

1 John Chapter 3B

Let me ask you a question: If the Lord would have cracked the sky and returned in all of his glory, last night (Yes, Saturday Night) would you have welcomed him with THE humble confidence that is the fruit of saving faith OR would you shrink back from Him in shame at his appearing? (*Think about it!*)

- How then can we live every day of our lives in the joyful hope of Christ's appearing and NOT shrink back in shame at the thought of his return?
- Well, according to the Apostle John it is by "Abiding in Him." You see, there is no need for those who dwell in loving union with Christ to shrink back in horror at His appearing.

Return with me now to the 1st epistle of John Ch. 2:28 **And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. 29 If you know that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.**

- You see, our confidence at His appearing comes from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whereby we have been crucified with Him and raised, with him to live a spirit empowered life of righteousness for the glory of God.

Here in the context of 1 John 2:29 – 3:10 there is a direct connection between knowing God and living a righteous life.

- As children of God, all those who are born of God will display the family trait of righteousness in ever increasing measures in this present life. And John tells us that when the Lord returns, "we will be like him." The righteousness of the Saints will be perfected when we see Him face to face.

1 John 3:2 **Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. 3 And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**

- Beloved, it is this blessed hope of the appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ which serves as a purifying agent in the lives of the redeemed.
- And now, in contrast to those who abide in Christ and do what is right (2:29) those who purify themselves, as He is pure, (3:3) John shines the spotlight on those who claim to know God and YET continue to live in their sin.

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

- My friends, this morning we have before us a uniquely challenging portion of Scripture. Challenging because WE who are born of God truly desire to live a life of holiness and yet every one of us struggles with remaining sin in our lives to one degree or another.

I would venture to say that most of us could relate to the Apostle Paul who said:

Romans 7: 18 **For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.**

- In my heart, I delight in the Word of God and I long to live in obedience BUT there is a traitor in my flesh, always seeking to resist the desires of the Spirit.
- Like the children of Israel in the days of Joshua, we awaken every day to a fight, a battle to possess all of the precious promises of God.
- In light of this ongoing struggle for sanctification the words of John here in the third chapter of his Epistle serve as a two-edged sword:
 - For those who face the battle with confidence and faith in the finished work of Christ there is great assurance and eternal hope.
 - BUT for those who are content to live in the mire of unrepentant habitual sin there is only fear and darkness.

Here in Vs 4-10 John describes both the nature of sin and the transforming power of the Gospel in the life of a believer.

1. The Essence of Sin
2. The Elimination of Sin
3. The Exercise of Sin

John begins by defining the very essence of sin when he says, **“Sin is Lawlessness.”**

- From a very early age, we show ourselves to be rebellious law breakers. (Josiah 8 months old, don't touch Grammy's things! Smile and touch it anyway)
- Well, The framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith contemplated the Biblical Doctrine of Sin and came up with this definition.

“Sin is any want (any lack) of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.”

- This precious document help us to understand that sin has two sides. The First is doing that which God has commanded us NOT to do and the second, NOT doing that which God HAS commanded us TO DO.
 - We would define that as sins of commission or sins of omission.
- For example: In the Garden, God commanded our first parents not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of God and evil. (God drew a line in the sand and what did they do?) They crossed the line, they willfully rebelled against the command of God and they ate the forbidden fruit. (That is a sin of commission)
- On the other hand, in Genesis 1, God gave man dominion over **“the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”** AND yet when they could have taken dominion over that creepy talking serpent, they neglected to exercise their God-given authority. In that case, they did not do what God commanded them to do.
- This is the sin that James described in his writing:

James 4: 17 **So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.**

- Friends, this is why my personal confession of sin includes both the things that I have done, as well as those things that I have left undone.
- John tells us that all sin is lawlessness. It is the transgression of or the neglect of God's moral Law.

Now that we understand the essence of sin let's move on to consider the elimination or the removal of our sin by the work of Jesus Christ.

Point #2 The Elimination of Sin

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

- The primary reason for Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God to put on human flesh and dwell among us was to take away sins. (plural) So we understand that Christ came to deal with the consequences of the specific sinful acts of his people (Pillar P.119)
- The words that John uses when he says: **"TO TAKE AWAY SINS."** Literally means to remove those sins by lifting them away.
- **ILLUSTRATION:** Consider a tragic accident in which the driver has been ejected from the car and hurled down the street. After a few flips the car tragically lands on top of that ejected driver. The poor man has no ability to remove the heavy weight that has come to rest on top of him. He needs someone stronger, someone greater than himself take away the weight.
- WE need someone greater than ourselves to lift the heavy weight of our sins.
- The Prophet Isaiah, foretells the removal of this great weight through Christ

Isaiah 53: 4 **Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.**

If you happen to be studying though the Gospel of John with us on Wednesday evenings, you will remember the announcement that was given by John the Baptist.

John 1: 29 When he saw: **Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"**

- As Isaiah prophesied, this removal of sin was accomplished through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Servant of the Lord.

