

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 8-2-15 AM NOTES
"GOD'S CHILDREN AND SIN"
1 JOHN 3:4-10
8 in Series, "Absolute Assurance"

1 John 5:13a (NKJV) "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..."

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*

William Cowper, 1774

*There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains:*

*Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more:*

William Cowper, 1771

I. The Provision of the Savior (vv. 4-5, 8)

Romans 14:23b (NKJV) "...for whatever *is* not from faith is sin."

Proverbs 24:9a (NKJV) "The devising of foolishness *is* sin..."

James 4:17 (NKJV) "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin."

1 John 5:17a (NKJV) "All unrighteousness is sin..."

A. The Necessity of the Savior's Provision (v. 4)

1 John 3:4b (HCSB) "(Everyone)...sin is the breaking of law."

Psalms 119:97 (NKJV) "Oh, how I love Your law! It *is* my meditation all the day."

Romans 3:23 (NKJV) "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

B. The Nature of the Savior's Provision (vv. 5, 8)

John 1:29 (NKJV) "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"

Romans 7:23 (NKJV) "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Romans 6:6-7 (NKJV) "⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. ⁷ For he who has died has been freed from sin."

1 John 1:7b (NKJV) "... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

1 John 3:8a (ESV) "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil..."

John 8:44c (NKJV) "...for he is a liar and the father of it."

John 8:44b (NKJV) "He was a murderer from the beginning..."

Hebrews 2:14 (NKJV) "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil".

James 4:7 (NKJV) "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

II. The Practice of the Saints (vv. 6-7)

A. They Do Not Practice Sin (v. 6)

1 John 1:8, 10 (NKJV) "⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

1 John 3:6 (ESV) "No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him."

1 John 3:9 (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."

Matthew 7:16a (NKJV) "You will know them by their fruits."

B. They Do Practice Righteousness (v. 7)

"Those who do live in sin reveal that they have neither seen Christ nor known Christ...Never at any time have they spiritually envisioned the Savior so as to know Him in a personal, saving relationship. Sin and Satan is their life, not righteousness and Jesus. In contrast, the child of God has experienced a decisive break with sin. Sin no longer controls their life; the Son of God does, for they continually abide in Him." □ Danny Aiken

III. The Power of Salvation (vv. 9-10)

A. A New Life (v. 9)

1 John 3:9 (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."

B. A New Love (V10)

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The main theme of the book of 1 John is assurance of salvation. **1 John 5:13a (NKJV)** “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...” The key words in that verse are, “that you may know”. One minute after you die, you will have already had your first glance at heaven with all of its beauty and joy, or you will have had your first glance of the absolute horror of hell and its hopelessness. That is a sobering thought! At some point after death, you will have had your first glance at the breathtaking beauty and majesty of the resurrected, glorified Christ or your first encounter with evil beyond anything you could ever have imagined. Whether it is heaven or hell, after you die, your destiny for eternity is set; it is unchangeable.

In my opinion, two of the saddest things here on earth are first, those who are deceived about salvation and think they have eternal life but in reality do not, and second is the person who has truly experienced a new birth and the forgiveness of sins and yet lacks assurance. Let me share with you an example of that second category. William Cowper (1731-1800) wrote some of the most meaningful hymns that the church has ever sung. Let me share some from two of them.

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.*
- William Cowper, 1774

*There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains:*

*Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved to sin no more:*
- William Cowper, 1771

What amazing and worshipful words! It may surprise you to know some of William Cowper's life. Although he wrote words like those we just read, Cowper attempted suicide multiple times and believed that he was condemned. Cowper's mother died when he was 6 and he was sent to boarding school. Cowper felt rejection and actually felt that he was worthless and not fit to be accepted by God. No one longed for God's acceptance more than he did.

