in the Gospel revelation of the "Seed of the woman," the "Lamb of God," Christ Jesus, God and Man, and His vicarious atonement for a lost world.

Because Christ lived and died and rose again, Adam's sons and daughters have life and hope again. A song of joy and praise wells from their hearts and lips, the song of the redeemed. Faith standing on the Rock of Ages triumphs, "*I believe in the forgiveness of sins.*"

This Christian, saving, justifying faith, however, is not a dead theory, but an active principle and force, which produces abundant evidence in the life of the true believer. A good tree brings forth good fruit. Of this every Christian must be reminded frequently.

St. Paul exhorts us in 1 Cor. 6:20, ***²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.***

St. John teaches us that saving faith in the Lamb of God is the foundation of man's salvation, and in his sublime vision on Patmos recorded the living hope of God's redeemed. In our text he impresses upon the followers of the Lamb, the importance of walking in Christian love, kindness, generosity, and compassion.

This is the same message as St. Paul who says, ***let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ.***¹ Failure to live the Christian life gives the lie to all professions from the lips.

St. John encourages his beloved parishioners to the new obedience, not with frowning legalism and threats, but with the plea of Calvary. We read in 1 John 1:1-2, ***¹ My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.***

In this evangelical spirit this father and apostle tenderly, lovingly, calls God's "dear children" to willing, whole-hearted service of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Our theme is "*Sin Not, but Walk in Christian Love.*" May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. Sin Not, But Walk In Christian Love

Reminds God's Children Of The Foundation Of Their New Obedience.

In admonishing his dear children to glorify God in their lives, St. John earnestly pleads with them not to sin, ¹*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin.*

Sin, every sin, dishonours God. Sin, as our Luther's Small Catechism points out, is "*every transgression of the divine Law.*" Every sin provokes God and merits the penalties of divine justice, both temporal and eternal. But why this admonition to God's dear children? It is because the best of Christians still carry the Old Adam, which at all times is striving for mastery.

Even St. Paul, a man of God, complains in Rom. 7:15, *For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.* And we read in 1 John 1:8 that: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* Knowing this fact from Scripture and experience, we are humbled. We must "watch and pray."

It is a daily challenge to fight the good fight of faith and to lay aside the works of darkness and to remind ourselves daily that *God did not call us to uncleanness, but [to] holiness.*²

While sin dishonours God and nullifies man's claim to any favour of the Lord, Scripture also clearly teaches that good works please God. They are acceptable anthems of praise, and have God's promises. But what is a good work in the sight of God? Our Catechism again answers the question; A good work is "*Whatever a child of God does, speaks, or thinks according to the Ten Commandments for the glory of God and the welfare of his neighbour.*"³

Not all works that people call good are good before God. Only a good tree brings forth good fruit. True, even unbelievers may perform works of civic righteousness which command the approval of just men. But good works which

please the Father in heaven are the fruit of faith, the sacrifice of those who have become God's dear children through faith in Christ.

Scripture says in Rom. 14:23 that *whatever is not from faith is sin*. God's children, who have been born again of water and of the Spirit, they, and only they, are capable of serving the Lord with gladness, of doing God-pleasing works, and thereby glorifying their Father in heaven. To such people St. John addresses our text, and with them he pleads *to walk just as [Christ] walked*.

Now, in order to encourage God's dear children to live worthily of their calling in Christ Jesus and to make their lives a God-pleasing anthem of praise to their Redeemer, the apostle points to three impelling motives which Christians must always keep in mind in choosing the path of righteousness, namely, their knowledge of the Lord, their fellowship with the Lord, and the example of the Lord.

The knowledge of the Lord motivates a person into action. Our text says, ³ *Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. 'He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* St. John pleads with God's children to shun sin and to walk godly because they know the Lord Jesus Christ. Theirs is not a book knowledge, but a knowledge of the heart, by faith, just as St. Paul says in 2 Tim. 1:12, *"I know whom I have believed."*

Enlightened by the Holy Spirit, our ignorance of Jesus has been dispelled. Through the Gospel we have learned to know Jesus to be true God and true man, our perfect and only Saviour from sin, death, and the power of the devil. By His atonement we are saved, reconciled to God, and made heirs of heaven.

To know Christ, His tearful and blood-stained labours, with a living faith compels Jesus' disciples to hate and shun sin in every form. To pretend to know Christ and yet to sin wilfully is a living lie.

The second argument St. John uses to stir Christians to turn their backs on sin and to walk righteously is their fellowship with the Lord. Our text says that *whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.*

When the Holy Spirit calls the sinner out of darkness and kindles the fires of saving faith in his heart, there is established a fellowship which St. Paul calls a *“fellowship of the mystery.”*⁴ As the head and the members are united in one body, as the branches are most intimately joined to the vine, so the believer enters a fellowship, a union, with his Master Jesus through faith.

