

contrasted with the effective work of Christ:

And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool (*Heb 10:11-13*).

Christ’s work actually accomplished something. His one sacrifice is all that is needed for those whom He represented. By His work on the cross, He did it all. What is the “all” that He did? The next verse tells us: “Because by one sacrifice He has *made perfect forever* those who are *being made holy*” (*v14 NIV*).

This verse shows us the two things that Christ purchased for all of His own. First, it speaks of the forgiveness of sins that makes the believer “perfect” in God’s sight. We call this *justification*. The believer is declared perfectly righteous, or sinless, because Christ paid the penalty for every sin that he has ever committed or ever will commit. Then, believers are referred to as “those who are being made holy.” That is, Christ purchased a work of God in the life of every believer to progressively make him holy. We call this *sanctification*. The believer is motivated by God to put off sin and live for Christ. Another way to think about this is that Christ purchased a work of the Spirit to make the believer love Jesus Christ more than anything else in this world.

If God had simply provided forgiveness of sin without a work of the Spirit to make us holy, then Christ would have been expecting too much of us when He asks us to lay down our lives for Him. But the reality is that Christ provides everything He asks us to give Him. Every believer gets the complete package of salvation—both justification and sanctification—complete forgiveness of sins and an incurable love for God. If you claim to know Christ but this love for God that Jesus purchased is not greater than your love for sin, then you must question whether you actually know Him at all.

### Spiritual Slavery

The Bible teaches that the world is divided into two types of people, **God-haters** and **God-lovers**:

Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (*James 4:4*).

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (*1 John 2:15-17*).

Notice the clear contrast that these verses bring out concerning believers and unbelievers. If you love the world, you hate God. If your loyalty lies with the world, you’re God’s enemy. Jesus said:

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [money] (*Math 6:24*).

The one you serve is your master. The world (that is, the pursuit of self-satisfaction and all that that entails) is opposed to God (who is pursuing His own glory and honor), and God is opposed to the world. We need to pick a master and we need to pick wisely because the masters are at war with one another. Our danger is that we may not realize that we are **enslaved**, even as the Jews in Christ’s day. And notice, these even “believe” in Him:

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered Him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man. How sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free? (*John 8:31-33*).

They didn’t understand that Christ was speaking about their *spiritual* state. So He continues:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto Him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to Him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but He sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God (*John 8:34-47*).

These Jews were unbelievers, slaves of sin and children of the devil. Whatever they may say, Christ knows whose children they are and what master they serve by their actions. They sin like their father and master—the devil. Listen to the Apostle John:

Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever

is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (*1 John 3:6-10*).

A lost man is a slave to his sin. He lives a life characterized by self-centeredness and lack of concern for God’s glory. He is helpless and dead in sin unless Christ sets him free. But once he is set free from sin, John says, “he doth not commit sin,” that is, *he cannot go on sinning*. He cannot go on living a life of self-satisfaction. He cannot live a life of disobedience to his new master. He’s a slave of God now.

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (*Rom 6:15-18*).

The saved and the lost are in the same spiritual state. They are both slaves. They have different masters, but they’re both equally enslaved. We usually think of slavery as a master forcing his slave to do labor against his will. But spiritual slavery is that of a slave *willingly* serving his master, and at the same time unable to do otherwise.

### Whose Slave Are You?

When confronted with a situation in which you have the opportunity and the temptation to sin, you should ask the question, “**Do I love this sin, or do I love Jesus?**” This choice will let you know whose slave you really are. Years ago I met a man from Africa whose life had been very painful. Much of his family and closest friends had been butchered by Muslims. He talked about the gospel and said he believed that he was a sinner and that Jesus died for his sins. I said this to him, “I must ask you something important. It is about those men who killed those you loved, tortured your friends, and drove you from your home. Are you willing to pray for them, and if you had the opportunity, to show them kindness and love? Are you willing to lay down your life for them?”

He looked at me for a moment, clearly trying to control his emotions, and he said, “This is a hard thing you are asking. These men did terrible things. I am willing to do many things for God, but this thing is too much. Perhaps it is impossible.”

He was right. What I was asking of him *was* impossible without a *supernatural* work of God in his soul freeing him from the slavery of hatred toward those men. The Muslims who were so cruel to him did not deserve his love. The things that had happened were tragic. But what was even more tragic was that he was deceived about his spiritual state. He thought he was a child of God and yet

he had lived for many years with an intense hatred in his heart that he was unwilling to repent of.

As you ask the question, “**Who do I love?**” and answer it in various life situations, you will begin to see clearly where your heart truly is. You will find out without any doubt whose slave you really are. The question helps you to put your situation and your heart under the microscope. It will expose you for being either a **God-lover** or a **God-hater**.

