

# I John 3

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] now friends and brethren would you please stand with me in the chapter we read earlier on 1 John chapter 3 and this morning with God's help I would like to study together with you from verse 4 to verse 10 1 John chapter 3 from verse 4 to verse 10 let's read again these words whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness and sin is lawlessness and you know that he was manifested to take away our sins and in him there is no sin whoever abides in him does not sin whoever sinned has neither seen him nor known him little children let no one deceive you he who practices righteousness is righteous just as he is righteous he who sinned is of the devil for the devil has sinned from the beginning for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil whoever has been born of God does not sin for his sin remains in him and he cannot sin because he has been born of God and this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God nor is he who does not love his brother now how do you know how you feel when you read this letter it is a well known letter we have verses that we often quote we find encouragement but there are some verses some parts of this letter which are very challenging as we read it as we read it we feel really challenged by what

John says to this believer and it might be a temptation to read this letter like a kind of test of our salvation you read verses like this he who commits sin is of the devil doesn't know God you read it and you think about yourself or at least I think about myself am I a Christian?

is John testing the faith of his readers or is John testing our faith? I think it's important for us to understand these challenging verses to look at the context to look at the people that John is writing to and first of all he's writing to Christians he's not writing to unbelievers he's not writing generally to unconverted people he is writing to people that are part of the church of Jesus he calls them beloved dear children earlier on he says that your sins are forgiven you have overcome the devil the word of God abides in him so these are not the words of someone who is unsure about the salvation of the people he's writing to he thinks he believes that they are Christians and in writing this letter he's not undermining their confession he's not questioning their confession the purpose of this letter is to encourage them not to challenge them not to put doubts in their minds but to encourage them in their walk in their pilgrimage in their following Jesus so even when we read like he who commits sin is of the devil the apostle is not thinking about them is thinking of some of us and the context of this letter is one of church division in chapter 2 the apostle speaks of those who were with us but were not of us people that in the past were part of the church part of the congregation and then they went astray they left and they left because they started following wrong teaching unbiblical teaching and as you read this letter you find that

John often insists about who Jesus truly is that he's God that he's God in the flesh so it's very likely that these people had lost sight of who Jesus really was they were following the teaching that had been undermined the person and work of Jesus Christ but more than that they were also following a teaching that undermined the gravity of sin they were told that sin doesn't matter because sin is committed in the body and the body doesn't matter all that matters is the spirit and so if we sin in the body God doesn't care because it is in the body the body is going to disappear we are souls we are spirits and we are going to live you can see they were living a very inconsistent life they claimed to be Christians they claimed to know God they claimed to have a spiritual life in themselves but their practice was completely different from what

God commanded them and so when John is saying phrases like he who commits sin is of the devil doesn't know God it's not thinking of the Christians of the people he's writing to it's thinking of the people who departed from the congregation who are now living a misleading life a sinful life John is saying to them you are a Christian you have overcome the devil you are following Jesus sadly they are not and John is therefore making a contrast between them and the rest and he's saying to them in many ways don't follow the example don't follow the path they're walking into because those who walk in that path are not those children but you are and so your conduct should be different so you can find this contrast even in these verses and I say there are two contrasts there is one between the righteous and the unrighteous but also between everyone else and Jesus there is there are two contrasts between

[ 7:17 ] Jesus and man and within man those who are transgressing God's law and those who are following and obeying God's law but there is also an example and that example set before the people and before us is Jesus so this morning we're going to look to the transgressors to the righteous and to Jesus so we'll begin with the transgressors what is John telling us about those people who were once within the church and now left and are leaving a sinful life in verse 4 he says whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness now here comes the first scary verse is the apostle John saying that if I sin against God I commit lawlessness and therefore I am lost is that what John is saying no he isn't because we can't find this in our

