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## 1 John 3:1-9

### The Identifiable Mark

**1 John 3:1-9:** “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 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. 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.”

As I was going through this wonderful epistle this past week, I found myself getting tremendously convicted. I would encourage all of you to not read 1 John if you don't want to be convicted. If you don't want to get real about your faith, stay away from it because he's going to push it. I mean, the dogma just jumps off of the pages and it's so clear, isn't it? The emphasis is, “Do you love God? No, you're lying,” all the way through.

As you go through the beginning of this wonderful epistle, as he wants you to experience confidence in your faith, he wants you to get real with your faith in order for that to happen. So, in the first chapter, he begins to describe what we would say is real fellowship. If in fact you're going to get real about your faith, you have to have real fellowship with God. The wonderful thing about this chapter is that he begins to explain the whole physical thing as well; what we have seen, handled. You begin to realize that God is wanting us to get physical about this. You can read texts in the Old Testament that says God loves you, but there's something inside of us that goes, “Yes, but where is He?” and God says, “I'm coming.” And He comes to earth; think about that. God in the flesh, Emanuel, God with us, and John goes, “We beheld Him. We touched Him. I leaned against Him. God was with me.” So, we begin to realize that the church also is that way. You can't feel a part of a church if you're not with the church. It's part of the body of Christ. So, the coming together, the gathering together is that which makes it real. He also states in chapter 1 that in order to be real you have to be transparent. You have to be real about your sin. You're a sinner, right? We were just going through the class, discussing what sin was about in Romans 3, and it says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Here again, people misunderstand what the word “sin” means. The perception is sin is something I do wrong. No, sin is not something you do wrong, it's what you don't do right. That's what sin is because it is an archery term in both the Old and New Testament. The word

that is used means to miss the mark of perfection. So, you shoot the arrow, you miss the bullseye, you've sinned. How much did you sin? Well, it doesn't matter. You missed it. That's why it's put the way it's put in Romans 3, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." What do you do wrong? Well, that's not it; it's what you don't do right. You're not perfect, you're not like God. To admit this is a no brainer. I mean, if you just walk up to someone, and say, "Are you perfect?" "No." It doesn't take long to admit that. If you say you have no sin, John says you're lying, the truth's not in you. If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just to forgive you your sins. (1 John 1:9) How wonderful that is, all you have to do is admit it, but you have to admit it and come clean.

When the kids are going out, we sing "Rejoice in the Lord always," and they don't seem like they're rejoicing always to me. Hey, we need to admit it, we're not always rejoicing, but our desire is to do so. It's when we come clean, it's when we will admit. One of the problems I think, in the whole realm of religion, is it's all about a façade; and there's a clear reason why Jesus chose fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot. Even today, when you read the Gospels, you can see the humanness of these individuals. Peter just bounces off the pages, or Phillip, "How are going to feed all these people? Let me get out my calculator...I don't think we have enough." And you realize, ok, we've got a bean counter. But you see the different ones, and you see they're flawed, they're human. Why does God reveal this to us? Because that's the truth. We need a Savior. We need somebody to save us. The unfortunate thing is that we somehow want to make man like God. I mean, you take these guys, the apostles, and you see them on stained glass in these great edifices of religion, and they look so saintly, and I'm going, "They're fishermen for crying out loud." God saved them, genuine, they're real. In fact, Nathanael goes, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" He goes, "I like this guy. He's transparent, he's real, he says it like it is," and you realize, ok, maybe God was choosing real people and not sanctimonious. Unfortunately, what we do is we try to anthropomorphize God like a man, and that's where we get confused. We want to elevate man, and make man like gods, and we want to make God like us. The wonderful thing is that His love is far superior to ours. His power is far superior to ours. I'm so glad that I can't comprehend who He is because if I could somehow comprehend Him in my mind, He wouldn't be God.

So, as John begins to describe the essential ingredients that are necessary for us to have confident faith, he's fundamentally saying at the beginning of chapter 1, you're going to have to get real about your fellowship, and you're going to have to be real about who you are. Transparency has to be real in any relationship; otherwise, it's really not a relationship if you're not going to be truthful and transparent in your love for one another.

