

# 1 John 3:8 Commentary

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FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
 Click chart to enlarge  
 Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
 Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - [Charles Swindoll](#)

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			
From Talk Thru the Bible			

## STUDY GUIDE 1 JOHN 3

What is this? On the photograph of the Observation Worksheet for this chapter you will find handwritten 5W/H questions (Who?

What? Where? When? Why? How?) on each verse to help you either personally study or lead a discussion on this chapter. The questions are generally very simple and are stated in such a way as to stimulate you to observe the text to discern the answer. As a reminder, given the truth that your ultimate Teacher is the Holy Spirit, begin your time with God with prayer such as Psalm 119:12+ "Blessed are You, O LORD; Teach me Your statutes." (you can vary it with similar prayers - Ps 119:18, 26, 33, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171, etc) The questions are generally highlighted in yellow and the answers in green. Some questions have no answers and are left to your observations and the illuminating/teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. Some qualifying thoughts - (1) Use "As is" - these are handwritten and will include mistakes I made, etc. (2) They may not be the best question for a given verse and my guess is that on some verses you will think of a far superior 5W/H question and/or many other questions.

Dr Howard Hendricks once gave an assignment to his seminary students to list as many observations as they could from Acts 1:8. He said "So far they've come up with more than 600 different ones! Imagine what fun you could have with 600 observations on this passage. Would you like to see Scripture with eyes like that?" (P. 63 [Living by the Book](#) - borrow) With practice you can! And needless to say, you will likely make many more observations and related questions than I recorded on the pages below and in fact I pray that the Spirit would indeed lead you to discover a veritable treasure chest of observations and questions! In Jesus' Name. Amen

Why am I doing this? **Mortimer Adler** among others helped me develop a questioning mindset as I read, seeking to read actively rather than passively. Over the years I have discovered that as I have practiced reading with a 5W/H questioning mindset, it has yielded more accurate interpretation and the good fruit of meditation. In other words, consciously interacting with the inspired Holy Word of God and the illuminating Holy Spirit has honed my ability to meditate on the Scripture, and my prayer is that this tool will have the same impact in your spiritual life. The benefits of meditation are literally priceless in regard to their value in this life and in the life to come (cf discipline yourself for godliness in 1Ti 4:8+.) For some of the benefits - see Joshua 1:8+ and Psalm 1:2-3+. It will take diligence and mental effort to develop an "inductive" ([especially an "observational"](#)), interrogative mindset as you read God's Word, but it bears repeating that the benefits in this life and the rewards in the next will make it more than worth the effort you invest! Dear Christian reader let me encourage you to strongly consider learning the skills of [inductive Bible study](#) and spending the rest of your life practicing them on the Scriptures and living them out in your daily walk with Christ.

Although Mortimer Adler's advice is from a secular perspective, his words are worth pondering...

*Strictly, all reading is active. What we call passive is simply less active. Reading is better or worse according as it is more or less active. And one reader is better than another in proportion as he is capable of a greater range of activity in reading.* (Adler's classic book [How to Read a Book is free online](#))

[John Piper](#) adds that "Insight or understanding is the product of intensive, headache-producing meditation on two or three verses and how they fit together. This kind of reflection and rumination is provoked by asking questions of the text. And you cannot do it if you hurry. Therefore, we must resist the deceptive urge to carve notches in our bibliographic gun. Take two hours to ask ten questions of Galatians 2:20+ and you will gain one hundred times the insight you would have attained by reading thirty pages of the New Testament or any other book. Slow down. Query. Ponder. Chew.... (John Dewey rightly said) "People only truly think when they are confronted with a problem. Without some kind of dilemma to stimulate thought, behavior becomes habitual rather than thoughtful."

*"Asking questions is the key to understanding."*

--Jonathan Edwards

That said, below are the [5W/H questions](#) for each verse in this chapter (click page to enlarge). This is not neatly typed but is handwritten and was used for leading a class discussion on this chapter, so you are welcome to use it in this "as is" condition...



**1John 3:8 The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil:**

**GREEK** - ho poiou (PAPMSN) ten hamartian ek tou diabolou estin (3SPA1) hoti ap arche o diabolos hamartanei (3SPA1) eis touto ephanerothe (3SAPI) o huios tou theou hina luse (3SAAS) ta erga tou diabolou .

KJV 1 John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

BGT 1 John 3:8 ποιου τινος μαρτυρουμεν οτι ο διαβολουσ εστιν, οτι απ αρχης ο διβολουσ μαρτυρει. εστω το φανερωθη

υ ς το θεο , να λ σ τ ργα το διαβ λου.

NET 1 John 3:8 The one who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was revealed: to destroy the works of the devil.

CSB 1 John 3:8 The one who commits sin is of the Devil, for the Devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the Devil's works.

ESV 1 John 3:8 Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

NIV 1 John 3:8 He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

NLT 1 John 3:8 But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil.

NRS 1 John 3:8 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.

NJB 1 John 3:8 Whoever lives sinfully belongs to the devil, since the devil has been a sinner from the beginning. This was the purpose of the appearing of the Son of God, to undo the work of the devil.

NAB 1 John 3:8 Whoever sins belongs to the devil, because the devil has sinned from the beginning. Indeed, the Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil.

YLT 1 John 3:8 he who is doing the sin, of the devil he is, because from the beginning the devil doth sin; for this was the Son of God manifested, that he may break up the works of the devil;

MIT 1 John 3:8 One who continues to commit sin represents the devil, because from the beginning the devil continues to sin. The reason for the revelation of God's son was to terminate the devil's deeds.

GWN 1 John 3:8 The person who lives a sinful life belongs to the devil, because the devil has been committing sin since the beginning. The reason that the Son of God appeared was to destroy what the devil does.

BBE 1 John 3:8 The sinner is a child of the Evil One; for the Evil One has been a sinner from the first. And the Son of God was seen on earth so that he might put an end to the works of the Evil One.

RSV 1 John 3:8 He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

NKJ 1 John 3:8 He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

ASV 1 John 3:8 he that doeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

**Wuest** - The one who is habitually doing sin is out of the devil as a source, because from the beginning the devil has been sinning. For this purpose there was manifested the Son of God, in order that He might bring to naught the works of the devil. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

- **The one who practices sin is of the devil** - 1Jn 3:10, 5:19 Mt 13:38 John 8:44 Eph 2:2
- **for the devil has sinned from the beginning**: 2Pe 2:4 Jude 1:6
- **purpose to destroy the works of the devil**- 1Jn 3:5 Ge 3:15 Isa 27:1 Mk 1:24 Lu 10:18 Jn 12:31 16:11 Ro 16:20 Col 2:15 Heb 2:14 Rev 20:2,3,10,15
- [1 John 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **A LIFE THAT BEARS THE MARK OF THE DEVIL**

Having given them a clear marker that one is truly a child of God (practices [present tense] righteousness in 1Jn 3:7) John now continues the other side of the warning "**Little children, let no one deceive you**" specifically be on the alert for the one who "practices (present tense - as their lifestyle) sin" for they are "of the devil" regardless of what they say with their lips (their life speaks louder than their lips!). They may say "I raised my hand in church 20 years ago and ask Jesus into my heart. John is saying if they practice right living toward God and man, that is proof that their *profession* is indeed *possession* (so to speak). But if they

continually **practice** (present tense) **sin** as the bent of their life, with reckless abandon and no grieving over sin or desire for repentance, then the evidence is clear that their profession of faith is false and they are deceived! From Jesus' warning in Matthew 7 sadly it is clear that **many** (not just a few) will in fact be deceived, thinking they can live like the devil and still have heaven! This reminds me of the Devil's old lie "*You surely shall not die.*" (Ge 3:4+) And yet we find men perpetrating this old lie today, saying you can make a profession of faith and live like the devil the rest of your life and still have Jesus when you die! (e.g., [see note](#) or [here](#)) Some have rightly referred to this false teaching as "**cheap grace!**" Jesus' words could not be much clearer...

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does (present tense) the will of My Father Who is in heaven. **Many** will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' 'And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; **DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE** (present tense - as their lifestyle) **LAWLESSNESS.**' (Mt 7:21-23+)

**The one who practices** ([poieo](#) - [present tense](#) as the general direction of his life) **sin** ([hamartia](#)) **is** (present tense) **of the devil** ([diabolos](#)) - This is the "reverse" of 1 Jn 3:7+ statement that "The one who practices righteousness is righteous."

**Ligon Duncan** explains that "A life which is bent towards sin, a life which is characterized by the rejection of God's word, by refusing to seek after the holiness of God in Christ (**Ed**: cp sanctification = holiness in Heb 12:14+)—this life is a life which bears the mark of the devil. So John here says, '*You do what you are.*' But he also says that 'you do whose you are.' Not only do you do what you are, you do whose you are. ([The Test of Righteousness](#))

**Sin** ([266](#)) ([hamartia](#)) originally conveyed the idea of missing the mark as when hunting with a bow and arrow and missing the mark or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose. See literal use of similar Hebrew word (Jdg 20:16). In Homer some hundred times hamartia is used of a warrior hurling his spear but missing his foe. Later **hamartia** came to mean missing or falling short of any goal, standard, or purpose. **Hamartia** in the Bible signifies a departure from God's holy, perfect standard of what is right in word or deed (righteous). It pictures the idea of missing His appointed goal (His will) which results in a deviation from what is pleasing to Him. In short, sin is conceived as a missing the true end and scope of our lives, which is the Triune God Himself. As Martin Luther put it "Sin is essentially a departure from God." The law is like a ruler and sin is like a crooked line - Anyone can detect a crooked line (cp sin) when a perfectly straight line (cp law) is drawn next to it!

