

Part Two

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[0:00] Hear the Word of God. 1 John 3, verses 4-10. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness.

Sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared, Jesus appeared, in order to take away sins. And in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him, Jesus, keeps on sinning.

No one who keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous as He is righteous.

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.

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's been born of God. By this, it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil.

[1:07] Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. Hear the Word of God. Imagine a new soap opera.

As the wind blows, Brittany has become pregnant. And it could be one of three men. Either Dirk, Stone, or Oscar.

A paternity test is called for. They take a sample of the baby in Brittany's womb, and then they are able to take samples from Dirk, Stone, and Oscar.

And lo and behold, there is a DNA match. The DNA doesn't lie. So, next week, on the next *As the Wind Blows*, you will find out who is the paternal father of Brittany's baby.

A paternity test. Our ongoing obedience to Jesus Christ is a kind of paternity test. It reveals who we belong to.

[2:22] Who we want to take after. The evidence isn't DNA. The evidence is in your ongoing habitual practice of righteousness.

Think of righteousness as practical holiness lived out in your attitudes and your actions. 1 John contains a series of three tests.

I've told you about these. There's the belief test. What you believe to be true about Jesus. And then there's the love test. Do you love those who Jesus has shed his blood for?

And then there is the obedience test. The practice of righteousness. Obeying God's commands.

Last week, we started in on an obedience test.

The test itself is from chapter 228 through 310. And last week, I point you from 228 to 3.3 that John emphasizes the future appearing of Jesus.

[3:22] And it is to fuel our present obedience to Christ. And this morning, in verses 4 through 10 of chapter 3, God's past work in Christ, it invigorates our present obedience to Jesus.

The obedience test is actually a paternity test that reveals who your father is. Here's the big idea.

When you remember what God has done for you, you will want to be like Jesus all the more.

When you remember, take to heart what God in Christ has done for you, you will want to be like Jesus in his righteousness all the more.

So this morning, I've got seven remembrances for you. We're going to make quick work of this. So remember, when you remember what God has done for you in Christ, you're going to be stirred.

Third, if you're a child of God, it's going to stir you to want to obey God all the more. First remembrance is remember what making a practice means.

[4:46] If you look back at 1 John 3, 4 through 10, let me see if you can actually hear the emphasis. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning

practices lawlessness.

If you look down at verse 6, no one who abides in him keeps on sinning. No one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or know him.

Verse 7, whoever practices righteousness is righteous. Verse 8, whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil. Look at verse 9, no one born of God makes a practice of sinning.

Verse 10, by this 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. So what does this making a practice mean?

Well, the best way to think about it is think about an overall way of life. Your lifestyle, your general trajectory of life.

[5:57] And you've got two options. Either your general trajectory of life is towards Jesus, to follow him and to be like him and to obey him, or it is to live for sin, maybe tip your hat to Jesus once in a while, but you're really living for yourself.

And what this is getting at is the habitual practice of your life. John is not requiring sinful perfection of Christians here.

Do you know how I know that? If you flip back into your Bible to 1 John 1, 9, he's writing to Christians and he says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteous.

Now look at 2, 1 and 2. My little children, I'm writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

He is the propitiation for our sins. So when we read this making a practice and see this repeated throughout our text, what it's getting at is the way you typically live your life.

[7:18] Let me just ask you two questions and then point to a pastoral gray zone. Here's another way you can approach this because what's riding on this is knowing if you're a child of God or not, right?

Here's another way to ask the question. What is the outlier behavior of your life? Is your normal course of life to sin and to sin and to sin with an occasional obedience thrown in, really for what other people think, but you continue to sin, or is your normal course of life, obey Jesus, do what I can, occasionally sin, I confess it, repent, move on.

What's the outlier behavior? What's norm? What's the exception? What's the exception? Here's another way to get at it. What do you want? What is the desire of your heart?

Do you desire the holiness and the righteousness that adorn God in His presence, that adorn the life of Jesus, or do you just want to live a life for yourself?

Now, this opens up to the pastoral gray zone. When a person professes to be a Christian, and yet their overall trajectory of their life is characterized by sinful attitudes and actions, it's really confusing.

[8:53] You know who it's confusing for? It's confusing for the Christians and non-Christians in relationship with that person, and it's also confusing for the person, because they know that they are professing something that they're not living.

I happen to think that a Christian who's professing to be a follower of Jesus, who is living a life of disobedience, is actually the most miserable people person on the planet.