Cowper's first suicide attempt was in his thirties. He tried to drink laudanum, an opium and alcohol solution, hoping that it would put him in a permanent sleep, but just couldn't bring himself to drink it. Later he tried to commit suicide by cutting himself with a knife and the knife broke. He tried to hang himself and the rope broke. Cowper was convinced that he had committed the unpardonable sin. He once wrote of himself that he was damned below Judas. His sense of sin and future punishment were overwhelming.

After spending some time in an insane asylum he was taken into the home of John Newton (who wrote *Amazing Grace*). While with Newton, Cowper suffered from paranoia and believed that he was being poisoned. Again, he tried suicide and failed. He wrote biblically correct words to songs about grace, but believed that he himself was excluded from it. Throughout the torment he was going through, Cowper

continued to write poetry that extolled the wonders of the Gospel. He also wrote ballads for use in William Wilberforce's campaign against slavery, and yet continued to think himself condemned. Cowper's friends had no doubt that he was a Christian, primarily because of his deep desire to please God and do His will whatever the cost. They believed his desire for God could only be explained by a work of grace in his heart. Cowper's problem was a lack of assurance of salvation, and it seems that he died without that assurance. [Facts about William Cowper from Erwin Lutzer, *How You Can be Sure You Will Spend Eternity with God*, pages 125-127]. How sad; how incredibly sad!

The book of 1 John was written for people like William Cowper who it seems had salvation but no assurance of salvation. But the book of 1 John was also written for people that populate the Bible belt and because they "made a decision" and "asked Jesus into their heart" think they are saved though there is no evidence of salvation in their daily lives.

In the passage we are examining in 1 John, we are going to see that one of the main ways genuine salvation is evidenced is by how we relate to sin.

I. The Provision of the Savior (V4-5, 8)

There are several different descriptions of sin in the Bible. **Romans 14:23b (NKJV)** "...for whatever is not from faith is sin." **Proverbs 24:9 (NKJV)** "The devising of foolishness *is* sin..." **James 4:17 (NKJV)** "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do *it*, to him it is sin." **1 John 5:17a (NKJV)** "All unrighteousness is sin..." In 1 John, sin is most clearly described in our text (3:4) as "lawlessness". Our attitude toward sin in all of its facets gives evidence of the condition of our heart and whether we have been truly born again or not. The world sees sin as no big deal. John presents sin as a horrible offense against God. It reveals a deliberate disregard for God's law. Sin is an affront to God and it deserves God's wrath. The question is, "What do we do about sin?"

A. The Necessity of the Savior's Provision (V4)

The moral law of God is like a builder's plumb line. A plumb line is a string with a weight at the end. If a builder wants to discern if a wall or pipe or whatever is straight, he hangs the plumb line next to the wall or whatever needs to be straight. We are not saved by keeping the moral law, but in that law we see the standard God has for us and how far we have come short. The fact is that we are all off plumb! That condition is revealed by God's moral law. Being off plumb with the law of God is the meaning of sin. **1 John 3:4b (HCSB)** "...sin is the breaking of law."

A little girl was asked to define sin and she said, "Sin is anything you like to do". She had a warped idea of sin, but so do a lot of adults! The law of God was not given to make us miserable. As I shared in a recent message, when God says "you shall not", He is saying, "Stay away from this; it will hurt you". When God says "You shall", He is saying "this is what is best for you". The Old Testament saints loved God's law. **Psalms 119:97 (NKJV)** "Oh, how I love Your law! It *is* my meditation all the day." Here is the universal problem. We have all broken God's moral law; we are all guilty of sin and no amount of law keeping in the future can atone for our law breaking in the past. **Romans 3:23 (NKJV)** "for all have sinned [broken God's law] and fall short of the glory of God". Sin is a defiant will, a fist in the face of God. Sin is saying "no" to God in attitude and action. Sin is cosmic treason against the God of the universe! Every human being is in need of a Savior.