In chapter 2, he emphasizes that you have to really have this thing called "true righteousness." It has to be something that is truly right and truly wrong. We live in a day and age where right and wrong is very fluid, and people begin to describe what they think is right and what's wrong. If you want to know what's right or wrong just put it on the internet and ask people, but what you'll find is that you'll have all sorts of different strange and bizarre answers. There is no

absolute. There's no truth that seems to never change; and the wonderful thing about Scripture is we know there's a truth that never changes. So, he begins by saying there has to be this true righteousness, and that righteousness is in Christ. So, a right and wrong has to be defined by God, and it has to be visualized in the person of Christ. In fact, the way that he puts it in chapter 2 is "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." How wonderful it is that we actually have righteousness being played out, and we can see what righteousness looks like. That's one of the things we're going to be talking about today as we come to chapter 3. But as you go through chapter 2, you understand and comprehend that the world doesn't see things the way we do, and our love for righteousness is really antithetical to the world. In other words, if in fact we love God, we're not going to love the world. (1 John 2:15) "Do not love the world nor the things in the world." Then he begins to show that the world is diabolically opposed to things of righteousness. They don't mind defining their own righteousness, and then hopping on that wagon, but when God defines righteousness, wow, are they really upset about that. He uses the word "antichrist," against the things of God. We live in a world that is against Him. Jesus tells His disciples, "Don't be surprised if they hate you, they hated Me." So, you start following Me, they're going to hate you too; not because you're doing something wrong, but because you're doing what is right before the eyes of God. So, he begins to describe the hostility. The point is you're walking in true righteousness, and you're not affected. See, one of the signs that the Spirit of God is within you is that you're not affected by what the world is doing or how they're thinking; because you're not thinking those things, you don't love those things. You can't be bribed by those things because you love God, and you love righteousness. Now, what is that? That's the Spirit of God within you. You couldn't do this by yourself. So, he's giving the evidence of that in chapter 2.

When you come to chapter 3, we're going to see this interesting picture of what I would call authentic offspring. We are children of God, and He starts off, "Wow, how wonderful it is that we should be called children of God. Can you imagine?" I could just see John getting animated about this, "I'm a child of God! It's unimaginable." Hebrews says, "Which of the angels did He ever call sons?" (Hebrews 1:5) He has allowed us to be a child of God, how wonderful that is.

So, we come to chapter 3, and he gives us principles, points, characteristics, evidential qualities of a person that is a child of God. What does it look like to be a child of God? What is it that causes us to stand out? What are the marks of a child of God? Are they identifiable? I would say, yes. So, what we're going to do as we go through the different verses is we're going to in some way give you the principles of the points or the characteristics that describe these marks that God gives us that say, "Hey, you know what? I'm part of the offspring of God. How do I know? Well, I have these identifiable marks on me."

So, we're going to pick up in 1 John 3, and we'll begin with this wonderful statement, how great the love of God is. The way that he puts it at the very beginning, it seems as if he's literally saying, "Where would this come from? It has to be divine. How powerful and how great this love is." (1 John 3:1) "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us..." given to us

graciously; obviously not something that we earned. “...that we would be called...” *“teknon,”* “children of God.” We’re a part of His family, “...and such we are.” I like the fact that he actually states in the present, we actually are now children of God.

“For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”

Now, the word that he uses in dealing with knowing God in this text is not *“eidō,”* which is oftentimes used in the perfect, but he uses the word *“ginōskō,”* which refers to a process. His point is that the world has not come to know Him. They can’t even begin to know Him would be another way of putting it. People go up in the mountains, I don’t know what they do. I’ve often said, “What are you looking at your belly button for? The answers aren’t there,” but they’re meditating or something; but they’re trying to find God. The fact of the matter is they can’t know Him. What’s interesting about this passage is that one of the identifiable marks of a true believer is that we see clearly God’s love for us. The world goes, “So, God loves?” We go, “Yes, you have no idea how much He loves us!” and they’re going, “Ok, settle down there. You’re getting a little too excited for me.” The point is that this difference makes the world feel uncomfortable. It’s a very strange phenomenon, you start talking about the love of God, and they’re going, “Whoa, it’s a fanatic. You guys scare me.” In fact, Peter touches upon this when you think of 1 Peter 4:4, he says, “The world is surprised that you’re not running at the same dissipation as they are.” “Why don’t you guys want to do the same stuff that we do?” And we go, “You know, just not feeling it. No desire.” And they’re going, “I don’t understand that. That’s strange. That’s bizarre.” Well, let me tell you how much God loves you.” “Oh, I don’t want to talk about that.” At the very beginning, his point is there seems to be this clear realization of something that the world can’t see. So, if in fact you’re feeling the love of God, and you talk to somebody that goes, “I don’t understand what you’re talking about.” Then that’s an identifiable mark. That’s God saying you’re His, they’re not.