And if you find yourself in that gray zone, where you're saying, I want to be a Christian, but man, I love sin, you need to turn.

Turn from your sinning. Turn from your idols. Turn to the living Christ, and confess Him as Lord, and find life.

Remember, when John is speaking up here, this making of practice, he's talking about an ongoing, habitual way of life that ends up revealing who you are.

[9:59] When you remember what God has done for you, you'll want to be like Christ all the more. So let me remind you of the second thing. Remember that sin is lawlessness. In verse 4, sin is lawlessness.

And brothers and sisters, it is far worse than you want to think it is. Sin means missing the mark. John Tippmann, this past fall, showed me how to shoot a crossbow with its arrow.

It's called a bolt. And I spent hours practicing shooting a crossbow from different distances from the target. I'm trying to get into the bullseye.

Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep. Not once was it dead center. I'm talking hours. That's missing the mark. And God calls all human beings everywhere, and he holds every human being account to be every day hitting the mark of his righteousness, his holiness, in your attitudes and your actions. But as the scriptures say, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Not one of us is righteous. Not one of us hits the bullseye. Did you notice in verse 4 how John equates sin with lawlessness?

[11:14] Lawlessness is a rejection of God's good, holy, loving rules. We've seen two dramatic examples of that over the last several months.

August, Jacob Blake is shot. And then from within our city, there is this small contingent of people who just go lawless.

Hate, chaos, fear, destruction, death, lawlessness. But it also happened just over a week ago in D.C.

Another mob storms the U.S. Capitol building, and it's lawlessness. Hate, chaos, fear, destruction, death. Now, if you feel like I haven't represented your group or represented them poorly, let me just bring this home a little bit.

If you're being honest with yourself, you will see the same sin in lawlessness in your own heart.

[12:31] You know what you are capable of. You know what happens in you. You know the hate that can show up in your heart. You know the potential of chaos-making you can do.

You know the fears. You know the destruction you can bring about. And you know the death in you. You've had murderous thoughts. Be honest. The fact of the matter is, we're not too far away from the lawless crowds. And what you must remember is, the sin and lawlessness are in complete opposition to a holy, good, loving God who gives His law for love and good.

Sin is worse than you think, brothers and sisters. It's far worse than you think. Especially when you realize it's in you. Here's something I want to make sure you're making the connection of.

Lawlessness is actually lovelessness. Remember how Jesus, when He showed up and He preached the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 17, He said, I didn't come to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law and the prophets.

[13:49] And then towards the end of Matthew, Matthew 22, He's talking to this hotshot lawyer, and He tells this lawyer that all of the law and the prophets depend on just two commandments.

You can sum up the whole Old Testament with two commandments. Love your God with everything you've got and love your neighbor as yourself. The law is fulfilled in love.

And Jesus embodied it. Lawfulness, according to Jesus, is obeying all that God commands out of a wholehearted commitment to God and your neighbor.

Sin and lawlessness is worse than you think. It affects our actions and our attitudes. It's a lovelessness towards God and our neighbor.

When you remember what God has done for you in Christ, you're not going to want to do that. So remember, three, who Jesus is. In verses 5, 7, and 8, we're told things about Jesus.

[14:57] Remember, Jesus is the incarnate opposite of sin and lawlessness. He is the incarnate, the embodiment of lawfulness manifest in love for God and others.

And Jesus did what no one else could do, even for an hour. Jesus obeyed all of God's commands every moment of his life out of an all-consuming, all-governing love for God and his neighbor.

Did you notice in verse 5? In him there is no sin. Did you notice in verse 7? He's the righteous one. Did you notice in verse 8? He's the son of God. He's without sin.

He's full of holiness. And he is fully God and fully man. God incarnate. And he's alive today. What you must understand is that as we're talking about living lives of righteousness, our source, our standard, our means, and our end is Jesus.

It's by his righteousness imputed to us the moment we believe that we are righteous. And he's the standard.

[16:14] Jesus is the gold standard of practical holiness. We must learn to compare and evaluate our own attitudes and actions to Jesus.

who do you think is the standard of the Christian life? Pastors and elders? To some extent, as we emulate Jesus, do you think you're the standard of the Christian life?

Jesus is our gold standard of practical holiness, of lawfulness manifest in love. And we must be constantly aligning ourselves to Jesus.

That's the standard. Aren't you glad to see the invisible God made known throughout the Gospels? We can see him.

He's not just the source, standard, he's the means. We will grow in practical, everyday holiness of attitude and action as we abide in him.