John reminds us of the reason why Jesus could be our substitute and bear our sins, it is because he had no sin of his own. The Scripture clearly declares that He was sinless in every way.

Hebrews 7:26 describes Jesus as: **holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.**

- Paul describes him as, “**He who knew no sin,**” (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- IN 1 John 2:1, He is “**The righteous one.**”

Through His death, Jesus was able to remove, to lift away the sins of his beloved people and through his perfect life to grant them the gift of his own righteousness.

Now, with this removal of sins in the front of our minds, John clearly states that it is inconsistent for anyone claiming to be a Christian (one who shares the very life of Christ by the indwelling Holy Spirit) to live continually or habitually in sin.

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

- To say that a believer could continue a life of habitual sin is to ignore both the reality and the necessity of the sanctifying element of our salvation.
- You see, throughout the Bible Justification (being made right with God) and Sanctification (being transformed into the image of Christ) are absolutely inseparable.
- Even though justification is a once and done event and Sanctification is an ongoing process this dynamic duo of God’s saving grace cannot be separated.
- The Apostle Paul clearly communicates this connection between justification and sanctification in his letter to the Romans.

In Chapter 4 & 5 Paul wonderfully describes the Justifying grace of God.

Romans 5:1 **Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.**

- Then AFTER touting the glories of our Justification Paul moves on to show the necessity of our sanctification in chapter 6.

Romans 6:1 **What shall we say then? (in light of our justification) Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.**

- Our union with Christ is BOTH in his death AND resurrection so the removal of sins cannot be separated from the resurrection power by which we now live a new life of righteousness.
- When we were saved, we experienced a complete cleansing and separation from our sins, which on a practical level continues to occur as we become more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

- Listen to the words that Paul writes to his friend Titus.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, 12 training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives (WHEN?) in the present age,

- That same grace that saved us continually urges us to renounce the sinful patterns in our lives and live for the glory of God.

13 waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

- What did he redeem us from? “All lawlessness” Sin is lawlessness.
- He gave himself to purify a people who are Zealous for Good Works!

Now we remember that in John’s day the false teachers were claiming that they had obtained a right relationship with God AND YET they continued the same immoral practices that previously consumed them.

- Like a pig imagining himself to be washed clean, the false teachers claimed to be free from all manner of filth yet in reality, they continued to roll around in the same putrid stench day after day.
- John tells us it is impossible for a true believer to continue living a life of habitual unrepentant sin.

DOES that mean that all believers should live perfect sinless lives? No! John already told us in Chapter 1:

1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

- How then do we balance what appears to be two opposing thoughts on the subject of sin?

Let me share the words of Douglass Sean O’Donnell with you again this morning “We are not sinless saviors of ourselves, but we are sin-hating, sin-fighting images of our immaculate Immanuel. While we still have sinful patterns of behavior, some of which will plague us for life and others of which we have already conquered, our new habits of holiness have become our prevailing lifestyle.”

Paul tells us that the bondage of sin by which we once lived a lifestyle of habitual lawlessness has been broken and now we who believe are lead by the Holy Spirit to live a brand new life as slaves of righteousness.

Romans 6:17 Thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, 18 and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

- We have been liberated from the kingdom of darkness, where we were in bondage to sin and we have become citizens of God's Kingdom, where we have become slaves to righteousness.
- IN the infamous words of Bob Dylan "You Got to Serve Somebody!"

Friends, over the last 20 years or so, an old debate has resurfaced within the church. At its core, it is a debate over the union or the separation of Justification and Sanctification in Salvation.

- In an effort to explain why so many so-called Christians continue to live their lives in continual or habitual sin the idea of a "Non-Lordship" salvation has come into the church.

Non-lordship salvation or what has been titled, "**Easy Believism**" is an erroneous view of salvation which states that a person simply has to believe in order to be saved and there is no corresponding need or requirement for a committed life of Christian discipleship.

- Certainly, we need to believe in order to be saved, and we are saved by grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone; BUT that grace is never alone, it always produces good works in those who truly believe.
- Those who hold the view of easy believism teach that personal sanctification is divorced from justification, so discipleship is seen as a path that some Christians follow, but others simply do not.

In "Non-Lordship Salvation" the term "**Carnal Christian**" is used to describe those who receive Jesus as Savior but do not submit to him as Lord. It describes those who once made a "decision for Christ" but have not continued in Christian discipleship. Some call this "**cheap grace**" because it suggests that "**accepting Jesus**" does not involve any further commitment by the believer. Those who hold this false view prefer to use the term the "**free grace**" to describe their position. They can have salvation with no strings attached.

- Charles Ryrie, of the famed Ryrie study Bible strongly affirms this non-lordship position stating that accepting Jesus as Lord does not refer to a subjective commitment to Christ's lordship, He says that repentance is merely a changing of one's mind about who Jesus is and does not require a change of life.

I hope you can see how this idea of "Non-Lordship" salvation goes against what John teaches here in Chapter 3.

I am sharing this with you because this false teaching is prevalent in some churches right here in our local area. LET'S try to remember the Words of John so that we may be able to help our friends walk in the truth.