So, how great this love is. Look how it ends in verse 1. For this reason the world doesn’t know you. They don’t know what you’re talking about. They don’t know anything about this, and they don’t know Him, and that’s the key point.

(1 John 3:2) “Beloved, now we are children of God...” Once again, I like the fact that it’s in the present. “...and it has not appeared as yet what we will be.” Now, what he’s going to convey is that the day is coming when clearly, eschatologically, we’re going to see Him face to face. We know that, but John is not going to just hover there in the future. He’s going to show us that there is a being transformed in the image of God, and an appearing that begins to come into our lives. Let me give you an example of this, if you go with me to 2 Corinthians 3, Paul gives a parallel comparison contrast between Moses in the Old Testament and of course, the presence of God on the mountain; and yet, the people’s inability to really see the glory of God because of the fear of the law. It’s an interesting picture. I mean, His face was glowing, everything was magnificent, but it was very clear in the Old Testament that the mountains shaking, lightening flashing, “Moses, you go.” So, there’s a great fear about this. The point is that what was keeping them from seeing God? The answer is the law. “God is so holy; God is so perfect.” It’s true. “We

can't have access to a holy God such as this." So, the great fear that was whelmed in their hearts; but it kept them from seeing Him for who He truly was because in the realization of law, the focus is always on the law and not what's behind it. What we understand according to Deuteronomy is the reason why God gave you the law is because He loved you. We couldn't see that.

So, the way that 2 Corinthians 3:15 reads,

"But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart;

(2 Corinthians 3:16) but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

(2 Corinthians 3:17) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

(2 Corinthians 3:18) But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

The passage is talking about a transformation that occurs as the clarity of Christ begins to get focused. And in some way John is making mention of this within the passage, if you go back to John 3:2, "Beloved, now we are children of God." So, obviously we have this relationship with God in which the law is not that which keeps us apart. We can draw closer to Him.

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know..." That's in the perfect tense; this is what we know.

"We know that when He appears..."

Now, stop right there. That phrase is oftentimes thought of as dealing with future events, but it doesn't use the future tense. Now, I'm emphasizing this for a reason. It uses what is called a subjunctive. A subjunctive is something that is possible to happen but has not yet happened. The point is that He could appear to you. Is he talking about future events? We will see at the end that we'll see Him just as He is, future. The point is, as Paul says in Corinthians, we can be transformed, and begin to see Him more clearly. We now see in a mirror dimly, but the veil is taken off. How do we see Him clearly? The passage is telling us, "We know that if He should appear;" in other words, if God should be manifested to us. More specifically, if we could see Him just as He is then there would be a transformation in us. The emphasis of the verse is that we know we can be like Him. How do we get there? By seeing Him just as He is. Our thought is that we become more like Jesus the more we do things that we force ourselves to do; and the point is the more you look at Him, the more you become like Him. This is why Hebrews 12:2 says, "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter." So, what perfects me in my faith? Fixing my eyes on Jesus. There's a transforming power, and it's one of the things that he says. One of the things about a child of God is, he just can't seem to take his eyes off of the one he loves. It's that relationship that won't let you take your eyes off; and the more you love God,

the more you become like Him. It just makes sense. It's like a kid wanting to emulate His father. He just fixes his eyes on his dad, and starts walking the same way his dad does, and doing the same thing his dad does. How did you learn how to do that? There's only one answer: because you love that person. That's why Paul will say, "Imitate me, as I'm imitating Christ." We're imitators of Christ, right?