Bible in English Bible but if you go into the original when John says whoever commits sin he says whoever commits their sin a specific sin John is not thinking of any sin he's considering one specific sin which is the sin of the people who left the church who are now living a sinful life who are denying the personal work of Jesus Christ who are careless about sin and so John is saying to them transgressors are those who are following this sin you are not doing this but they are they are denying Christ they are denying his divinity they are denying his incarnation they are denying that he was manifested in our sins they are denying his wounds so the problem in many ways is heatherstone this congregation that left these people who are left were following a false teaching they were not following the will of God the revelation of God anymore they were following a religion of men and that was the problem that was the sin and in many ways mankind is divided in two groups of people those who are following

God's religion and those who are following man's religion those who are following salvation by grace those who are following salvation by words those who are following Jesus or following the devil and John is reminding these people this group is a group that is against you you are a different person different people and so make sure that your lifestyle is different from theirs as well another thing that belongs to the transgressors to the unrighteous people is that they continue in sin again our translation doesn't show this but in the original again and in different translations the idea is not like in verse in whoever sinned but whoever abides in sin whoever continues to live in sin

John is not saying that he who sins and maybe even struggles with a specific sin and therefore falls into that sin again and again John is not saying that person is not a believer John is talking about people who enjoy sin who have pleasure in sin who are consistent in sin who have no intention for repentance who don't care about what God thinks about sin there is a difference and John is saying the unrighteous person the transgressors the children of the devil are those who have no concern about sin who are quite happy to continue in sin to abide in sin who make sin their practice their lifestyle who have no interest in what is good and what is righteous and what is Godly again you can see the difference John is not addressing the believers he's not putting doubts in their mind he's showing to them the difference between them and the rest they who continue sin sin and maybe you sometimes wonder about your own salvation and say am I a believer if you don't like sin if you hate sin if you try by God's grace not to sin if you are sadden and grieved when you sin it means you're not a transgressor because the transgressors the unrighteous people the ungodly people they don't care about sin they abide in sin it's their home it's their dwelling place it's the place where they find peace it's when they do wrong another thing

John tells us about these transgressors is that they do not know God in verse 6 whoever sinned has neither seen him nor known him remember these people claim to be Christians the people who had left the congregation who are now living sinful lives they still thought I am a Christian I am going to heaven I am a follower of God this is impossible they cannot be God's children they cannot be his followers because they don't know him they have never seen him they don't know who God is his holiness that is light that is without sin but also they do not know him in a deeper way they don't have a relationship with him often the bible uses the word knowledge to indicate fellowship connection the knowledge that a husband of his wife!

[ 13 : 57 ] And John is saying these people despite what they say with their lips they don't know God they don't know God rather they are of the devil verse 8 he who sins is of the devil again not he who falls into sin not the Christian person who struggles against sin that falls into sin and then repents maybe falls again but repents again not that person John is thinking of those who abide!

they don't know God because they are of the devil remember Jesus is the same expression more or less with the pharisees the pharisees thought that they were God's people that they were pleasing God the reaction was different Jesus said to them you do the will of your father the devil your works manifest that you are not of God if you are not a child of Abraham and the pharisees were not just simply trying to obey God and failing they were abiding in sin despite God's revelation despite Jesus mighty works they claimed that he did his works because of Bethlehem because of the devil not because of the Holy Spirit not because of God Jesus did things with the power of the devil so they were abiding in sin there was a rejection of sin they were ethical in their understanding they did not know

Christ who he was the value of his person the power of his works and John is saying those who left you those who departed these unrighteous people their behavior proves to you they're not your brothers and sisters anymore without the wear of us but it went beyond the devil and it's interesting that John mentioned one sin and this sin is rebuilding our strength whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God that's a general statement nor is he who does not love his brother these people who had departed from the church they were not simply wrong in their theology but their attitude towards the rest of the believers was also wrong and it's interesting that again and again the apostle

