

Abiding by Conquering Sin (Shorter)

Sermon Seven I John 3:1-10

On one side of the sermon insert is an outline of our scripture. At times an important Bible study tool is to see if an outline offers us a message. On the other side is the sermon outline with some accompanying texts. First point, **Jesus only died for sinners.** Verse 4 declares, “Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness, sin is lawlessness.”

Eddie Martin shares: “I have met a few people who try to convince me that they were not bad sinners. A person came forward, & I prepared to give them a prayer to repeat after me. The prayer I usually give is, ‘Dear Lord, I know that I am a no-good sinner. I know I can’t save myself. I do need forgiveness for my awful sins. I can’t do without you, Jesus. Please forgive me for my many sins. I pray my prayer in Jesus’ Name. Amen!’”

I began to give the prayer to repeat after me. “Dear Lord, I know I’m a no-good sinner.” The person never said a word. I looked at them & said, “Don’t you want to be saved?”

They said, “Yes, Eddie, I do want to be saved, but I’m not a sinner.”

“Then you can’t be saved,” Eddie said, “Jesus only died for sinners.”

“But, Mr. Martin, I’m a good sinner.”

Eddie responded. “A good sinner! There are no good sinners. God can’t save you until you become conscious that you are a no-good sinner and need His forgiveness.”

“But, Mr. Martin, you don’t understand. I’m really not a bad sinner,” the person replied.

Eddie told the person to go back & sit down. But they held on to his hand with a vise-like

grip. Finally looking Eddie in the eyes, the person said, “Oh, please forgive me. I know I am a no-good hell-deserving proud sinner. I do need Christ to forgive me of my sins.”

“Wonderful! Now you are ready to do business with God. No one can do business with God until they are willing to confess their sinfulness to Him.”

Most people either love sin or resist it. God calls us to leave it behind with His help. He tells us all who sin are guilty of breaking the law. We break God’s laws in many different ways. We may not always break the law of the land, but we clearly break God’s law. Just because something is legal, doesn’t mean it’s ethical. This is why God gave us principles, laws, so we would know that we have sinned.

What are the two great commandments that Jesus gave us? (**Ask for a response**)

Love God and love your neighbor.

Any time we sin we will break one of these two great commandments and probably both. For example, Bernie Madoff broke both of these commandments by stealing billions of dollars from people. He broke God’s law that says, “Thou shalt not steal.” By stealing he showed that he did not love God nor did he love other people. He was convicted in New York and in heaven for law breaking.

Second, **sinners need a sinless Savior.**

Verse 5 tells us, “You know that Jesus was revealed to take away sins, and in Jesus there is no sin.” Both the Old Testament and New Testaments tell us: (Ezek. 18:4) “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Romans 6:23)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Sin is serious. But many people don’t think it’s so bad to sin. They think, it’s no big deal.

But let's do some comparisons. People call sin an accident. God calls it an abomination. People call it a defect, God calls it a disease. People call it an error, God calls it hostility. People call it a liberty, freedom, a choice.

God calls it lawlessness and adultery. People call it a trifle, God calls it a tragedy. People call it a mistake, God calls it madness. People call it a weakness, God calls it willfulness.

People like to call sin by other names, to make it sound minor, to make it seem less harmful & hurtful. Some try to make it more attractive by putting a good spin on it to look better. Plus Sidney J. Harris said: "Once we assuage our conscience by calling something a necessary evil, it begins to look more and more necessary and less and less evil." So we fool ourselves when we down play evil.

Since all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God – we need help from outside of ourselves. John invites us to look at God's perfect sacrificial revelation - Jesus. It's why we are invited to abide in Jesus and do right.

Jesus only died for sinners. Sinners need a sinless Savior. And **those who persist in sin, don't know and don't abide in Jesus.** Verse 6 informs us, "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him." Or to say this another way, "Everyone who sins & keeps on sinning doesn't know Jesus."

A writer shares this personal story. "Whenever I'm in Chicago, I find myself driven, as if by unseen forces, into a deep dish pizza restaurant. My recent visit was no exception. As soon as I stepped off the plane, I began craving copious amounts of cheese covered in chunky tomato sauce. And sure enough soon I found myself in Lou Malnati's pizzeria awaiting my hand made pizza pie with giddy anticipation. It was sort of a sad scene. I was

dining by myself, so there was no pretext of community. I was just there to gorge myself. And that's precisely what I did. After a few slices I hit a wall but consumed one more.

"One too many, it turned out. As I maneuvered my distended belly away from the table, I had a theological revelation: deep dish is a lot like sin. Both start out with bliss but end in misery. Both take you further than you wanted to go, faster than you wanted to get there. And both require confession. So that's what I'm doing here. I hope you'll absolve me. Next time, I'll try to eat a little less."

