

Born of God

by Tricia Berg

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for His seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:9-10

This passage tends to confuse people. They wonder how this can be, since people who are born again DO still sin sometimes? Some speculate that maybe it means that even though they do sin, their sins are not counted against them (or not even "seen" through Jesus' righteousness)? What does "cannot" mean—is it in the sense of "unable" or more like "shouldn't"? The key to the passage is the word "practice." We are not perfected until we see Jesus and He finishes the process He began in us the day we were saved. However, we make a PRACTICE of trying to please Him in all we do rather than sinning deliberately. IF we are born of God and walking in the Spirit, then we CANNOT delight in sin, since we are giving the control of ourselves to God, who hates sin. So the better we know what pleases Him, the easier it is for us to do that.

*For **the love of Christ controls us**, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that **those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised**. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation**. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (Also see Rom. 6.)*

*For if we go on sinning deliberately **after** receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries. Hebrews 10:26-27*

God cares whether we or not practice righteousness (which is obeying, as the opposite is unrighteousness, which is lawlessness, which is sin - 1John 3:1-10). If we live for the devil and prefer the wicked, deceptive ways of the world over the truth and goodness of the Bible, then God says that's who we "belong" to. (John 8:44, 1John 2:15-17, John 15:18-19, Isa. 5:20-21) We believers love what our Father loves and walk in obedience to Him. (1John 3:1, 10) He hasn't left us alone to try to do this, since it would be impossible with our sinful nature. He has given us His Spirit. (Rom. 8:7-9, Titus 2:11-15, 1John 3:24, Gal. 5:13-25)

*For God has not called us for impurity, but in **holiness**. Therefore whoever disregards this, **disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you**. 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8*

*Strive for peace with everyone, and for the **holiness** without which no one will see the Lord. Hebrews 12:14*

*As **obedient children**, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14-16*

*For your **obedience** is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil. Romans 16:19*

*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having **escaped** from the **corruption** that is in the world because of **sinful desire**. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they **keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For **whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins**. Therefore, brothers, be all the more **diligent to confirm your calling and election**, for if you **practice** these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be **richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**. Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are **established in the truth** that you have. 2 Peter 1:3-12*

How can someone say they have escaped the corruption of sinful desire (as Peter says above) if they are still enslaved to it? (John 8:34-36, 2Pet. 2:19) If a person is "cured" of their addiction to a substance, but they still "can't live without it," would anyone believe they had really been cured? No. The evidence that they have been cured is that they no longer "need" it anymore—they are no longer controlled by it. They may have moments of weakness of being tempted to go back to it, but (if they are wise) they rely on God for strength to overcome. (1Cor. 10:12-13, 1Pet. 5:7-9, Eph. 6:10-20, Heb. 12:1-4, Prov. 3:7-8)

*What then? **Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!** Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are **slaves of the one whom you obey**, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were **once slaves of sin** have become **obedient from the heart** to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been **set free from sin**, have become **slaves of righteousness**. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For **just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness**, so now **present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification**. Romans 6:15-19*

*For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are **led by the Spirit of God** are **sons of God**. Romans 8:13-14*

It IS possible for us to resist and even quench Him—when we do that (and we all do at times), there will be no "fruit" of the Spirit. (1Thess. 5:19, Eph. 4:30-5:12, Heb. 12:7-11, Psa. 111:10, Psa. 119:105, Jam. 3:13-4:10) If we said that our apple tree is fruitful, but it actually only has a few tiny apples that are sour and filled with worms, wouldn't people be confused? (Matt. 3:7-12, 7:15-20, 12:33-37, Luke 6:43-49, 8:14, John 15:1-10) Someone who has died to their old, sinful self will have a noticeable change in their behavior—not all at once (2Pet. 1:8-11, Eph. 4:13, Col. 1:28, 4:12, Heb. 5:11-14), but over time the new life inside of them will become evident by their attitudes, words and actions ("fruit"). (Rom. 6:6-7, 2Cor. 12:20-13:2, Col. 3—the whole chapter is very edifying.)

*Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may **bear fruit for God**. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to*

*bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we **serve in the new way of the Spirit** and not in the old way of the written code. Romans 7:4-6*

*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the **fruit of righteousness** that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Philippians 1:9-11*

*And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the **knowledge of his will** in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to **walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.** May you be strengthened with all power, according to **his glorious might, for all **endurance** and **patience with joy,** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.** Colossians 1:9-12*

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always **obeyed**, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, **work out** your own salvation with fear and trembling, for **it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.** Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be **blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish** in the midst of a **crooked and twisted** generation, among whom you shine as **lights** in the world, **holding fast** to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Philippians 2:12-16 (So much for the “moment of faith saves” and “no repentance required” lies that some are teaching these days. Also see Jam. 2:13-26, Jam. 1:21-26, Matt. 7:13-29)*

Faith comes by hearing the word, and so does our knowledge of God. (Rom. 10:17, 15:14, Eph. 1:17, 4:13-14, Col. 1:9-11, 2Pet. 1:5-6) If we neglect our faith, we will lose sight of what it is to BE a Christian—to LIVE OUT our life IN Christ. We will be sickly Christians, both physically (1Cor. 11:30-32) and spiritually—our lamps may even run out of oil if we neglect them long enough and persistently enough. There will be no time to remedy that problem once the Bridegroom returns—better to wake up now and prepare. (Matt. 25:1-13)

Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and **do not go on sinning.** For some have **no knowledge of God.** I say this to your **shame.** 1 Corinthians 15:34

*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an **evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.** But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be **hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.** For we have come to share in Christ, **if indeed** we hold our original confidence **firm to the end.** Hebrews 3:12-14*

We do not need to live in fear that we may have committed some sin without even realizing it, and that it won't be forgiven until we confess it. John says that attitude shows we don't understand the perfect love of God. (1John 4:13-21) That said, it doesn't mean that we should take our forgiveness lightly such that we don't even care about obeying Jesus. (John 14:15, John 15:8-10, Col. 2:6-7, Titus 2:11-15, 2Pet. 3:11-18, 1Thess. 4:6-8, Eph. 5:1-6) Our part is to abide in Him and His words, and HE does the rest. We YIELD to (walk in) the Spirit. He NEVER fails. (John 15:1-10, Mark 8:34-38, Luke 9:23-26, Matt. 19:25-30, Mark 10:26-31, Luke 18:27-30, Phil. 1:6) Just remember that He doesn't force anyone to believe OR to obey Him. We humble ourselves and accept the FREE gift of salvation, and we do the same when we obey out of love, gratitude and respect. (Jam. 4:4-10, 1Pet. 5:6-11)

*This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. **If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.** But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. **If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.** If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.** 1 John 1:5-10 (He forgives us as many times as we honestly repent and ask Him, just as He said we are to do for others. Matt. 18:15-17, 21-35)*

People can get a pretty good picture by looking at our lives of whether we are IN Jesus or not (Matt. 5:15-16 - this light includes TRUTH; Eph. 4:15-16, John 14:6, 16-18). If we love all of the same things we did before we were saved (because we were "walking in darkness" - Eph. 4:18, 5:8, 11, Acts 26:18, John 3:18-21, 8:12, 12:35-36, 46, Matt. 6:22-23, 2Cor. 4:6, 6:14, 1Thess. 5:5, 2Pet. 1:16-21, 1John 2:11), then we should question how important our faith is to us, or if we are even IN the faith. (2Cor. 13:5) It's one thing to have a "heart for the lost" and another to be indistinguishable from them—one thing to live IN the world and another to be OF it. (2Cor. 6:14-7:1, Eph. 5:11-17, 1Corinthians 15:33, John 15:19, Jam. 4:4)

Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, **to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people.** For we ourselves were **once** foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that **those who have believed in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works. These things are excellent and profitable for people.** Titus 3:1-8 (Also see Titus 3:14, Jude 1:16-23, Jam. 5:19-20, Gal. 6:1.)

