



“Whose Child Are You?”
1 John 3:4-10
Perfect Love: The Book of 1 John

Introduction

A basic, fundamental principle in today’s passage: *children resemble their parents*. Children share the same nature as their parents and reflect their image – not just physically, but ultimately in terms of their character, values, beliefs and behaviors.

Nine Observations

1. The Nature of Sin

Verse 4: “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”

Most sins fall under four basic categories:

- 1) Unbelief or faithlessness (Rom 14:23)
- 2) Missing the mark (Rom 3:23)
- 3) Unrighteousness (1Jn 5:17)
- 4) Lawlessness (1Jn 3:4)

2. The Purpose of Christ’s Coming

Verse 5: “You know that He appeared in order to take away sins...”

3. The Sinlessness of Christ

Verse 5: “in Him there is no sin.”

The point: If Christ came into the world to take away our sins, how can we keep *living* in sin? That would be totally contrary to the purpose of his coming.

4. The Importance of Abiding in Christ

Verse 6: “No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.”

This is the key to practical victory over sin in our lives. Because Christ is sinless and pure, no one who abides in him can sin. It is impossible to abide in Christ and sin at the same time.

5. The Practice of Righteousness

Verse 7: “Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous...”

William Law: “Doing is the test of Being.” Apparently, the false teachers claimed it was possible to be righteous without practicing righteousness. John flatly denies that. Whatever we are on the inside will be manifested on the outside.

6. The Origin of Sin

Verse 8: “the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning.”

Names or titles for the devil:

- Satan – adversary or accuser (Job 1:6)
- Devil – divider (Mt 4:1)
- Beelzebub – lord of the flies, or possibly lord of dung (Mt 12:24)
- Abaddon (Hebrew) or Apollyon (Greek) – destroyer (Rev 9:11)
- The evil one (Mt 13:19)
- The tempter (Mt 4:3)
- The ruler of demons (Mt 9:34)
- The father of lies (Jn 8:44)
- The god of this age (2Cor 4:4)
- The ruler of the fallen world system (Jn 14:30)
- The prince of the power of the air (Eph 2:2)
- The deceiver of the whole world (Rev 12:9)
- The angel of the bottomless pit (Rev 9:11)
- The accuser of our brethren (Rev 12:10)
- Our enemy (Mt 13:39)
- Our adversary (1Pet 5:8)
- A murderer (Jn 8:44)
- A roaring lion (1Pet 5:8)
- A dragon (Rev 12:9)
- The serpent of old (Rev 12:9; cf. Gen 3:1)
- Lucifer – light-bearer (Isa 14:12)
- The son of the morning (Isa 14:12)
- The anointed cherub (Eze 28:14)
- Angel of light (2Cor 11:14)

God created Satan as one of the most glorious and powerful angels in heaven – perhaps ranking as an archangel, along with Michael (Jude 1:9). But through his pride, sin came into being, and Satan rebelled against God, leading a third of the angels out of heaven (Isa 14:12; Rev 12:3-4, 9).

All sin is devilish in nature. All sin is satanic. And to take part in it is to take part in the devil's activity.

7. The Second Purpose of Christ's Coming

Verse 8: “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.”

The devil's names and titles reveal the nature of his “works.” But Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, tear down the gates of hell, set the captives free, and establish an everlasting kingdom of righteousness. (This began at the cross and will be completed at his second coming.)

8. The Power of the New Birth

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.”

John makes an astonishing claim that has created a lot of confusion. He claims that a Christian who is born of God does not sin and cannot sin!

This does not mean Christians can achieve a state of sinless perfection in this lifetime. John has already explained that is not the case (cf. 1:8, 1:10, 2:1).

The key to interpreting this correctly is understanding the tense of the verbs! Throughout this passage John has been using present tense verbs to indicate a persistent, ongoing action. His point is that a Christian cannot go on living in sin habitually, without repentance, because God's seed lives in him. ("Seed" could refer to the word of God, the gospel, Christ, the Holy Spirit, or the new nature given to each believer at salvation.) Whatever the case, John's point is the same: the Christian's supernatural birth will keep him from habitual sin.

9. The Undeniable Result of Your Paternity Test

Verse 10: "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.

Remember the fundamental principle: children resemble their parents. There are only two options. In the words of John Stott: "Our parentage is either divine or diabolical." Either we are children of God, or children of the devil. Your lifestyle reveals your lineage. Whose child are you?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & ACTION ITEMS:

- 1) What did you learn about the nature of sin from this passage?
- 2) Why is sin contrary to the purpose for which Christ came into the world?
- 3) Why is abiding in Christ the key to victory over sin in our lives?
- 4) Which name or title of Satan stood out to you the most, and why?
- 5) How would you explain John's claim in verse 9 that a Christian *does not sin* and *cannot sin*?