

1 John 3:4-12

"The Proof Is In The Practice"

What we are, what we shall be, what we should be. That's the context we're coming back to here in 1 Jn Ch 3. The *love* of God has seen fit to make us *children* of God. As a believer in J.C. that's what *you are presently*. You are a child of God. *What you shall be* when Jesus returns is a bit of a mystery. We don't know exactly what our transformation in glory throughout all eternity entails. What we do know is that we will be like Jesus in that we will be perfectly holy, perfectly righteous, perfect in love, no flaws, no failures. We'll inhabit our resurrection body. We'll be like Jesus. – What that *should be* inspiring in you & me is *purity*. Knowing that Jesus could return for us at any moment, that we'll stand before Him & be made like Him should render a certain effect in our lives... It should serve to clean us up *morally*.

If you desire to live *sinfully*, then the simple truth is that you haven't been "born again", the Spirit of God doesn't dwell in you. If the Spirit of God lived *in* you, you would have a desire to be *pleasing to God, obedient to God* (rather than rebellious before God).

Here in Vs 4, Jn begins to reason from the negative. The child of God desires to render obedience, the unbeliever has no such desire, they're content to rebel *against* God & live in sin *before* God.

Vs 4-5

He's moving from comparison (we shall be like Him [Jesus]) to *contrast*. He speaks of "whoever commits sin" in the light of, "...in Him there is no sin, He was manifested to take away our sins."

& So that there's no confusion as to what sin is, John defines it at its most basic root. It's absolute disregard for the law of God (which is inherently disregard for the One who made the law, God Himself). & Just to be clear. We know that in Christ we're not under the Mosaic law. This is not a reference to the 613 laws put in place for Israel by Moses. What John is simply saying is that *sin* is *anything* that runs contrary to the will of God, the word of God & the ways of God. So, a "sinner" is one who is insubordinate (defiant) to the will/word of God.

Now, we should also set something else straight (so that there's no confusion straight out of the gate) & that is this. John isn't preaching or teaching sinless perfection this side of eternity. We can never take apart, apart from the whole. We have to be very careful when we're studying scripture that we don't isolate/separate a verse from its overarching context.

John has just stated (Vs 2) that we won't be *like* Jesus until we *see* Jesus as He is (face to face). Back in Ch 1 he said, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."*¹ The key here is in the word "commits". In the Greek it's a verb that's found in the "present perfect" tense which speaks of continual, habitual action. *It's not a reference to someone who falters in or occasionally falls into sin, struggles with sin, stumbles over sin or any of that. It speaks of someone who blatantly, habitually & continually practices sin. For the child of God, sin will be the exception, not the rule. The believer will stumble occasionally, maybe struggle constantly, but will not blatantly, habitually, continually sin w/out regard for God or His word.*

& (Again) Just so there's no confusion as to exactly what John means when he uses the word "sin", he tells us. "Lawlessness". In fact, he says, "sin is lawlessness".

Now, as I mentioned. We know that in Christ we're no longer under the Mosaic law. But does that mean that the law serves no purpose? Not at all! As far as that goes, let's consider the 10 commandments (*Btw 9 of the 10 commandments are repeated in the N.T. ensuring that they're still there to govern/guide our hearts. There's only 1 not repeated. & That's the law to keep the Sabbath, because the work is finished in Christ, we rest in Him perpetually, He is our Sabbath. "Come to Me all you who labor & heavy laden, Jesus said, & I will give you... rest. Rest for your soul." He did the work, He finished the work, salvation is complete in Him*).

* But the Bible is clear that the law was *never* given to save us. People like to think they live by the 10 commandments, no they don't. You can't. We repeat this on the regular around here, we come "flawed from the factory". We are born w/an *imperfect* nature, a sin nature. Therefore it's *impossible* that we should render *perfect* obedience. An imperfect person can never render *perfect* obedience. *In theory, if you could, then you could be saved by keeping the law. But you can never keep it because it's aimed not at who you are outwardly, but who you are inwardly. That's what Jesus was teaching during His "Sermon on the Mt."* He said things like, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*² You see? You might toe the line outwardly, but inwardly (in your heart) you're guilty. & Man may look to the outward appearance, but God searches... the heart.

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [1 Jn 1:8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mt 5:27-28]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

So, the purpose of the law was *never* to save us, but to show us our need for a Savior. Paul put it this way, *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*³

The law was given to us as a mirror of sorts, so that we could look into it & see all the filth of our hearts being reflected back to us. So that we would realize our guilt before God & cry out to *Him* to cleanse us, to rescue us, to... save us. *

But when we act w/out regard to God, His word, His will, His ways. We commit “lawlessness” & lawlessness is *sin*. & Let me encourage you. When you sin before God, don’t make excuses for it, don’t downplay, don’t candy coat it, confess it. Don’t tell God you made a mistake, call it for what it is, “I’ve sinned. I’ve erred exceedingly & played the fool.” God already knows what you’ve done, the only 1 you’re fooling in calling it anything less than it is, is yourself.