### The Way Sin Works

“I don’t know what happened. I was doing fine. I was reading my Bible and going to church and then I was back to my old ways.” I’ve heard this so many times, but it’s wrong. That’s not really the way sin works. It may have seemed like you were doing fine and then “Wham!” you went whole hog back to your sin, but in reality sin begins with small steps and starts in the mind. Listen to the Apostle James:

But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (*James 1:14, 15*).

Consider a man in the supermarket check-out line who innocently glances at the magazine rack. He sees a picture of a woman dressed provocatively and that gets his mind going. He can stop there, but he’s enjoying the fantasy. On his drive to work he sees a young woman jogging and he goes back to his fantasy. This time he lingers longer and imagines more explicit things. He knows it’s wrong but he blocks out the voice of conscience. The rest of the day at work he feels “pressure” to follow his lusts. After work, he goes home and indulges fully in his sexual fantasy on the internet because he feels compelled. The next day he comes to his senses and thinks back over his sin, and says, “I don’t know what happened. I was doing fine. I was reading my Bible and going to church and then ‘all of a sudden’ I was back to my old ways.”

### Killing Sin Quickly by Asking the Question

Knowing that sin begins in the mind and starts small, we need to kill it quickly before it grows and kills us. In the illustration above, this man could have repented the moment he saw the magazine and began to lust, asking God’s forgiveness. And since the magazine rack is always in the same place in the supermarket with the covers always having women dressed provocatively, he could’ve briefly prayed for strength to keep his eyes on that which would honor God.

Thinking ahead and having a strategy to live to God’s glory is a good thing that not only helps us to kill sin early, but to avoid it altogether. But once you have made that first misstep, that first sinful decision, it becomes more difficult. Sin is pleasurable. If it wasn’t pleasurable,

it wouldn't be tempting. But we must see the choice to sin for what it is: choosing to sin is choosing to love sin more than God. This will be intolerable to any true believer.

In the midst of your sin, you must teach yourself to ask the question: **"Who do I love?"** It is such a simple concept and yet it is the hardest work you will ever do. When you find yourself angry with your wife and ready to zing her with a nasty comment, train yourself to have this automatic inner dialogue begin: "When I sin I am showing that I love sin and hate God. Who do I really love? Do I love Christ who has shown me so much mercy in spite of my terrible sin, or do I love myself and this sin I am about to commit?" When no one is around, and you have the temptation to look at pornography or something provocative, you must discipline yourself to ask this question: "Am I willing to forsake Christ to indulge in this sin? To sin like this shows my contempt for the Lord. Is that truly where my heart is?" This should bring you to reflect on **the Cross** and the terrible cost of your sin, and lead you to see that your sin is a personal offense against the God that you love, and cause you to deny yourself sinful pleasure.

### When the Answer is "I Love Sin, Not Christ"

When you ask yourself the question, **"Who do I love?"** and the answer comes back, **"I love sin, not Christ,"** this should frighten you. It should literally put the fear of God in you and cause you to think of Scriptures like this:

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (*Heb 10:26-31*).

When your life-style is marked by decisions to follow your sinful desires rather than Christ, you should have no assurance of your salvation, but only fear of God. The reason you should have fear is because when you choose to sin over following Christ you choose to take up arms against God. If God is your enemy, you truly have something to fear. This warning should cause you to repent and humbly submit to Christ, thanking Him for His mercy. But if it doesn't cause this reaction and you continue to sin, at least you know where you stand with God. You are exposed as an unbeliever. You can at least live in that little bit of truth rather than in a state of self-deception.

### Obedience: There is No Substitute

You may weep bitterly over your sin, confess it publicly, and raise your hands to Jesus in emotion-filled worship—and still be a **God-hater**. If your life is characterized by sin, and your sorrow over that sin never leads to significant change, then you are the very person that John is speaking of in 1 John 2:4:

He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Jesus makes it clear what love for Him looks like:

If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings (*John 14:23,24*).

There is no substitute for obedience to Jesus Christ and no excuses for continuing in your sin. If you continue in your sin, you don't love God and you're not a believer—no matter what you say or do. Paul tells us that there are no special circumstances that make disobedience to God tolerable:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it (*1 Cor 10:13*).

You can cry your eyes out, you can sing worship songs all night long, you can embarrass yourself publicly on a weekly basis by confessing your sin to a group of people, but without the actions of denying sin and obeying Jesus Christ, these and other emotional outbursts are meaningless.