As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a **holy** priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a **holy** nation, a people **for his own possession**, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who **called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** Once you were not a people, but now you are **God's people**; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to **abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.** Keep your conduct among the Gentiles **honorable, so that when they **speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.**** 1 Peter 2:4-5, 9-12 (Also see Rev. 5:10, Rom. 12:1-2, Eph. 2:22, Mal. 3:16-4:3, Psa. 50:14-23.)

As I said in my article "[God's House](#)," the "royal priesthood" referred to by Peter above is in the order of Melchizedek, of which our Lord Jesus, the Head of the Church, is High Priest—the only begotten Son of God, who is Master of His Father's House. (Heb. 3:5-6, 5:5-10, Col. 1:15-19) If an elder in the church is to be above reproach in running his own earthly household, how much more so do you think that Jesus expects to be obeyed by those in His Father's household in the kingdom of God? (1Tim. 3:4-5, Col. 3) We obey because we expect to receive the honor of being among the called, chosen and faithful who return WITH Jesus at the second coming (Rev. 17:14, 19:14, Rom. 8:18-19, Luke 20:34-36, 2Thess. 1:4-12, Rev. 2:10, 3:11, 2Tim. 4:7-8, Phil. 3:8-16, 1Cor. 9:24-27, Heb. 12:1-4)—not in an attempt to justify ourselves, but because we have been justified by Jesus' finished work and we seek His glory in ALL things.

(Gal. 2:16, Rom. 3:20-28, John 19:30, Rom. 2:7, 1Cor. 10:31, 15:35-58, 2Cor. 3:18, 4:17-18) Abraham was justified by faith, not by works—however, he showed by his obedience that he truly believed in his heart, not just with empty words. (Rom. 4:2, Heb. 11:17-19, Jam. 2:21-23, Rom. 10:8-10)

If we prefer the company of our “lost” friends and family to that of other believers, there is something wrong (except to the extent we are trying to be a light to them by showing them God’s love). The world sees what it’s like to be part of God’s family by how we treat one another. (John 13:34-35, Gal. 5:13-15, 6:10, Psa. 37:25-26) We’re not to let our earthly family lead us away from Him. “Brother” means fellow believer and follower of Christ. (Mark 3:31-35) If there’s a “contest,” then Jesus is to win by default—the FIRST and GREATEST command is to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength (and the second is to love our neighbor as ourselves). (Matt. 10:34-39, Mark 12:28-34, Rom. 13:8-14)

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. **If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but **whoever does the will of God abides forever.** 1 John 2:15-17*

Believers are supposed to be willing to “take one for the team” by suffering for Jesus’ sake, whether it’s because people think we’re ODD that we don’t want to join them in sin, or they hate us for having unpopular VALUES (that define behaviors they find acceptable as being called SIN by God - John 7:7, 1John 3:12-13), or even if they threaten our lives because they hate Jesus. (Acts 6:10-15, 13:50, 14:2, 21:27-36) Many people who reject Him want to be their own “god,” but remember, Satan tricked Eve into disobeying God by telling her she would be more like God (even though she was already made in His image, as are we, but we also have the sinful nature inherited from Adam). (Gen. 3, John 8:44, Rom. 5:12, Jam. 3:9-11) All who reject God or His ways have been deceived in some way, just as Eve was (and she then led Adam astray). (1Tim. 2:13-14, 2Cor. 4:3-11, 1Cor. 1:18-31, 2Tim. 3:13, Rom. 16:18-20, 1Tim. 6:3-21, 2Pet. 2:14-22, Jude 1:16-19) We’re supposed to remember that it’s Jesus being persecuted, not really us. (Acts 9:1-6, 1Pet. 4:3-5, Matt. 5:10-12, John 15:18-21, 1John 3:13, 2Tim. 3:12, 1Pet. 2:20-24, Phil. 1:27-30, Heb. 13:12-15, Heb. 12:3-4—just read all of Hebrews 12.)