[17:27] See that in verse 6? No one who abides in him keeps on sinning. This abiding, it's a present tense verb and what it's talking about is this ongoing, dependent, life-giving relationship we have with Jesus.

Remember, he's the vine, we're the branches. If we abide in him and he in us, we will bear much fruit but apart from him, you'll be a jerk and you'll be a jerk as we depend on him, who he is, what he's done, what he will do, as we remember him, what God has done for us in him, it's going to juice your holiness.

It's going to give you a desire to want to be like him. He's also our end. The Greeks called it telos. He's our aim. Our practice of everyday holiness is ultimately not for us, not to us, oh Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory.

I don't say no to sin and yes to Jesus so that you can pat me on my back. Look what I've done. Our aim is Jesus.

[18:48] It's for him. It's for his glory. This past week I was talking to a young lady as I had filled out a reference for her and one of the questions that we were talking about was how do you grow as a Christian and her answer was on the money.

Read my Bible every day, pray throughout the day, share my faith. She's legit. I'm like, amen. Can you disciple me? And then I asked her, well what's the goal of your growing as a Christian? You know what she said? She paused. Read my Bible every day, pray throughout the day, share my faith. That's the goal?

That's the goal of your Bible reading is to read your Bible? It's the goal of your praying is to pray?

The goal of your sharing your faith is to share your faith?

I didn't say it like that to her. I said the goal is Jesus. Romans 8, 29, God is conforming us to the image of his son.

[20:01] 2 Corinthians 3, 18, as we behold him in the scriptures, we are being transformed from one degree of glory to the next and that's by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord, our end game, our telos is Jesus.

And when you see that, you remember that, it makes you want to live for him. Point number four, remember why Jesus came.

Are you feeling a little adrift right now? Are you feeling like, well, you know what, I'm kind of measuring my works of righteousness and my works of sin like my practice? I'm not really excited about this.

Remember why Jesus appeared. In verses five and verse eight, the word appeared appears twice. Last week, John showed us he appealed to the future appearances of the Lord Jesus Christ to juice our present obedience to Jesus.

And here, John is appealing to the first appearances of Jesus. Side note, we live between the appearances of Jesus.

[21:21] His first appearing inaugurated the saving reign of God and his second appearing will consummate it. bring it home.

And notice how John ties this first appearing talked in verse five to purpose. You know that he appeared in order to take away sins.

That's a purpose clause in order to take away sins. He appeared the first time to take away sins. To take away the penalty of sins through his death.

To bear the wrath of God that was intended for you. Remember, did you hear me when I said he is our propitiation? Jesus was the perfect sacrifice that endured all of God's wrath in its full for any sinner who would come and confess him as their Savior and Lord.

He came to take away sins by his death. And not just that, he came away to take not just the penalty of sin but the power of sin.

[22:38] He broke it when he was raised from the dead. He demonstrated that he was victorious and more powerful than sin, death, and the devil.

And you've been united to Christ in his death and resurrection, therefore sin has no mastery over you. Romans 6, 1-14. Do you know what this means?

There is no Christian, genuine Christian on the face of this planet that can ever claim they are helpless to sin.

They've been united to Christ in his death and resurrection. The Spirit of God indwells them. You think he's not powerful enough? And there's more.

Jesus came to take away the very presence of sin. His death and resurrection inaugurated a sin eradication campaign that will be fulfilled at his second coming.

[23:46] Jesus' first appearing was to eradicate sin and sin. Not to spin off a sin toleration campaign. Not to spin off a sin permissiveness campaign.

Not to spin off a sin excusing campaign. Not to spin off a presumption on God's grace campaign. So if your habitual practice right now is to preserve and multiply sins, you've got to know you're at cross purposes with the risen, reigning, and radiant Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Son of God in whom there's no sin. He is the righteous one and he appeared in order to die for sinful, lawless, unrighteous folks like you and me so that we could live in the freedom from the penalty of sin, the power of sin and one day its presence.

Remember in verse 4 there was this equating of sin and lawlessness? Well, between verses 5 and 8 there's this other kind of soft parallel.

Jesus appeared to take away sins in verse 5 and in verse 8 Jesus appeared to destroy the works of the devil. Do you think about your sins as kind of like the works of the devil of lining up with that guy?

[25:19] The devil has been sinning from the beginning and yet Jesus, there is no sin in him. He's the righteous one. So is your ongoing practice, your attitudes and your actions ongoingly, are they supporting the love-driven sin eradication campaign of Jesus?

or is it supporting unloving, sin-promoting works of the devil? Which team are you playing for?

