



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 John 3:4-9

"The Inadmissibility of Sin"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Returning now to 1 John chapter 3 and reading verse 4 through verse 9 for our Scripture reading, 1 John chapter 3, in verse 4 through verse 9. The apostle writes,

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (That last clause in the original text reads simply, "sin is lawlessness." In other words, there is no sole reference to the law of Moses, but is even more inclusive than the law of Moses. Sin is lawlessness.) And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. (It's interesting that John writes, "is no sin," he's not speaking about his preexistent life alone, nor his life while he was incarnate here upon the earth, nor his present life only, but inclusive of all and eternally in him, is no sin.) Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. (Now that verse, if you read it carefully and think about it, raises a number of questions that need some explication. I hope to be able to give some of that, but notice the strength of the statement, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not, whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.") Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 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. (You notice, of course, in verse 5, a very similar expression, "You know that he was manifested to take away our sins." And here, for this purpose, the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. That indicates that the works of the devil have a sort of ordered, systematic quality about them, and the original text uses a verb that means "to loose, or to undo." So it's as if our Lord is unraveling the systematic works that the devil had sought to perform and seeks to perform in his ministry. And finally, in the 9th verse, the apostle writes,) Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: (Now it is possible to understand this clause in several different ways, but the great majority of the biblical interpreters have felt that "his seed" is a reference to God's seed, and "remaineth in him" simply means to abide in him. So "his seed," that is God's seed abides in him, God's nature, it has been rendered in one of the more modern versions) and he cannot sin, (What a strange statement, "He cannot sin.") because he is born of God."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let's bow together in of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we turn to Thee in the name and through the merits of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who has made it possible for the righteousness of God to be imputed to us, for he has, as the Scripture has said, been manifested to take away our sin; manifested also for this purpose, that he might destroy the works of the devil. We thank Thee and praise Thee for all that Thy hast done, all in accordance with the eternal purpose, and we thank Thee that as we reflect upon the history of the Christian church, the history of the present generation of believing men and women, and as we look into the future we see the hand of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit being glorified

in all that Thou hast done. We worship Thee today; we praise Thy name through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We pray Thy blessing upon the whole church of Christ, and we pray Thy blessing upon this local church, and ask Thy blessing upon our elders, and our deacons, and the members, and friends, and the visitors who are here. May, Lord, as we think about the things of the Lord, our own spiritual lives be deepened, and may also by Thy grace, may we be useful in Christian service. Help us Lord, as we seek by Thy grace, to interest others in the claims of Christ to be fruitful and to be helpful and to accomplish above all, the will of God for us.

We thank Thee for the day in which we live, and for the opportunities which we have. We pray for our country, for our president. We ask also Thy blessing upon us this year as it is a year of elections. We pray that Thy perfect will may be done. We have confidence, Lord, in the way that Thou dost manage the affairs of this universe. And so, may those "ministers of God," to use the apostle's expression, those who hold public office, be those who are elected in accordance with the divine purpose.

We pray especially, Lord, for the sick, and ill, and those who have requested for us to pray for them. We thank Thee, Lord, for the way Thou hast answered some of our petitions just recently. And we thank Thee that Thou dost hear us as we pray for each of those whose names are in our calends of concern. Undertake for them and for those who minister to them, and encourage, and console, and give healing as it should please Thee.

Be with us in the service as we sing, as we listen to the word of God; may it be a time of spiritual growth and edification for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Returning to 1 John chapter 3, and verse 4 through verse 9 for the exposition this morning, and our subject, as the bulletin has noted, it is "The Inadmissibility of Sin." The apostle, if you've been reading and following along with me, continues his development of the moral test of a believer's possession of genuine

Christianity. Now, he has just related this moral test to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. In chapter 2, in verse 28 he said, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." And in verse 2 of chapter 3, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." So the apostle relates our moral life to the Second Advent.

