

1 John 3:4-9

SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT on Why Sin is a Big Deal

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After hearing that sermon title, you might be thinking, “I picked the wrong Sunday to come to church...” This is a pretty typical reaction to teachings about sin, not just in the world but in the church as well. In some churches today, talking about sin is considered “taboo,” because it’s not what packs people in, or what keeps them happy enough to stay. As a result, some pastors have even removed it from their preaching and replaced it with what is called “cotton candy gospel.” Meaning that it’s all the good stuff, but no conviction or responsibility to confess and turn from our sins.

The truth is, we need to and must acknowledge our sins. Why? Because if it wasn’t for sin, there would be no salvation, no real relationship with God, nor would we know how great God’s love is. Think about it, the only way we can be in awe of how good God is, is by knowing that we deserve to be judged for our sins; but when we understand what He did to set us free from the penalty of our sins, His goodness and love is fully revealed to us. One the reasons we don’t like to talk about sin is because it places the blame at our feet. We can’t blame it on what happened to us, or what someone did or didn’t do – it starts and ends with us.

Let me be honest with you, I didn’t want to preach this message to you today... Because I know that no matter how I say it, or my tone of voice, sin is always offensive. But what I want to tell you is this... that if you feel conviction during our time today, it’s not God pointing His finger at you in disgust and judgment, but it’s Him pointing out something in your life (like He did mine this week) that is ultimately producing death in you; and because He wants you to know the full Joy of this life, He must call out our sins.

This is what any good parent would do for their child. No good parent, if they saw their child playing in the street, wouldn’t tell them to play in the yard, so they can be safe. In the same way our heavenly father convicts us of sin so that we can live life the way He meant it to be, and not in the way of the pain sin will bring us.

I know this sounds heavy but let me assure you my goal today isn't to bash anyone over the head with the bible, because I'm a sinner too!

The Lord has been speaking to me about this just as much as He is going to speak to you now. But the truth is that we need to understand why win is a big deal if we're going to understand why we live for Him. When we remember that, even in the depths of our sins, Jesus stepped in and paid the penalty, we'll live for Him and know Him more.

As we study 1 John 3:4-9 we will see why sin is a big deal, and why it shouldn't be a part of our lives, by focusing on three points: the Seriousness of Sin, the Ignorance of Sin, and the Association of Sin

Let's begin with our first point...

Seriousness of Sin (V4-5)

Sin is serious because it's lawlessness - In verse 4 John gives us the definition of sin, by calling it "lawlessness." And lawlessness is basically open rebellion or a lack of civic law. John is using this language because his readers back then, and even now, know that lawlessness isn't a good thing. In the same way, John is telling his readers that sin is lawlessness and rebellion against the law of God.

When we think about the law of God, sometimes we think back to the Ten Commandments; but today many of us know the entirety of scripture to be the law of God, meaning that anything contrary to God's word is sin.

Billy Graham once defined sin this way – "The definition of sin is any lack of conformity to the moral character of God or the law of God. We sin by thinking evil, speaking evil, acting evil or omitting good. God has set the standard with His word, when we miss that standard we are in sin." Something I want to show you is that Billy Graham talked about a "standard." He said, "when we miss that standard we are in sin."

- When we hear this word "standard" we think of something we have to live up to, something we must achieve, or something to be measured by. The truth is that God's word is the standard that you and I are called to live by, but many times this doesn't sit well with us. We think to ourselves, "why do I need to live according to His standard and not my own?" I believe that whether

you're a Christian or not, in some way, you've asked this question before. Or maybe you phrased it this way: "Who is God to tell me what to do?!"

- Oftentimes when people want to get away from this standard, they just deny that God even exists. The logic behind this is that if you can deny that God exists, then that means you don't have to be accountable to His standards. As a result, you can justify living according to your own standards and not His. The problem with this thinking is that it's based on the assumption that God doesn't know better than we do. As a result, we limit life, because we're living according to our limited understanding of "what life is." His standard for us is a guide to live life to the fullest, the way He intended it to be lived.

John uses the word "lawlessness," so we would associate sin with crime or a lack of order. Just like in our society today, we know that committing a crime isn't a good thing, and naturally we do everything in our power not to commit crime. Why? Because we know that committing a crime leads to a punishment we can't get away from. In the same way, John is communicating that sin is a serious crime or offense against God, and all sin deserves judgment. [2 Corinthians 5:10](#) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. This sounds very controversial in the culture we live in, and if we're honest it just sounds scary. Knowing that the sins we committed deserve to be, and will be, judged by God. Fortunately, for us, God sent His son Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins and save us from condemnation. [John 3:17](#) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

- As John is writing this, he has in mind the previous chapters of 1 John. That if we claim to know Christ, then we will not continue to walk in the darkness of sin, but in the light of fellowship with Him. We also have to keep in mind that John isn't talking about sinless perfection, because as we look back at 1 John 1:8, it is clear that all believers will sin; but John is making it clear that even though a believer may sin, they don't "practice sin," or in other words "continue in an unbroken habit of sinning."
 - Why? Because.... sin keeps us from a relationship with God ([Isaiah 59:1-2](#)), sin produces death in us ([James 1:15](#)), sin steals our strength ([Proverbs 6:26](#)), robs us of joy and peace ([Psalm 32:3-4](#)) and sin leads us to death ([Romans 6:21](#)).

