

1 John
Oil & Water
1 John 3:4-6
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Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

Well, I encourage you to take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 John. For those of you who may be our guest today, it's our habit and tradition to continue to walk through verse-by-verse studies of books of the Bible. And we find ourselves in 1 John, chapter 3. We've been studying this book for a couple of years, and if you come back tonight, you'll find us in Revelation where we've been for more than a year and a half or so. So, we encourage you to come and study with us; we want to take God's Word seriously; we want to understand it in its original context, its original languages, and then having understood it, we want to bring it into today, and say, "What did God intend for the original readers to do with it? And what does He intend for us to do with it?" So, as Paul put it to Timothy, we read the Scripture, explain the Scripture, and apply the Scripture—that's what we do, and that's what we've been called to do. So, we're glad you've come to be with us this morning. But we're in 1 John, chapter 3.

You have undoubtedly heard the old saying that oil and water don't mix. It's true, they don't, but I wonder if you can answer the question, "Why?" I couldn't until this last week, but let me explain it to you. The problem, you see, the reason oil and water don't mix is because of the incompatible properties that the two elements have. Water molecules, they tell me and I'm about to go beyond my paygrade here, but what are molecules are polar. That is, with an uneven distribution of charge across molecules. Each water molecule has a negative charge partially from its oxygen atom, and partial positive charges from its two hydrogen atoms. Here's how [Scientific American Magazine](#) describes it:

This polarity allows water molecules to form strong hydrogen bonds with each other between the negatively charged oxygen atom on one water molecule, and the positively charged hydrogen atoms of another. Oils, by contrast, are nonpolar. And as a result, they're not attracted to the polarity of water molecules, in fact, oils are hydrophobic or water fearing. Instead of being attracted to water molecules, oil molecules are repelled by them. As a result, when you add oil to a cup of water, the two simply don't mix with

each other. Because oil is less dense than water, it will always float to the top of the water. So, it's true. Oil and water don't mix.

The reason I thought of that is because in the very same way that that is true, in the passage that we come to this morning, John wants us to understand that genuine faith in Jesus Christ, and a habitual lifestyle of sin are equally incompatible. And they are equally incompatible because of their totally different properties. That's what we want to see unfold in the passage we study this morning.

Let me just remind you the theme of 1 John is “The Tests of Eternal Life,” and he gives three tests, those same three tests in three cycles or three movements. We finished the first cycle of those three tests; it goes from chapter 1, verse 5 to chapter 2, verse 27. We're studying the second cycle of those three tests, it begins in chapter 2, verse 28, and runs through chapter 4, verse 6. Now John begins the second cycle by returning to the test of obedience. Here's a test of eternal life, are you obedient to Jesus Christ and His Word? Let's read this passage together, I'll begin in 1 John, chapter 2, verse 28, and I'll read down to chapter 3, verse 10, you follow along.

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him. (Chapter 3) See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared (or been manifested) as yet what we will be. (But) We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God

appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because He is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Now, that section tells us that our obedience to Jesus Christ shows certain things about us. It shows “Our Real Birth,” whether or not we've truly been born again. It shows “Our Real Relationship to Jesus Christ,” are we truly His follower? Or are we still a slave of sin? And verses 3 through 10, it shows “Our Real Father,” are we a child of the devil? Or are we a child of God?

Now, last week we finished the first section where we learned that our relationship to sin, or put differently, our obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word shows “Our Real Birth.” It shows whether we are still dead in sin, or whether we have experienced the new birth and have been born of God.

Today, we come to the second section of this portion, and here we learn that our obedience to Jesus Christ and His Word shows “Our Real Relationship to Him.” That's the message of verses 4 to 6 of chapter 3; it shows, our obedience shows whether we are still a slave of sin, or whether we have, in fact, become a follower of Christ. Now I just read it for you, but I want you to read it with me one more time as we look at studying it together. Look at 1 John 3, verses 4 through 6.

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen him or knows Him.

The point of those three verses is simply this, the person who professes to know Jesus Christ, but who lives in a pattern of habitual ongoing sin, where his life is more characterized by sin than righteousness, does in fact, not know Jesus Christ, regardless of what he or she claims.