Well, now he relates it to his first advent. As we noted in the Scripture reading, in verse 5 he says, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins," first advent. And then, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." These words that we have just read which relate our moral life to our claims to be Christians, someone has said are the Bible's "bluntest word" upon the subject of religion and morality. These surely are blunt words. Look at the statement in the 6th verse, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." And verse 9, "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." The professing church, of which we are a part, surely needs to face up to the test.

In a periodical that in the current issue speaks of factions jostling for position among the American Baptists, incidentally the ABC USA is the American Baptist Churches of the United States of America. This is not the Southern Baptist convention, but what evangelicals and Christians have called the Northern Baptists.

Generally speaking, they are much more liberal than the Southern Baptists, much more liberal, and as a result of their history in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, have become quite liberal in spots, although there are many believing men and women who are among them. But in the earlier part of the century there was really a legitimate comparison that might be made between those two bodies, but now the difference is reflected in something like

this, that in the Southern Baptist Church there are thirty-seven hundred missionaries, in the Northern Baptist Churches or the American Baptist Churches of the United States of America there are two hundred, which will give you some idea of the interest in evangelism that is reflected in the two bodies. One of the reasons for the difficulty is that the Northern Church has consistently taken what they have called, and which they have rejoiced in, a non-creedal position. That is, there isn't anything written down for which they stand very strongly, and being non-creedal it's not surprising that you have their leadership expressing views that are destructive of the authority of the Bible.

For example, in a denominational journal, the American Baptist, one author declared the Bible is full of inconsistencies. Among other things the Northern Church, in its official publication, I must say, the people in the pews are not like those who are editing the official publications, as is so often the case, but they have been strongly supportive of the Sandinista government of Nicaragua and other governments that would generally be regarded in the United States as leftist governments. In one particular issue of *Christian Action*, published by the ABC, the Ortega Regime was identified as "Marxism which can exist side by side with Christianity." One interesting statement made by them was, this is by one of their authors in one of their articles, "American Baptists are ecumenical, local. An ecumenical group can involve Roman Catholics, orthodox, Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and other religious groups, as well as those affiliated with the National Council of Churches." What he seems to be saying is that oneness in Christ includes Muslims and Buddhists. Now, I know that most of us who are believing Christians or at least professing Christians would find that rather strange, and to tell you the truth, I think the Buddhists and the Muslims would find it very strange too, to be said to be one with the American Baptists of the United States of America. Homosexuality is a very divisive issue among them, while there are some of the men who have affirmed the fact that the Bible is contradictory to the practice of homosexuality, and that also has been written in letters to the editors of some of their

magazines, yet at the biennial meeting at Pittsburg in 1987 attended by four thousand delegates, a resolution condemning the growing acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle was defeated by a hundred vote margin. So what you have in those delegates is, a majority believing that it is not proper to affirm that homosexual lifestyle is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. There's no need to talk further about that, but I think you can see that if our churches are filled with people like this, then the moral test of which John is speaking, is something that is surely apropos for us.

Many of you know that I read the *National Review*, I do read other things besides the *National Review*, I remember one time a preacher stood up one time and said, "This is all I read." And another fellow punched his friend and said, "He didn't have to tell us that." [Laughter] But I do try to read a few things, and I even read a few on the other side of the political aisle from me in order to find out what my friendly enemies are thinking about and talking about.

But I do read the *National Review*, I admit that. And in the present issue is a very interesting article entitled, "Bishop Pike's Return Engagement." Now those of us old enough to remember the fifties and the sixties will remember Bishop James Pike of the Episcopalian Church, created quite an interest, all over the country. He was the favorite bishop of the media, the reason being that he was constantly saying things that were shocking and controversial, and particularly so since Anglicans, Episcopalians have always been so reserved and dignified. Well, here is Bishop Pike denying the Trinity, denying many other things, and finally as you may remember, he had to be rebuked by the leadership. He became bishop inclusive of the San Francisco area, then later became interested in the mediums, because one of his sons had committed suicide, and he hoped to make contact with him. And in order to later on engage in further spiritual experiences, he went to the land of Palestine or Israel, went out in the desert, wandered in the desert looking for spiritual experience, so he said, and was found dead around 1968 or 1969 or 1970.

