

TRUTH COMMUNITY

- TEACHING GOD'S PEOPLE GOD'S WORD -

The Necessity of Holy Living

1 John 3:4-10

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Good morning. Glad to be here in a warm place and warm hearts with the fire of the word of God to be able to set before us here today and to continue our growth in righteousness as we walk with Christ through our earthly pilgrimage.

We are going back today to the book of 1 John and I invite you to turn to the book of 1 John toward the end of your New Testament.

It has been an extended while since we were preaching in 1 John—almost six months I think. I had some things in the Proverbs and then different things that I wanted to address, so we took a little bit of a break. But I am delighted to come back to the book of 1 John because of the immensely practical impact that it has in our lives and upon our thinking.

Just by way of a very quick review to kind of get us back in to the flow of this book, the apostle John is writing in first John to strengthen believers and to give them discernment against false teachers. 2000 years ago when he wrote, believers were under assault from teachers that were distorting the word of God, that were denying the true Christ and were creating a false idea of what it meant to be saved and what that should look like in someone's life, so John is writing to clarify these issues.

Now, just to remind you of his purpose when he wrote, there is a couple of three verses that are just really key where he says specifically why he is writing. Look at 1 John 1:4, he says:

These things we write so that our joy may be made complete.

He is writing to promote our joy, that we would know the conscious blessing of salvation, he wants us to be joyful and that is something that we should all aspire to. We should be glad to have the input of the word of God to promote joy in our lives. In chapter 2:1 he says:

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

He is writing to promote your righteousness, your holiness of life, your holiness of conduct, your holiness of thought and motivation, he is writing to promote that, to increase that joy and holiness.

And then in chapter 5:13, his purpose is so clear:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Assurance, a confidence in real salvation that it belongs to you and assurance that the judgment of God will pass over you in the end because of the work of Christ and because you belong to Him—joy and holiness and assurance. The more that we understand salvation, the more we enjoy these spiritual qualities, these spiritual fruits in our lives. And so John is writing, the whole of his book is designed to promote those qualities in the lives of true believers. And so everything that we see and learn from 1 John, everything that we read ultimately ties back in to those qualities, it is pointing us to those things, it is helping us to grow in those areas.

Now, when we were last in 1 John, we saw that holy living necessarily flows from true conversion. There is no such thing as a true Christian whose life is not somehow being conformed to righteousness—that is an impossibility. We spent a good measure of time in 1 John 2:29. Again, we are just kind of reviewing and kind of getting the gears turning here in 1 John 2:29. He introduces, he speaks of the reality of regeneration in the lives of believers, he says:

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

And then he speaks of the future coming of Christ and the fact that we are going to see Him face to face. Look at chapter 3:2, he says:

We are children of God and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears we will be like Him because we will see Him just as He is.

(Verse 3) And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure.

And then just to kind of show you the bracket in this section of scripture, look at chapter 3:10 where he says:

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.

And so, in chapter 2:29 and chapter 3:10, you see the emphasis on righteousness and at the end of chapter 3:9 he says, speaking of true believers:

...he cannot sin because he is born of God.

Here is the point, this passage from chapter 2:29 to chapter 3:10 is emphasizing the reality of righteousness in Christian living—that's the point, and he says that everyone who believes in Christ will purify himself—chapter 3:3.

Purity is essential, righteousness is necessary, it is not only necessary because God commands it, but it necessarily happens because of the nature of the work of God in the life of the believer. He regenerates us, He gives us a new nature, He causes us to be born again and we live according to the new birth after we have been saved—that is the theme, that is the focus of this passage here at the end of chapter 2 through chapter 3:10. Everyone who believes in Christ will manifest righteousness in one way or another. Purity is essential, sin therefore is no trifling matter. Sin is not a matter of incidental consequence, sin is the whole purpose for which Christ came to deliver us from sin unto righteousness, to deliver us from the penalty of sin and also from the practice of sin, that's what we are going to see as we look at this passage that is before us here this morning. 1 John 3:4-10 is our text for this morning. Let me read the passage to kind of set it in your mind and then we will see if we can get through the whole thing this morning:

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins. No one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure that no one deceives you. The one who practices righteousness is righteous just as He is righteous. 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 to destroy the works of the devil. 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. 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.

