

## **Whose Child Are You?**

**1 John 3:4-10**

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I want you to follow with me first John 3, beginning in verse four. John says, "Whosoever commits or practices sin transgresses also the law, for sin is a transgression of the law. And you know that He," that is Jesus, "Was manifested," verse five, "To take away or to carry away our sins. And in Him, there is no sin. Now, whosoever abides in Him does not practice sin, sinneth not. Whosoever sinneth have not seen Him nor knows Him. Little children, let no man deceive you. He that does righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous, and he that commits sins is of the devil for the devil's sins from the beginning." "Now for this purpose," verse eight, "The son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God does not practice sin, for His seed remains in Him and he cannot sin because he is born of God. In this, the children of God are manifested in the children of the devil. Whosoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother."

John in verse 10, puts all of humanity into two categories. What are those two categories? They're not black and white and gray, and they're not from the west or from the east. It's not a religious category. He puts them in these two categories. He uses the phrase, children of God, and buckle your seatbelts, children of the devil. Now, I didn't say it, the Bible says it, but I said it because the Bible says it. God says, you are either His child, child of God, or you are a child of the devil.

Now, this does not mean that you are a blatant Satan worshiper, that you dress in black and you cut up animals and you worship at a satanic altar, that you walk around with a pitchfork and horns, that you're of the devil. Nor does it mean that you are as bad as you could be, but it does mean that unless you've been born a second time of the spirit, you are not a child of God. And if you're not a child of God, there's only one category left and that's a child of the devil. Even Jesus looked at the religious leaders of His day and he said, "You are of your father, the devil, and the lust of your father you will do." Now, they were religious. The scribes in the Pharisees, the Jewish people had the scribes and the Pharisees as their spiritual leaders. But Jesus said, "You are of your father, the devil." You might see somebody that even lives a seemingly moral life, but if he hasn't been born again, he's not a child of God.

Now, John in this passage, he gives us two birthmarks of the child of God, and we've seen this in first John. The first one is righteous living, verses four to 10, and the second one is righteous loving, verse 11 to 24, our text for next Sunday. So John says All of God's people have these two birthmarks. They live righteously, they love righteously. So holiness and love are the birthmarks of a true child of God. Now, I want to set the context of this passage, so back up with me to chapter two and verse 29. Notice in chapter two, verse 29. If you know that He is righteous, then you know that everyone that does righteousness or practices righteousness is what? Born of Him. This is where John introduces that phrase, born of Him and practicing righteousness. The birth mark of a true child of God is righteous living.

Now, when at the end of chapter two he mentions being born of Him, John then goes on a little digression, and in chapter three, verses one to three, John is in a parenthetical section. It's kind of a parenthesis where he talks about the wonder of God's love that we should be called the children of God. Matter of fact, let's look at it, chapter three verse one. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God." So he introduces the theme of God's love, and we are his children because he mentions it at the end of chapter two. And then he goes on to say, "Beloved," now verse two, "Are we, the children of God, it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

"And every man that has this hope," verse three, "In Him," here it is again, "Purifies himself even as He is pure." So he comes back to this topic of we are the children of God, but Jesus is coming, and because He's coming, He's pure, we're going to live pure lives.

And then he says, "Whosoever commits sin," verse four, "Transgresses the law, and sin is the transgression of the law." So he starts into this passage, verses four to 10, when he says the birth mark of God's children, sons and daughters of God, where God has set His love upon us, is righteous living. So in our text, John gives us four reasons why sin is incompatible with the Christian life.

Now, as I do often in my preaching, I tell you to take these notes down or write these points down. Four reasons sin is incompatible with the Christian life, or four reasons Christians should not sin and they're very clear. Number one, because of the nature of sin itself. Why is it that a child of God should not willingly, voluntarily, habitually practice sin? Answer? Because of the nature of sin itself. It is lawlessness, it is transgression of God's law.

Go back with me now to verse four. "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law, for sin is a transgression of the law." Now, John states a universal truth from which there is no escape, to which there is no exception. Notice in verse four, whosoever. You see that? What does the word whosoever mean? It means... Get ready, this is really deep. It means whosoever. I studied all week to find that out. Whosoever means whosoever. It means anyone, no exceptions. "I'm the exception. I can sin. God doesn't care. It's okay for me to do what I want to do. I'm the exception." No, whosoever commit sin breaks God's law, is the transgressor of the law, no exceptions.

