

1 John 3:4-9

“Cross Examination”

If your hope is *in* Christ of being made *like* Christ you will lead a pure life *before* Christ. That’s the bottom line of what John was saying *to* us and sharing *with us* as our time came to a close last week. “We know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him *purifies* Himself, just as He is pure.” Or to understand that another way, Jesus changes lives; He takes us and transforms us. and He does so in a manner that begins instantaneously. The bible says, “...*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*” 2 Cor 5:17 We call that “salvation,” it’s an instant change that takes place when we give our lives to Jesus, our position goes from dead in sin to alive in Christ, we go from wickedness to righteousness, from guilty before God to being declared innocent, from being in a place of condemnation to a place of justification. But believe me when I tell you that that’s not the end, when you give your life to Christ and He makes you brand new it doesn’t end there, that’s only the beginning.

It’s much like being born initially, when you came forth from the womb that wasn’t how it ended for you, it was how it began. Now it was about learning to grow, develop, discovering how to walk and talk, mature and increase in strength and knowledge. So to in Christ, when you believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins you become what the bible refers to as “born again.” You have a *new life*, and even as you’ve changed, grown and matured through life physically, so to spiritually. It’s a process that the bible refers to as “sanctification,” it happens through a means that the bible identifies in several different ways but they all ultimately point to the same thing. The bible calls it bearing fruits worthy of repentance, it’s referred to as crucifying the flesh, as dying to self, as me decreasing and Him increasing in my life. The bible speaks of taking up our cross and following Jesus, it speaks of forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to the things which are ahead, pressing toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God that is in Christ Jesus. It speaks of laying aside every weight and the sin that so easily ensnares us that we might run with endurance this race that’s set before us looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Here’s the point; over and over again the bible makes it clear in no uncertain terms that in Christ *we change*, not only *positionally* (from death to life, from condemnation to justification), *practically* as well.

What Christ has done for you inwardly/spiritually will be displayed by the way I lead my life outwardly/practically. “Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” This is principle that John has in mind proceeding out of Vs 3 and into Vs 4.

Throughout our study of 1st John, John has been all about comparison and contrast, a life that looks like “this” means one thing, if it looks like “that” it means another. He’s been very black and white, and he continues to be as he’s been speaking about the fact that in Christ our lives change. If our lives don’t change, then regardless of whatever emotional experience we may’ve had or prayer we may’ve prayed we didn’t truly come, or commit to Christ, because with out exception Jesus *will* make both an initial and ongoing difference in your life, notice.

Vs4-6

Do you see the connection? Whoever has hope in Christ will purify themselves, that is he or she will seek to lead a life of practical holiness through obedience to the word of God. But (Vs 6) whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him; John is showing us the incompatibility of claiming to be a child of God yet continuing on in sin. Those dots don’t connect, that bucket doesn’t hold water, I’m doing the math but it’s not adding up... If Jesus came to take away sin and I’m abiding in Him in Whom there is no sin, how then can I continue on in sin as though nothing has changed? You see those 2 positions are simply incompatible.

Vs4

Notice here that John removes any hope of ambiguity or uncertainty with regard to what sin is and who this applies to. As for the application it’s universal, there’s not so much as a single exception to the rule, it applies to “*whoever*” and that my friends includes us all. Something else we want to take note of is the word “commits” which would be better translated “practices.” “Whoever *practices* sin” it’s a word that is in the present tense which means that it speaks of an ongoing action. The idea is that of a habitual pattern, and the reason I point that out is because of the particular section that we’re considering today has the tendency to bring confusion if you’re not at least vaguely familiar with the original language in which this was written which of course was Greek. I’m not a Greek scholar by any stretch of the imagination, however there are wonderful Greek helps that will often times bring illumination and understanding to a passage whereby the English translation seems to be a little vague or perhaps confusing.

Now, we’ll talk a little bit more about that later but for now let’s stick to what it is that John is saying to us and that is this, “If you practice sin, you practice lawlessness because at its root level that’s exactly what sin is, lawlessness.” It’s a complete disregard for the law of God, and of course to disregard the law is to disregard the law Giver. Someone who sins is someone who rebels *against* or is insubordinate *to* the will and the ways of God.