Now, an observation from thirty-thousand feet above the passage here this morning. What I want you to see at the start is how John speaks in absolute terms, there is no qualification to what he is saying here. He repeatedly, repeatedly, repeatedly uses the term “everyone” when he is talking here in this passage. Everyone or no one in the English text. He is speaking of everyone in these passages that I want to call in these particular verses that I want to show you, it is the same Greek construction even though the English translation is a little bit different as he switches from a positive to a negative statement.

But notice this in verse 4:

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness.

(Verse 6) No one who abides in Him sins. No one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

Same construction, everyone, everyone, or no one, speaking in absolute terms. Verse 9:

No one who is born of God practices sin.

Verse 10: “Anyone who does not practice righteousness... (You may have a marginal note that literally says “everyone” it's the same construction:

Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God.

He is speaking in absolute terms—everyone, all, no exceptions. He is speaking absolutely when he describes the necessity of holy living in the Christian life.

Now, he can say that, he can speak in such absolute terms because by the very nature of true salvation, by the very nature of what salvation is, a work of God in the life of a man, because it is God who works and God infallibly accomplishes His purposes. It is not just that Christians should live righteously, it is that they will live righteously because the power of God is at work in the heart of the believer to produce the fruit of righteousness in their lives.

Now, that is his focus, he is looking at it from a divine perspective that makes these things necessary. He is speaking as a pattern of life; he is speaking as a direction of life as we are going to see. But he is not just saying that you should live righteously, he is saying that you will if you are truly saved and that is the context of what we have to examine here this morning.

How can he speak so absolutely in light of the frailty of human flesh? How can he speak so absolutely when we still have sin that clings to us? How could he speak that way?

He is speaking in divine certainties that are rooted in four spiritual realities about the nature of salvation in this passage. And what I want you to see as we go through this and as we examine these four different areas is that they are all woven around the same, he is driving at the same conclusion, he is driving at the necessity of Christian righteousness. Why it is that Christians live transformed lives? Why is it that that happens? That's what he is teaching and these four principles are all wrapped around the same theme of the necessity of righteousness. He is promoting the holiness of the believers that we looked at in chapter 2:1:

I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin...

These things help us understand why Christians have the power to overcome sin and why it is that looked at their lives over the course of time and as a whole, they will overcome sin. Holiness is necessary and inevitable, why is that? We could state it differently, why is sin incompatible with being a Christian—these are the four things that we are going to look at.

1. The Nature of Sin

The nature of sin is absolutely incompatible with the work of God in the life of the believer. And so we understand that the true salvation delivers us from sin. The point is that salvation delivers you from sin and delivers you from the domination of sin, from the realm of sin and delivers you in to the realm of the Son of God and the nature of sin is such that those two things cannot coexist. True salvation delivers you from sin and unto a submission to Christ and therefore a sinful life is the antithesis of the very purpose of salvation. Look at chapter 3:3 again, he says:

Everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself just as He is pure.

And then he states the opposite side as we look at verse 4:

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness and sin is lawlessness.

He affirms one aspect of it and then he denies another aspect of it side by side—that's what is happening here. And so, the nature of sin as such, look at verse 4 with me, the nature of sin is such as that it is lawless rebellion against God. The nature of the construction in the original language equates sin with lawlessness, it uses them as interchangeable terms. The man who lives in sin is living in lawless rebellion against the living God, he is defying the authority of God as it is expressed in His law and as it is expressed in His word, and that practice, that ongoing nature of that habitually sinful life is lawless.

What John is saying here in the overall flow of his argument, in the overall flow of his context is that a true Christian does not live as though God has not revealed His law to us. A true Christian recognizes the authority of God, recognizes the authority of His word and submits himself to it. He is not speaking of living in Christian perfection here, but what he is saying is to claim salvation while living lawlessly, while living in opposition to the authority of God is a fundamental contradiction.