Well, there's another Bishop Pike, the Bishop of Newark, Bishop John Spong, and if you listened to public television the other night, Bishop Spong was on for about thirty minutes or so, and debating with another Anglican or Episcopalian bishop. He is the Episcopal Bishop of Newark, NJ and he is the author of a new book called, *Living in Sin* and among some of the things that the bishop is saying is the Bible is totally out of date. As a religious authority one should not follow the Scriptures, what one should follow is progress. John Neuhaus has said, "Progress is God, and John Spong is her prophet." Well, what makes his book so controversial, he calls it controversial, well, because it's about sex, that's why. And so, and incidentally Richard John Neuhaus has likened him to television's Dr. Ruth, except he's masculine. [Laughter]

He's celebrating the mutual pleasuring that is the *sine quinone* of good sex, and good sex comes in many forms. It comes in hetero, homo, within, outside marriage, etcetera. These are the sexual views of this new age. Denies biblical authority, it sinks biblical authority into the sea of the relevant relativity of all truth. And as for Paul, following Paul, he doesn't say about John, but we have a good idea what he would think of John when we hear what he says about Paul. "Those who appeal to the authority of St. Paul are blind to the fact that he was a driven, conflicted, guilt-ridden misogynist who quite possibly was homophobic, because he was himself homosexual." But the bishop assures us that he reads the Bible, he loves the Bible, he reads it every day. And Dr. Neuhaus says, "One wonders why." [Laughter]

Now, what is interesting about this too, is that he is the Bishop of Newark; Newark where eighty percent of the people in his bishopric are the poor of this land. There is nothing, so I'm told I haven't had the chance to read the book yet, there is nothing, I am told, that would minister to the people of his community. But this is a bishop, he's not simply a rector, he is a bishop in the Episcopalian church. I think you can see, at least it appears so plain it's just as something right before my face, the Christian church needs to face up to the test that the apostles, and particularly the Apostle

John in our passage, suggests for us. "Whosoever abideth in him does not sin: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." The Apostle John's standards suggest very plainly that Bishop Spong is not a believing man at all. One could not possibly say, in the light of the things that he has written, that he is such.

Now, the Christian church must not only deal with love, we have to deal with sin, unlove, divorces, adulterers, scandals, gossip, strife, or to put it generally, the works of the flesh. These are things that are proper objects of the church's concern. Now, we're not speaking about doctrinal things, we've already talked about that. That, too, is part of the things that we must deal with as professing Christians in the Christian church. Let's take a look now at how John deals with moral issues. You'll not find it very easy.

In fact, when someone has said the Bible's "bluntest word upon the subject of religion and morals is found here," you can expect that what John is going to say is disturbing, to say the least, if we are not readers and students of holy Scripture. He speaks first about sin and lawlessness, and incidentally he follows a little pattern. He gives the theme, and then he talks about the purpose of Christ's coming with regard to the theme, and then follows with a conclusion, four, five, and six. He interrupts that with a little appeal to the children, and then launches into the same thing, this time talking about sin and the devil, giving the theme of what he is saying, describing the purpose of Christ's coming with reference to the devil's works, and finally concluding with a logical conclusion; so, first, law or sin and lawlessness

The heretics John has in mind, we have said, were probably Cyrenthian gnostics. They arrogantly assumed that they were an initiated elite, apart from the rank and file, and they had special knowledge, and one of the things that they were assured of was the fact that matter was evil. And so consequently, if matter is evil, then we may withdraw into an acetic kind of existence and have no contact with evil. All we can say, that's a fruitless activity; we cannot possibly withdraw from everything. Let's eat, drink, and be merry, and enjoy ourselves. The precise position that these Cyrenthian gnostics had

concerning morals, we can only gain from John's condemnations of their attitudes. With reference to doctrine, we know that they believed that Jesus, as the Messiah, had not really come in the flesh. We've talked about that. We'll have to talk about that again later on. But now, the theme of what John is going to say here in connection with sin and lawlessness is expressed in verse 4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law," or sin is lawlessness.