Now, in these verses, John identifies for us four specific ways that habitual sin is completely incompatible, like oil and water, with a real relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. The two don't mix. You can't say, “Yes, I know Jesus, I'm His follower, I believe in Him and I

I'm going to heaven," and live in an ongoing pattern of habitual sin, a life characterized by sin. Why? Well, first of all, because "It's Incompatible with God's Law," it's incompatible with God's Law. Look at verse 4, "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." Now, there's so much in that verse; there's so much behind-the-scenes in that verse. What John does here is he condenses or truncates his biblical argument. What I want to do before we look at the verse is fill it out a little bit, let you see what he's really arguing. Here are the sort of behind-the-scenes arguments that he's making in verse 4.

The first part of his argument is this, "Every unbeliever hates God's Law, and does not—in fact cannot—submit to God's Law," every unbeliever. Go back to Romans; Romans, chapter 8. You remember in Romans 8, verse 4, Paul says that the requirement of the law is, in fact, being fulfilled in us who are true believers who don't walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit, and in that context here, those aren't two different kinds of Christians. He's talking about a real Christian versus a false Christian. Real Christians fulfill the law, they keep God's law. And he goes on to explain that beginning in verse 5, but look down to verse 7, "...the mind set on the flesh (This is now unbelievers, those who have not been redeemed, those who have not been saved who have not experienced the new birth.) the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so." Unbelievers hate God's Law, and they don't submit to it. In fact, notice the last expression there, "...they are not even able to do so." He uses the Greek word '*dunomai*,' which means 'to have the capacity, to have the ability.' They lack the capacity to obey the law of God. Every unbeliever is described in that way.

A second point that lies behind verse 4, in our text, is this, not only does every unbeliever hate God's Law and doesn't submit to it, but "Every believer has experienced regeneration or the new birth." That's what Jesus said, of course, in John 3, right? He said, "You can't enter the kingdom unless you have been born again." (Paraphrase.) In John, chapter 1, John writes there that you who have believed, you have been "born of God." If you look at chapter 5 of 1 John; 1 John, chapter 5, verse 1, you see this same point made. Notice what he writes here, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) (literally, the text says) has been born of God..." perfect tense. Your believing follows your having been born of God. So, every true believer has experienced regeneration, "has been born of God."

Thirdly, “In regeneration, God gives the believer a new love for God's Law.” If you've been saved, if you become a follower of Jesus Christ, at the moment of your salvation, you experienced the new birth, you were regenerated; and in that regeneration in that new birth, you were given a new love for the Word of God. Listen to Psalm 119:77, “...Your law is my delight;” Psalm 119:97, “O, how I love Your law, It is my meditation all the day.” Paul in Romans 7, verse 12, says, “...the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.” That's the testimony of every true believer. Romans, chapter 7, verse 22, even as Paul talks about the Christian's ongoing struggle with sin, He says, “...I joyfully concur with the law of God in the (my) inner man.” That's what every true believer says, “I love God's Law, I want to obey God's Law.” So, if you've been saved, if you've been truly regenerated, if you've experienced the new birth, you have a new love for the law of God.

And, you also have “A new ability to keep that law.” Before, remember Romans 7, you hated it and did not submit yourself and could not submit yourself to it. But in the new birth, God changes your heart. Listen to the New Covenant promise of the new birth or regeneration in Ezekiel, chapter 36, verses 26 and 27, God says, “...I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh,” that is regeneration. He goes on to describe the results of that, “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.” God says, “When I save you, when I give you new life, when you're born again, I am going to cause you to walk in My statutes.” It's a necessary result of the new birth, a new ability to keep the law of God.

And the fourth part of the argument that lies behind 1 John 3:4 is this. “Because of this radical change toward God's Law, the true believer will not, in fact cannot, live in perpetual sin,” because of what God has done in the new birth. (Paraphrase.) Look at 1 John, chapter 3, verse 9, “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

Now, with that background, now that we understand John's basic logic, let's go back and look at 1 John 3:4, let's take it apart. Verse 4 says, “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness.” Notice “everyone,” this is a universal statement; there are no exceptions. In fact,

six times in this section, John says, “everyone who” or “no one who.” In other words, John says, “Listen, I want you to know the implications of the gospel that I’m about to give you are universally true; there are no exceptions – you’re not the exception; I’m not the exception.” He says, “Everyone who practices sin.”

