

Getting Serious About Our Commitment

1 John 3:4-24

When we look at the world today, it is very easy to see those who are not believers in Jesus Christ. It's very easy to see the ungodly as they live their lives doing and practicing ungodly lifestyles. The amazing thing to me is when the "world" is shocked by some of the actions of the ungodly. Don't get me wrong, they should be shocked, but by and large, what is their standard of measurement?

Situation ethics? Depends upon rather I have a greater need than you...

Relativism? Where there are no absolutes...

Well, for someone who wants to please God and live a life to honor Him, the standard is very clear...

I mean we could turn back to the Pentateuch, the Torah, the first five books of the Bible and look at the Law. There, chapter after chapter we would see the righteous standard of God verse by verse. Or we could simply look at one verse that sums it all up:

Leviticus

Leviticus 19

² *"Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them: 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am Holy.*

Ah, but then some of us would say, I'm not of the Old Testament. I'm a New Testament Believer. So, I would then have to recant from the Leviticus verse, but I would also take you to the book of 1 Peter –

1 Peter 1

¹⁵ *but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,* ¹⁶ *because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."*

Then some might perchance say:

"Oh, but Pastor, I'm doing very good in my walk of holiness. Why, I haven't killed anyone, I've never robbed a bank, and I've never cheated on my spouse!"

But before I gave you an "Atta Boy or Atta Girl" reward, I would have to ask you to read with me through a portion of Matthew 5

Matthew 5

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'²² "But I say to you that **whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.**

And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But **whoever says, 'You fool!'** shall be in danger of hell fire.

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'²⁸ "But I say to you that **whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

³¹ "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'³² But I say to you that **whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.**"

So, I don't think we need to wonder too much about the standard do we? Jesus was very clear about the standard: holiness and perfection, in thought and in deed, with full obedience to those things declared by the Law and lived out by Jesus Christ. We know that the standard is there, yet we also know that we walk around in these "sin prone" carcasses. *In the natural man*, we are not only prone to sin, but in *the natural man* we are helpless to fight against it.

Paul himself tells us in Romans 8

⁵ *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh....,*

⁶ *For to be carnally minded is death....,*

⁷ *...the carnal mind is enmity (at war) against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.*

⁸ *So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

We are currently in a study in the book of 1 John, and as you turn to chapter 3, let me remind you John is speaking to the Church, to men and women who were professing Believers in Jesus Christ as their Savior. But, this is what John said to those Believers in chapter 1, then moving on into chapter 2—

⁸ *If we say that 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.* ¹⁰ *If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

(2) ¹ *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* ² *And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*

Sin, yes, it is always present before us and around us.

But, do we HAVE to walk in sin? No, the power of sin and death have been defeated at the Cross of Jesus Christ.

John gives us the hope that even when we do sin, we have *an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.* ² *And He Himself is the propitiation (complete and absolute satisfaction for the wrong done) for our sins.*

And if we do sin, we don't have to abide or stay in sin. And that pretty much what John is telling us here in 1 John 3. He has been most recently talking about the anti-christ and his false teaching. He was warning the Church that they need to be careful to not be drawn away to his lies and deceit.

Then at the end of chapter 2 and moving into chapter 3 he gives the Church great words of blessing and encouragement—

²⁸ *And now, little children, **abide** in Him, that when He appears, we **may have confidence and not be ashamed** before Him at His coming.* ²⁹ *If you know that He is righteous, you know that **everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.***

¹ *Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.* ² *Beloved, now we are children of God; and **it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*** ³ *And everyone who has this hope **in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.***

And everybody is feeling all wonderful and warm and fuzzy, then John moves on into verse 4—

1 John 3

⁴Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. ⁵
And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶***Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.***

⁷*Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.* ⁸***He who sins 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. ⁹***Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.***

Oh my gosh! We look at that and wonder if we'll ever make it. Look at the wording of some of those phrases above. At first glance it would appear as hopeless.