Now, at a minimum, what we would say is John has said that righteousness of conduct is not a matter of indifference. My Christian friend, righteousness of conduct is not a matter of indifference for us. To sin is to practice lawlessness, John says. Now, he's not simply saying to practice sin is to disobey the Mosaic law, he actually in more inclusive than simply the Mosaic law. That is, to do sin is to have an attitude of rebellion, rebellion against all law, all of the moral law of God. Sin is lawlessness.

Now the Bible has some interesting things to say about the nature of sin, the real essence of sin. We don't have time in a sermon like this to discuss it theologically, except to say that I think that the fundamental essence of sin is unbelief. The reason we are lawless, the reason we are rebellious, the reason we do not respond to the word of God is that we do not believe the word of God. We do not believe it is the word of God. And so, out of our unbelief, for Jesus said, remember that he will send the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will convict us of sin, righteousness, and judgment of sin, because they "believe not on me." "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin," so the Apostle Paul writes.

So we are going to say that the essence of sin is unbelief, but because we do not believe the word of God, our sin of unbelief issues in lawlessness, that is rebellion against God, unwillingness to submit to what holy Scripture says. We may use various subterfuges, we may say, like that American Baptist pastor said, that "The Bible is full of inconsistencies." We may say other things, but fundamentally, that's what we are talking about. And then after unbelief has resulted in rebellion, then it issues in immorality. We're inclined to think that immorality is sin. Well, it is sin, but the fundamental cause of

immorality is unbelief that leads to rebellion, which issues in immorality. Adam disbelieved in his heart first of all, Eve as well. The inclination originated within their hearts that led to the volition, "I will take of the fruit," And then finally, the action of partaking of the fruit, and eating it.

But the sin occurred long before Eve actually tasted the fruit. It occurred when the inclination developed within her heart and Adam likewise. So our sins first of all are inclinations within the heart that issue in a volition, and finally in an action. So unbelief issues in lawlessness, rebellion, and finally is seen in immorality. After sin, in Genesis chapter 3, it's not surprising then to find murder in Genesis chapter 4. What we are seeing is simply the outworking of unbelief, rebellion, and then immorality.

Now, today how do we deal with things like this? Well, we use euphemisms, that is, when a man sins, particularly a public figure, it's not a sin. I remember Wilbur Mills and his sins, and they were put all over the papers. I don't ever remember anyone saying Wilbur Mills had sinned. The best that the media could come up with was, and this I believe was Chet Huntley's, it's a "mere peccadillo," a "mere peccadillo." Well, that's a nice euphemistic expression; if it's a terrible sin you call it a peccadillo; that covers it over. Or we use terms like personality problems, temperamental weaknesses, and now we love to call everything a sickness. We no longer have the seven deadly sins; we have the seven significant sicknesses. [Laughter] It's not sin, its sickness.

Now, mind you, I'm not posing as an individual who understands everything about this. I might be wrong on some points, but I think that in general what we are seeing is the transformation of our language, because we do not like the term sin. It may be interesting for you to know that sin, that term, etymologically is the creation of the word of God, so far as we know, there was no such concept of sin until the Scriptures, or the revelation found in the Scriptures expresses it that way. So John says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresses the law," he does lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.

Now what is the remedy? He says, "And you know." In other words, he appeals to common knowledge. He's talking to individuals who have the knowledge of our Lord's ministry. Maybe they don't understand the significance of it, but they do understand that Christ has come, and they understand the general purpose for which he came. "You know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." So he appeals to common knowledge of Jesus Christ, and he came to deliver us from the guilt of our sin, and also from the impurity of our sin. In the counsel chamber of the eternal deity, in the eternity of the past, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit devised the plan by which we, ourselves, are brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus to become members of the family of God, and by which our life throughout eternity will be governed. We "know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." What a magnificent statement that is. "In him there is no sin."