Now, what does he mean when he says here, committeth sin? My King James translation, as much as I love this translation, is not a good translation of this verse, because the word committeth sin is in the present tense. So in interpreting grammatically this phrase, what he's describing is not a single act of sin. What he's describing is a habit, a practice, an ongoing, habitual, intentional, deliberate practice of sin. Christians read this and they freak out. They go, "Wow, if I sin, I'm of the devil. If I sin, I'm not a child of God. If I'm sinning, I'm not really saved." It's talking about a willful, deliberate, ongoing practice. And some translations actually translate that, practices sin, and that's a good rendering of that word. So rest assured, even if you stumble and fall, first John 1:9 remember, says if we confess our sin, He's faithful and just to

forgive us of our sins and to cleans us from what? All unrighteousness.

So do Christians sin? Yes, but not willingly, intentionally, and the more important point is habitually, ongoingly do we not sin. So if you are committing sin, then you are transgressing God's law. Now, here's the definition of sin. Transgresseth also the law. Whose law? God's law. You mean God has a law? Yes, God has a law and I'm awfully glad he does. But the Greek has actually translated sin as lawlessness because it's describing in a more general term the spirit or the attitude of our sinful behavior.

A Sunday school teacher who was teaching a class of fifth grade boys asked the class, "What is sin?" One of the little boys said, "It's anything you really like to do." Not bad, but the truth is if you're a Christian, you don't like to do it anymore, right? When you get saved, the things you used to love, you now hate, and the things you used to hate, you now love. Because if anyone being in Christ is a new creation, old things pass away, all things become what? Brand new, right? So the things I used to love to do, I don't love anymore. The things I used to hate, now I love because I'm a new creation in Christ. He who practices sin, present tense, is lawless. Anyone who commits sin acts in defiance of God's holy law, so it is incongruous to think that a child of God could willingly, deliberately, intentionally commit sin and break God's law.

Now, it's a little hard for me because I kind of shared my heart for service, kind of got it off my chest, but this Friday, when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that so-called gay marriage is now to be legal in all 50 states, my heart was broken. My heart was broken. And in some ways, I'm speechless. I don't really know what to say. I've been preaching the Bible for 42 years. I've been preaching God's standards of holiness and righteousness and marriage. One man, one woman, God's design, and it so breaks my heart to see the nation drift further and further and further and further and further from God's word. I feel like Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, and I did weep this week, and I continue. It breaks my heart to see our nation drift farther from... We've rejected God. We've rejected His word.

George Washington said, "It is impossible to govern a nation without God and the Bible." It's that simple. But even though my heart was broken, I am reminded of the fact, and I encourage you to remember, God is still on the throne. Amen. God is still on the throne, and God is the supreme judge of all the earth, and God have mercy on America when we forget that God's standards are holy, they're righteous and they're good. Marriage is a divine institution. You talk about an old institution. Some of them are commentating about the old institution of marriage. Old is right. It goes all the way back to Genesis chapter two, chapters one and two. "God made man and God created woman and He put the two together, and He says for this cause, a man will leave Father and mother, cleave unto to his wife and the two become one flesh."

And Jesus said, "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder." Do you know that marriage is not only a divine institution but marriage reflects the nature and character of God Himself? Three in one, father, son, Holy Spirit, three in one. The triune nature of God represents the two in marriage become one. Marriage is a reflection of God Himself, and marriage is also a reflection of Christ and the church. It's a holy institution, instituted by God. I

believe in the sanctity of marriage.

Right now on our website, a sermon I preached a year or so ago is on the main webpage there. The sanctity of marriage, five reasons for the sanctity of marriage. Check that sermon out and send a link to other people to watch. But the church reflects Christ and the bride of Christ. It reflects marriage, so no wonder the world hates marriage, and so the same vocabulary... I heard one commenter on the news say, "Why can't we just call it marriage? Why can't we just call it marriage?" You can call it whatever you want, but it's not marriage. Marriage is one man and one woman for life. That's God's design for marriage. And because it is sanctified by God and holy by God, it is under attack.

Now, as I said, first service, I was hesitant to even mention it this morning because I knew once I started, I couldn't stop, but I'm going to hold off for a couple of weeks and then preach a whole sermon again on the sanctity of marriage and what God says about homosexuality, straight from the Bible. Now, I want you to know this. God loves the sinner, which is you and I, but he hates the sin. So what do we do? We love the sinner, we hate the sin. God loves homosexuals, but he hates the sin. Marriage is the building block of our society. As goes marriage, so goes our culture.