What is sin? Well, the Greek word simply means ‘to miss the mark, to miss the target.’ But notice here, it’s the by the way, the normal word and the New Testament for sin, for the violation of God’s Law. But notice what he says, “Everyone who practices sin.” Now, the New American Standard translators have chosen that word. There are other words that have been chosen in the past that are a little misleading. The King James chose “Everyone who commits sin,” which makes it sound like true Christians don’t sin ever. But what the Greek text actually says is this., “Everyone doing sin.” It’s an interesting expression. He doesn’t say “Everyone who sins,” he says, “Everyone doing sin.”

Be careful! John does not mean here that real Christians never sin. How do I know that? Because he’s already told us that. Go back to chapter 1, verse 7, “...if we (are walking) in the Light as God Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son (keeps on cleansing) us from all sin.” So immediately, he tells us that walking in the light as a pattern doesn’t mean you never sin because we’re going to continually experience the cleansing of sin as we walk in the Light.

Look at verse 8, “If we say that we have no sin, (I think here denying a sin nature, denying depravity.) we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.” So, what do we do with sin as believers? Verse 9, “If we (are confessing) our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Verse 10, “If we say that we have not sinned, (Here’s a denial that we’ve committed acts of sin.) we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.” Verse 1 of chapter 2, “...little children, I’m writing these things to you so that you may not sin. (He said, “Don’t misunderstand, I’m not saying sin is okay.) (But) if anyone sins, (And you will sin.) we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” So, John doesn’t mean in chapter 3, verse 4, that Christians never sin.

What does he mean? He means that Christians don’t live lives characterized by sin. “Doing sin” is the way to express that. It’s in the present tense meaning, “this is their consistent pattern;

this is their characteristic practice; this is what marks their lives.” This group is exactly the opposite of those back in chapter 2, verse 29, who are “practicing righteousness” or doing righteousness.

Now, the translators chose the word ‘practice’ here in a similar way to how we use the English word when we talk about the practice of medicine or the practice of law. You know, over the last number of weeks as Sheila's been recovering from her cancer surgery, I have done a lot of medical things. But doing a lot of medical things is not the same as ‘practicing medicine;’ I'm not practicing medicine, that's not my occupation, that's not what consumes all of my time. I, instead, am doing some things that are medical, you see the difference? That's what John is saying here, “Believers sin, yes, they do, but they don't practice sin; it doesn't characterize them; it doesn't become, if I can put it this way, their occupation, their career; it's not the thing that marks most of their lives.

Verse 4 says “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness.” Now that is a shocking statement, “To practice sin is to practice lawlessness.” What is lawlessness? Well, it's the state of being, rebelling against and not doing the law. Lawlessness is a mindset that's inherently antagonistic to God's Law and, therefore, produces lawless actions.

Now, this is why it's shocking, the defining characteristic of sin is lawlessness. Look at verse 4, “...sin is lawlessness.” In the New Testament, there are other definitions of sin like this one, for example, Romans 14:23, “...whatever is not from faith is sin;” James 4:17, “...to the one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin;” 1 John 5:17, “All unrighteousness is sin.” So, there are other definitions of sin, but this is, by far, the one here in verse 4, is the clearest, the most direct and the most shocking because John here says, “That sin, your sin, my sin, in its inherent nature, is lawlessness.” In other words, sin is an active, intentional rebellion against God's known will. It's not just a weakness, it's not just a failure. It's not a simple missing of the mark, it's not an accidental deviation from the right path; it's an act of rebellion against our rightful King.