To describe the sinlessness of our Lord is very difficult. I'm going to take the liberty of reading to you one description. "How do we conceive of him without sin," this individual writes, "How do we conceive of him as without sin? He is before us as one in whom there is no sympathy with what is vile and polluting; or with what is mean and base; or with what is unfair and untrue ; or with what is dishonorable and unhandsome; or with what is unkind, ungenerous, unloving. Not a thought, not a feeling, not an affection is in him that could offend the purest taste, the most fastidious delicacy. Benevolence without the slightest alloy of selfishness ; integrity such as the breath of suspicion cannot touch; seraphic mildness, sweetness, calmness, that no storm of passion has ever ruffled; a soul attuned to all the melodies of heaven, on which no jarring note of earth's discord can ever strike; a divine dignity ; a divine gracefulness in look and mien, in air and carriage, infinitely removed from man's uncertain temper and the rude strife of tongues;—some such ideal, some such picture, rises before our eyes."

But he goes on to point out something else. This is not simply a negation of things, behold it, "See," he writes, "It is no mere negation; no mere abstinence from evil,

or absence of evil. Nor is it any mere spontaneous development of native, innate good. It is positive, practical, perfect obedience to God's holy law. It is the doing of his will with the whole heart. It is to live for no other end but that his will be done. So in his life did he manifest his sinlessness who said, "I must be about my Father's business." "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it." John writes, "In him is no sin." That's necessary if we are to have a Savior, we must have a savior untouched by sin, and to reflect upon that description is to realize how great a Savior we do have. The moral glory of our Lord Jesus apart from the ministry of the cross is something that we can only say is brighter than we could ever look upon with our eyes.

The conclusion the apostle reaches in verse 6 of this first little argument is what one of the commentators has called "a double hammer blow." "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." Abiders do not sin, is what he says. What does it mean to abide? To realize our oneness, taking his view of things, understanding sin as he understands it, understanding law as he understands it, understanding righteousness as he understands it, understanding guilt as he understands it, understanding holiness and desiring holiness, that would be reflective of being in him. But on the other hand, non abiders, this is why John's words are so blunt, non abiders have "not seen him, neither known him."

One can see here the utter incongruity, the utter incompatibility, the absolute intolerable inadmissibility of sin. That's what the apostle is saying. Now, think about it for a moment, I look back now over forty years of the ministry of the word of God, just about forty. I can think of many fathers and many mothers who came to me at a particular time in their lives when their children had begun to go astray, and I can remember the many times in which they told me, "I do believe, in spite of this activity which is going on, has been going on for a lengthy period of time, that my son or my daughter is a Christian." And understanding because I grew up in the same kind of atmosphere, if you asked the reason why, "Well there was a time when my son or

daughter told me that they had received Christ as Savior," but the life thereafter, there is no indication of submission to the authority of the word of God.

Now, what do we say? What do we say? I'm not intelligent enough to know whether anyone is a Christian or not. I have some very good ideas about a lot of you. I've seen your lives to some extent, but I am no omnipotent, omniscient being, able to tell you, you are a believer or you are not. That's not my duty. I can point you to the word of God and say, "here are the things that the word of God says." But you can do that just as well as I. I do know this, that if what the apostle says is true, many of our children, that we may have thought were believers, are not really believers, and therefore, we ought to be concerned about them. We ought to pray for them. We ought to do everything that we can within the will of God and according to the will of God to seek, with God's help, to bring them into the family of God, remembering that "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

Now, the tender appeal in verse 7 should be noted. The apostle says, "Little children, let no man deceive you." That means that moral deception is possible. He says, "I don't want you to be deceived by the heretics that are in your midst." It's a tender kind of appeal. He calls them little children. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." So that the test of belonging to the Lord is a test of behavior; the practice of righteousness is a legitimate test with our Lord as the example. One gets the impression occasionally in our evangelical circles that, in seeking to make the point that faith in Christ alone saves, which is a legitimate point and must be made, must be insisted upon. The ground of our salvation is in no way any work of ours, it is the work of the Son of God, and that work of the Son of God, the merits of his atoning work have become ours through the instrumentality of faith. Through faith, not on account of our faith, but through faith; faith being the hand of the heart, that by which we receive a free gift.

