



October 10, 2021

“Sin is Incompatible”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Wednesday Nights at Alêtheia 6:30

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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I JOHN 3:4-10 ~

“Sin” is ἁμαρτία (hä-märr-tē-ä). It can be defined as “_____ to the Lord that _____ fellowship.” All of God’s commands are _____.

- 1) Original sin:
- 2) The 10 Commandments:
- 3) Jesus’ last command:

Taken a step further, “Sin” definitely has an “___” in the middle. Sin is, in a word, _____.

“Lawlessness,” is used here as a synonym and clarifying description of “_____.” Lawlessness and love are antithetical, meaning _____ (Romans 13:8-10).

“Practice” is the word ποιέω (poy-ě-ō), the verb “To do.”

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God Bless You!

Verse 4, John equates the two terms. "Sin is lawlessness." Verse 5 now sets the stage for the principle. Jesus was sent by the Father for a _____. Verse 6 states the principle: Jesus is without _____ and His entire mission to earth was to remove _____. Here's the point... How can a person abide in Him and _____? It's inconceivable.

Jesus saved us from _____, not in order to _____!

Verse 7 sin and righteousness are two polar opposite things. Never _____ otherwise. The person who has a righteous character, lives righteously.

Here righteousness is treating people _____, which is another way to say, treating people as you would like _____ to treat you.

Jesus is sinless and so, He is righteous... Verse 8 gives us the opposite. John is setting up a rhetorical dualism to show the complete _____ of sin and righteousness.

Verse 9, again, a rhetorical point that means sin of any kind, habitual sins, minor sins, gross sins, occasional sins of commission and sins of omission, along with unknown sins... all sin of any kind are at _____ with being a Christian. It is all rebellion against God that produces harmed relationship.

John wasn't saying the person "Born of God," was incapable of sinning, he was saying that the indwelling presence of God is incapable and since that Spirit lives within you...

Verse 10. Jesus said the way that the world knows people belong to Him is by their _____ for their fellow Christians. The way the world knows we're the same as them is by our self-centered deeds. A child of _____ could not possibly be mistaken for a child of _____.

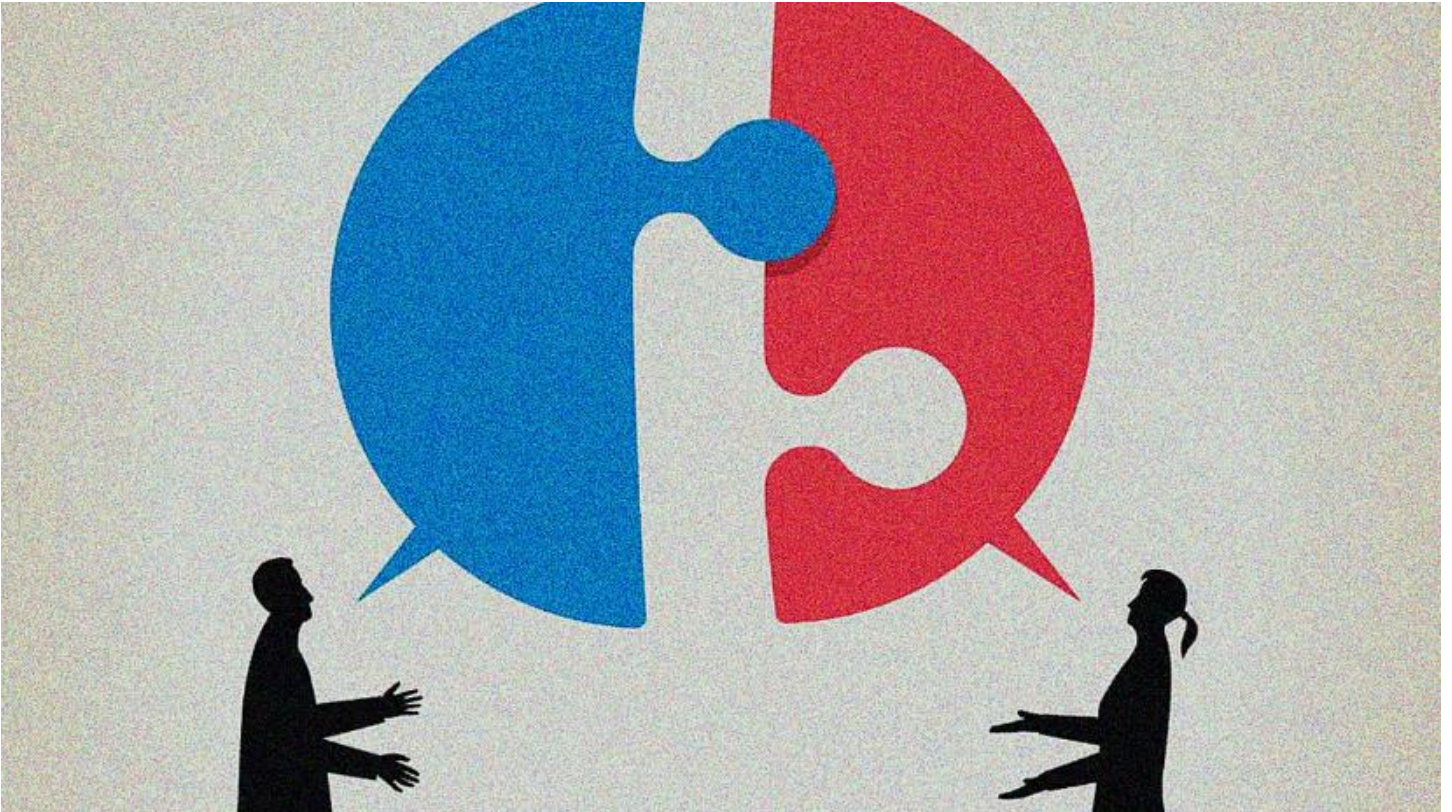
Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____



I John 3:4-10, 4Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. 5You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8the 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. 9No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10By 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.



In any communication it's important to define our terms to make sure that we're all talking about the same thing. Recently we've defined the terms "Holy," and "Righteous," and "Pure." Some time back we defined "Sin." Prominent words in today's passage are the word "Sin" again, along with "Lawlessness," and perhaps even more importantly the word "Practices."



Just a quick reminder about the word “Sin.” You may recall that it is the Greek word ἁμαρτία (hä-mär-tē-ä), giving us our highfalutin seminary word hamartiology, which is the study of sin. In the past, I’ve defined “Sin” as “Disobedience to the Lord that destroys fellowship.”

