Practicing What We Preach

Often a politician preaches we should have a tight budget and try to recover from economic waste. It is a shock to learn that when such a person is elected he often has an extremely expensive celebration. Some years ago, a member of the church who sold cars was found to be the front man of a ring selling cars stolen in other states and brought here.

AS Christians, we realize that none of us is able to live without sin. But it does seem we should make an honest effort to practice what Jesus preaches, and not to live instead as a hypocrite.

I John 1:8-10

8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

We are not any longer to "live in sin."

Romans 6:12-13

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

13 Do not yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but yield yourselves to God, as one alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

So why are we then shocked when we learn about things like that car dealer? Possibly it is because to do that on a continuing basis makes it hard for us to understand how he could be struggling against that sin. It seems rather that he is either a complete hypocrite or he has yielded himself to the service of sin in that matter.
What did Jesus do about the things He preached, and in what circumstances. Struggling against sin is, after all, a very practical matter. I need to know how to go about it, as well as why.

Jesus came to save us all.

Matthew 5:43-48

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'

44 But I tell you this: Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

45 In this way you show that you are children of your Father in heaven. He makes his sun rise on people whether they are good or evil. He lets rain fall on them whether they are just or unjust.

46 If you love those who love you, do you deserve a reward? Even the tax collectors do that!

47 Are you doing anything remarkable if you welcome only your friends? Everyone does that!

48 That is why you must be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect.

In Matthew 21:12-17, Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph. In the temple courtyard He healed the sick and blind who came to Him. He cast out the money-changers and the animal sellers, and answered the evil priests and scribes who resented what He did.

As you read about Jesus in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John you find Jesus interacting with disciples who believed in Him, with new people who had never seen or heard of Him, with people whose lives were given over to sin, and with people who practiced a form of their own righteousness without seeking the righteousness that comes from God.

When the wicked crucified Him, Jesus did not call down legions of angels on them, or destroy them with His own power. As He suffered on the cross, He said:
Luke 23:34

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

Jesus and the children

Matthew 18:1-6

1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,

3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receives me.

6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

children at the temple

Matthew 21:12-16

12 ¶And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

13 And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

15 And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,
And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

Do we suppose children weren’t children, that they made no noise, or always did the right thing?

children coming to Jesus

Matthew 19:13-15

13 ¶Then were there brought unto Him little children, that He should put His hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.

14 But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. 15 And He laid his hands on them, and departed thence.

What lessons can we learn from Jesus about children, about people who are not living as they should, and how we ought to relate to them?

The matter of forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-22

21 ¶Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?

22 Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.

Jesus' parable

Matthew 18:23-35
A steward had an immense debt which he owed to his master. His master in pity forgave him everything. Then the steward went out and was very severe with people who owed him much smaller debts. Then the master heard about it.

34 And his lord was angry, and delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 So likewise shall My heavenly Father do also to you, unless each one of you from your hearts forgive his brother their trespasses.

How we relate toward a sinful world is a difficult matter. Reminding ourselves of Jesus’ ways can give us guidance we need. Kindness and respect can go a long way. Jesus did not shy away from identifying sin, but the only people He was "scathing" toward were the unrepentant hypocrites who later put Him to death.

Jesus neither accepted sin nor condoned sin, but neither was He mean and hateful toward ordinary people who were practicing sin. To several He said, "Go, and sin no more." (John 8:11)

Certainly, if we would be the children of God, we must believe in Him (Romans 10:10), repent of our sins, (Luke 13:3), and obey the gospel (Acts 2:37-38). We must follow that with an attempt to live soberly, righteously, and justly in this present world (Titus 2:12). We must follow by keeping communion with the Lord's people (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). But we are to do these things as the "little children of God" and not as the judges and juries of mankind.