Now, the reason that is shocking is, as human beings, we all have the tendency to excuse our sin. Oh, we do it in various ways, you know, some will excuse their sin as a weakness, or they'll say, “Well, yeah, okay, it is sin, but it's just a little sin, it's a peccadillo, you know, it's a minor

little sin that doesn't really hurt anyone.” Others will say, “No, you know, it's an inherited trait or predisposition that we just can't help; I just can't help myself, this is how God made me, or this is how I am.” And of course, there are some today who argue that it's not sin at all, what the Bible defines as sin is actually a virtue. But God says, “Our sin is a defiant violation of His moral law.” It is a refusal to live in obedience to His revealed standards of right and wrong. D. Edmond Hiebert defines it this way, he says, “Sin is a deliberate deviation from an infraction of the standard of right, a willful rebellion arising from the deliberate choice of the sinner.”

Let me ask you a question, “Is that how you think about your sin?” It's not an accident, it's not a weakness; it's an act of defiance against the One who has the right to tell you how to live. Law defines it this way, a commentator. “To sin is to assert one's own will as the rule of action against the absolute good will of God.” Sin is lawlessness.

You know, when I was growing up, I enjoyed watching some of the old westerns, maybe some of you did, as well. And of course, one of the common themes in the old westerns is that occasional town out in the west who lacked a marshal, lacked law enforcement, and, therefore, the entire town was completely lawless. But, you know, on television and in the way it was portrayed, even in those lawless towns, there were just a few bad apples that the marshal needed to come in and clean up and deal with, but most of the townspeople were good, decent people, and if we can just get rid of those bad apples, then we'll see how, in fact, these are really law-abiding people, and everything's good. That is not how God sees this world at all. God sees every village and every town and every city as completely lawless. More importantly, God doesn't see mostly decent people who are surrounded by and bothered by a few bad apples. God sees every human heart, your heart, my heart, apart from the grace of the gospel as inherently lawless. That's what sin is. In fact, it's interesting when Jesus in Matthew 13, verse 41, He's talking about the judgment that will come at the end of the world, and He says, “The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness.” In other words, every person who doesn't believe in Jesus Christ is considered lawless by God.

Now why? Why is sin lawlessness? Well, I wish I had more time to really fill this out. Go back and listen to my messages on the end of Romans 1 and then Romans 2; but let me give you

the short version. The reason all sin is lawlessness is every single human being who has ever lived on this planet knows God's Law. Many know it because they have the Scripture; that's Paul's argument in chapter 2 where he talks about the Jewish people who have the Word of God and don't do it. And he says, "You are a transgressor of the law," you're lawless, even though you have it.

But what about those people who've never seen the Scripture? What about them? How can you say they're breaking God's Law? Do look at Romans 2, let me show you this passage; Romans 2, verse 14, "...when Gentiles who do not have the (written) Law, (They don't have the Bible; when they) do instinctively the things of the Law." In other words, when pagans who have no Scripture, who've never read the Scripture, set up laws in their culture to say, "Nobody should steal, and if you steal, you're going to be punished." How do they know that? How do they know they shouldn't do that? Because he goes on to say, "...not having the Law, are a law to themselves." But verse 15, "...they show the work of the Law (That is the basic substance of God's Law.) written in their hearts, (God wrote it in their hearts.) their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them." You see, even if you didn't have the Bible, think about how many times your conscience has said, "Don't do that, don't do that, don't do that," and you did it.

So, go back to the end of chapter 1; Romans, chapter 1, verse 32. Here he's talking about pagans who've never seen the Bible, who worship false gods. Verse 32, says:

They know the ordinance of God, (Why? Because it's written on the heart. And even though they know that ordinance, those who practice such things, and) that those who practice such things are worthy of death, (They know that God's going to judge those who do these things.) they not only do (them,) but (they) ...give hearty approval to those who practice them.

So, the reason it's rebellion, the reason sin is rebellion is because it is always rebelling against God's Law, either the Law written on the heart, the substance of the Law written on the heart, or the Law written in the Scripture; but either way, every person on this planet has the basic substance of God's Law, and they're accountable. So, our sin, then, is an act of rebellion against

the revealed will of God, either revealed in the heart, or revealed in the Scripture, or for many of us, both.

You ever thought about it this way? Our real problem isn't how our sin affects us. That's where we usually spend our time. You know, I hate this sin in my life because of how it makes me feel, because of, you know, how it messes up my relationships, etc. That's not our real problem. Our real problem is our relationship to God's Law. We have broken God's Law, and we deserve God's punishment. You have broken God's Law, and you deserve His punishment. I have broken God's Law, and I deserve His punishment.

And, I have another problem. Even if I had never broken His Law, God says:

To be in my presence, you have to be righteous, you have to keep My Law, you have to be every bit the kind of person I demand. You have to love Me perfectly, and you have to love others as you love yourself. (Paraphrase.)

So, I've got two problems: I've never done that, and, instead, I've done exactly the opposite, I've shattered, I've broken God's Law. That's, folks, why we need the gospel, because Jesus answers both of those problems. Jesus died for me, suffering the punishment that I deserved for breaking God's Law, and Jesus lived for me as a substitute, and through thirty-three years, He perfectly kept God's Law for me, so that that could be credited to my account, and God could accept me. That's the gospel, 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, (That's the cross, God treated Jesus as if He had lived my life.) so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (So that God could credit Jesus' perfect life of righteousness to me and treat me forever as if I'd lived that life.)." That's the gospel.

If you're here this morning, and you've never believed that gospel, listen, somebody's going to pay for your sin. God is just; He doesn't grade on a curve; you won't be the first to escape. Someday you'll stand before Him if you don't deal with His offer of Christ now, someday you'll stand before Him and you will get justice, absolute unwavering, pure justice. Your only hope, my only hope is to receive the justice Jesus received on our behalf and to be saved through His life, death and resurrection. I plead with you this morning to repent and believe in Him.

Back to our text, John's point in verse 4 is that true believers don't live in habitual patterns of ongoing, unrepentant sin, because it's completely incompatible with God's Law, which Christ loved and kept, and which He's now given us a love for and enabled us to keep.

There's a second way here that habitual sin is incompatible with a real relationship with Christ. It's because "It's Incompatible with Christ's Mission," it's incompatible with Christ's mission. Verse 5, "You know (John here appeals to common knowledge among believers, you know.) that He appeared." He is literally 'That One.' That's the way John likes to refer to Jesus, "That One," that special One, that unique One, that One, notice, "appeared." This is the same Greek word that John used back in chapter 2, verse 28, he uses in chapter 3, verse 2 of the Second Coming, that He will appear. But notice here, he says, "He appeared," this is referring back to His First Coming, the Incarnation. By the way, don't miss the theological point he makes with that word 'appeared.' What if I said to you of my birth? "Well, that's when I appeared." So, what is that? That's a little odd. What do you mean, "you appeared?" Because the implication of that word, and it's an implication John intends to make, is that Jesus existed before His birth in Bethlehem as the eternal Son of God, and He appeared.

But notice, "You know that He appeared in order (For this reason, for this purpose, for this goal.) to take away sins." Now, notice that John doesn't use the singular sin, but plural sins, meaning all of the individual sins of His people. He appeared; He came in the Incarnation to take away those sins. "To take away" can mean either to 'lift and carry,' or it can mean 'to carry off, to carry away.'

And here, I think that's the implication; Jesus came to carry sins away. It's like what John says in † John 1:29. You remember, John the Baptist saw Jesus and he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," who picks it up and carries it off. The picture there is of the Day of Atonement. You remember on that special day each year in the nation of Israel, when the sins of the people were to be atoned for, the high priests would have two goats. He was demanded to take two goats; he was to cast lots between them and one of the goats was to be offered as a sacrifice. The other goat the priest was to put his hands on the head of that goat and confess over it all the sins of the people, and then they took that goat out into the wilderness to die outside the people of God. You see, those two goats picture the fullness of what Jesus did

in his death for us. On the one hand, He died as a sacrifice, paying the penalty for sin; on the other hand, he took the guilt of our sin, and He took it outside the camp away from us and has separated it as far from us as the east is from the west. Jesus appeared to take away, to carry off our sins.

