

1John 3:4-10

In conversations with those who are not Christians

We can be puzzled that they believe the same things we do

Yet they also believe things that are incompatible with Christianity

Some say they believe that Jesus is the Son of God – the Bible is true

That we are saved by faith

But then they add – you can get to heaven by being good

Or we are all sons of God – or there are many roads leading to heaven

These statements are actually common

They come from a widely held but incorrect view of truth

Today most people believe truth is relative it is personal and it can change

Christianity can be true for you and Buddhism can be true for you too

Incompatible statements are OK

Since truth is relative there is no real truth

It's whatever works for you

Of course as Christians we believe in absolute truth

Truth is eternal and remains true regardless of social or moral changes

It is not relative and cannot change

It is personal and yet it is also universal

Real truth is true for everyone whether they believe it - or like it - or not

For truth to have any relevance it must always be true

And there must be corresponding denials

You see not every belief is true regardless of how strongly it is held

If Jesus is God's unique Son – then others are not

At least not in the same sense

If salvation comes by grace through faith in Jesus

And He is the only way to the Father

Then you cannot come to God any other way

Regardless of how strongly you believe you can

Someone asks you for directions to Chicago

You say the best way is to hop onto I-80 West and it will take you right there

The guy standing next to you says – that may be true for you but I believe the best route to Chicago is

to hop onto I-80 East take it to I-77 South and stay on that route until you get to Chicago

You say – You can't get there going that way – but he insists saying – I strongly believe you can

Take the wrong road to Chicago and you will be inconvenienced, but with some help and course correction you will eventually get there

Take the wrong road to heaven and you will be a whole lot more than inconvenienced

The amazing thing is this – people on the wrong road to Chicago will eventually ask for help – women sooner than men

But people on the wrong road to heaven will stubbornly hang on to their erroneous beliefs until it is way past too late

I bring this up because one of John's goals in his Epistle

It to separate truth from error

So the Letter's teachings are often accompanied by strong denials

An example of this is found in chapter 1

John says that God is light and immediately states that in Him there is no darkness at all

To know Him you must walk in the light and if you say you know Him and walk in darkness – you're dead wrong

John gives us the truth and then he gives us the negative side of it

John has given us three tests

Pass these three tests and you will have assurance you are a child of God

They are the tests of - righteousness - love - and truth

John is about to revisit his test of righteousness

His thesis - No one who is born of God practices sin

Now be certain that those who born of God do sin

Some are still trapped in it – but it is not their lifestyle – it is their struggle

Having said that - the Bible is pretty clear – No one who practices sin is born of God

John is writing so that we his readers might know we are saved

But he is also sending a warning

To this 1st century church, struggling with false teaching he writes

No one who is born of God practices sin

Sin comes from the flesh and every believer is accountable for the deeds done in the flesh

Listen carefully - John isn't telling us that if we sin we lose our salvation

He has already written that if we say we have no sin we lie

We are all going to sin

And when we do we can go to the Father for forgiveness

What he means is

If your lifestyle is one of sin you have no assurance of salvation
Now John isn't stating anything that isn't found elsewhere in Scripture
Paul writing to believers in Rome – the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace
The flesh is that old Adamic nature which will never obey God
Every believer has two natures
The old sinful flesh and the new indwelling Spirit
And you are in a battle for the control of your mind – every believer is
John lets us know that winning that battle is incredibly important
For what your mind dwells on controls what you do and say
What you feed your thought life determines whether Spirit or flesh wins
As a professing believer if you are only thinking about satisfying the flesh
You have more troubles than you know
You see when the Holy Spirit draws sinners to God
He begins to do a work of regeneration in them
They are recreated to obey the Word – follow Christ – reject temptation
And display the fruit of righteousness
John's goal for this Letter is to set forth tests
By which a person's claim to salvation can be verified
Now on the one hand John rejects the claim of false teachers
That they have advanced beyond the struggle with sin – not possible
Then he writes that that no matter what you claim to believe
If you do not obey Christ's commands – and live righteously
You need to question whether you are a child of God
In today's passage
John gives us three reasons why Born Again believers do not practice sin
Sin is incompatible with the Law of God
Sin is incompatible with work of Christ
Sin is incompatible with the work of the Holy Spirit

First - Sin is incompatible with the Law of God - (READ VS 4)
The two primary biblical definitions of sin are – missing the mark – and - without righteousness
Sin is falling short of the standard – The standard is the Law of God
Sin is having no inherent righteousness

John states that sin is lawlessness and rebellion against God

John learned this from Jesus - Matt 7- Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who (note the key word) you who practice lawlessness."