I think we can all identify with this analogy. It's so easy to persist in sin, and abide less and less in Jesus. John warns us, people who continue to live in sin, whatever their sin is, are not abiding in Jesus and don't know Him. They know not the true and living God and they know not His truth.

Will Rogers said, "Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects." This is true but there is one area of life where people can't afford to be ignorant and that's about God!

Do we get the idea that sin is our problem? It's always been our problem. Sin separates us from God. Sin destroys people's lives, marriages, families, even countries. It's why John is so adamant in the book of First John. There is only one answer for sin: The lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He alone is our sin-bearer and Savior.

Have you ever gone to a store to buy something that the store advertised? But they did not have it? You got the sense, maybe there was some false advertisement going on? Like they only had a few of that item? And how many times have we bought something only to discover that it didn't work as advertised?

John goes to great lengths to tell us the devil is a big liar. He offers false advertising. He lied from the beginning and he's been lying ever since. He can even use religious people to deceive us. So John **warns us, D, to not be led astray, to not be deceived.** Verse 7. "Dear children, do not let anyone deceive you, lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as Jesus is righteous."

Has anyone ever sold you a bill of goods? The devil has been doing that for thousands of years to all humankind. He says things like, "Go ahead and enjoy all of life. You only go around once in life. This is all there is to life." But we know there is more to life than this life. We are preparing for the next life. We know God's ways are more life giving in this world than the devil's ways. So let's not be deceived – even by religious people – those who use religion to get rich, to be famous, to have power, to create their own theologies – like John was reacting to. So know the Bible. Be clear on proper theology.

Next John tells us, **Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil.** Verse 8. "Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil."

The Puritan preacher, Thomas Brooks, in the 1,600's said this about Satan:
he promises the best, but pays with the worst;
he promises honor and pays with disgrace;
he promises pleasure and pays with pain;
he promises profit and pays with loss;
he promises life and pays with death.

Satan started this sin business with Adam and Eve. He deceived them. He led them astray. Then the two hid from God. When God caught up to them, the man sinned again by blaming the woman and blamed God for giving him a help mate; the woman sinned

again as she blamed the serpent for tempting and tricking her.

Because of Satan's deceptive work, we all have been infected with the disease called sin. The devil has been sinning from the beginning of his appearance on earth and perhaps even before when he was kicked out of heaven for his prideful arrogance. And whether we like it or not, when we sin we are in league with him. John tells us, the person who does what is sinful is of the devil. We really don't like the idea of being related to the devil, but as a minimum we could be considered somewhat devilish when we sin.

A young African convert to Christianity was given a position of trust with the missionary. He violated the trust, however, & stole something. The missionary asked, "Why did you take something that didn't belong to you?"

The native replied, "It wasn't I who stole, it was grandfather in the bones!" That was his way of referring to his old sin nature. We all have grandfather in the bones, the evil one in us because the old man of sin lurks within us.

Jesus only died for sinners. Sinners need a sinless Savior. It's why we need to abide in Jesus and not persist in sin. The Holy Spirit and the Bible warns us to not be deceived by Satan. It's why God revealed Jesus who came to destroy the works of the Devil.

Plus we need to know that F, **we can overcome sin.** Verses 9 & 10. "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him and her; they can not go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother."

This phrase, “No one who is born of God will continue to sin,” has many people trying to understand and clarify it. William Barclay says, “This bristles with difficulties.” I’m going to avoid a long complicated variety of explanations to simply say – our goal is to overcome sin. We need to keep in mind the whole context of this letter. John’s not saying we are perfect – but we work toward purity and sinlessness with the Holy Spirit’s help.

This story is told about Daniel Webster, the famous American politician and orator. He spent a summer in New Hampshire, and every Lord’s Day went to a little country church morning and evening. His niece asked him why he went there, when he paid little attention to far abler sermons in Washington D.C.

He replied: “In Washington they preach to Daniel Webster, the statesman and senator, but this man has been telling Daniel Webster, the sinner, of Jesus of Nazareth.”

That’s the right attitude to have. It’s called humility. Scripture tells us, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. (I P 5:5) This is one way of growing into perfection.

John’s discerning between who is truly a child of God and who was not, is straightforward. We simply can’t be born of God and continue a lifestyle contrary to who God is. We love God and neighbor at least as much as we love ourselves. We may get fooled into sinning, but we must believe with all our hearts, that we have Jesus to help us overcome sin!

May we not be led astray as to who Jesus really is - fully human and fully God.
May we abide in Jesus by doing right.
Our abiding helps us conquer sin.

