



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: 1 John 3:3-10*

### 1. The tension of believers sinning or not sinning

#### a. “Do not sin” verses in CSB and some other translations>

- a. *1 John 3:6 Everyone who remains in him does not sin; everyone who sins has not seen him or known him. 1 John 3:8 The one who commits sin is of the devil, ...*
- b. *1 John 3:9 Everyone who has been born of God does not sin, because his seed remains in him; he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God.*
- c. *1 John 5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin...*

#### b. Apparent contradiction with:

- a. *1 John 1:8-9 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.*
- b. *1 John 2:1 if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*
- c. *“In the 1st Epistle [of John] believers both sin (1:9-2:2) & yet do not sin (3:4-10; 5:18), a tension the author makes no attempt to resolve.” [Andrew J Byers, *Gospel Reading & Reception*, p. 210]*

#### c. Other translations try to solve the tension

- a. “makes a practice of sinning” or “keeps on sinning” or “practices sin”
- b. *1 John 5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning,*

#### d. Sin is lawlessness – 3:4

- a. Should be understood as without law instead of breaking the law
- b. It is rebellion against God’s authority
- c. “To be “lawless” does not mean simply to break the law; it means to disdain the very idea of a law to which one must submit. ...**Anomia is the rejection of God’s authority and the exaltation of the autonomy of the self. ...There is something innate in human nature that causes each of us to resent the idea of submitting to a higher authority than ourselves.**” Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 143
- d. “The foundation of a right relationship with God is acknowledging that he himself defines the standard of right and wrong, and that we must be willing to submit ourselves to his authority.” Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on*

the NT, p. 144

## 2. The contrast between children of God and children of the devil 3:6-10

### a. Children of God

#### a. They abide/remain in Christ – 3:6

- a. "The statement that everyone who remains in him "does not sin" is difficult." Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 145
- b. "No one who abides ... keeps on sinning. True followers of Christ do not recklessly and habitually violate what their anointing (2:20, 27) has planted within them .... Those who do habitually sin have neither seen him nor known him. They are not genuine Christians." ESV Study Bible
- c. Since sin is in fact a present reality in every life, and even in the lives of those who are followers of Christ, how can anyone remain in him? There is a distinct tension in 3:6-9. The tension that begins here comes to its fullest press with John's statement in 3:9 that the one born of God "is not able to sin." Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 145
- d. "The author uses present tense forms of the verbs "to remain" and "to sin," indicating that both the "remaining" and the "sinning" in this statement are being viewed as continuous acts." Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, p. 130

#### b. Children of God are born of God – 3:9

- a. "Being born from God means to continue to be vivified by God's creative power; such birth cannot be lost or abrogated." Judith M. Lieu, *I, II, & III John*, p. 138
- b. Paul's emphasis is on adoption
  - a. **Eph. 1:5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,**
  - b. **Rom. 8:15 have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"**
  - c. As adopted sons we have a position of sons with the blessing of inheritance
- c. John's emphasis is we are born of God
  - a. **John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**
  - b. John 3:3 ... unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God
  - c. 1 John 3:9 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.
  - d. As children of God, we have the life of God, the eternal life

#### d. The seed abides in them – 3:9

- a. "A daring metaphor employing the word "seed" (Greek *sperma*) to depict the Spirit's work in believers. Unlike the children of the devil (in this case the secessionists), the children of God do not go on sinning because the Spirit dwells within them. NIV Zondervan Study Bible
- b. "God's seed. Some take this to be the Word of God that brings about the new birth (cf. [James 1:18, 22](#); [1 Pet. 1:23, 25](#)). Others see it as a way of speaking of the Holy Spirit in his regenerating and transforming presence within the believer. Since the Holy Spirit works through the Word in regeneration, both of these ideas are likely intended here. In other words, because the Word is present in the believer's heart through the work of the Spirit, the believer cannot keep on sinning. Thus the hearts of genuine Christians (those who are truly children of God) have been so transformed that they cannot live in a pattern of continual sin—though this does not mean that Christians are ever completely free from sin in this life (see [1 John 1:8-10](#))." ESV Study Bible
- c. "What is it actually that remains in those born of God that makes it impossible for them to continue in sin? Within 1 John believers are said to have remaining in them (be indwelt by) the gospel message they heard from the beginning (2:24), the anointing/Holy Spirit (2:27), and God himself (3:24; 4:12, 15, 16). Of these three, the Holy Spirit is the most satisfactory option in the light of the fact that the new birth is effected by God through the Spirit, and it is the Spirit who in Johannine theology remains with and in believers." Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, p. 135
- d. "Because those born of God share his character, they are incapable to committing the sin of which John speaks." Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 148
- e. "It's not in the nature of the God-born to practice and parade sin." The Message

#### e. They do not make a practice of committing sin 3:9b

- a. "The author uses a present-tense form of the infinitive "to sin" (*hamartanein*), indicating that it is sinning as an ongoing action that he has in mind here as impossible for those born of God." Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, p. 134

#### f. They have the life within that confesses sin and desires to continue in righteousness

- a. "...John makes clear that it is not spiritual perfection that is expected; such perfection awaits the second coming of Christ. **Yet regeneration will inexorably produce a heart that confesses sin and continues in righteousness. Continuing in sin is an impossibility for those who are truly God's children** (1 John 3:9: "cannot")." Andreas Köstenberger, *Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, p. 268
- b. "John also acknowledges that even those who have been born of God do sin, and he calls his readers to acknowledge and confess their sin because God is faithful and just and will forgive confessed sin based on the cleansing power of Jesus' blood (1:7-2:2)." Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 150
- c. Another view on the sin that believers do not commit
- g. "The sin that a born-again child of God is not able to commit is *anomia*, that radical autonomy that rejects God's authority to define how people are to live. **Those truly born of God will not deny their sin or reject God's authority to name it, but**

