

THE CHILD OF GOD IS NOT A WORKER OF LAWLESSNESS (1 JOHN 3:4-15)

INTRODUCTION: The fearful reality of the workers of lawlessness

- The most terrifying truth presented in the New Testament is undoubtedly the encounter of “the false Christian” with the Lord on the day of judgment. As we read in Matthew 7, The LORD says:
 - **Matthew 7:21–23 (NKJV) — 21** “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **22 Many will say to Me** in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ **23** And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’
 - **“You who practice lawlessness”**: Referring, I believe, to the same people that the Apostle John is trying to warn in the passage we have before us. He said in verse 4: “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness”. (1 Jn 3:4).
 - **“Many will say to Me”**: Perhaps the most daunting and fearful thing of all is the fact that the LORD has not only mentioned a future possibility but rather has promised that this will take place. He does not say, “Be careful because there is a chance that on that day there will be false Christians”; rather, He says: “Many will say to Me”. The one who has decreed all things is telling us that from among professing Christians, there will be some who will arrive to that day with full certainty of their belonging to Christ, having given their lives to “Christian works and deeds”, yet they will hear from the mouth of the Saviour “depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness”
 - **“That day” - No more time, no more opportunity**: On that day there will be no more time. This is the last day; there is no more time for repentance or changing their religious fleshly ways. That is the last day, and there will not be tomorrow for them to fix their ways and do the will of the Father by genuine faith.
 - **“That day” - No room for excuses or pretence**: On that day, there will be no room or opportunity for excuses or pretence. Many would have believed and fallen by the deceitfulness of their religious deeds, but not the LORD. Many would have applauded and recognised their religious endeavours, not the LORD. The false Christian will be before the ONE who knows all things and judges righteously and will be left without excuse. Their outcome will be eternal commendation, “depart from me you workers of lawlessness.”

- And it is because of the seriousness of such an event that the Scriptures call us graciously and continually to examine ourselves while there is time!
 - **Psalm 139:23–24 (NKJV) — 23** Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; **24** And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.
 - **Haggai 1:5–6 (NKJV) — 5** Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! **6** “You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes.”
 - **Lamentations 3:40 (NKJV) — 40** Let us search out and examine our ways, And turn back to the LORD;
 - **2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV) - 5** Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.
- **The value of self-examination in light of the Gospel:** Self-examination when done in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is good and necessary. This self-examination should not be the result of wanting to be a better Christian, but rather, it should be the result of our beholding of the love of Christ.
 - **2 Corinthians 5:14–15 (NKJV) — 14** For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; **15** and He died for all, that those who live **should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.**
- **Gracious warning against what the flesh:** Brothers and sisters, let me give you this gracious warning against what your flesh may be tempting you to think now: Oh, here we go again, one of those harsh sermons. Does not he look to himself? He thinks he is holly... etc, etc.. Each one of us is responsible for our own lives. Please know that calling the congregation to examine ourselves is not judgemental but loving.
 - **Proverbs 27:6 (NKJV) — 6** Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.
 - True friends are those who are willing to point out our mistakes for our own good, not those who always agree with us. "The kisses of an enemy are deceitful." like the kiss of Judas, which was deceptive.
- **These are the faithful wounds of John, our friend:** This is what the Apostle John was trying to do with the church:
 - He has already pointed them to the present and future blessings of what it is to be a child of God.
 - But now he must by the same Spirit be a friend to them and point them to the necessary realities of what is to be a child of God, that is: **THE CHILD OF GOD IS NOT A WORKER OF LAWLESSNESS.**
 - Especially because it seems that there were some false teachers who were trying to convince people that they could be Christians and live their lives in the practice of sin: **1 John 3:7**
- **The structure of the passage:** The Apostle will present in this section three things
 - **The reality (4-7):** The child of God does not live a life of sin but practices righteousness

- **The reason (8-10):** The child of God has the seed of God in him/her different to the seed of Satan that is in the children of Wrath
- **The fruit (11-15):** The result of this righteousness is manifested in the love that the child of God has for other children of God, this is love to the brethren.

SERMON:

THE CHILD OF GOD IS NOT A WORKER OF LAWLESSNESS

1. The reality (4-7): The child of God is not a worker of lawlessness

a. Explanation:

- i. **Explanation from Theology:** We are talking about practical righteousness. To understand this, it is necessary that we will understand first what it is not:

1. **Biblical Practical Righteousness is not sinless**

perfectionism: In other words, this idea that a Christian will never sin, or even the idea that is possible to live a life without sinning at all. The apostle has made this very clear in chapter one when he said:

- a. **1 John 1:8 (NKJV) — 8** If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
- b. **1 John 1:10 (NKJV) — 10** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
- c. **Whoever claims that Christians do not sin or can achieve perfection in this life is in error.** At best, those who teach this doctrine are deceived and ignorant, and at worst, they are acting against God, effectively making Him a liar and demonstrating that they do not truly understand nor have God's word within them. These are often hypocrites who are very good at projecting their secret sins onto others. Because their conscience is hardened, they can set standards of perfection for others while they are secretly sinners.
- d. **The presence and power of sin will remain in us until we see the Lord Jesus Christ.** The ultimate solution to this is the resurrection in a new body. It's important to understand that while sin still exists in Christians, it no longer holds the power to dominate, subjugate, or enslave them to a life of sinning. Christians are no longer controlled by sin's power, even though its presence is still a reality.

