

john 15:4
A b i d e in **M E**



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 4 - Number 11
The week of January 27, 2019

Sermon Series: *The Real Thing*
Whose Child Are You?
1 John 3:4-10

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

A Sinful Understanding of Sin
by T.J. Johnson¹

Repentance. This was how Jesus began and ended his earthly ministry (Matthew 3:2, Luke 24:47). It was His central message which revolved around a central theme, Christ came to "seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10). At the heart of both his message and theme is a need to understand sin.

Salvation is unintelligible without a common understanding of sin. What are we repenting of, if not sin? What are we being saved from, if not sin? Like it or not, sin is a central concept in the Christian faith. So why do so many believers lack a proper understanding of sin? If asked, could the average churchgoer give a Biblical definition of sin? Do they often think on it? Do they fight it every day or have they long since surrendered to its sway? Do most churches regularly offer moments for corporate confession or calls to repentance?

If not careful, the church can find itself being reactive to past mistakes or cultural fads rather than proactively pursuing the whole of Christian truth. CS Lewis chides, "Luther surely spoke very good sense when he compared humanity to a drunkard who, after falling off his horse on the right, falls off it next time on the left."² When it comes to sin, the church has certainly been on both sides of the horse. Below are a few wrong reactions I have observed.

Sin Magnified

I remember growing up and hearing a lot about sin. It soaked from every sermon. It sprang from every song. It reverberated from the pulpit of every revivalist. But, if we are honest, there was perhaps an over emphasis on sin. It is an injustice to preach sin yet withhold grace. For many listeners, real or perceived, this was their reality. The preaching of sin is never meant to beat you down. Sin does a good enough job of that on its own. The preaching of sin is a doctor's diagnosis of a disease from which Christ is the only cure.

Sin Categorized

Churches can sometimes focus so entirely on certain sins that its members begin to be comforted (falsely) by their apparent holiness. When sins such as adultery, homosexuality, abortion, and drunkenness are continually preached as "the" sins to avoid then sin has been redefined as only the grosses of acts. The result, we who do not struggle with such sins are never fighting the sins we do struggle with. We slay not the beast of gluttony, pride, anger, greed or jealousy, for this is a trivial matter. Our redefining of sin has numbed us from conviction of sin, great or small, against a holy God. We are not broken over sin because we re-categorize our sins as daily struggles...everyone gets angry or lies from time to time. Yet the Bible seems content to juxtapose sexually moral and liars, sorcery and faithlessness (Revelation 21:8).

Sin Immaterialized

For many, sin isn't overemphasized but merely missing. If churches twenty years ago focused too much on sin, churches today focus too much [on a false concept of]³ love. While it is true that God is love, love is not god. In an attempt to love others, we have removed from our vocabulary anything that would offend. Being reminded of my true nature is quite offensive. I don't like it. Although Jesus removed many barriers that kept us from God, our discomfort with sin was not one of them. Many believe that sin is unimportant because God's love is greater than our sin. But it is the love of God that actually confronts us in our sin, for only through confrontation can sin be confessed, and only through confession can sin be forgiven, and only through forgiveness can God's love be fully experienced. Jesus was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). To sit upright on the horse we need both grace (He loves) and truth (He judges sin).

Sin Defined

Perhaps the problem is that we do not see sin as we ought. I am challenged by the writings of Ralph Venning. In his book, "The Sinfulness of Sin," written after the great plague, he calls sin the plague of plagues (let that sink in) and describes it as thus, "Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, the contempt of his love..."⁴ Stephen Charnock cuts to the quick when he asks, "How sinful is sin that God must bleed to cure it?"⁵ Let us remind ourselves that Christ bled for all sin, not merely for those we deem particularly heinous.

Thus we are back where we began, seeking an answer to the question, "What is sin." John Piper defines sin as, "Any feeling or thought or speech or action that comes from a heart that does not treasure God over all other things."⁶ Though many would like to define sin as anything that hurts another or infringes upon the freedom or love of another, the Bible simply does not lend itself to that definition. Sin is directed against God (Psalm 51:4), is a rebellion against God (Genesis 3), is hated by God (Isaiah 61:8), and an attempt to replace God (Romans 1:18-32). RC Sproul remind us that, "even the slightest sin that a creature commits against his Creator does violence to the Creator's holiness, His glory, and His righteousness. Every sin, no matter how seemingly insignificant, is an act of rebellion against the sovereign God who reigns and rules over us and as such is an act of treason against the cosmic King."⁷

Oh, that we might see sin for what it is. It is not a trifle thing to taste (Ephesians 5:12). It is not a minor thing to dismiss (I John 1:10). Sin is the great enemy of our heart that seeks to rob us of our greatest joy. May we heed the words of John Owen, "Be killing sin or it will be killing you."⁸

¹T.J. and Jenni Johnson direct The Middle Kingdom, an online media platform where expats living in China can connect for Christian community, fellowship and discipleship.

²C.S. Lewis, "The World's Last Night" (1960)

³Words in bracket were added for clarification.

⁴The Sinfulness of Sin (1669)

⁵Christ Our Passover (2000)

⁶<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-origin-essence-and-definition-of-sin>

⁷<https://www.ligonier.org/blog/sin-cosmic-treason/>

⁸The Mortification of Sin (1656)

STEP ONE . . .

OBSERVATION
What does the text say?

1 John 3:4-10

⁴Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸Whoever 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. ⁹No 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. ¹⁰By 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.

