

## Addition and Subtraction! 1 John 3:4-10

Last Sunday we compared a Jack-O-Lantern to the gospel!

To make a Jack-O-Lantern it requires both addition and subtraction!

We added light, eyes to see, ears to hear... but we also subtracted the dirt, the yuck from the inside, & the flesh of the pumpkin that inhibited sight, sound...

The same is true of the gospel – when we receive it into our lives, there is addition & subtraction that takes place! But the addition/subtraction of what?

The Apostle John, in our passage, lays it out for us – In receiving the gospel, righteousness is what gets added to our lives & sin is what gets subtracted!

It's both/and! You can't add the former without subtracting the latter, and you can't subtract the latter without adding the former!

You can't have the righteousness of Christ without the removal of sin also!

And you can't remove sin without also adding the righteousness of Christ!

As Christians, we claim that Jesus' own righteousness is added/credited to our account by faith! But do we also acknowledge, that with that righteousness comes the removal of sin in our lives as well?

I've heard it said, "That when it comes to sin, the only difference between the Church and the rest of the world is that the Church has been forgiven!"

This is only partially true! Listen again to John's words here in verse 5 & 6, "You know that he (Jesus) appeared in order to take away sins... No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him." There's a difference between sins "forgiven" & "removed."

How many of us would admit that we are sinners? How do we know?

Are we sinners because we sin, or do we sin because we are sinners? Both!

As Christians who sin, what are we to do about the dilemma vs. 5 & 6 presents?

- First of all, we can't deny that there is a problem! Sin is a major problem!
- Secondly, we must acknowledge that forgiveness of sin is only part of the remedy! Forgiveness & repentance go together like an offense & defense!
- Thirdly, we must understand what John is saying, and what he is not saying!

John uses the phrase "a practice of sinning" and "keeps on sinning" to distinguish between committing sin/trespass and making a habit out of it!

"Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness..." If we commit a sin, we have broken God's Law, but that doesn't mean we deny or reject it! It means we are transgressors, in need of repentance & forgiveness!

The gospel declares that there is hope for transgressors found in Jesus Christ!

But to "practice lawlessness" is to embrace the heresy of antinomianism! Which means you reject the Law of God & are not bound by anything/anyone!

Antinomianism wreaks havoc both in & outside of the Church in different ways!

We all sin, but what we do with it, & what place it has in our lives is what matters most! Excuses, denial, rationalization, rejection of truth is what those who "practice lawlessness" do! They do not know God & are not born of Him!

But, those who have had their sin removed by faith, and who continue in repentance, they are the ones who are declared righteous in God's sight!

Righteousness, like sin, also has a dual reality! We do what's right because we are righteous in Christ! But we are also righteous when we do what is right!

There is a righteousness that we receive at conversion because of the finished work of Jesus Christ, and there is also the righteousness we pursue as a result of the ongoing work of Christ in our lives! This is how we make sense of Vs. 7

And just as "forgiveness & repentance" of sin go hand in hand, so too does righteousness "received & pursued" - like an offense and defense on a ballfield!

What are the implications of all of this? What are the takeaways?

- If you are a Christian, sin is a past & a present problem, but the gospel is the remedy for both! You are already forgiven & you can be delivered!
- If you are a Christian, righteousness has been added to your account, but righteousness is also what you are to pursue in your following after Christ!
- If you are an unbeliever, don't allow the practice of lawlessness rule your life There's deliverance from sin, & the righteousness of Christ, offered to you!

This letter from John has been all about how to know if we are true Christians, as well as how to live as light in this world! It's all about addition & subtraction!

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