

1 John 3:4-12 | Entire Sanctification?

Verse 4

- Lawlessness = an attitude of rebellion.
- This same word is used to describe the Antichrist in **2 Thess. 2:3, 7**
- the opposite of Christlikeness (cf. **v. 5**), not just violation of a rule or standard.
- It is significant these PRESENT TENSE VERBS emphasize habitual, ongoing, lifestyle action (**practices**)

Verse 5

- Jesus is against sin
- His work is to take away (1) the penalty, (2) the power, and (3) the presence of sin
- There is no sin in Him (He is against it in nature and work)

Verse 6

- So, if you live in (**abide**) Christ, you are going to (progressively) have the same attitude toward sin
- If you **keep on sinning** (NIV) or **continue to sin** (NLT) you prove that you do not **abide** in Him
 - The present active participle!!! (cf. **verse 9^a**)

Some argue that Verse 6 is saying that Christians will not sin

- ✚ Does this passage actually teach that a true Christian will never sin? (**Christian Perfectionism or Entire Sanctification**)
- ✚ Scripture does not teach that we can attain a state of sinless perfection or entire sanctification in this life—that is not what this text is saying

1. 1 John 1:8-2:2

2. The reason John was writing

a. Correcting two wrong views about sin

i. Sinlessness (**1 John 1:8**)

ii. Insignificance (**1 John 3:6**)

b. The opponents separated salvation from ethics and morality

3. The present-tense Greek verbs in 1 John 3

a. Verse 6 in the NLT

Anyone who **continues to live in him** will not sin. But anyone who **keeps on sinning** does not know him or understand who he is.

b. Verse 6 in the NIV

No one who lives in him **keeps on sinning**. No one who **continues to sin** has either seen him or known him.

4. Perfectionism would have to be true for all Christians at all times (**1 John 3:9**)

5. The exhortations in the NT to live righteously (E.g. **Eph 4:1; 5:1**)

6. Romans 6 (Especially vv. 12-14)

7. Romans 7 (Especially vv. 14-25)

8. The clear teaching in the NT that we will continue to sin

a. Romans 7

b. Matthew 6:11-12

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

c. James 3:2

For we all stumble in many ways...

d. 1 John 1:8ff.

9. The experience of God's Holiness reveals our continued sinfulness

a. Isaiah 6:5

Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

b. Job 42:5-6

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.

10. The Christian experience

"Indeed, the more sanctified the person is, the more conformed he is to the image of his Savior, the more he must recoil against every lack of conformity to the holiness of God. The deeper his apprehension of the majesty of God, the greater the intensity of his love to God, the more persistent his yearning for the attainment of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the more conscious he will be of the gravity of the sin that remains and the more poignant will be his detestation of it... Was this not the effect in all the people of God as they came into proximity to the revelation of God's holiness?" —John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, p. 145.

So, 1 John 3 is not saying that Christians will never sin. **What it is saying** is that a Christian has within him or her by virtue of their new birth a power not to sin.

- ✚ God within them is causing righteous living
- ✚ He is not in them causing sin

- "Does not know Him or understand who He is" (NLT) is looking back to verse 5

Verse 7

- Don't be **fooled**—the proof is in the pudding
- Those who are in Him are going to progressively be like Him (**Romans 8:29; Eph 4:1; 5:1**)
- People who claim to be in Him but are not being changed to be like Him are **deceivers**
- Our righteous efforts do not bring us to God—They do show that we have met Him.
 - They clearly reveal our spiritual condition and maturity after salvation
 - We are not saved "by" good works, but "unto" good works.
- The goal of God's free gift in Christ is Christ-like followers (cf. **Eph. 2:8–9, 10**).
 - The ultimate will of God for every believer is not just heaven when he dies (forensic justification), but Christ-likeness (temporal sanctification) now

Verse 8

- There is no third path—you are either of God or of the Devil
- If you make a practice of sin, you are of the devil
- That is the devil's way
- Eph 2:1-3
- **Jesus came to destroy the devil's way(s)!** (**verse 5**)
- The **"already and not yet"** tension of the NT also **relates to the destruction of evil**.
 - The devil has been defeated, but he is still active in the world until the full consummation of the Kingdom of God.

Because we struggle and cannot be content with sinning we prove that we are in Christ

- ✚ To be content with sinning is to prove that we are of the devil
- ✚ The opponents separated salvation from ethics and morality... proved they did not understand Jesus and His saving work

Verse 9

- **Seed**
 - Seed, both what is sown as containing the germ of new fruit, and what is growing out of the seed sown, produce.
 - In 1 John 3:9 the *spérma* of God denotes the power of God operative through the Holy Spirit working in believers.
- If you are born of God, you are going to be like God
 - Being born again peaks of a settled condition produced by an outside agent (God).
- The main point of all this is that what that cannot mean is that you **make a practice of sin**
 - Those with God's seed in them—who are born of Him—have a new nature
- His seed abides in you!
 - A seed is alive, generates more life, and grows and is radically transformed as it grows (sunflower seed)
 - If we are **born of God**, we have a new nature (a different seed is in us)
- Therefore, we **cannot** go on sinning, make a practice of sinning, continue in sin
 - Cannot = *ou dunamai*
 - *Dunamai* = to have power to do something (cf. *dunamis* = **power, ability, strength**)
 - Present tense = to continue to do something
 - We have a different sort of power all together! (**born of God**) (**Eph 3:14-20**)
 - That power was broken in our lives, we were saved from that power (**Romans 6**)

Verse 10-12

- Eliminating the shades of grey and showing us a clear way to be (v. 10)
- Clear evidence of new birth is love for each other (v. 11)
- Memorable example of the two ways of being (v. 12)

If a person does not experience this new life in them, if they can be **indifferent to sin**, then they are likely not born of God

- ✚ **The fact that one is struggling with sin and cannot be content with simply sinning is evidence of the new birth and subsequent new nature**
- ✚ "... Even if a person is struggling with temptation and at times falling prey to it, they can have the assurance that because they know the power of God within them impelling them away from sin and toward the love of their fellow believers, they are in fact one of His children and His new life in them will win in the end." (Hard Sayings of the Bible, p. 739)
 - It is indifference to sin that is the sign of the absence of God's life in us
 - Struggling with darkness is part of walking in the light
 - Accepting, embracing or denying darkness is living in it

So, if you are born of God, you will not be able to **just go on sinning** in the same ways. What will happen?

- **Conviction, confession, repentance.**
- If you are not convicted and do not feel the need to confess and repent, then you are either not born again, or you are in full on rebellion—and **you will reap what you sow**.

Here again, we see **the tension of living in the dawn**

- ✚ A life totally free from sin will be ours **in the future**
- ✚ We have the reality of that new life **already in us**
- ✚ And we have the realization that the new life is **not yet** totally victorious
- ✚ So we must **admit** our sins, **confess** them, **repent** and **appropriate** the new life every day

Maybe this is a wake up call for you

- You know you are in Christ—you know you have been changed—but you are not **practicing** that change
 - This is a wake up call—you need to repent
 - You are going the wrong way—the way of the devil
- **But that is not who you are**
 - You have been born into the way of Jesus and you need to live that way
 - There are resources for you: New Nature, Identity, Power, Community

Where is the joy in these things? Or Why does this matter?

- Pushing back the grey space
- We really are brand new
- We really can live in a brand new way
- God's power is at work in us
- We do not need to be mastered by sin!
- We can and must live into the light of the dawn!
- In this is joy