

Lambs Among Wolves

By

Meade MacGuire

Chapter 2

Love Is the Way

IN THESE tense days when everything is moving with great rapidity, we feel that we are constantly facing many serious problems. There are the financial, social, and educational problems, the moral and physical problems, the personal problems, and the family problems. What an array they make! And they all seem important. But let us remember that, after all, there is only one problem of supreme importance. Most of our problems are temporary and will be settled in a few days, or at most in a few years. But there is one problem which involves our eternal destiny. If we find the solution to that problem, we know that all the others are of minor importance and can be faced with courage and cheerfulness. The big problem is *sin*. Only that one thing can rob us of the joy and happiness of eternal life in the world to come.

Some years ago I was spending a week at one of our large denominational colleges. I was associated with a minister with whom I had not worked before, but I knew he was a successful evangelist. As he arose to address the students, his first words startled and rather shocked me. He said, "How many of you young people ever expect to sin again?" The room was quiet. I began to wonder what he could mean and whether or not he was rather fanatical. I waited almost breathlessly to hear how he would answer such a question.

His sermon was a revelation to me. It showed how little real study I had given to the subject, for the answer was simple and logical. Does not the Bible say, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins"? Now, how can He save you from your sins while you expect to keep right on sinning? We are saved by faith, but what evidence do you give of having faith if you ask Him to save you from your sins and then admit that you expect to keep right on sinning?

On the other hand if we pray earnestly in the morning that the Lord will abide in our hearts and will keep us from committing one sin all through the day; and if we earnestly co-operate with Him, we shall be giving Him a chance to keep us from sinning hour by hour. God is not going to compel us to stop, but He will save us if we follow His instruction. I speak of this because many have said to me, "Oh, well, everybody sins and always will sin as long as we are in this world. I never saw anyone who did not sin."

What Is Salvation From Sin?

It seems to me that this approach evades the question and ignores the plain teaching of the Word of God. How would it sound if I should say, "I accepted Jesus as my Saviour, and now I am a child of God. Before I joined the church, I was a habitual thief, stealing something every day. Now I try hard every day to overcome, but I cannot deny that I steal quite often." Would you believe in that kind of salvation?

I think of a man who attended an evangelistic meeting one night and was deeply impressed. He came forward and gave his heart to the Lord. After prayer with the ministers he went home happy. The next night he returned, but he had a despondent, almost hopeless look on his face. Asked how he got along that day, he replied that he had made a terrible failure and was sure there was no hope for him. He

confessed that he was a wicked man and that he cursed and swore almost every sentence. He said, "I suppose I have sworn a thousand times today; there is no hope for a sinner like me."

But the evangelist gave him the precious promises of God's love for the worst of sinners and told him of God's power to save to the uttermost those who come to Him and surrender all. The man was encouraged and went home determined to be a real Christian. The next night he was at meeting again and looked quite happy. When asked about his experience that day, he said, "Oh, the Lord certainly helped me today, and I got along much better. I do not think I swore more than 500 times today." Would you call that salvation from sin?

I think of another man I met on the island of Celebes, in the East Indies. He had come out of the darkness of heathenism and was a member of the church. One evening in a meeting he was giving a thrilling testimony of the wonderful love of Jesus in saving him. The pastor whispered to me and said, "Look at that man. Until two years ago he was known all over this city and the surrounding country as the King of the Drunkards. But when he surrendered his life to the Saviour and by faith claimed His promises, he never tasted liquor again. One day one of his old friends came and urged him to go to the saloon and have a drink with him; but this man refused, saying, 'I have no desire for drink any more.' The man urged again, offering him a large sum of money if he would drink with him. But the man replied, 'Thank you, my friend, you keep your money, for I do not care for drink. I have something in here (placing his hand over his heart) which satisfies me far more than drink ever did:'"

If that man, a habitual drunkard, could be saved from drinking the very day he surrendered his life to Christ, why cannot we be saved from any other sin if we are really in earnest about it?

The more we consider this question, the more we shall realize that it is a serious one, and that we dare not ignore it. The Bible says, "He shall save his people from their sins." If I claim that I am one of His people and yet manifest a violent temper day by day, am I not actually and openly denying Christ? I say that I am His, but my life testifies to the fact that I am under the dominion of sin. I do not see how anyone can claim to be saved from any sin until he has stopped practicing that sin.

