

1. John 8
2. Romans 8

## I. Introduction

### A. Last week we looked at I John 2:28-3:3 and saw John overwhelmed with wonder at the goodness of God

1. John gave us a command that we should actively abide in Christ, drawing our life and nourishment from Him
2. But, as he gave that command, he touched the truth that as we abide in Christ, the Son of God, we are adopted as children of God, and he wonders and rejoices in that glorious truth and calls us to wonder and rejoice also
3. John calls us to look at the love that God has shown to us in Christ and to be overwhelmed by that love, to be awe inspired at how much God has done for us in Christ, especially to adopt us as His children
4. And he goes farther, he tells us that we should wonder and rejoice now, but we can look forward to a time when the Son of God will come back and we will be made like Him and will perfectly abide in Him forever
5. Then John closed his thought with a simple statement of fact: if this is true, if we are rejoicing in God's love now and looking forward to Christ's return, then we will be purifying ourselves as He is pure

### B. This week we are going to look at the next seven verses, I John 3:4-10

1. In these verses, John is going to support his conclusion in 3:3 - *And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.*
2. John is going to unpack why this statement is true - why does everyone who hopes in Christ purify himself?
3. And his simple answer is - because that's who we are, we are those who are pure

### C. I John 3:4-10 - *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

### D. Proposition and Outline:

1. Proposition: If we are hoping in Christ, we will be purifying ourselves because the continuing presence of sin denies our union with Christ and our relationship with God
2. Outline:
  - a. What is sin?
  - b. Who is Christ?
  - c. Who are We?
  - d. Who is the Devil?
  - e. Who is Christ?
  - f. Who are We?

## II. What is sin?

I John 3:4 - *Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.*

### A. John starts his discussion of our purification by making a simple definition - a simple definition of sin

1. John starts by defining sin as lawlessness, stating clearly that everyone doing sin is also doing lawlessness
2. John wants to make it clear that sin is a problem, it's not something to be swept under the rug, it's not something to be ignored, it's not something to be redefined, sin is lawlessness

### B. And John makes this definition for a reason based on the subject of his letter

1. As we look at this letter, it appears that one of John's purposes is to combat a nascent gnostic theology
2. And one component of later gnostic theology was a strict divide between spiritual and physical realms - God existed in a spiritual realm and we are saved through knowledge of the spiritual realm and by interacting in the spiritual realm and thus spirit is, by definition, good
3. On the other hand, the physical realm was the opposite of the spiritual realm and was evil by definition - but the two realms really don't interact, things that happen in the physical realm don't affect the spiritual realm
4. This led to an odd licentiousness in the gnostic community - it didn't matter what their bodies did, it didn't matter how much sin they committed in the physical realm because that didn't affect their spiritual knowledge
5. Sin wasn't really real, it was an illusion that was happening in this physical realm and couldn't imperil the salvation of one who had the special knowledge of the spiritual realm

### C. John emphatically denies this idea

1. Sin is neither an illusion nor unimportant, sin is a real thing that imperils a believer and puts us at odds with God
2. And John does this by defining it as lawlessness - sin is ignoring a law that has been set up, and, in consequence, ignoring a relationship that should exist
3. Lawlessness is ignoring and rebelling against an appropriate relationship, whether that relationship is government to citizen, king to subject, or, importantly, father to son
4. In each of these relationships, the proper way for the inferior to relate to the superior is to follow the law set forth by the superior, the only way for these relationships to thrive and provide the benefits of each relationship is by living within the law - living outside the law denies and destroys the relationship
5. And John has just defined our relationship - we are children, children of God, making God our Father
6. So John says that sinning isn't an unimportant physical illusion, it is a denial of that relationship, it is lawlessness, ignoring our new relationship with God
  - a. Leon Morris says it this way in the *New Bible Commentary* - *John insists that sin is evidence of wrong relationship to God. Sin, he says, is lawlessness, where the Greek construction implies that the two words are interchangeable. The law here is, of course, the law of God and the essence of sin is disregard for that law of God. It is the assertion of oneself against God's revealed way, the preference for selfishness over the service of God... Sin sets the sinner in opposition to God.*

### D. I think this is an important truth to note, because at least my first reaction to this verse is that it is a simple truism

1. When we read that sin is lawlessness, we might just say, 'ok, that's obviously true,' and think that it doesn't advance our understanding very far - we might think that sin and lawlessness are exactly the same word
2. But, by putting this statement in its context, both in time and in the letter, we see that John is saying something very important about sin and relating sin to the relationships that he has been talking about in his letter
3. So far in his letter John has defined two relationships as central to the Christian life
4. First, a Christian abides in Christ - a Christian relates to Christ as the branch relates to the vine
5. Second, a Christian is a child of God - a Christian relates to God as a beloved child in Christ
6. Since these relationships are so important, there is no way that sin could be unimportant because sin is a breaking of these relationships, sin is ignoring the basis of these relationships, sin is lawlessness - rebelling against the truth of these relationships
7. So, for the rest of this paragraph, John is going to delve into these two relationships - abiding in Christ and children of God - and demonstrate that sin is truly denying and destroying these relationships

### III. Who is Christ?

I John 3:5 - *You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.*

#### A. Since John wants to show that sin is breaking our relationship with Christ and with God, John starts by defining who Christ is and what Christ has done

1. The first relationship John is going to examine is abiding in Christ - he has already asserted that the true believer abides in Christ and has commanded us to keep abiding in Christ
2. If we are abiding in Christ, though, then who Christ is should define who we are, if we are intimately connected to Christ, if we are drawing our life and our sustenance from Christ, then who Christ is is going to flow into us

#### B. So John defines who Christ is - Christ is without sin

1. He says it very simply - *in him there is no sin*
2. John's statement is simple and emphatic - no touch of rebellion, no missing of the mark has ever been implicated to Christ, Christ has always been infinitely separated from sin so that no hint of it can be found in Him, no stain of sin will ever be drawn out of Christ
3. This is one of the most important statements in Scripture and is specifically attested two by the three apostles who wrote the majority of the New Testament
  - a. John attests to this fact here in I John 3:5
  - b. Peter says the same thing in I Peter 2:22 - *He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*
  - c. Paul says in II Corinthians 5:21 - *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
  - d. The author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 4:15 - *We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*
  - e. The apostles who lived with Christ and were appointed to bear witness to Christ knew that He was completely sinless, He never rebelled in word or deed against His Father

#### C. But John doesn't just define who Christ is, he also defines what Christ came to do - He appeared to take away sins

1. Not only is Christ's being completely opposed to sin, His actions are completely opposed to sin
2. Christ didn't come into the world, live a perfect life and then die so that we could continue in sin - His actions were specifically designed and executed in order to destroy the power and the penalty of sin
3. John the Baptist declared in John 1:29 - *Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*
4. And Hebrews tells us clearly that Christ's sacrifice was for the purpose of destroying sin in Hebrews 9:26 - *But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*
5. And, lest we misunderstand what destroying sin means, Paul says in Romans 8:3-4 - *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*
  - a. God sent Christ into the world to condemn sin in the flesh, not to condone sin in the flesh
  - b. God sent Christ into the world in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, not to allow us to continue in lawlessness
  - c. God sent Christ into the world so that we would walk according to the Spirit, not continue gratifying the flesh
  - d. When Christ died in order to put away sin, it's not only in some sort of metaphysical sense - that sin doesn't mean anything anymore - Christ died to put away sin, to get rid of what is contrary to His nature
6. So Christ's actions bear out Christ's nature - He is perfectly sinless and He has acted in this world in order to destroy sin and install righteousness in His people - everything about Christ is contrary to sin
7. If this is true of Christ, then it should affect those who abide in Christ - which is where John takes us in the next verse

## IV. Who are we?

I John 3:6-7 - *No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.*

### A. If you are using a different version than the ESV this morning, your text might say something slightly different

1. For example, the NASB says - *No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.*
  - a. The NASB says that those who abide in Christ *don't sin*, the ESV says that they *don't keep on sinning*.
  - b. The NASB has the sense of an absolute, simple statement, sin doesn't happen if we're in Christ
  - c. The ESV has the sense of a continuing action, a habit of sin doesn't happen when we are abiding in Christ
  - d. It might seem like a small difference, but it is actually an enormous difference, a difference that I have thought a lot about over the last week
2. If we look at the Greek, the NASB has a better word for word translation - if we're abiding in Christ we don't sin
  - a. But if this is true, this is a problem because verse seems to deny what John has already said
  - b. Let's go back to I John 1:8-10 - *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*
  - c. If what John has already said is true, how can he now say that - *Whoever abides in Him does not sin.* - doesn't this deny I John 1:8? Doesn't this make John the same as those he is denouncing?
3. I bring this up because it would be really easy to try to minimize these verses
  - a. Running to the ESV translation would be the easy thing to do - it would be very easy just to say, "John isn't saying we never sin, he's only talking about habits or patterns of sin."
  - b. So, as I worked through these verses, I wanted to carefully guard myself against running to the easy option  
We need to hear the full effect of John's statement - if we are abiding in Christ then we don't sin

### B. So how can we resolve these two statements?

1. Actually, having said all of this, I'm actually going to take us back to the ESV translation
  - a. The ESV talks about a habit or a pattern of sin that is contrary to abiding in Christ
  - b. I really appreciated Leon Morris again in the New Bible Commentary as he supports this position - *We must not water down statements like this; the Christian has no business with sin and must never be complacent about it, even about occasional sin. But we should also notice that the present tense in Greek often has a continuous force and this appears to be its significance here: 'no-one who continually lives in him makes a habit of sinning' and again, No-one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. John is not writing about individual acts of sin, but about habitual attitudes. The life we live reveals the source from which we draw our life.*
  - c. As I looked into it, it turns out that the present tense in Greek verbs actually doesn't have as much to do as when the action happens as it does with how the action happens
  - d. The present tense in Greek usually represents an action that is continuing or an action that keeps happening, not an action that happens once now
2. In the end, I do think the ESV translation is the best translation as far as communicating the meaning
  - a. So, did I take us down this 'academic' rabbit trail for no reason? Why didn't I just stick with the ESV?
  - b. I don't think I've gone through all of this for no reason, I've gone through this for a couple of reasons
  - c. First, I think it's really important to say what the Bible actually says, not what might be easy to say - we can lob this accusation at others, but if we get lazy, we can do this ourselves as well
    - i. The ESV translation is obviously the easy translation and how most of us react to the text in any translation, so we need to check that to see if it's true or we're just whitewashing the text
  - d. Second, even though the ESV communicates the meaning well, I think it loses some of the force
    - i. The extra words added in the ESV show us the meaning of the present tense in Greek, but the simple Greek I think carries more force
    - ii. The NASB and NKJV give us that sense of force - if we are abiding in Christ, we don't sin - sure it means a continual habit of sin, but the force of that statement is what John is trying to get across - it's impossible for us to be in sin if we are in Christ - in sin and in Christ are opposite states
    - iii. If we left it at the ESV translation, we might say that some sin is ok, but a lot of sin is bad, but the Greek doesn't communicate that all - sin is opposite to Christ and therefore sin should be the opposite of us, being comfortable with sin is antithetical to being comforted in Christ

### C. So John uses this to differentiate between true and false professors

1. The true professor will not be comfortable with sin
  - a. John has defined the relationship of the believer - the believer is abiding in Christ
  - b. John has defined who Christ is - Christ is the one opposed to sin, He has no sin and acts to destroy sin
  - c. So, the true professor, abiding in Christ, is going to hate sin - the true professor is not going to have a comfortable cease fire with sin, the true professor isn't going to let sin continue in his life
  - d. The true professor is going to hate sin with a passion because sin is contrary to what he is because it is contrary to what Christ is and his identity is now in Christ
2. The false professor, on the other hand, may be very comfortable with sin
  - a. But a comfortable liaison with sin by necessity denies the special relationship of abiding in Christ
  - b. John makes this relational aspect of sin very clear in the negative half of his statement - *no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.*
  - c. A comfortable cease-fire with sin, a lazy habit of sin demonstrates that a professor really hasn't ever met Christ, a professor that is ok with sin hasn't ever seen Christ and obviously doesn't know Christ
  - d. Sin is the opposite of what Christ is, it is what Christ hates, those who are ok with sin don't know Christ
  - e. So, sin is the evidence of a broken relationship - as John said earlier, sin is lawlessness

### D. But what does this mean for us?

1. First, we can't minimize or ignore these verses
  - a. Sin is antithetical to the Christian life and every hint of sin in our lives should be battled to the death
  - b. Anything less isn't being true to Christ, who He is or what He has done for us
  - c. Many Christians today would ignore or explain away these verses, make them unimportant to the Christian life, or make their meaning so trivial as to have no practical application
  - d. In an age when holiness is not upheld, these verses are often thrust aside in the name of free grace
  - e. The first thing we need to do is not ignore these verses but give them their due weight, let them spur you on to fight sin more, to battle it to the death because you know this is true and you love Christ
2. But if we don't ignore these verses, these verse could be very discouraging to us
  - a. As we fight against sin, sometimes it can seem as though we keep failing - in fact, we might start to feel as though our failures constitute a pattern of sin, the very pattern of sin that John is warning us against here
  - b. And maybe that's true, I don't want to minimize any conviction that the Holy Spirit is applying through these words this morning, but at the same time, I want to carefully define how we apply them to ourselves
3. I think, ultimately, the difference comes down to attitude, to desire, which is where we left off last week
  - a. This is why I tried to use the phrase 'comfortable in sin' earlier - this I think is the best phrase that captures what John is saying - those who abide in Christ cannot be comfortable in sin, comfort in sin denies Christ
  - b. So, if you are struggling against sin, but find that you fail again and again, but every time you fail you hate the sin, you turn away from it , you take it to Christ for forgiveness, you seek His power to fight against it and you take practical action in your life to fight it, you show that you aren't comfortable in that sin
  - c. But if you fail in sin over and over again, and each time you fail you make a show of asking Christ for forgiveness, but you make no real effort to change anything, you aren't fighting against it tooth and nail and you just keep returning to the same sin, you are demonstrating you are comfortable in that sin
  - d. To some outside viewers, this might look very similar, but at the heart it's very different - one is fighting against sin despite failure looking to final victory, one is forfeiting in the face of sin, presuming on grace in place of any actual fight
  - e. You could describe it as the difference between a man who falls in the mud, showers, returns to the path and keeps walking, trying not to fall down again and a pig who is forcefully washed and then runs back to the mud and wallows in it - at one moment in time they might look the same, they might both be covered in mud, and if the man falls on the path several times, they may both repeatedly fall in the mud, but their motives, desires and the sum of their actions are different, in fact, their very being is different
4. Again, I don't want to minimize conviction this morning - if you are failing again and again in sin, these verses should prick your conscience and give you a desire to fight more against sin, to seek Christ and His power more through prayer and to make a practical fight against sin, to find new ways to guard yourself against that sin
  - a. But if you are doing that, if that is truly your heart, don't let these verses discourage you
  - b. Instead, let these verses encourage you, encourage you to fight more, your fight isn't for nothing, your fight is to be like Christ, your head, your life, your Savior

## V. Who is the Devil?

I John 3:7-8a - *Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.*

### A. As John finishes his comparison of those who abide in Christ verses those who are comfortable in sin, John introduces a new character into the discussion - the devil

1. John says that those who are comfortable in sin are not exhibiting the characteristics of Christ, instead their exhibiting the characteristics of the devil, the one who is the opposite of all that Christ is
2. And, as John introduces another character, he uses this to transition between the two relationships we are talking about
3. We just finished talking about the first relationship - abiding in Christ - now John turns to the second relationship - children of God
4. John has already made one absolute contrast - abiding in Christ is the opposite of abiding in sin, the two are mutually exclusive, to be one is to not be the other
5. Now John is going to introduce another absolute contrast - we can be either children of God or children of the devil, again the two are mutually exclusive and their children will be marked by their characteristics

### B. So John introduces the devil as the antithesis of God's character here and gives a brief description of his character

1. John has already introduced the substance of God's character in 1:5 - *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*
2. The devil, then, is the exact opposite of God's character. John says - *the devil has been sinning from the beginning*
3. The essence of the devil's character is rebellion against God

### C. John introduces the devil and his character here not to make much of the devil but to tell us something about sin

1. Far from being an inconsequential action, sin is participating in the devil's rebellion against God
2. This statement serves a similar purpose to John's statement in verse 4 - sin is lawlessness
3. John is defining sin for what it truly is
4. First, he defined sin as denying the relationships that we have with Christ and God
5. Now, he is defining sin as affirming the opposite relationship, a relationship to the first sinner and the father of sinners, a relationship to God's archenemy, the devil
6. Sin cannot be overlooked because, just as righteousness points to a relationship with Christ, sin points to a much grimmer relationship, sin is rooted in the devil

### D. Christ makes this same point in the gospel of John

1. John 8:39-44 - *They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father---even God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies*
2. Sin, in all of its characteristics, is evidence of a relationship with the devil, the antithesis of God

## VI. Who is Christ?

I John 3:8b - *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*

### A. Just as John turned to Christ after defining sin in verse 4, John again turns to Christ after defining sin in verse 8

1. Sin is a partnership with the devil, a relationship with the devil
2. But, again, Christ is completely opposed to what sin is
3. Christ cannot have any part of sin because Christ has acted as the ultimate enemy of the devil - but not only is Christ the devil's sworn enemy, Christ has won the victory and Christ has destroyed the devil and all His works

### B. Christ's purpose can be summarized in this - Christ is opposed to everything that the devil represents

1. Christ is opposed to everything the devil represents to such an extent that He came into this world to destroy everything the devil represents and to conquer the ancient serpent that led the rebellion
2. Revelation gives a vivid picture of this in Revelation 12:7-10 - *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.*
3. This is the essence of Christ - the one who will throw down the ancient serpent and take his kingdom from him
4. How could Christ ever be allied with the devil? It would be completely impossible, the devil is Christ's sworn and defeated enemy
5. So how could Christ ever be allied with sin? It would be completely impossible, sin is Christ's sworn and defeated enemy

### C. Thus, by derivation, anyone who is allied with the devil has made himself the enemy of Christ

1. Anyone who would proclaim allegiance to the devil in actions that represent the devil's cause is, by nature the enemy of Christ, one to be destroyed by Christ because Christ will destroy all of the works of the devil, none will be overlooked
2. Friendship with the devil is enmity with Christ, or, as James puts it, in James 4:4 - *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*
3. Sin can't be taken lightly because it is antithetical to who Christ is, to what Christ does and makes us an enemy of Christ

## VII. Who are we?

I John 3:9-10 - *No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.*

### A. Having defined sin once again and Christ once again, John turns to our second relationship - children of God

1. Are we demonstrating that we are children of God or are we demonstrating that we are children of the devil?
2. The answer is pretty simple because it is the exact same answer from verses 6 and 7
3. Those who are comfortable in sin are not demonstrating any special relationship between them and God, instead they are demonstrating that the devil is, in fact, their father
4. But those who fight against sin and strive for righteousness are displaying the characteristics of God their Father and demonstrate their true adoption

### B. So John makes some strong statements about what it means to be a child of God

1. A child of God has, supernaturally, been made out of God's essence
  - a. John says that, if we are children of God, then God's seed has made us and is in us
  - b. To say it colloquially in 21st century terminology, if we are children of God, God's DNA is what made us and should be in us now
  - c. This is what John is saying - if we have been born of God, God's seed is in us
  - d. And this isn't merely hypothetical, Peter tells us that we do truly share the divine nature, II Peter 1:3-4 - *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*
  - e. Amazingly, if we are children of God we share the life of God, God's essence abides in us - this is incredibly surprising and incredibly good news
2. But, this means something - it means we ought to look like God
  - a. As a child should look a little bit like a father, if God's DNA has made us, we should look a little bit like Him
    - i. *So, no one born of God makes a practice of sinning*
  - b. In fact, it should be impossible for us to look completely different from Him
    - i. *So, he cannot keep on sinning*
  - c. God's Fatherhood should leave an indelible mark on our lives which is seen in our relationship to sin, sin is antithetical to God and He's passed that trait down to us
  - d. In fact, that's the same thing Peter says when he talks about us sharing God's nature - we *become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire*
  - e. If we share God's nature, we can't share the opposite of God's nature - it's just completely impossible

### C. Again John uses this to differentiate between true and false professors

1. We can either be children of God or children of the devil - and we can tell because we will look like our Father
  - a. If we are children of God, our life will be marked by the character of God, practicing righteousness, not sin
  - b. If we are children of the devil, our life will be marked by the character of the devil, continuing in sin
2. In fact, John says that imitating our father makes it evident what side we belong to - not only can we use this to test ourselves, we can see this in others as well
  - a. This isn't an invitation to judge others, to nitpick at other's lives and feel superior
  - b. But, we can look at those around us, especially those who are teaching or making specific claims in the church, and a significant and continual pattern of sin argues strongly against their profession - if they truly are acting more like the devil than like God, there is no reason to listen to or worry about their teaching
  - c. This is John's target - the false teachers of proto-gnosticism, he tells his recipients that it should be evident that the false teachers don't have anything do with Christ or with God because their lives demonstrate a different parentage, a different allegiance, so there is no reason to worry about their teaching



#### **D. So, once more, what does this mean for us?**

1. Since John is making the exact same point as the first half focusing on a different relationship, the result should be exactly the same
  - a. So, first, don't ignore these verses, let the weight of these verses wash over you and show you the intense difference between fighting against sin and forfeiting to sin
    - i. It is so very easy to ignore these verses, either by discounting what they say, or by agreeing with what they say but not letting it have any practical effect in our life
    - ii. But if this is true, then sin should be our mortal enemy, sin claims a different parentage and denies our rights as children before God - we should hate sin!
  - b. But also, don't let these verse discourage you, let them encourage you to keep fighting hard against sin
    - i. We can't deny the continuing presence of sin in our lives and this can be very discouraging
    - ii. But, if you truly hate the continuing presences of sin in your life, then these verses should spur you on to keep fighting, don't turn to despair, there is actually great hope in these verses
    - iii. If you are a child of God, then your fight will be won, you will be finally victorious - ultimate failure will be impossible because it is impossible that one born of God could keep on sinning
2. But, as John says that this differentiation is evident, not only internally but externally as well, I want to make one more application - we should judge those who teach based on these verses
  - a. In many ways, these verses conclude a thought that started in 2:18, where John warns us about antichrists that have appeared in the church
  - b. These antichrists have separated themselves from the church and are teaching false doctrine, especially denying the humanity of Christ and are confusing those in the church
  - c. But John tells his recipients that it should be evident what camp these teachers belong to by the lives that these teachers live - and we can apply this to false teachers in all ages
  - d. You should judge those who teach, whether it be Dan and I or other teachers you listen to or read throughout the week, first by comparing our teaching to the Word of God, but then second by examining our lives - if we are teaching the things of God by the power of the Spirit, then our lives should bear witness to that
  - e. If a teacher's life does not give evidence of a living and abiding relationship with Christ through the practice of righteousness, it is dangerous to listen to that teacher's teaching
  - f. This doesn't mean that teachers must be perfect, but it should be clear, it should be evident which side a teachers life is on - is the teacher evidencing parentage by God or parentage by the devil
  - g. This is why the requirement of 'being able to teach' is such a small portion of the requirements of an elder and the requirements of a life lived in union with Christ make up the bulk of the requirements
  - h. The easiest way to judge a teachers teaching is by looking at his life, does he abide in Christ or not
3. So apply these verses to yourself and fight against sin, and apply them to teachers and reject those who aren't fighting against sin
  - a. And, above all, make sin your mortal enemy - it belongs to the devil and not to God, it belongs to the world and not to Christ
  - b. If you want to abide in Christ and thus be a child of God, sin cannot continue in your life - fight tooth and nail against it until it is completely eradicated from your life
  - c. In other words, keep fighting until Christ comes, because John has already told us that is when sin will be eradicated - then we will be like Him because we shall see Him as He is
  - d. But, if we have made sin our mortal enemy until then, we will not have to shrink from Him in shame, but will joyously welcome Him as the victor who will end our struggle