Who's your captain? Uh, you know, it's pretty close. The devil, Jesus, I love sin, righteousness, I'd rather laugh when the sinners than cry with the saints.

Do you remember what happens to the devil? Revelation 20, Jesus returns, he cleans the clock of the hosts of the devil, and then the devil is grabbed and tossed into the second death, the lake of fire, fire, where, and I quote, he will be tormented night and day forever.

He came to destroy the works of the devil. devil. There's no comparison.

[26:56] When you remember what God has done for you in Jesus, you will want to live for Jesus all the more. Remember who you are.

In verses 8, 9, and 10, we have this contrast. Verses 7 and 8, there's this contrast between the children of God who practice righteousness and the children of the devil who keep on sinning.

We see it in verse 10. By this, it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil. You've got this contrast, and the difference is obedience, but it's a deeper difference.

Do you know what makes the difference between a child of God and a child of the devil? Look at verse 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. The difference between a child of God and a child of the devil is whether or not someone has God's seed abiding in them.

[28:01] So the question becomes, what is God's seed? And classically, option one is God's seed is the implanted word of God, the gospel, 1 Peter 1, 22, 23, and 25.

That's right on. Or, option two, this God's seed is the Holy Spirit, of whom we just saw a reference to in 227, the anointing.

It's this same writer, John, recounts Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus in John 3. Do you remember this? Nicodemus, how do I be born? I have to be born again?

What? And Jesus goes on to explain the agent of the new birth, of regeneration, of being born again, is the Holy Spirit. Just as the wind blows wherever it wills, so does the Spirit. Titus 3, 4 speaks of the regeneration of the Spirit. Galatians 4, Romans 5 speak of God's Spirit indwelling Christians bearing witness to our inner beings that we are children of God, God by which we call out, Abba, Father.

[29:16] And in both contexts, it shows up in the way you live your life. Galatians 5, Romans 8, 13, put to death sin in you. Well, I'm showing my hand.

I lean towards this being a reference, God's seed to the Holy Spirit. But you know what? We don't have to decide between the two. God's seed is God's gracious, undeserved, pouring out of the Holy Spirit into a sinner's heart that inclines their heart to God's Word to believe and trust and obey. God's seed is this supernatural work of God's grace that transforms a child of the devil into a child of God.

We all used to be children of the devil following the course of the Spirit of this age. Did you notice the strong language in 3, 9?

We read, for God's seed abides in him and he cannot keep on sinning. If God's Spirit indwells you, if the third person of the Trinity takes up residence in you, he will not allow you to grow callous or casual or comfortable with the sin that Jesus came to take away and destroy.

[30:59] Galatians 5, 16 and 17, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. The desires of the flesh are opposed to the desires of the Spirit.

Spirit opposes the desires of the flesh. Why? So that you do not do the sinful things you want to do. How do you respond to this? If you're not a Christian, if you're hearing these words and you're like, that's not me, that's a kindness, now you can run to Jesus and say, Jesus, I confess you as my Savior and Lord.

Give me the life in you. And he's going to call you to follow him all the days of your life. It's a joy to follow Jesus. And if you're a Christian and you are within earshot of these words and you're becoming aware of the sin in you that opposes Christ, that's good.

That's the Spirit of God at work in you, conforming you to the image of Jesus. And so what you do is you confess it, you repent of it, and you enlist the help of other Christians to help you live for Jesus. You know what the real test is? The real test is this. When you become aware of your sin, how do you respond? Do you hide it? Or do you bring it into the light?

[32:34] Confess it to the Lord. Find forgiveness in Jesus again. When you remember who you are, what God has done, that you are a child of God, born of the Spirit, to be made like Jesus, it makes you want to be like Jesus.

Sixth, remember what the evidence points to. In verse 10 we read, by this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil. This is your life.

How you're conducting your life. It's the evidence. It reveals whose child you are. God, child of God, or child of the devil.

Who you are determines how you live, and how you live evidences who you are. For people who know both me and my dad, Steve Salvati, we regularly get comments about how we share his likeness.

I look like my dad. Similar body frames and head shapes. I talk like my dad. He's got some great words that I like to use.

[33:51] I laugh like my dad. In fact, we share a lot of the same humor. I work like my dad. My dad imparted to me a work ethic.

I'm so grateful for him. I recreate like my dad. I cut loose in the same way he cuts loose. I've become like my father.

And when I'm around other people who know both of us, I regularly hear, you are truly your father's son. Some of it's DNA. Some of it I've learned.