John goes on to remind us that ultimately, we take sin seriously because Jesus suffered and died to set us free from sins. So for us to continue in our sins, is to embrace what He came to free us from. John isn't talking about the person who stumbles in sin, but he is talking about the person that's continuing to live a life of sin, without repentance.

I don't know about you, but when I hear the words "continues in sin," I begin to justify my "stumbles" in sin, by saying, "at least it was only one time." Or try to toe-the-line of sin, stopping short of physically committing the act of sin. John is making it clear that sin is such a big deal that we can't justify "just doing it once," or play around with temptation, when we know where we will eventually end up. One biblical commentator once said - *We often fail in the battle against sin because we won't call it for what it is: a lawless offense against God.* Instead, we say things like "If I've done anything wrong..." or "Mistakes were made..." and so forth. Call it for what it is: sin and lawlessness. "The first step towards holy living is to recognize the true nature and wickedness of sin."

- Many times, we fall into sin, because we start taking sin seriously. We feel like, "I got this, no need to worry," and when we assume this, we fall into sin. **Romans 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.** Notice this says, "do not let." Meaning you have to be on your guard from the moment you wake up to the moment you go to bed every day.
 - This sounds like a daunting task, and that's because it is! We all get tired fighting this battle, but that's why God made a way for us to be refreshed and strengthened in His presence. **Isaiah 40:31 But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.** In the same way our cars need to be refueled to get to their destination, we too need to be refilled, so we can finish our race with joy.

In verses 4-5 John is not only laying out how serious sin is, but he is also coming against the Gnostics, who claimed to be Christians, but really weren't. John, in previous chapters, said that these false believers were lying about knowing Christ, because their lives didn't reflect what they claimed. One of the ways this was evident was the Gnostic belief that sin wasn't a big deal. The Gnostics taught that

because sin is in the body, you cannot be responsible for what the body does. Meaning that you were innocent of any guilt, or conviction from God, because sin is a natural part of the body.

- John comes down hard on this false belief, because a believer can't call themselves innocent, in mind, body, or spirit, if they are continuing in the sin that Christ came to rid them of. I feel like as we study this you can sense how frustrated John must have been with these Gnostic believers, because what they were teaching was completely against the purpose of Jesus....
 - Jesus had a clear purpose for coming into the world; He didn't come to just be another good teacher, or to make mankind better. His mission was to remove the power of sin from our lives. [Matthew 1:21](#) *And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.* One biblical commentator once said - *that the Lord Jesus saw sin to be so great an evil, that He came into our world, and gave Himself to the bitter sorrows of death on the cross, to redeem us from it.* The whole work of Christ was designed to deliver us from sin, not to give us a free pass to indulge in it, like the Gnostics believed. As a result, we should do our best to avoid it, because Jesus died to set us free from it.
 - The hope in this is that even though we may not be "sinless," if we are in Christ, we should "sin-less." Even though believers are capable of sinning, the presence of Christ in their lives means they cannot do so lightly. John clearly states that those who know God will seek to live for Him, including a life that increasingly flees from sin and follows the teachings of Christ.

Sin is a big deal, because Christ gave His life to set us free from it, so we can't continue in it. Those that do, reveal their ignorance of it.

Ignorance of Sin (V6-7)

John is saying, that since sin is lawlessness (3:4), and since Jesus came to take away our sins (3:5), then to abide in Him means not to sin. As we look at verses 6-7 it's important to understand what the scripture is saying and what it isn't saying.

What John is saying, is that anyone who abides or continues in a real relationship with Jesus may struggle with sin, but it isn't their lifestyle. What he isn't saying, is

that just because you have a relationship with Jesus, you can assume you won't sin again. The point being, for the believer, a lifestyle of continual sin is inconsistent with abiding in Jesus Christ. [2 Corinthians 5:17](#) tells us why. It says, [Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.](#)

- The reason a lifestyle of sin is inconsistent with knowing Jesus, is because we aren't who we used to be anymore. When we were dead in our sins, we enjoyed it; but as a new creation, filled with the spirit of God, we don't anymore. As a result, it's impossible for someone to experience this new life, and at the same time be comfortable in continual sin. I'm not saying you won't struggle with sin, but it's not a place that you stay in. One biblical commentator once said - [The question is, "How do you react when you sin? Do you give into the pattern of sin, and let it dominate your lifestyle? Or do you humbly confess your sin and do battle against it with the power Jesus can give?"](#)
 - Sin becomes a lifestyle when it's not dealt with, or when we make excuses or justify it, instead of coming to the Lord, and aligning with His perspective of sin. Confessing it to Him and turning from it.