John in this letter refers to not loving your brother and almost the greatest sin he says you cannot say that you love God like these people were claiming and not loving your brother you're a hypocrite and so John is saying the false of these people who left the clear manifestation that they're not of God but of the devil is that they do not love the brethren if they were your brothers and sisters they would love you if they were part of the same family you are part of if God was their father as he is your father they would love you because you are brethren but you don't and that proves to you they are not your brothers and sisters we thought they were but!

how important this is for God remember when Jesus was asked about the summary of the Lord we would have replied the same commandments Jesus replied love God and love your neighbor as yourself Jesus says I'm giving a new commandment that you love one another which is a new commandment and John again insists how important it is that they love one another we can talk a lot about following God and we can be very strict in our spiritual disciplines in our church going in our Bible reading in our keeping of the commandments but if we do not love our brethren our brothers and sisters but then

[ 19 : 01 ] John tells us that these people will be destroyed John tells us that Jesus the son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil it says that in verse 8 in a sense those who are following the devil those who are the children of the devil those who are far away from God's people and from the knowledge of the true God the unbelievers the unconverted those we call the lost they will have the same end of the devil these words are not for the church these words are for those outside the church for the unconverted so my friend I don't know where you are this morning maybe you are part of the church you attend the church you have a connection with the church and yet you're still in unbelief you're still following the religion of man and not the religion of

God maybe you know about Christ but you don't know Christ if that is your case you need to come to Jesus and pray for forgiveness you need to come to him and ask for salvation because if you are like these transgressors if these verses are revealing something to you about yourself then you need the mercy of God in Jesus Christ you need to repent and ask for God's mercy but then John tells us something about the true church the true believers and John tells us remember he's doing a contrast so there is going to be a little overlap here but John tells us that the righteous do not continue in sin those who are unbelievers those who are not converted who are still outside of

God's grace they enjoy sin they have pleasure in sin but you are different God has changed you and therefore you don't abide in sin anymore you used to but not anymore now if you read the whole letter you will find that he who denies to sin he who says I don't sin is a liar so John is saying you as a Christian are still fighting against sin you who are righteous in God's sight for being forgiven for your sins you're still falling into sin sin against God there is no such a thing as a perfect Christian none of us is perfect we all fall we all have weaknesses all of us have a sin or certain kinds of sin where we fall more easily more often where the devil is still a grip on us

John is not saying that the Christian does not enjoy sin even when we back slide there is something within us that hurts the Holy Spirit speaking to our conscience we don't enjoy even when we fall into sin we are not happy rather than remaining in sin we remain in Jesus it says in verse 6 whoever abides in him does not sin if we abide in Jesus we cannot abide in sin the other people the unconverted they abide in sin therefore they cannot abide in Christ because Jesus is light he's without sin and it's impossible for light and darkness to be together you can have one or the other and so

John is encouraging the Christian he's saying to them I can see this I've seen you you don't abide I can see there is a struggle with sin I can see that you fall into sin but you don't abide in sin because you abide in him you abide in Christ you have fellowship with him you are united with him he is in you and you are in him more than that he says in verse nine whoever has been born of God does not sin the unconverted Their father is the devil but you are different you have been saved in Christ and now your father is God and his seed remains in him the apostle Paul in Ephesians speaks of the life of God been given to us what is it that enabled the

[ 24 : 47 ] Christian to resist sin to be holy to do what is right it's not his strength it is that God has given us spiritual life that the life of God is in us a mistake that I often do and we often do as Christians especially in our circles it's the same of the Galatians we begin by grace and then we try to continue by works we think that justification is by grace but then sanctification is my work no it isn't our catechism says that sanctification is God's work in us it is by grace we are sanctified it is by God's grace and God's life in us it is the ministry of the

Holy Spirit it is Jesus abiding in us that sanctifies us that makes us more like him not our efforts of course there are means we have to use but it is his work not ours this is not challenging their faith this is encouraging them he said to them you have God in you have fellowship with God you know God God is in you and you are in God you are completely different from those people who left from these false teachers from this false religion you have the life of God in you all is well with you little children he calls little children there's no question their salvation is he assuring them you are saved and also in verse 10 when he says that he who is not of