How could you be hoping for Christ's return, how could you possibly know Christ and be looking forward to His return, which prompts people to holiness and that is essential to true salvation, how could you truly possess that while manifesting a life full of lawless rebellion that ignores God's authority and live in conscious defiance of it. "Yes, I know what God requires, but I'm going to do this." That's completely inconsistent, those two things cannot join together, it's an oxymoron, that's such a fundamental contradiction that is oil and water that do not mix, is what he is saying here. And so the very nature of sin is such that lawless living is completely incompatible with true salvation and the true Christian sees that, he knows it, and his life is ordered accordingly.

Turn over to Matthew chapter 7 where you see Jesus speaking in these themes as well, Jesus addressing the same problem that the apostle John is addressing in 1 John--people who claim to know Christ, but whose lives manifest something else. John is simply carrying forward a theme that Jesus spoke on in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:21, He says:

Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven but he, who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to me on that day "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons and in your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them "I never knew you, depart from me you who practice lawlessness."

You see the point here is that look at it from God's perspective, the nature of His salvation is such that true salvation orients your heart toward righteousness, it orients you toward respecting the authority of God and submitting to it and ordering your life accordingly—that is universal in salvation. There is no such thing as two classes of Christians, one who is really on fire and they submit to the word of God and others who are saved, but they reject the authority of the word of God. No, it's not like that, it's everyone, it's one or the other, there's not a middle ground here. Christians practice righteousness because salvation orients you toward the word of God.

In the act of spiritual regeneration God replaces that spirit of rebellion in the heart of an unbeliever, He replaces that spirit of rebellion with the spirit of obedience, a spirit that delights in the law of God, a spirit that wants to submit, that delights in obedience, that delights in submission. The true Christian is one whose greatest joy is to honor Christ and to submit to Him and have Him reign over him as Lord, there is no such thing as a Christian who rejects that, contrary to the false teaching that is prominent in some realms of evangelicalism, salvation produces obedience, and so the nature of sin which is lawless rebellion against God is fundamentally incompatible with that.

So what we draw from that is that habitual indifference to God's word shows and reveals an unconverted heart. God saves us in order to make us holy and you cannot any assurance of salvation while you are pursuing a pattern of the lawlessness of sin. This goes beyond Sunday morning; this really goes to the pattern of your life the rest of the week. And so this becomes very searching, very practical. We have to plumb the depths of our heart if we have been indifference to God's word, if we have been tolerating sin in our lives, this is a wake-up call that says "Wait a minute, just wait a minute. What is true about me? What is true about my heart? What is true about my relationship to Christ?" Once the issue is framed this way as John has framed it this way, we realize that we have to turn away from those pet sins in order to increasingly conform ourselves to the reality of true salvation. Someone could hear that truth, conscious of sin in their lives and proceed as if nothing had been said is someone who is increasingly forfeiting their right to assurance of salvation because you can't have it both ways.

And so, more than any particular act of sin in your life, this is addressing your fundamental orientation and attitude toward the authority of God and His word—you submit to it or not. Because the one who says it's not that important to me, is manifesting a spirit of lawlessness which is the very spirit of sin, which is incompatible with true salvation. God saves us to make us holy and everyone that He saves He gives them a new nature that is oriented toward obedience.

And so this is more than just external behavior, this is about the fundamental motivations and affections of your heart. The nature of sin is such that a Christian cannot continue in it and be truly saved.

Now secondly, John speaks about another aspect of true salvation that compels the necessity of holy living:

2. The Nature of the Savior

The nature of the Savior as he moves in to verses 5-7. True Christians must practice righteousness because of the person and work of their savior, Jesus Christ. Look at verses 5-7 with me, this is very compelling when you understand this and when you see the flow of John's argument, he says:

You know that He (meaning Christ) appeared in order to take away sins and in Him, there is no sin. No one abides in Him sins, no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

Little children, make sure no one deceives you, the one who practices righteousness is righteous just as He is righteous.