* So... *sin* is lawlessness. “And you know that He was manifested to *take away* our sins, & in Him there is *no sin*.” Again, He’s showing the obvious inconsistency of claiming to be a Christian (a believer) and leading a life earmarked by sin. That goes against the grain of the very reason Jesus came, it’s inconsistent w/His nature in you.

Why did Jesus come? Why was He “manifested”. Why did Christ (touchably, tangibly, physically) come to this earth? “To *take away* (meaning to lift up and carry off) our sins!” The prophet Isaiah put it like this, *“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”*⁴ He was manifested to take away our sins! *

* Perhaps you remember the scene in your mind’s eye, there he was, J.B. out ministering to the masses & Jesus began to make His way through the crowd. John saw Him & pointed the people to Him saying, *“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”*⁵

He takes away sin’s *penalty*, He breaks the bondage of sin’s *power* & when we’re w/Him in glory He will completely remove sin’s *presence*.

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ro 3:19–20]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Is 53:5–6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Jn 1:29]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& At the risk of stating the obvious, it's *only* Jesus who *can* take away sin. *You* can't take away your sin. *I* can't take away my sin. It's impossible that we should cleanse ourselves in this way. – Many try, through asceticism... punishing themselves, beating themselves, starving themselves, crawling on their knees... you just can't do it. Remember? Imperfect people can't render perfect atonement (in any form or fashion). We *must* receive the atoning work, the cleansing work of Jesus on our behalf. He alone *takes away* sin's penalty.

Neither can we break the *power* of sin in our lives. Jesus does that, it's His work & we must receive it & respond to it. – We certainly can't take away the *presence* of sin in our lives. That's the work of Jesus & it'll be fully realized when we'll be glorified w/Him in heaven. *

* Ladies and Gentlemen: only the Lord Jesus can clean you up... He was manifested, to take away our sins. Many people are of the mindset, "I need to get this or that taken care of, then I'll come to Jesus." *That's like saying, "Well, after I get to feeling better, or get rid of this cancer, I'll go see the Dr."* Jesus went into the temple (Matt 21:12-13, Jn 2:13-17), then *He* cleansed it. So to w/you & me, we come to Him just as we are, & He'll be the One to overturn the tables of sin in our lives. He'll cleanse us, He'll take away our sins. *

"& In Him there is no sin." Jesus, being the Lamb of God w/out spot & w/out blemish, perfect & w/out sin, was qualified to make the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He took our sin upon Himself & "carried it away" as it were. He paid for it & in Him we're clean before God.

So understand what John is saying here. If you say you're a believer yet you habitually, continually practice sin that, you're either fake (putting up a pretense for whatever reason) or you've deceived yourself because Jesus came to *take away our sins*. & Incase you're uncertain on the issue, look at how he hammers it in, in Vs 6.

Vs 6

John is simply adding it up for us. Jesus *takes away sin*. In Him *there is no sin*, therefore, whoever *abides in Him* does not sin.

& At the risk of redundancy, he's not saying that as a child of God you will never commit a single act of sin (we've established this). The verb "sin" is again in the "present tense" speaking of that settled habitual way of life. *What John is bringing into focus for us here is a person's character. The believer's life will not be characterized by sin. What it will be characterized by is "abiding in Him" (in Christ).*

Sin will be the exception, not the rule. I think a great illustration would be the Prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). The child of God can certainly find himself/herself in the “pigpen”, but he/she isn’t a pig. You’re out of your environment even being there, the child of God won’t “abide” in the pigpen partaking of the “slop” of sin. He/she will repent, return to their heavenly Father...

* You might just jot down to read it later, Romans Ch 6. The whole point is the transformation of a person’s life when they become a new creation is Christ. The old you, that person you used to be is dead. Sin no longer has dominion (authority) over you. The new nature you have just isn’t compatible w/or comfortable *in* sin.

So, in some ways the question isn’t really, “Do you sin or not sin?” You do, you will. The better question may be, “How do you react/respond when you sin?” Do you wallow *in* it, perpetually give in *to* it, allow it to characterize you or dominate your lifestyle? Or are you *convicted* of your sin, humbly *confess* your sin & battle *against* your sin through the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?

Don’t make a “peace treaty” w/your sin. Don’t wink at its presence in your life. Don’t justify it, rationalize it or make an excuse for it. “Well, everyone has their struggles, this one is mine.” That goes against the grain of everything we are in Christ, the work that He’s done & is doing in your life. He was manifested *to take away* our sins, not allow to make an *excuse for our sins*. Paul said it like this, “*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*”⁶ *

* “Whoever sins (habitually, characteristically) has neither seen Him nor known Him.” I love how “matter of fact” “brass tacks” John is. For him, there’s no ambiguity. It’s not an “I’m not really sure” situation. If you lead a life of unrepentant sin, it’s simple. You don’t know J.C., you’ve never seen (perceived/experienced) Him.