2. **Biblical Practical Righteousness is about living a life of progressive sanctification:** The key word to understand this idea is “practice”. A Christian has the ability, through the Spirit, to practice righteousness. This is what the Apostle refers to as walk in the light:
- a. **1 John 1:7 (NKJV) — 7** But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. - To walk in the light means that you are progressing in holiness as you progress in your faith. So a walk of sanctification will have these two elements:
 - i. **Holiness:** You have victory over sin, but you realise that you cannot do it on your own; you genuinely depend on the LORD.
 - ii. **Repentance:** You learn that for you to have victory over sin, you need to be forgiven.
 - b. **The apostle's main concern is that we, as children of God, should not misuse our status for the flesh.** While it's true that as God's children, we are recipients of His great love, and nothing can separate us from that love, we are also expected to be like Him, that is, to live lives of righteousness. That idea of a Christian who is not advancing in sanctification is an error. This is a false belief. It is not accurate and certainly not in line with the Gospel. The apostle is particularly worried about those who identify as Christians yet engage in habitual sinning. Again, the key term here is "practice." The apostle emphasises the practice of sin versus the practice of righteousness. His message is clear: he urges us to forsake the practice of sin and instead commit to practising righteousness. That is the emphasis that starts in verse 4.
- ii. **Explanation from the text:** This is what the Apostle is trying to communicate.
1. V4- I understand that verse 4 is often cited as a definition of sin, stating, 'Sin is a transgression of the law.' While this is a valid reference for defining sin, the apostle's intention in this context goes beyond just defining it. Instead, he highlights the seriousness of being involved in the continuous practice of sin. Continually sinning means more than just not doing what you should; it really means you keep breaking God's law. Let me put it simply: “The one who engages in the practice of sin is deliberately going against God’s law, His will”.
 2. V5-6 To be a worker of lawlessness is completely against the Gospel of the LORD Jesus Christ and against the new nature of the Christian. Why?

- a. **Gospel v5:** Because the Son of God, without Sin, came, died and has already defeated Satan and Sin. He is victorious already!
- b. **New nature:** He has paid for the penalty of our sin and has given us the true assurance that sin will have no dominion over us. - **Romans 6:14 (NKJV)**
— 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.
- b. **Application:** Let none deceive you:
 - i. **Not your flesh:** Remember what is in your flesh by nature, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life, these will try to find a point of agreement with the things of the world, and will try to convince you that it is ok to have fellowship with the world. An unsanctified conscience is the worst false teacher we can face.
 - ii. **Not false christianity:** Many will try to deceive you as they were doing the early church. They will tell you in a subtle way that you can be a sinner while you call yourself a christian. This is a doctrine of false teachers.

2. The reason (8-10): The child of God is no longer a child of Satan.

- a. **Explanation:** The main reason the Apostle gives for why the child of God is not a worker of lawlessness but a worker of righteousness is that they are no longer children of Satan:
 - i. **Of the Devil v8:** The son of Adam is a son of Satan; hence, an eternally bound sinner whose only Hope is the redemptive work of Christ.
 - 1. **Of the devil:** Sinner by nature
 - 2. **Only hope is Christ:** We cannot liberate ourselves. The works of Satan are beyond ourselves only Christ can destroy them.
 - ii. **Of God v9:** The way that God destroys that work of Satan is through Christ and the work of The Son applied to the sinner by the Spirit. This is the idea of the “God’s seed abides in him”.
- b. **Application:**
 - i. **The Gospel applied:** The Son conquers at the Cross. The Spirit Conquers in our flesh. The redeemed sinner conquers over sin → The life of Christ in us destroys the dominating power of sin over our lives and gives us the promise of a future complete deliverance.

3. The Evidence (10-13): To love the brethren.

- a. **Explanation:**
 - i. The primary manifestation of the righteousness of God in us, His children, is the love we have for His children. - V10
 - 1. **Evident:** This word means “to manifest, “to show,” intransitively “to shine,” “to light up,” “to become visible,” “to appear.”

2. **Loving the brethren is not only central to the Christian life but to the message of the Gospel - V 11:** John's message in his writing can be reduced to this.
 - a. **Gospel:** Jesus came, lived and died and was resurrected for us.
 - b. **Letter:** so we need to live in light of our love for Him and one another
 - c. **Revelation:** while we wait for His Second coming.
- ii. **How do we know what is to love the brethren? - v10**
 1. **“Does not practice righteousness, does not love the brethren”:** Being a genuine child of God is **evidenced** not by merely avoiding works of lawlessness, but by actively practicing works of righteousness, specifically and more immediately through acts of love for the brethren.
 2. **Hate or love, not middle ground:** Between brothers and sisters there should be an active manifestation of love. Indifference is a coward and passive manifestation of hate. → **1 John 3:18 (NKJV) — 18** My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth
- iii. **The example of Cain - V12:**
 1. From the example of Cain, we learn a couple of important lessons about haters - V12.
 - a. First, Haters are the property of Satan. “Who was of the devil”
 - b. Second, Haters are generally involved in other unrighteous deeds. “His own deeds were evil”
 - c. Third haters will oppose the children of God. V13 -
 - d. **1 John 3:13 (NKJV) — 13** Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you.
- b. **Application:**
 - i. No middle ground in the Gospel brethren, love or hate. A cold heart is in the best case scenario one that is walking in darkness and needs to repent.
 1. **1 John 1:6–7 (NKJV) — 6** If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. **7** But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

CALL: Have you passed from death to life?

1 John 3:14–15 (NKJV) — 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. **15** Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

1. Do **you know** that you have passed from death into life?
 - a. How do you know? “Because we love the brethren”
 - b. If you hate the brethren, you are a murderer and you know that no murderer has eternal life
2. **What can I do?** Look to Christ!
 - a. **1 John 1:9–10 (NKJV) — 9** If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.