



"The Truth about Sin" 1 John 3:4-10
March 8th, 2015 by Pastor Tim Dodson,
at Jesus Fellowship of Believers,
Menomonie, Wisconsin

1 John 3:4-10 (4) *Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. (5) And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. (6) Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. (7) Little children, let no one deceive you. He who*

practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. (8) He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (9) Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (10) In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

Consistently polls have shown us a truth that we really would rather deny as believers. Polls that tell us that when it comes to issues such as sexual activities outside of marriage, materialism, and just our general world view, there is virtually no difference in America between those who claim to be born again Christians and the population at large. The fact it's... whether we want to accept it or not, those claiming to be Christians often... *very often*, think and act just as the world does. We may claim to believe in Jesus and the Bible, but our lives don't back up those claims.

John herein makes it clear that actually living a righteous life is a distinguishing mark of one that truly has been born of God. Because sin is serious and it is opposed to the reasons why Christ came, Christians do not and cannot live in sin.

In its use in common Greek, the word translated "lawlessness" here has a much broader meaning than the general interpretation of it when it appears in the Old Testament. Therefore it is quite likely that John is not talking about merely the breaking of a specific law of God...a specific instance of sin, but rather, referring to one who *practices* sin. That practice is not merely an error... a 'stumble,' but rather a "revolt against God." But therein lies the issue: few of us will admit that such a pattern of sin in our lives is a "revolt" against our Creator.

John is venturing forth into the truth... the fact that sin, at its core, is much worse than just 'messing up.' All such action is an offense to our Creator. And to actually make a practice of it in any way is to be in open rebellion against God Himself.

If you do not have a biblical view of the seriousness of sin, then you will no doubt fail to grasp the necessity of any real and radical action because of such, either by you or a sovereign God! Why the need for a Savior to "appear in order to take away sins" (3:5), if all we need is just a few tips on how to have a happier life or improve our self esteem? Why do we need to hear all this extreme talk about Christ shedding His blood for our sins and deal with all these wild and fanatical aspects of a disciples lifestyle?

It is forever our tendency to play down the serious nature of sin. Satan's strategy has always been to get rebellious man to think more highly of himself than he ought to think: "*I may not be perfect, but I'm not wicked. It's not like I follow Satan or something!*" Satan wants us to "measure ourselves by ourselves, and compare ourselves among ourselves." (1 Corinthians 10:12) When *we* become the standard, truly we are the most pitiful of people! Because the measuring stick is Christ, not any individual amongst humanity!

At the same time, we tend to want to "revise" the person and nature of God Himself by clutching the attitude of "*Surely, a loving God is hip to today's culture and He surely understands that I'm only human. He made me after all! And if He really loves us He would never send anyone to hell.*" So Satan in affect moves through this thinking to essentially try to pull God down from His absolute holiness and to undermine the cross. Thus it all comes down to this; if God is not so holy and I'm not so sinful, then I don't need anything as radical as someone actually dying as a sinless substitute to pay for my "faults"...for my "debt!"

But the fact is, that is *exactly* why Jesus came! He came to "take away sins." This passage echoes the record of so many years before when John the Baptist proclaimed "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Contrary to the popular notion, Jesus Christ did not come to this earth *primarily* to give us moral teaching or even an example of holy living! He did those things, but his main reason for coming was to take away the sins of mankind and the penalty for having done them! This was not done with His words, but with His blood. And the only way that He could do this was to be completely sinless Himself. Thus John adds, "and in Him there is no sin."

John tells us that those who "abide" in Him do not live in sin. John in his writings often spoke of this "abiding." It speaks of fellowship, communion, and relationship. In such it negates the furthering of this idea that Christianity is merely a belief system, and pushes it out to where it lives in truth...out into a "life system." When we operate in sin we say clearly that we are not abiding in Him, because if we were, it would be impossible to sin. If this is true...and scripture does indeed back it up, then what does that say as to how we go about our fight against the flesh and sin?

But what about the second part of verse 6? How do we deal with John telling us that "*Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him?*" Well, John goes on to tell us to "not be deceived." Whenever that is said in scripture, it should have the effect upon us to sit up and pay attention. John is not wasting his breathe on idle conjecture. It is obvious that people have *been* deceived and/or *are* being deceived currently. There were..according to this book as a whole, those that appear to have indulged in the subtly perverse reasoning that somehow you could 'be' righteous without necessarily bothering to 'practice' righteousness. That concept is factually rampant in our day. It is the fruit of those that teach that you may accept Christ as Savior without submitting to Him as Lord. I am astonished at how many folks adhere to this thinking, despite a tidal wave of evidence to the contrary, and the eternal penalty if you are wrong!

John's comment on the second half of verse 6 declares that there in essence only two camps. One, that knows Him and abides in Him, and those who do not abide in Him and thus prove that they do not know Him at all. To think and believe otherwise is to emasculate the gospel, rendering it spiritually impotent and powerless. To hold to that contrary position places you outside the realm of biblical Christianity. It is scripturally unthinkable that a person can be born again as a New Creature in Christ and not allow Christ the Lordship control over all of that life. I am not speaking, (nor is John) that earthly manifest of holiness is going to be a perfect display of godliness, because it never will be on this side of eternity. But to reject "pattern" and "passion" for Jesus as *Lord* as well as Savior, is simply a damnable doctrine of false teachers and blind prophets.