Christ Himself says in John 15:5, ⁵ *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.* As the branch receives its vitality, its strength, from the vine, so the believer receives holy impulses from Jesus to keep God’s commandments. For a person who is in real fellowship with Christ, to trifle with sin is absurd, and unthinkable.

Finally, St. John points to Christ’s example of holiness as the impelling motive for all true believers to renounce sin and to fight the good fight. Our text says, ⁶ *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

The life of Jesus was blameless, holy, His life is summed up in the word *“I delight to do Thy will.”* On Pentecost Day, St. Peter, facing Jesus’ executioners, boldly stated that Jesus was the “Holy One.” And none arose to challenge that truth. Jesus whom His disciples call Master and Lord tells His faithful, *“Follow Me.”* We read in 1 Pet. 2:21, ²¹ *For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.*

This admonition does not impose a new yoke, or a new commandment upon Christians. Our text says, ⁷ *Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning.*

As God’s revelation at all times proclaimed salvation by faith, so the same Scriptures emphasised that faith abounds in good, God-pleasing works and that faith without works is dead.⁵ But in another sense this is a new commandment for St. John’s parishioners, *Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining.*

It is new in their own practical realisation, in their experience of the new birth. Called out of darkness, through the call of the Holy Spirit, old things had

passed away, and all things have indeed become new, as we learn from 2 Cor. 5:17. In their new experience of the love of Christ they will and must make a joyful noise to the Lord and serve the Lord with gladness.

2. Sin Not, But Walk In Christian Love One Specific Application Of This Principle To The Life Of Believers In Christ.

After reminding God's children of their calling in Christ Jesus and that Christians belong to the Redeemer in body, soul, and spirit, the apostle makes a specific application of this truth to the life of God's children.

Our text says, ⁹ *He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.* ¹⁰ *He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.* ¹¹ *But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

First of all he urges upon the faithful that they uncompromisingly cast out all hatred of a brother. Hatred is the opposite of the spirit of Christ, and is as diametrically opposed as light is to darkness. To hate is to remain in spiritual darkness. Hatred is a bond that chains the guilty to the chariot of Satan.

This is clear from Galatians 5:19-21, ¹⁹ *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,* ²⁰ *idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,* ²¹ *envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

For example: Cain, the brother of Abel; and the Jews hating Christ. He who hates is blind, walking in spiritual darkness, not knowing where he goes. Christians, too, must guard against hatred. Hatred, open or secret, drives out the Holy Spirit and strangles spiritual life.

How dare a Christian pray the Fifth Petition of the Lord's Prayer, "*And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,*" with hatred toward a brother in his heart? Kindly, lovingly, St. John pleads with his

dear children: Cast out anger and hatred, children of God, and — *“Love the brethren.”*

A charitable, forgiving, loving heart at all times is the reasonable service, the glory of God’s redeemed. A living faith in the Saviour, whose entire life was a symphony of divine love, shines forth in Christian virtues, is summed up in one word — love.

Love, or Christian charity, is a beautiful and fragrant flower in the garden of faith that must be zealously, continually, and prayerfully guarded and cultivated. Christian love is humble, self-denying, and self-sacrificing.

This holy fire of love was kindled in the heart of St. Paul, the servant of Lord, a love expressed in the amazing statement, Rom. 9:3, ³ ***For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren.*** His love for the brethren was a self-consuming fire. And St. Stephen, standing on the verge of martyrdom, offered this prayer for his persecutors, ***“Lord, do not charge them with this sin.”***⁶

Let this mind be in you, dear Christians, which was also in Christ Jesus. Do you feel your weakness? Turn to the Lord, who said, ***“My strength is made perfect in weakness.”***⁷ And although you have not already attained, yet earnestly strive after the prize, undaunted, trusting, and believing.

Resting upon the sustaining arms of your merciful Saviour, you, too, will go from strength to strength, and your faith will score new victories over each battle until the last battle is won and your Master’s voice will greet you at the gates of the celestial city with the welcome, ***“Well done, good and faithful servant.”***⁸

There God’s redeemed will join in a better, everlasting *“Jubilate”* in honour of the Redeemer, blessed forevermore!

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,⁹

Do no sinful action,
Speak no angry word:
Ye belong to Jesus,
Children of the Lord.

Christ is your own master,

He is good and true,
And His little children
Must be holy too. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Philippians 1:27

² 1 Thessalonians 4:7

³ *Luther's Small Catechism*, Q163, *What are good works in God's sight?*

⁴ Eph. 3:9

⁵ James. 2:26

⁶ Acts 7:60

⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:9

⁸ Matthew 25:23

⁹ Hymn 610