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# KNOWING THAT WE KNOW HIM

A COMPLETE CONTRADICTION || JOHN 3:4-10

This week I read a compelling letter from a Christian businessman. The message was addressed to his friends and colleagues who are skeptical about his faith in Christ. He opens his letter with a candid assessment of his own inconsistencies and failings as a believer.

*I really like beer and drink too much of it. I yell at my kids way too much. I love beautiful women and admire them too closely and too often. I am crude, blunt, and often times my sense of humor is only funny to me (and that is really all I care about anyway). I am a control freak, can blame and be critical. I am cynical, can be grumpy and, more often than not, people annoy me. And last, but not least, I continuously judge everyone I come in contact with — weird hair, unattractive, geek, wrong clothes, loud mouth, terrible parent, and those are just a few of the thoughts that passed through my mind as I walked through the airport this morning.*

His list hit home. I am guilty of so many of the same things, and a lot more on top of that. To make matters worse, I've grown far too comfortable with my sin. I can engage in any number of activities that are inconsistent with who I am in Christ without giving it a second thought. Sometimes I even enjoy them. I know that they are acid to my walk with Christ, but I go there anyway.

Christians were never meant to be comfortable with sin, much less enjoy it. To love Christ is to hate sin. To love sin is to hate Christ, or at the very least to treasure our sin far more than we do him.

John is not about to let us off the hook. He knows we will sin, but he won't settle for lame excuses like, "that's just who I am," or "nobody is perfect." Mainly because that is not who we are and we have been united to the perfect one. John reminds us that our sin is a complete contradiction to who we are in Christ.

## **OUR SIN AND LAWLESSNESS (v. 4)**

*4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.*

John is not nearly as concerned with breaking the law as he is with the attitude that leads us to break the law in the first place, "lawlessness." Lawlessness involves becoming a law unto ourselves. It means we reserve the right to pick and choose, determine right and wrong, and make the final call on what we think is best for us. Lawlessness was at the heart of the first sin, and it has been at the heart of every sin that followed.

1. How did Adam and Eve practice lawlessness?
2. How did the older brother (in the parable of the prodigal son) practice lawlessness?
3. How did the younger brother (in the parable of the prodigal son) practice lawlessness?
4. How do we practice lawlessness?
5. What are the inevitable consequences of practicing lawlessness?
6. What is the remedy to lawlessness?

## **OUR SIN AND THE CROSS (vv. 5,8)**

*5a But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.*

*8b The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

We learn a lot about the character of God on the cross. The cross reveals God's compassion for fallen humanity and hatred of sin.

1. How would you describe the average Christian's attitude toward sin?
2. How would you describe God's attitude toward sin?
3. Why does God hate sin?
4. Why should we hate sin?
5. How does Christ take away our sin?
6. What are the works of the devil?
7. How did Christ destroy the works of the devil?

## **OUR SIN AND THE NEW BIRTH (vv. 6-10)**

*6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.*

*7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8a The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning...*

*9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.*

*10 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 God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.*

John makes two very vivid points. You cannot simultaneously walk with God and live in sin (v. 6), and our sin as a whole is incompatible with who we are in Christ.

1. What do you think John means by "keeps on sinning" and "continues to sin?"
2. How does John describe those who "keep on sinning" and "continue to sin?"
3. What does it mean to "be born of God?"
4. How does John describe those who are "born of God?"
5. The application of this passage takes us in two directions. We must do everything we can to nurture the new nature, and we need to take our sin far more seriously.
  - a. What are some practical steps you can take to nurture your new nature?
  - b. What are some practical steps you can take to take your sin more seriously?