B. The Nature of the Savior's Provision (V5, 8)

The provision that Jesus made for us was a complete provision. We needed something done about sin and we needed something done about Satan. Jesus has provided all that we need. First, He has made provision for our sin. Notice in verse 5 that He came to take away our sins. The words "takes away" means to lift up, to remove. John the Baptist said about Jesus in **John 1:29b (NKJV)** "Behold! The Lamb of God who **takes away** the sin of the world!" Jesus took care of our sin. In the New Testament, sin is used in two ways. When sin is singular (sin) the New Testament is generally referring to the power, the principle or law called sin that dwells in our bodies ("members"). **Romans 7:23 (NKJV)** "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." It is through this power or law of sin that Satan enslaves us. This

power called sin is Satan's inroad into our lives to tempt and for the unsaved person to control. When the word "sin" is plural (sins), it is generally referring to specific acts of sin that breaks God's law. The provision that Jesus made on the cross dealt with sin and sins. Listen carefully. **Romans 6:6-7 (NKJV)** "6 knowing this, that our old man [the old us in Adam that was enslaved to sin] was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin [power or law of sin in other places] might be done away with [this phrase literally means to lose authority over, not annihilated], that we should no longer be slaves of sin [this power or law of sin]. 7 For he who has died [the old man] has been freed from sin [the enslavement to the power or law of sin]." That power called sin is still in saved people, but the only one it enslaved was the old man in Adam and he has been crucified with Christ. The fact is that we do not have to succumb to the temptation to sin because we are no longer slaves because of the provision of Christ. What about acts of sin (sins)? **1 John 1:7b (NKJV)** "...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." The cross dealt with the law or power of sin and the shed blood dealt with the acts of sin. Hallelujah!

Second, Jesus dealt with the motivator and instigator of sin, the devil (V8). At the beginning of verse 8 John makes it clear that a person who continues in sin is of the devil. The ESV says, **1 John 3:8a (ESV)** "Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil..." We will deal with that more in depth in a moment. John makes some very important statements about how Jesus' death and resurrection affected the devil. The devil has a three fold strategy to defeat mankind. First, he operates as a liar. **John 8:44b (NKJV)** "...for he is a liar and the father of it." His strategy with mankind is to get them to believe his lies. Second, the devil operates as a sinner; he is the original sinner. (**1 John 3:8a (NKJV)** "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning." Third, the devil operates as a murderer. **John 8:44c (NKJV)** "He was a murderer from the beginning..." John is going to show us that those whose lives are characterized by lies, sins, and murder (remember that Jesus said that hatred is murder) has the devil for their father and not God.

Notice what Jesus has done to the devil. **1 John 3:8b (NKJV)** "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." Victory over Satan is one result of Christ's coming, His death, and His resurrection. Jesus is not only our Savior; He is also our victor. The Bible gives us this same truth in **Hebrews 2:14 (NKJV)** "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil". The word "destroy" does not mean to annihilate; it means to render inoperative, to rob of power, to take away authority. He is still here; he is still deceiving; he is still trying to intimidate, but God's children are the victors over him. Our task is to enforce the victory already won by Christ. Because he is a defeated foe, we can obey **James 4:7 (NKJV)** "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." We do spiritual battle with Satan from victory, not for victory. We already have the victory; we simply must enforce it.

Hallelujah, what a Savior! He came to take away our sin and to leave the "accuser of the brethren" without any legitimate accusation. In addition, He came to destroy the works of the devil. He was successful in both tasks.

II. The Practice of the Saints (V6-7)

There are two things that characterize believers.

