

“Every Believer Is Like Jesus”
(1 John 2:1-11)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

We saw this morning

That no Christian is perfect –

Every believer sins –

We all sin –

John tells us,

If we don't think we have –

So that we think we don't need Jesus –

Or that we continue to sin –

So that we don't need to repent –

We're only deceiving ourselves –

God's truth has not been applied to our hearts

In a saving way by His Spirit;

We're also calling God a liar,

Because He says both are true.

His point is,

That even as believers,

We have a war going on in our hearts,

Between the flesh and the Spirit –

When the desire of the flesh wins out,

We sin –

If that wasn't true,
 Then we wouldn't need
 Continually to confess our sins,
 That we might receive God's merciful forgiveness –
 At least some of us wouldn't.

B. Preview.

John now goes on
 To tell us why he wrote these things:
 It wasn't to give us an excuse to sin,
 But to show us the reality of our sin,
 So that we'll turn from it to Jesus
 And push on to become more like Him:

He tells us this evening that,

The Father sent Jesus into the world
To destroy the power of sin in our lives.

He sent Him that we might *become like Him* –

And He sent Him to be our Advocate –
 That He might stand up for us when we fail,
 That we might make it to heaven.

II. Sermon.

A. John tells us first,

That the Father sent His Son into the world

That He might destroy sin.

He makes it very clear

That he didn't write

What he did in chapter 1

To give us an *excuse* to sin:

God's work of redemption

Is meant *to free us* from sin:

He writes in verse 1, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so *that you may not sin.*"

John seems to have been concerned

That some might take what he said

And twist it into an excuse for sin –

If it's true that all believers sin,

And yet still have fellowship with God,

And will eventually go to heaven,

Then why go through the hard work

Of putting our sin to death?

Have you ever noticed

That when you pay someone

Before they've completed their work,

That the work never seems to get done:

It's because the incentive is gone:

They already have what they were hoping for,

So why work any further?

A former member here

Used to develop apps for businesses.

As a part of the process,

He had to give them the finished app –

So they could try it to their satisfaction –

Before he received payment.

The one recurring problem he had

Was that they were reluctant to pay him –

It's because they already had the finished product.

The same can happen in God's kingdom:

If the Lord has given us heaven

Through faith in Jesus –

If we already have the reward –

It can tempt us

Not to do the hard work

Of fighting and overcoming our sins.

John wants to make it clear

That this isn't an option.

What he wrote was meant

To *convict* those who denied their sins,

Or to *comfort* those who struggled with sin:

It wasn't meant to encourage it.

He tells us a bit later in this letter,

That the Father sent His Son into the world

To undo what the devil did –

Not to advance his work:

We read in 1 John 3:5-8, “You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. *The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*”

When the devil succeeded

In getting Adam and Eve

To listen to him rather than to God,

Two things happened:

They became guilty,

And they became corrupt.

Adam’s guilt became ours –

Because he represented us in the Garden –

And with his guilt came corruption –

His sin forfeited the Spirit’s work for all of us:

That’s why we come into the world

In the condition we’re in: guilty,

And on our way to judgment –

And corrupt –

Wanting nothing to do with God

Or His Law.

Jesus came to undo this:

By taking our guilt

And suffering in our place –

He propitiated God –

He satisfied His justice,

He paid the price justice demanded –

So we can go free.

And by obeying His Father's Law perfectly –

He not only gave us a perfect record of obedience,

He also merited/earned the Holy Spirit,

That He might give Him to us,

That He might give us a new heart –

New affections –

So that we would *love God* and *hate sin*.

B. Now that Jesus has undone

What the devil did to us –

Now that He's given us a new record,

And a new heart –

John wants us to know

We won't live as we did before –

We will no longer be the slaves of sin,

But the slaves of righteousness:

Now we can and will live like Jesus.

1. One way we can know

That we've come savingly to Him,

Is the fact that we do live like Him:

He says in verses 3-6, "*By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*"

At first glance,

There seems to be a bit of a contradiction here

That we need to clear up –

As we do, we'll better understand

What John is saying.

This morning, we heard him say in chapter 1:8,

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us."

And in verse 10, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."

