

King's Way Church
Message for Jan. 21, 2007
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Learning a new Habit: THE PROCESS OF TRANSFORMATION
1 John 3:1-10

Different people in different situations need to hear different advice. The book you write for a struggling married couple is different than the one you write for a young engaged couple. Make sense?

JOHN'S TARGET AUDIENCE

In the same way, 1 John was written for people in a specific situation. In order to understand 1 John, you need to understand who these people were. They *weren't seekers*. They *weren't non-believers*. They *weren't game-playing religious people*. They were **born-again, Spirit-filled, fully-devoted followers** of Jesus Christ. Now, among them there were some heretics who were trying to lead them astray, but John isn't writing to those people. He writes *about* them, but not *to* them. John is writing to a group of dedicated and devout Christians who are, most certainly, saved.

Here's the problem. Some people go to 1 John with questions that he didn't intend to answer in this letter. 1 John wasn't written to answer the question "Am I really saved?" He makes it clear that he knows his readers are members of God's family. Instead, he's answering the questions, "How can I change? How can I be more like Jesus? How can I go deeper in relationship with God?" This is an important distinction because John says some things in chapter 3 that are difficult to understand if you don't know who he's talking to.

Case in point. He says...

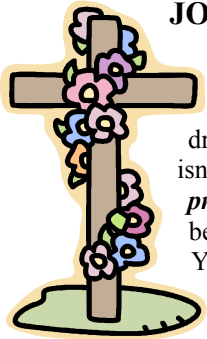
(v. 9) Those who have been born into God's family do not sin, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they have been born of God. (NLT)

The Greek verb is in the present tense and indicates "on-going" sin.

(v. 9) No one born of God practices sin. [NASV]

(v. 9) No one born of God will continue to sin. [NIV]

JOHN'S WORDS ARE NOT A THREAT



That's not what John said. It's true, in his letter he talks about heretics and phonies, but he doesn't talk *to* them. The "**you**" in this letter is always the same: **born again Spirit-filled believers**. Later in this chapter he draws a line between the believers and non-believers, and next week we'll look at the distinction, but right here this isn't what he's talking about. When he says "*No one born of God continues to sin*" – **that's not a threat; it's a promise**. He's not trying to make his readers doubt their salvation, he's trying to give them hope. He's saying "You belong to God – we've already established that – and since you have been born of God, you won't continue to sin. You can be free of its grip."

John isn't addressing those who may or may not be Christians, trying to help them determine which camp they're in. He's addressing those who are most certainly saved. Therefore, when we read this letter, that's how we must interpret his words.

HE TAKES AWAY YOUR SIN

In chapter 3 John tells his readers that followers of Jesus can experience transformation from sin. He says...

(v. 5) And you know that Jesus came to take away our sins.[NLT]

That's the way John the Baptist described him: "**Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**" (John 1:29 NIV)

Jesus came in to the world to pay the price for our sins so that we could be forgiven. He also came to eradicate our sins, to get them out of our lives. He came not only to erase the **penalty** of sin; he came to erase the **presence** of sin. His idea is that we should be holy because he is holy. [1 Peter 2:16]

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ABIDING IN CHRIST IS THE KEY



The word *abides* means to *remain or reside* – you cannot practice sin. When you’re abiding Jesus, or as John also calls it, *walking in the light as he is in the light*, the Holy Spirit convicts your heart of every thought and action that comes between you and God. You cannot continue in that thought or action. Your new nature – the life of God that is in you – will rise up against it.

Understand: There’s a difference between being saved and abiding in Jesus. You received salvation when you invited Jesus Christ to come into your life and forgive you of your sin. It’s a one time event, it’s an act of God, you receive it by faith. But that’s not where the God part of our lives ends. It’s where it begins. Those who have been saved are called to abide in Jesus. What does this mean and how do you do it? Here’s what it means to abide in Jesus: It means acknowledging his presence in everything you do, and yielding to his leadership at every turn. It’s receiving God’s presence in your life each day, each moment of the day.

OUR ULTIMATE TRANSFORMATION



But remember the Styrofoam cup; this is not an overnight process. In fact, John tells when the process will be completely finished. (v 2) When will we attain perfection? When we see him face to face in heaven. Till then, our sanctification is a process – a process that God guarantees will be successful, but a process nonetheless. When you struggle with sin, it’s not a question of whether you’re in or out of the camp; it’s a question of whether you’re living each day in his presence. Do you want to experience transformation from sin? Then live in him. Make it your habit everyday to acknowledge his presence in everything you do, and yield to his leadership at every turn.

CONCLUSION

If you’re saved, John wrote this chapter for you – not to gauge the authenticity of your salvation, but to gauge the *progress of your holiness*. John says that Jesus Christ came to take away your sin. Since God’s seed is in you, you won’t keep sinning. You’ll become holy, just like Jesus, if you abide in him—that means **acknowledging his presence in everything you do and yielding to his leadership at every turn**. Do this and you’ll begin to see transformation take place in your life. And then John reminds us that the ultimate transformation takes place when we see him face to face. That’s our hope. As John begins this chapter: (v. 1) *See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.* [NRSV] You are God’s people. He has put his life in you so that you can experience power over sin and can be changed into the image of Christ.

“Our vision is to make a change in our community by being a *life-giving* church that is *true* to the Bible and *relevant* today by helping You find *Your way!*”

-King’s Way Church

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