

John 3:8 Who's Son Are You?

8 the one who practices sin

Literally, the text is “he who does sin is from the devil.”, and again, the implication is of continuous action, or those who continue in sin, practice it, and for whom it's a habitual part of their life. Every believer has at least some struggle with the flesh, and may sin repeatedly. 1 John 1:8 **8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.** But, the difference is that those who practice sin as a lifestyle don't care that they are sinning. Whereas Christians have the Holy Spirit inside us who is grieved by sin, and this drives us to repent, turn away from our sin, and confess them to the Lord. The difference is our attitude toward it. Does the sin bother our conscience, does it seem foreign to us, or are we right at home in it? That's the question.

Is of the Devil

John reveals the power behind those who practice sin in 1 John 3:8. John is purposefully making a stark contrast between two kinds of people, believers and non-believers. The righteous act righteously and are identified with Jesus, while the lawless act un-righteously, and are identified with the devil. The enemy, Satan, is the source of evil, and so when people are evil-doers, they are showing themselves to be of the devil. We see Jesus use similar language in John 8:44 **44 You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he tells a lie, he speaks from his own nature, because he is a liar and the father of lies.** According to Jesus, some of the works of the devil are murder and lying. These two sins summarize the character of the devil and his goals. He works to see people destroyed and go to hell (so murdering them in the permanent sense), and he desires to deceive them into that destruction.

for the devil has been sinning from the beginning

In saying, “because the devil has sinned from the beginning.” John reminds us of Satan's fall, probably best recorded in Ezekiel 28:12-19 and Isaiah 14:12-15 or so. Satan was not created evil, but was originally a beautiful angel, until the day that unrighteousness, injustice was found in him. And he was cast out. The enemy is characterized by sin, it's his nature, and so he continues to stand in opposition to God. And so Jesus stands in opposition to him.

The Son of God appeared for this purpose,

“For this reason the Son of God appeared.” Jesus became incarnate for a reason.

to destroy the works of the devil.

So John describes the purpose of Jesus' incarnation as “in order that he might destroy the works of the devil.” How is this accomplished?

Jesus came to take away sin.

As Christians, we seek righteousness. Those who live in unrepentant, continued sin show themselves to be children of the devil because they reflect the devil's unrighteous nature. It is by their sinful actions that they prove themselves to be sons of the devil. The one who has Christ dwelling within him does not continue to sin because Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. Those satanic works of sin and iniquity no longer have no place in the Born Again believer, because we are regenerated by the Spirit. In a real sense, the work of the devil in a believer's inward man is being destroyed from the inside out, as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in His Work of sanctification. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and that guarantees our sanctification, and guarantees that those who continue to follow the enemy will just get worse and worse.

Before we were saved, we were under the influence of evil, and acted in rebellion against God, just like the enemy does, and just like the servants of the enemy do. In fact, we **“were dead in [our] transgressions and sins, in which [we] used to live when [we] followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient”** as it says in Ephesians 2:1–2. The works of the devil in our lives caused us to be **“gratifying the cravings of**

our flesh and following its desires and thoughts” Ephesians 2:3. It is only through the love, mercy, and grace of God that we were rescued from the works of the devil. Ephesians 4-5 **4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our wrongdoings, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**. Through sin, the enemy has power over those who have not come to faith in Jesus, but Jesus came to break that power, and to keep on breaking it in our lives as we allow the Holy Spirit to conform us to the image of Jesus. Our part is to allow this process of sanctification to continually work in us, to make us bear our Heavenly Family Resemblance more and more. John says this a different way in 1st John 3:5-6 **You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. 6 No one who remains in Him sins continually; no one who sins continually has seen Him or knows Him.** Our commitment to Christ, and our relationship with Him will be reflected in how we live our life.

Jesus came to give life, and defeat sin’s power—death.

John 10:10 **10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.** Abundant life is spiritually abundant. When we rely on Jesus, we do not need to worry about material needs. God will supply what we need. He is our provider (see Matthew 6:25–33). Abundant life is also eternal life. Jesus has defeated death. 1 Cor 15:54-57 **54 But when this perishable puts on the imperishable, and this mortal puts on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: “Death has been swallowed up in victory. 55 Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law; 57 but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.** We have victory in Jesus, and because of His finished work of salvation on the cross, we don’t have to fear death.

Jesus came to take away the suffering caused by sin.

Morally, the devil entices people to sin, making evil seem appealing so that people choose evil over obedience to God. James 1:14 **14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it has run its course, brings forth death.** Physically, the devil can inflict disease, and he seeks to use physical trials to cause people to blame God for their ills. We should pray for the sick. That’s why James encourages us in James 5:14-15 **14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; 15 and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.** Notice the close link between the physical illness being healed and the spiritual sickness, sin, being forgiven and removed.

The enemy also attacks our mind by deceit. 1 Tim 4:1-2 **But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, 2 by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,** So the enemy seduces people into believing lies and teaching false doctrines, warping their minds, so that they become insensitive to the call of God back to Him. The enemy casts doubt and keeps unbelievers intellectually blinded to spiritual truth and the gospel (see 2 Cor 4:3-4). The enemy arranges distractions and promotes confusion that cause people to act hastily, irrationally, and foolishly. Spiritually, he takes every opportunity to snatch away the Word of God sown in a person’s heart. We see this illustrated in Matthew 13:19 **9 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one sown with seed beside the road.** The hardness of their hearts causes the word not to penetrate and speak to them.

Jesus came to destroy the enemy personally

The servants of the enemy seem to know that Jesus came to destroy them. In the synagogue in Capernaum, the spirits of a demon-possessed man cried out in Mark 1:24 **23 Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 24 saying, What business do you have with**

us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are: the Holy One of God!" So, the demons knew that Jesus' business was to ultimately destroy them, even though the time for their actual destruction wasn't yet fulfilled.

Jesus has come to destroy Satan's work in introducing sin to the world, and take away his power to influence. This "taking away" involves more than forgiveness of individual sins. Satan, who has continued to sin from the beginning, continues to be the tempter of mankind. His goal is clearly to get all people to sin along with him. Jesus' purpose in coming is to stop the cycle, to free men from Satan's power and influence, and to remove sin from their lives. By doing this, Jesus destroys Satan's work. Jesus came to save people, not just from the fires of hell and eternal damnation, but from being sons of the devil, under the power of sin each day of their mortal lives, and transform them into sons of the Kingdom, who will one day be transformed, and brought into glory where sin will forever be removed. Who's son are you? Who's son do you want to be?