God is all-powerful, and He gives us a salvation that's an example of that power. He forgives our sins and makes us incurable God-lovers. But even these can get stuck in sin. The question **"Who do I love?"** will wake up the Christian who has bogged down. It will cause him to reassess his life and true priorities. We need this not only as a wake-up call, but also as a way of helping those who are deceived about their spiritual state to learn the truth about themselves before it's too late. The true answer to the question **"Who do I love?"** is not found in words nor emotional displays, but in our willingness to deny ourselves by turning from sin and following the Lord Jesus Christ no matter what the cost might be. □

—Steve Lehrer



## COME JUST AS YOU ARE

Cast yourself at once, in the simplest faith, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. All of your preparation for eternity is entirely out of yourself, and in the Lord Jesus. Washed in his blood, and clothed upon with his righteousness, you may appear before God divinely, fully, freely, and forever accepted. The salvation of the chief of sinners is all prepared, finished, and complete in Christ (*Eph 1:6; Col 2:10*).

Your eye of faith must be directed entirely out of and from yourself to Jesus. Beware of looking for any preparation to meet God in yourself. It is all in Christ. God does not accept you on the basis of a broken heart, or a clean heart, or a praying heart, or a believing heart. He accepts you wholly and entirely on the ground of the perfect atonement of his blessed Son. Cast yourself, in childlike faith, upon that atonement—"Christ dying for the ungodly" (*Rom 5:6*)—and you are saved!

Justification is a poor, law-condemned, self-condemned, self-destroyed sinner, wrapping himself by faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is "unto all, and upon all them that believe" (*Rom 3:22*). He, then, is justified, and prepared to die and meet God, and he only, who casts from him the garment of his own righteousness, and runs into this blessed "City of Refuge"—the Lord Jesus—and hides himself there from the "avenger of blood" (*Joshua 20*), exclaiming, in the language of triumphant faith: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (*Rom 8:1*).

Look to Jesus, then, for a contrite heart; look to Jesus for a clean heart; look to Jesus for a believing heart; look to Jesus for a loving heart; and Jesus will give you all.

One faith's touch of Christ, and one divine touch from Christ, will save the vilest sinner. Oh, the dimmest, most distant glance of faith, turning its languid eye upon Christ, will heal and save the soul. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (*Isa 45:22*). God is prepared to accept you in his blessed Son, and for his sake he will cast all your sins behind his back, and take you to glory when you die (*Isaiah 38:17*)—"I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (*Heb 8:12*).

Never was Christ known to reject a poor sinner that came to him empty and with "nothing to pay" (*Luke 7:42*). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (*Matt 11:28*). God will glorify his free grace in your salvation, and will therefore save you—**just as you are**, "without money and without price" (*Isaiah 55:1*). Paul responded immediately to the anxious jailor who asked what he must do to be saved—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (*Acts 16:31*).

No matter what you have been, or what you are, plunge into "the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness" (*Zech 13:1*), and you shall be clean, "washed whiter than snow" (*Psalms 51:7; Isaiah 1:18*). "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin" (*1 John 1:7*). □

## Do You Love Jesus or Your Sin?

The most important question we can ask and answer in this life is, **"Who do I love?"** In every life situation you find yourself in having to make a choice between sin and obedience to God, consciously ask yourself, **"Who do I love?"** Make it a clear, open, and honest matter in your own mind that when you sin, you are choosing to love sin and hate God. Do you claim to be a Christian, yet you harbor hatred and are unwilling to forgive? Do you profess to be a believer, yet you live with known sin in your life? Do you show up every Sunday at church, yet you're consumed with the things of this world and the love of money?

### What is a "Christian" According to Jesus?

We should never assume that people are Christians merely because they go to church regularly, don't commit any crimes or social disgraces in front of us, and they understand and say they believe the gospel. This is a far cry from what our Lord defined a "Christian" to be. A true believer in Christ is one who is so in love with his Lord that he is willing to do anything to obey Him and bring Him glory.

He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it (*Matt 10:38; Luke 9:23,24*).

To take up our cross daily or to deny ourselves for Christ's sake is the very essence of what it is to be a believer. This speaks of a daily execution of one's self in order to obey Jesus Christ. Anything short of this radical obedience, according to Jesus, is not authentic Christianity. Our Lord has drawn a line in the sand. He has set the standard for what a true Christian is. Are you willing to deny yourself for Christ's sake, to suffer persecution for His name—even death?

### Salvation is the Complete Package

Although it seems like Jesus is expecting an unreasonable amount of loyalty from us when He tells us to deny ourselves and take up our cross or we are not worthy of Him, the fact is that Jesus doesn't expect anything from us that He doesn't provide. In Hebrews, the saving work of Jesus Christ is described as the New Covenant. The ineffective work of the Levitical priests is