What the Bible Says

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." 1 John 5:18. There are many statements in God's Word like this which we read again and again but pass over lightly without much thought. We might be startled if we stopped to meditate upon them until their real significance is understood. This is especially true of statements in the First Epistle of John, which is sometimes called "The Book of Christian Certainties" because the words "We know" or their equivalent occur about 20 times in this short letter.

John the beloved disciple was well acquainted with Jesus and His teaching. After 50 years or more of actual experience in the practice of these truths, he wrote this precious book to emphasize those facts and principles, which every disciple should *know* as a practical experience. When he writes, "Whosoever is born of God sinneth not," we know that this is the word of God, and there is no place for the expression of our personal views or differences of opinion regarding it. Many do not want to face this statement without question and either pass it over lightly or declare that everyone sins. They do not believe it possible to cease wholly from sinning; therefore the text cannot mean what it says.

Keeping the Law

On the other hand, we hear these very people assert that we should keep the commandments of God, the moral law. They are scrupulous in the observance of the Sabbath of the Lord in obedience to the fourth commandment. They believe that those who have the light regarding the obligations of the moral law and still continue to transgress that law by desecrating God's holy Sabbath cannot expect to

be saved. All this is unquestionably true, but why do they consider the transgression of the fourth commandment any worse than breaking some other precept of that law? Does not the Scripture say, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all"? James 2:10.

Every sin men commit is a transgression of some precept of the law. I may be conscientious in obeying the fourth commandment, but if I disobey my parents or fail to be strictly honest, I am as guilty as one who breaks the Sabbath. How can I consistently and sincerely appeal to my neighbor to keep the Sabbath so that he can be saved, while I admit that I have sins in my life which I have not stopped and cannot stop?

If we all admit that God has made provision that His children shall have complete victory over all their sins, is it not imperative that we study to understand the plan by which this precious experience is to be attained and then co-operate fully with our Saviour?

God's Promises

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." 1 John 3:6.

"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." 1 John 3:9.

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." 1 John 5:4.

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not." 1 John 5:18.

"Christ came to make us 'partakers of the divine nature,' and His life declares that humanity, combined with divinity, does not commit sin."—*Ministry of Healing*, p. 180.

In view of these clear and emphatic statements, how can we deny that salvation from sin means to stop sinning? I know that many are saying, "No one knows how I long to stop sinning. I have resolved and struggled and prayed for years to get the victory over these besetting sins."

It is an important and necessary step in the life of victory to come to the place where we hate sin and long to be set free from its dominion. And it is imperative that we understand the means by which this experience is to be attained. How hard I tried in my youth to overcome habitual sins in my life! But I made little progress, and I was discouraged. It came as a surprise to me that I was not alone in this experience, for everywhere I went, I found earnest Christian people struggling with the same problem. I found them resolving to do better, waging a bitter struggle against sin, and—failing! And failing again! I was still more surprised when I discovered that the Apostle Paul had passed over the same road—resolving, promising, struggling—only to experience failure and defeat.

"For that which I do I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." Romans 7:15, 19, 18.

Later on the apostle found the secret and cried out with exuberant joy, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Romans 8:37. Oh, how I rejoiced when I learned the secret of victory over that ungovernable temper, which had almost driven me to despair! And how I longed to make it plain to others who were having a similarly discouraging struggle! Now, if we find by a more careful study of God's Word that our failure has been due to the fact that we have tried to do something ourselves that God does not ask us to do, and which is impossible for us to do, we shall

joyfully accept the victory which Jesus has already won for us. Then we can witness in our words and in our life that Jesus saves His people from their sins.

What Is Sin?

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4.

Many are not interested in talking or thinking about the law. They have been told that the law of Ten Commandments was abolished at the cross, and we are not now expected to keep the law. What a strange theory for one who professes to believe in Jesus as his Saviour! What are we to be saved from if it is not the guilt and condemnation of sin? The Word of God says, "For where no law is, there is no transgression." Romans 4:15.

