

# Series: The Confident, Loving Church – week 13

**CDOBC – beginning on 2/14/10**

Title: **“Avoiding Sin”**

*1 John 3:4-6 ~ June 6, 2010*

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**OBJECTIVE:** To encourage believers to pursue holiness in their life.

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## Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- VBS Registration – visit table in courtyard

## Opening Prayer

One of the great areas of confusion in our current times is regarding the subject of sin. This is not primarily confusion in the non-believing culture at large – although there is certainly great confusion in that realm on this topic. The primary confusion I am speaking of is within the Church. For a variety of reasons – all rooted within sin themselves – current day believers are unaware and in many cases unconcerned with sin in their life. Maybe it’s a reaction against hell-fire and brimstone preachers and legalistic churches which has fostered an overly permissive view of sin and a lack of understanding the true nature and evil of sin. Perhaps it as simple as an issue of pride – a prideful view of oneself that considers themselves a good person who doesn’t really need to understand the evils of sin because they consider themselves far above those moral pitfalls. Whatever the reason, research has shown...and my anecdotal experience has revealed the lackadaisical attitude toward sin that believers have today.

According to a Barna survey of church-going Americans (Americans Draw Theological Beliefs From Diverse Points of View – October 2002), 74% deny the Biblical teaching of original sin, and believe that “...when people are born they are neither good nor evil - they make a choice between the two as they mature.”

In my experience as a Pastor over 20+ years, I have seen repeatedly a lack of concern – and in some cases a lack of awareness of sinful living in a believer’s life. For many believers, the choices they make and the attitudes they maintain and opinions they share openly which are directly opposed to the Bible – and it doesn’t seem to cause them any pause at all!

Where would you place yourself this morning?

Are you a believer in Christ? Have you understood your sinfulness - after understanding your sin, have you placed your faith in the atonement of Christ which He accomplished on the cross? Have you then committed yourself to following Him each day and living according to His commands for our life?

Or,

Are you someone who professes faith in Christ, but you live your life with no thought or awareness of sin? Your life is not really characterized by a spiritual battle between the ‘new self’ and the ‘old self’, but simply as someone who tries to do the right thing – and you are satisfied with making it through each day upon your own wisdom and philosophy?

Which camp are you in?

Turn to 1 John 3:4-6...Read passage

## The nature of sin vs. 4

What is sin? Unless you know the answer to this question, how can you avoid it in your life?

John knew that the believers throughout Asia Minor were confused about the topic of sin – what was sin and what was not – so he simplified it and clarified the issue for them.

The Gnostic teachers – the anti-christs – had taught that there was no ‘law of God’ – that there was nothing that governed their behavior. They taught they were free to pursue the desires of the flesh and that this pursuit in no way interfered with their faith in Christ.

(Anti-nomian philosophy – no rules – I can do as I please / Relativism = Anti-nomian philosophy.

Actual Greek word is *anomia* = lawless / *nomos* = law)

This was not only a perversion of the Gospel and it’s call on the life of each believer, but it was a lie concerning sin itself! Sin is whenever we break the Law of God.

But – even more than that – John gives a fuller picture / definition of sin – he states under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that “sin is lawlessness”! Why the extra emphasis? Many modern day Christians struggle with the first part of John’s statement here – let alone the second part!

The first part clearly states that there is such a thing as the Law of God. Meaning, that God has communicated to us how we are to act...

how we are to treat others...

how we are to approach Him in prayer and worship...

how we are to live morally...

how we are to live sexually...

how we are to live as a husband or a wife...

how we are to live as a single person...  
how we are to live as a minor child...  
how we are to live as a parent...  
how we are to live as an employee or an employer...  
how we are to live as a citizen...  
how we are to live as a neighbor...  
how we are to live in the Body of Christ.

All of these things God has told us in His Word...in the Bible.

Unfortunately, many Christians today either don't realize these commands from God either out of ignorance or because they have never read the Bible or studied their faith – but there is also a group within the church that has simply refused to follow God's commands because they would rather live how they want to live – not as God commands. They see their faith only as an issue of Heaven or Hell – not an issue of their life now!

The other area that is unfamiliar with many modern day Christians – which was also unfamiliar with many first century Christians – is that sin is more than a failure to live up to God's standard – it's more than doing things God has prohibited – it's lawlessness – which means that it is a disregard and rebellion against the things of God in your heart! Lawlessness means that someone rejects the Law of God and chooses instead to pursue their own path.

