

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. Please take God's Word and turn with me to 1 John chapter 3.
2. We have returned to our study of 1 John after a year of covering various issues.
3. This is our third message in chapter 3.
4. Today we are beginning a look at verses 4-10.
5. Follow me as I read them to you.
6. 1 John 3:4-10 (NASB) Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has

sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

7. Now that final verse sums up essentially what the text is about. "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious."
8. How can you tell a Christian from a non-Christian?
9. How can you tell someone who is born again from someone who is not?
10. How can you tell someone in the family of God from someone in the family of the devil?
11. The answer is anyone who doesn't practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.
12. Clearly it is obvious whether a person is a Christian or a non-Christian by virtue of whether or not they practice righteousness or practice sin.

13. That couldn't be more clear.
14. There's nothing about that that is unclear or vague or obscure.
15. Yet there are those who teach otherwise.
16. Listen to what some are teaching today:
17. Repentance is just a synonym for faith. No turning from sin is required for salvation.
18. Here's another one. Faith might not last. It is a gift of God but it might not last. A true Christian can completely cease believing and therefore can commit the ongoing great sin of willful unbelief and still be a Christian.
19. Here's another one. Saving faith is simply being convinced or giving credence to the truth of the gospel. It is confidence that Christ can remove guilt and give eternal life. It is not a personal commitment to Him.
20. Here's another one. Christians can lapse into a state of permanent spiritual barrenness.
21. Here's another one. Christians may fall into a state of lifelong carnality, born again people who continuously live

like the unsaved.

22. Here's another one. Disobedience and prolonged sin are no reason to doubt one's salvation.
23. And another one. A believer may utterly forsake Christ and come to the point of not believing. God has guaranteed that He will not disown those who thus abandon the truth.
24. Those who have once believed are secure forever, even if they turn away.
25. Here are some more that might even be more disturbing:
26. Repentance is not essential to the gospel. In no sense is repentance related to salvation.
27. And another one. True faith can be subverted, overthrown, collapse and even turn into unbelief.
28. What they're basically saying is that saving faith is the experience of a moment and it is simply believing for a moment certain facts about Jesus and asking Him to save you based upon those facts. No necessary repentance, no necessary obedience, no righteousness, no turning from sin, no spiritual fruit is required.

29. So I say again, the key is verse 10. "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious," two categories are then given.
30. One is the test of practicing righteousness, the other is the test of loving his brother.
31. And the first few verses running up to verse 10 deal with the matter of righteousness.
32. And then from verse 11 on to the end of the chapter, it deals with the issue of love.
33. You can tell who's a true Christian, the children of God are obvious.
34. They practice righteousness and they love.
35. Those are not new themes, they were all in chapters 1 and 2.
36. But here the approach is a little different. Its expanded, its widened, its broadened.
37. In chapters 1 and 2 the emphasis was on fellowship.

38. In chapters 3 to 5 it's on Sonship, i.e., being a child of God.
39. You say you're in the fellowship, then there is going to be a manifestation of the reality of that in what you believe and how you conduct your life.
40. Here the emphasis is you are a child of God, if you are a child of God that will manifest itself in how you believe, and how you behave.
41. There are people in John's day and even today who claim to be Christians but habitually practice sin and have no visible, measurable dominant love for other Christians.
42. And that's the problem John is addressing here in 1 John 3:4-10.
43. If you look at verses 3 John has just talked about those whose hope is fixed on Christ "purify themselves, just as He is pure" and then in verse 4 John turns to the individual who is not purifying himself but rather "practices sin" and gives the universal statement regarding sin.

# LESSON

## I. If You Practice Sin You're Not a Child of God (v.4)

### A. Because Children of God Practice Righteousness

1. This is now the habit of their life not sin
2. Their sin is infrequent not a habit like it was before they came to Christ

### B. This is the Test Everyone Needs to Make (2 Cor.13:5)

1. The use of "everyone" means this is all inclusive
2. It applies to everyone that is habitually practicing sin (1 John 2:29, "practices righteousness is born of Him")
3. If you "practice sin" or the plural "practices"

The KJV translation has the word 'committeth,' which is misleading in that it suggests a point of action rather than the continuing practice.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hiebert, D. Edmond. [\*The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary\*](#). Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1991. Print.

- a) The NASB has word “Practices” (poieo) is used 6 times in vv.4-10 [2x(v.4), 1x(v.7), 1x(v.8), 1x(v.9), 1x(v.10)]
- b) This is a “course of sinning, a willful, obstinate, persisting in sin”<sup>2</sup>
- c) This participle is used in the present tense to refer to continuous action
- d) It refers to the “habit of doing sin”<sup>3</sup>
- e) The present tense points out two things: (1) This being a matter of continued behavior and (2) it pictures the individual as actively engaged in “doing” sin. The reference is not to his being engaged in a definite act of sin but to his characteristic practice of sinning.<sup>4</sup>
- f) Although genuine Christians have a sin nature (1:8), and do commit and need to confess sin (1:9; 2:1), that is not the unbroken pattern of their lives. A genuinely born again believer has a built-in check or guard against habitual sinning due to a new

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<sup>2</sup> Gill, John. John Gill’s Exposition on the Whole Bible. E-Sword.