Others say, "I am not under the law, but under grace." What does it mean to be under grace? It means that by His grace you are united with Christ and have the experience of the Apostle Paul when he said, "Christ liveth in me." Galatians 2:20. If Christ lives in you, He will live the same life He lived when here in the flesh. If anyone could be saved by grace, while ignoring and transgressing the law, then he would be saved *in* his sins. The Bible says, however, that Jesus saves His people *from* their sins.

The Secret of Obedience by Grace

We now come to the secret of the glorious experience of salvation from sins and the life of victory which Jesus has made possible for His children. There is one way pointed out clearly in the Bible by which we can obey the law and be delivered from the dominion of sin. The Apostle Paul gives us the key to this experience in Romans 13:10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

One who fulfills the law renders perfect obedience. Jesus said He came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it, and that is the life He wants to live in His children. For years I longed for victory over my terrible temper; and I resolved, and promised, and prayed to overcome it, for I did not know at that time that the secret of victory was love. It does not say that love helps or enables us to fulfill the law, but "love is the fulfilling of the law." In other words love and sin cannot control at the same time, so to the extent that my life is filled with love, it is emptied of sin. If love inspires and dominates every motive and thought and act of my life, I shall be in perfect harmony with the law of God.

Love is the greatest thing in the world, for GOD IS LOVE. All the happiness we have in this life or shall have in the next springs from love. We long for love. Nothing else so profoundly affects our lives. Its effect is strikingly illustrated in a remarkable "love story" recorded in the Bible:

Jacob fled from home because his brother had threatened to take his life. He traveled his lonely way for days, past heathen villages and along the barren wilderness trails, a weary exile without friend or companion. One day he came to a well surrounded by flocks of sheep. Soon a young woman named Rachel came with her flock, and he learned that she was a relative of his beloved mother. He accompanied her home and soon asked for her hand in marriage. Her father stated the terms—seven years must he labor for her—and Jacob went to work.

We can picture this ardent young suitor, far from friends and his native land, lavishing all the pent-up affections of his lonely life upon the one most dear to him. Though the Oriental custom permitted no outward expression, yet love burned as an unquenchable fire in his heart as the days and weeks and months built up into years. Under the burning sun through the long days of summer, and through the dark, stormy nights of winter, he guarded the flocks and herds from robbers and beasts of prey, always

toiling cheerfully, bravely, heroically, thinking of Rachel. The seven years seemed but a few days, because of the love he had for her.

As I pondered this story, I said to myself, Surely there is no one in this world so loving and lovable as Jesus. Is it not possible for me to know Him and love Him with a devotion that will bring every motive and word and act of my life under His influence, that will keep my affections so centered upon Him, that by beholding Him I shall be changed into the same image? Then I could go wherever He leads and bear every burden, every trial, hardship, danger, and serve Him devotedly year after year, and they would seem like a few days because I love Him so. And I would be keeping the law.

What Love Does

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."
Romans 13:8.

Like many others, I once looked upon the law as being negative, a constant demand not to do certain things. Of course this dolorous approach pleases his Satanic Majesty, for he hates the law of God. As we study the Bible, we see how positively contrary that theory is to the truth. The law places a loving wall of protection around every child of God. If we loved God as He loves us, we would look with horror and loathing upon everything that He forbids in this law.

Some years ago I was holding meetings in a large city. One evening at the close of the sermon a woman came to talk with me about her husband. He was a businessman and a member of the church, but she felt that he was becoming so absorbed in his work that he was neglecting his Christian experience and gradually drifting away from the Lord. She requested me to visit him and see whether I could help him.

The next afternoon I called at his place of business. He was a friendly man and greeted me cordially, making me feel kindly toward him at once. After visiting with him a few moments, I mentioned my talk with his wife and her anxiety concerning him, and his attitude changed at once. He began to tell me of the serious problems he had in his home, finally declaring that it was impossible for him to continue with his wife, and he did not intend to do so. I was very much distressed over the situation; and that evening, after the meeting, I asked them whether they would meet me the next afternoon. They agreed.

I earnestly hoped and prayed that after talking these matters over frankly, permitting each one to mention the difficulties which were causing trouble, they would acknowledge where they had been wrong, and the differences would be settled.