**David Smith** on **practices** ([poieo](#) - [present tense](#) as the general direction of his life) **sin** - "he that makes sin his business or practice." ([Expositor's Greek Testament](#))

**George Findlay** - Being, negatively, an un-Christian, anti-Christian thing, verse 8 affirms that sin is positively diabolical. The righteous Son of God stands forth as the leader of the sons of God, cleansed by His blood and abiding in His righteousness. For the doers of sin there is another leader; they choose another patron and pattern: "He that commits sin is of the Devil." The reason St John gives for ascribing this shameful complicity to sinners is that "from the beginning the Devil sins." There sin, so far as revelation indicates and according to the Apostle's theory of evil, took its rise,—from that most wretched and wicked being whom Scripture names "the Devil" ("the slanderer"), and "Satan" ("the enemy" of God and man). Satan was the first to lapse from God; and he has continued to sin all along—he "sinneth from the beginning." From this personal source the law of sin and death first proceeded and "the darkness" spread over the world, even as Christ's law of love and all the light of the Gospel were "from the beginning" in God the Father (1Jn 1:1, 2:7, 13). Sin is Satan's domain, his sphere, his work; and every sinner is his ally and instrument. The committer of sin makes himself of the Devil's party, of the Devil's spirit, and finally—according to the fearful words of Jesus (Matt. 25:41)—of the Devil's doom. He is engaged in building up those "works of the Devil," which "the Son of God came that He might destroy." Every such man is abetting the enemies of God and goodness; he aids the captain of rebellion to maintain that fortress of evil, that huge rampart erected in the universe against the holy and almighty will of God, which we call "sin."[\(1 John 3:4-9 Commentary - scroll down to page 252\)](#)

**C H Spurgeon** - "Well, labor under no mistake, sir. 'He that committeth sin is of the devil.' It is no use making excuses and apologies; if you are a lover of sin, you shall go where sinners go. If you, who live after this fashion, say that you have believed in the precious blood of Christ, I do not believe you, sir. If you had a true faith in that precious blood, you would hate sin. If you dare to say you are trusting in the atonement while you live in sin, you lie, sir; you do not trust in the atonement; for where there is a real faith in the atoning sacrifice, it purifies the man, and makes him hate the sin which shed the Redeemer's blood."

**Henry Mahan** -A man who practices sin, dishonesty, drunkenness, malice, envy, lies and disobedience to the commandments of Christ is not of God, but takes his character from the evil one, for Satan has violated the way and laws of righteousness from the beginning. He imitates Satan, not Christ, and resembles his parent as children do their parents (John 8:41-42). Christ came not only to put away our sins in regard to the **penalty** of them and the **curse** of the law, but to deliver us from the **power** of Satan and the **practice** of ungodliness (Romans 6:12-18). ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

**H A Ironside** - All through his fearful history the devil has been characterized by rebellion against God. He practiced sin from the beginning. Those who are children of the devil exhibit the moral characteristics of their father, while those who belong to the family of God exhibit the moral characteristics of their Father. They delight in holiness even as the others roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongues.

*This is not the course, and habit, and tenor of his life;  
there is sin in much that he does, but he hates it, loathes it, and flees from it."*

**Be wary of teaching** (and beloved it is out there in pulpits that call themselves evangelical) that says John is describing believers who can practice sin and be of the devil and still be believers. Yes, believers sin but I like the way **Spurgeon** explains it - "This is not the course, and habit, and tenor of his life; there is sin in much that he does, but he **hates it, loathes it, and flees** from it."

**The one who practices** (present tense) **sin** ([hamartia](#)) **is** (present tense) **of the devil** ([diabolos](#)) - If a commentary or sermon has been interpreting the phrase **practice sin** in the present tense (1Jn 3:4, 9 = **practices sin** and 1Jn 3:6 = **sins** -- all 3 in present tense) as simply a reflection of what **every** believer does (because we all sin and we do so everyday), **THEN** 1Jn 3:8 confronts this interpretation with a problem.

In simple terms, John is saying in 1Jn 3:8 that whoever **practices** (present tense) **sin** ([hamartia](#)) **is of the devil** ([diabolos](#)). How could this possibly describe a believer? Perhaps one might say "Well, when a believer sins, he is acting like the devil and in that sense might be described as **of the devil.**" While that sounds potentially plausible, again we must return to the context to let it guide our interpretation. And in the context of 1Jn 3:10 John clearly delineates two families, one **of God** and the other **of the devil**. With this revelation to guide us, the most natural interpretation of the phrase **of the devil** ([diabolos](#)) in 1Jn 3:8 is that these are individuals who are **children of the devil** ([diabolos](#)). And how can we discern they are children of the devil in 1Jn 3:8? By their actions, where their practice of sin in the present tense speaks of sinning as their lifestyle. Yes, believers commit sins, but that is not the natural leaning of our heart as new creatures in Christ (2Cor 5:17+). Dear reader, I beg you to be a Berean (Acts 17:11+) when reading any commentary or sermon on 1John (including the one you are reading)!

**Hiebert** agrees that "The practice of sin reveals family identity. One who **practices** "the sin," as marking the realm of **the devil**, thereby reveals his diabolical nature. John did not say such a one is "born of the devil" (contrast 1Jn 2:29), but "is of the devil." The "of" (ek) denotes *source*, not of his *existence*, but of the *evil* that dominates his life and practice (John 8:41-44).

**Spurgeon** is quite blunt in his comments on this passage - Well, labor under no mistake, sir. 'He that practices sin is of the devil.' It is no use making excuses and apologies; if you are a lover of sin, you shall go where sinners go. If you, who live after this fashion, say that you have believed in the precious blood of Christ, I do not believe you, sir. If you had a true faith in that precious blood, you would hate sin. If you dare to say you are trusting in the atonement while you live in sin, you lie, sir; you do not trust in the atonement; for where there is a real faith in the atoning sacrifice, it purifies the man, and makes him hate the sin which shed the Redeemer's blood. (**Ed**: And all God's people say "Amen!") ([Exposition of 1 John 3](#))

**Wuest** - "Commits" (KJV) is poieō, in a present tense participle, "He who is continually doing sin." Smith suggests, "He that makes sin his business or practice." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

**Steven Cole** - John divides all people into two camps: those who practice righteousness (1Jn 3:7) and those who practice sin (1Jn 3:8). There is no third camp for those who do not believe in Jesus, but are decent, good people who never hurt anyone. You may protest, "Surely, my grandmother who was sweet towards everyone and who believed in the basic goodness of human nature, was not of the devil!"

**Charles Ryrie** on "**practices sin**" = "continually practices. I.e., sins as a regular way of life."

**Disciple's Study Bible** - Habitual sinners are under Satan's control and are his children. Satan's existence is and always has been characterized by sin, rebellion against God.

**Who practices sins - present tense** = as the general direction of their life. Notice that John contrasts children of the Devil with the children of God by their actions (practicing or not practicing sin). What they do, how they behave, reflect to "whom" they belong. There is no "middle ground"- one is either safe in Christ or in the family of the Devil and under his (or his minions') diabolic influence. Paul summarizes the estate of every unregenerate man or woman...

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this **world**, according to **the prince of the power of the air** (the **Devil**), of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our **flesh**, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Eph 2:1-3+) (Note the **evil triumvirate** arrayed against us = the **world**, the **flesh** and the **devil**).

**Vine on practices sin** - John's use of the present tense of the verb [poieo](#), "to do," expresses the meaning of the alternative verb [prasso](#), "to practice." The manner of life which is marked by continuing to do sin is described by the phrase "doeth (practices) lawlessness," which is constant disregard of the law of God. As, then, doing righteousness is an evidence of the new birth, so doing lawlessness is an evidence of not being born of God....Again, the apostle does not give the exact contrasting parallel with what he has just stated, which would have been "he that doeth sin is unrighteous even as the devil is unrighteous." He goes further and expresses definitely the evil spiritual relationship, in contrast to the divine relationship of his readers. Not that the devil is the source of anyone's existence, for, as **Augustine** says, "The Devil made no man, begat no man, created no man." The devil is the source of sin, and therefore the one who leads a sinful life is spiritually connected with him. Not that man is helpless in his continuance of evil, as if he were void of responsibility in the matter, but that, inasmuch as the habit of his life is the same as that which characterizes the devil, a spiritual relationship exists between them. (Collected Writings)

**Is (continually) of the devil (diabolos)** - The idea is not that one is "born" of the devil (he never gave birth to anyone), but that this individual draws from him the ruling principle and power of his life much like a son does from his father. Jesus so accused the hypocritical Jews - "You are of you] father the devil" (Jn 8:44). When one habitually acts like the devil he shows who is "*father*" really is. At the same time he also shows that he is not a true child of God.

**Augustine** put it this way - The devil made no one, he begot no one, he created no one; but whosoever imitates the devil, is, as it were, a child of the devil, through imitating, not through being born of him.

*How unbecoming it is for them that profess themselves Christians to have the gospel in their mouths and the devil in their hearts.*

-- Thomas Manton

**MacDonald** - Some children are so like their parents that you couldn't lose them in a crowd. This is true of God's children and of the devil's children. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. Here again the thought is, "He who practices sin is of the devil." The devil has been sinning (continuous, characteristic behavior) from the beginning, that is, from the first time that he did sin. All his children follow him in this broad way. It should be added here that men become children of God through the new birth, but there is no birth in connection with the children of the devil. A man becomes a child of the devil simply by imitating his behavior, but no one is begotten as a child of the devil. (**Ed:** I would say that there is a birth involved - physical birth is an entrance into the kingdom of darkness because we are born sinners.) (Borrow [Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** lamented that "It is to be feared that too often the Name of the Lord Jesus has been dishonored among the heathen by the vices and cruelties of *those who call themselves Christians*; may this fact excite *true believers* to greater diligences in causing the gospel to be proclaimed as with a trumpet in all quarters of the habitable globe." ([Exposition of 1 John 3](#))

**John Calvin on the one who practices sin is of the devil** - It is like saying that it belongs to the devil to entice people to sin. Hence it follows that his members, and all who are ruled by him, give themselves up to commit sin.