*Show yourself in all respects to be a **model of good works**, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an **opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.** Titus 2:7-8 (Also 1Pet. 2:12)*

*"You are the **salt of the earth**, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is **no longer good for anything** except to be **thrown out and trampled** under people's feet. You are the **light of the world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it **gives light to all in the house**. In the same way, **let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**" Matthew 5:13-16 (Don't forget that the "Beatitudes" immediately precede this passage, which include blessings for being Christ-like, including suffering persecution.)*

We don't do good deeds to try to save ourselves or to be seen by others so that they will glorify US, but we ARE to do good nevertheless, for GOD's glory. (Matt. 6:1-6) Our good works includes both taking actions, like feeding the hungry, as well as abstaining from evil (as defined by God). (Eph. 2:10, 2Thess. 3:13, Gal. 6:9, 1Cor. 15:58, 1Tim. 2:8-10, 6:18, Titus 2:14, 3:8, 14, 10:24, Jam. 2:14, 3:13, 1Thess. 5:22, Col. 1:21-23, 3:5-10, Rom. 12:9, 16:19, 1Cor. 5:12-13, 1Cor. 10:6-13, 14:20, 2Cor. 5:9-10, 1John 3:12, Rom. 1:28-32, 2:6-11, Heb. 5:14, 1Cor. 6:9-20, Psa. 97:10, Amos 5:14-15)

*Beloved, **do not imitate evil but imitate good**. Whoever does good is from God; **whoever does evil has not seen God**. 3 John 1:11*

*Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For **"Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."** Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? **But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed**. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is **better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil**. 1 Peter 3:8-17*

*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But **rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed**. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you*

are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. For it is time for **judgment to begin at the household of God**; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" Therefore **let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good**. 1 Peter 4:12-19 (Also see Rom. 8:13-19.)

This is why Jesus said to count the cost. It's not easy to be a disciple of Jesus, but the rewards of overcoming in this temporary world are eternal. (Luke 9:62, Col. 1:9-14, 3:23-24, Heb. 3:5-6, 6:11-12, 10:36, 1Cor. 2:9, Jam. 1:12) Jesus set for us the example of faithfulness, no matter what, to the end. We are cautioned repeatedly in the New Testament not to be deceived—not to accept "another Jesus." (2Cor. 11:1-4, Gal. 1:6-10, Jude 1:4) We don't pervert the Gospel into EITHER keeping the Old Covenant law OR into a license to sin. OUR Jesus is HOLY and He died to set us free FROM sin. He lives in us, so we don't want to defile our bodies with sin (especially sexually), since we are His temple. (1Cor. 6:17-20, 1Cor. 3:16-18)

And **if** you call on him as **Father** who **judges impartially** according to each one's **deeds**, conduct yourselves with fear **throughout** the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the **precious blood of Christ**, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. Having **purified** your souls by your **obedience** to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly **from a pure heart**, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:17-25

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "**If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.** For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and **count the cost**, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise,

*when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, **any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.** "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is **thrown away.** He who has **ears to hear, let him hear.**" Luke 14:25-35*

Some say that Jesus' warnings were only to the Jews, not the Church, since His earthly ministry occurred prior to Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given. (Acts 2:1-4) I would like to point out, however, that the Scriptures are consistent. What is found in the Gospels is also found in the rest of the New Testament, and in much of the Old Testament as well, including when clarification is made that the purpose of a requirement has now been fulfilled. (e.g. Food restrictions represented separation between Jews and Gentiles.) In fact, Jesus uses the same phrase about hearing in the above passage as He does in each of the letters to the CHURCHES in Revelation 2-3.

We ARE special because of God dwelling IN us—there is NO doubt about that (not that many people in the Old Testament were filled with the Holy Spirit), but the fact remains that we are grafted IN to Israel. (Rom. 11:11-24, Rom. 9:4) Some people want to claim everything good for the Church and assign everything bad to the Jews/Israel—but that's yet another form of replacement theology (saying the Church has replaced Israel). There is no difference between believing Jew and Gentile in the New Covenant. (Rom. 2:9-11, 28-29, Gal. 3:28, Acts 2:39, Eph. 2:11-22) There IS, however, a FULLNESS of the Gentiles that will come into the Body of Christ. (Rom. 11:25) We should concern ourselves with bearing fruit and being ready for that time to come rather than bragging about the "time of Jacob's trouble" not applying to us and arguing about the timing of Jesus' return. (Matt. 21:33-46, esp. v. 43, Rom. 11:17-24, Jer. 30:7, Dan. 12:1, Matt. 24:21-22, Matt. 25:10, John 15:8, Matt. 5:16, Luke 10:2)

This really isn't too hard for us to understand. If we love Jesus, we will do as He says (not twisting His words or choosing which ones we like). If we love our sin too much to turn from it, then we do not love Jesus. (John 14:23-24) He indwells those who love Him and show it by obeying Him—which is also how we abide in Him. Just saying we are saved, but continuing in our former sins as though we had never come to the knowledge of the truth, is not enough. (John

14:15-26, John 3:3-8, John 15:1-17, Rom. 8:1, 1Cor. 15:23, 34, 1John 2:1-6, 3:4-10, Phil. 3:14-21, 1Pet. 1:8-9, 2Pet. 1:8-11)

And it is God who **establishes us with you in Christ**, and has **anointed us**, and who has also **put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee**. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (Also see 1John 2:26-29, 3:24. Remember, His Spirit bears good and abundant fruit. Gal. 5:16-25, Eph. 5:9-12)

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of **his body, that is, the church**, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God that was given to me for you, to make the word of God fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all **his energy that he powerfully works within me**. Colossians 1:24-29

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And **no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account**. Hebrews 4:12-13 (Also see Jer. 17:10, Rev 19:13-16, Isa. 49:2-12, Heb. 10:29-31.)

Please note that the disobedience of Israel was not refusing to believe that God existed (Jam. 2:19, Heb. 11:6), but by their wicked actions and grumbling against Him. (Num. 14:1-4, 21:4-9) They refused to do as they were told and TRUST Him, out of fear, despite personally witnessing His saving power in Egypt and at the Red Sea. (Psa. 95:7-11, 106:7-43) We are warned in Heb. 3:15-4:11 not to repeat their mistakes! (Deut. 7:21, 31:6, Matt. 10:28) Also see:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. **For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ**. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. **Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did**. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." We must not indulge in **sexual**

immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

*For the LORD spoke thus to me with his strong hand upon me, and **warned me not to walk in the way of this people**, saying: "Do not call conspiracy all that this people calls conspiracy, and do not fear what they fear, nor be in dread. But the LORD of hosts, him you shall honor as holy. Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he will become a sanctuary and a stone of offense and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble on it. They shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken." Isaiah 8:11-15 (Also see Ezek. 11:16.)*

"Fear" of God is a healthy respect for Him and His almighty power. If we have any sense at all, we'll remember that, even as we obey out of LOVE and GRATITUDE for what our beloved Savior has done for us. Jesus as "Lord" is not an honorary title! (2Cor. 4:5-6, 2Pet. 2:1-3, Rom. 10:9) Those who truly desire to please Him need not be afraid, but should continue growing in the knowledge of Him through prayerfully studying the Bible (a "normal" version, not a "special" version made to support false teachings, or a paraphrase that's twisted to fit an unbiblical agenda), and doing what it says. (1John 3:19-20, 4:18, 2Pet. 3:17-18, 2Tim. 3:14-17, Heb. 10:22-25, 2Cor. 7:1, Heb. 6:11-12, 2Pet. 1:3-4)

*"Because he **holds fast to me in love**, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and **show him my salvation.**" Psalm 91:14-16*

*Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and **perform your vows to the Most High**, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me." **But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers. You give your mouth***

free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. **These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself.** But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. "Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver! The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!" Psalm 50:14-23

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been **set free from sin** and have become **slaves of God**, the **fruit** you get **leads to sanctification** and its end, **eternal life.** For **the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.** Romans 6:20-23 (For some reason, people seem to only like the second half of v. 23 of that passage these days.)