There are actually several different ways that the bible defines sin for us. For instance the bible says, “*The devising of foolishness is sin,*” Prov 24:9 The idea of “devising” is that of planning or cultivating a means to do something. “Foolishness” has been defined as that which is bound up in the mind of a child that can only be removed by the rod of discipline, it’s that which tears down rather than builds up. You set out to do something destructive be it subtly or obviously, whether it has to do with property or character assassination or whatever, that’s sin. In Rom 14:23 Paul said, “...*whatever is not from faith is sin.*” James said, “...*to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.*” James 4:17 You know what the right thing to do is in a given situation and yet you choose to do something other than that, you’ve sinned. John defines sin for us as “lawlessness,” it’s that which *defiles* that is rooted in *defiance*.

It’s interesting to me that John defines sin as lawlessness because the very reason that the law was given was to demonstrate to us exactly how sinful we are. The law was never given to make us righteous because we’re carnal, but the law is spiritual; it was given to show us our sin and our need for a Savior. Romans 3:20 “*Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*” God’s law says, “You shall not covet” yet I find that when I see something that you have that I want...I want it, how can I not want it? I can’t in and of myself, and in that I’m guilty of covetousness.

Now covetousness can apply to anything someone else has that you want, be it their property, their money, their platform or popularity, even their spouse. If you find yourself longing for or lusting after another person’s spouse, you’re guilty not only of covetousness but according to Jesus you’ve now committed adultery in your heart as well. So the law wasn’t given to save us, but to show us our sin, to lead us to our Savior, namely Jesus. Now, in Christ we’ve been set free from the bondage of the law and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, but nonetheless we haven’t been set free *to* sin, but set free *from* sin, there’s still a law that applies to you and me and that is this; the law of love.

But we’re to recognize what sin is, it’s lawlessness, it’s rebellion and wickedness. So often we like to soften the matter by using phrases like, “my bad” or “I’ve made a mistake” or “if I’ve done anything wrong.” and We like to blur the matter a bit so as to distract from the gravity and sincerity of it all. The fact of the matter is that it’s sin and as sin it’s lawlessness. If I won’t call sin our for what it is in my life I’m still in some measure trying to make less of it than it is. One has said that the 1st step toward holy living is to recognize the true nature and wickedness of sin. Until I’m ready to call it out like it is I’m not really ready to repent of whatever it is because to me it’s not that big of a deal, but understand that disregard for the ways and will of God (as is revealed in His word) is disregard for God Himself. “Sin *is* lawlessness.”

Vs5

You guys this is the gospels message right here, the purpose of His coming, why did Christ come to this earth, why did He wrap His deity in the flesh and blood of humanity and subject Himself willingly to the brutality of the cross? “To take away our sins,” (PTL) Jesus’ mission at the root level was to take away our sins. Of course this only further underscores the seriousness of the “sin dilemma.” How’s that, because *Christ* came to take away our sins, why? Because we couldn’t, we were in a no win situation and there was nothing we could do about it, if God didn’t intervene we’re all headed for destruction. God made a way where there was no way in/through the person of Jesus Christ That’s why Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” John 14:6 He’s it, He’s the only way and apart from Him there is no other; He was manifested *to take away our sins*. It was God’s plan from before the foundations of the world, it was prophesied hundreds, and thousands of yrs in advance; that in Him God would *resolve* and *absolve* the sin dilemma. Leave 1st John and travel back with me to the familiar passage found in Isaiah 53. (Vs 4-12)

The angel told Joseph concerning Jesus, “...*you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.*” Matt 1:21 And on that day that J.B. saw Jesus making His way through the crowd toward him and he said these words of Him, “*Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” John 1:29 He was manifested *to take away* our sins. The word translated “take away” is a single word in the Greek, it means “to carry off” or “to take up and carry” it also speaks of the vicarious bearing of a penalty; it can speak of being carried off or taken away by death. It’s simply rich with description regarding what Christ did for us on the cross. As I was studying about it and meditating upon it I couldn’t help but be reminded of Yom Kippur, the Great Day of Atonement that came around only once a year for the nation of Israel.