**Of the devil (diabolos)** - These "sin practitioners" are in the family of and under the authority of the devil; they are children of the devil, as it were, in that they take after the "family likeness!" There are only two "families" on earth since sin entered the world (Ro 5:12+) = the family of God (contrary to popular opinion only believers can truly call God "Father") and the family of the Devil, respectively the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness (Col 1:12-13+). The only way to be transferred out of the kingdom of darkness is to behold and receive the glorious light of the Gospel (2Cor 4:4, 6+) which will open (just as Jesus taught Paul) "their eyes so that they may turn from **darkness to light** and from the **dominion of Satan to God**, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me." (Acts 26:18)

**Wuest on of the devil** - "Of" is ek, "out of," used with the ablative case, gives us the ablative of source. He who continually does sin is **out of the devil as a source**. That is, his sinful propensities, issuing from his totally depraved nature inherited from Adam, find their ultimate source in the devil who brought about the downfall of our first parents. **Habitual actions again are an index of character**, and here, of source. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

**For** - Always pause and ponder this term of explanation, asking "What is the author explaining?, etc" In this case, John explains why a child of the **devil** continually **practices sin**. Why? Because like "father," like "son" and sinning was the nature of their father from the day he fell and it was their nature from the day they were born. As Jesus said "You must be born again" to reverse the curse! (Jn 3:7)

**Devil** (Latin *diabolus*) ([1228](#))(**diabolos** from **diá** = through, between + **ballo** = to cast, throw) means a **false accuser, slanderer** (one who utters false charges or misrepresentations which defame and damage another's reputation), **backbiting** (malicious comment about one not present), one given to malicious gossip or a **calumniator** (one who utters maliciously false statements, charges, or imputations about, this term imputes malice to the speaker and falsity to the assertions). Notice how the root words (**diá**

= through + **ballo** = throw) picture what the devil does. He constantly throws between seeking to divide whether it be between a husband and wife, a child and parent, a church, etc. Resist his divisive, condemnatory accusations firm in your faith. **Diabolos** is applied some 34 times to Satan, the god of this world, and in each case has the definite article in the Greek ("the" = defining a specific entity) and is never in the plural (the three uses below in the pastoral epistles are all plural) as when applied to men who, by opposing the cause of God, may be said to act the part of the devil or to side with him.

**Sinned** (264)(**hamartano**) literally means to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize). Hamartano means to act contrary to the will and law of God. **Hamartano** means to err (err is from Latin **errare** = to wander or to stray!) which means to wander from the right way, to deviate from the true course or purpose and so to violate an accepted standard of conduct. **Hamartano** means to swerve from the truth, to turn aside from the straight course charted by the Word of Truth.

**Vincent on the devil has sinned** - The present tense indicates continuousness. He sinned in the beginning, and has never ceased to sin from the beginning, and still sins.

**Wuest - Sinned** is a present of duration which speaks of that which has begun in the past and continues into the present. The translation could read, "The devil has been sinning from the beginning."... Smith identifies the words "the beginning" as "the beginning of his diabolic career." ([Erdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

**Vine** says the stress is "upon the phrase **from the beginning.**" Sin began when Satan first sinned. The use of the **present tense** in the statement, instead of the past "has sinned," marks the fact that he himself is sinful and his course is unceasingly one of sin. By his misrepresentation of God, which is implied in the title "**devil**," he has ever sought to attack the soul of man, endeavoring to instill reasons for doubt and distrust of God. That is the evidence of Scripture from the first to the last, cp. John 8:44." (Collected Writings)

**Beginning** (746)(**arche**) refers to the commencement of something as an action, process, or state of being. Arché refers to what is first or has primacy (the state of being first). Beginning most likely refers to Satan's initial fall from God's favor (Isaiah 14:12-14 - note the "**I will's**", Ezekiel 28:12-17)

How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! "But you said in your heart, '**I will** ascend to heaven; **I will** raise my throne above the stars of God, And **I will** sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north; **I will** ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will** make myself like the Most High.' (Isa 14:12-14)

Ezek 28:12 "Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.13 "You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared. 14 "You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you [there.] You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 "You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created, Until unrighteousness was found in you. 16 "By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned; Therefore I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God. And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the stones of fire. 17 "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings, That they may see you.

**Steven Cole** comments on Isaiah 14:12-14 - Notice that five times the devil said, "I will," in opposition to God. He was not content with where God had created him. He wanted his own way. As we saw in verse 4, which is parallel to verse 8, the essence of sin is rebellion against God. The sinner says, "I will! I want my way! I will not submit to the Most High God." So whenever a person acts in line with his own will, without submitting to God's will, he is committing the original sin of the devil. Whether it manifests itself as the humanly respectable, "I will be nice to others, so that people will think highly of me," or as the reprehensible, "I will kill others to get what I want," it all comes from the same source: the devil. Any action that originates in the human will that is not in submission to God is devilish, even if outwardly it is a nice, humanitarian, seemingly "good" action.

Jesus described the Jews who had **professed** belief in Him (Jn 8:30) but who by their actions (e.g., Jn 8:37-38, Jn 8:58-59) proved they were not genuine believers -- "You are of [your] father the **devil**, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning (this would refer to the Garden of Eden), and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own [nature;] for he is a liar, and the father of lies." (Jn 8:44)

## **A SECOND REASON FOR THE FIRST APPEARING**

**The Son of God** (same phrase 7x in this epistle - 1Jn 3:8, 4:15, 5:5, 5:10, 12, 13, 20) - Notice that this title emphasizes Christ's deity. In 1John 3:5+ **He appeared** in order **to take away sins** and John says He appeared to **destroy the works of the devil**. In a word, the Son crushed the power of sin (1Jn 3:5) and Satan (1Jn 3:8).

**John Piper** says, "Christmas is because God aims to destroy something ... [it is] God's infiltration of rebel planet earth on a search and destroy mission" ([The Son of God Appeared to Destroy the Works of the Devil](#))

**Appeared** (has been revealed) ([5319](#))(**phaneroo** from **phanerós** = manifest, visible, conspicuous in turn from **phaino** = give light; become visible in turn from **phos** = light) means God was brought to the light and made clearly visible as the God-Man. John uses **phaneroo** 7x in this epistle - 1Jn 1:2, 2:19, 2:28, 3:2, 3:5, 3:8, 4:9.

**For this purpose** - Whenever you see this term of purpose or result, take a moment to ponder "What is the purpose or result of His appearing?" To destroy the works of the devil.

**W E Vine** on **The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.**— The full title, "the Son of God," is mentioned here for the first time in this epistle. Previously He has been spoken of as "the Son." While, in this epistle, as the Son He is made to stand out distinctly from the children of God, here in the full title He also stands out as the one who, being possessed of essential, unoriginated relationship with the Father, came forth from the Father and came into the world in order to destroy the works of God's opponent. Further, in the mention of this title Christ is set in contrast to those who in their deliberate habit of evil-doing are spiritual children of the devil. While the verb **luo, to destroy**, literally means "to loose," the literal meaning must not be pressed here. The word is used of that method of destruction by which a thing is broken and nullified, and this is the effect of Christ's work on the Cross upon **the works of the devil**. These **works** are the operation of the Evil One upon the human heart, by which man, yielding to his suggestions and influence, has fallen into sin and continues therein. This verse does not provide ground for the assumption that all mankind will eventually be delivered from the effects of sin. What is stated is the means God has taken, the provision He has made, for the accomplishment of the end in view. The whole tenor of the passage stresses the fact that man by continuing in sin may refuse to avail himself of the effects of the work of Christ. This statement in 1 Jn 3:8 resumes that in 1 Jn 3:5, setting forth the subjects as in connection with God's adversary, and not merely with sin, and thus preparing the way for the statements of 1 Jn 3:9,10. ([Collected Writings](#))

**Destroy** ([3089](#))(**luo**) means to loose, release, break, to set free what is bound. Before we were born again, we were in bondage to sin and Satan. Jesus has set us free, *loosed* us from the diabolical works which bound us like chains. This is the same verb Jesus used when he raised Lazarus from the dead and said "**Unbind** (luo) him and let him go." (Jn 11:44). **Luo** is used in Revelation 1:5+ to describe how Jesus "**released** (luo) us from our sins by His blood." In Luke 13:16 Jesus asked "this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, **whom Satan has bound** for eighteen long years, should she not have been **released** (luo) from this bond on the Sabbath day?" Luke used luo to describe the stern of the ship being "**broken up** (luo) by the force of the waves." This makes me think of the "He breaks the power of cancelled sin and sets the prisoner free." ([O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing](#))

**B F Westcott** on the choice of the verb **luo** which means "**to loose**" - The works of the devil are represented as having a certain consistency and coherence. They show a kind of solid front. But Christ, by His coming, has revealed them in their complete unsubstantiality. He has 'undone' the seeming bonds by which they were held together.

**Wuest** adds that Jesus "has done more than that. By the blood of His Cross He has paid for sin, made a way of escape from the arch enemy of men's souls, defeated the purposes of the devil, and will finally bring about his complete downfall." ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used by permission)

In a parallel passage the writer of Hebrews says that

Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that **through death He might render powerless** (katargeo) him who had the power of death, that is, the **devil** and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. (Heb 2:14-15+)

But you might be saying "That sounds good, but it seems to me that Satan is alive and well on planet earth!" While that is true, John's point is that because of Christ's death, burial and resurrection, Satan is a defeated adversary and now all who are safe "in Christ" are released from his authority. The devil's defeat is describe by John in Revelation 20 after being released from his 1000 year confinement -

And when the thousand years are completed (cp Rev 20:1-3+), Satan **will be released** (somewhat ironically also uses **luo**) from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the



seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. (Revelation 20:7-10<sub>±</sub>) (As an aside notice that very frequently when the devil is mentioned, the word deceived or deception is often mentioned in the same context -- clearly this is his great "*modus operandi*" to deceive! What's the point? The best defense against deception is to hold fast God's Word of Truth, so that in the day of trial or temptation or tribulation, that living and active word might hold your spirit, soul and body fast!