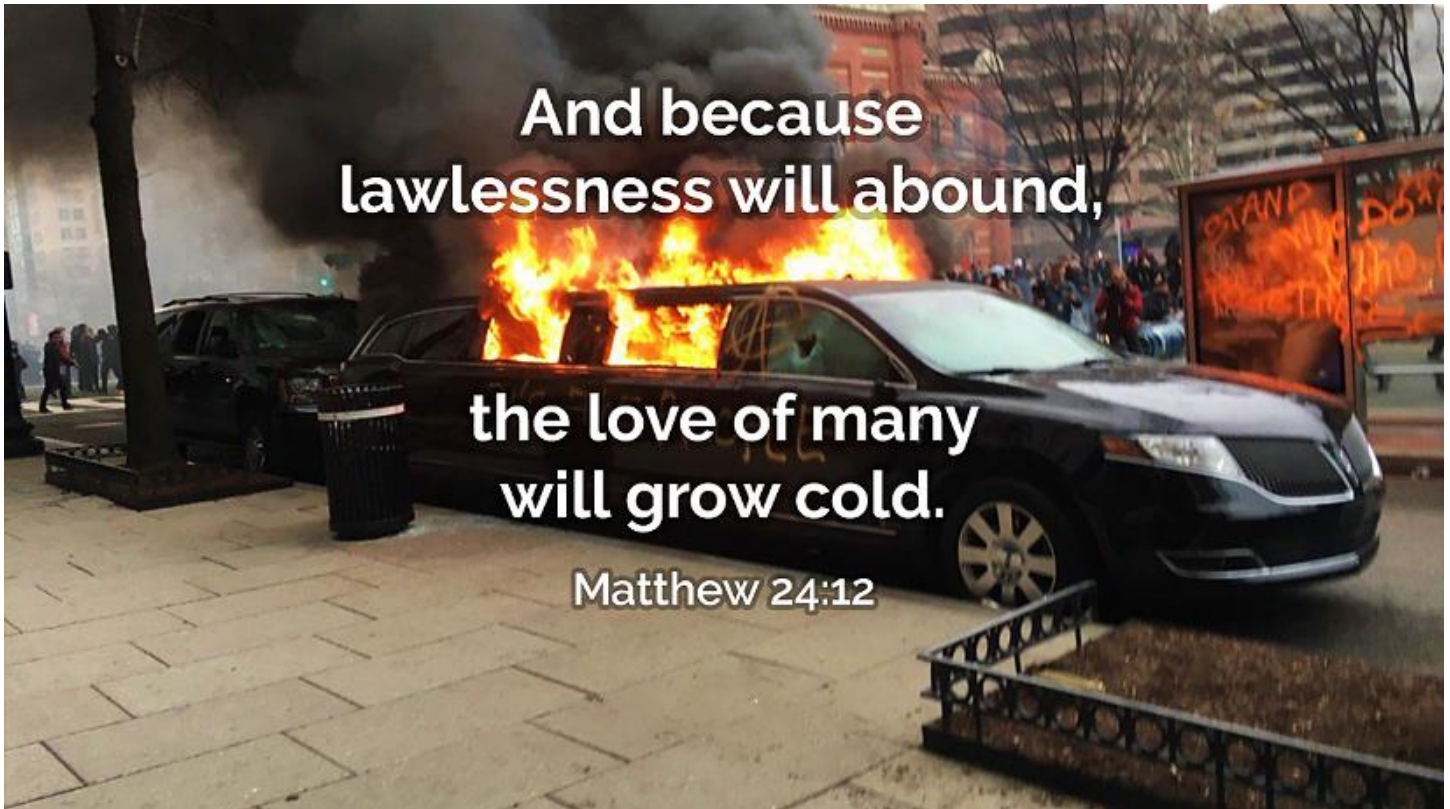
⁴Everyone who practices **sin** also practices lawlessness; and **sin** is lawlessness. ⁵You know that He appeared in order to take away **sins**; and in Him there is no **sin**. ⁶No one who abides in Him **sins**; no one who **sins** has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸the 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. ⁹No one who is born of God practices **sin**, because His seed abides in him, and he cannot **sin**, because he is born of God. ¹⁰By 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.

It's a broad principle with two interwoven components - A) disobedience to God's desire and B) harmed relationship.

How are they interwoven? All of God's commands are relational. If for no other reason than a child disobeying a parent is the result of the child trusting their own judgment more than they trust the loving, nurturing, and mentoring judgment of their parent - that is always relational and always results in a deterioration of relationship. 1) Looking at original sin. Adam and Eve disobeyed the Lord's command to trust Him enough to not eat from a particular tree. As a result of their

independence from right relationship with God their relationship with Him, with the animals, with nature itself, and with each other, was ruined. 2) The 10 Commandments illustrate the principle. Each commandment is a directive from God to foster proper relationship with Him and then with others. What is “Thou shalt not murder,” but a relational desire? 3) The best example is Jesus’ last command to “Love one another.” A failure to love the people in this church - that’s the “One another,” is a A) direct disobedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and B) it destroys fellowship, wrecks relationship, destroys unity in the Body of Christ on earth - it is therefore the very definition of sin...

Taken a step further, “Sin” definitely has an “I” in the middle. It is “Disobedience to the Lord that destroys fellowship,” because of a self-centered focus - a trust in one’s own ideas and efforts, rather than in God’s as well as a desire for one’s own benefit over the benefit to God and others. “Sin” is, in a word, selfishness.



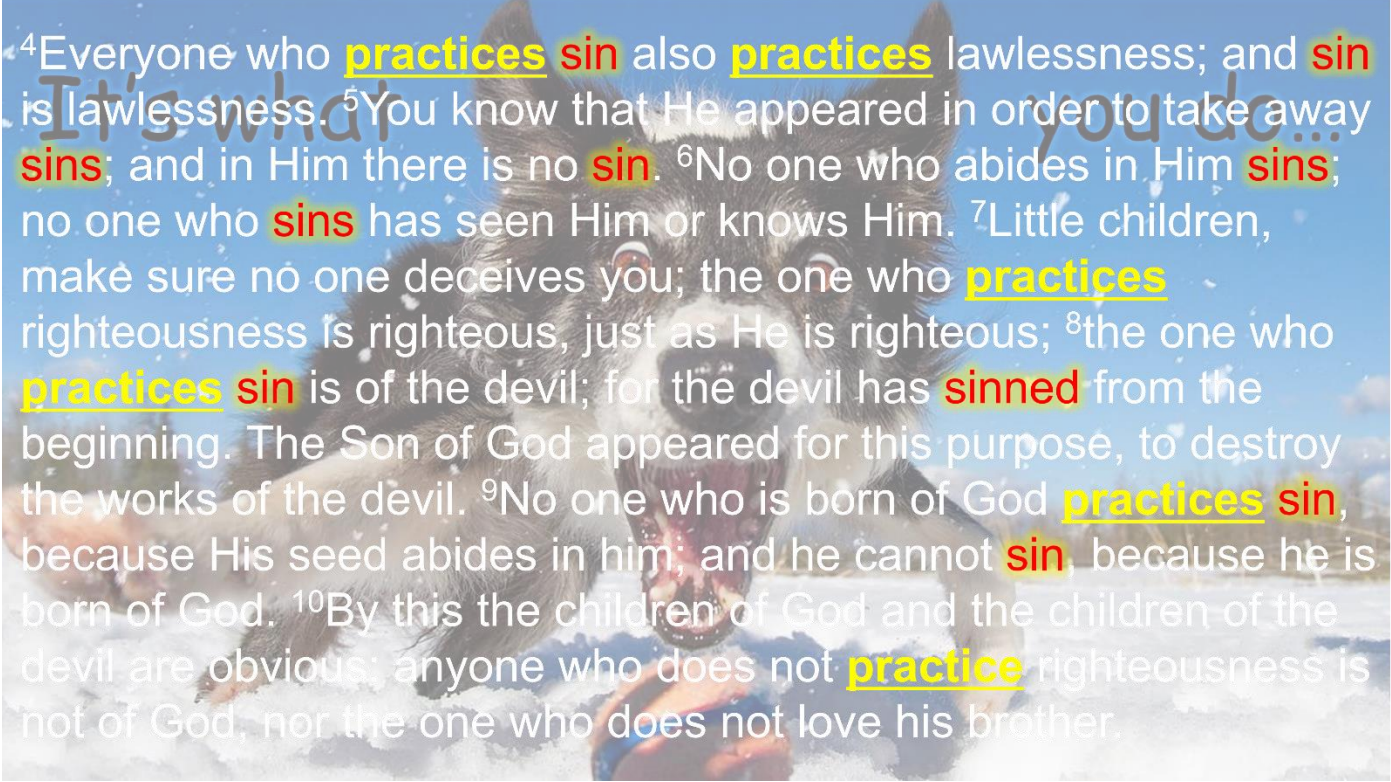
“Lawlessness,” is used here as a synonym and clarifying description of “Sin.” “Lawlessness” and love are antithetical. That means that they are opposed to each other. The Apostle Paul confirms that by bluntly stating “Love is the fulfillment of the Law” (Romans 13:8-10). Lawlessness, whether towards God, or towards human government, is a desire to sin - a desire to get what you want at another’s expense - which is antithetical to love. Self-centered rebellion driven by resentment.

