

*“Why Christians Can’t Sin” part 2*

October 30, 2011

Text: 1 John 3:7-10

**In 1 John 3, the Apostle John calls us to purify ourselves from sin, & in vss 4-10 of that chapter, he gives us 3 reasons for doing so=>**

We considered the first 2 of those reasons last time=>

1) Because sin is opposed to God’s Law;

Not just an offense against other people, ourselves, or a list of does/don’ts, but against God’s Law, & therefore, ultimately, against God Himself.

2) Because sin is opposed to the Person/Work of Jesus X.

1 Jn 3:5 says X appeared on earth=> *“in order to **take away sins**; & in Him there is **no sin**.”*

The Xn who continually indulges in sin is living in opposition to X, who came to take away his sins.

This morning we will consider the 3<sup>rd</sup> reason why we as Xns must purify ourselves from sin=>

Because sin is opposed to our new nature as believers.

**John’s epistles are full of clearly stated certainties that tend to divide the world into opposites=> light vs darkness, love vs hatred, children-of-God vs children-of-the-devil.**

In terms of morality, John again divides all men into

2 groups=> the righteous and the unrighteous.

Our natural tendency would be to say, “Wait a minute! What about all of us who are somewhere in the middle?”

\* John says there is no middle—that if we are regenerated children of God, our new nature is righteous, & therefore we live righteous lives;

\* But if we are still children of the devil, we are unrighteous & our life-deeds reveal a pattern of unrighteousness.

You can almost hear the howls at this point=> “That’s totally unrealistic/harsh/unloving! Why would John talk like that?”

A lot of liberal theologians would immediately go to work, trying to find what it was in John’s background or his personality that would make him so naïve, harsh, and insensitive.

Those of us who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture have only 1 question: Was 1<sup>st</sup> John inspired by the H.S.? If it was (& we believe it was), there really are only 2 kinds of people—righteous/unrighteous.

So we need to deal with that truth.

Not just righteous positionally with the imputed righteousness of God—but personally and practically as well.

The whole world, including all of Sedona, and all of us, is populated by people who are righteous, people who are unrighteous, & no one else.

This can be a rather daunting message for preachers to have to deliver to their people.

Charles Spurgeon certainly felt that when he preached this text 128 years ago (in 1883), saying this early in his message=>  
“No, my Hearers, we cannot talk to you as all the people of God, for you are not! Some of you are children of the Wicked One and though it may not be pleasant to be told so, yet it is no business of ours to please *you*! Our duty is to preach so as to please God and benefit the souls of men—and that can only be effected by an honest enunciation of matters of fact.”

**In this text, John explains the righteousness/unrighteousness of mankind, w/ 4 moral descriptions of people=>**

- \* Those who practice righteousness
- \* Those who practice sin
- \* Those who don't practice sin
- \* Those who don't practice righteousness.

In each case he employs the word “*practices*” to indicate the on-going/overall moral bearing/behavior of a person's life, not a single act of either righteousness/sin.

**\* Group 1—Those Who Practice Righteousness**

[1 John 3:7]=> “*Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He [lit. That One—emphatic pronoun referring to X] is righteous;*”

**John prob. warned his readers not to let anyone *deceive* them because that's what false teachers were seeking to do.**

Pre-Gnostics were trying to lead them astray, not only theologically, but morally as well.

They taught that a person's flesh (body) could sin, without it involving his soul—so sin didn't really matter.

They also said that a person could be righteous without actually practicing righteousness, simply because Gnostics somehow belonged to a divine sphere of righteousness.

In fact, he could sin constantly/grievously and still consider himself a very righteous Xn.

This isn't too different from some Xns today who think their sins are less offensive to God, just because they're Xns, sinning "Xn sins."

In the Scriptural view, when someone sins, his whole person sins.

He can't disassociate himself from his sin by saying, "My flesh did that, not me."

And although X cleanses a Xn from his sins, they so offend God's holiness that Jesus died, to atone for them.

**John is warning believers against the lie that a sinful life is compatible with faith in X.**

He does it with tender/loving sensitivity, addressing his readers with his favorite term of endearment (*"Little children"*).