**THOUGHT** - This begs the critical question - Are you memorizing the Word? There is simply no better way to hold fast God's Truth than to treasure it in your heart! (Ps 119:9,11) Begin today -- write down a verse on an index card and carry it with you, meditating on it when you have free time and you will soon have it memorized. Then add another verse and index card, but keep the old card with you, because frequent review is the key to successful Bible memorization. See related resources - (1) Meditate, (2) Primer on Biblical Meditation; (3) Memorizing His Word (4) Memory Verses by Topic

**The works of the devil** - There are many "**works**" but as discussed above, one of his main "**works**" is to deceive. See Summary of the Methodeia of Satan See [Satan in Nave's Topical Bible](#) and [Schemes of the Devil](#)

**John Piper on the works of the Devil** - The work of the devil is to tempt people to sin. When they sin, his work is accomplished. So what the Son of God came to destroy is not just the guilt of sin (which might enable us to stay like we are and go right on sinning into heaven) but actually sinning. The Son of God came to destroy sinning. The enemy on the rebel planet is sin. The deadly virus in the Appalachian village is sin. The force to be conquered on the Western Front is sin. Christmas is God's invasion of enemy territory to rescue a people from the devil and destroy the sin in their lives. ([The Son of God Appeared to Destroy the Works of the Devil](#))

**Daniel Akin** - Seeing 1Jn 3:8 in parallel with 1Jn 3:5, we see that the works of the Devil, which our Savior came to destroy, are sins. By means of His atonement, sin's penalty has been nullified for the child of God. By means of the new birth, sin's power has been neutralized and dealt a death-blow. And, by virtue of His two appearances, sin's presence will soon pass away forever. Jesus delivered a knockout punch to the Devil on the cross. An empty tomb is an eternal monument to His victory and to ours! (SEE [Exalting Jesus in 1,2,3 John - Page 69](#))

**Steven Cole** - Truth of 1Jn 3:8b parallels 1Jn 3:5+, where John said that Christ **appeared to take away sins**. Here the focus is on Christ's coming to destroy Satan's **works**. This refers mainly to the devil's work of promoting sin in the human race. The word **destroy** is the Greek word, "to loose." It's as if we were bound by sin's chains, but Jesus freed us. He came to pay the penalty for sin that we justly deserved. By so doing, He broke Satan's power to accuse us before God (Rev. 12:10<sub>±</sub>), and He broke sin's power in the lives of believers (Ro 6:10-13+). Thus John is making the point that if we tolerate sin in our lives, we are siding with the devil and against Jesus Christ, who came to destroy the devil's works.

**H A Ironside** - Dear believer, there is not only deliverance from the judgment due your sin, but deliverance has been provided from the power of sin. He provides deliverance over sin that He might annul the works of the devil. He sets His people free from the power of sin and Satan that they might live in this world to the praise of His glory. ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

**Jon Courson** - In taking away our sin, Jesus paid the price for sin. In destroying the works of the devil, He destroyed the power of sin. That is, He destroyed the power of the Enemy to entangle us in those things that compromise our ability to impact the world for the kingdom. (See [Jon Courson's Application Commentary: Volume 3](#))

**John Calvin on the Son of God appeared for this purpose** - He repeats in other words what he had said before, that Christ came to **take away sins**. Hence two conclusions are to be drawn: that those in whom sin reigns cannot be reckoned among the members of Christ, and that they can by no means belong to his body; for wherever Christ exerts His own power, He puts the devil to flight as well as sin. And this is what John immediately adds; for the next sentence, where he says that those who do not sin are born of God (1 John 3:9), is a conclusion from what has gone before.

**John Stott** nicely sums up John's argument thus far: If the first step to holiness is to recognize the sinfulness of sin, both in its essence as lawlessness and in its diabolical origin, the second step is to see its absolute incompatibility with Christ in His sinless Person and saving work. The more clearly we grasp these facts, the more incongruous will sin appear and the more determined we shall be to be rid of it. (BORROW [The Letters of John page 128](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - **ILLUSTRATION** - For many months after the close of World War II, Japanese troops were discovered hidden in the caves and jungles of the Pacific islands. Some of these stragglers were living like frightened savages; they didn't know the war was over. Once they understood that it was no longer necessary for them to fight, they surrendered. Christians may rest in the truth that Satan is a defeated enemy. He may still win a few battles here and there, but he has already lost the war! Sentence has been

pronounced on him, but it will be awhile before the punishment is meted out. A person who knows Christ, and who has been delivered from the bondage of sin through Christ's death on the cross, has no desire to obey Satan and live like a rebel. ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

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### 1 John 3:8 Defeated Enemy

A friend and associate of boxers, American writer Wilson Mizner was himself a talented fighter. One night Mizner and boxer "Mysterious" Billy Smith visited a San Francisco bar, where Mizner started a fight with some longshoremen. At the end only one longshoreman was left standing. Although Mizner rained punches at him, he stayed obstinately upright. Suddenly, Smith noticed what was happening. "Leave him alone, Wilson!" he shouted. "I knocked him out five minutes ago."

On investigation it turned out that a punch from Smith had indeed knocked the longshoreman out cold, but had also wedged him vertically between two pieces of furniture.

Here's an accurate picture of our already-defeated but still standing enemy Satan!

Today in the Word, April 3, 1993

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**OUTWARD APPEARANCE AND INWARD CHARACTER.** - The outward life of Christ was true to His inward character, but, alas, how many of us claim the Name of Christ while we are destitute of His Spirit. Like the peacock, which is famed for its beauty and gluttony, there be many that have an attractive appearance, but at the same time an insatiable desire for self-gratification. Self-complacent boasting is just about as equally unpleasant as the horrid scream of the peacock. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

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### Spurgeon - The works of the devil destroyed (Sermon [The Works of the Devil Destroyed](#))

'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.' 1 John 3:8

Men have become wonderfully proficient in the science of excuse-making, frequently imputing their own guilt to the devil's guile. Yet sin in a sadly true sense does come from the devil; he first introduced it into the world. How or when he himself first sinned and fell from being an angel of light to become the apostle of darkness we will not conjecture. Many have thought that the pride of his lofty station, or envy of the foreseen glories of the Son of man, may have overthrown him; but, at any rate, he kept not his first estate, but became a rebel against his Lord, and the active promoter of all evil. Being expelled from heaven for his wickedness, he desired to wreak his revenge upon God by alienating the human race from its obedience. He saw what an interest the Creator had taken in man, and therefore judged that he could grieve him greatly by seducing man from obedience. He perceived that the Maker, when he formed the earth, did not rest; when he had made birds and fishes, did not rest; when he had made sun, moon, and stars, did not rest; but when he had fashioned man, he was so well content that then he took a day of rest, and consecrated it for ever to be a Sabbath. Thus was God's unresting care for man made manifest. 'Surely,' said the evil one, 'if I can turn this favoured being into an enemy of God, then I shall bring dishonour upon the name of the Most High, and have my revenge.' Therefore he alighted in the garden, and tempted our first parents, thus opening the gate by which sin entered into the world with all its train of woe. In that sense sin is truthfully described as being the work of the devil. He brought the flame, which has caused so great a burning. Since then he has been in some degree the author of sin by often tempting men.

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[Norman Geisler](#) - 1 JOHN 3:9—Doesn't John contradict himself when he asserts that Christians are without sin?

**PROBLEM:** John affirms here that "Whoever has been born of God does not sin." But in the first chapter he insisted that "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1:8).

**SOLUTION:** John nowhere claims that believers are without sin or never commit a sin. First John 3:9 is in the present continuous tense and should be translated "Whoever is born of God does not continually practice sin." Conversely, if a person habitually practices sin, he is not born of God. As James argued, true faith will produce good works (James 2:14ff). If a pig and a lamb fall into the mud, the pig wants to stay there, but the lamb wants to get out. Both a believer and an unbeliever can fall into the same sin, but a believer cannot stay in it and feel comfortable.

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### [Walter Kaiser - No One Born of God Will Continue to Sin?](#)

Most of us are quite conscious of sinning from time to time. Does this mean that we are not born of God? If we read three verses earlier, in 1 John 3:6 we find "No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him." This sounds even worse. Even stranger is the fact that in this very context the elder can write, "This then is how we know that

we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence" (1 Jn 3:19). These passages are hardly likely to set our hearts at rest! Could they mean that if we sin after our conversion or baptism we are damned (as was thought by some in the period of the church fathers)? If not, what do these passages mean? How can we truly set our hearts at rest?

This passage, which includes the whole of 1 John 3:2–10, is quite difficult, and there have been a number of solutions suggested:

1. One group of commentators notes that the verbs for "sinning" in these verses are in the present tense, which in Greek is a continuous tense. The NIV stresses this continuous aspect by translating "keeps on sinning" and "continues to sin" and "go on sinning." The argument is that while true believers may sin on occasion (so 1 Jn 1:7–9), they will not habitually sin. The weakness of this position is that it depends on a grammatical subtlety which an interpreter cannot stress in other places in the New Testament where this tense is used. Furthermore, in 1 John 5:16 the same tense is used for a believer seen by a fellow believer "committing a sin." Here is a true believer who is doing the same thing that is denied in 1 John 3:6, 9. Why doesn't the NIV translate consistently and so translate this passage "continuing to sin"?

2. Another group of commentators, noticing 1 John 5:16–17, suggests that "the elder" is thinking of two types of sin, a "sin that leads to death" and a "sin that does not lead to death." The true believer cannot sin a "sin that leads to death," but may sin the other type of sin. What these sins are is debated, some thinking that they are deliberate versus involuntary sins and others opting for other distinctions among sins (such as the difference between mortal and venial sins in the Roman Catholic tradition). Yet if this is what the elder means, why does he wait until 1 John 5:16 to mention this difference? His terms here appear rather absolute.