God doesn't love his brother I think we can say by implication that those who are of God loves the brother probably the clearest mark of God's grace in us is to love one another not in Africa of course we struggle husband and wife often we struggle parents and children we do fail in loving our neighbor as ourselves but there's a desire to do so there's a pleasure when we are with our families even when we have problems still it is our family we enjoy being with them even when we don't agree with what they are doing still they are our family because we have one father God is our father and God is their father and that brings us together we have an older brother his name is

Jesus he has brought us into his father to become his brothers and sisters and therefore we love one another and I think the greatest need for the church today is love our little congregation in Italy we have many failures many failures we're far away from what we should do as leadership as well as people there's one thing that is really encouraging for me there's love among us and when people come visiting they see it what is the greatest need we have is to feel love to be accepted and when there is a congregation where the word of God is faithfully preached of course but when there is brotherly love when someone comes in I want to be part of this

I need this love I need this care I need this help and those who are born of God they do love him but finally John tells us about Jesus and that's something that belongs in the New Testament to all the writers of the New Testament as soon as they come they mention Jesus not like a mantra not like a magic word but because they realize that in Jesus we have everything and so as John tells us about Jesus that he was manifested to take away our sins now in the Greek again the idea is of a perfect one once and for all as done Jesus has come to take away our sins our sins are removed again remember the context these people are struggling because there is false teaching somebody is undermining

[ 30 : 01 ] Christ and Jesus reminded them don't listen to them Jesus has forgiven you from all your sins you're justified God doesn't see you for who you are yourself because his son has taken away all your sins for God your name is you are righteous because of Christ he has removed all your sin he has taken them away in Jesus there is no sin they were undermining Christ they were saying wrong things about Jesus and John reminds them there is no sin in Christ remember John lived with Jesus for three years John was day and night with Jesus he saw him in all things in all situations he saw his actions his reactions he heard his words and then he says there is no sin in him these people can say whatever the life of

Christ but I was with him and he never sin never sin he was perfect and the contrast is with us needing to have our sins removed and Christ having no sin the apostle Paul brings the two together in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21 he Christ who knew no sin like John says here was made our sins so that we in a sense who knew sin plenty sin could become the righteousness of God in heaven so we were sinners but Jesus removed our sins away from us and he who is without sin gave us his obedience his righteousness to be ours and now we are righteous before

God we are innocent we are just but also Jesus becomes the example of the throne verse 7 let no one deceive you he who practices righteousness is righteous just as he is righteous don't follow the example of men don't be deceived by the example of these people Jesus is your partner he is your example he is the one you have to follow and of course it's good to have Christians around us that we can imitate but let's make sure that we imitate these people as long as they imitate Christ even the apostle Paul says don't be my followers as I am of Jesus the idea is if I don't follow Jesus don't follow me and too often we follow what someone else is doing what someone else has been doing instead of following what

Christ wants us to do he is our example we are Christians after all we often think of us as free church folks! that comes very very behind we are following Jesus and our desire should be to follow him because God has manifested him has revealed him who is no sin and that should be our desire to be without sin him but also Jesus is the one who destroyed the work of the devil one of the aspects of the atonement one of the fruits or results of the atonement is that Jesus conquered his enemies we are all nailed by the cross we often think of the cross as the devil having a temporary victory in Christ no that was his very defeat at the cross the devil was defeated once and for all

Jesus won on count and we are more than conquerors in him he won all his enemies have been defeated and will be defeated at his count where are you offense which group do you belong are you among those who are following Jesus who are saved by Jesus or those who are rejecting Christ there's only two possibilities no middle ground and God's invitation to you this morning is don't be deceived don't remain among God's enemies do not reject

[ 35 : 29 ] Christ forever because those who reject Christ will be destroyed why will you die says he why will you die God has sent his son to remove your sins away come to him believe him and he will save you let's pray him Thank you.