How did he do that? By bearing the guilt of each of our sins in His own body on the cross. Isaiah 53, remember:

He was pierced through for our transgressions, (Don't miss the plural for our transgressions.) He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being (Shalom, for our peace with God.) fell on Him (Jesus.), and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD (Yahweh) has caused the iniquity (guilt) of us all (That is all who believe in Him.) to fall on Him (Jesus, to strike Him.).” (Paraphrase.)

See what happened on the cross. It is as if everyone who would ever believe in Jesus Christ laid his hands on the head of our escape goat and confessed his sins, every single one of them over His head, and then He paid the debt for every single one of them, individually. 1 Peter 2:24 says, “...He Himself bore our sins (plural) in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.”

So, understand what John is saying here. He's saying that for a professing believer to live in habitual, ongoing, unrepentant sin is completely incompatible with Jesus' saving mission. I mean, Titus 2:14 says this, “(He) gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed.” Jesus came to take away sins. If a person says, “Yes, I'm a Christian, I'm a follower of Jesus,” but continues to live a lifestyle marked by sin, it shows that that person doesn't even understand why Jesus came. It's completely incompatible with knowing Jesus as Savior and Lord.

There's a third way that habitual sin is inconsistent with knowing Jesus, “It's incompatible with Christ's nature,” it's incompatible with Christ's nature. Look at the second half of verse 5, “...and in Him there is no sin.” He came to take away our sins, but He had no sin. I love the way it's expressed in the Greek text. Let me read it to you literally. It says, “and sin in Him not is,” or “there is no sin.” “Sin in Him there is not,” or “Sin in Him does not exist.”

Now, notice John changes from talking about Jesus taking away our sins, plural, to Jesus having no sin, singular. When Scripture speaks about Jesus and His relationship to sin, it consistently makes two theological points. The first is Jesus has never committed sin, 2 Corinthians 5:21, “He made Him who knew no sin.” And the implication there is, as He lived on earth, He didn't commit any sins; He was dying for ours. Hebrews 1:9, talking about the Messiah, “YOU HAVE LOVED RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HATED LAWLESSNESS.” Hebrews 7:26, our High Priest is “holy, innocent, undefiled, (and) separated from sinners...” So Jesus has never committed a sin. Can you just think about that for a moment? Just let that sink into your mind. He lived thirty-three years on this planet, and he never committed a single sin, not a thought, attitude, word, or action. He loved God perfectly every moment of His life, and He loved His neighbor as He loved Himself.

But there's another point that Scripture makes about Jesus, and that is Jesus never had a sin nature. And I think that's the primary point John is making here. It's true that He never committed sin, but here he's making a larger point. Notice the form of this statement is timeless. It refers to every stage of Jesus' existence, His pre-existence before His birth in Bethlehem, His Incarnation, the days during which He lived on this planet, His current state in heaven now, and His eternal state forever. Folks, Jesus Christ always has been, is, and always will be without sin in His essential eternal nature. Just like the Father, He is Light; He eternally exists completely without sin. But not only without any acts of sin, without a sinful nature, but positively, Jesus is also righteous.

Look at 1 John 2, verse 1, “...Jesus Christ the righteous (One).” Chapter 3, verse 3, “...He is pure.” Verse 7 of chapter 3, “...He is righteous.” So, Jesus committed no sins, and He doesn't have a sin nature and never has and never will.

Now again, John's point is this, you cannot be a genuine believer and live in a continual pattern of sin; because to do so, is completely incompatible with the very nature of the One you say is your Savior and Lord. It's completely incompatible with the nature of the One you say you follow and believe.

There's a fourth and final way that a continual pattern of sin is incompatible with knowing Jesus Christ as Lord, and that is, “It is incompatible with Christ's Gospel.” Look at verse 6, “No one

who abides in Him sins.” Now to abide in Him is to abide in Jesus. You'll remember that we discovered this is not some mystical experience, this isn't something you feel, and this isn't something that's only true of a few really special spiritual Christians – they abide in Christ; the rest of us wish we could. That's not it at all. As we've discovered in 1 John, every true Christian abides in Christ; because to abide in Him, the Greek word for abide simply means ‘to remain,’ to remain in Him, remaining in Jesus, as we discovered previously in our study, means to continue to believe in the biblical Jesus and the biblical gospel.

