

The Standard for the Believer

There are two common errors concerning the Christian and sin – a false perfectionism and antinomianism. Becoming a Christian does not exempt one from sinning nor from obedience to the law of Christ.

Unbiblical perfectionism teaches that the believer does not sin at all. No believer can experience this kind of sinless perfection until the resurrection when he will be free from the sin principle within. A modified form of sinless perfection does not include the eradication of the sin nature but teaches that a Christian can live without practicing sin for some period of time. But not practicing sin not only means not committing sin but also practicing and conforming to the will of God. Sinless perfection involves more than the absence of sin.

The biblical doctrine of perfection means ripeness, maturity, fullness, completeness. Biblical perfection is something expected of a believer here on earth, and it stands in contrast with immaturity.

Antinomianism teaches that the Christian is not bound by the law. This concept of freedom from law often leads to license. Antinomianism is sometimes equated with Christian liberty, a wrong equation. The opposite of liberty is slavery, and the believer has been brought from slavery to sin to a position of freedom from that slavery in Christ. The opposite of antinomianism is obedience to law. Which law? For the believer today it is the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." John 13:34

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. Galatians 5:13

burdens. i.e. the excess burdens that we need to share with one another, in contrast to the "load" (different Greek word) in verse 5, which means the normal amount each must carry for himself. *the law of Christ.* i.e. the commands of Christ, especially the new commandment to love one another (John 13:34). Living under grace is not license; it is a life of love and service (5:6, 13)

- A great principle for Christian conduct: Do not allow liberty to become license, but do all out of love for others.

What is the biblical standard for the Christian? It is not sinless perfection nor antinomianism. It is to walk in the light (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. 1 John 1:7

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

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us. 1 John 1:10

If we say we have no sin (as sinless perfectionism claims) we lie (1 John 1:8). Likewise, if we say we have not sinned for whatever period of time (as modified perfectionism teaches) we make God a liar (1 John 1:10). If we walk in the light we will not fall into the error of antinomianism, for we will keep His commandments (1 John 2:4, 6; 3:24).

The one who says, "I have come to know Him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 1 John 2:4

To sum up: The standard is God's holiness. The requirement is to walk in the Light. Our experience should always be a growing one, growing to maturity. That is true biblical perfectionism.

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

The remedy for believers' sins may be stated in one word: confess (1 John 1:9). It does not mean to merely mouth or recite the sins, but to see those sins as God sees them. That will surely bring repentance and the earnest desire to change. But if the same sins reoccur, the remedy remains the same.

When we contemplate sins of unbelievers, it does not seem so difficult to comprehend the enormity of sin, for we know the punishment will be eternal separation from God. But somehow when we consider sins in believers we lighten their seriousness. But make no mistake about it. All sin grieves God. Christ had to die for the sins we committed before and after we were saved. His death was the punishment for all sins. The fact that we are members of the family of God may bring more sorrow to our Heavenly Father when we

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sin. We ought to know better. We ought to use the power He has provided. We ought to want to please Him. We ought to struggle and fight harder and use every weapon He has given us. But above all, we ought to be making progress and showing growth in our lives.

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. Hebrews 6:1

maturity. The exhortation to these people is for them to go on to Christian maturity and to stop wasting time and opportunities. They knew the first principles, or basics, of Christianity and are being exhorted to go on from there.

Fellow members of God's family: press on to maturity (Hebrews 6:1).

Reference: ¹ *Basic Theology* by Charles C. Ryrie, pp. 230-234

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