We have such short memory that we've forgotten the Greco-Roman Empire. We've forgotten the Roman Empire and its decline because of this very same sin. It's not new. But we need to love them. We need to share Christ with them. I shot a text to my good friend, Jack Hibbs, the pastor of Calvary Chapel Chino Hills, and encouraging him that God's on the throne, keep preaching the gospel and let's take as many people to heaven with us as we can. And he only shot back this little text and said, "I have no words but His words." I thought, that's so good. I have no words but His words.

God has a standard, and here's the deal, God's law transcends man's law. So because the Supreme Court says it's legal doesn't make it right. Just because the Supreme Court legalizes abortion doesn't make it right. God's law transcends man's laws, but we've opened a Pandora's box. We're on a slippery slope, and without a fixed point, without God's word, the anchor of our soul, without God's word, the shining light in the midst of this darkness to know right from wrong, we're adrift. We're like a boat on a sea without a rudder, without a compass, without a sail, and we're just floating with the tides and the currents of modern opinion. But we as God's people, we have an anchor for the soul. We have God's word, we have God's truth.

But calling us back to our text today, and I said that in light of verse four, was that God does have a law. God does have a standard. And I encourage you as a Christian to look at all of life through the scriptures. It's what we call a Christian worldview or a biblical worldview. How do I look at marriage? Well, I look at it through the Bible. How do I look at all the relationships I have in life? I look at them through the Bible. How do I view government? I view it through the Bible. So you use the Bible to view all of life. How do I raise my children? I look at it through the Bible. So I have a Christian worldview, and we need to make sure that we stay anchored in the Bible and that we remember God is on the throne and God is the righteous judge, and we will obey

God rather than man.

So John states this universal principle. Number one, because of the very nature of sin, it is a violation of God's holy, righteous law that it's incongruous to think that a child of God could practice sin. Reason number two. If you're taking notes, write this down. Why should Christians not sin? Because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Because of the very reason Jesus came into the world, His person and His work. Verses five to seven. Follow with me, let's read it again. John says, verse five, "And you know," so he's appealing to their knowledge, "That He was manifested." Now there is a reference to Jesus. And He was manifested indicates that he pre-existed Bethlehem. It's implied there. It's inferred there.

If Jesus was manifested, it's talking about His incarnation. When God came into the world through the womb of the Virgin Mary and took on humanity, then He pre-existed, predated Bethlehem. So He came into the world, He was manifested. Why? To take away our sins, and in Him is no sin. So whosoever abides in Him, which is the same as knowing Him, fellowshiping with Him, seeing Him, hearing Him, whoever abides in Him does not practice sin. Whosoever practices sin has not seen Him, same as abiding in Him, and does not know Him. "So little children," he uses this term of endearment, verse seven, "Don't let anyone deceive you." He's talking about the false teachers. "He that does righteousness is righteous even as He is righteous." So you know something. You know why Jesus came into the world.

Now, I want you to notice that in verse five. Why did Jesus come into the world? To take away our sins. If Jesus came into the world to carry away... By the way, that word take away is the same phrase John the Baptist used when he pointed to Jesus and he said, "Behold the lamb of God who," here it is, "Carries away or takes away the sins of the world," or the sin of the world in that case. The image there of the scapegoat, He's come to carry away our sin. John says, "He's come to take away our sins," and he adds another point. "In Him," that is Jesus, "Is no sin." So the question is why would God's child practice sin? That's the very reason Jesus came into the world, was to take away our sin. He didn't come so that we could sin. He came to take away our sin, to forgive us from the penalty of sins and to deliver us from the power of sin, present tense. And one day when we go to heaven, we will be delivered from the very presence of sin altogether.

So we are justified, the penalty of sin. We're sanctified or made holy, lifelong process, the power of sin. And one day, we will be glorified. We will be free from the very presence of sin all together, and oh, praise God, what a day that will be. Amen. So why would I willingly, deliberately want to practice sin? It's contrary to the very reason and purpose that Jesus came into this world.

Let me give you reason number three. Why should a Christian not sin? Because he who is practicing sin is of the devil. Wow. When I read that, it's like get down, Apostle John. He's old, he's got nothing to lose. Don't you love it? I love being around old guys that are kind of crusty and raw and they just say what they think. They don't care if anyone likes them. They're going to die pretty soon anyway. "I'm not here to win a popularity contest. I've already lived my life. You

don't like me? Too bad." I love that. This is the way it is. If you practice sin, you are of the devil.