Here, God’s desires constitute the Law in this sense. A lawbreaker is a lawless person. It speaks to a

rebellious character. To be rebellious means that one is focused on themselves, is serving their own interests and trusts their own judgment over that of God's. Rebellion against God is disobedience, and it is lawlessness, and it is sin, and it ruins relationship.



“Practice” is the word ποιέω (poy-ě-ō), and it occurs 6 times in this short passage.



⁴Everyone who **practices sin** also **practices** lawlessness; and **sin** is lawlessness. ⁵You know that He appeared in order to take away **sins**; and in Him there is no **sin**. ⁶No one who abides in Him **sins**; no one who **sins** has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who **practices** righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸the 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. ⁹No one who is born of God **practices sin**, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot **sin**, because he is born of God. ¹⁰By 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.

It is the verb “To do.” It can mean to make, to manufacture, to cause, to produce, to accomplish, to carry out, etcetera. It is to act and can, in the construction used by John here, refer to an ongoing activity and is reasonably translated as “Practice,” indicating habitual doing - a person’s modus operandi, their M.O. - the activity that is characteristic of someone.



Because that is true, most scholars in the past took John to be talking about habitual sin as opposed to occasional sins. A person defined as a sinner routinely engaged in sinful behavior, but not a person sinning sporadically.

With that in mind, the scholars divided into two camps. Those who saw this as unsaved people and those who saw them as saved, but immature, or backslidden, Christians.

Recent scholarship has shed new light on the Greco-Roman rhetorical nature of John's instruction by

recapturing what first century people would have understood, and it actually eliminates the need to pick sides.



John wasn't talking about either a Christian, or a non-Christian, sinning... John was making a foundational Christian principle, crystal clear using his typical dualistic contrast. It's effective. I do it often where I carefully set up a situation where there is only two possible options. Instead of "You may be a Christian, or a Mormon, or a Buddhist, or a Muslim, or a Taoist, or a..." I set it up, "You are either a Christian or you are

not a Christian.” That’s a dualistic contrast and it’s what John is doing here.

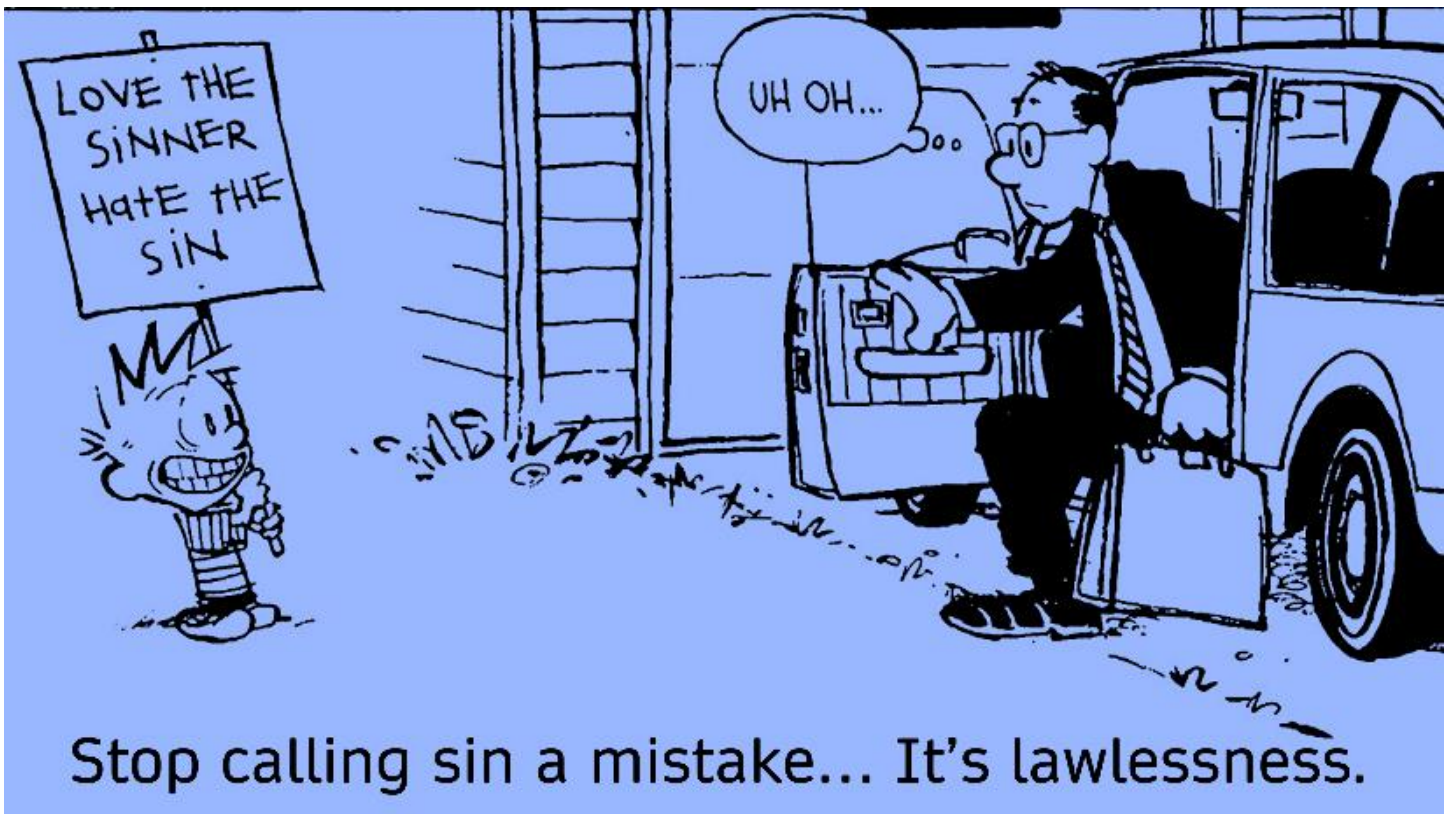
He was writing to Christians. We were reminded of that in two of the previous three verses: “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us”! We are the “Children of God,” he said and then, he said, “Beloved, now we are the children of God” and indicated that one day we would see Him just as He is and will be just like Him. In the middle of our verses today, he, once again, calls us “Little children.” John was talking to Christians from a pastoral perspective.