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and..." When He appears to us, we become like Him.

Now, the day is coming, "we will be like Him, because we will see Him." That's future tense; but the day is coming when we shall see Him for who He truly is in all of His glory. That doesn't mean that you can't become like Him in the process now. We know we should be like Him, when we see Him, He will be just like He is, we need to fix our eyes on Him.

In 1 John 1:3, he begins to talk about this hope that is fixed on Him. Once again, "hope" is that confident expectation. The question is what is the confident expectation that we have within the text? The confident expectation is to be like Him.

"And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him..."

Once again, what is that hope? To be like Him. So, if you fix that hope to be like Him, then what happens? Look at the text, it purifies you. As our hope is fixed on seeing Him for who He truly is, we begin to take on the distinction of holiness. Actually, the word that he uses for "purifies" is where we get the word "holy." That is to say, we become different.

The opposite of holy is common. So, we stop looking like the world, and we start looking like God. As Matthew 5 says, "Therefore, you're to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." We become like Him. It's purging, a purifying thing that begins to happen. Why? Because my earnest expectation and joy is to be like Him. That's the mark of a true child. I can tell you that I had no desire to do that before I came to know the Lord. I can tell you a lot of desires I had, but none of them were that. Now that I love the Lord so much, I just have a desire to be like Him. That's something I can't teach you. You're not going to learn this in the classroom. It's the Spirit of God that comes upon you, but there's an unction that comes within you. We oftentimes quote the passage in Corinthians, "the love of God constrains me." I'm moved to do this. What is that? It's the Spirit of God within me. It's an identifiable mark, my hope is fixed on being like Him. In the process, I become very distinct. There are some interesting examples of this. One is in 1 Peter 2. It begins to reveal that we do things very differently. In this day of strange things, it's just wonderful that we can tell the world we're strangers and aliens, and they'll believe us.

(1 Peter 9:2) "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION..." That means you're different in the world, and obviously our world is not here.

"...A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you..."

Somebody looks at your life, and they go, "That's not human." Good. That's divine, right?

(1 Peter 2:11) "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul."

(1 Peter 2:12) Keep your behavior excellent..."

You're different than the world. That's a mark of a child of God.

If you drop on down, he talks about submitting yourself for the Lord's sake. I can tell you, it's not in me to submit to governing authority. It's just not in me. They tell you, "You can't surf here." Well, that's where you want to surf. I remember they called helicopters out at me. I was surfing right off the shore of Nixon's house in San Clemente. It's a beautiful beach there. It's not in us to want to do what we're told to do. Peter makes mention of that specifically in 1 Peter 2:13, he goes, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority," ...but also to your bosses.

We go, "Yeah, but you don't know my boss. He's very unreasonable.

So, he says in verse 18, "Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable." He's covering every one of your arguments. He goes on, and says to do this even when they're hurtful, that you might be like Christ; because Christ did this. So, you want to emulate Him. Now, there are days you wake up, and go, "I really want to be like Christ;" other days, not so much. A lot depends on what you're being asked to do. You finally come down to the point as a child of God, and you go, "There's nothing I wouldn't do for Him." It ultimately, in my heart, comes down to that, and I can hear the voice of God going, "Will you do this for Me?" I'll go, "Ok, I'm not doing it for them, but I'll do it for you." Then He goes, "That's all I ask."

(1 Peter 2:19) "For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly."

You do it because of your relationship with God.

(1 Peter 2:20) "For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God."

This means you did the right thing, and instead of them going, "good job," they attacked you. This finds favor with God. Ephesians 5:10, "trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." What pleases Him? When I do right, even though I'm treated wrong; that pleases God. I'm going to do that. Why? Because there's something in me that says, "I want to please Him." It's just a mark. Once again, I know that it seems strange to the world.

(1 Peter 2:21) "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,"

(1 Peter 2:22) WHO COMMITTED NO SIN, NOR WAS ANY DECEIT FOUND IN HIS MOUTH."

You say, “Well, I didn’t do anything wrong.” Neither did He.

(1 Peter 2:23) “and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.”

That’s what we believe; if we do the right thing, and what is pleasing to God, He will take care of us. I don’t know how.

(1 Peter 2:24) “and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin...”

As you go to 1 Peter 3, it turns to the wife that has an unbelieving husband, and it says, “And you, don’t say anything to your husband, but by your gentle, quiet, and respectful behavior you put you trust in God, and believe God will take care of him.” He’ll do what’s right, He will change his heart. You begin to follow these truths, and the ultimate conclusion is that you’re doing things that go against your grain, and that are clearly not human. But rejoice, it’s a mark of God in you. It’s the presence of God, and that’s one of the reasons why Peter says, “but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.” (1 Peter 4:13)

(1 Peter 4:14) “If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

That’s one of the great evidences within the passage. We have this hope in us that purifies us, changes us, it causes us to think differently, we’re not like the world; and it’s so distinctive that the world is even, in some ways not only taken back but as Scripture says, they’re almost afraid of you because you seem to have no fear. “If you do that, you’re going to lose your job.” Ok. “Aren’t you afraid?” No, the Lord will take care of me. I’m doing the right thing. They’re trying to look for ways to threaten you, and they can’t.

In 1 John 3:4, part of that dogma begins to jump off the page even more. He says,

“Everyone who practices sin...”

I like the fact that the NAS is translated to the word “practice,” because it’s in the present active. It refers to things that you’re doing habitually. His point is that it’s something that you’re seeking. More specifically, “*poieō*” is a word that refers to spending your time and your efforts in pursuing. So, when he talks about “everyone who practices sin,” there are people that actually work at it, and they pursue these things. That’s what they want to do. The point is that those who practice these things, practice lawlessness. It almost sounds redundant, but his point is that you’re practicing rebellion. So, it’s you going against what you know God doesn’t want you to do.

“Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.”



Sin is going against God and His law. Lawlessness would probably best be described as a contempt for God and all that He stands for. It's kind of a snubbing Him type thing. The point of the verse is that what a person practices is what defines them; and this is a key point because you're going to see the word "practices" there two times in the small verse. I know we like to say, "Well, I slipped again." What are you practicing? What are you pursuing? What are you spending your time on? What is your effort being focused on? Because whatever that is, that's who you are. You see, John just won't let us get away with anything. What is it you're going after? Now, it goes on, and says,

(1 John 3:5) You know... Which is conveying that we have some vision of Christ.

We know this: "that He appeared..." So, we have seen Him appear. "...in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin."

I can see clearly that cross, and what He did for me. I know why He came. It's not confusing to us.

One of the great passages that makes reference to this is Colossians 2. I've often thought of this passage because of the way that it just capsulizes what God has done for me, and it brings my focus back to the cross; and just how marvelous, He's canceled out the debt that I owed.

(Colossians 2:13) "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

(Colossians 2:14) having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

(Colossians 2:15) When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him."

The point of 1 John 3:5 is that you know why Jesus appeared. We're looking at the cross, and we're not scratching our heads, "Why is He on that cross?" To pay for sins. I know in some ways it's axiomatic, but his point is that if you sin, you go against what you know is the whole reason why Jesus came. The way that it reads is, "You know that He appeared in order to take away..." eradicate, get these things away from us, and you're courting it? You know better. You see the cross. You have no excuse. We have seen. We know God. We know He appeared to take away sins. We're not confused. The love of God is not ambiguous to us. This therefore has become our aspiration. What? To remove sin. He appeared; we know why He came. We want to be like Him. What are we going to start doing? Moving sin out.

Galatians 5 says that it was for freedom that Christ came to set you free. So, what has God called us to do? Free people from their sin. We're showing them, you no longer have to be under bondage. You can be released from this. Now, why in the world would we pursue something when we've said that we want to follow the One who is getting rid of it all? It just

doesn't make any sense, and that's John's point within the passage. We know why He appeared. We see that clearly.

(1 John 3:6) "No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him."