Look at it. Verse eight. "He that practices sin." Again, commits sin is in the present tense, "Is of the devil, for the devil's sins from the beginning, and for this purpose, the son of God was manifested." So He was manifested in verse five to take away our sins, and he was also manifested, verse eight, to destroy the works of the devil. And by the way, I want you to notice that. There is a devil. There really is a devil. He was created by God as an angel. Pride filled his heart. He rebelled against God. He was kicked out of heaven, so Lucifer became Satan or the devil. He took other angels with Him in an angelic rebellion and so we have demons, fallen angels, and Satan is a fallen angel, and he's alive and well on planet Earth.

And he doesn't like you. I know you think you're pretty likable, but Satan doesn't like you. He doesn't like God, he doesn't like you, he doesn't like me, he doesn't like this church. He doesn't like any churches that preach the Bible and he'll do all he can to destroy the work of God. Even a nation that was founded on God and on the Bible and on God's word, he will do all he can to destroy that, and that's what we see today. It's a spiritual problem.

Now, John is arguing right here that you don't want to practice sin because it's transgressing God's laws. It's lawlessness. You don't want to be sinning as a Christian because, verse five down to verse seven, it's the very purpose Jesus came, to take away your sin. And then thirdly, if you practice sin, you are a child of the devil. Wow. This is not your feel good, secret, sensitive, tell me nice things kind of a message. If you look at verse eight, this is pretty clear as it could be. Jesus Christ came to destroy Satan's work, Colossians 2, verse 14 and 15. And He came to destroy the works of the devil through the power of the cross. If Jesus came, and at the cross, defeated the devil, then why would I follow the devil or obey the devil?

I love what John Stott says. He says, "If then the whole purpose of Christ first appearing was to remove sins and to undo the works of the devil, Christians must not compromise with either sin or the devil, or they will find themselves fighting against Christ." Amen and Amen. We should never compromise with sin or the devil. It's not the birthmark of the Christian. The Christian's birthmark is righteousness and righteous living, the whole tenor of our lives.

But let me give you point number four, the last point. Write this down. Why is it inconsistent for Christians to practice sin? Because God's seed, verse nine, is in you. God's seed is in God's children. I want you to notice that, verse nine. He says, "Whosoever is born of God does not practice sin." Why? Because His seed, whose seed? God's seed remains in Him, and he cannot sin or he cannot habitually, intentionally, unknowingly practice sin. Why? Because he has been born of God. Man, that's powerful.

Now, what does he mean by God's seed abides in you? Some say it's the word of God. Some say it's the spirit of God, and I can understand thinking in that direction, but I tend to believe as I've studied this passage, I believe God's seed in you refers to divine life or the new nature, or God's nature imparted in you. The Bible says that we as God's people have become partakers of the divine nature. Now, don't misunderstand that statement. It doesn't mean that we become

divine. We don't become gods, but we do have God's nature abiding in us. The word seed there is sperma. We get the word sperm from it. It means that we are born of God, and so the idea theologically means that we're regenerated by God. God puts his seed in our hearts, and what does seed have? It has life in it and we are born again.

Let me say something that I think is missed a lot and it's so important, and this is just a little footnote for you Bible students to chew on and think about. When you become a Christian, you believe in Jesus Christ, you trust in Him, you receive Him, all synonymous terms. Something happens to you or you are not really a Christian. And why do I emphasize that? Because a lot of times, we just think, "I believe in Jesus or I cannot believe in Jesus." Or, "I believe in Jesus," then a few months later, "I don't believe in Jesus." Or I believe in Jesus for a couple of years and then I don't believe in Jesus anymore. I was a Christian. Now, I'm not a Christian.

If you were a Christian, if you were really born into God's family, God did that work in you. Something actually happened to you. You were regenerated, you were given new life. You were born again, and God did it by His spirit. You can't born again yourself. Did you ever know that? "Yeah, I'm a Christian. I borned me Last week. I got myself born last week. I borned me last week. I regenerated myself." No, you didn't. Through faith, you can't be saved without faith, but when you trust Jesus, faith, God's spirit comes into your heart and gives you new life, and you're born into God's family. That's what I mean by something actually happened to you. If you think you're a Christian and nothing happened to you, then maybe you're not really a Christian. If you just started coming to church and listening to the sermons and you've got a Bible and you're trying to obey God's rules, and you think now you're a Christian, maybe you got baptized, maybe you got confirmed, maybe you're born into a Christian family. One of the worst things that we have in the world today is cultural Christianity.