3. Still others suggest that John is pointing to an ideal or expressing a tension in the Christian life between the ability not to sin, expressed here, and the reality of sin, expressed in 1 John 1:7–9. That interpretation is also possible, yet does it adequately express the strength of the language used here?

4. Finally, there are commentators who suggest that this passage must be taken in the context of the whole of 1 John, which shows that John is arguing on two fronts. On the one hand, one group the elder opposes is arguing that they are beyond sin. He addresses them in 1 John 1:7–9. Another group is arguing that their sins do not matter, since they are enlightened within. He is addressing them here. The weakness of this position is that the author does not make any clear distinction between groups. He does not say, "Now addressing the other group," or make any similar transition.

How can we evaluate these positions? Any conclusion which we draw must be both exegetically and pastorally sound. On this basis, I believe that while none of the four solutions is impossible, it is the last of them which is the most likely.

The elder is addressing a church situation in which there are some people who hold that Jesus was not really incarnate, probably believing that he only seemed to be a human being. Such beliefs in their full-blown form (which happened in the second century) are the foundation of Gnosticism, a system of belief in which salvation is based in knowledge or enlightenment and in which the physical world is disparaged, while the spiritual world is held in honor.

With respect to sin there are two directions that Gnosticism took. One direction was to deny sin. On the basis of ascetic practices and inner enlightenment the Gnostics believed that they were beyond sin. Naturally such beliefs were underpinned by a good dose of denial. The author addresses such people in 1 John 1:7–9. Rather than think that we are beyond sin and deny that what we do is sinful, Christians should confess their sin and get it removed.

Another direction that Gnosticism took with respect to sin was to claim that sin was irrelevant. Sin was something done in the body, and the body, in their view, was (at best) simply the outside shell of a person. The real person was the spiritual being who through enlightenment was living in communion with God. So one's body might be sleeping with a prostitute, but one's spirit was not involved in the act. In this passage the elder is addressing such people in no uncertain terms.

Starting in 1 John 3:6 the author makes a series of contrasts: (1 Jn 3:6a) no one who lives in God sins, (1 Jn 3:6b) no one who sins knows God, (1 Jn 3:7) those who know God live righteously, (1 Jn 3:8) the one who sins belongs to the devil, (1 Jn 3:9) the one born of God cannot sin. Thus we have an A B A B A pattern, shifting back and forth between those who sin and those who do not sin. The person who is saying that it is fine to sin, since sins are only part of the body and thus irrelevant, is condemned in no uncertain terms.

So what is the elder saying? He is saying (1 Jn 3:6) that if believers remain in Christ (which the NIV translates "who lives in him"), which means to stay in intimate connection with Christ, they will not sin. Christ is not the one producing the carelessness about sin that could be seen in the semi-Gnostic opponents of the elder (we say semi-Gnostic or proto-Gnostic, because the full Gnostic systems did not develop until the second century). Far from it, the one who sins is showing that to that extent he or she does not know Christ. The next statement makes the point clear: it is the one who does right who is righteous, for that is what Christ is. If a person really knows Christ, they will live like him. On the other hand, sin shows a person's inheritance in the devil, so acceptance of sinful living shows where such people are from. It is these very works of the devil that Christ came to destroy.

Then the author makes it clear in the verse we started with that being born of God puts a new nature in a person and that new nature will not sin. John has already admitted that Christians do sin (1 Jn 1:7–9), but that sinning is not due to the new nature. The author draws from the Old Testament picture of God's putting a new "heart" into believers ("I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees," Ezek 36:27). This was later picked up in intertestamental literature such as 1 Enoch 5:8 ("And then there shall be bestowed upon the elect wisdom, and they shall live and never again sin"; compare Psalms of Solomon 17:32; the Rule of the Community from the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1QS 4:20–23; Testament of Levi 18:9). The elder, with a background in John 3, expresses this using a picture from typical first-century ideas about human procreation: the male's sperm (seed) determines what the child will be like. So God's spiritual "sperm" determines what his children will be like. Those born of God have a nonsinful nature. This is a far cry from the indifference to sin asserted by the opponents.

One way which a believer can see this difference practically is in the love of fellow Christians. The love of fellow Christians is what God has implanted in our heart, while neglect or hatred of fellow Christians shows that we are pseudo-Christians (not born of God, 1 Jn 3:10–18).

So how do believers set their hearts at rest? By noting the nature of God within them, giving them love for fellow Christians and leading them into other righteous deeds. Will "our hearts condemn us"? Yes, they will, for all people will sin from time to time. Yet the God who put his very nature in the believer is greater than "our hearts."

Is 1 John saying that a true Christian will never sin? No, for he has already admitted that true Christians do sin and will be liars if they deny this truth (1 Jn 1:7–9). What he is saying is that a true Christian has within him or her by virtue of their new birth a power not to sin. God within them is causing righteous living. He is not causing sin. In fact, the secret to not sinning is intimate fellowship with Christ, or "remaining in Christ," as John puts it. If a person does not experience this new life in them, if they can be indifferent to sin, then they are likely not born of God, as Paul also says (1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21). On the other hand, even if a person is struggling with temptation and at times falling prey to it—indeed because they are struggling and cannot be content with simply sinning—they can have the assurance that because they know the power of God within them impelling them away from sin and toward the love of their fellow believers, they are in fact one of his children and his new life in them will win out in the end.

Here, then, is the tension. We have the picture of a life totally free from sin which will be ours in the future. We have the reality of that new life already being within us. And we have the realization that that new life is not yet totally victorious, so that we must admit our sins, confess them, and appropriate that new life again each day.

See also comment on JOHN 5:28–29; ROMANS 6:2, 7; HEBREWS 10:14; 2 PETER 1:4.

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### **[Gleason Archer](#) - Does 1 John 3:9 teach sinless perfection?**

In KJV 1 John 3:9 is rendered: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot commit sin, because he is born of God." In one respect this otherwise adequate translation fails to bring out one very important feature of the hamartanein ("to sin") after ou dynatai ("not able"): a present infinitive in Greek implies continual or repeated action. (Single action would have been conveyed by the aorist infinitive, hamartein.) For this reason some of the more recent translations bring out the true emphasis by rendering it "he cannot go on sinning" (NIV). NASB draws the inference from the present infinitive hamartanein that the earlier poiei (present indicative) in "doth not commit sin" (KJV) implies "no one who is born of God practices sin," since this stands in contrast to the hamaratanein of the later clause. This is probably justified, even though it would be wrong to say that the Greek present indicative necessarily implies continual action (for it often does not do so).

However, it is necessary to study carefully the sense in which this verb is meant, for even the most mature Christian is susceptible to temptation and may fall into sins of various types (even if not the more heinous sins that are considered under human law as amounting to crime). John teaches very clearly in 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." But what he is emphasizing here is the miracle of the new birth (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17), by which the life of Christ takes possession of the believer's heart and draws him into a totally new relationship to God and to God's holy will. Instead of being committed to the old principle of "myself first!" he now comes under the lordship of his Savior and makes it his conscious purpose to please God because he loves Him and completely belongs to Him.

In his new capacity as "one who has been born of God" (gegennēmenos—perfect passive participle—ek tou theou), the believer has God's holy seed (sperma) within him; and this sperma develops and enlarges within him like a seed within a flower pot, until it brings forth leaves, flowers, and fruit—all the while occupying more and more of the pot. The dirt in the soil may defile what touches it, but the function of the growing plant is not to soil but develop the new life and beauty that constantly proceeds from the seed. As the believer consciously abides in Christ (v.6, ho en autō menōn) and has his gaze fixed on Jesus (Heb. 12:2), he does not fall into sin but runs his race well, to the glory of God.

As for the special force of hamartia here, we should pay special attention to v.4: "Everyone who commits/practices [present

participle] sin [hamartian] also practices lawlessness [anomia].” The Devil is then referred to as the archetype, model, and patron of lawlessness (v.8); and it is he (and of course those who are under his control) whose business it is to practice sin as lawlessness. In other words, Scripture is distinguishing between the two great families in the universe: the children of light (1:7) and the children of darkness and disobedience (1:6).

What characterizes a true child of God is wholehearted commitment to the holy will and standard of God; what characterizes the child of this world (whose spiritual father is really Satan, according to John 8:44) is the commitment to self-seeking, self-deification, and transgression of every kind. This principle had to be stressed by the apostle in this letter, because already the antinomian heretics (who taught that a sinful life was quite permissible to the believer, because “grace would cover it all”) were confusing his church people; and they were losing their grasp of the holy life as the fruit of a true and living faith. John here reminds us all that the true believer is committed to a life patterned after Christ, and that as the bearer of the seed of Christ (that is, the Holy Spirit) he will constantly practice righteousness. Only the unconverted and the counterfeit will practice a self-seeking, self-asserting life of sin.

In his [Bible Questions Answered \(pp. 68–72\)](#), [W.L. Pettingill](#) devotes a very careful and perceptive study to this passage in 1 John 3 and offers this helpful paraphrase of vv. 4–10:

Whosoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifest to take away our sins, and in Him is no lawlessness. Whosoever abides in Him is never lawless: whosoever is lawless has not seen Him nor known Him.... He who is lawless is of the devil, for the devil was lawless from the beginning.... Whosoever is begotten of God is never lawless, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot be lawless because he is begotten of God. In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil.”