As long as we remain in the state and condition of pursuing Him; or more specifically pursuing to be like Him; "No one who abides in Him sins." We'll put it another way, as you pursue that hope, "I want to be like God. My desire is to be like Him." Let's change the format, if you were to say, "I want to stop sinning," you won't stop sinning; but if you say, "I want to be like Him. My desire is to be like Him," Scripture says that you'll stop sinning. It won't be because you have the power to do it, but because the Spirit of God will energize you; because that's what He's called you to be, like Him. Let all glory be given to Him, and not you. So, what begins to happen is a transformation in our lives. That's why John writes the way that he does, so dogmatically, that no one who abides in Him will continue sinning. I mean, you can't say, "I want to be like Christ, who came to eradicate sin," and be in sin. It's impossible for you to do that. No one who sins has ever understood Him. "Oh, I'm really close with God, I know exactly what He's like." You don't know what He's like if you're steeped in sin, you can't know Him.

(1 John 3:7) "Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous."

Practicing doing the right things, following the right One. As we make our pursuit one of practicing that which pleases our Father, then it transforms us into His image; and that is what's being said within that passage.

(1 John 3:8) "The one who practices sin is of the devil..." "Devil" referring to "*diabolos*," that which is false and slanderous. His point is that you said that you wanted to follow God and you practice those things that He came to eradicate; obviously you're lying. You're being deceitful. "...for the devil has sinned from the beginning." What's interesting about that phrase, "has sinned from the beginning," he's interjecting a phrase that is referring to that which displays something that's being worthwhile, or superior from the beginning, or in first place. The point is that the devil at the very beginning of time, in Genesis 3:4-5, gave value and worth to sin.

"The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning," is the sense that he gave credence or argument to man, "this is a good thing to do." There's something inside of us that goes, "It's kind of beneficial to sin." Romans 6 would say, "Ok, which of your sins have you benefitted from?" What did the devil, serpent, say at the very beginning? "Oh, this is going to make you wise. It will make you as gods." There's something about sin that he's injected into our minds, that we begin to think there's something valuable about sin. Otherwise, we wouldn't do it. I mean, it's gratifying, you can go down the list. "There are all these wonderful things that come from sin." There's nothing wonderful that comes from sin, and Jesus on the cross, you see the crucifixion of those who were steeped in sin and what sin does. It hates, it destroys, it tears apart. We see that clearly. So, there's something inside of

us that goes, “I don’t want any part of that. I don’t want to have anything to do with that.” It’s transforming.

John says, “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.”

You could actually put another word in there for “destroy,” and that is, take away its allurements and its authority. Once again, it goes back to Peter, “Why don’t you want to do the things you used to?” I just don’t want to do them anymore. There’s no allure anymore; it’s the Spirit of God within us, and God appeared for that reason.

It ends in this way,

(1 John 3:9) “No one who is born of God practices sin...”

That’s the key point; it’s not something that you and I pursue, it’s not something we spend our time and effort going after, it’s not our thought or focus. Well, what are your thoughts and focus? I want to be like Him; that’s where my mind is. My hope is to be like Him, and that begins to change me. It purifies me, it makes me like Him. It changes my nature.

“No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed...” “Seed” is where we get the word “sperm,” or “*sperma*.” I’ll put it another way, it’s not in our DNA to sin. We don’t want to do it anymore. What he’s conveying with the seed is that there’s this life-giving power, vital force, divine energy that creates a proclivity in my nature to want to do the right thing, to want to get rid of sin. It’s a mark that you are a child of God because this force, this life is within you. It abides in you, you cannot sin. “Don’t you want to sin?” No, I don’t want to anymore. Do we fall? Yes. If you go back to 1 John 2, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Yes, we do sin, and admit that you sin every day, but I’m sin conscience. I don’t want to do that. It’s not what I pursue, or practice. What I practice is, I want to be like Him, and that’s what has changed in my life. How transforming that is. Look, if it didn’t convict you, then it was just me, but wow, I could have done without that this week.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we give you thanks for Your lovingkindness to us, and the fact that You reveal things to us that are true. I mean, we say things, we talk about stuff, but the reality is that we’re not pursuing these things. It makes us doubt the reality of our relationship with You. It’s not saying that we’re lost. It’s just saying that we have no confidence. It is in this that You draw us back, and You say, “Let’s get real with what you know to be true.” I mean, you know why Jesus came. You know what He did on the cross. You know what God has come to destroy. You feel the same way about sin, right?