Now, notice this, get this, John is appealing here in verse 5, he is appealing to the very purpose of the incarnation to show the necessity of holy living in the life of the believer. The very purpose that Christ came to earth from heaven was to take away the sins of His people—that's why He came. And this is a repeated theme in 1 John that Christ came to do away with sin in the lives of believers. Look at 1 John 1:7 for example. You see this stated from different perspective, but you see the purpose of Christ being expressed in the removal of sin. Chapter 1:7, at the end he says:

...the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

(Verse 9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

(Chapter 2:2) He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for those of the whole world.

(Chapter 2:12) I am writing to you little children because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake.

(Chapter 4:10) And this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

When the angel announced the coming of Jesus in Matthew 1:21, he said:

He will save His people from their sins.

The whole purpose of Christ's coming was our deliverance from sin, that was the purpose of it. He is appealing to the purpose of Christ in coming here in verse 5, he says:

You know that He appeared in order to take away sins.

And then he appeals to the very nature of Christ in the last chapter, verse 5, he says:

...in Him there is no sin.

Your savior is sinless and He came to take away sin. Now, follow this, here is what he is saying here. For every true Christian, the purposes of Christ are at work in his life, or in her life. The purposes of Christ are at work in true salvation and that means that because He came to take away sin, He came to deliver us from sin, to save us from sin, because that is the very purpose for which He came and that is the very purpose of salvation, then it necessarily follows that the people who truly belong to Christ will find themselves increasingly separated from sin as they go through life because that is the very purpose. Christ came to take away the penalty of sin, which

He did as our substitute on the cross when He bore the punishment of God against our sins in His own body on the cross. He paid the penalty of sin at Calvary and that's why true Christians do not fear the judgment of God any longer in the sense of fearing eternal perdition as the penalty for their sin and say Christ took that away in His coming and in His crucifixion.

But understand this beloved, understand that Christ also came to deliver us from the practice of sin and that's what he is talking about here primarily in this passage in chapter 3. He came to deliver us from the practice of sin. Go back to chapter 2:29, I want you to see this in the flow of the book, I want you to see this in the context, he says:

If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Being born again delivers you unto a lifestyle of pursuit of righteousness—it's fundamental. And then, in what we have seen otherwise, in verse 9:

No one who is born of God practices sin.

The purpose was to take away sin and to form in us and to form for Himself a people who pursue holiness in this life. Turn back to the book of Titus, back a few pages to the left just before the book of Hebrews, Titus, chapter 2, beginning in verse 11:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.

Zealous for holiness, zealous for righteousness—that's the idea. It wasn't simply to exempt us from eternal judgment, it was to deliver us from a sinful life unto a righteous life—that is the purpose of salvation.

Now, having started with that fundamental premise, you have to go forward from that and say oh, that means there are implications. The purpose of salvation has implications for what we expect to see in our lives and what we expect to see in the lives of true believers. That delivering purpose of salvation means that true Christians will grow in righteousness over time because it is not about their self-effort first and foremost, it is about the power of Christ that work in the heart of one whom He has saved because that is why He did it. That is why Christ saved us was to deliver us unto righteous living. Look at 1 John 3:6:

No one who abides in Him sins. No one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.

Now in English, that's a pretty tough verse to hear because it sounds absolute as though it leaves no room for the remaining sin in the life of the believer. Let me help you with that. Bible teachers have answered this concern for many, many years. The Greek verb tenses here in verse

6 and throughout this passage are referring to ongoing or habitual action, the ongoing habitual action of sin. What John is describing here is a break with sin that brings a direction toward righteousness in the life of a true believer. He is not talking about reaching sinless perfection in this life, if he were, we would all be condemned by that statement. But understand that even earlier in his letter, John had denied the concept of Christian perfection earlier in his letter. Look at chapter 1. You don't have to rely just on the verb tense, see this theme in the whole context of what John said in his own book. 1 John 1:8, he said:

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

(Verse 10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

And so, he is not saying that Christians reach a point where they are absolutely sinless. What he is talking about here in 1 John 3, he is describing a habitual life pattern, an ongoing direction of life that is oriented toward righteousness. You could think about it this way, if you are not putting sin to death in your life, if you are not conscious of straining against sin, of trying to resist temptation, of being earnest for the purposes of Christ and the righteousness of God in your life, if that is not you, then the purposes of Christ are not at work in your life, you are still under God's judgment because this is the fundamental heart orientation of every true believer. God saves us unto this, He causes us to be born unto this and the child bears the mark of the parent's influence.