We're supposed to be well-thought of due to our good behavior, not because we behave the same ways that unsaved people do. (Luke 6:22-36, Acts 2:45-47, Heb. 13:16, John 10:32, 15:25, John 15:19-20, 1John 4:5-6) How hard is it to see that blending in with the world, loving sin and supporting others in theirs the way unbelievers do, etc. is a FAR CRY from being "struck down," "given over to death," and "slaughtered all day long"? (Rom. 8:31-39, 2Cor. 4:8-11, Rom. 1:32) We are not all called to martyrdom, but we ARE all called to die to our sinful selves. (1Pet. 1:6-7, Phil. 1:29, Acts 5:41, Col. 3:2-10, Rom. 6) That is what it is to OVERCOME. Jesus modeled it for us perfectly. (John 12:25-26, 1Pet. 2:21) He speaks His heart to us in the letters to the churches in Rev. 2-3, telling us what He hates and how to overcome. He has already overcome, and He is IN us. (John 16:33, 1John 4:4) However, if He were going to force us to overcome, then there would be no need to exhort us to do so. Starting with the time we accept the free gift of salvation by believing, we should want to please Him and rely on His power in us. This is not "works salvation"—how can that be anything other than grace that God lives in us? (John 17:20-26, also John 14:1-3, John 1:12-13) Could we somehow earn it or force Him to indwell us? Never!

Let love be genuine. **Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.** Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the

lowly. **Never be wise in your own sight.** Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but **overcome evil with good.** Romans 12:9-21

Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to **wake** from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us **cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.** Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But **put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.** Romans 13:11-14

Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has **ceased from sin**, so as to **live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.** For the time that is **past** suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, **living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry.** With respect to this they are **surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery**, and they **malign** you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. 1 Peter 4:1-5 (Also see 2Cor. 6:14-7:1.)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! **How can we who died to sin still live in it?** Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into his death?** We were buried therefore with him by baptism into **death**, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might **walk in newness of life.** Romans 6:1-4

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I **now** live **in the flesh** I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify

*for himself a people **for his own possession** who are **zealous for good works**. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. Titus 2:11-15*

So anyone should be able to see that this is not something use our imaginations to envision, all the while observing the opposite with our eyes. God (who IS love - 1John 4:8) dwells in us and it's His light that shines in and through us (unless we hide the light under a bushel, or become salt that has lost its saltiness)—His power that gives desire and strength to do His will, even while we're in these corruptible bodies. (Rom. 6:12, Phil. 2:12-16, Titus 2:12) We can't see wind OR the Spirit, but we can see the effects of both. (John 3:8, Rom. 8:9)

These earthly days are the testing times "in the wilderness" to prove our faith is genuine. Read the "giants of faith hall of fame" in Heb. 11 again. All of those names are there because they followed through on what was truly in their hearts. Their faith saved them because it was REAL. The promised land in the Old Testament is a foreshadow of the kingdom of God. The people needed to follow Joshua (a foreshadow of Jesus) in order to enter in, trusting that God would give them the victory no matter what challenge faced them. (Josh. 1, 24) So it is with us.

This is a wake up call to TRUE believers (those "with an ear to hear" - Matt. 13:8-9, Mark 4:8-9, Luke 8:8, Rev. 2-3). Jesus said the way was NARROW to eternal life and BROAD to eternal destruction. His discussion continued on, in context, to the topic of OBEYING Him. Let's believe Him and heed His advice. "Having an ear to hear" means listening (like when a child is expected to DO what they heard their parent tell them to do.) If what we would like others to "do unto us" is to approve of our sin and join in it with us, then we are NOT on the narrow road. Let's not put God to the test, but pass the various tests of temptation that the devil is allowed to put us through. (Job 1:6-2:6, Luke 21:31-32, Mark 14:38, Rev. 12:10-12) Let's submit to God and resist the devil so he'll flee. (Matt. 4:1-11, 1Pet. 5:9, Jam. 4:7, Eph. 6:12, 1Cor. 10:13, 2Cor. 12:20-13:2, John 17:15, Jam. 1:13-16)