Perhaps a super basic way to think of it is like this. There are some people whom you deem so great, so wonderful that seeing them, or meeting them, getting to know them would change your life forever. Jesus is that kind of Person (but much greater). If you meet Him, see Him, experience Him, you will never be the same. Jesus changes lives. *

Vs 7

* Jn says, “Don’t be fooled.” If someone is righteous, they’ll practice righteousness.

You don't have a "church life" & a "business life" & a "social life" & you're compartmentalizing like that. "I tithe appropriately in church, but I cheat on my taxes. But that's ok they're 2 different things..." No, they're not. One who is righteous, practices righteousness, that thread is woven throughout every area of their lives.

Jesus said it like this, *"Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them."*⁷ The fruit of a person's life will reveal the root of a person's life. If I'm rooted in Christ, the fruit of my life will reflect that. If I'm *not* rooted in Christ, that will reflect that as well, through the practiced patterns that come into fruition in my life. *

& Just to say it out loud, John isn't saying that we're made righteous before God by our own righteous works. He's saying the righteousness of Christ in your life will be made evident in the way you live. – I don't know if it was Charles Spurgeon who said it 1st or not, but the principle in play here is this. "The grace that does not change my life will not save my soul." Or we could say it like this. "The grace of God that saves your soul will change your life." If the nature of Christ is *in* you, it will shine forth from you.

Vs 8-9

Remember that "fruit shows the root" principle I just gave you? John is continuing to drive that home for us. The idea is this; if a person *knows* God, has been born again of God, they will *obey* God. If a person does *not* know God, hasn't *been* born again of God they will obey the devil. (That doesn't mean that they sit around making a conscious decision to obey Satan. Rather, if you don't serve God, you serve the devil by default, there are no other options.)

"He who sins (habitually, characteristically) is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning." John is giving us a little insight here & that is this. Sin finds its origin in Satan. He is the "original source" of sin. So, the contrast here is between Christ (in Him there is no sin) & the devil (who is the source of all sin). – Of course, that doesn't mean that any time you sin, "the devil made you do it". We're all responsible for the decisions that we make.

⁷ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Mt 7:16–20] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

However, there is an acknowledgment here that the devil is responsible for sin entering the world by orchestrating that whole debacle back in the Garden of Eden, deceiving Eve, resulting in Adam's disobedience to God.

But again, it's comparison/contrast for the sake of discerning if a person is of God or of the devil. You'll act like your father (is the idea). One will practice righteousness, the other will be content to live in sin. He who sins is of the devil.

& Check it out, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." More insight into the purpose of Christ's coming to this world. #1 To take away our sins, #2 To destroy (nullify/dissolve) the works of the devil. Or to understand it another way, * Jesus came to set you free from Satan's grip, to break the chains w/which he had enslaved you. No one, & no-thing outside of Christ can do that for you. No preacher, no counselor, no therapist. However, J.C. (the Great Physician) can break chains & set you free from the bondage of sin & death. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Whom the Son sets free is free indeed... Satan places you in bondage to sin, Jesus sets us free from sin that we might lead a life set apart to God. *

"Whoever has been born of God does not sin (for His seed remains in him) & he cannot sin because he has been born of God." John is saying (like Paul in Gal 2:20) that when I'm truly born again of God, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. We're to reckon ourselves dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

That new nature that's in you, will not sin. In fact (Jn says) it *cannot* sin because God's "seed" remains in you. (Is this a reference to the life of Christ w/in you, or the seed of the Word of God that abides in you? I think there's room for both.) When the life of Christ is in you & the word of God is rooted in you... that new nature in you won't sin against God. Close

Perhaps you're wondering then, "Well, how does that work out? Because I still sin..." When God saved you, He gave a new nature to you. But He didn't remove the old nature from you (Rom 7). That new nature won't sin, but when we choose to yield ourselves to the old nature... we'll stumble, we'll falter, we'll fail.

It's why a backslidden Christian is the most miserable person on the planet. He has too much of the Lord to enjoy sin & too much sin to enjoy the Lord... There's a constant war w/in him & he's miserable. What's the answer?

Eph 4:22, 24, *“that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and ... put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”*⁸

*Allow me to put it plainly. When you are born again, a notable, tangible, observable change will take place in your life & it will be worked out in every aspect of your life. The proof is in the practice. If you’re practicing sin, you’re heading in a dangerous direction

Jesus came to take away our sins. He, being w/out sin, was made sin for us (upon the cross) that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. If you haven’t humbled yourself before Him, surrendered your life to Him. Why put it off another day? Trust in J.C. & old things will pass away, all things will be made a new. How does that sound? New life. You’ll be a new creation in Christ.. *

Prayer Points:

Father I pray that You help us (as Your children) to put off, concerning our former conduct, the old man which only grows more & more corrupt & to learn what it means to walk in the Spirit, in true righteousness & holiness. That we refuse to make a “peace treaty” w/our sin, & that we be truly repentant *of* our sin.

If you’ve not given your life to Christ & today, you know it’s time to quit playing games, taking chances, or trying to clean up your own life, then take care of it right here, right now. Turn from your sin, trust in J.C. that times of renewal & refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.