Being their pastor, he's deeply concerned that this deception could endanger their souls if they actually believed it.

John's message is that there's no mystery about who is righteous and who is unrighteous.

Those who practice righteousness are righteous, those who practice unrighteousness are unrighteous.

It's very straight-forward.

There's no secret, mystical knowledge (as claimed by the Gnostics) which disconnects one's conduct/behavior from his character, or from God's assessment of his soul.

And our being saved doesn't mean God says to Himself, "That one is My child, so his sin isn't really sin."

**John adds that the righteous believer is righteous "*just as He [X] is righteous.*"**

This means at least 3 things=>

1<sup>st</sup>, this means that our righteousness is to be real righteousness like X's.

X's reputation for righteousness was earned, not honorary. He wasn't awarded that reputation because of who He was. His righteousness extended to His whole being and everything He did.

Our righteousness is to be just as real/observable as X's.

So John says=> "We are to be righteous *just as He is righteous.*"

2<sup>nd</sup>, this means that Jesus was able to live a perfectly righteous life because He was the Son of God.

And we are to live righteous lives because we are God's children, indwelt/empowered by God's Spirit.

Not because of our own unaided moral strength.

I.e., we are to be righteous *“just as [X] is righteous.”*

3<sup>rd</sup>, X’s life was to be the example His disciples would follow,

by doing what He did, thinking as He thought, praying as

He prayed, loving as He loved, and living as He lived.

As John says in 2:6, the one who says he abides in X ought

to walk in the same manner as He walked.

We are to be righteous just as X is/was righteous.

And when X appears, our righteousness will become

exactly like His—perfect.

**1 Jn 5:13 explains John’s purpose for writing this epistle=>**

*“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”*

Applying this simple principle that righteous people do righteous

acts, we can assess our own righteousness, so we’ll know

that we do have eternal life.

\* We ought to know whose we are, and whom we serve.

\* We ought to assess whether/not He has given us a new &

righteous nature as determined on the basis of

righteous lives that make us morally different from

nonbelievers.

It’s of utmost importance for a person to know whether he is a

slave of unrighteousness, or the Lord’s free man.

My friend, you are either one/the-other, and the

ramifications are crucial because as 5:12 says=>

*“He who has the Son has the life; he who does not*

*have the Son of God does not have the life.”*

**\* Group 2—Those Who Practice Sin**

**The principle John teaches here isn't what we might expect.**

Having just said that those who practice righteousness are righteous, we might think his 2<sup>nd</sup> principle would be that those who practice sin are unrighteous.

But as he often does, he leapfrogs over the obvious, going a step beyond what we expect, and saying that those who practice sin are of the devil.

**[Verse 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, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”*

**A person's character is a reflection of his spiritual paternity, inheriting either from God the Father or from the devil, the principles by which he operates/lives his life.**

Until/unless he becomes a child of God by regeneration, through faith in Jesus X, his spiritual father is the devil, who has built into his fallen nature evil values/strategies by which he will live.

Being part of the world system, he lies in the power (and under the influence) of the evil one (1 Jn 5:19).

Satan will control him through the desires of his fallen

*flesh=> “immorality, impurity, sensuality, / idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, / envying, Drunkenness, carousing, and things like these” (Gal 5:19-21).*

He will do the works of the devil, making them his own.

The Jewish leaders illustrated that principle by killing

Jesus, who had told them frankly (Jn 8:44), “*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning.*”

In I Jn 3:12, John will also describe Cane as being “*of the evil one,*” and so he “*slew his brother,*” becoming a murderer.

Like father, like son.

**No one in his right mind would want to be told that his spiritual father is the devil, & he does the devil’s works, being linked with Cane and the Jewish leaders who murdered Jesus.**

But Eph 2:2 says that until a person is saved, he walks=>

“*according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air [the devil], of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.*”

Though it may seem shocking to you, if you aren’t a born again child of God, you are a child of disobedience, a child of Satan—doing his work for him, like a slave.

Because, as John says, those who practice sin are “*of the devil,*” lit. *ek* (out of) the devil—he is your spiritual father/parent and the source of both your nature/desires.

This doctrine isn't pleasant to hear, but it's nonetheless true.