So, look again at verse 6, “No one (There is no exception to this.) who (is abiding) in Him (That is, who is continuing to believe in the biblical Jesus and the biblical gospel in a saving way.) sins,” literally is sinning or is continuing to sin, or to use the expression already used is “practicing sin.” Do you follow John's logic here? If Jesus’ eternal nature is sinless, and if He came into the world in the Incarnation to take away the sins of His people, no one who truly believes in that Jesus and that gospel lives in a continual pattern of sin. It's completely incompatible with the gospel that Jesus preached.

John's already made this very clear; go back to chapter 1, you remember in verse 5, he says:

This is the message we have heard from Him (Jesus) and (we) announce (it) to you, that God is Light, (He is completely characterized by truth and moral purity. And He's not like any other light you've ever seen because the light we know has always got a little bit of shadow of darkness somewhere.) and in Him there is no darkness at all.

He's like no light you've ever experienced. There's nothing but light. And therefore, verse 6, if we are claiming, if we are saying that we have fellowship with that God who is Light, and yet our lives are walking in the darkness, in other words, we're not talking about we sin as believers, of course that's true; but rather, our lives are characterized by darkness, our lives are characterized by sin. There's more sin in our lives than there is any love of truth and righteousness.

We lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the Light, if we're walking in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, then we have fellowship with each other, we have

fellowship with Him, and the blood of Jesus His Son keeps on cleansing us from all sin.(Paraphrase.)

Go down to chapter 2, verse 3:

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep his commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him, ought himself to walk in the same way as He (Jesus) walked.

Go over to chapter 3, verse 8:

The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. No one who is (born again, who has been) born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

No one, without exception, who is remaining and continuing to believe in the biblical Jesus and the biblical gospel, just keeps on sinning as the characteristic of their life. Verse 6 goes on, "No one (again, without exception, no one) who is sinning (That is, in an ongoing, continual way. No one characterized by practicing sin as the governing principle of their lives.) has seen Him." (Paraphrase.)

Now, John doesn't mean physically. He's writing at the end of the first century, and he's writing to people in Asia Minor, many of whom had never been to the land of Israel, certainly not during the time of Jesus. He's talking about this person has never seen Christ accurately in the Scriptures. Such a person does not truly see and understand Jesus' real nature. And verse 6 says no one who is continuing to sin like that "...has seen him or knows Him." Such a person has not truly come to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus Himself said exactly this. Turn back to Matthew, chapter 7. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives three warnings. The whole Sermon on the Mount, it's about entering His and being a part of His spiritual kingdom, belonging to His spiritual kingdom, and eventually

His literal kingdom. At the end of this sermon he says, “Listen, I have got to give you three warnings about this.” The first warning in verses 13, and 14 of Chapter 7 is, “Beware of the wrong entrance,” beware of the wrong entrance. You see, there are a lot of people who are selling a way to heaven and it's false; it's false religion, it's false philosophy, it's the wide gate, or just apathy and indifference, just the way of sin, just do what you want, and we'll all get there in the end. It's the wide gate and Jesus says, “Listen, there's a wrong entrance, don't get the wrong entrance.”

The second warning He gives us in verses 15 to 20, and it's “Beware of false teachers,” because they're going to be pointing, they're going to claim that this is how you get to Jesus, this is how you get to heaven, this is how you get to God. And they're going to be pointing to the wrong entrance; they're going to be standing there going, “No, no, that's not it; this is it over here.”

But the third warning he gives is in verses 21 to 23, and it's a warning against self-deception. And this is a different group. This is a group who have found the right entrance, and who believe they have entered the right entrance. In other words, they found the biblical Jesus, they found the biblical gospel, and they believe they've entered, they believe they're saved, they believe everything is right between them and God. But Jesus says, there's going to be a group that that's not true of. This is verse 21, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.”