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**J. C. Philpot. Daily Portions** - "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8 - There will be no thorough destruction of indwelling sin, until the body drops into the grave, and the soul mounts aloft to be with the Lord; nor a full destruction of its effects in the body until the resurrection morn, when the body shall be raised from the sleeping dust and changed into the glorious image of the body of the Son of God, a fit companion for the immortal soul. Then will the victory be complete; then will Christ appear, shining forth with the luster of a million suns; then will be the glorious manifestation of the Son of God; and the works of the devil will be thoroughly destroyed. The theme of heaven's anthem, the grand theme of eternal adoration, will be the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil. The redeemed will look down from the battlements of heaven and see what works have been executed by the devil; they will see millions of fellow-beings consigned to eternal misery, weltering in hell, while they view themselves safe in the arms of eternal love. They will see the Son of God, without a veil between, manifested to their eyes in such heart-ravishing glory as the three disciples had but a feeble, dim view of on the Mount of Transfiguration. It will be their joy to see him as he is. He will always wear his human nature; he will never lay that aside. That will always shine resplendent with all the glory of Godhead; that will be the object of eternal admiration and love; and to that glory of the God-man all the saints in bliss will be forever looking and forever adoring, for sin will no longer have a being in them, but they will be conformed to the glorified image of the Son of God, and be celebrating forever the grand triumph of the cross. - J. C. Philpot. Daily Portions

**John MacArthur - A DECREASING FREQUENCY OF SIN** [Strength for Today: Daily Readings for a Deeper Faith - Page 15](#)

“No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”<sup>1</sup> JOHN 3:9

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*A decreasing pattern of sin in a believer's life means his faith is genuine.*

A sinful life pattern is incompatible with salvation. If you could continue in the same sinful pattern after being saved from sin, that would mean salvation is ineffective. Therefore, 1 John 3 deals with the saving work of Christ and reveals just how effective it is.

Verse 5 says Christ “appeared in order to take away sins.” If you say someone who has had the work of Christ applied to him is continuing in sin just as before, you are denying the purpose for which Christ came. He died to take away the pattern of sin as well as the penalty.

Therefore, if you are truly a believer you will relate to God in a totally new way, because the Christian “abides in Him” (v. 6). You are no longer a perpetual slave to sin, but you now have the option and ability to do good (see Rom. 6:14, 17–18). You will always be acutely sensitive to sin (Rom. 7; 1 John 1:8–9); yet, because of Christ’s abiding in you, your struggle will decrease over the years, and sin will be less and less a pattern in your life.

That brings us to 1 John 3:9, which is a reminder that believers have been born anew by the Holy Spirit. Your new nature or new disposition of life is the “seed” verse 9 speaks of. Just as the seed of a plant, when placed in the soil, produces a distinct kind of life, the divine seed produces a righteous life in you that ends sin’s dominance. And that seed will never die—1 Peter 1:23 says it is “imperishable.”

What does all this mean to you if you’re a genuine believer? It means you will see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life because you now have holy affections. It doesn’t mean sin will be eliminated, because your unredeemed flesh is still present. It means the more you practice righteousness—with its right motives, right desires, right words, and right actions—the less you sin, and the more you can be assured you’re a child of God.

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Suggestions for Prayer: If there is a frequent sin you struggle with, ask God to help you defeat it.

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### **Ian Paisley - The Manifestation of God the Son in Satan's Destruction**

"He that committeth sin is of the devil: for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8

#### I. The Manifestation of God's Son

"For this purpose was the Son of God manifested"

The word manifested indicates the Eternal Pre-Existence of the Son of God. He was somewhere else before He was manifested to the world. He was manifested to the world in ten ways: 1, Supernaturally by the Incarnation; 2, Physically by the virgin birth; 3, Impeccably by the temptation; 4, Miraculously by His works; 5, Prophetically as the Prophet of God; 6, Sacrificially as the Priest of God; 7, Powerfully by His resurrection; 8, Gloriously by His ascension; 9, Supplicatory as the Advocate; 10, Royally as The King enthroned.

#### II. The Devastation of God's Enemies

The devil is the greatest of all sinners. He is the Supremo of Sin. He is the enemy of life, a murderer. He is the enemy of light, a liar. He is the enemy of law, a violator and he is the enemy of love, a traitor. Christ destroyed his works at Calvary and broke his head and will carry out his capital sentence fully when he damns him to the lake of fire forever.

#### III. The Culmination of God's Purpose

Christ did the Father's will.

The text is the record of a glorious purpose fulfilled.

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### **Oswald Chambers —1 John 3:8**

OUR LORD'S LIFE CHALLENGES US to maintain an intense narrowness in our spiritual lives. I agree that walking arm in arm with the world is highly beneficial for the civilizing of a community. But I believe that civilization is not Christianity.

Modern Christians' craze for social refinement is effacing the rugged, sterling truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The fear of poverty makes many a Christian live in harmony with the world. The church that allows this worldly practice will, of course, gain the respect of this world; but if repentance does not come soon, that church will hear those words of Jesus, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23).

First John 3:8 clearly shows us that Jesus came to our world of sin to destroy the works of the Devil, not to renovate them. The Christian who yields to this temptation to gain supremacy in this world will be found ultimately to bear the scent of a spiritual corpse, with a horrible stench of evil corruption.

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### **A W Tozer - Satan Would Bind Us in Our Own Grave Clothes [Evenings with Tozer: Daily Devotional Readings - Page 21](#)**

... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8

It is part of the devil's business to keep the Christian's spirit imprisoned. He knows that the believing and justified Christian has been raised up out of the grave of his sins and trespasses. From that point on, Satan works that much harder to keep us bound and gagged, actually imprisoned in our own grave clothes!

He knows that if we continue in this kind of bondage we will never be able to claim our rightful spiritual heritage. He knows also that while we continue bound in this kind of enslavement we are not much better off than when we were spiritually dead.

This is one reason why the Christians in today's churches are behaving like a flock of frightened sheep—so intimidated by the devil

that we can't even say "Amen!"

I am sure that it is not glorifying to our God that Christians should be so intimidated and silenced in our day. It was Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, who came down and took our human body for Himself. He was a man, born of a woman, a man wearing our own nature—but He was also God!

He went out to the cross and they sacrificed Him there. The Father, God Almighty, accepted His sacrifice as the one, final fulfillment and consummation of all the sacrifices ever made on Jewish altars. After three days, He came out of the grave, then ascended as Victor over death and hell!

Believing this, we ought to be the most fearless, the happiest and most God-assured people in the whole world!

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**Daily Light on the Daily Path** - "[The woman's seed] shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.—But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.—"But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."—"You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above."

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.—And he . . . cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."—"In my name they will cast out demons."

The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

Gen. 3:15; Isa. 52:14; Isa. 53:5; Luke 22:53; John 19:11; 1 John 3:8; Mark 1:34; Matt. 28:18; Mark 16:17; Rom. 16:20

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**Daily Light on the Daily Path** -The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.—Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.—He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.—And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.—But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:8; Eph. 6:12; Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:15; Rev. 12:10–11; 1 Cor. 15:57

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**Martyn Lloyd-Jones - 4 devotionals on 1 John 3:8**

### **A MIGHTY BATTLE 1 JOHN 3:8**

We see that our Lord did not come into the world only to teach. He did do that, and He gave incomparable teaching. We must realize what he came primarily to do. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested," not that He might teach us, not that He might give us a glorious example to follow, not that He might give us some transcendent idea that would illuminate our minds and thrill us. Not at all! He came, He was manifested, He appeared that He might "destroy the works of the devil."

We see that sin is unrighteous, that it is a transgression of the law, and that sin means we are violating God's holy will for us and God's holy purpose with respect to us. But this is the other part: "To continue in a life of sin and evil," says John in essence, "is just to identify yourself at once with the devil and his ways and with everything that belongs to him." And it is this that is emphasized in this verse.

Our Lord came into this world to wage a great fight; He entered into a mighty battle. The way in which He was victorious in this fight is celebrated especially on Easter Day. This is the day that reminds us of the fact of Christ's victory. It is not a day that reminds us of certain principles in life. You often hear people thank God for this whole "principle of resurrection," how the flowers begin to appear, and how the trees and life come into being in the Spring. Now, that has nothing to do with this blessed message of the resurrection. We are concerned about a fact, not a principle of nature; and the fact is that in the resurrection our Lord ultimately established His conquest over the devil.

Our Lord came into this world to wage a great fight.

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## OUR ADVERSARY 1 JOHN 3:8

We begin by considering this “adversary,” as he is described (1 Peter 5:8), the devil. The Son of God came because there was a certain state and condition in this world that had been produced by the devil. Now whether we like it or not, the fact is that the whole drama of redemption, as it is outlined in the Bible, simply cannot be understood at all unless you accept the biblical doctrine with regard to the devil. It is an essential part of this message; it is there from the very beginning and right through to the end.

And this is the biblical teaching. The explanation of the problem of mankind and the whole state of our world is to be traced back to this fact about the devil. According to the Bible, God made the world perfect; so what has gone wrong with it? And here is the answer. Someone who is described in various terms and to whom various names are given in the Bible came and spoke to the man and the woman whom God had placed in that perfect world. He is called “Lucifer,” “the son of the morning,” and “the god of this world.” He is called “the serpent,” “the prince of the power of the air,” and “the strong man armed.”

There are various names given in the Scriptures, but they all describe the same person. And according to this teaching, this is the explanation of evil and of sin and of all our miseries in this world. The devil came and spoke to man, and he enticed him to sin. So man went against God; and the result of all this is the state of the world as it has been from the moment that man fell.

The whole state of our world is to be traced back to this fact about the devil.

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## LOOK FORWARD IN ANTICIPATION 1 JOHN 3:8

As we believe the message of the Gospel, we are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light—the kingdom of God’s dear Son. He is building up His own kingdom; he is drawing men and women unto Himself out of the world; He is going on with the work. He is in glory seated at the right hand of God, and He must reign until His enemies shall be made His footstool. He is going on until the number of the elect shall have been gathered in. And when that has happened, He will come again. He will return into this world as King and Lord, and He will finally finish the work. He will come with a mighty sword, and not only evil and sin but Satan himself and all his cohorts shall be cast into the lake of fire and will finally be banished from the sight of God for all eternity. And our guarantee of all this is the glorious fact of the resurrection: He “was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

Remember then what He has already destroyed, and look forward in anticipation; the blessed hope that faces us as Christian people is that He will destroy these works of the devil utterly, completely, and finally. Evil and sin will be finally destroyed out of existence, burnt, destroyed forever. God shall be all and in all, and if we are in the army of the mighty Victor who has already risen from the grave and thereby conquered death, if we belong to Him, we shall behold that final judgment of Satan, and we shall dwell for all eternity in a perfect state with no sin and no sorrow, with no sighing and no tears.