Next, John was old when he wrote this Letter, but he was not senile. He just told us that anyone who says that they do not ever sin is a liar. He has just told us that we need to confess our sin. Jesus taught us to pray with one of the six requests in that prayer a daily request that our sins would be forgiven as well as a reminder for us to forgive others as well. This cannot possibly be about Christian sinlessness.

Nothing would indicate a discussion of the initial salvation, nor of the final sanctification - we’re talking

about life on planet earth in an earth suit, but filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, with all of that said, we are in a position to see the real meaning of these ever so controversial verses. It all has to do with an argument for a principle that should motivate behavior. An argument for a principle that should motivate behavior. Hold that thought.



Verse 4, "Everyone," actually meaning all persons without any exception, "Who practices sin also practices lawlessness."



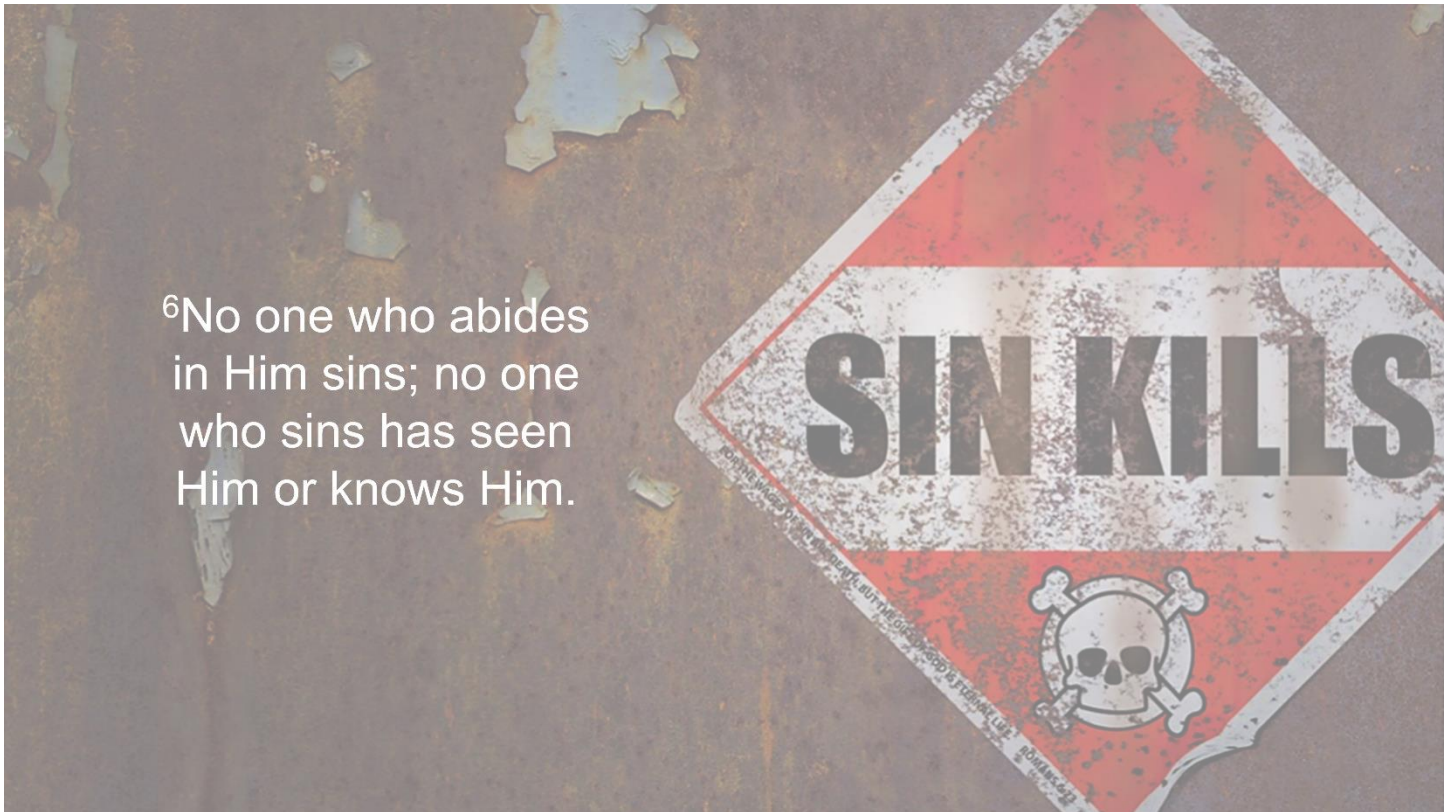
John equates the two terms. Then to make sure no one missed it he restates it as an explanation, because “Sin is lawlessness,” and both are in opposition to love. “Sin” and “Lawlessness,” are the same as we said.



Whereas verse 4 defined our terms, verse 5 sets the stage for the principle, “You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin.” This is Christianity 101, everyone knows this. Jesus was sent by the Father for a purpose. He was made manifest to human beings for a reason and that reason was specifically to remove the effect of sins. How could He do that? Because He and only He was sinless perfection eternally. The manifestation, here called “Appeared,” demonstrates His preexistence and eternal nature as completely without any sin.



John has set the stage.



Verse 6, “No one who abides in Him sins.” This is the principle. Jesus is without sin and His entire mission to earth was to remove sin. How in the world can a person abide in Him - abide in that Jesus and sin? It’s complete incompatible nonsense! It cannot be - it’s insane to think such a thing is even conceivable. John doubles down, “No one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.”