That's the negative side, looking at it from the positive side here, if you find yourself conscious of resisting sin, conscious of overcoming sin, you look back over the course of your life since you believed that you were saved and you say "I see a change in my life." Or if you were saved in a very young age "I see my life and my heart desires being conformed, I want to live like God says Christians should live in the scriptures." If that is you, even though you sometimes fail, your life is showing the outworking of God's eternal purposes in sending Christ—that is phenomenal. When you see those desires and affections in your life, you see yourself drawn to the word of God, you see yourself loving the word of God, you see yourself loving the person of Christ as He is revealed in scripture, and there is that dominating influence that is the core of your innermost affections, that is the outworking of God's eternal purposes in sending Christ. And in the context of the whole book of 1 John, what he is doing is that when you recognize those desires in your heart, it should give you an assurance of salvation that gives you a spiritual confidence that you truly belong to Christ, that you have overcome the world, that you have been delivered from sin and as a result, you are able to live in a spiritually victorious manner in the midst of a spiritually hostile world—that's the way this works.

You start with an understanding of what Christ was accomplishing when He came to earth, what His purposes were, His purposes were to deliver a people from their sins. You find yourself sensitive to sin, hating sin, fleeing sin, resisting temptation, practicing righteousness even though you stumble sometimes along the way and then you say "Oh, this is what salvation looks like and this is what's going on in my heart, I must truly belong to Him." And you are free to rejoice in the reality of salvation because nothing about the natural unsaved man is inclined toward those

affections. That kind of righteous living, flowing from a regenerated heart reflects the character of the righteous Savior.

Look at chapter 3:7, he says “Little children, make sure that no one deceives you...” He says this isn’t hard, just be on the alert and don’t let anyone deceive you on this point because there will be people who come and try to tell you that it’s not like what I’m saying here. He says don’t let anyone deceive you on this this most fundamental point about the necessity of holy living to the true Christian’s life. “The one who practices righteousness is righteous...” In other words, the one who practices righteousness is someone who God has saved. And you see righteousness flowing out of one who claims Christ as his Lord and Savior. Understand that behind that, look at the end of verse 7, “Just as He is righteous...” It’s the reflection of outworking of the righteous character of Christ in our lives.

If you belong to Christ and the Spirit of Christ lives within you, then the righteous nature of Christ is going to manifest itself through you. The power of Christian living is not rooted in your own strength, it is rooted in the power of the one who saved you and He works out His purposes in our lives.

Now, there is a third reason that Christians live righteously and that is:

3. The Nature of Satan

You see, the practice of sin is rooted in the devil himself. Look at 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, to destroy the works of the devil.

Here is what he is saying. He is saying the one who lives in unbroken patterns of sin, the one who is not separated from a sinful life, the one who has not brought himself in to subjection to the living God, the one who has not submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ and yielded to His authority, that person shows that he belongs to the devil not to Christ, no matter what else he may say. No matter what else he may say, saying flowery things about Jesus or saying flowery things about where he is at spiritually, look at the core of life, look at what is flowing out of the core of life there and that is the basis upon which you make your understanding.