But nevertheless, once we have said that we have biblical reason to say with the Apostle John, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." And as I say, evangelicalism today, with its tendencies to antinomianism under the guise of, "We walk by the Spirit, we are not under the law," and there is a sense in which that is true. You know my position. You can find it in many of the expositions. I am not in any way one who feels that we are under the Ten Commandments as a code today, but we are perfectly justified in setting the morality of the law of God over against our lives and asking questions about the kind of life that we do live. As I say, in evangelicalism one gets the impression that what our Lord should have said to the woman taken in adultery was, "Go in peace, and you may sin again." But what he said, so far as we can tell was, "Go in peace, and do not sin." These were our Lord's words.

Now, in the final two verses, the apostle speaks about sin and the devil, and he follows the same pattern again. There's the theme, the seriousness of sin. This time it's related to Satan. There's the purpose of the coming. It relates to Satan and his works, and then a word by way of conclusion. So the emphasis turns to him who is the originator of sin, the evil one himself. Sinners belong to the evil one. He says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." That is, they have the same kind of life. As a matter of fact, sinners draw their ruling principle of life from the devil. They are of the devil. There is a likeness. Just as we are not of the world, but of the Lord, so those who have never believed in Christ are of the devil.

And then the remedy is set forth, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." The devil characteristically sins; we characteristically apart from the saving work of Christ are bound in our sins, our chains. Christ characteristically looses us from our sins. We who are doomed felons outside of Christ, living in Satan's domain, the domain of sin, find by the grace of God that we are delivered from the prison house of sin, through the saving ministry of the

Lord Jesus Christ. To follow Satan, my professing Christian listener, is to embark on a sinking vessel.

Let us go back to something that pains any American to talk about, but two and a half years or so ago, Challenger was disintegrated by an explosion. Let us suppose that a new Challenger were built, exactly like the other, exactly like the other. How many of you would ride it? I would imagine you would find a reason why you should not ride Challenger, because you would think that that would be to embark upon a sinking vessel.

Well, my friend, to follow Satan, to persist in the likeness to him that we have when we persist in sin is to be more fatal to your ultimate destiny than to have been on Challenger, more fatal. Christ died to unloose the works of Satan. That he has done. We won't talk about the different kinds of atonement. We don't have time to talk about it. I want to get to this conclusion which is important. And he states in verse 9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin," not he does not sin, or not he must not sin, or he ought not to sin, but he cannot sin, "because he is born of God." God's children cannot live in sin, any more than the devil's can live out of sin.

Now, notice John says these words are blunt, aren't they? They are very blunt. He says the believer does not, cannot sin. But now, after all, do not believers? You know you are a believer, many of you may be, most you in this audience. I hope most; I hope all of course, know deep down within your heart you have believed in Christ. There has been a transformation in your inmost being, and you love our Lord and you want to serve him. You want to be fruitful. You want to be the kind of Christian God would want you to be. You hate it when you do something that is contrary to his will. You're very, very disappointed when the bent of your mind at times seems to be contrary to the word of God, and you take pleasure in things that you know are contrary to holy Scripture. How can you possibly say, John, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin?" Haven't you read the Bible, John? Don't you know about David? Don't you know about Peter,

your own friend, your own leader of the apostolic band? Don't you remember he denied the Lord? How can you possibly say, "Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin?"

Now, if John were here, he would say, "Look, I will have to instruct Lewis on the Greek language." He'd say, "Didn't you notice, I'm using the present tense. Now, the present tense in Greek refers to continuous action, durative action in the present time. So for you folks out there who may not know Greek, and for Lewis who ought to know better, I'm going to render it for you the way it should have been rendered in English."