We shall dwell for all eternity in a perfect state with no sin and no sorrow, with no sighing and no tears.

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## SINLESS PERFECTION? 1 JOHN 3:8-9

The man or woman who is righteous will show that by living a righteous life; the one who is not righteous shows it by not living a righteous life. That is why this reference to the devil is so significant: “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.” That is his characteristic, his nature, his habit; that is his way of living. That is the thing that is so true of the devil: He sins from the beginning; he goes on sinning. “And that man,” John says in essence, “who goes on sinning is therefore the man who is proclaiming that he has the kind of nature that the devil has. He does not have the new nature that the Christian has.”

We must remember that the apostle here is speaking about all Christians. Now some of the people who believe in sinless perfection tell us that the apostle here is only talking about some Christians. But at this point they become inconsistent, because they forget the message of verse 6; they say he is only speaking about some, but John is speaking about all Christians: “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not.” If a man does not abide in Christ, he is not a Christian at all; to be a Christian means to be abiding in Christ. Now there are some who would have us believe that you can be a Christian without abiding in Christ, but surely that denies the whole doctrine of rebirth. We are in Christ or we are not, and if we are not in Christ we are not Christians at all. “If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9); if we have not been born of the Spirit, we are not Christians. You cannot be in Christ one day and out the next; every Christian is in Christ and abides in Him. John is not only speaking to certain Christians—he is speaking to all Christians.

We must remember that the apostle here is speaking about all Christians.



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**J C Philpot** - 1 John 3:8 - There will be no thorough destruction of sin within until the body drops into the grave, and the soul mounts aloft to be with the Lord; nor a full destruction of its effects in the body until the resurrection morn, when the body shall be raised from the sleeping dust and changed into the glorious image of the body of the Son of God, meet companion for the immortal soul.

Then will the victory be complete; then will Christ appear, shining forth with the lustre of a million suns; then will be the glorious manifestation of the Son of God, and the works of the devil thoroughly destroyed. The burden of heaven's anthem, the grand theme of eternal adoration, will be the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil. The redeemed will look down from the battlements of heaven and see what works have been executed by the devil; they will see millions of fellow-beings consigned to eternal misery, weltering in hell, whilst they view themselves safe in the arms of eternal love. They will see the Son of God, without a veil between, manifested to their eyes in such heart-ravishing glory as the three disciples had but a feeble, dim view of on the Mount of Transfiguration. It will be their joy to see Him as He is. He will always wear His human nature; He will never lay that aside. That will always shine resplendent with all the glory of Godhead; that will be the object of eternal admiration and love; and to that glory of the God-man all the saints in bliss will be for ever looking and for ever adoring, for sin will no longer have a being in them, but they will be conformed to the glorified image of the Son of God, and be celebrating for ever the grand triumph of the cross.

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**A W Tozer - The Devil Hates Everything Dear to God** [Evenings with Tozer: Daily Devotional Readings - Page 6](#)

... For the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8

I have observed among spiritual persons in the Christian fellowship a tendency either to ignore the devil altogether or to make too much of him.

Both attitudes are wrong!

There is in the world an enemy whom we dare not ignore. We see him first in the third chapter of Genesis and last in the twentieth of Revelation, which is to say that he was present at the beginning of human history and will be there at its earthly close.

This enemy is not a creation of religious fancy, not a mere personification of evil for convenience, but a being as real as man himself. The Bible attributes to him qualities of personality too detailed to be figurative, and reveals him speaking and acting in situations hard and practical and far removed from the poetic imagination.

He is said to be a liar, a deceiver and a murderer who achieves his ends by guile and trickery. While he is not omnipresent (omnipresence being an attribute of God alone) he is ubiquitous, which for his purpose amounts to the same thing.

Satan hates God for His own sake, and everything that is dear to God he hates for the very reason that God loves it. Because man was made in God's image the hatred with which Satan regards him is particularly malevolent, and since the Christian is doubly dear to God he is hated by the powers of darkness with an aggravated fury.

In view of this, it cannot be less than folly for us Christians to disregard the reality and presence of such an enemy.

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**David Jeremiah - For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil** [Life-Changing Moments with God: Praying Scripture Every Day](#)

Lord God, I do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Inasmuch as I have partaken of flesh and blood, Jesus Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. Having disarmed principalities and powers, Jesus made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. John the apostle heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives to the death."

Thanks be to You, Almighty God, who gives me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ.

The battle is real, Lord, but the victory is sure—and You give me strength in the meantime! I praise You!

1 JOHN 3:8; EPHESIANS 6:12; HEBREWS 2:14; COLOSSIANS 2:15; REVELATION 12:10–11; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:57

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[John Piper - Christmas Solidarity](#)

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 1 JOHN 3:8

The assembly line of Satan turns out millions of sins every day. He packs them into huge cargo planes and flies them to heaven and spreads them out before God and laughs and laughs and laughs.

Some people work full-time on the assembly line. Others have quit their jobs there and only now and then return.

Every minute of work on the assembly line makes God the laughingstock of Satan. Sin is Satan's business because he hates the light and beauty and purity and glory of God. Nothing pleases him more than when creatures distrust and disobey their Maker.

Therefore, Christmas is good news for man and good news for God.

"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). That's good news for us.

"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). That is also good news for God.

Christmas is good news for God because Jesus has come to lead a strike at Satan's assembly plant. He has walked right into the plant, called for the solidarity of the faithful, and begun a massive walkout.

Christmas is a call to go on strike at the assembly plant of sin. No negotiations with the management. No bargaining. Just single-minded, unswerving opposition to the product. We won't be a part of making it anymore.

Christmas solidarity aims to ground the cargo planes. It will not use force or violence, but with relentless devotion to truth it will expose the life-destroying conditions of the devil's industry.

Christmas solidarity will not give up until a complete shutdown has been achieved.

When sin has been destroyed, God's name will be wholly exonerated. No one will be laughing anymore.

If you want to give a gift to God this Christmas, walk off the assembly line of sin and don't go back. Take up your place in the picket line of love. Join Christmas solidarity until the majestic name of God is cleared, and he stands glorious amid the accolades of the righteous.

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### **[Rick Renner - Set the Spiritual Hostages Free! 1 John 3:8](#)**

Multitudes of people in this world today are held hostage in their minds by the devil. They are incarcerated, locked up, and caged in their minds and emotions, held like slaves, prisoners, or detainees who are under arrest and live at the mercy of their conqueror.

I couldn't begin to count the people I've met through the years who fit that description. Although they belong to Jesus and legally have every right to freedom, they remain in spiritual bondage, at least in some measure, in certain areas of their lives. Whether they persisted in a particular sin or failed to do something they should have done (such as read the Word, pray, or stay in fellowship with other saints), their minds were pried open wide enough for Satan to find an inroad and take that part of their minds captive.

You see, the mind is the primary area Satan seeks to attack. He knows that once he succeeds in planting a stronghold of deception in some area of a person's mind, from that lofty position he can then begin to control and manipulate that person. The Bible calls this kind of deception in the mind a "stronghold" (2 Corinthians 10:4). It is a "stronghold" because once a lie is planted in someone's head, it is very hard to remove!

But First John 3:8 says that Jesus came into the world "... that he might destroy the works of the devil"! I want you to particularly notice the word "destroy" in this verse. It is taken from the Greek word *luo*, which refers to the act of untying or unloosing something. It was used in classical Greek literature to refer to people being delivered, released, or freed from difficulties, burdens, or needs.

In the New Testament, the word *luo* was used to depict the untying of the thongs of a shoe or sandal in Mark 1:7; the unfastening of a donkey's colt in Matthew 21:2; the loosening, unraveling, and removal of Lazarus' grave clothes in John 11:44; and the taking away of Paul's chains in Acts 22:30. But the Greek word *luo* also means to break or to destroy, as in Revelation 5:2, where the Bible says that Jesus is worthy to "loose" (or break) the seals referred to in the book of Revelation.

One of the clearest examples of the word *luo* is found in Luke 3:16, when John the Baptist says, "... But one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose...."

The word *luo* is translated here "to unloose." It is the picture of someone who reaches down to unloose the tight strings of a sandal; then he begins to unwrap those strings from the shoe until finally the shoe becomes so loosened that it easily slips off his foot.

Now let's look at First John 3:8, the verse we are focusing on today. Here the Bible uses the word *luo* when it says, "... For this

purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” This tells us that when Jesus Christ came into the world, He came to untie and unloose Satan’s binding powers over us. His objective was to disentangle us from Satan’s control; to unfasten us from the demonic shackles that held us captive; to unravel the chains Satan used to keep us in his grip; and to break and destroy all the fetters Satan had used to hold us hostage.

Because the word *luo* is used in First John 3:8, it could be taken to mean:

“... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might untie people from all the works of the devil, unraveling Satan’s hold on them—until the devil’s works in people’s lives are utterly destroyed and his hostages are set free.”

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus’ redemptive work destroyed the power of the enemy and our liberty was fully purchased. You see, setting people free from Satan’s power has always been Jesus’ primary concern. First John 3:8 declares that this was the purpose that the Son of God was manifested on this earth. Since this is His concern, it should also be ours.

So many people in this world today are incarcerated, locked up and caged in their minds and emotions. They are held like slaves or prisoners, living at the mercy of their conqueror. Therefore, it is time for you to learn how to recognize the devil’s strategies in other people’s minds and lives. Jesus came to set people free, and God wants to use you to take the delivering power of God to them so the works of the devil can be destroyed in their lives.

The mind may be the devil’s preferred battlefield, but you can make sure he loses every skirmish! Just determine today to be a willing vessel God can use to free spiritual hostages from demonic oppression!