An unsaved person would prob. respond=> "How could anyone call me a child of the devil? I'm no saint, but I'm just as good as most people who call themselves Xns!"

Sadly, that might be true, because there are spiritual hypocrites/pretenders w/i the Church's walls.

Jesus called them "tares," and said Satan is the one who has planted them in the Church.

But the reality remains, that the difference between a true Xn's works and a non-Xn's works, is as great as that between God's works and Satan's works.

**Satan has sinned from the moment of his first rebellion against God, and in all his "*works*" he strives to get men to join him in that rebellion, by defying God.**

He whispers lies to them about the delights of the flesh and the pleasures to be enjoyed thru devotion to oneself.

He deadens men's conscience, & blinds/closes eyes to the truth of God, w/ demonic doctrines & hardened hearts.

He teaches men atheism—doctrinal/practical—the denial of God's existence/relevance.

And whatever creation/conscience have taught men about God, he twists/perverts/denies.

He degrades man with drunkenness/addictions and teaches him to degrade himself with filthy habits/language.

He fosters pride within man—pride of looks/dress, pride of wealth, pride of achievement, or any of the other idols men worship in place of the true God.

He works to destroy human relationships with hatred, strife, wrath, bitterness, malice, envy, revenge, & suspicion.

**Those who practice these sins and all the rest by which Satan corrupts human nature, are “of [come out of] *the devil.*”**

He has been practicing sin from the beginning of his rebellion against God.

That had to be after God created man and then pronounced His entire creation (including angels) “Good.”

According to Job 38:4-7, God had created angels before He laid the foundations of the earth.

It also had to be after man was placed in the Garden, that Satan rebelled against God.

In Ezek 28:13, God speaks to the devil about himself=>

*“You were in **Eden**, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering.”*

But exactly when Satan fell, Scripture doesn't tell us.

What the Bible does tell us is that he became the originator and instigator of human sin after he had fallen, enticing Adam/Eve to sin, and thru them, enslaving the whole human race to sin.

Intellectually, he began seducing them into the error of  
doubting what God had said.

Physically, he worked to inflict disease/death on them.

His all-encompassing goal was to oppose God by alienating  
men's affections from God, drawing them into sin, so  
that God would punish them and separate Himself  
from them.

**But neither Satan nor any other angel (elect/fallen) foresaw  
the fact that God Himself would willingly come to earth,  
sacrificing Himself to rescue/redeem men from their sin.**

I Pet 1:10-12 says the angels longed to look into the future in  
order to see what kind of Messiah God would send to  
accomplish this, but God never revealed it to them.

Even with his massive angel-intellect, the devil never even  
imagined that God's own Son would come to earth,  
die as a man for men, in order to destroy Satan's  
works in the hearts/lives of men.

He didn't foresee the implications of God's infinite love for  
us.

He never realized that this had been God's plan from before  
the beginning, in order to reveal His limitless grace,  
to both men/angels.

When Satan suddenly realized God had sent His own Son, he  
must have known then/there, he could never defeat Him.

But being under sin's maniacal grip himself, he couldn't cease his own self-destructive opposition to God.

**\* X's incarnation began the destruction of Satan's works.**

Light had now dawned, & the end of darkness was in sight.

\* Next, Jesus' life advanced that destruction, as He resisted each of the devil's temptations in the wilderness like no other man ever had, & drove demons out of people demonstrating His formidable power.

\* The word "*destroy*" that John uses in vs 8 lit. means to "loose." Jesus loosed people from Satan's captivity w/ His teaching and started loosing/undoing the devil's whole kingdom, w/ the truth, so it would fall apart.

\* When the 70 disciples X had sent out to proclaim His Kingdom returned, rejoicing in their victories, Jesus said (Lk 10:18), "*I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.*" Satan was falling because X's disciples were proclaiming the truth of X's Kingdom, to Satan's people, and some of them were beginning to listen/believe.

\* But ultimately, it was Jesus' death that dealt the fatal blow to Satan's head, after he had wounded our Lord on the heel. The alienation between God/man caused by sin had been the devil's masterstroke, a virtual Gordian knot, that he thought no one (even God) could untie.