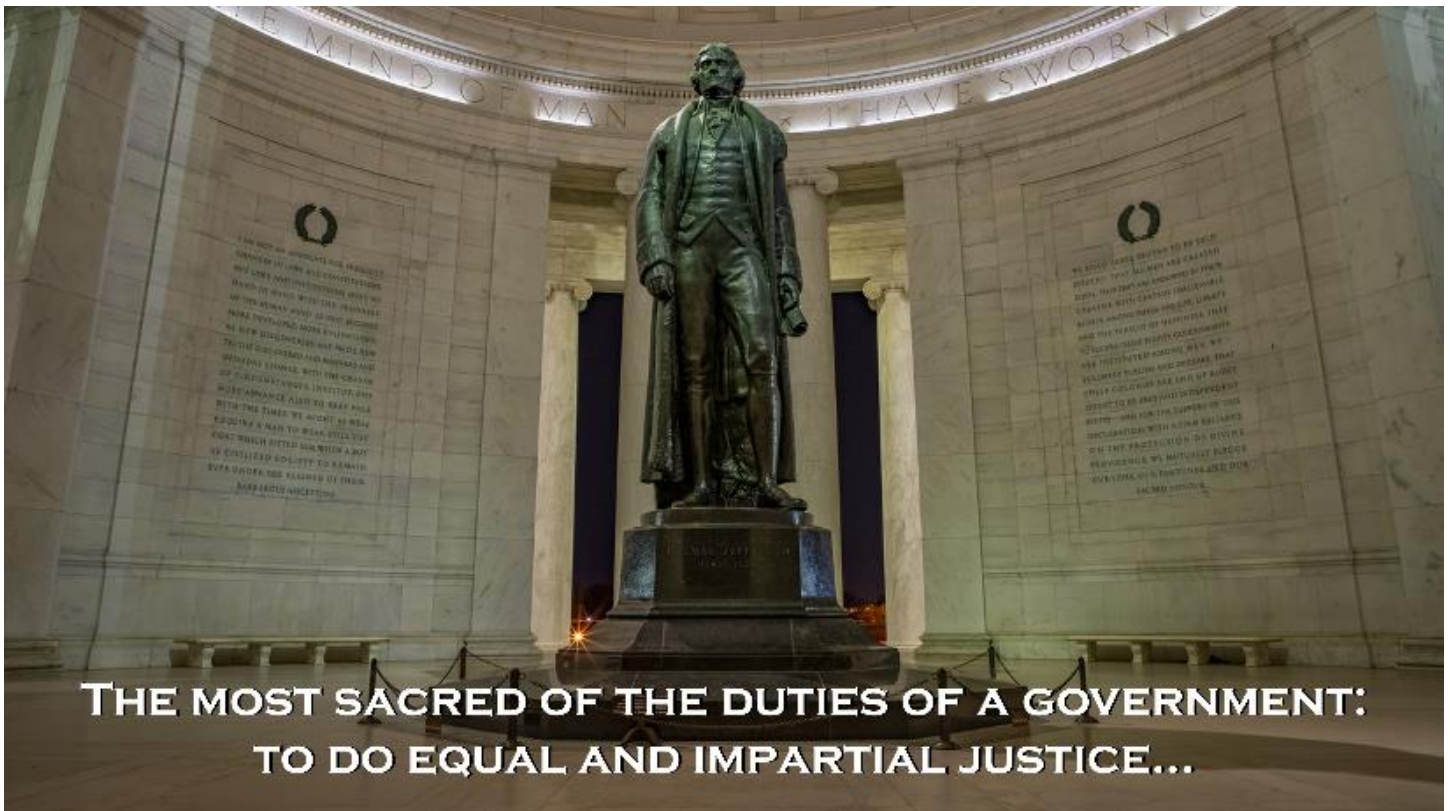
Jesus saved us from sin, not in order to sin! Sin, which John defined as rebellious lawlessness is the opposite of Christ and His people. Christ and sin have nothing in common and so naturally, Christianity and sin have

nothing in common either - nothing to do with each other.