It is not what someone says with their lips that are primary, it is what their life is saying. If the life is contradicting the lips, then what the lips are saying is false. If you live in sin, you belong to Satan. If you are indifferent to the word of God, you belong to Satan. Turn back to John, chapter 8, Jesus says:

You are of your father the devil and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and he does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Scripture teaches us that Satan is the one who gave birth to sin as the original one who rebelled against God. He lured Adam and Eve to sin in the Garden of Eden and now he incites the world environment to promote sin, he promotes false doctrine, he promotes sinful philosophies. All of the manifestations of sin that we see all around us trace their ultimate root back to the devil, that's what this is saying here in verse 8. "The one who practices sin is of the devil." He finds his source in Satan because the devil is the one who has sinned from the beginning, it all traces back to him.

And so the person who lives in sin, the person who embraces and believes false doctrine is someone who belongs to Satan, the child displays the traits of his parents. And John says here in verse 8, look at verse 8 again, he says in light of that reality, be mindful of this that:

The Son of God appeared for this purpose to destroy the works of the devil.

To bring truth where error had reigned, to overturn the rebellion of the devil, to deliver those who were under the realm of the devil unto the realm of the kingdom of God. Colossians 1:13-14, listen to this:

He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sin.

John is saying here, what he is saying in chapter 3 is that Christ and aspect of the coming of Christ and aspect of the purpose of incarnation was for Christ to destroy the works of the devil. That is why you can expect to see sin and false teaching overthrown in a true Christian, it is an intrinsic part of Christ's saving work, it is why He came. And so, the purposes of Christ cannot be simultaneously at work in the life of someone whose life is dominated by the sinful philosophies, sinful practices that the devil instigates, Christ came to overturn that. And if you have truly been saved, then those works that are originating in the devil are going to be overturned in your life, the power of them is going to be broken. There is a new king in place even if there are pockets of insurgencies left in your life, the reigning, ruling one in your life is Christ not the dominating presence of the one who is the author of all sin.

You see, what John is doing here is he is showing us, he is explaining to us that the effect of the work of Christ is going to be seen in the life of everyone, everyone, everyone without exception, everyone who believes. This is going to somehow be manifested because it is rooted in the purposes for which Christ came. He is making a more fundamental argument than saying simply you shouldn't sin, that's not his argument here—you shouldn't sin. But he is explaining why that power is available, why it is true that you won't live a life of sin like that because it is rooted in the purposes of Christ. He came to take away sin, He came to destroy the works of the devil and if He has saved you, know that those eternal purposes are at work in your life—it's very powerful.

And so we frame our expectation of what to see in the redeemed life first and foremost by understanding what the purposes of Christ were in coming and seeing how the lawlessness of sin and the rebellion of the devil are the antithesis of that and these two things cannot live together simultaneously.

Now, let me address a pastoral issue at this point. Many people would say that they understand this and affirm it, but here is the challenge that a lot of years of pastoral ministry have made obvious and it is a temptation that some of you fall in to, maybe without knowing it, maybe just with tolerating an inconsistency in your thinking. Here's where we compromise this, this is where you are tempted to compromise this, it's when you start thinking about your loved ones that claim to be Christians, but are living sinful lives and have done so for years and years and years. You can know that you are compromising the truth of scripture when you start hearing yourself say things like "I know how he lives, I know he is living in a whole lot of sin, but you know, when he was 12, he prayed to receive Christ and so I'm sure he is a Christian, he has just drifted away from the Lord. And so, never mind the intervening 30 years of his life here, or make it more personal, never mind the intervening 30 years of my life because he prayed a prayer back when, he was even baptized, so we're just hoping for the Lord to bring him back." Look, that is a denial of truth when you talk that way and when you reason that way. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness. Christ came to take away sin. No one who abides in Him continually sins. Verse 7:

The one who practices righteousness is righteous. The one who practices sin is of the devil.

Don't argue with the word of God because of your human affections on these things. Don't deny the word of God because you don't like the consequences of applying it to the loved ones that you see around you—you can't think that way, you can't live that way. I understand that you want them to be saved, but you cannot overlook a life pattern of sin that contradicts the gospel simply for the sake of the human affection. Your affections must be deeper than your human relationships. Your affections must belong to the one who has truly saved you and your loyalty belongs to His word, supremely more so in a surpassing way more than any human relationship. And so it is incumbent upon you to think rightly about these things and say "You know what, he is not a believer" rather than continually making excuses that contradict the gospel that you say you love. It is much, much better for you to think of that person as being unsaved and confront them with that truth. 2 Corinthians 13:5:

Examine yourself to see whether you are in the faith.