- Place brackets around the word **everyone** (v. 4) and **whoever** (verses 7 & 8). All three are from the same Greek phrase.
- Circle the word **lawlessness** in verse 4. Draw a line from it to the right margin and write “*rebellion: not just individual sins.*”
- Underline **in order to take away sins** (v. 5) and **to destroy the works of the devil** (8). Both indicate the reason why Jesus came into our world.
- Place a parenthesis around the three occurrences of the word **makes** (v. 4, 8, 9), which indicate that the verb is in the present tense—indicating an ongoing act.
- Double underline **children of God** and **children of the devil** (v. 10). In the right margin of verse 10 write, “*behavioral categories, not essence of being categories.*”
- Circle **let no one deceive you** (v.7). In the left margin write, *a command to be persistent against.*
- One helpful way to grasp this difficult passage is to group all the corresponding statements together under one of two categories: *The Children of the Devil* and *The Children of God.*

The Children of God	The Children of the Devil

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

What does the text mean?

The commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

⁴**Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.** John's concern is about those who are not emulating the purity of Christ in their own lives; who make a **practice of sinning** (see 3:3). Makes a **practice** of is [*poieo*]: to do or make continually. John uses two words for sin: (1) Sinning [*hamartia*] – a general moral miscue; (2) **Lawlessness** [*anomia*] – a serious, even despicable infraction (see Matthew 7:23; 13:41; 24:12). One translator expresses the final phrase: "sin is Belial." It refers to those who oppose and defy God's rightful rule as Lord of our lives. "Sin is nothing less than personal treason against the Sovereign of the Universe" (Daniel Aiken).

⁵**You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.** Literally, *the sins*. The plural noun **sins** is preceded by the definite article. What sins? Our sins—or the individual sins of those who believe (see 1 John 2:2). To **take away** our sins He had to be sinless Himself. Jesus committed no sin for He knew no sin (see 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22).

⁶**No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.** Since Jesus appeared to take away sin, no one who abides in Him continues in a pattern or practice of sin. Abide [*meno*] is expressed in the present tense indicating an ongoing act. John is not denying that anyone who abides in Christ cannot sin (see 1 John 1:9), but a sinful life does not mark a child of God (see 3 John 11). The idea of **seeing** Him or **knowing** Him is synonymous with believing in Him through a saving relationship.

⁷**Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.** This verse is a gentle, fatherly warning against being deceived. **Let no one deceive you** is a present imperative. It is a command calling for constant vigilance (see also 2:26). The false teachers were

not merely condoning sin but making it seem virtuous. Those who are justified by Christ will show by how they live that they have been made right with God. **He is righteous:** righteousness is consistent with the character of Jesus just as sinning is consistent with the character of the devil. The agitators consistently represented a failure between knowing God and walking in the light.

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 **devil has been sinning** means that he has been rebelling since the beginning (an allusion to Genesis 3). **Destroy** [*lyo*] is used in Ephesians 2:14 for breaking down the wall of hostility. Jesus paid the price for the atonement of our sin, removing every basis for Satan's accusations against us and therefore, destroying his work.

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.** John reiterates verse 6a. The **practice of sinning** is not the trademark of a believer. **God's seed** [*sperma*] refers to His divine nature (i.e. the Holy Spirit) being implanted in us. The major issue here is the apparent discrepancy between 1 John 1:10 and 1 John 3:9. The new birth involves a radical change in our nature. For those who experience the new birth, practicing sin is incompatible with it.

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.** Practicing righteousness and loving one another are inseparable qualities. We may ask, who is my brother? "The answer, especially in light of verse 17, will be not unlike that which our Lord gave to, 'Who is my neighbor?'—'Anyone who needs my love'" (F.F. Bruce).

Complementary Passage

~ John 8:31-47~

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ³³ They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free?'"

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸ I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father."

³⁹ They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, ⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. ⁴¹ You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."

STEP THREE . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

Questions

1. Generally speaking, do you think Christians take sin seriously enough? Why or why not?
2. For what reasons did Jesus appear in His incarnation? (see verses 5 & 8).
3. List all the descriptions of the children of God and the children of the devil. (See chart.) Why does John compare and contrast these two categories?
4. Do you think John was overstating things when he said that the one who practices sin is a child of the devil? Explain.
5. Read 1 John 1:8 and 3:6. Since this is not a contradiction, how do the two statements coexist?
6. What is the difference between sin and a lifestyle characterized by sin? Is that an important distinction to draw? Why?
7. According to verse 8, what is the practice of sinning evidence of?
8. The warning in verse 7 informs us about the pressures the Christians John was writing to were facing. How do these same concerns still apply to us?

9. What is *God's seed* a reference to in verse 9?

10. Why does John refer to love as the essential manifestation of practicing righteousness?

STEP FOUR . . .

APPLYING

How is the text lived out?

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22

You're encouraged to journal your answers to the following questions in order to apply what you've learned this week.

1. How is God making Himself known to you?
2. What is going on beneath the surface of your life that Jesus is trying to change?
3. How is God calling you to serve your family, community, and world?

A Bible Reading Plan for 2019

(on LCC website)

Sunday, January 27 thru Saturday, February 2, 2019

Exodus 32-34; Exodus 35-37; Exodus 38-40;

Leviticus 1-3; Leviticus 4-6

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

The Godhead *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

The Resurrection and Return of Christ *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

Unity in Christ *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternity *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

Memory Verse

1 John 3:5

**“You know that he appeared in order to take away sins,
And in him there is no sin.”**