A. They Do Not Practice Sin (V6)

Bear with me while I give you a short (and hopefully not boring) lesson on the Greek language that is the original language of the New Testament. I want to show you two of the 7 tenses in Greek. First, there is the aorist tense. This tense speaks of an act that takes place at a point in time. The present tense is ongoing action – a pattern over a period of time. In the KJV and the NKJV the word "sin" is not mistranslated, but in my opinion, it is not translated in the clearest way. We see the same thing in **1 John 3:9a (NKJV)** "Whoever has been born of God does not sin..." I remember seeing a bumper sticker on a vehicle that said, "If you sin, you are not saved – 1 John 1:9". There are groups that teach only those who live sinless, perfect lives are saved. That would contradict **1 John 1:8, 10 (NKJV)** is written to Christians and says, "8 If we say that we have no sin (noun, no single act of sin), we deceive ourselves, and the truth

is not in us.¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” Let me clear this up. The word “sin” in 1 John 3:6 is a present tense. That speaks of ongoing action – a pattern of life. The ESV translation indicates this. **1 John 3:6 (ESV)** “No one who abides in him **keeps on sinning**; no one who **keeps on sinning** has either seen him or known him.” In 1 John 3:9, we see a more accurate to the grammar translation in the ESV – **1 John 3:9 (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.” [See also the NASB and NIV]. If all of that is horribly confusing, here is the bottom line. John is saying that the pattern, the practice of the Christian life is not sin. No one who lives a lifestyle of sin is in Christ. This is what Jesus was referring to in **Matthew 7:16a (NKJV)** “You will know them by their fruits.”

B. They Do Practice Righteousness (V7)

Verse 7 simply gives the positive side of verse 6. Verse 6 says that a person who is in Christ does not practice sin; sin is not the pattern of their life. Verse 7 says that the one who is righteous (in right standing with God) practices righteousness – acts righteous as a pattern of life. Again as Jesus said in **Matthew 7:16a (NKJV)** “You will know them by their fruits.” The rotten fruit of the unsaved is a pattern of sin. The ripe fruit of the saved is a pattern of righteousness. Remember that we are talking evidence of righteousness, not earning of righteousness.

III. The Power of Salvation (V9-10)

There are two primary results of the new birth.

A. A New Life (V9)

Remember the ESV translation of **1 John 3:9 (ESV)** that we looked at earlier. “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.” Bible scholars differ on what the “seed” really is. Some say it is the Holy Spirit; some say it is the Word of God, and some say it is the new nature. A good case can be made for all three of these. I lean toward the seed (the life of God in us) being the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who is the life of God in us. We have the Spirit of Christ in us who gives us a new life and new power over all that we confront. His seed in us fixes us so that we cannot practice sin.

B. A New Love (V10)

This verse is a summary of what we have learned in this passage. The test to determine if what you have is real is this: “Do you practice righteousness and do you love others?” John was a no nonsense guy and through Him God inspired a no nonsense book. John presents our lives in terms of two categories – either you are a child of God or you are a child of the devil. John sees only absolutes – no gray areas with John. It is light or darkness, truth or the lie, God or the devil, life or death. For John there was no middle ground. The evidence of where we stand with God is our conduct, our pattern of life.

CONCLUSION

One of the godliest of the early church fathers was John Chrysostom (344-407 AD). He was the bishop of Constantinople and one of the greatest preachers who ever lived. From what seems to be reliable historical sources we learn that John Chrysostom was hated by the Emperor’s wife Eudoxia and she had him arrested. The Emperor sought to have John shamed by denying the truth of what he had preached. Nothing was succeeding in his evil endeavor. So the Emperor discussed with his advisors what could be done. The Emperor said, “Shall I put him in a dungeon?” The advisers said, “No, for he will be glad to go because he longs for quietness so that he can meditate on the mercies of his God.” The Emperor said, “Then he shall be executed!” An advisor said, “No, for he will be glad to die. He declares that in the event of death he will be in the presence of the Lord.” In frustration, the Emperor said, “What shall we do?” One advisor said, “To cause Chrysostom to suffer, make him sin. He is afraid of nothing except sin.”

Your attitude toward what the Bible calls sin is critical evidence as to whether or not you have a sure salvation. You can be wrong about a lot of things; but on this issue you can’t be wrong. You can know with absolute assurance where your eternity will be spent. If you don’t know it, settle it this morning.