But, let's get a better look at 1) What John **IS** saying and 2) What John **IS NOT** saying—

Albert Barnes states—

(a.) He who is born again does not sin habitually, or is not habitually a sinner. If he does wrong, it is when he is **overtaken by temptation**, and the act is against the habitual inclination and purpose of his soul. If a man sins habitually, it proves that he has never been renewed.

(b.) That he who is born again does not do wrong **deliberately and of design**. He means to do right. He is not willfully and deliberately a sinner. If a man deliberately and intentionally does wrong, he shows that he is not actuated by the spirit of (Christ). It is true that when one does wrong, or commits sin, there is a momentary assent of the will; but it is under the influence of passion, or excitement, or temptation, or provocation, and not as the result of a deliberate plan or purpose of the soul. A man who (continually,) deliberately and intentionally does a wrong thing, shows that he is not a true Christian; and if this were all that is understood by perfection, then there would be many who are perfect, for there are many, very many Christians, who cannot recollect an instance for many years in which they have intentionally and deliberately done a wrong thing. Yet these very Christians see much corruption in their own hearts over which to mourn, and against which they earnestly strive; in comparing

themselves with the perfect law of God, and with the perfect example of the Savior, they see much in which they come short.

Charles Spurgeon—

We understand by this not that believers are perfectly free from sinning, but that they do not sin habitually, willfully, and openly as the unregenerate do. Their lives are holy, and when faults occur they grieve over them. The river of their lives runs towards righteousness, and though there are eddies in it these do not affect the main current.

Warren Wiersbe can help us to understand:

What the Greek text really says is: “No one who abides in Him *practices* sin; no one who *practices* sin has seen Him or knows Him” (1 John 3:6). “No one who is born of God *practices* sin ... he cannot *practice* sin because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). To “practice” sin is to sin consistently and as a way of life. It does not refer to committing an *occasional* sin. It is clear that no Christian is sinless (1 John 1:8–10), but God *expects* a true believer to **sin less, not to sin habitually.**¹

As well as **John Stott** who writes—

“The present tense in the Greek verb implie(s) habit, continuity, unbroken sequence” (Stott);

The NIV has the right idea when it translates these verbs with phrases such as *keeps on sinning, continues to sin, and he cannot go on sinning.*

I believe the gist of what John is telling us here is, if we continually choose to walk in the flesh rather than in the Spirit, there is **cause for great concern** as to whether or not we are truly a Child of God or we are simply one who has tried out religion and found it empty.

More often than not, for the one who appears to be Christian and yet ***falls back into the world in a consistent and continual manner***, the case may very well be that they were never truly “**born again**”; there was never a “**new creation**”; the self had never been “**crucified with Christ**”; they never came to a point of **repentance and confession** – all of which are needful as part of the conversion experience.

As a matter of fact, John says that the lifestyle is the declaration of the status of our spiritual heritage – are we of God or of the devil?

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 504.

¹⁰ In 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.

It is interesting how he goes back to an issue he dealt with back in the first chapter, our relationship with our Brothers and Sisters in Christ. That relationship and our love for each other is of major importance. As one of the 12 disciples, John was present when Jesus spoke the following words. As a matter of fact it is only in John's Gospel record where we have these words directly from the Savior—

John 13

³⁴ "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Not by Sunday School attendance or volunteering or even acts of community service – it is only through the reality of true love for one another that the fullness of the message of the Gospel goes out.

We are not of this world, but all together we are to be strangers to this world and to its cultures and ways – not so much that we are ignorant of them, but definitely we are not to be partakers. And as such, we need to rally around each other in encouragement and support. We should never walk in jealousy towards one another—

1 John 3

¹¹ For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹² not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.

¹³ Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.

¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. ¹⁵ Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

¹⁶ By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

¹⁸ *My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.* ¹⁹ *And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.*

Our testimony and our acts need to validate one another. And together they ought to line up with and bring honor to the Word and plan of God. When our heart's desire leads to our words and actions lining up with God's purposes and bringing honor to Jesus, that's when we can have confidence that *we are of the truth*.

Our heart, our words, and our actions need to be in line with the will of God. It is the inner man that brings about the great revelation of who we truly are—

1 John 3

²⁰ *For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.* ²¹ *Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.* ²² *And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.*

But don't look at this as a formula to get what you want out of the "Great Vending Machine in the Sky". It's not that if we do one, then two, then three, God will be beholding to us. God owes no man anything. What John is saying is, when we are walking in faithful obedience to the Word of God; we are then in a position to know the mind of God; and so we are surrendered to the purposes of God; and therefore we will be asking for the will of God – *whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight*.

John brings these thoughts all together in the closing words of this section.

1 John 3

²³ *And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.* ²⁴ *Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*

The whole idea of *believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ* goes back to what we spoke of this past Sunday – it's more than a mere head knowledge that does nothing to change the heart. Our belief and faith have to come from hearts sold out for Christ.

The sad reality is, for some the difference between heaven and hell is only about 18' away – a head knowledge without a heart commitment.

How many of you have ever seen a video of someone bungee jumping off a bridge or whatever? Did you wonder to yourself, how absolutely insane that is? After all who in their right mind would jump off a 200' high bridge over a canyon tied to a big rubber band?

Well, according to their website, **Bungee Consultants International** (BCI) specializes in the custom design and manufacture **and sale** of bungee springs, bungee cords, shock cords, and all equipment needed for use in specialty applications. **According to their specifications:**

Their bungee cords are designed to operate between 325% and 400% elongation and provide a very smooth ride for your clients, by creating g-forces between 2.4 - 2.8. Their cords meet or exceed CBA, NABA, BERSA, SANZ and Australian specifications.

According to their website, they are... the finest available..., made with the highest quality materials..., with exclusive proprietary methods..., with several safety features built in not found on most other cords.

The rubber itself is highly specialized and designed specifically for bungee... a dual helical binding of threads to minimize premature wear and distortion..., has ozone and UV protection - the largest factor responsible for the deterioration of the rubber..., also has a special silicon coating which minimizes friction between the individual strands of rubber and offers overall abrasion resistance. Most of the rubber used today is still coated with talc (the stuff you put on babies butts?).

The length of the cords are double-wrapped in opposite directions to ensure the elimination of 'soft spots' on the cord, maintain structural integrity and thus maximize cord life (and hopefully yours?).

Now, I could go on and on about their harnesses, giving a minimum of 10:1 safety factor when used as instructed... their rigging plate, made of stainless steel..., their screw lock ½" carabiners which are half load tested to withstand 14,000 pounds of force...

You and I could become very well educated in the field of bungee jumping... and still never experience the rush and adrenaline of plunging towards the earth with the only thing between you and certain death is this big rubber band around your feet.

You would be educated, but you wouldn't really know.

What John is trying to get across to the Church is that, we are all plunging towards eternity. As a matter of fact, according to the latest calculations, ten out of ten of us are going to die before we see Jesus, unless the Rapture comes first. The big question is, have you experienced new life in Christ this side of death, or are you simply going on **head knowledge**.

Head knowledge means you have all the equipment at your disposal, but you've never strapped on the gear..., stood out on the platform..., and stepped out in faith to trust your eternity to the assurance of the love of God and the sacrifice of Christ for your sin, the One who *laid down His life for us*. You've never allowed Him to make you anew creation, but you continue to try religion in your own strength.

Jesus Christ died so that we didn't have to trust in religion. So that we didn't have to live our lives with a continual unknown as to rather or not we would ever fully measure up to God's standards. As the Word of God tells us, we could never measure up, so Christ fulfilled the Law for us.

And as John says at the beginning of chapter 3—

1 John 3

¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ² Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Oh, that we would all be found in Him on that day!