

DOING IS THE TEST OF BEING

1 John 3:4-10

INTRODUCTION

During the Korean War, a Korean woman had an affair with an American soldier and became pregnant. The soldier went back to the United States and she never saw him again. She gave birth to a little girl. This little girl looked different than the other Korean children. She had light-colored curly hair. In that culture, children of mixed ethnicity were ostracized by the community. Many women would even kill their children because they didn't want them to face this rejection. But this woman didn't. She tried to raise her little girl as best she could. For seven years she tried until the rejection became too much. So, she abandoned her little girl to the streets.

The little girl was ruthlessly taunted by people. They called her the ugliest word in the Korean language, *took* which means 'alien devil'. She lived on the streets for two years before she made her way to an orphanage.

One day at the orphanage, word came that a couple from America was coming to adopt a little boy. All the children in the orphanage got excited because at least one little boy was going to have hope. He was going to have a family. So, this little girl spent the day cleaning up the little boys giving them baths and combing their hair, wondering which one would be adopted by the American couple.

The next day the couple came and this is what the girl recalled: "It was like Goliath had come back to life. I saw the man with his huge hands lift up each and every baby. I knew he loved every one of them as if they were his own. I saw tears running down his face, and I knew if this couple could, they would have taken the whole lot home with them."

“He saw me out of the corner of his eye. I was nine years old, but I didn’t even weigh 30 pounds. I was a scrawny thing. I had worms in my body. I had lice in my hair. I had boils all over me. I was full of scars. I was not a pretty sight. But the man came over to me, and he began rattling away something in English, and I looked up at him. Then he took this huge hand and laid it on my face. What was he saying? He was saying, ‘I want this child. This is the child for me.’”

Beloved, we are not just rescued. We are adopted. We, children of wrath by birth, become the children of God by **rebirth** and by **adoption** into the family of God.

Let us look again to our Father and Maker’s handbook.

→ **READ 1 John 3:1-10**

vv. 1-3 – adoption

vv. 4-10 – how to tell which family you belong

We are either in the family of Satan and have Satan as our father or we are of the family of God and we have the holy God, Creator of the universe as our father.

Today, we will look at the seven verses of **1 John 3: 4-10**.

Proposition: 3 Certain Indicators of which family you belong – where you are relative to:

- I. The **Law of God**,
- II. The **Work of Christ**
- III. The **Ministry of the Spirit**

So That: 3 Reasons Christians don’t habitually sin.
3 arguments for holiness.

1st Certain Indicator of which family you are in, ...

This has to do with where you are relative to the Law of God.

I. The Law of God 1 John 3:4

Point – What is sin?

Man calls it a trifle, God calls it a tragedy.
Man call is an accident, God calls it an abomination.
Man calls it a defect, God calls it a disease.
Man calls it an error, God calls it enmity.
Man calls it a mistake, God calls it madness.
Man calls it a weakness, God calls it willfulness.
Man calls it liberty, God calls it lawlessness.

Westminster Shorter Catechism, Question 14 – “What is sin?
Answer: “Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”

Proof – “⁴**Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.**”

“**Everyone**” – John makes very clear this is all inclusive. This is exhaustive.

“**Everyone**” – v. 4

“**No one**” – v. 6 (twice), v. 9

“**Anyone**” – v. 10

There are no exceptions. There are no excuses.

→ You are in one family or the other.

“**Everyone who practices sin**” – from the Greek word ἀμαρτία – which is translated as ‘missing the mark’

“**also practices lawlessness**” – from the Greek word ἀνομία – which literally translates as ‘no law’

→ Sin is immoral. And sin is illegal.

The antinomian says that Christians can sin and that Christians do sin. OK. So far so good. But here’s the catch. They say Christians can and do sin ... AND ... it doesn’t really matter. It’s all under grace.