But we see him saying in 2:4, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

On the one hand,

If we say we have no sin –

That we *don't break* the commandments –

The truth is not in us.

On the other hand,

If we *break* the commandments –

Which is what we do if we don't keep them –

The truth is not in us.

Which is true?

Both are.

But we need to understand

The sense in which each is true.

If we are true believers,

We will still sin –

As we saw this morning,

We're not yet perfect;

We still have corruption in our souls;

And because we do,

We will still think,

Desire,

Speak,

And do things

That are sinful –

We don't love God yet

As we should: with our whole being.

But since we do love Him to some degree –

Because of the Spirit's work in our souls –

We won't sin with a *whole* heart,

We'll always be fighting against it to *some degree* –

We won't *give ourselves* to it;

We won't *practice* sin.

We saw John write in 1 John 3:6, "No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him."

He explains this in 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."

Practicing sin isn't the same

As *falling* to particular sins –

The Puritans believed

That each of us has one or more

Of what they called *besetting sins* –

Sins that we're particularly liable to;

That we often fall into;

Sins that we will have to struggle against

All of our lives.

I think we know from our own experience

That they're right:

We all struggle with sin.

John isn't talking here about

The sins we struggle with

Because of our imperfection:

He's talking about the practice

Of giving into sin without a fight –

Where there is no struggle;

Only the desire for that sin.

He's saying,

If that's our experience,

It shows we don't have the Spirit –

If we did,

The love He's given us for what's right

Would create a struggle

Against our desire for what's wrong –

There would be a fight.

True believers sin,

But they don't give themselves fully to any sin,

Because they love God.

2. John goes on to say, if we love God,

Instead of practicing sin,

We will practice righteousness.

He says in 2:3, "By this we know that we have come to know Him, *if we keep His commandments.*"

He says in verses 5-6, "*Whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*"

And in 3:7, "Little children, make sure no one deceives you; *the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.*"

We'll *obey* the Law –

We'll give ourselves to do what it says –

We will love God,

And our neighbor –

Because that's what we'll want to do.

We'll particularly love our brethren –

Because that's what Jesus did.

He says in verses 7-11, “Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. The one who says he is in the Light and *yet* hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”

The *commandment* John refers to –

Which is in one sense old,

But in another new –

Is the command *to love our neighbor*.

It's old in the sense

That it's the same commandment

Jesus gave His disciples in John 13:34,

Which was about forty years earlier:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

Even then,

There was a sense in which it was old –

The Lord taught them in the Old Covenant

They were to love their neighbor as themselves –

But it was also new –

Jesus gave new meaning to it

Through His own example:

“Love one another, even as I have loved you.”

But there’s still another sense,

In which this old commandment is new –

When the light of the Spirit comes into our hearts,

And drives out the darkness that was there,

So that we see what true love is,

We will begin to love those who belong to Him,

Just as Jesus loves them.

C. But let’s not forget what we saw this morning:

Our love will still be imperfect –

We will still sin –

The good news is:

When we sin,

The Lord will stand up for us:

John writes in 1 John 2:1-2, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an *Advocate* with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world.”

The word “Advocate” is *paracletos*:

The same word Jesus used to describe the Holy Spirit.

Just as Jesus went to heaven to send the Holy Spirit

That He might be our helper, comforter and counselor on earth;

So He does the same for us there:

Now He stands before God on our behalf,

To plead the merit of His sacrifice –

A sacrifice that wasn't just for the Jews,

But also for the whole world (Gentiles):

For us –

This is what will keep us in the grace of God,

And guarantee we'll make it to heaven.

Yes, we are imperfect –

We still sin –

But we no longer practice sin –

We don't give ourselves to it with a whole heart;

We fight against it;

Because Jesus has overcome it.

And even though we may fall many times,

Our sins won't destroy us –

We have an Advocate who will bring us to heaven:

Jesus Christ.

Now we practice righteousness –

Like Jesus, we love our brethren:

Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

He put His light in us,

That He might shine through us to the world,

So that others might know Him.

And so let that light shine,
By yielding to the Spirit,
Living like Jesus,
And loving the brethren. Amen.

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