Now I cannot do it as John would, because he would speak with a Semitic accent, [laughter] but anyway, he said, "This is the way they should be read, 'Whosoever is born of God does not go on doing sin.'" "Does not go on doing sin, for his seed abides in him." God's seed; God's nature; the new life God has implanted in the believer, it abides in him, and he cannot go on sinning -- not he cannot sin as we might understand that in English -- but cannot go on sinning, because he is born of God. He has been born of God.

In other words, John is not speaking of the impossibility of sin, but the impossibility of persistence in sin. Do we get that? The impossibility is not the impossibility of sin. David, Peter, etcetera, etcetera, inclusive of Calvin and Servetus, and other experiences that godly men have had down through the years -- every godly man can tell you about his sin, for we have sinned. We do sin, that's what John has said in the first chapter, "If we confess our sins; if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves." "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." And then finally, in verse 10, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." So what is he speaking about? He's talking about persistence in sin. He's talking about a life that is characterized by sin. That is, if the bent of life is sin, habitually sinning, sin having dominion over us, which Paul says is impossible for a believing man.

How important that is, my Christian friend; I get some encouragement from that. After reading this you might think, "Well, it just is not for me, evidently." Now, someone has said, "Yet one cannot claim the righteousness of Christ, and at the same time practice unrighteousness." Practice unrighteousness that would be to acknowledge the need of it, saying you have the righteousness of God in Christ, and then deny the necessity of it by practicing unrighteousness.

Why can we not persist in sin? He gives us two reasons. He says, "His seed abideth in him," divine nature, we're different. We're different. After we've been born again, when by God's grace by the work of the Holy Spirit, we've been brought to repentance and faith and new life has been given to us by the grace of God, we are different. As Paul put it, to give another apostle's words, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new." We have a new nature, we're different. We're different children. That's one reason.

And then to put it more theologically, he says, "He cannot go on sinning, because he is born of God." There has been a deep, radical transformation within me, and there is an internal pressure created by God within my heart toward holiness. I fail; I fail often. I fail constantly, but the bent of my life is toward the holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Praise God in his marvelous grace. That's what happens within the heart of a believing man. So sins inadmissible, persisting in sin, a Christian cannot do that. Behavior is of unsurpassed importance, not for salvation, but for the evidence of what God does in a human heart.

Robert Law put it this way, "To believe in Christ and to believe in sin, to love Christ, and to love sin, to live in Christ, and to live in sin as one's element is as unthinkable as that one should face north and south at the same moment." That's why Christ came, why he came is to take away the guilt and impurity of our sins, to dissolve the works of Satan and undo them, and they will be undone finally, completely. Specious

arguments that claim emotion, knowledge, spiritual experience as sufficient evidence of a divine work within the soul and depreciate the need of obedience, character, Christ-likeness, submission to the word of God, the ease with which in so many sects and movements on the fringe of Christianity.

“We have ecstasies and visions, and nervous convulsions and so called miracle working. These intuitional guidances from the Holy Spirit; they have been erected into the proofs of grace, when the proof of the reception of grace in the soul of man is the transformation of his heart that issues in a changed life.” That's what the apostles stand behind. So to sin is to cease to abide. To abide is to believe him, to cleave to him, to grow up in him, to get into his mind, to drink into his Spirit, to grow, for it is progressive sanctification. Our abiding in him, taking the same view that he does of things begins, of course, with our views of our sin, of Christ's cross, and thus of his saving us in his own way and in his own terms.

If you are here today and you've never believed in Christ, let me remind you there is only one way of salvation. The terms are set forth for us in the word of God, and we must be saved and sanctified according to his terms in holy Scripture. May God help us to be submissive for Jesus sake. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are indeed grateful for the warnings and admonitions that the apostles have left for us. We so need them. It is so easy, Lord, to hide behind the things that appear to give us the freedom to do as we wish, rather than the submission to the word of God that Thou dost wish. Oh God, we confess our failure. We confess our sin. We pray that Thou wilt deliver us from those acts and actions and thoughts and deeds and the things that are dishonoring to the God that loved us and gave himself for us...

**[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]**