

1 John 3:4-9 | Sunday February 1, 2026

1 John 2:28; 3:2-3 ESV

(28) And now, little children, **abide in Him, so that when He appears we may have confidence and not shrink from Him in shame at His coming.**

(2) Beloved, **we are God's children now**, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears **we shall be like Him**, because **we shall see Him** as He is.

(3) And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

Two weeks ago we saw the amazing truth that we are called a child of the God most high. This was not a hope, or something that might take place. John emphatically states that “**we are God's children now.**” This truth is echoed in Colossians 3, our true life right now is hidden in Christ.

Colossians 3:3-4 ESV

(3) For you have died, and **your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

(4) When Christ who is your life appears, **then you also will appear with Him in glory.**

Our true life right now is hidden in Jesus. Yet, we know the we do not always look like a child of God. This is why we long for the day when Jesus will appear. When we see Him face to Face, we will be like Him. Our true nature as a child of God will finally be reflected in our whole life, and even in our body. **When He appears in glory, then we will appear in glory.** We are to live for this real future moment by abiding now. A believer who does not abide will give an account of themselves to Jesus and will shrink from Him as He appears. As a child of God we should desire to abide with Him and be excited and confident when He arrives. John is going to continue this thought and show how incompatible sin is to a believers life.

1 John 3:4-10 ESV

(4) **Everyone who** makes a **practice** of sinning also **practices** lawlessness; **sin is lawlessness.**

(5) You know that He appeared in order to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin.

(6) **No one who** abides in Him keeps on sinning; **no one who** keeps on sinning has either seen Him or known Him.

(7) Little children, let no one deceive you. **Whoever practices** righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous.

(8) **Whoever** makes a **practice** of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

(9) **No one** born of God makes a **practice** of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.

(10) By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: **whoever** does not **practice** righteousness is not of God, nor is **the one who** does not love his brother.

Six times John emphasizes **making a practice** of something in this short passage. He is comparing the difference of **making a practice of sin and making a practice of righteousness.** The term for practice is a generic catch all term in the Greek, and its definition is 7 pages long. It can emphasize **producing/ manufacturing** something, **accomplishing** something, **carrying** something out, and even **bearing** fruit. The difference between practicing

righteousness and practicing sin applies to everyone. **8 times John references, “everyone who”, “no one who,” or “whoever.”** The false teachers were trying to introduce different classes of believers. They claimed to be enlightened and on a higher plane than everyone else. John is directly contradicting this. This truth applies to everyone, whoever they may be. He starts this comparison of practicing sin and righteousness by defining sin.

1 John 3:4 ESV

(4) Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; **sin is lawlessness.**

Everyone that produces, manufactures, bears, or brings about sin, is actually producing lawlessness. This applies to every nonbeliever and believer, everyone. **Sin at its very core is a rebellion against God and His holy law.** It is more than imperfection, or a mistake. It is not simply a product of society, our body, or how we were raised. All of these things influence our sin, but at its core, sin is a willful rejection of God and breaking His law. **Sin is an active rebellion against God’s known will.** Adam and Eve rebelled against God’s revealed will/ law and as sinners we have continued in this rebellion. In order to live a holy righteous life we need to understand what our sin truly is. The false teachers were softening sin and John wants to reestablish how heinous it truly is.

1 John 3:5 ESV

(5) You know that **He appeared in order to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin.**

We were just encouraged to look forward to the day when Jesus will appear

(1 John 2:28) at His second coming, and now John is reminding us what Jesus accomplished the first time He appeared. **He came to take away sins.**

John 1:29 ESV

(29) The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who **takes away** the sin of the world!”

Jesus is the perfect payment for sin. He is the one who **lifted sin up to the cross** so that it can be **taken away** from us. Jesus came to eradicate sin. It was the barrier of our fellowship with Him. Jesus has no sin in Himself. He is absolutely pure, and holy. **This has huge implications for believers who want to abide with Him.**

1 John 3:6 ESV

(6) No one who abides in Him **keeps on sinning**; no one who **keeps on sinning** has either seen Him or known Him.

Many struggle with this verse. In typical John fashion He presents a straightforward truth with no wiggle room. **Since Jesus is perfect, to abide in Him means to not sin.** Practically, we would like an asterisk, where a little sin would be allowed as we abide. Even the translators try to introduce this by adding the words **keeps on sinning**. The NIV even adds the word **continues in sin**. The translators are trying to introduce the idea that a believer will sin, but there is a line of sin that is habitual, continual, or living in, that an abiding believer cannot cross. **The problem with this is that these words are not in the Greek.**

The translators know this, and try to make the case that the tense/structure of the verb (present/participle) indicates it. The problem is that **there are no other examples in scripture that would support this**. In 1 John 5:16 we see the same phrase and tense and it is not translated this way at all. Also there are Greek words and phrases that mean **without ceasing** (1 Thess 5:17) and **continually** (Luke 24:53, Heb 10:1), and John did not use any of them. As uncomfortable and hard of a truth it is the NASB95 translates the verse well.

1 John 3:6 NAS95

(6) No one who abides in Him **sins; no one who sins** has seen Him or knows Him.

Verse 5 told us that Jesus has no sin. **So in order to abide in Him we must reflect that, we must be without sin**. Sin, even a little bit, always breaks our fellowship with Him because of His purity and Holiness. John already taught this truth.

1 John 1:6 ESV

(6) If we say we have fellowship with Him **while we walk in darkness**, we lie and do not practice the truth.