But the supreme Son of God solved the problem by taking the offender's place, being "*numbered with*

*transgressors*” (Lk 22:37), accepting unto Himself the wrath of God, crying out, “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*” (Mt 27:46), declaring “*It is finished!*” (Jn 19:30), then bowing His head and giving up His spirit.

The die was cast, the work had begun in men’s hearts by which both the tendency/possibility of sin would ultimately be destroyed, and evil’s fortresses in this world had begun to come apart.

Jesus is still destroying Satan’s works by drawing men/women to Himself, transforming their hearts/lives.

By the time it’s all over, Jesus will have so destroyed Satan’s works that evil will never again disturb mankind.

For now, however, Satan is still doing his wicked works, but he is our defeated foe, whose days are numbered, because X has said=> “*Now the ruler of this world shall be cast out*” (Jn 12:31).

As a result, those who identify w/ Jesus by faith can escape their slavery to sin, & thus Satan’s grip on their souls.

**So it’s great news for us to hear that God’s Son “*appeared... that He might destroy the works of the devil.*”**

Jesus didn’t come to curb or downsize or alleviate Satan’s works, but to absolutely destroy them into evil’s nonexistence.

He alone, who Col 1:16 says created the mighty angels in the 1<sup>st</sup> place, has the power to destroy them/their-works, and that includes Satan himself.

Only God's own light could overcome Satanic darkness, and it did.

Those who practice sin are “*out of the devil,*” but both they/he will ultimately be destroyed in hell, by the power of God's Son.

**\* Group 3—Those Who Don't Practice Sin**

[Verse 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.*”

**Again we find that Gk word *ek* (out of)—“born ‘out of’ God.”**

God is the believer's Father, the Source from whom he derives a new nature, and his new life.

II Pet 1:4 says we've become partakers of the divine nature. The “*seed*” of God (Gk *sperma*) is God's holy/righteous nature, implanted in the heart of the believer w/ all of its life-giving power.

So being “*born of God*” is a radical inward transformation by which an old nature dies, & new one takes its place.

That's exactly what Paul had in mind when he wrote

II Cor 5:17=> “*Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*”

Just as with his natural birth, the Xn did nothing to cause his own spiritual birth, but exercise the faith given him by God, like a baby taking its first breath.

He is God's child because he's "*born of God*," not of himself;

Not even partly of himself and partly of God.

**In our own text, the phrase "*born of God*" is a perf. participle, indicating that, although the Xn was born again at some time in the past, the effects of his rebirth continue on, still.**

Having been "*born of God*," he now continues to be God's child, and a partaker of God's nature.

So John says, "*His [God's] seed abides [remains] in him.*"

God's nature, & the principle of His eternal life, remains in the Xn, exerting an inward and upward tug towards righteousness.

This explains John's words "*He cannot sin.*"

It's not merely that he does not sin, or that he is able to not sin, but rather that he can't practice sin.

Again, notice that John uses pres. tense verbs and the specific word "*practices*" to indicate that he's talking about the ongoing practice of sin, not individual acts of sin.

Do believer's sin? Yes, occasionally.

In fact, 1 Jn 1:8 said that if they deny they sin, they deceive themselves.

But believers don't get caught up in continual/habitual patterns of sin, because we have a new life.

Xns may even continue to struggle w/ a particular sin, but that struggle is punctuated w/ righteousness that's increasing/replacing the unrighteousness in their lives.

Before they were saved, they sinned constantly, and their moral righteousness was never anything but filthy rags, spiritually.

Now they live righteous lives, sinning only occasionally.

They cannot live in continuing sin, because sin opposes the new nature within them, & supernatural birth from God has the lasting effect of preventing that.

They could no more continue in sin, than God could sin.

**Someone: I'm not sure John is right about this. I know Xns who do sin a lot—all the time.**

That brings us to our 4<sup>th</sup> group of people & the 4<sup>th</sup> principle=>

**\* Group 4—Those Who Don't Practice Righteousness**

[Verse 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.”*

**A person can only be 1 of 2 kinds of people—a child of God, or a child of the devil (there's nothing else in between).**

How do we know which one a person is?