It was on that day that the high priest would take 2 goats with out spot and with out blemish and the one would be a blood sacrifice, an offering for sin, the other the high priest would take and lay his hands on the head of the goat confessing this sins of the nation over the goat. The idea being that the sins of the people were being laid upon the scapegoat, then he would take the goat and set it free to be lost in the wilderness; and the picture that was being portrayed in all of that was that through the shedding of blood their sins had been forgiven and that their sins had been “taken away” “carried off,” gone. The bible declares, “*As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*” Ps 103:12 The blood of the spotless/sinless Son of God has been shed, He’s borne our sin and has taken them away. 2 Cor 5:21 “*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*”

He's taken away the *penalty* of our sin, He's taken away the *power* of sin over our lives, that is He changes our practice of sin, we've been set free from sin's dominion over us, this is that ongoing practical sanctification we were talking about in our time of introduction. Ultimately He takes away the very *presence* of sin, of course we'll reap the benefit of that when we're with Him and we're like Him, seeing Him as He is.

“And in Him there is no sin” that means that He's with out spot, with out blemish, no internal sin nature, no acquired effects of sin in His life, I have both. But in Him there is no sin therefore He was qualified to take away our sins, but this is another reason that sin in the life of the believer doesn't add up, because the work of Christ is to *take our sins away*, not to act like sin is *ok* or that we're somehow some exception to the rule, we're not.

Vs6

In John Ch 15 Jesus spoke of *abiding* in Him; and He said that the result of the abiding process would be that we would bear fruit, (like a branch that abides in the vine). Well, we need to understand that the fruit that's produced as we abide in Christ isn't sin, *in Him there is no sin*. Therefore if I'm in Him and all of my resources are from Him and out of Him how then could sin be produced as the net effect of drawing upon Christ? It couldn't be, because there's no sin in Him to draw upon, here's the point. The new nature that you've received in Christ will not, in fact *cannot* sin; what then does it mean when you sin, or when I sin? (“Because surely you aren't teaching that if I sin at all I'm not saved or aren't a Christian are you?”) No, I'm not teaching that, really it's quite simple, when you sin, or when I sin, to put it plainly you're not walking at that point in the Spirit but in the flesh, you've given in to the impulse of the sin nature with in you rather than crucifying the flesh and walking in the Spirit. Your new nature *will not sin*, so when you sin, when I sin it simply testifies against me that I wasn't walking after the new nature I've been given in Christ, but rather I've allowed myself to succumb to the sinful tendencies of my flesh.

Now, this is the Vs I was referring to a little while ago when I said it's helpful to have a Greek help or 2 laying around the house. Because if you're not careful you'll read this and think, “Man, I know that if I were to be honest with myself the fact of the matter is I still sin on a daily basis, yet this is saying that if I sin I haven't seen Him nor known Him...maybe I'm not saved.”The word “sins” here is again in the present tense which speaks of a habitual pattern of life.

Remember that earlier (in Ch 1) John told us that if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth isn't in us, so we know that John isn't saying that if we abide in Him we'll be in this sinless state of practical perfection. Remember it's not until we see Him that we'll be like Him. Until then you will still contend with the sin nature that you inherited via Adam and unfortunately there will be times that you lose the fight. But if Christ be in you, and you are in Him then the overall course of your life will change and rather than living with a continual bent toward sin, my heart's desire and general pattern of life will be that of righteousness, not sinfulness.

Now, having said that the last thing I want to do is make you feel better about your sin, or give myself some form of excuse as though, "Oh well, it's going to happen, I'm not perfect." We do well to examine ourselves to make sure that we're not seeking to justify a life of unrepentant sin and sometimes conviction along these lines is what we need to once and for all repent of some sin that's been lingering around that we've been entertaining. Paul said, "*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? — unless indeed you are disqualified.*" 2 Cor 13:5 David asked God to search him, and try him, and see if there be any wicked way in him that He might lead him in the way everlasting. Don't just assume I'm ok, you're ok we're all ok, we're not all ok, what's the general pattern of your life, is it that of abiding in Christ or is it that of entertaining some sort of sin or various sins in your life?

You see, if as a general rule your life is characterized by sin, that is you sin habitually, (it could be lying, immorality, stealing, partying, it could be as subtle as self reliance trusting that since you don't do any of those kinds of things that you're ok, that's called pride, God hates pride) then what you're proving is that you've not *seen* Christ, nor have you *known* Him. The word "seen" speaking of perceiving Him, seeing Him for who He is, to see with discernment, and the word "known" speaks of knowing by experience, understanding. If the habit of your life is defined by sin as opposed to righteousness (moral integrity motivated by a relationship with Christ), then you've not perceived who Jesus is in truth and you don't *know* Him, nor do you *understand* Him...translation, you're not abiding *in* Him.