John says that "He who (makes a practice) of sin(s) is of the devil." Such is a cold and stark statement which must be accepted and embraced if we are to be Bible people. It is not comfortable and it is most definitely accusatory. It is the definitive "line in the sand." This is why there are so many who want to avoid this book that John wrote or reject it altogether. It affectively is the bright light of judgment, and therefore is readily accepted by those who truly desire to evaluate their standing with God and is quickly rejected by those who want to avoid looking in there at any cost!

Isaiah 14:12-14 "*How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'*" This passage speaks of Satan's fall and many of ours also. For the key to it all lies in those herein repeated words "I WILL...." Because there lies the heart of all that John is speaking of...the defining manifest of our lives. If it is "I will" then I'm not a rescued child of God, and if I *live*...not just believe but *live* with the heart, mind, and intent that "He will" then I reflect redemption not just profess it.

To reject His will over our lives is the essence of rebellion. When we want and live for *our way...our control*, then we commit the same original sin that Satan himself committed. Any action that originates in the human will that is not in submission to God is devilish, even if outwardly it is a nice, humanitarian, seemingly "good" action. Psalms 16:2 reminds us that "You are my master, I have nothing good **apart** from you." John wrote in his gospel...chapter 15 verse 5 that "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; **apart from me you can do nothing**." Meaning I can do nothing righteous. I can do nothing *for* God because frankly I am not *a part* of God.

But John then gives us the "good news" in verse 8 saying "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." Again, when sin herein speaks of a practice of sin...a surrender and acceptance of sin practice in our lives, then this is good news indeed! Because when we have indeed been born again...the "seed" of God dwells within Him and being that God does not sin, neither therefore can you. Aren't those awesome words? "...he cannot sin." How we often battle against the power of sin in our lives...trying desperately to not fall, to not surrender. Yet the key is and always has been to nestle up close to Christ and allow Him the control of our lives. The decisions, the paths, the future, the physical placement of our very being. This is the road to righteousness.

It is very important to understand that John is not inferring that we might attain to sinless perfection. He has already dealt with that issue back in chapter 1 where he tells us that when we sin we have an advocate to step in on our behalf. He is talking about a *practice of sin*. A surrender to and coming under the power of the practice of sin. Sadly, the folks who often are adversely concerned by this passage are those believers who are greatly disturbed by the stumbles in their lives but are passionately desiring to please their Lord and to live for Him, and those who brush it all off are those who *should* be concerned, for they have a pattern of sin and surrender to the flesh. Those who do not believe that Jesus needs to be Lord of their lives in order to be saved.

A truly reborn individual...when he or she stumbles in sin, is alarmed, pained, and ashamed. There is immediate and very real action put forth to 'shut it down,' because he or she cannot remain in that sin. They simply cannot. *"A pig and a sheep may fall into the same mud hole, but there is a difference. The pig will love it and wallow in it, because that's its nature. The sheep will want to get out and avoid that mud hole the next time, because it has a different nature. If God's seed abides in you, you cannot wallow in the mud. If you like it in the mud and don't want to get out, you may need to ask whether you truly have been born of God."*

Verse 10 in this section brings it all home: "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." Don't be deceived...don't be fooled. It's easy to say, "I believe in Jesus." But John says, "Look at your life. If I do not practice righteousness, if I do not live in obedience to God's Word, especially with regard to the horizontal love for those around me, my claim is false." John's final comment shows that true Christianity...true redemption includes love for my brother. Such is the "relational test"...the horizontal manifest of our salvation. But more on that next week! (3:11-18).

Philippians 2:12 Paul calls upon us to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." And he says again in 2Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves." So I leave you with the words of John herein: *"Do not be deceived..."*

Pastor Steven Cole says *"The modern American church has fallen into serious deception on this crucial matter of sin. The popular view is that there are two options for the Christian life. "Plan A" is for the really committed: you trust Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is tough. You have to obey Jesus totally, repenting of all your sins. It means giving up the right to spend your money as you choose, because you yield it to Jesus and manage it as His steward. It means following Jesus as His servant. He may call you to go to the mission field or even die as a martyr. But, you will have rewards in heaven.*

If that's too difficult, you may want to try "Plan B." In this option, you accept Jesus as Savior, but you don't need to follow Him as Lord. With this plan, you will go to heaven when you die, but you just don't get as many rewards. But, you can enjoy the pleasures of sin now and at least get in the door of heaven later.

But the truth of the Bible, the truth that John emphasizes here is, "There is no Plan B!" Plan A is the only plan for eternal life. Christ calls you to follow Him as Savior and Lord. You cannot do this by your own strength or willpower, but only if He imparts new life to you, causing you to be born of God. If you have been born of God, it will be obvious. The new life in you will produce a life of righteousness. "Little children, make sure no one deceives you!"