Now, don't misunderstand. Jesus is not saying obedience is how you get saved. Remember what He's doing; He's showing those who claim they're saved, that they're not. He's saying, “Here's how you know if you really have been saved, you do the will of the Father.” Then He goes on, “Many will say to Me on that day, (So he fast-forwards to the Judgment Day; this is a shocking thing, because Jesus says, He's going to be the judge.” And he says, “Let me tell you what's going to go down on the Day of Judgment; here's how it's going to look.” (Summary paraphrase.) “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, you’re my Lord, I confessed You as Lord, we prophesied in Your name; in Your name we cast out demons, in your name we performed many miracles, look at all we did, we claimed to follow you, we did a lot of things in your name, some of them even amazing!’” (Paraphrase.) Verse 23, “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME...’” Jesus says on the Day of Judgment, there

are going to be people who show up who are still self-deceived, and who think they really belong to Me, and they're going to give me their sort of pitch, and I'm going to say to them, "I don't know who you are. Leave."

Now, as a young Christian, I used to fear that I might be in that group. You don't have to be afraid because Jesus tells us exactly who they are. Look at the next phrase at the end of verse 23, "...DEPART FROM ME, YOU (Here it is.) WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS," you whose lives are marked, not by righteousness, not by obedience, but by lawlessness and sin, you've deceived yourself, you're not one of Mine, I never knew you, depart from Me. (Paraphrase.)

And then He goes on to tell the parable, you remember of the wise man who built his house on the rock, and the foolish man who built his house on the sand. Ask one hundred Christians what the rock is in that parable, and ninety-eight of them will say, "It's Jesus." Wrong, wrong answer. Jesus is the rock in other places in Scripture, but what's the rock in this parable? Look at it, verse 24, "...everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock." And then the judgment comes and his profession of faith in Me stands. It's real. It's genuine. (Paraphrase.) Verse 26, "Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand." Judgment comes, and here's his profession of faith in me, and it collapses in rubble. It's not real. It's not genuine. I say, (Verse 23) "...DEPART FROM ME...I NEVER KNEW YOU." Why? The wise man who built his house on the rock, the distinguishing feature is that he heard Jesus' words and did them. That's not how you get into heaven. That's how it shows whether or not your profession of faith in Jesus is real or not.

John wrote this paragraph to confront the Gnostic false teaching of the first century. The Gnostics argued that you could engage in all kinds of sin and still be in communion with God. Now, there aren't many Gnostics around today, but sadly, there are contemporary versions of this flawed idea that knowing the gospel and professing to believe in Jesus or all that matters, and it doesn't really matter how you believe.

Let me give you two very common examples in the Dallas area. I hope you haven't been deceived by them. One of them is decision-ism or easy believe-ism. This is the idea that if you

ever said a prayer, if you ever repeated after someone, you said a prayer, you made a decision at camp or whatever, you made a decision at some point in your life, then you are a Christian from that time forward, and it doesn't really matter how you live, you're in. And when the judgment day comes, you've got your get-out-of-hell-free card, because you said a prayer, you prayed a prayer or you made a decision. John says, "If your life is characterized by sin, you never were converted, you never were saved." (Paraphrase.)

The other bad idea is what's called free grace or anti-Lordship. This idea was heavily promoted by several professors at DTS (Dallas Theological Seminary) and it teaches that faith doesn't mean that you acknowledge Jesus' Lordship over your life. In fact, if at any point in your life, you mentally affirm the gospel to be true, then you're a true Christian, regardless of how you live.

Read the book of 1 John; read 1 John, 3: 4-6, because that's a test, it's a test. Have you really seen the biblical Jesus and the biblical gospel in Scripture? Have you truly come to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ? If so, John says, "You are not living in a habitual characteristic pattern of sin in your life. No one remaining in the biblical Jesus and the biblical gospel keeps on continually practicing sin." (Paraphrase.)

But, as you sit here this morning, if you say, "Tom, you know, I'm not perfect, I do sin, but I can see the change in my life. I love the Law of God. I love obedience. I seek to obey, and as I look back over my life, over the last number of years, I'm not where I want to be, but by God's grace, I'm not where I used to be, and I can see a decreasing pattern of sin in my life, and I can see an increasing pattern of righteousness, and that's what I want more than I want anything else. I want to be like Jesus Christ." Then understand, you've passed this test, and you've not been self-deceived. You have eternal life!