Again that's not to say you'll never sin, but *when* you do *what* do you do? Do you give in to it, go along with it, let it dominate your lifestyle and define who you are? Or are you grieved by it, humbly confess it before God, seek to do battle against it through the power of Christ in your life? Jesus came to break the chain, whom the Son sets free will be free indeed.

Vs7

Again John is hammering home this point. Prior to my coming to Christ there were a lot of things I practiced, one of which *was not* righteousness. But when Christ entered the equation of my life there was an “about face” that took place, there were patterns that began to change. Not because of me, but because of Christ *in* me, and that’s what’s so important to understand here, it’s not about what you do so much as is the fruit of Christ *in you*. It’s a, “You show me your faith with out your works and I’ll show you my faith *by* my works” kind of mentality. The idea being that saving faith will produce real time practical results in your life, you’ve heard, “the faith that doesn’t change your life won’t save your soul.” That’s what John is speaking of here.

The good tree will bear good fruit, it’s just that simple. If God be righteous and you receive His life, then you will *necessarily* manifest the same feature. Remember this Vs? “... *(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth)*,” Ephesians 5:9 If Christ be in you what kind of fruit will you yield? Goodness, righteousness and truth, the fruit of the Spirit is love; of course we know that *God* is love.

Real quick you guys I want you to see this, notice the words, “righteous, just as He is righteous.” In Vs 3 we talked about being “pure, just as He is pure”, in 1st Peter we talked about being holy, for He is holy. What’s my point? That as He is so we are to be in this world; (1 John 4:17) the fingerprints of a godly life will be the characteristics of God *in* your life.

Vs8-9

Again you’ve been born of God; you have with in you the Divine nature which cannot sin because in Him there is no sin. So the point here is that a habitual pattern of unrepentant sin will not be the case in the child of God.

Now, regarding the one who does sin in a habitual fashion John says of that individual that he/she is of the devil, why? Because ultimately Satan is the source of all sin, sin originated in him, so we can trace the root of sin back to him; it’s his work; and here John gives us another reason why Christ came, #1 to take away our sins, #2 to destroy the works of the devil. Why? Again because we can’t, only He can, when it comes to the bondage of sin in your life, there’s really nothing I or anyone else can do to help you with that. You need to get on your face before God and cry out to the Lord because He’s the One who will destroy the works of the devil in your life.

The word “destroy” here is interesting because it doesn’t really mean to annihilate or obliterate, Satan is still alive and well roaming the earth like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The word means more literally, “to dissolve or free from bondage” “to loosen and/or to undo” “to render inoperative”. It’s that which Paul was speaking of when he said in reference to the work of Christ upon the cross, “*Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*” Col 2:15 The work of the cross has destroyed, or rendered inoperative the works of the devil in the life of the child of God, Jesus breaks the bonds, sets the captives free, made the way where there was no way.

Vs9

John here simply identifying and defining what the “born again” life looks like; a notable change takes place. It’s that which Paul preached when he said that as believers we’re to, “... *put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,*” and that we’re to “*put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*” Eph 4:22, 24 His seed remains in you, it’s God who’s at work in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure, you’ve partaken of the Divine nature and you’re different.

What a good time to take inventory of your life, to do a little “cross examination” that is examining yourself in the light of the work of the cross and its net effect in and upon your life. Examine yourself as to whether or not you’re truly in the faith, are the fingerprints of godliness upon your life, is there a longing to walk *with* Him, to grow *in* Him, to be obedient *to* Him and made *like* Him. If you’re not sure, make sure, if you are sure than to God be the glory, great things He has done!

Prayer Points:

Father search us and know our hearts, try us and know our anxieties, Lord see if there be any wicked way in us and lead us in the way everlasting. Teach us what it means to bear fruits worthy of repentance, to crucify the flesh and walk in the Spirit; that You might have Your way in us to the glory of Your name. Help us Lord to deny ourselves and to abide in You; and may we turn from our sin and trust in You.

If you’ve been sitting there listening today and as we’ve been examining what it means to be a child of God, something has been resonating *in* you and speaking *to* you saying, “That’s not me” yet you want it to be than I want to pray for you. If God is dealing with your heart and you know that you need to turn from your sin and trust in Him, you long to be forgiven, to be made clean, old things pass away, a new creation in Christ; you can humble yourself before Him and surrender your life *to* Him right here and right now.