So, the true nature of sin is not simply disobedience – not simply a failure to do the right thing – it's a heart rebellion and rejection of God's commands!

**The purpose and nature of Christ** vs. 5

Christ appeared – this would point to His first advent – His virgin birth, earthly ministry, His death, burial, and resurrection. The reason Jesus took on flesh was to take away our sins.

John’s wording here is important. Not only did Jesus take on flesh in His first advent to atone for the sins of the world – but to “take away our sins”. Now some think this is simply theological word play – but I think it’s more significant than that. The natural result of Jesus atoning for our sins is that He takes our sins from us in the sense of our guilt. However, I believe that John has a double meaning in this phrase. Not only has Jesus taken our sins away through His atonement – but He has “...taken away our sin” in the sense that He has replaced it with His Spirit – He has replaced our sin with our new nature – He has made us a new creation in Him!

He has taken our sin away and at the same time He has imputed His righteousness to us!

Verses that speak of sins defeat:

Titus 2:14

“...who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

Romans 6:6

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- <sup>7</sup> because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

1 Cor. 15:55

“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”

The practical application to the believer is that we are no longer a slave to sin (unless we choose to be!) because Christ has taken away our sin! We are a new creation in Christ –

which means that we are called to a new life – a life of obedience and holiness.

“But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” – 1 Peter 1:15-16

Once again – this is where pride shows its ugly face – we don’t want to be embarrassed so we hide our sin – and this only serves to strengthen sin’s bondage over us!

Jesus has “...taken away our sin” – so we need to stop embracing our sin and stop taking it back into our life!

“And in Him is no sin.” – speaks not only to the fact that Jesus did not sin – but that He didn’t have a sin nature – that He didn’t know sin in His heart – let alone in His actions.

## **The new nature of believers vs. 6**

Now for the tough verse.

The NIV translates this well...the verb is in the present tense – which means it is referring to a current, repeated action.

John is not saying that if we sin (which every Christian does – see 1:8-2:2) we are not “in Him”.

The key to understanding this verse is in the Greek verb tense – which speaks of ongoing, repeated, or habitual sins.

This is where it gets tricky.

- ◆ Is John saying that if we repeat a sin then we are not “in Him”?
- ◆ How many times can we repeat a sin before it disproves our claim of faith in Christ?
- ◆ How long of a period of sinning can I have before it is considered “habitual” or “ongoing”?

Any answers we give to these questions are subjective because Scripture does not give us these specific answers.

Jesus addressed this issue when He spoke of those who would claim His name – who would even serve and minister under His name – and would even perform miracles in His name – yet He denies that He ever knew them! Why? Because they “practiced lawlessness” (present middle-passive participle) – which is the same idea we have here in vs. 6.

MT 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?'

**Vs. 23' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'** NASB

So the issue here is not sin in general, but continual or habitual sin. John is talking about the person, who claims to be a Christian, but their life has not changed at all – there is no difference in their actions or their attitudes that indicate they are a new creation in Christ – and John says they have not “...seen Him or known Him.”

The first part of the verse can be interpreted as refuting the believer who says they have a close relationship with Christ but they have ongoing sin in their life. As John has stated earlier in chapter 1, this cannot be. Nobody can claim fellowship with God if they are walking in the darkness. The second half of the verse goes one step further – telling us that is someone is continuing to sin – when there is no change in their life – when their faith has no impact upon their life’s actions or attitudes – that this person is not a believer – even if they profess belief (i.e. the Gnostic false teachers).

## Application

Develop a larger understanding of your salvation.

Christ came not only to atone for our sins – but to separate us from our sins! To “take away our sins”.  
Are you limiting the power of your salvation by only applying it in terms of heaven – eternal life?  
Eternal life – the spiritual life of God is not only for the future – but for the present.

Let your new nature dominate your life.

If you are a believer – you have been bought with a price – the price of Jesus’ death.  
If you are a believer – your sin has been killed through the power of Jesus’ death and resurrection.  
The Christian life is a battle – a momentous battle between your old self (your sin nature) and your new self (new nature in Christ).  
Allow your new nature to dominate your life by submitting to it.

Close in prayer – transition to communion