

Practicing Righteousness or Practicing Sin?

1 John 3:4-10

JOHN'S DEFINITION OF SIN

1. The NATURE of sin is LAWLESSNESS. v.4-5

- In Greek thought, to sin was to “miss the mark.” (Imagine an archer missing the bull’s eye on the target.)
- In John’s thought, to sin was to break the law of God. (Moral Law = 10 Commandments)
- The Law reveals the character and will of God. Ref. Psalm 19:7-11 (perfect, righteous, pure, true, etc)

→ Jesus taught that sin is not merely a matter of action, but a matter of the heart. Mt 5:21-22, 27-28

2. The ORIGIN of sin is the DEVIL. v.8

- Not, ‘the devil made me do it’; but ‘sin is connected to the father of sin.’

→ The good news (Gospel) is that both the nature & the origin of sin have been addressed by what Jesus did.

PRACTICING SIN OR PRACTICING RIGHTEOUSNESS

1. The use of the word “practice.”

- Used 6 times in these verses. Also in 1:6 and 2:29.

2. The meaning of the word “practice.”

- Gk. ποιέω (related to Eng. ‘poet’ or ‘poem’) to create, make, compose; Present tense: continual, on-going
- Therefore, “practice” = on-going, continual, perpetual making or creating.’

3. The use of “practice” in 1 John.

- John contrasts those who ‘make a practice of sinning’ and those who ‘practice righteousness.’ v.6, 8, 10
- Remember John has given us two ‘guardrails’ to guide us when we look at sin the life of a Christian:
...Christians do not go on sinning... but Christians sin. v.1:6, 8, 10: 2:1, 4; 3:4-10

→ Main idea: There is a difference between committing a sin and making a practice of sin.

- John 8:34: Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who **practices** sin is a slave to sin.

WHY CAN'T CHRISTIANS CONTINUE TO MAKE A PRACTICE OF SINNING?

→ John connects his argument with at least three realities in the Christian’s life.

1. The reality of our new birth. v.9, 10

- Christians have been born of God. v.9 Ref. John 3:3,7
- Christians and non-Christians come from different spiritual families. v.10 Ref. Eph.2:1-5; John 8:39-47

→ John is not just saying Xns ‘should not’ keep on sinning. (I.e., moralism) He links it to the reality of the new birth.

2. The reality of our union with Jesus Christ. v.5, 6, 7

- Christians are united with Jesus.
- v.5: ...in him there is no sin.
- v.6: ...has either seen him or known him.
- v.7: ...as he is righteous. Ref. 2:1

→ Christians share the same ‘DNA’ as God.

3. The reality of Jesus’ mission. v.5, 8

- v.5: You know that he appeared to take away sins...
-To ‘take away’: to take up, to remove completely, literally: “to lift up and carry away” Gk. αἶρω
-To practice sin is to deny that the cross actually accomplished what God intended.
- v.8: The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

→ Was Jesus successful in His mission? Did He achieve the purpose for which He came?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS...