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Capitol Commission Bible Study
The Fight Against Evil
1 John 3:4-10

Overcoming Sin - 3:4-6

One of the essential elements of abiding in Christ is the putting aside of deliberate sin from one's lifestyle. In verse 4, John says: *Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.* John tells us here that, in its essence, sin is disregard for the law. Thus, when people live contrary to the commands of God, they sin. John is not suggesting that people just legalistically follow the law, as sin is more than mere wrong acts. Wrong motives, are the source of wrong acts. That said, outward expressions of sin are evidence of what is in the heart.

The remedy for the sin problem is, of course, to have the sin forgiven. In verse 5, John says: *He (Jesus) appeared in order to take away sins.* He did this through his sacrificial death and resurrection. He was qualified to become this sacrifice because *in Him there is no sin.* His perfect (sinless) life qualified him

to be the atoning sacrificial lamb. As all individuals are responsible for their own sin, every sinner should be punished based on their own wrongdoing. But God desired a different outcome, so he created a remedy. This cure required a worthy (sinless) person to die as a sacrifice for the ones who deserved the punishment. As no mortal human being could ever be worthy, God decided to become that sacrifice by manifesting himself as a human being on earth, living a perfect life, and dying on the cross as the sacrifice.

Because of what Christ did on the cross, the sin problem has been put aside for those who receive him. In verse 6, John says: *No one who abides in Him sins.* This is not saying that it is impossible for believers to commit sins. Rather, that no one who actually takes seriously their life in Christ would deliberately keep on living in sin as a lifestyle.



The Work of the Devil - 3:7-10

In verse 7, John says, *"make sure no one deceives you."* He is simply reminding his readers to be careful of the deceitful message of the Gnostic teachers. Gnosticism taught that committing sin in the body would not affect one's standing before God. John directly contradicts that by saying, *"the one who practices righteousness is righteous."* Right living is evidence of a righteous person.

Additionally, John reminds them that the righteousness that believers practice is not simply the result of doing righteous acts. Rather, righteous acts are the result of righteousness already being an element of the very character of the believer. The result will be that we will work to be righteous in our daily living *just as He is righteous* (that is, to the same degree of his righteousness).

Then, in verse 8, John identifies sinning with the source of sin. He says: *the one who practices sin is of the devil.* He wants his readers to realize that the devil is not some imaginary character, but is a real creature whose very nature and work is sin. As such, everyone who practices a lifestyle of sin not only exhibits sinful deeds, but actually displays the devil's character in their own life.

Satan's goal is to entrap people in sin. However, *the Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.* So, when Christ became the sacrifice for sin by his death on the cross, and sealed the act by his resurrection from the dead, he created the means for the destruction of the bonds of sin.

In verse 9, John notes: *No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him.* This is merely a positive affirmation of what he said earlier – that those truly born of God will put aside a lifestyle of sinning.

Finally, in verse 10, John summarizes his point by affirming that the evidence of a relationship with God exists in a person's life, and is seen in his or her lifestyle. He states: *anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God.*

Why This Passage is Important Today

We all struggle with the moral weakness that is part and parcel of our humanity. This weakness causes us to think and act in ways which we know are not right. It also makes us guilty before God, and that guilt is experienced in our lives as feelings of guilt for our wrongdoing.

The good news is that we have a remedy on both counts. By entering into a relationship with God, we have our sin forgiven which eliminates the actual guilt which exists in our being. And as we daily live in that relationship, God gives us the strength to overcome the wrong deeds which cause us to experience the feelings of guilt.

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