Some of it's not perfect. But I welcome it. I welcome the compliment.

I want to be like my dad. I want to be more like my heavenly father. Just as the life of Jesus, the righteous one, holiness incarnate, evidenced the unseen God who is holy, our lives, evidence, our holy father too.

[35:04] We want to be like him. We want to strive after holiness. He wants us to share in his holiness because he loves us and wants good for us.

So, do you bear the family likeness? Are you becoming more like him? Maybe you're a Christian and you're discouraged. You're more aware of your sin than you are of God's good work in you. Imagine an 11-year-old boy playing with a red yo-yo. Many, many Christians think of their following of Jesus like the yo-yo.

They're more aware of when they're on a downstroke of disobedience and then they're aware of their upstroke of obedience and that's their life. But just imagine that 11-year-old boy with a red yo-yo.

Up and down it goes. But that 11-year-old starts climbing a flight of stairs. That yo-yo, even though it's going up and down, is ascending.

[36:16] Many Christians are unaware of the work of God in them, slowly transforming them into the image of Jesus because they're more aware that they're on a downstroke.

But lo and behold, every Christian is fixed to the right hand of God. He will never let you go even when you come to the end of your rope.

This is reasons why we run in packs, brothers and sisters. When other Christians can speak into your life and say, you've made progress. You're different than you were a year ago.

You treasure Jesus more. You obey Him more. You're trying to multiply your life for Him. You are giving yourself and belonging to one another. When you realize, when you remember what God has done for you in Christ, it makes you want to be like Christ all the more and run with a pack of people who are wanting to be like Christ too.

The last remembrance. Remember, do not be deceived. Verse 7. Little children, let no one deceive you. The devil's been around for a long time and he's been sinning from the beginning.

[37:43] He's been deceiving from the beginning. Distorting the truth of God's word. Confusing what obedience is. Don't be deceived into thinking that your practice of righteousness doesn't matter.

Don't be deceived. Do you know who it matters to most? Your God. Your Holy Father. He says, be holy for I am holy.

Jesus, this is how serious God takes it. Jesus died for you so that you could live a holy life unto God. We don't live holy lives unto God in order to be saved.

We've been saved by God's grace to live holy lives for the glory of Jesus. Don't be deceived into thinking that your practice of righteousness doesn't matter.

It matters to your God. Don't be deceived into thinking that what happens in private and what happens in public are two different domains.

[38:47] That's a lie. And here's how we know it. From God's perspective, he sees everything. There are no domains from God's sight.

There's nothing hiding. You know that from Proverbs 15.3. So if you think you're committing secret sin, you're not. God sees it plainly.

Don't be deceived into thinking that settling for a nominal degree of common righteousness is okay. Many of us are looking around at other people, other Christians, and you're like, well, I'm better than him.

Oh, man, only if I can be more like that guy or that gal. Sometimes we just all agree to a common level of righteousness, which is good enough.

Jesus is the source. He's the standard. He's the means. And he is the telos of our righteousness. Paul said in Philippians 14, I press on toward the goal for the prize for the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

[40:08] Paul said, for me to live is Christ. Don't settle. Don't settle for ordinary righteousness.

your aim is Jesus. And don't be deceived by the world.

Seriously, the world are those unregenerate men and women who are living lives in opposition to God. The church are those blood-bought men and women born of God's spirit who are seeking to live lives of obedience.

Are you really going to take your cues of how to live your life from people who don't know God? Don't be deceived.

If you're being called a prude because you're taking God's word to heart, forget about it. Obey your Lord. Don't give in.

[41:16] Stop listening to them. Tune your ear to your Jesus. Make it your aim to please your God above all.

But when you remember what God has done for you in Christ, you will want to live for Christ all the more.

I've given you seven remembrances, brothers and sisters. Is the Holy Spirit doing a convicting work in you this morning? Welcome it. Yes!

Make me like Jesus in attitude and action. I am making progress up those stairs of Christ-likeness even when I am more aware of my yo-yo being on a downstroke.

Do your work. What God has done for us in Christ, it compels us to live lives of Christ-likeness in present, ongoing, decision after decision.

[42:24] You will not regret that when you stand before Him. Let's pray. God in heaven, God in heaven, we ask by Your Spirit that You would do a thorough work.

Cleanse Your house. Purify us as You are pure. Make us righteousness. Give us a taste for divine holiness.

Help us not to settle. God, set us apart from everyone else. Make us the light that we are. Restore our saltiness.

Renew our brilliance by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus. Amen.