- Just as there is deception in the church today there was deception in the church of John's day and John addresses that deception in this next section:

Now, we understand the essence of sin is lawlessness, we have seen Christ's elimination of sin and now we move on to the exercise or the ongoing practice of sin.

3 The Exercise of Sin (or the Practice of sin)

1 John 3: 7 **Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is (as Christ) righteous.** 8 **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.**

- The present tense verbs that John uses throughout these verses are marked in the ESV by the word "Practice." They show ongoing action: **Whoever (continually) practices righteousness / Whoever makes a practice of sinning**
- Contrary to any false teaching that may be going around, only those who practice righteousness can live with the assurance that they have indeed been raised to new life in Christ and made partakers of His righteousness.
- And in direct contrast to the "**righteous ones**" John holds up those who make a practice of habitual sin. He says, they are "**of the Devil.**"

And John informs us that the spiritual battle in which we are engaged, has been going on from the beginning. From the fall of man in the Garden, But the good news is this:

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

- This is that glorious victory that was foretold by God himself in the third chapter of Genesis as soon as man fell into sin.
- Listen to what God said to the Serpent

Genesis 3:15 **"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."**

- The reason the Son of God appeared was to fulfill the Word of God and CRUSH the head of the Serpent!
- Although John does not tell us exactly how Jesus destroyed the works of the Devil he said in verse 5,

He (Christ) was manifested to take away our sins;

- Bringing these two thoughts together, we see that Jesus Christ was manifested, He took on flesh and dwelt among us in order that He might take away sin and in doing so He destroyed the works of the Devil.
- Paul refers to Christ's victory over the Devil in his letter to the Colossians.

Colossians 2:15 **He (that is Christ) disarmed the rulers and authorities (Spiritual powers) and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.** (in His work on the Cross)

- It stands to reason then that those who partake of Christ's victory over Sin and Satan will no longer live their lives in continual, habitual sin.

9 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, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

Before I had my own children, I could walk into a hospital nursery and I could honestly say that all of those little babies looked the same to me. (I know sad)

- BUT when one of them was MINE, the seed of my OWN flesh, there was no mistaking which one he was! NO hair, blue eyes and little ball of a nose.
- AND so it is with those who are born of God; **God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God**
- God's children bear the family resemblance of righteousness, they cannot continue in sin because the SEED of God's Word abides in them.

John Owen, Do you mortify? Do you make it your daily work? Be always at it whilst you live; cease not a day from this work; be killing sin or it will be killing you.

Now, there are people who will come to me after this sermon and ask, Pastor Barry, **"How often can I sin and still be considered one of God's children?"**

- Can I sin once a week? Once a month? Once a year?
- Let me stop you right here and tell you in all love and honesty, it is not the frequency of our sin but rather the sincerity and the fruit of our repentance, it is the depth of our brokenness and the transforming work of the Spirit that reveals the truth that we are indeed the children of God. Consider the words of David:

Psalm 51:17 **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.**

- Practically speaking, Jesus taught his disciples to be bold in their dealing with sin
- Heartfelt repentance can be seen in the radical way that we deal with sin in our lives. How desperate are we to live a life of true holiness?

Matthew 5: 29 **If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.**
30 **And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.**

- Listen, I am not advocating blindness or amputation as a path to holy living. What I believe Jesus is saying here is that there are times in our lives when Sanctification requires radical steps for success.
- If your computer, your tablet or your phone are causing you to sin, get rid of them.

- If that bottle that you have hidden in the laundry room is causing you to sin. Dump it down the drain!
- If your friends are continually leading you to a lifestyle of sin, dump them and find believing friends who will help to disciple you along the path of righteousness.

My friends, this kind of bold step requires courage and the support of a loving community of believers. You see, there are people among us this morning who HAVE walked this path of discipleship before you and they can help you.

IF you find yourself convicted of sin this morning, IF you are laying under the heavy weight of guilt, let me lead you to the one who takes away our sin. Jesus Christ. If this is the first time that you have seen the weight of your sin in the light of God's perfect holiness, if the Spirit of God has cut you to the heart with the sword of His Word this morning I would like to share the words of the Apostle Peter with you:

Acts 3: 19 **Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,**

- If you are one of God's children this morning, let's prepare ourselves for the Lord's Table, the remembrance that He has prescribed for our sanctification.
- We begin in humble confession:

Psalm 139: 23 **Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if *there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.***

Gracious God we come before you this morning in humble confession, recognizing that we have done those things which we ought not to have done and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done. Therefore, we agree that apart from you there is no good thing in us.

- The contemplation of your word has brought us to our knees in repentance.
- And in that repentance we are reminded yet again of your willingness to forgive.

Psalm 103:8, (YOU ARE) merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. 9 (YOU) will not always chide, nor will (YOU) keep (YOUR) anger forever. 10 (YOU) do not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is (YOUR) steadfast love toward those who fear (YOU); 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far (YOU HAVE) removed our transgressions from us. 13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.