My great grandpa was a Christian. My grandfather was a Christian. My parents were Christians. I'm a Christian. I'm born in a Christian nation. I eat Christian food. I've got a Christian haircut. I wear Christian clothes. I listen to Christian music. I go to Christian Church. Thank God I'm a Christian. You're only a Christian if you've been born into God's family. That's why I'm calling this series Life That is Real. Do you have the life that is real? Is a life of God in your soul? Did something happen to you. Were you changed by the power of God? That's what it means to be a Christian. It's not enough just to believe that God exists or even to believe that Jesus died for you on the cross. You not only have to trust Him, but you have something happen to you when God comes in and gives you new life and you become a child of God.

You go, "John, I'm not sure why you're making such a big deal out of this." Because that's what the whole passage is about. Whose child are you? If you are God's child, His seed is in you. His nature is in you. That's why once you got born again, "I don't like to do that anymore. I don't like to go there anymore. I don't like to listen to that anymore. I don't want to hear that anymore. I don't like to go there," and then, "I like to go to church." I never thought I'd see the day that I'd like going to church, and now, I'm actually a pastor of a church. Christians used to be creepy to me. They were weird. They smiled, they clapped, they sang, they looked clean. "I can't be one of them." And now, I am one, and I love them. I love God's people.

And as we were singing this morning, I was just thanking God. God, it's so great to be in a holy place. This is a holy place. This is a sanctuary, and you are the saints. Live like it. Go out into this dark world, and it's getting so dark. It's getting darker and darker and darker and darker. I can't even imagine what we have lying in store for us as a nation. My heart is so broken, but you, my dearly beloved, you are the light of the world. You are the salt of the Earth. But if the light is put under a bushel, if the salt loses its savor, it's good for nothing. So I'm praying that this morning, this message stirs your heart to shine bright in this dark world, to live a life of holiness, because of the nature of sin is lawlessness, because of the person and work of Christ to take away our sin, and because he who practices sin is of the devil, and because fourthly, God's seed is abiding in you.

Now, verse 10 in closing is a summary. It's a summary of verses four to nine. Here's what John says. "In this," everything he said from verse four down, "The children of God are manifested." So he tells us why Jesus was manifested. Now he tells us what makes clear are manifest true children of God, and that the children of God are manifested by this righteous living, and the children of the devil are manifested. "Whosoever does not righteousness is not of God." So if you don't practice righteousness, then you are not a child of God, "And neither he that loves his brother."

So at the end of verse 10, he's introducing the next birthmark, and the next birthmark is love. That's the next birthmark. You can't say, "Well, I'm a Christian, but not one of them loving Christians. I don't love anybody. I hate people." It doesn't work that way. You can't say, "I'm a Christian, but not one of them holy ones. I'm not one of them sanctified Christians." It doesn't work. This is how we know the children of God. This is how we know the children of the devil. They live righteously, they love righteously.

Now, I want to close with this question. Whose child are you? Whose child are you? You are either a child of God or you are a child of the devil. If you're a child of God, you're on your way to heaven. If you are a child of the devil, you are on your way to hell. Two groups, two destinies, two eternities, heaven or hell. Whose child are you? You say, "Well, pastor John, I don't really know today." Well then, you need to know. You need assurance. I don't want anyone to leave church today without absolute assurance, "I am a child of God. I have been born of God. I have the life of God in my soul. I know that my sins have been forgiven. I know that I am His child. I know that when I die, I'll go to heaven."

And if you don't have that assurance today, I want to give you an opportunity to be born into God's family, to invite Jesus Christ to come into your life and to forgive your sins, and that you might become His child. I don't care if you're young, raised in a Christian home, maybe you've been at revival your whole life. I don't care if you're old or you're middle aged. I don't care what religious background you've had. I don't care what color your skin is. The Bible says, "All have sinned and all have fallen short of the glory of God." The Bible says, "There's no one righteous, no not one." But Jesus came from heaven, was manifested on Earth, died on the cross to take away our sin, and in Him is no sin. Our only hope is Jesus Christ. He's the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father but through Him.

So if you're here today and you don't know for sure that you are a child of God, you need to receive Christ today and be born into his family. Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer.