

INTRODUCTION

Our Lord Jesus, by His apostle John, has warned us, as little children, “Let no one deceive you,” let no one convince you to believe these two statements are false, because they are the truth:

- He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as Jesus Christ is righteous; but
 - He who practices sin is of the devil, just as the devil has sinned from the beginning.
- That’s what we studied together two times ago.

The devil has sinned from the beginning

The works of the devil are to get us human beings to be sinners as he is

The Son of God, however, was manifested, was revealed, to destroy the works of the devil

by His incarnation, His becoming man

by His being born of the virgin, not a son of Adam

by His righteous life, His committing no sin

by His death on the cross

by His resurrection from the dead

by His preaching the gospel to sinners

by the regenerating work of His Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners, granting to them the new birth

ultimately, by His return on the day of final judgment, yet to come in the future

Yes, the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil

Therefore, do not be deceived into thinking that someone can be righteous in Jesus Christ, but just continue sinning, which is of the devil. That is impossible, because the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil!

That is what we learned last time. Today we hook on right there and continue by observing this aspect of John’s warning to us:

Do not be deceived into thinking that someone has been born of God, who does not practice righteousness, but continues a life of sin, because anyone born of God does not continue in sin, and indeed cannot.

TEXT

1 John 3:7-10a

BODY

Do not be deceived into thinking that someone has been born of God, who does not practice righteousness, but continues a life of sin, because anyone born of God does not continue in sin, and indeed cannot.

I. The One Who Is Born of God Does Not Continue in Sin

A. Literally

1. not “No one...” but “Any who is born of God sin not does”
2. RWP: can only mean “go on sinning”

B. Born of God

1. meaning: born again; born from above; regenerated
 - a) made a new creature
 - b) made a new man
2. implying
 - a) the true disciples of Jesus Christ
 - b) genuine Christians

C. Does not continue in sin means...

1. he does not sin as his way of life; as ESV “makes a practice of”
2. he always is brought to repentance from sin
3. illus. Several places I read this illustration: a compass needle left to itself is found pointing north; it can be sent spinning other directions, but always returns to point north

D. Because His seed remains in him

1. the apostle has been talking to us about being born of God, being the children of God; now he substitutes the language of having God’s seed in us; that actually makes perfect sense, when you think of children begotten of a father;
 - a) they are conceived by the father depositing seed;
 - b) those children then of a certain kind by virtue of that seed;
 - c) we talk about that in terms of DNA, genes, chromosomes, etc.
2. you then can tell who a creature’s parents are by what kind of creature he acts like
 - a) if you see a creature standing in a barn, eating hay, saying, “Mooo,” as she is being milked by a farmer, you know the seed remaining in her was implanted there by parents who are cattle
 - b) if you see a creature swimming around in a fish bowl, extracting oxygen from water by its gills, you know the seed remaining in it was implanted there by parents who are fish
 - c) illus. My own kids do not live like pigs
3. what exactly is the seed of God that remains in him?
 - a) is it the word, the gospel? maybe he means that; it’s true
 - b) is it the Holy Spirit? maybe he means that; it’s true
 - c) I think he means the wonderful change made in the soul by the word and the Spirit
4. but whatever exactly John means the seed to represent, the essential, dominant behavior of the one who has God’s seed remaining in him is not sin, but righteousness

E. You see that although the thing proven by the argument about God’s seed remaining in him proves not only that the one born of God *does not* continue to sin, but also that

II. The One Who Is Born of God *Cannot* Continue in Sin

- A. illus. It not just that the fish in the bowl *does not* go into the barn to eat hay, be milked, and say “moo,” but that the fish *cannot do* those things
- B. So, the one who is born of God, having God’s seed remaining in him, not only *does not* continue sinning, but indeed *cannot* continue sinning.
- C. Instead, he must practice righteousness
- D. This is a known characteristic of those who are the children of God
- E. This is not a characteristic of those who are not the children of God
 - 1. they can continue in sin
 - 2. even while naming Jesus Christ
 - 3. it surprises or shocks God’s children
 - a) what she is doing is such a blatant breaking of God’s commandments of love---how can she do that?
 - b) what he is leaving undone is such a basic duty of love---how can he not do that?
- F. illus. Let’s say you bought a cow for the first time, and the same day it was delivered, you also brought home a goldfish. Your preschooler might say, “Mommy, the new cow is swimming around in a bowl on the table.” That news is a bit shocking, but you understand easily enough what has happened. A little child is confused. He is calling a creature something it is not.
 - 1. A cow cannot swim around in a bowl on the table because she was born the offspring of cattle, and her behavior is determined by the seed that remains in her, having been implanted there by her parents
 - 2. But a fish that is being called a cow *can* swim around in a fish bowl
- G. The one who is born of God cannot continue in sin, because he is born of God; but the one who is not born of God, but merely says he is born of God, *can* continue in sin
- H. Because the one who is born of God cannot continue in sin, but must practice righteousness, whereas the one who is *not* born of God *can* continue in sin...

- III. This Is an Area in Which the Children of God and the Children of the Devil Are Revealed for Who They Are
- A. A child of God cannot but practice righteousness; his life of righteousness, observable as such, and not as a life of sin, shows him to be a child of God
 - B. Therefore anyone not practicing righteousness should not be thought of as a child of God; instead, a person saying he is a Christian, but continuing a life of sin, should be thought of as a child of the devil
 - C. APPLICATION: Consider this a reliable method for determining who are and who are not to be thought of as born of God; that is, who are and who are not to be thought of as true Christians.
 - 1. other methods are unreliable
 - a) certainly any bare statement that a person is a Christian; remember we are talking about those who credibly profess to be Christians; so even a mere listening to that credible profession alone is not a reliable method
 - b) observing that the person goes to church
 - c) observing that while the person is at church, he or she says or does things that seem very good
 - d) observing that the person does righteous things as part of his or her lifeall these methods are shown in the scriptures and our experience to be unreliable
 - 2. the method taught us here by our Lord is reliable, so consider it reliable
 - D. APPLICATION: Then, of course, use this method as needed.

CONCLUSION

Dear church, brothers and sisters in Christ, I am flawed, and have sin in my flesh, as you do, also. But imperfectly and falteringly I love the Lord Jesus, I love you, and I love this church of His. It is exceedingly difficult for me, as well as for you, to make judgments about people---hard to make the judgments, hard to be sure we've made the right judgment, hard to stick by them, hard to be sure if maybe we weren't wrong, hard to admit it if we think we were, hard to deal with any unpleasant consequences from making right or wrong judgments, hard to sleep at night when these things are going around and around. Of course I have in mind the most recent church discipline case in this church, but what I'm saying is true in general and in many specific cases we face in life. These difficulties and pains will be with us, Christ's church, until He returns to make all things new. He is a righteous, perfect judge, and will set everything right on the last day.

Yet these difficulties, doubts, and pains must not dissuade us from making necessary judgments in this life. Only let us make those judgments based on what the bible tells us, as here in 1 John 3, so that any errors we make and any pains we suffer will be only those that come with the process, not any we bring on ourselves unnecessarily.

Do not be deceived into thinking that someone has been born of God, who does not practice righteousness, but continues a life of sin, because anyone born of God does not continue in sin, and indeed cannot.

NKJV

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. (10) In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God...

ESV

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. (10) 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...

KJV

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (10) In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God...

whoever has been born of God

Poole:

he that hath had such a blessed change wrought in him, by the operation of God's Spirit in his heart, as to be translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of his own dear Son; transformed in the spirit of his mind, i.e. sincerely changed from all evil to all good; from an obedience to the flesh, &c., to an obedience to God.

Gill:

regenerated, or born from above...new creatures in Christ

Barnes:

that is, who are true Christians

does not sin ESV makes a practice of sinning KJV commit sin

Gill:

does not make it his trade and business; it is not the constant course of his life; he does not live and walk in sin, or give up himself to it; he is not without the being of it in him, or free from acts of sin in his life and conversation, but he does not so commit it as to be the servant of it, a slave unto it, or to continue in it

Barnes:

do not sin habitually and characteristically

Ellicott:

“Sinneth not,” therefore, looks rather to the Christian’s course as a whole.

Spurgeon:

That is to say, this is not the course, and habit, and tenour of his life; there is sin in much that he does, but he hates it, loathes it, and flees from it.

Immortal principles forbid the child of God to sin; the new-born life within us keeps us holy. We have our imperfections and infirmities over which we mourn; but no child of God can live in sin, and love it. He hates it; he is like a sheep that may fall into the mire, but he will not wallow in it, as the swine do. As soon as possible, he is up again out of the mud and the filth. He goes sorrowing, with broken bones, when he perceives that he has grieved his God. His life as a whole is a holy life.

JRY:

for His seed remains in him

1 Peter 1:23

Calvin:

The Apostle means the same thing by the seed of God; for God’s Spirit so forms the hearts of the godly for holy affections, that the flesh and its lusts do not prevail, but being subdued and put as it were under a yoke, they are checked and restrained

he not only shews that we cannot sin, but also that the power of the Spirit is so effectual, that it necessarily retains us in continual obedience to righteousness.

Geneva:

The Holy Spirit is so called by the effect he works, because by his power and mighty working, as it were by seed, we are made new men.

Trapp:

The new nature

Poole:

the principles of enlivened holy truth

Gill:

not the word of God or the Gospel...nor the Holy Spirit of God...but rather the grace of the Spirit, the internal principle of grace in the soul, the new nature, or new man formed in the soul, is meant; which seminally contains all grace in it, and which, like seed, springs up and gradually increases, and always abides; and is pure and incorruptible, and neither sins itself, nor encourages sin, but opposes, checks, and prevents it

Edwards:

the seed of which he is born of God, the same seed by which he is begotten of God, remaineth in him, and therefore he does not fall away to a state and trade of sin again, out of which he was begotten, and born by that seed.

Barnes:

There is much obscurity in this expression, though the general sense is clear, which is, that there is something abiding in the heart of the true Christian which the apostle here calls "seed," which will prevent his sinning.

The word "seed" (σπέρμα sperma) means properly seed sown, as of grain, plants, trees; then anything that resembles it, anything which germinates, or which springs up, or is produced.

The exact idea here, as it seems to me, is not that the "seed" refers to "the word of God," as Augustin and others suppose, or to "the Spirit of God," but to the germ of piety which has been produced in the heart "by" the word and Spirit of God, and which may be regarded as having been implanted there by God himself, and which may be expected to produce holiness in the life.

The expression here used by John, thus explained, would seem to imply two things:

- (1) that the germ or seed of religion implanted in the soul abides there as a constant, vital principle, so that he who is born of God cannot become habitually a sinner; and,
- (2) that it will so continue to live there that he will not fall away and perish. The idea is clearly that the germ or principle of piety so permanently abides in the soul, that he who is renewed never can become again characteristically a sinner.

Bengel:

that is, the word, with its peculiar efficacy, 1Pe_1:23; Jam_1:18

Ellicott:

the Holy Spirit: that influence proceeding from God, imbued with divine vitality, regenerating, renewing, refreshing, causing the nature of holiness to spring, to grow, to bloom, to bear fruit.

JFB:

the living word of God, made by the Holy Spirit the seed in us of a new life and the continual mean of sanctification.

RWP:

God's seed, "the divine principle of life" (Vincent).

JRY:

Children are born to a woman by her conceiving the child in her womb, carrying it to maturity, then delivering it.

A child is born to a father by his implanting his seed where it fertilizes. The genetic makeup of the father's seed then determines the genetic makeup of the one born to him.

In the case of the Lord Jesus, that genetic makeup was implanted by God's Holy Spirit.

-will my son jump into the ocean, swim to the bottom, and live there?

-will my son get down on all fours, root around with his nose for roots and nuts, and say, "oink, oink"? (although he might for a moment, he would not continue in it as his way of life)

and he cannot sin ESV keep on sinning

RWP: The present active infinitive hamartanein can only mean "and he cannot go on sinning,"

Calvin:

Here the Apostle ascends higher, for he plainly declares that the hearts of the godly are so effectually governed by the Spirit of God, that through an inflexible disposition they follow his guidance.

John does not speak of one act, as they say, but of the continued course of life.

Trapp:

Sinningly, so as to be transformed into sin's image: cannot do wickedly with both hands earnestly, Mic_7:7-9. He sinneth not totally and finally, he cannot so fall as apostates; for the seed of God ever abideth in him.

Poole:

which is not to be understood simply, as if he could not sin at all, which were to contradict what he had said before

out of a hatred of goodness: or, do not such acts customarily, or not so unto death

Gill:

the meaning is, he that is born of God, as he is born of God, or that which is born of God in him, the new man, or new creature, cannot sin; for that is pure and holy; there is nothing sinful in it, nor can anything that is sinful come out of it, or be done by it; it is the workmanship of the Holy Spirit of God; it is a good work, and well pleasing: in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold sin with delight; and an incorruptible seed, which neither corrupts nor is corrupted; and though it is as yet an imperfect work, it is not impure

Barnes:

Not merely he will not, but he cannot; that is, in the sense referred to.

it must mean that there is somehow a certainty as absolute "as if" it were physically impossible, that those who are born of God will not be characteristically and habitually sinners; that they will not sin in such a sense as to lose all true religion and be numbered with transgressors; that they will not fall away and perish.

no words could more clearly prove that true Christians will never fall from grace and perish. How can what the apostle here says be true, if a real Christian can fall away and become again a sinner?

because he has been born of God KJV is born of God

Gill:

the reason of the impeccability of the regenerate man, as such, is because he is born of God: for that which is born of God in him, does, under the influence of the Spirit, power, and grace of God, preserve him from the temptations of Satan, the pollutions of the world, and the corruptions of his own heart; see 1Jo_5:18

Barnes:

God has given him, by the new birth, real, spiritual life, and that life can never become extinct.

JFB:

“because it is of God that he is born” (so the Greek order, as compared with the order of the same words in the beginning of the verse); not “because he was born of God” (the Greek is perfect tense, which is present in meaning, not aorist); it is not said, Because a man was once for all born of God he never afterwards can sin; but, Because he is born of God, the seed abiding now in Him, he cannot sin; so long as it energetically abides, sin can have no place.

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest ESV it is evident

Calvin:

He shortly draws this conclusion, that those in vain claim a place and a name among the children of God, who do not prove themselves to be such by a pious and holy life, since by this evidence they shew that they differ from the children of the devil. But he does not mean that they are thus manifested, so as to be openly recognized by the whole world; but his meaning is only this, that the fruit and adoption always appear in the life.

Geneva:

The conclusion: by a wicked life they are known who are governed by the Sprit of the devil: and by a pure life who are God's children.

Gill:

regeneration and faith do not make men the children of God, but manifest them to be so; adoption makes them the children of God, and entitles them to the inheritance; regeneration gives them the nature of the children of God, and makes them meet for it, and manifests their right unto it; not to the men of the world, but to themselves and other saints:

and the children of the devil

Gill:

such as imitate him, do his will and his lusts, and are openly under his power and influence; these are distinguishable from regenerate persons, and the children of God, by their lives and conversations

Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God

Gill:

that is, he does not appear to be born of God, who does not by faith lay hold on the righteousness of Christ for his justification before God, and acceptance with him; and who does not do works of righteousness in faith from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory of God; for where regenerating grace is, there will be such graces and such practices:

Spurgeon:

Holiness and love are the marks of the true child of God; and where these are not to be found, a man must not bolster himself up with any notion that salvation is his, for he is no child of God.

JRY:

First, as to how this reads.

Greek [no textual variant]: pas - Any who is born of God sin not does/commits from Vulgate to ASV, even Moffatt, this was essentially the same

-Wycliffe: Ech

-Tyndale through ASV: Whosoever

-Moffatt: Anyone

RSV: No one born of God commits sin

The distinction here seems important to me.

-In the RV/NIV/ESV, the text is talking about no one. There is no one like I'm about to describe.

-In the actual bible, the text is talking about any and every true Christian, true disciple of Jesus Christ

Call to Worship: Psalm 99:9

Scripture Reading: Genesis 39:1-12

Sermon: "He Cannot Go On Sinning" 1 John 3:9

Benediction: Jude 24-25

Trinity 441 Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ

Trinity 634 We Praise Thee, O God

Grace 85 It Is Enough That I Am in Christ

Trinity 37 God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength

Grace 140 See What a Morning

Trinity 702 Wonderful Grace of Jesus