Your life is a contradiction of the gospel, don't tell me you are a Christian and you are just struggling. Come on, this has been going on for 20 years, where is the power of Christ in your life? The idea of that is not to condemn them, but to confront them with the reality of the gospel so that they would examine themselves and truly repent. That is so much better than affirming them and tolerating a false profession of salvation that ultimately will lead them to eternal punishment. You are not doing them any favors when you talk that way, you are making it ten times worse, you are giving them cover for their deception. We have to take these things seriously, we have to talk and act and relate to people like these things were true because they are, and the consequences are too great. And regardless of the reaction that we get against that perhaps, far better for you, the true Christian to be faithful to your savior and faithful to His word and let the human consequences fall where they may. Don't affirm a child of Satan as being a child of God, come on, that is appalling.

Now, one last thing in our final minute here. John points to the necessity of holy living as a Christian by way of:

4. The Nature of Salvation

Salvation changes your pattern of sin because God plants His holy nature within you, this is what we had spent three weeks talking about on 1 John 2:29, the idea of regeneration, you are born of God. Salvation does not make you perfect, regeneration does not make you perfect, but it does break the power of sin and enable you to serve God in newness of life. Look at 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.

He is referring to regeneration, that secret act of the Holy Spirit in which God imparts the divine nature to a sinner so that he will repent of sin, believe in Christ and serve Christ in newness of life. God gives us a new nature:

If any man is in Christ, behold, he is a new creation, the old things have passed away, behold, new things have come.

The nature of salvation is such that righteous living will flow from it because God has given us a new heart. And if you have been born again, you will not continually live in sin, you will not be indifferent to the calls of your conscience because it will restrain you.

One writer said it this way: “The nature of God within the believer is opposed to sin and will not let the believer rest in sin, but rather constantly exposes sin and prods him to holiness.”

God puts His nature in us, God gives us a new heart and that nature, that internal prompting toward holiness is powerful and at work in the life of the believer. And so the holiness and love and truth that are fundamental aspects of God’s moral character shine forth in one way or another in the life of the one who is born again.

Brothers and sisters, are you truly a Christian? First of all, fundamentally, you realize that you cannot be good enough to earn heaven, right? Salvation is entirely dependent on the person and work of Jesus Christ, nothing that you contribute to the package, nothing. Understand that the one who claims to be a Christian, sees his life shaped by these truths that we have talked about here today, this shapes the way that you respond to individual temptation even, it shapes the way that you respond to that pet sin in your life that is inconsistent with true Christianity. You hear this and you say “I’ve got to put that away; I’ve got to deal with this broken relationship of which I am the cause. I have to deal with pride and sin in my life, even though maybe no one knows about it, God sees it and it is incompatible with being a Christian and so I’m going to deal with that even if no one knows because it is the reality of my life, it is the affections of my heart, it is the power of God at work in my life.”

John concludes with this summary statement, look at verse 10, he says:

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.

Two families in the world, the family of God and the family of Satan, there's no one else. Those who belong to God live holy lives, those who belong to Satan do not.

Let's pray. *Father, we are so greatly grateful to you, thankful for the clarity of your word, thankful for the purposes of Christ in coming to deliver us from sin. We thank you for the forgiveness that is expressed in the doctrine of justification, we have been declared righteous based on the person and work of Christ and we thank you for that. WE thank you for what we see here in this passage that the purposes of Christ were such as to deliver us from the ongoing practice of sin as well. Help us to manifest the truth of this in our lives, to be faithful to it in our relationships and to honor you with the way that we deal with sin that we might bring forth the fruit of righteousness which is the birthright, the prerogative and the responsibility of every true Christian.*

We commit these things to you in the great name of Jesus Christ. Amen.