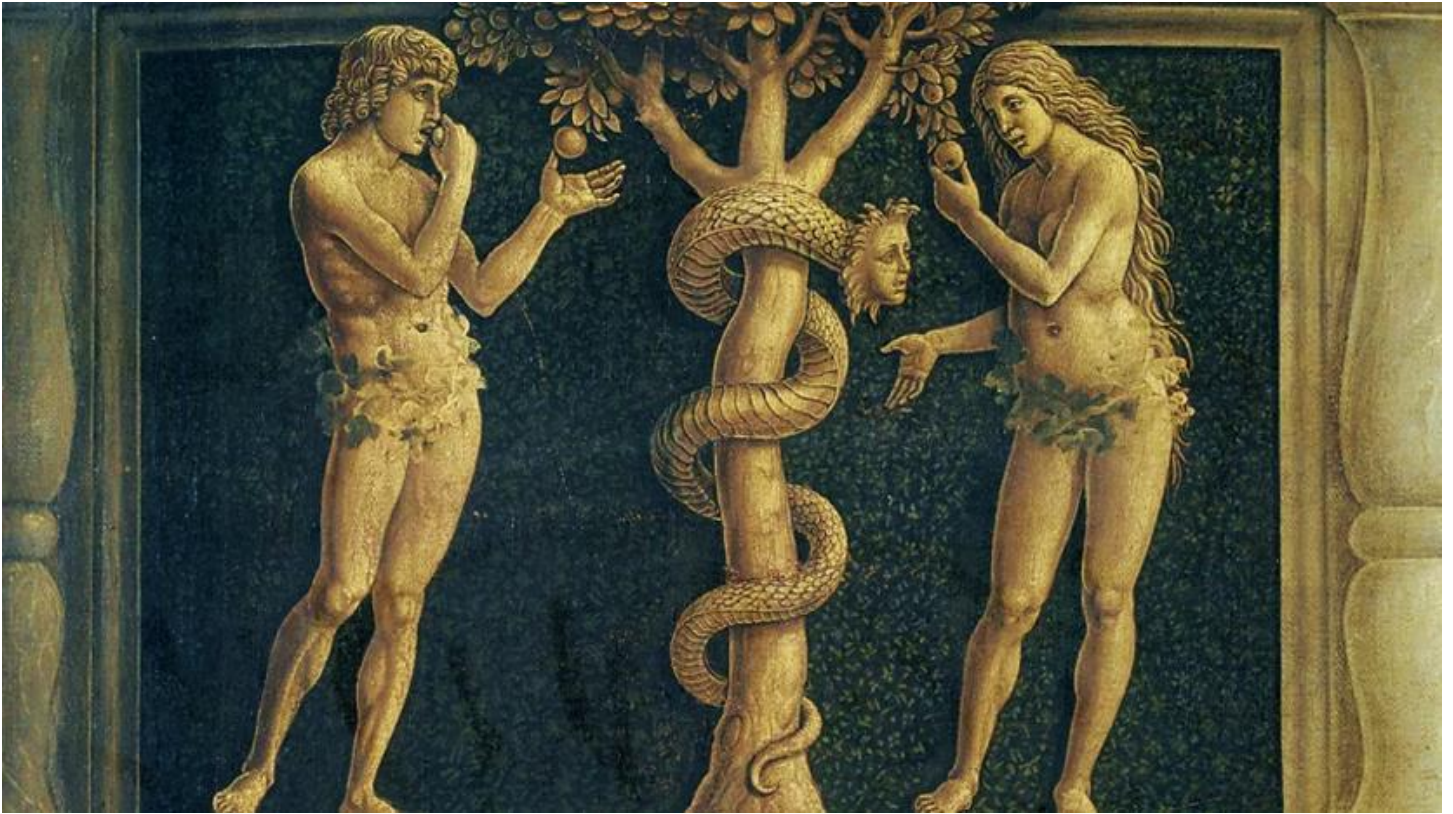


⁷Little children,
make sure no one deceives you;
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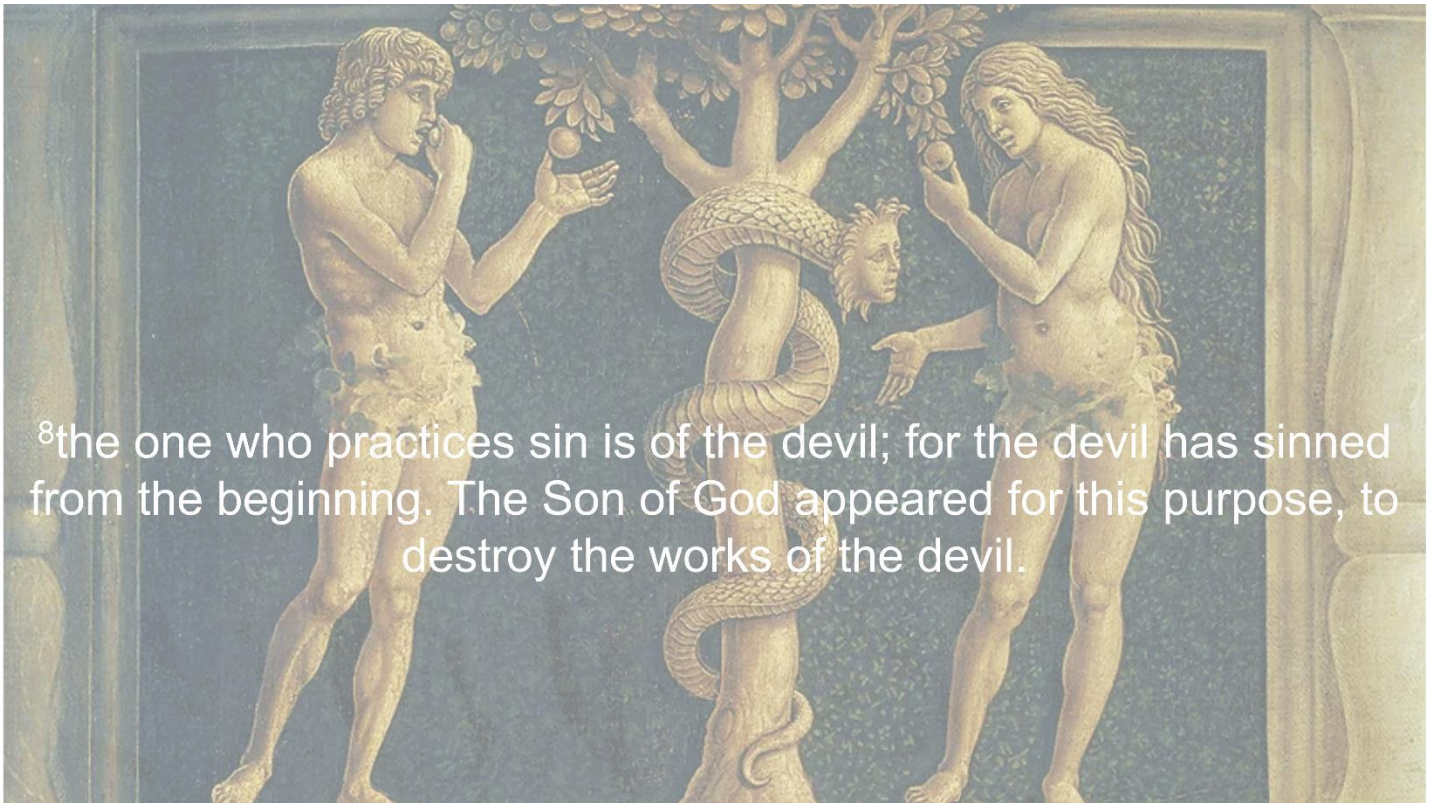
In verse 7 after the Holy Spirit reaffirms that He is talking to Christians, He essentially says, make no mistake about it, sin and righteousness are two polar opposite things. Never think otherwise, listen to no one who blurs that distinction and as a Biblical Truth, understand that the person who has a righteous character, lives righteously.



Here righteousness, which we defined last month as being just, as being honest, and as acting with the integrity necessary to treating people equally, which itself, is another way to say, treating all people as you yourself would like to be treated by God... That righteousness is the opposite of sin. The person who is that person acts like that person just as the one in Whom they abide does.



Jesus is sinless and so He is righteous... Verse 8 gives us the opposite.



⁸the 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.

“The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.”

Here’s where I need to reiterate that we’re still talking about Christians. This is vital to our understanding. If I think that John is talking to all people, then this verse is about the unsaved and it lets all Christians off the hook. John has no interest in letting you or me off the hook.

You say okay, John’s talking about Christians who practice sin just like the Devil? No - not that either. What John is talking about is setting up a rhetorical

dualism to show the complete incompatibility of sin and righteousness... The “Righteousness” of Christ versus the “Sin” of the Devil.

He's not interested in describing non-Christians or backslidden Christians, he's interested in driving home the point that there are only two camps and to try to dabble in both is anathema! Don't even think about doing it - if you want to be in one camp - be fully in that camp. Of course, as Christians we've already chosen a camp and what John is saying here is realize that. He again reiterates that by reminding us that the entire purpose of the manifestation of the Word of God was to take away sin. “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.” Again, saved not to sin but away from sin. Sin is so serious it cost the Word of God made flesh His perfect life.

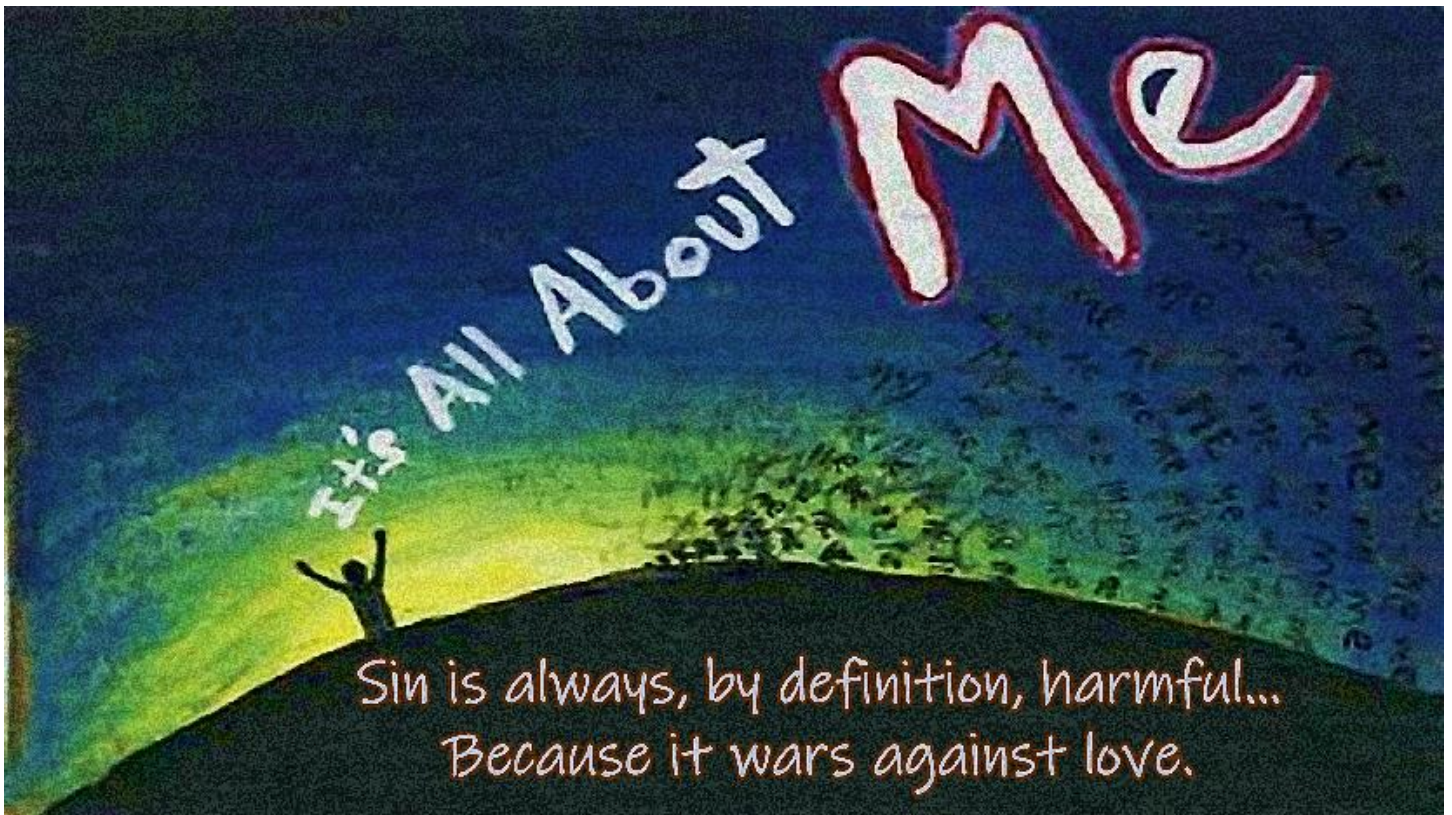
⁹No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