John goes on to say that if you live in a lifestyle of sin, it's evidence that you have neither seen Him nor known Him. This is significant, because some of the Gnostic teachers, in an effort to convince people that their beliefs were right, would tell people that they met Jesus personally, before His crucifixion, and received personal approval that what they believed was true. John exposes this false story, by basically telling his readers, "If they really knew Jesus, like I knew Jesus, then they wouldn't be saying these false things, nor would they continue to live in their sins!"

- John is making it crystal clear that these Gnostic believers were ignorant of Christ, because their lives didn't look any different from the world.

John gives his readers a way to identify the false teachers, by telling them that a believer who truly knows Christ will practice what's right like Jesus did, meaning that they live a life of righteousness. Righteousness, meaning that their conduct is "morally right or justifiable." How do we practically do this? [Micah 6:8](#) [He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the Lord require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God?](#) This sums it all up for us. If a person is seeking to live a righteous life it should look like this. This is what the Gnostic believers didn't have, nor did they believe you needed to live righteously.

- The point John is making here is that, as a result of our salvation, we have both the desire and the power to conduct ourselves like Christ and do good works. Meaning that, because of Christ, we have the ability to make wise choices, and walk in Christ's example. Like the Gnostics, evidence that someone doesn't know Christ is that they make a lifestyle of not walking in the example of Christ, or doing what's right according to God's word.

Sin is a big deal, because if we truly know Him, our lives won't look the same, nor will we continue in our sin. We will live righteously and associate with Christ and not our sins.

Association of Sin (V8-9)

John places great emphasis on resisting sin, because sin is linked to the devil, and Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.

For many of us, we've heard many stories about the devil. In these stories, the devil is portrayed as this cosmic force of evil with sharp teeth, horns and a pitchfork; but this isn't how the scripture originally describes him. In [Ezekiel 28:12-19](#) it says - "You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty... You were the anointed cherub covered in precious stones... I established you... you were perfect in your ways from the day you were created." The truth is, the devil didn't start out the way we know him today. He was in heaven, as one of the most celebrated angels God created, but because of sin, he was cast out of heaven. Jesus spoke of this moment in [Luke 10:18](#) when He said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."

The reason he was cast out was because he wanted to "be god" and tried to lead a rebellion against God, in an effort to take His place. [Revelation 12:7-9](#) And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, ⁸ but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. ⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. When the devil was cast out of Heaven, he came to earth in an effort to be the god of this world, since he couldn't be God in Heaven.

As a result, the world is not under the direct influence of God, but of Satan. While on earth, the devil's goal is to deceive mankind into rejecting God and following his influence, by the works of sin. Fortunately, John tells us that "Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil." [Hebrews 2:14](#) says - [Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.](#) Jesus did exactly that when He died on the cross. He destroyed the work of the devil, by removing the power sin had over our lives.

- The point John is making here is that when you think of sin you think of the devil, because it all started with him, and continues today. He is known as a constant sinner, and if sin is associated with him, and is what caused him to be judged by God, then we have no business going anywhere near it.
 - We resist the works of the devil, by submitting ourselves to God. [James 4:7](#) [Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.](#) No matter what our perception of the devil is, the truth is that he is more scared of you than you are of him! He knows the power that we have in Jesus and knows that when we walk in a right relationship with Jesus, he loses.
 - Ultimately John is making the point that the person who lives in a continuous pattern of sin isn't following God but the influence of the devil.

John ends this thought by bringing this back to our identity in Christ. As we learned last week, those who have given their lives to God have been given the right to be called children of God, and as children of God we receive a new nature. This new nature is called the "new man." The new man is a reflection of the characteristics of Christ. This is our identity.

- This is what John means when he says that "believers don't sin because God's seed is in them." The "new man," in those who follow Jesus, cannot continue in sin. It doesn't mean that we're perfect, but it means that even if we wanted to "soak in sin," we wouldn't be there very long, because we have a new nature. One biblical commentator once said - [The fact that he has been begotten of God excludes the possibility of his committing sin as an expression of his true character, though actual sins may, and do, occur so far as he fails from weakness to realize his true character.](#)

Again, the emphasis is not on perfection, but on the characteristics of the "new man" in Christ, as children of God. A true believer cannot help but live differently

because God's "seed" is in them. [2 Peter 1:4](#) says – by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Sin is a big deal because it's associated with the devil, but we're called to reflect the new man in Christ.

In conclusion:

TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT on Why Sin is a Big Deal, we need to remember how serious sin is, how ignorant it makes us of Christ, and who it associates us with.

Like I said before, my goal isn't to bash anyone, but so that we will see how great our God is. Because this is the essence of the gospel that we preach! We were hopeless and dead in our sins, but Jesus stepped in and saved us from them, so now we are no longer guilty, but innocent of all our sins and enjoy relationship with Him for eternity!

This becomes the motivation of why we are living for Him, because He has done so much for us.