Illustration – I remember years ago at a church I pastored in the northeast, right before a Sunday service, a man accused me

of “the heresy of Lordship Salvation” → this is actually a phrase that was coined by the antinomian party to capture what is really the biblical gospel. The name ‘Lordship Salvation’ comes from the idea that Christ must not only be Savior but also Lord. And we see this all throughout Scripture. Not only is Jesus Christ our Savior who saves us and rescues us from sin, but as part of our new birth, He is also our Lord.

Consider the following quotes to help you understand the significance of this thinking. These quotes are from men who are part of Bible churches and seminaries who would oppose Lordship Salvation and espouse this Easy Believism kind of thinking:

- *“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.”*
- *“A believer may utterly forsake Christ and come to the point of not believing.”*
- *“Nothing guarantees that a true Christian will love God. Salvation does not necessarily even place the sinner in a right relationship with God.”*
- *“Genuine believers might even cease to name the name of Christ or confess Christianity at all.”*

Really??? I have no idea what these men would say about out text today.

John, on the other hand says, if you treat sin with indifference, you’re not even a Christian.

Heb 10:26 – “if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”

This passage is on par with James 2 in the battle against Easy Believism and Antinomianism

I like the Biblical balance put forth by the Puritan **Thomas Watson** – *“It is not falling into sin that damns. It is lying in sin without repentance (that damns).”*

“and sin is lawlessness” –

We know from this passage and others in Scripture that sin is missing the mark, transgressing, twisting/perverting ... so **“lawlessness,”** in one sense, is just one facet of sin.

But the grammar here does not bring this out. The grammar here is interchangeable → **“sin is lawlessness”** and could be accurately stated from the text, **“lawlessness is sin”**

→ So right here, John is basically defining the same thing from two different vantage points

We know what Jesus said:

Matt 7:23 – “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”

Beloved, this teaches us that there is no such thing as, “a petty sin,” “a small sin.” Because sin is a transgression against the omnipotent Holy God.

Someone may ask, “What about when no one is harmed?”

That is a fair question. The answer is one “small sin” is sufficient to fan the flames of Hell for eternity.

Proof?

Illustration– Think of Adam. He didn’t steal the piece of fruit, he didn’t harm anyone, so to speak, when he ate it. However, one man ate one piece of fruit, and cast the entirety of humanity under the judgment of God.

Application– On the other hand! God, your Father, uses His Law as a schoolmaster to lead you to His Son, Christ. In Christ, You are awakened to your sin and transformed. You have a completely different attitude toward His Law.

Three times in **Psa 119**, David, says, “I love Your Law!”

Heb 10:15-17 – “the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws upon their heart, and upon their mind I will write them, ¹⁷and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”

2nd Certain Indicator of which family you are in, ...

This has to do with where you are relative to the work of Christ.

II. The Work of Christ 1 John 3:5-8

Point – The work of Christ transforms you so that your sins are taken away, you are placed in Christ, the Righteous One, and you are delivered from the power of Satan.

In vv. 2-3, John referenced the purifying hope of the future coming of Christ. Here in vv. 5-8, John shines the light of his pen on the purpose of the past coming of Christ.

Proof – ⁵**“And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.”**

“**And you know that**” → This is the cool crisp breeze of Christian assurance that blows through our souls

“**He appeared in order to** (purpose statement) **take away sins**”

- literally lifting up and carrying something away; *remove, sweep away* like with a flood; *do away with, kill, execute*

John 1:29 – “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

“**and in Him there is no sin**” – is this doctrine or is this application? It is both.

→ Fellowship with a sinless Savior and fostering a sinful lifestyle are mutually exclusive.

“No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.”

The answer is in the tense (see v. 4).

“^{7a}Little children, let no one deceive you” – 1:8; 2:26

→ Satan always wants people to believe something not true and to feel secure in their error.

It does not work to have everything else right
... but to have one thing wrong that you must have right.
→ This is not a faith that saves. This is a faith that damns.

MacArthur – *“A no-repentance gospel, a no-holiness gospel, a no-submission gospel, a no-transformation gospel is the devil’s lie to give false security to damned people.”*

“^{7b}the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;” – 1:9; 2:1, 29; 3:7, 10, 12

Sin is immoral.
Sin is illegal.
Sin is diabolical.

John says here, “You do what you are.”
And he also says, “You do whose you are.”

“^{8a}the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.”

“devil” – from the Greek word **dia,boloj** (meaning ‘slanderer’ or ‘accuser’) from which we get the English word diabolical

John paints in black and white.
He doesn't blend together to make gray.

Illustration – How is a man best prepared to resist the temptation to leave his wife? He fills his mind with her. He loves her as Christ loves the church. He would lay down his life for her.

Application – In the same way, you and I resist the devil by making much of Christ. You and I resist the temptation to leave him as your first love.

Illustration – At a Bible College a teacher gave the students a test in which they had to write a paper on Jesus Christ and the devil. One student wrote on and on about the Lord Jesus finally adding a sentence at the close of his paper, “I have no time for the devil.”

Illustration – When the Germans invaded and conquered Holland, Dr Klaas Schilder counseled the pastors in Holland about how to respond to this invasion in his editorials in “The Reformation”. He counseled them not to preach about the Nazis and the problems they were causing every Sunday. They would most effectively resist the evils of Hitler by worshipping the true Lord, and declaring the beauty and peace of his reign.

Application - In the same way, so it is with our resistance to the devil. It will be counterproductive if we spend excess time on Satan. We would be giving him the oxygen of publicity. How much time is spent in the New Testament letters speaking about him? Very little. You serve the resistance best by speaking much of the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom.

And this is precisely where John now turns his attention again:
“^{8b}**The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.**”

“**The Son of God**” – this is the first appearance in 1 John, but then ... 1 John 3:8; 4:15; 5:5, 10, 12-13, 20

“**destroy**” – meaning *loose*; freeing someone or something tied up or bound; *untie, set free, release; tear down, break up; , do away with, undo, destroy*

Heb 2:14-15 – “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.”

Application - Deliverance from severe danger!!
→ deliverance from hopelessness and helplessness!!

3rd Certain Indicator of which family you are in, ...
This has to do with where you are relative to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

III. The Ministry of the Spirit 1 John 3:9-10

Turn to: John 3:5-8

Point – The purpose of **sin** is to separate us from God.
→ The purpose of **God** is to separate us from Sin.

Proof – “^{9a}**No one who is born of God practices sin**”
– 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18 and 3 John 11

“**practices sin**” – 3 times in NASB → All here (3:4, 8, 9)

Sin is immoral.
Sin is illegal.
Sin is diabolical.
Sin is unnatural.

It was natural for you to sin prior to God’s rescue and adoption of you. But now, born of God, as a child of God, it is unnatural for you to sin.

1 Cor 10:21 – “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.”

Rom 8:13 – “if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

Why?? → “^{9b}**because His seed abides in him**” – **2:24-3:2**

Gen 3:15 – “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Turn to → **Gal 3:16, 19, 29** – we are in Christ and the seed that God promised abides in you and in me – this is why it is so unnatural for us to sin.

“^{9c}**and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.**” – New Birth!

“^{10a}**By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious:**”

→ Doing is the test of being! We do in Christ because we are saved by faith alone and we are born again and transformed.

“^{10b}**anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.**”

John applies the test of **obedience** and **love** to this situation.

Augustine – “*Love God and do as you please.*”

Is Augustine endorsing the antinomian libertine *laissez faire* attitude towards sin in the life of a Christian? No. He is describing the motivation the Christian has for his actions.

Illustration – We obey the Law of God out of love, not out of obligation.

Application– 4:19 – “We love, because He first loved us.”

→ Reverse the order and make it binding/a command ...

Because He first loved us, love!