#### MY PRAYER FOR TODAY

Lord, please help me to be conscious of the people I meet who are bound by the devil in their minds. I know that You want to use me to touch them and to bring them the freedom that can be found only in You. I am so sorry for the times I get so busy that I fail to recognize opportunities to speak Your name and to share Your love with people who are lost and bound. Please help me to become consistently alert to the people for whom You died and to go out of my way to tell them the Good News that will deliver them and set them free.

I pray this in Jesus’ name!

#### MY CONFESSION FOR TODAY

I confess that I am alert to the people around me who are held as hostages in their minds. I see their struggles; I recognize their fears; and I use every available opportunity to speak words of freedom and release into their lives. I have received so much from the Lord; now it is my responsibility to share this same liberty with others who come into my life. I know this is what God is asking of me, and I choose to start obeying this mandate today.

I declare this by faith in Jesus’ name!

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### [1 John 3:9 and the Doctrine of Perseverance](#) Dr. Sam Storms

One thing John emphasizes in his first epistle is the reality and gravity of sin. In 1:8 he forcefully labels those who say they have no sin as self-deceived and void of the truth. In 1:10 the claim not to have committed sin is tantamount to calling God a liar, and in 2:1 John clearly implies that Christians will sin (although he writes to help them avoid it). How then do we understand the statement in 3:9 that the one who is begotten of God “does not do sin” (lit.) and in fact “is not able to sin”?

Following are the major interpretative options (excluding the suggestion of some that John simply contradicts himself):

(1) To avoid the difficulty some have narrowed the definition of “sin” to notorious crimes or offences against love (this was the view of both Augustine and Luther).

(2) It has been suggested that what John means is that a Christian cannot sin because what is sin in the life of an unbeliever is not regarded as such by God when committed by a believer. This is contrary to both John and the rest of the NT.

(3) One interpretation draws a distinction between the “old” nature in the Christian and the “new” nature. The “old” nature may continue to sin but the “new” cannot. But how do we isolate a “nature” from the “individual” himself/herself? We may speak of “flesh” and “spirit” in a person, but it is always the person who sins or does not sin, not merely a “nature”.

(4) Others say John is speaking about the ideal and not reality. The argument is: Since all anticipate that sinlessness will be characteristic in the age to come, and since John believed that the age to come had come (2:8), he naturally asserted the sinlessness of Christians!

(5) Some say that John, in the heat of controversial circumstances, breaks forth in holy passion and speaks with apparent exaggeration and over-emphasis.

(6) One view stresses 3:6 where it is stated that the one who “abides” in him does not sin. They contend that this “abiding” in Christ is not descriptive of all Christians but is a condition which only some (those “in fellowship”) believers fulfill. The degree of a believer’s holiness, then, and his ability to sin or not sin are dependent on whether or not he “abides”. When one is abiding in Christ he cannot sin. When one does not abide, one does sin. But 3:9 makes it clear why a Christian doesn’t practice sin, indeed, is unable to sin, and it has nothing to do with abiding. It is because he/she “is born of God”.

(7) Others say that the sin of which John speaks in 3:9 is willful and deliberate sin. The Christian, so they say, cannot commit such deliberate sin in the face of the Lord. Oh, really? What of David?

(8) A few take John quite literally. Hence they believe he is teaching perfectionism. 3:9 proves that sinlessness is attainable in this life. The statements in 1:8, 10 and especially 2:1 are describing the immature believer who although not yet sinless may still become such through diligent activity and love.

[I personally find either of the next two options to be the most likely.]

(9) Some argue that the “sin” which a believer does not and cannot commit is the “sin that leads to death” in 1 John 5:16, namely, hatred of believers and denial of Jesus. I address this view in great detail in my discussion of the sin unto death (see “Controversial Issues” on the web site).

(10) The view adopted by most commentators is that the sin a Christian does not and cannot commit is habitual, persistent, unrepentant sin. John is not concerned so much with the momentary, individual acts of sin as he is with the overall characteristic tendencies and inclinations of a person’s life. John is looking at the pervasive temper of one’s overall experience in life, not at the singular incidents individually. John is not taking a snapshot, but a moving picture. His repeated use of the Greek present tense appears to bear this out. He focuses on the habitual character of the activity in view.

In 3:6 John says that the believer who abides in Christ “sins not” (present tense). Also, the one who “does sin” (present tense) shows that he has neither seen nor known Him. John nowhere denies that a Christian commits acts of sin. He does deny, however, that the Christian sins persistently, habitually as a reflection of the characteristic inclination of his soul.

Note that in 3:9a he says the one begotten of God “does not do sin.” “Again,” notes Stott, “it is not the isolated act of sin which is envisaged, but the settled habit of it, indicated by the verb *poiein*, to do or to practice, which is used of ‘doing’ sin in 3:4a, 3:8 and 3:9, of ‘doing’ lawlessness in 3:4b, and of ‘doing’ righteousness in 2:29, 3:7 and 3:10a” (126).

John also says the one begotten of God “is not able to sin”. But again notice that “to sin” is not an aorist infinitive but a present infinitive. If the infinitive had been aorist John would be contradicting what he said in 2:1. The present infinitive again indicates that he has in mind the inability of the born-again believer to habitually live in sin as if it were the prevailing temper of his soul.

If the Christian “does not” practice sin, indeed, “cannot” practice sin, wherein lies this “impossibility”? That is to say, how does a believer avoid the life of persistent sin so characteristic of the non-believer? Stott’s answer is excellent:

“Wherein lies this ‘impossibility’? John’s answer is given in two phrases: for his seed remaineth in him and because he is born of God.... his seed is accurately rendered in the RSV text ‘God’s nature’, or ‘the divine seed’ (NEB), and ... in him refers to the child of God. In this way the two parts of verse 9 become exactly parallel, each part consisting of a statement that the Christian does not or cannot sin, to which is added the reason for such an assertion. The implication will then be this: the new birth involves the acquisition of a new nature through the implanting within us of the very seed or lifegiving power of God. Birth of God is a deep, radical, inward transformation. Moreover, the new nature received at the new birth remains. It exerts a strong internal pressure towards holiness. It is the abiding influence of his seed within everyone who is born of God, which enables John to affirm without fear of contradiction that he cannot go on living in sin.... Indeed, if he should thus continue in sin, it would indicate that he has never been born again” (127).

When those born of God do sin, conviction, grief, brokenness, misery, sorrow, discontent, all of which lead to repentance, will occur.

## [Can A True Believer Continue in Sin and Persist in Sin?](#)

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God" (1 John 3:9-10).

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5:18).

The Teaching of Zane Hodges and Joseph Dillow	
The fruitful believer The partaker or heir The believing believer The overcomer	The barren believer The carnal one (non-heir) The saved person who stops believing The non-overcomer
This righteous saved person has a new nature that never sins. Moreover this saved person consistently walks in the Spirit and does not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.	This unrighteous saved person continues in sin and persists in wickedness. This carnal believer does not practice righteousness. He is born of God and has a new nature but he consistently walks in the flesh. He will not inherit the kingdom and will not reign with Christ.

There are three factors which prevent a true believer from continuing in sin, and they all begin with the letter "C."

(1) **CONFESSION**—The sinning believer need not continue in a state of sin because he may CONFESS his sins (1 John 1:9) and God is faithful and just to forgive his sin and cleanse him from all unrighteousness.

(2) **CONVICTION**—Spirit wrought conviction ought to lead to humble confession. If it does not, the conviction continues. The Holy Spirit makes His grieved presence felt (Eph. 4:30). The true believer can never be comfortable in his sin, even as righteous Lot's soul was vexed in Sodom (2 Pet. 2:7-8). We can thank God that He makes us miserable when we are not right with Him. When we are disobedient we are unsettled, unpeaceful, unhappy. Thank God it is so!

(3) **CHASTENING**—If the sinning believer does not respond in the right way to God's conviction in the heart, then the Father will chasten His child whom He loves (1 Cor. 11:31-32). Maximum chastisement can even result in the physical death of the believer (1 Cor. 11:30). As a good human father will not permit his child to continue doing wrong, so the Heavenly Father will not permit His child to continue in wickedness. [Hodges teaches that it is possible for true Christians to be "bastards" (Heb. 12:8--KJV) or illegitimate sons, and even though they are saved, they will not be chastened of the Father and they will lose their inheritance!

See Hodges discussion of Hebrews 12:8 in The Bible Knowledge Commentary. See also [The Teachings of Zane Hodges](#) ]

**A Key Question:**

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1)

**Paul's answer:**

"God forbid (Perish the thought!). How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2)

**Hodges/Dillow answer:**

The believer should not continue in sin but many believers do. Many persist in sin and practice unrighteousness (even persisting in the sins mentioned in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). They will be saved but they will not inherit the kingdom.

*Questions:* Why are not these believers convicted? Where is the Father's chastening hand? Where is the heavenly restraint?

R. Gene Reynolds in his helpful book Assurance—You Can Know You're A Christian said the following on page 73:

- A person who is living sinfully, who knows he is living sinfully, who enjoys living in such a manner, who intends to continue that sinful way of living—that person does not have the Holy Spirit living within him. The very fact that he is 'comfortable' about his sin is proof of the Spirit's absence. His spiritual vital sign registers 'no life.' (From [Assurance: You can know you're a Christian](#) See also Gerald Borchert's book "[Assurance and Warning](#)")

Hodges teaches that righteous living proves that a person is saved but that unrighteous living does not prove that a person is lost (*Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 893). He says, "the converse does not follow" (p. 893). In other words, Hodges teaches that a person can give evidence that he is saved but he cannot give evidence that he is lost! His righteous living points to LIFE but his unrighteous living does not point to DEATH! He can have assurance of salvation but not assurance of damnation!

For more discussion of this dangerous, deceptive teaching of Hodges, Dillow, Wilkin, et al see [INDEX PAGE](#).

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