**will confess their sin and be cleansed by Christ's blood.** In this way the sin of the believer is different from even the same sinful acts that unbelievers commit." Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 151

- a. "Kruse is almost certainly on target to suggest that *anomia* is the key to understanding these difficult statements. ... John is not referring to every sin as *anomia*, but is concerned with the sin that leads to eschatological judgment (i.e. Apostasy). John will later say in 5:6-17 that there is sin that does not lead to death." Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, pp. 147-8
- b. "But what sin is not *anomia*? It is sin that has been confessed and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ (1:9; 2:1-2). **The sin of a believer who acknowledges and confesses it is of a different type than the sin of those who refuse to confess and submit to God's authority.** It is the *anomia* sin that leads to death that the one born of God is not able to commit because God's seed remains in them... and they have been born of God." Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 148
- c. There is an apparent contradiction in 1 John concerning sin in the believer's life: those who claim not to have sinned are liars (1:10); those born of God do not and cannot sin (3:6,9). A possible resolution is that, in context, 3:4 defines the latter sin as "lawlessness" (Greek *anomia*). In the NT this word refers not to breaking the law but to rebelling against God (like the devil's rebellion). If this is the case, John is saying that those who claim to know God and yet sin in this way certainly do not know God and are, in fact, in league with the devil. This is the sin that those born of God do not and cannot commit. It is possible for believers to sin in other ways, as 1:8-2:1 indicates." NIV Zondervan Study Bible

### b. Children of the devil 3:8,10

- a. They make a practice of sinning
  - a. "It may be that there's no satisfactory resolution of the tension between 2:1 & 3:6-9. However, if we recognize the connection between sin & *anomia* ['lawlessness' CSB] (rebellion) in 3:1-10, we might say that *the sin which distinguishes the children of the devil is the sin of the devil, rebellion or anomia, and it is this sin that it is impossible for believers to commit* because God's 'seed' remains in them & they cannot commit it." [Colin G. Kruse, *Letters of John*, p. 132]
  - b. "John builds a case against the person who wishes to be known as a Christian and yet defends practices and attitudes that God has defined as sin. To do such a thing is to be lawless and to reject God's authority, and this should rightfully call into question one's assurance of eternal life, because it calls into question ones' identity as someone born of God." Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 150
- b. The devil has been sinning from the beginning
  - a. "The devil's work is essentially trying to undo God's work by turning people aside from doing God's will (i.e. causing them to sin)." Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, p. 133
- c. They do not practice righteousness
  - a. "...doing what is right and not doing what is right (both understood as continuous actions) become important identifying marks of the children of God and the children of the devil, respectively. ...Other important identifying marks of the children of God and the children of the devil are loving and not loving fellow believers, respectively." Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, p. 136
- d. They lead others astray
  - a. "As [John] saw things, the secessionists were not only living sinful lives themselves but were teaching others to do the same....In the present verse [v. 7] the author warns the readers again lest "anyone" should lead them astray. In this context the warning relates to moral behavior: "The one who does what is right is righteous.'" Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, p. 131
  - b. "...the author urges his readers not to be led astray by those who say sinful behavior does not matter. It must matter, because the Son of God appeared to destroy the work of the devil, which is to lead people into sin." Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, p. 133

### 3. Jesus Christ came

- a. To take away sin 3:5
 

*You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.*

  - a. "Jesus appeared in order to take away sins, not only so that sin might be forgiven (1:9) but also so that it might cease to exercise its tyrannical bondage. in him there is no sin. A reminder that "God is light" (1:5), and his Son embodies his sinlessness." ESV Study Bible
- b. To destroy the works of the devil 3:8b
 

*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.*

  - a. "The devil seeks to turn people aside from doing God's will, causing them to sin, so that he may accuse them before God and demand judgment upon them. By his death Jesus atoned for human sin, thus removing the basis of the devil's accusation and so destroying his work." NIV Zondervan Study Bible
  - b. "If Christ appeared first both to 'take away our sins' & to 'destroy the devil's work,' & if, when he appears a second time, 'we shall see him' &, in consequence, 'we shall be like him,' how can we possibly go on living in sin? To do so would be to deny the purpose of both his 'appearings.'" (John Stott, *The Letters of John*, 132-33)
- c. He is without sin
  - a. "The statement that there is no sin In Jesus Christ says more than that Jesus never committed a sin during his life on earth. It says that one cannot remain in him and sin, for there is no sin in Jesus. John is building a case against the person who wishes to be known as a Christian and yet who defends those practices and attitudes that God has

defined as sin. To do such a thing is to be lawless and reject God's authority." Karen H Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the NT*, p. 144

#### 4. Conclusion

##### a. On God's side:

- a. Jesus appeared (the first time) to take away sin and destroy the works of the devil
- b. Through believing we are born of God and received his life, the "seed"
- c. This life in us does not agree with or tolerate sin – this is a gift

##### b. On our side:

- a. We are bothered by our sin because of the life we received
- b. Therefore, we confess our sins, which is to purify ourselves in view of his coming appearing; we are cleansed and forgiven
- c. We abide/remain i