B O R N
of
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1 JOHN 5:1-5

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.” These words have caused tremendous debate over the millennia. The first phrase is absolute, “No one” literally means “No one” inclusively - not one single person ever, who is a Christian, “Practices sin.” Let me remind you that the easy way out is simply to stress the continuous nature of the present tense verb ποιέω translated as “Practices,” to indicate habitual sin, rather than incidental sins.

In other words, no Christian remains a slave to a lifestyle of sin. Is that true? I have often said that if you think that you are living life sinlessly even for days at a time, you simply need to expand your definition of the word sin.



We've already seen that sin is, in a word, selfishness. If any Christian thinks that he or she does not routinely act selfishly they are deluded. So, we, even mature Christians, can be described as habitual sinners if we look closely enough. That cannot be what John means.

As I said before, it is a rhetorical point. What he means is that sin of any kind... Habitual sin of an incredibly minor nature, or more obvious, as well as individual sins of commission and omission, along with sins that go unrecognized... all sin of any kind is at odds with being a Christian. That's the message - don't get comfortable with you sin - it's wrong, counter-productive to the Kingdom, it is the Devil's domain, as it is rebellion against God that produces harmed relationship. Relationship with God, relationship with others and even relationship with yourself.

With that understood John can go on to say something mind-blowing... it is "Because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Is John saying that a Christian cannot sin? Clearly, he is not saying that and because all scholars know that they set about trying to change the plain meaning of these words in a whole variety of ways from John meant eventually when we're in Heaven, to John was just excitedly overstating the truth, to John was only talking about the net effect because Jesus has paid for all sin.

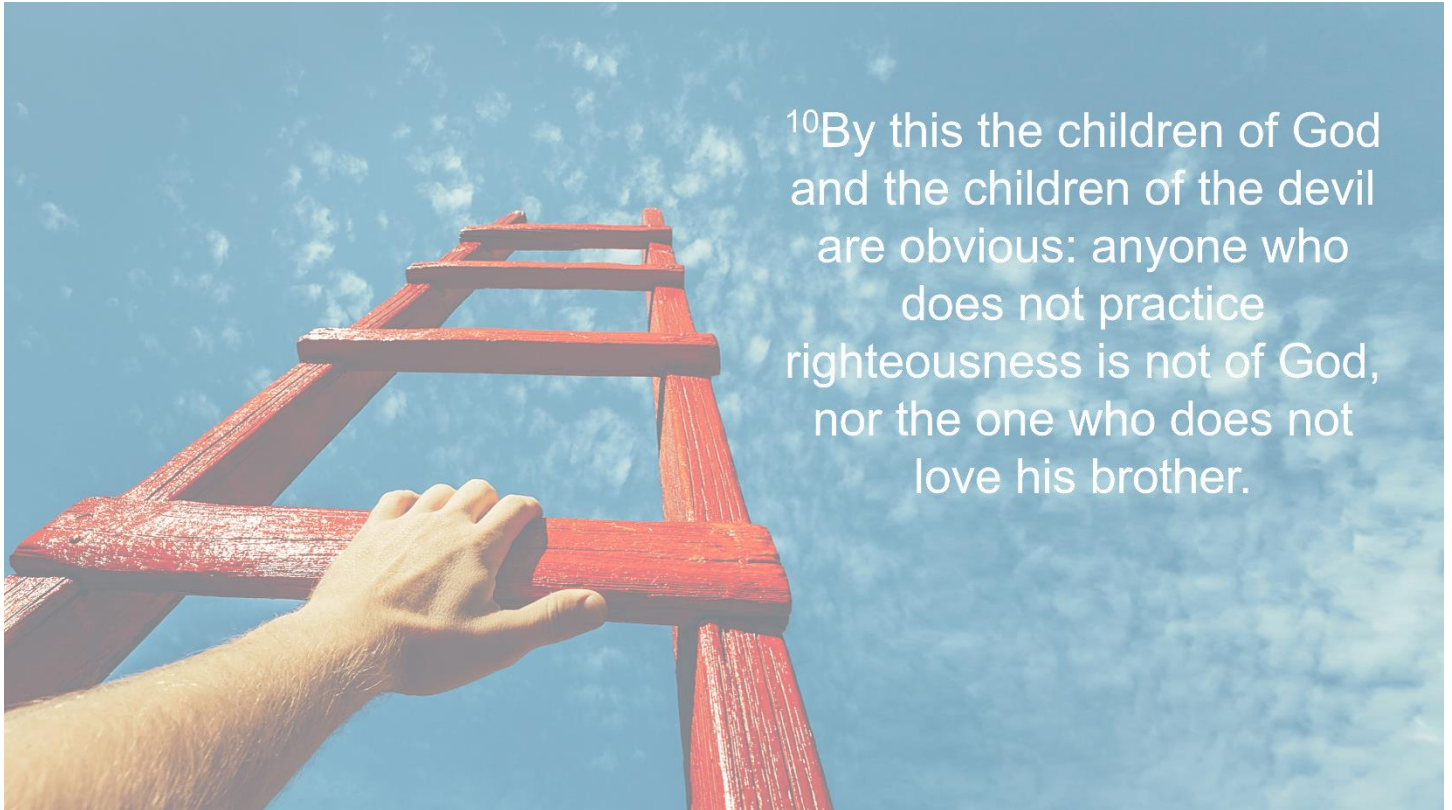
Well, none of that is necessary. This goes back to what John just said about Jesus. Jesus is sinless. Guess

what, so is God. God's seed abides in the Christian person as a deposit of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, like Jesus, like the Father, is sinless... He cannot sin.