John's statement allows very little room for exceptions

Everyone who habitually practices sin

In other words all who live for themselves pursuing their own pleasures

Are living in an ongoing condition of lawlessness

And lawlessness marks all those outside the kingdom of God

Those whom God has miraculously transformed

Have traded slavery to sin for slavery to God

You once obeyed your old sin nature (the flesh) and now you obey God

Rom 6 - You are the slave of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness. Having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness - past tense

It's really pretty simple

We were saved from the bondage of sin so that we might live righteous lives

Jesus Christ who was rich in righteousness took your sin and became poor, so that you could have the riches of His righteousness credited to your account

That is the Christian life

Once sin controlled you - you were its slave

As a born again believer you now sin because you choose to sin

But you don't have to sin

For some of us it is as though we were in prison with sin as the warden. Whatever sin said, we had to do. Even though Jesus has set us free, we long for that sin-controlled life

In the movie "The Shawshank Redemption" a longtime prisoner is given his release. But he has been in prison so long he doesn't know how to behave in society. He actually longs to return to the prison life he had grown accustomed to

That is how many of us live - we are so used to sinning so imprisoned by sin

Even though we are free we don't know how to behave any other way

Whom the Son has set free - He is free indeed - you are free

Free from the penalty of sin - free from the power of sin

You don't have to do those things - or say those things - anymore

Maybe you've thought that you cannot stop sinning - but you can

Abide in Christ and you will have power over sin

Turn to the person next to you and say - you don't have to sin

Sin is incompatible with the Law of God

And sin is incompatible with work of Christ (READ VSS 5-8)

Jesus primary mission was to conquer sin

So it doesn't make any sense for we who are redeemed

To continue to practice the very thing Christ saved us from

To continue in sin ignores the work of the cross

And impedes the process of sanctification

Jesus died because of sin

Jesus death paid the penalty for your sin – that is redemption

Redemption is a word that comes from the marketplace

It means to purchase

Jesus purchased your freedom by His death

He literally bought you with His blood

Jesus death satisfied the demands of an angry God – that is propitiation Propitiation is a religious term

Scripture tells that God is angry with sinners every day

What could satisfy His anger – The sacrifice of an unblemished Lamb

Jesus was God's Lamb

Who died to satisfy the wrath of His Father towards men

Jesus died that you might be declared righteous – that is justification

Justification is a legal term

It means that God has legally declared you - not guilty - righteous

The guilty go to hell – the righteous go to heaven

So that is a pretty important verdict

You stand before the Just Judge of the world as a righteous person

And Jesus lives so that you might begin to live the righteous life that God has already declared you have – that is sanctification