<sup>3</sup> Robertson, A.T., Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Hiebert.

nature (“born of God”—v. 9; Rom. 6:12).<sup>5</sup>

- g) That’s not so with unbelievers - Paul said to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 (NASB) For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances; 21 I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and **not repented** of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have **practiced**.
- h) So “The Christian does not, cannot habitually and persistently sin. He will sin sometimes. He will sin willfully. But he will not sin habitually, persistently and relentlessly. Few have been saved, born again, regenerated, made new, the whole direction of your life is now toward God. The direction of your life is toward holiness. Your mind is set on the Spirit, Romans 8:6. Your mind is set on

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.

things above, Colossians 3:2. You are disconnected from earthly things, Philippians 3:19. And so we can say although the believer sometimes sins, yet the ruling principle of his life is opposition to sin so that he hates the sin that he sees in his own life. To put it in the language of Romans chapter 6, sin does not reign in us any longer."<sup>6</sup>

### C. Sin is Incompatible with a Christian

What is sin?

1. There are several definitions of sin in the Bible:
  - a) "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).
  - b) "The thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. 24:9).
  - c) "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/62-25/the-christians-incompatibility-with-sin-part-1>

- d) “All unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17).
- e) But John’s epistle defines sin as *lawlessness* (1 John 3:4). It views sin as *defilement* (1 John 1:9–2:2), but here it views it as *defiance*.<sup>7</sup> (rebellion)

John calls it...

## 2. Sin is lawlessness

- a) Sin is a deliberate deviation from and infraction of the standard of right, a willful rebellion, arising from the deliberate choice of the sinner. “Sin is the greatest tragedy of the entire universe. It’s actually rebellion against God.” Thus by its nature sin has the character of lawlessness.<sup>8</sup>
- b) William McDonald said, “Sin is insubordination to God, wanting one’s own way, and refusing to acknowledge the Lord as rightful Sovereign. In essence it is placing one’s own will above the will of God. It is opposition to a Living Person who has the

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<sup>7</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W. [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#). Vol. 2. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996. Print.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Hiebert.

right to be obeyed”.<sup>9</sup>

- c) “Lawlessness” (anomia) is “the condition of without law”<sup>10</sup>
- d) So the term “lawlessness” conveys more than transgressing God’s law. It conveys the ultimate sense of rebellion, i.e., living as if there was no law or ignoring what laws exist (James 4:17).<sup>11</sup>
- e) This is “the assertion of the individual will against and in defiance of the law of God, the refusal to live in accordance with the revealed standards of right and wrong.”<sup>12</sup>
- f) Hebrews 1:9 (NASB) says that Jesus hates lawlessness: “You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.” (let that sink in for a minute. Do you hate what Jesus hates?)
- g) Jesus gives a sobering statement to those who practice lawlessness in Matthew 7:23 (NASB) And then I will declare to them, ‘I

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<sup>9</sup> MacDonald, William. [Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments](#). Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.

<sup>10</sup> Thayer, Joseph. *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

<sup>11</sup> MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.

<sup>12</sup> R. J. Drummond and Leon Morris, “The Epistles of John,” in *The New Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 1155.

never knew you; depart from Me, you who ***practice*** lawlessness.

- h) Adam Clarke says in response to 1 John 3:4: “Here is a fearful text. Who is a child of the devil? He that commits sin. Who is a child of God? He that works righteousness. By this text we shall stand or fall before God, whatever our particular creed may be to the contrary.”<sup>13</sup>

## II. **Jesus Came to Take Away Sin (v.5)**

“You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.”

John says, “Jesus Christ was made manifest (became flesh, lived, suffered, died, rose again) in order to take away the sins.”<sup>14</sup>

“To take away sins” indicates from the aorist tense (*arē*) the effective removal of human sins as the goal of Christ’s coming.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Clarke, Adam. Adam Clarke Commentary. Esword.

<sup>14</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. [\*The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude\*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966. Print.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Hiebert.

A. This was the purpose of His coming

1. He came to put away sin - Hebrews 9:26 (NASB) (NASB) "...He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."
2. John the Baptist said He came to "take away the sin of the world" (John 1:29)
3. Paul said in Titus 2:13-14 (NASB) that "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed..."
4. Adam Clarke said, "He came into the world to destroy the power, pardon the guilt, and cleanse from the pollution of sin. This was the very design of his manifestation in the flesh. He was born, suffered, and died for this very purpose."<sup>16</sup>
5. To habitually practice sin goes against Christ's purpose!

B. Jesus was the Perfect Sacrifice Because He is Sinless

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Clarke.

He is properly qualified to be the atoning sacrifice for the sins of men.<sup>17</sup>

D. Edmond Hiebert says the phrase “And in Him is no sin” is “literally, “and sin in Him not exists” [and it] emphatically declare[s] the sinlessness of the remover of sins. As such He is the perfect pattern of what the child of God should be.”<sup>18</sup>

1. 1 John 3:3 says “He is pure.”
2. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB) He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.
3. Hebrews 4:15 (NASB) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.
4. 1 Peter 2:22 (NASB) who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., Clarke.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Hiebert.

## **CONCLUSION**

1. What does this say to you this morning?
2. Are you practicing sin?
3. If so, this is inconsistent with your claim to be a Christian.
4. You cannot be practicing sin and say that Jesus took your sin away.
5. The mark of salvation is the decreasingness of sin in your life.
6. Sin is now infrequent. It's no longer a habit.
7. Examine yourself right now.
8. You're a liar if you are habitually practicing sin in your life and you need to repent and surrender your life to Jesus Christ for salvation.
9. You can come to Him right now by placing your faith in Him and turning from your sin and confessing Him as who He is....Lord!
10. Let's pray.