John wasn't saying the person "Born of God," was incapable of sinning, he was saying that the indwelling presence of God is incapable and since that Spirit lives within you... The implication is that you should not even entertain the idea of sin, let alone dismiss it as normal. It's not normal! For a child of God indwelt with the Holy Spirit - it's not normal. Don't get complacent, don't get comfortable and especially don't ever think that it is okay. It's not okay for the Child of God to sin - stop it! And when you do sin, take it seriously. Confess it, turn from it, apologize for it, fix it, learn from it, and accept forgiveness as you move on and try again. We'll never become more righteous if we don't recognize the importance of righteousness, which is the same as recognizing the complete inappropriateness of sin in our life.



That brings us to verse 10, which is a summary verse as well as a transitional verse into the next section.

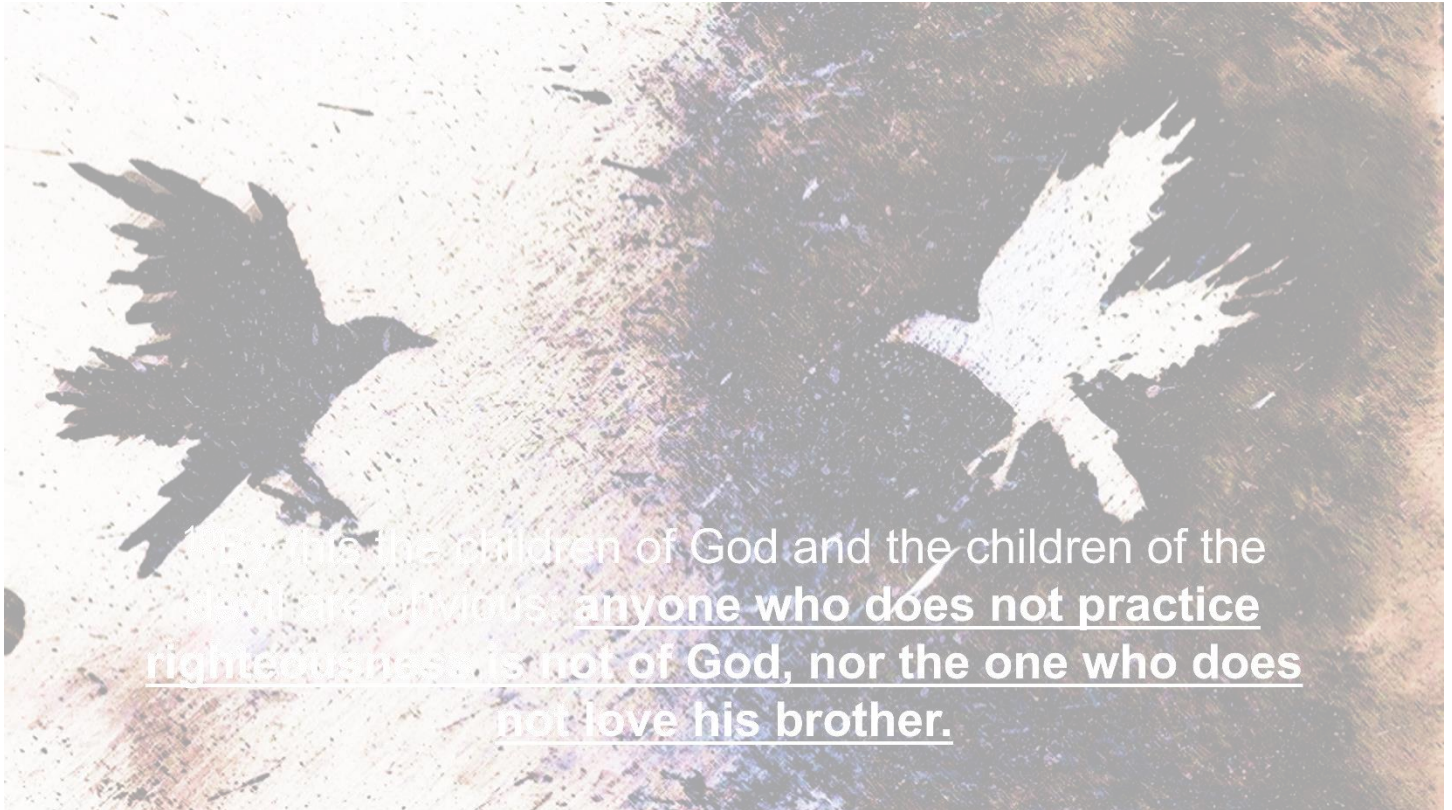


¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Jesus said the way that the world knows people belong to Him is by their love for their fellow Christians. Paul repeatedly tells us that the way you know a person is of the Devil is by their self-centered deeds. Here John says the same basic thing. The child of God must be obviously different than the child of the Devil. They must have a character altered by their intimate relationship with a sinless God - they must have a vastly different perspective with which to view the world as they abide in Truth - they must have an altogether transformed motivation and desire from an unsaved person.



A child of Light could not possibly be mistaken for a child of dark - put another way, a person dedicated to following Christ and selflessly serving Him and others could never be confused with a person dedicated to their own interests and selfishly serving themselves.



The biggest issue that I have with the NASB translation comes next where they make it seem as though there are two things that a child of God does. 1) practice righteousness and 2) love their fellow Christians. "Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother." That seems like two things - it's absolutely not - it's one thing.



The way the Greek actually works there is the second phrase is the explanation or clarification of the first, which brings the whole passage back around to the point of the whole Letter. It should be translated more as the Holman Bible does with, “Whoever does not do what is right is not of God, especially the one who does not love his brother.” The NET is okay too with, “Everyone who does not practice righteousness—the one who does not love his fellow Christian—is not of God.”

I would translate it as “Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, which is to say, the one

who does not love his brother, is not of God.” The point is the difference between “Righteousness” and “Lawlessness” is the actual tangible outward expression of self-sacrificing love that one has for the church, or lack thereof.


Once again, I must stress that John isn't here giving us a test of salvation, or even a test of how backslidden a Christian is - what he's done here is beat it home in completely concrete and certain terms that there is no room in Christianity for a failure to love - so stop being unloving!

Stop sinning by making everything about you - because it's always all about Him and when we have that straight we're on the right track.

Now, you may say that's a really tall order. To which I will say, just what John would say if he were here... Yes, it is and that's why you have the Holy Spirit and that's why in that power you must choose daily to abide in Him. When you get it wrong, don't shrug your shoulders and dismiss it with “I'm only human.” Recognize the seriousness of sin and its incompatibility with God and with the Lord's work. Confess, repent,

accept the forgiveness given and move forward once again knowing that He is always faithful.

When we go forward in that way, we are manifested in this reality just as He was manifested in this reality - manifested as Light and Truth, as those who are Righteous and as those who Love, which is the same thing.



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 Emails: pastor@myaltheia.com, stacey.sundt@myaltheia.com

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Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____