That is the Gospel of Christ

Not the Gospel plus – it is the Gospel of Christ

Jesus didn't die for some of it – He died for all of it

And when you live your life just like the rest of the world

It dishonors the work of Christ

Jesus wants you to live your life as though you belong to Him

Because you do and He has given you the power to do it

And yet so many Christians live as though salvation was past tense

Heaven is future tense - and in between - we're on our own
While we are on planet earth we are to struggle and get by the best we can
It's a miserable life but heaven is just around the corner so stick it out
And we sing the hymn – Someday It Will Be Worth It All
As though it isn't worth it now
But Jesus Christ didn't come just to get you out of hell and into heaven
Although that certainly is a major part of the plan
Jesus came so that He could get Himself out of heaven and into you
There isn't a situation that you face that He doesn't have the answer
And there is never any time when your life is out of control
Although it may seem that way – you see
When you gave your life to Christ He came to take control
And there is never any situation that He cannot handle
Jesus lives in you that you might live a life that glorifies God
And be His ambassador to an angry and rebellious world
You are to be a “living letter” attracting men and women to Jesus
And the only way it is possible for you to attract others to Jesus by your life
Is for you to outwardly display His character
Which is in sharp contrast to how the rest of the world lives
So it is incompatible with the work of Christ for you to practice sin
John writes that - no one who practices sin can also abide in Christ
The verb used here denotes a continual action of defiance and rebellion
When you become a Christian you will sin again
But your life will change and you will sin less
One of the early church leaders was Augustine of Hippo
He had led a wild life – after he was saved he bumped into an old girlfriend
When he saw her he turned away – she cried out – Augustine it is me
And he responded – it is not the same me
It is not to be the same old you
This world is divided into two camps – two races – two kingdoms
Those who are God's and those who are the devil's
The devil is the inventor of sin and chief enemy of God
He is the ruler of this sinful world system
Because he is the instigator of rebellion against God

All unsaved rebellious sinners are his children

John writes that everyone who practices sin belongs to the devil

He also tells us that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil

What does that mean

First Jesus came to save men and women out of the devil's domain

He came to destroy the devil's lie that you don't need God to be complete

He came to limit Satan's power in the lives of the redeemed

And some day Jesus will completely destroy and make new

This entire world system set up by Satan to lead men away from God

But until that event you are to live for God

By allowing Jesus to live His through you

And Jesus doesn't sin

Sin is incompatible with the Law of God;

Sin is incompatible with work of Christ

Finally sin is incompatible with the work of the Holy Spirit

(READ VSS 9-10)

You are born again because the Holy Spirit did a work in your life

John 3 – That which is born of flesh is flesh; that which is born of Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, "You must be born again."

You have been transferred into the kingdom of God

Because you were born again of the Spirit

Jesus pictured this work as a seed

This seed was implanted in you by the Holy Spirit and you believed

That seed is the Word of God

Peter explains it this way

1Peter 1- You have been born again, not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable; that is, through the living and enduring Word of God.

The Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word that was preached to you.

You are saved because you heard the Gospel and responded

Your new birth is from imperishable seed – a seed that never dies – never grows weak

That means your salvation is secure forever

When you received the Word of God it enlightened your mind

So you can now discern spiritual realities

Before salvation the things of God were foolishness to you

You didn't understand them - you didn't believe them - some of them just seemed silly
The minute the things of God began to make sense to you
Was the exact moment the Holy Spirit began to work in your heart
He was the one who threw off the chains of your unbelief
And awakened your mind
Your new birth signaled the end of your old life of sin and lawlessness
And the beginning of your being able to obey God
You are now a new creation
Before the Holy Spirit regenerated you, you were spiritually dead
Unable to respond to the truth or even understand it
Incapable of saving yourself – or making yourself better
The Holy Spirit set you free from the captivity of sin
And is now at work in you giving you freedom from the power of sin
Changing you into the person God intends
You dishonor His work and His love when you choose to practice sin
This is important
All that God has done for you He did for you because He loves you
And God's Spirit residing in your life should produce love for Jesus
Now listen – here's my point
Love for Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit
Should keep you from practicing sin
Finally
If you're meeting with someone and just as the meeting is about to be over
Your bear them say – oh, by the way – listen very carefully
You are about to hear the most important thing they have to say
And the real reason they wanted to talk to you
Right here at the end of this section it is as though John says
Oh, by the way. Everything I wrote you about sin – well it also applies to loving each other
Those who abide in Christ will love their brothers and sisters in Christ Warts and all
So - if you aren't loving your brothers and sisters in Christ
I don't mean you must have warm gushy feelings – although that's OK
I mean loving your brothers and sisters in practical caring ways
If you are not loving that way – helping them along the pathway of life
But instead you are always looking for them to do that to you

It is a sign that you are not abiding in Christ
Or you are not really a part of the family of God

Now I don't consider it my mission to give you a guilt trip
It's not my calling
I have been called to prayer and to the teaching of the Word
But sometimes the Word of God makes us uncomfortable – intentionally
Now listen – if you're uncomfortable - that isn't me –
That is the Holy Spirit using the Word of God to help change your life
If right now He is speaking to your heart – right now is the time to respond