

## 1 John 3:4-10a

### Sin and Righteousness

#### Introduction

As we continue to study 1 John, we need to look at **3:10** where John says that the differences between a child of God and the child of the devil are obvious. Obvious! You can tell the difference! Once more John portrays the issue in black and white, where you are either of God or of the devil, and there is no middle ground, as people would have you think. John is emphatic when he discusses how a child of God is identified by righteousness. John, once more, is focusing on the false teachers have crept in the church and try to lead the church astray, but John tells the Christians, "Listen, false teachers and its followers will try to deceive you, and don't be fooled. The reason is that the differences are obvious...all we have to do is check out their confession, their pattern of life and their love for their brother. A true Christian will exhibit all these characteristics; whereas, non-believers will not." In verses **4-10**, John talks about those differences in terms of righteousness.

#### I. Sin (4, 8a) (*Characteristics of sin*)

- Lawlessness of sin
  - Breaking the law

**Romans 5:13** *for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law.*

**Note:** We break the law because of sin...it is sin's nature to break the law. This has to do with our whole attitude toward the Lawgiver. We do not want His law over us, but our own way...we do what is right in our own eyes.

- Rebellion

**Matthew 7:23** *And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'*

**Note:** active rebellion against God's known will. It is also a desire to live out our own way—a willful rebellion that originates from the heart. The verse is in context of Jesus' condemnation against the outward religious appearances of being holy without any change in heart. This is a practice of sin where people do not care if they are sinning. They know what God says, but they do not care and they do it because it suits them. They make all kinds of excuses for their behavior when the simple fact is that they do not want to let go of it.

- Of the devil

**John 8:44** *You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

**Note:** Characteristic of the devil is to sin. Jesus said that he was a murderer from the beginning and a liar (since from his proud rebellion against God). He will morally entice people to sin and mankind loves him for it because they are children of the devil. The devil and his angels would never repent of their sins and neither would people who live in constant rebellion against the Holy One.

**Transition:** Sin has dominion on all people, keeping them under its tyrannical bondage. However, John said that Christ came to take away our sins and destroy the works of the devil.

#### II. Work of Christ (5, 8b)

- Take away the sins of the people

**John 1:29** The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

**Hebrews 9:26** Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

**1 John 2:2** And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

- Take away the bondage

**Titus 2:14** who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed

**Note:** John is talking about freedom from sin...not just being justified, but sanctified, or separation from sin.

- In Him no sin

**Note:** Because Jesus had no sin...we become like Him. This is a glorious truth of who we are in Christ.

- Destroy the works of the devil
  - By complete submission

**Hebrews 2:14** Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil.

**Note:** Because He was able to completely submit to the will of His Father, He gained victory over the devil's work...complete victory. What that means for us Christians is that He destroyed our relationship with the devil (which we were once under the power of the evil one).

- Loosing of the bonds of sin

**Galatians 2:20** I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me

**Transition:** Because we are of Christ, we no longer are of sin. Furthermore, Christians no longer have to sin. This is a glorious truth that we have in Christ. We do not have to sin. Rebellion is replaced by submission

### III. Sin and the Christian Life (6, 9)

- Does not sin (continually)
  - Does not do it habitually; does not practice sin

**Note:** This does not mean that believers do not sin because John states earlier that believers do sin and that we confess our sins before the Lord. Believers do willfully and consent to sin—as we see in the lives of the OT and NT believers and in our lives. What this means is that believers no longer practice sin. We hate sin and we are convicted by it. We confess and repent of our sins.
  - Submission to Christ's Lordship

**Romans 6:16-18** Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? 17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

- God's seed
  - Holy Spirit

**Note:** We are born again through the incorruptible Word of God which does not perish (**1 Peter 1:23**). We are brought through the word of truth (**James 1:18**), meaning that we have been changed through the word that is placed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
  - God's nature in the believer

**2 Corinthians 5:17** if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation

**Psalm 40:7-8** Then I said, "Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book it is written of me. 8 I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart."

**Ezekiel 36:26-27** I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

**Jeremiah 31:33** But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (new covenant)

**Note:** This is part of the New Covenant where God has changed us completely to the image of His Son. As He followed the Law perfectly willingly and delighted, so can we with our new nature—loving His Law and wanting to please Him. This new nature is as opposed to sin that it will not allow believers to persist in rebellion. This new nature constantly exposes sin and prods us to holiness (Boice). This is a radical change from our old nature since His perfect nature is now in us.

## **Conclusion (7, 10)**

Becoming a true Christian results in a life that is diametrically different from the former life. Believers are transformed in mind, emotion, and will. A true Christian are in Christ and His righteousness is imputed to us. This is the whole crux of the argument that John makes here—Do we practice righteousness? Is our overall conduct and thinking in righteousness? Do we show hatred to sin, and do we grieve when we do things that we shouldn't as well as not doing the things that we should? Do we consistently confess our sins and seek His righteousness? John makes this claim, "whoever practices righteousness is righteous" because he wanted to make it abundantly clear to us who we are...of God or of the devil. What is the practice of our life? Sin or righteousness?