John says it's revealed to all, and obvious—the difference isn't even subtle or hidden from sight.

The general tendency of a child of God is to practice righteousness, & the tendency of a child of the devil is to practice unrighteousness (not unrighteousness).

A Xn habitually practices righteousness, w/ occasional sin.

A non-Xn habitually practices unrighteousness w/ no real God-honoring righteousness at all, ever.

Or as Jesus put it=> *“So then, you will know them by their fruits”* (Mt 7:20).

What could you conclude about someone who says he was saved but has lived a life of on-going unrighteousness for the past 10 years?

On the basis of our text, I would say he wasn't really saved.

What could you conclude about a Xn who demonstrates no love or interest in other Xns at all?

I'd say an unloving Xn isn't really a Xn, not only based on this verse, but also on Jesus' words in John 13:35=>

*“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

Love is the ultimate form of human righteousness because it fulfills the whole royal Law of God.

Someone: That doesn't apply to me, I'm task-oriented (not people-oriented).

The word *“anyone”* (vs 10) means it does apply to you, because there are no exceptions to this principle,

including psychological traits, like task-orientation,  
or even shyness.

**Let's close by applying this text to ourselves.**

What do you see when you look within your heart—a spiritual  
nature derived from God, or one derived from the devil?

Do you love the Lord, or at least have a sincere desire to be like  
Him, and to be with Him forever?

If so, that a good start.

Have you seen (and do you see) X destroying the devil's works in  
your life, such as self-righteous pride, or his work of doubt  
(as he tries to persuade you that even God couldn't forgive  
you)?

Is Jesus X progressively destroying unbelief or fleshly lusts  
in your heart/life?

If He has begun, you can be confident that He will finish the task,  
perfecting it until the day of X Jesus.

And you will know that you have eternal life.

***“Why Christians Can’t Sin”*** (Part 2)

October 30, 2011

Text: 1 John 3:7-10

1. This morning we will consider the third reason why we as Christians must purify ourselves from sin: Because sin is opposed to our [8 new] nature as believers.

I Jn 3:5

2. The whole world, including all of Sedona and all of us, is populated by people who are righteous, people who are unrighteous, and [6 no] one else.

**In this text John explains the righteousness and unrighteousness of mankind with four moral descriptions of people...**

**\* Those Who Practice Righteousness**

**[1 John 3:7]**

3. John is warning believers against the lie that a sinful life is compatible with [12 faith] in Christ.

4. We are to live righteous lives because we are God's children, indwelt and [20 empowered] by God's Spirit.

I Jn 2:6; 5:13; 5:12

\* **Those Who Practice Sin**

[Verse 8]

5. A person's character is a reflection of his spiritual paternity, inheriting either from God the Father or from the devil the [22 principles] by which he operates and lives his life.

Gal 5:19-21; Jn 8:44; I Jn 3:12; Eph 2:1

6. Satan has sinned from the moment of his first rebellion against God, and in all his works he strives to get men to join him in that rebellion, by [16 defying] God.

Ezek 28:13

7. Neither Satan nor any other angel foresaw that God Himself would come to earth sacrificing Himself to rescue and redeem [8 men] from their sin.

I Pet 1:10-12; Lk 10:18

8. Ultimately, it was Jesus' death that dealt the fatal blow to [16 Satan's] head after he had wounded our Lord on the heel.

Lk 22:37; Mt 27:46; Jn 19:30; 12:31; Col 1:16

\* **Those Who Don't Practice Sin**

[Verse 9]

II Pet 1:4

9. The "seed" of God is God's holy, righteous nature implanted in the heart of the believer with all of its [10 life] giving power.

II Cor 5:17; I Jn 1:8

10. Believers cannot live in continuing sin because sin opposes the new nature within them, and supernatural birth from God has the lasting effect of [24 preventing] that.

\* **Those Who Don't Practice Righteousness**

[Verse 10]

Mt 7:20

11. What could you conclude about someone who says he was saved but has lived a life of unrighteousness? That he [14 wasn't] really saved.

Jn 13:35

12. Have you seen (and do you see) Christ destroying the devil's work in your life? If He has begun, you can be confident that He will [14 finish] the job.