We either walk in the light abiding with Jesus or in the darkness in sin. It cannot be both at the same time. **Because Jesus is without sin, we cannot abide in Him as we are sinning**. This is the exact same truth as saying sin breaks our fellowship with Jesus. **Sin and abiding are incompatible**. If I said a person cleans (present tense) their gun then I can know that they are not at an airport waiting for a flight. We know this because airport terminals are incompatible with guns. There are check points, and x-ray machines ensuring this fact. When a person cleans their gun, they could be a lot of different places but they will not be at an airport terminal.

This is exactly what John is teaching. When we are abiding with Jesus we will not sin. When we sin we are not walking in fellowship, abiding, with Him. Our sin shows we don't know Him in that moment and are not seeing Him. It **does not say** that we never knew or saw Him. Sin does not come out of knowing and seeing Jesus. **This truth means it is impossible for a believer to constantly abide, because we know that we will sin**.

1 John 1:8-9 ESV

(8) **If we say we have no sin**, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

(9) **If we confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

All of us sin and fall out of abiding with Jesus. As long as we are in this body with our old sin nature we will never perfectly abide with Jesus. **If we claim to be sinless, always abiding, we deceive ourselves**. This is why confession is so important. We all sin and stop abiding, and we are to bring these sins into the light and walk fresh with Jesus. Sin always breaks fellowship, and needs to be taken seriously. We cannot deceive ourselves or let anyone else deceive us that sin is not a big deal.

1 John 3:7-8 ESV

(7) Little children, **let no one deceive you**. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as He is righteous.

(8) Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was **to destroy the works of the devil**.

The false teachers were trying to deceive these believers. Some taught that they were **beyond sin**, and had a secret that helped them be perfect. Others were teaching it was impossible not to sin **so it was not big deal**. Either way John is emphasizing the importance of holy living and the serious consequences of sin. When we abide with Jesus we do not sin. **When we sin, we are joining in with the devil who has been sinning from the beginning.**

John 10:10 ESV

(10) The thief comes only to **steal** and **kill** and **destroy**. I came that they **may have life and have it abundantly**.

There is no life in sin, it only kills and produces death. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. The word destroy in 1 John 3:8 means **to loose or untie, to set free**. When we trust in Jesus' life, death and resurrection we are set free from sin. We are given the abundant life that is only found in Him.

How we live as a believer in this new life is tremendously important! Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, why would we keep living in what Jesus came to conquer? **Participating in sin is participating in the very thing Jesus came to destroy.** It is participating in the very thing that caused Jesus to die on the cross. Whatever rational we hear that tries to excuse sin, it is wrong. We are to walk in our new life in Jesus.

1 John 3:9 NAS95

(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**.

This verse is very difficult because it presents the constant struggle and tension between who we are right now as a child of God and practically how we live. It compares our **position** with our **practice**. John already declared (3:2) that we are a child of God right now. This part of us, **the new child of God, does not sin**. When we sin, and we were already told we will, that comes from our old sin nature.

1 Corinthians 15:45 NAS95

(45) So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, **BECAME A LIVING SOUL**." The last Adam became **a life-giving spirit**.

The moment Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden their spirit, the part of them that could be in relationship with God and abide with Him died. All humans since then have **a body and soul and a dead spirit**. If you are born a **human you cannot change your nature, you cannot become a horse**. We reflect the same human nature as Adam and it involves being dead spiritually.

Then came Jesus, the last Adam. He reconciled our sin, and made it possible for us to become spiritually alive. **He gives life to the spirit that was dead in us**. Just like our human nature that cannot be changed; **once someone is born spiritually that cannot be undone**. Our Spirit that came alive is described as a child of God, and John is saying that it does not sin. It is the part of us that can abide with Jesus. We now have a very serious moment by moment choice of how we are going to live.

Romans 6:1-5 ESV

(1) What shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?**
(2) By no means! **How can we who died to sin still live in it?**

(3) Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? (4) We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, **we too might walk in newness of life.**

I will remind you that Jesus came to **“to take away sins” and “to destroy the works of the devil.”** When a person is saved, they are brought back and identified into His death on the cross. We are also identified into His resurrected life. We are given new life in our spirit through Him. We are to walk in that new life; we are to abide in Him. As we abide in Him, we will walk in obedience, **this new spiritual side of us does not even have the ability to sin, this is what John says in verse 3:9.** Unfortunately, that is not the only side of us. As a believer we have **the capacity to abide with Jesus in our spirit and not to sin, but we also still have the capacity to sin in our old sin nature,** our flesh. The same man who just asked how we can continue in sin, also says in the very next chapter:

Romans 7:18-21 NAS95

(18) For I know that nothing good dwells in me, **that is, in my flesh;** for the willing is present in me, but **the doing of the good is not.**

(19) For the good that I want, I do not do, but **I practice the very evil that I do not want.**

(20) But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, **I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.**

(21) I find then the principle that **evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.**

The spiritual side of us that came alive in Jesus cannot sin. In direct contrast, our old sin nature the flesh, all it wants to do is sin. Our flesh does not have the ability to do anything else. Paul feels caught between these two sides of himself. He knows that He keeps on doing evil. **He changes Greek words to emphasize the ongoing nature of these sins.** He practices at sinning. This battle could only take place in a believer because if someone is spiritually dead, then they would have no desire to do good. **These two sides, are both Paul.** He cannot blame His flesh and act like He does not have a choice in the matter. This battle wages inside every believer. The great news, is that it is temporary and **we have been given the Holy Spirit to come help us, abide right now and one day permanently.**

Romans 8:10-13 ESV

(10) But if Christ is in you, although **the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life** because of righteousness.

(11) If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead **will also give life to your mortal bodies** through His Spirit who dwells in you.

(12) So then, brothers, **we are debtors,** not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.

(13) For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but **if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can put to death that old sin nature, and abide with Jesus in our new spiritual life.