They came at the appointed time, and I asked the lady to present her view of the situation first. She did so, and then her husband stated his side of the question. I had hoped that as each point was presented and discussed kindly and frankly, the one at fault would recognize and acknowledge the wrong and make it right. But my concern increased moment by moment, as they seemed to get farther and farther apart. Finally in desperation I said to them, "My dear friends, I think your case is hopeless. If you would both confess your sins to God, and your faults to each other, and would ask for forgiveness, the Lord would pardon you, and you could go home reconciled and happy and live real Christian lives; but if you continue your present course, I see no hope for you."

They seemed to sense their serious situation, and we knelt to pray. I have never forgotten those prayers. The man wept and confessed his sins, humbly and earnestly praying God to forgive him and create in him a new heart; and God answered his prayer. Then his wife prayed, confessing her wrongs and pleading with God for a new heart. When we arose and they embraced each other, we were conscious of the presence of the Saviour. The room seemed filled with the atmosphere of heaven.

Some weeks later I visited their church, and after the service I asked the lady how they had been getting along since our little meeting. Her face lighted up, and she cried, "Oh, our home is the happiest home, and there is not a better husband in the world than my husband." Then I found the man and asked him the same question and was thrilled by his reply. He said, "Our home is just a little heaven, and really my wife is an angel. There isn't a better wife in the world than she is."

"For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law." It is heaven where God is because there all is love, and love is the fulfilling of the law. When our hearts are possessed with that love, it is heaven in our hearts, and thus heaven may begin in this life and may be in our home and our church.

Love Includes All

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love:" Galatians 5:14. There are 10 commands in the law of God. Let us glance at them briefly: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. . . . Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image. . . . Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. . . . Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . Honour thy father and thy mother. . . . Thou shalt not kill. . . . Thou shalt not commit adultery. . . . Thou shalt not steal. . . . Thou shalt not bear false witness. . . . Thou shalt not covet." All these 10 commands are embraced in the one word *love*. LOVE and nothing but love can meet the requirements of the Decalogue.

I was giving some studies in a college on this subject of love. One morning some members of the faculty were on the platform, and others were in the audience. Desiring to make a practical application of this truth for the benefit of the young people, I addressed a member of the faculty who, the students knew, regarded his wife with deep affection. I said, "Professor, may I ask you some questions for the benefit of these students?"

He answered, "Certainly."

Then I proceeded to say, "I understand there is a law forbidding you to kill your wife. Now, do you find that you must resolve, and promise, and struggle with all your power to control yourself and not kill your wife?"

He replied, "No, sir, I do not."

"There is also a law forbidding you to bear false witness against your wife. Do you not find that, notwithstanding all your efforts and resolutions, you occasionally lie about her?"

Again the positive reply, "No, sir."

"There is also a law forbidding you to steal from your wife. Really, do you not find it very difficult, and does it not require all your will power and effort to refrain from stealing from her?"

"No, sir, it does not."

"I am meeting people who say they want to be good Christians and are trying their best day by day, but in spite of all their efforts and resolutions, they fall into sin. You spoke as though you did not find it hard to obey the laws I mentioned. How do you account for this?"

Instantly the reply came, "*I love my wife.*"

Is not that a simple illustration of the truth that "all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love"?

And now let me state a principle which I believe is fundamental for every Christian: You never committed a sin against God in your life other than when you loved yourself more than you loved Him.

And you never committed a sin against any human being other than when you loved yourself more than you did him.

"Self-idolatry: . . . lies at the foundation of all *sin*."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 114. If by the grace of God we deny, crucify, and dethrone SELF, and enthrone Jesus in our hearts, we have the victory over sin. If you really love a person as Jesus loves you, nothing could persuade you to kill him, or steal from him, or bear false witness against him. You would not covet what is his, but rather would always be wanting to give him something, for "love gives." Love is the source of all generosity, all sacrifice for others, all noble giving. "God so loved the world, that he gave." So if we love others more than self, we shall not sin against them.

Who that has struggled and prayed for years over this problem of sin will not rejoice to know that there is a way of deliverance and victory? That way is LOVE. Do you want that love? If you desire it more than anything else, you will seek until you find it. The promise is, "He that seeketh findeth." Matthew 7:8.