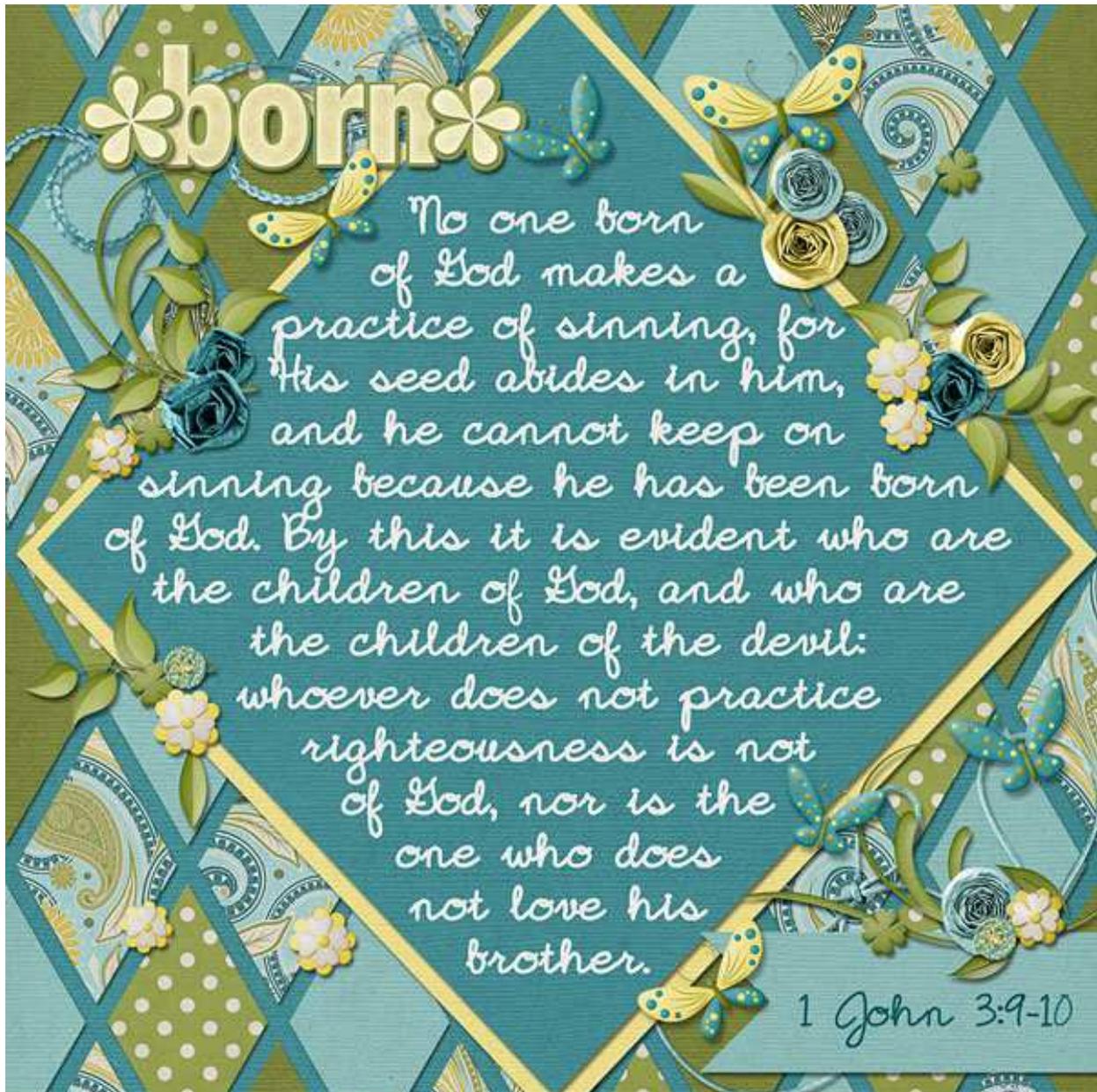
*And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves **unfruitful**. But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and **bear fruit**, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." And he said to them, "**Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand?** For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. **If anyone has ears to hear,***

let him hear. "And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away." Mark 4:18-25

"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. **Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.** Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their **fruits**. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. **Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.** Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who **does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, '**I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.**' Everyone then who **hears** these words of mine and **does** them will be like a **wise** man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who **hears** these words of mine and **does not do** them will be like a **foolish** man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." Matthew 7:12-27 (Also see Jam. 1:22-25, Matt. 25)

We know that **everyone who has been born of God does not keep on sinning**, but he who was born of God protects him, and the evil one does not touch him. We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 1 John 5:18-19

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