

1 John 3:10 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother and sister.

John gives a litmus test to tell who are Born-Again Christian followers of Christ, and who are not.

By this

John said that no one who is born of God practices sin, and will say that those who do not follow Jesus don't practice righteousness.

The Believer's Struggle Against Sin

The reason that John denies the possibility of believer's sin, is that when we sin, we are acting in accord with our old nature, our flesh, and not our New Nature. For a Christian, we cannot sin, and be walking in our New Nature. The devil's children reveal their unregenerate natures by sinning. So when a Christian sins, he or she fails to express the new nature but reflects the devil's pattern by expressing the old nature. For a Christian, our struggle is AGAINST the flesh, by the power of the Spirit, not cooperating with it. We are no longer allied with the flesh against God. We have changed sides. But, we still have this flesh, with it's sinful nature, problems, hurts, habits and hangups. And that means that we have a struggle going on inside us, the Spirit against the flesh.

See Rom 7:14-24 **14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. 15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.** So, we see Paul's inward desire, guided by the Spirit is to live a holy life, but he finds that he has this fleshly nature that wants to sin, and sometimes he listens to his flesh, and sins, and he hates this! For believers, this struggle with sin is vexing, and is really the central struggle of our lives, Gal 5:17 **Galatians 5:17 For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want.** As a Christian, we finally have peace with God, and it's wonderful! But immediately we find that we're now on God's side, at war with the world, the devil, and our own fleshly desires! And Paul looks at his own battle—the inner man, powered by the Holy Spirit striving to do God's Will, and the flesh, trying to do whatever it wants. The key here is the struggle against sin. Paul says in Rom 16-18 **16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.** Paul finds that by imperfect keeping of the Law, he has given sin an opportunity. As Paul says in Rom 7:19-20 **19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.** He's given the enemy an opportunity for harming him, and given sin an opportunity to work destruction and death in his life, instead of dying to himself, and overcoming sin. And it's because he's trying in his flesh. And what's his reaction? He is miserable: Rom 7:24 **24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?** But, for Christians, this grief over sin brings not hopelessness, but a realization that we cannot overcome sin ourselves. And so, with Paul, we say in Rom 7:25 **25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!** Jesus, through the resurrection power of the Holy Spirit in each of us, has given us the power to overcome sin! He is our deliverer from sin, not we ourselves! Didn't Jesus die for ALL of your sins? Then why are you trying to take some of them back from Him and say "I can handle these myself". No, Give Him all of them! Trust Jesus! He can give you the victory!

Sin speaks to the world

Another reason why we do not sin, is that it should be more and more distasteful to us, outside, and foreign to us, as we become more and more like Christ. And, when believers sin, they are bearing a witness to the world, but it's not the one that they want to bear. Sin in the life of a believer is not only evidence of their lack of walk with Christ in the New Birth that has been purchased for them on the cross, it also gives this bad witness to the world. And they recognize the hypocrisy immediately! It's "speaking their language".

Perseverance in Christ also speaks

Our perseverance in our Christian walk by the Spirit, and not the flesh, is not only a proof of salvation to us, this sustained abiding in Christ, this continued following after Him and keeping our eyes on Him is a proof to those around us that we belong to Jesus. As Christians, we will “abide” or remain in Him. We can trust that God will complete His work in us Phil 1:6 **For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work among you will complete it by the day of Christ Jesus.** What a wonderful verse. But we forget the one before it: Phil 1:5 **in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.** It’s the Philippians personal walk in Christ, active participation living out the Gospel of Christ in their daily walk with Him that gives Paul the confidence to say that God’s work is continuing in them, and will keep continuing in them until the day when they stand before Jesus. Paul agrees with John; the proof of salvation is in the abiding, walking with Christ.

the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest

So, “By means of this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest.”—are obvious. Our conduct, the way that we live our lives, makes our parentage, from a spiritual perspective.

Well, the way that we live our lives, speaks volumes about our spiritual parentage as well. Jesus, by His walk, and His Character, revealed God the Father to us as Emanuel, God with us, so also we, by our walk, our character should be revealing Jesus to those around us! Our conduct makes visible and obvious our true spiritual parentage. The children of the devil display their basic nature by sinning.

anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God

Anyone born of God will practice righteousness, and anyone not Born of God will always lack righteous conduct, because righteousness is always sourced in God, who they do not know! So what about those people who are “good people”, who do wonderful things from a human perspective? Now many good-seeming works are disguised evil deeds, or done with self-serving, selfish or unrighteous motivations. The classic example is the Pharisees.

But what about those people who are unbelieving, but are good people acting out of human kindness and a sincere effort to do good and serve people? Is God going to allow them to go to hell, along with the really evil people of the world? In terms of how God handles these situations, let’s look at Cornelius in Acts 10. We know from Acts 10:2 **2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and made many charitable contributions to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually.** An angel even appears to this Roman centurion, and says, **“Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God”** in v. 4. But despite these good deeds that even God attests to, through his angel, which are motivated by a desire to please God, and praying earnestly to God, he was not yet born again. By his own testimony Cornelius indicated that an angel had told him, **“Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved”**. God will do whatever is necessary to bring the saving message of Jesus Christ to that person so that he can believe it and be born again. We saw a more modern example with the Jesus Movement in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s. There was a sincerity of heart, and a desire for Good in some of those flower children that God knew, once they were saved, would turn into a joyful devotion to Him. Again, they were not saved by works, but that desire to do good and seek God got His attention, and He brought about the circumstances needed to hear the good news, come to faith in Christ, and be saved. Even if He needs to send apostles or missionaries to some unlikely places. Titus 3:5 **5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we did in righteousness, but in accordance with His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit,** It is only by faith in Jesus Christ that anyone receives the forgiveness of sins. And, if God will respond to their feeble and inadequate efforts, then maybe so should we. Let’s go to those who are searching for God in all the wrong places, and let’s point them to how to have a real relationship with God through Jesus, his son.