



Gospel of Grace
FELLOWSHIP

1 John 3:4-6

Lawlessness or Abiding

by Bob DeWaay

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The Text From Lexham English Bible

1 John 3:4

Everyone who practices sin also practices **lawlessness**, and **sin is lawlessness**.

1 John 3:5

And you know that that one (*demonstrative pronoun*) was revealed in order that he might take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

1 John 3:6

Everyone who resides (*abides = meno_*) in him does not sin. **Everyone** who sins has neither seen him nor known him.

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1

Sin Is Defiance of God's Moral Standard

1 John 3:4 (LEB)

Everyone who practices sin also practices **lawlessness**, and **sin is lawlessness**.

- This is in contrast for verse 3 (purifies himself)
- "Lawlessness" (*anomia*) is used of Sodom in Gen. 19:15 LXX (the lawlessness of the city)
- By defining sin (*hamartia* = missing the mark) in this way John emphasizes its seriousness
- Jesus speaks of lawlessness in Matthew 7:23
- Luke 19:14 shows what attitude this reveals

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2

An Implication of "Sin is Lawlessness"

By defining sin this way, we can understand how John uses large categories. He sees people as either in the category of abiding in Christ by faith, confessing that He both defines and provides the remedy for sin, or in the category of "lawlessness" ('we will not have this man rule over us'). Thus apparent contradictions are resolved. Christians are not sinless, but they are abiding in Christ who takes away sins. They are willing to submit to Him. This does not depend on their relative piety compared to other Christians.

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3



Christ Came to Take Away Sins

1John 3:5a (LEB)

And you know that that one was revealed in order that he might **take away sins**...

- This was stated by John the Baptist (John 1:29)
- “Take away” is *airo_* which is used in Col. 2:14 for removing the decrees against us
- Here it means to lift up and remove (expiation)
- This involves a purpose clause *hina* (in order that)
- Those who are lawless refuse to admit their need for redemption (See John 8:31-47)

An Implication of “Take Away Sins”

Those who are “lawless” either claim that sin is of no consequence (like saying whatever is done in the body does not matter), or that it really was not that important. Some defined away sin so that they would not need to obey Christ (1John 2:4). Thus those who abide are “staying put” in Christ, always confessing their need for His forgiveness and expiation (blotting out of guilt).

Christ Is Sinless

1John 3:5b (LEB)

...and in him there is no sin.

- He offered Himself as the perfect offering (1Peter 1:19)
- He had no “lawlessness” (*anomia*) according to the LXX of Isaiah 53:9
- He was tempted but without sin (Hebrews 4:15)
- In Revelation Jesus is the Lamb whose blood has removed sins (Rev. 7:14; Rev. 12:11)

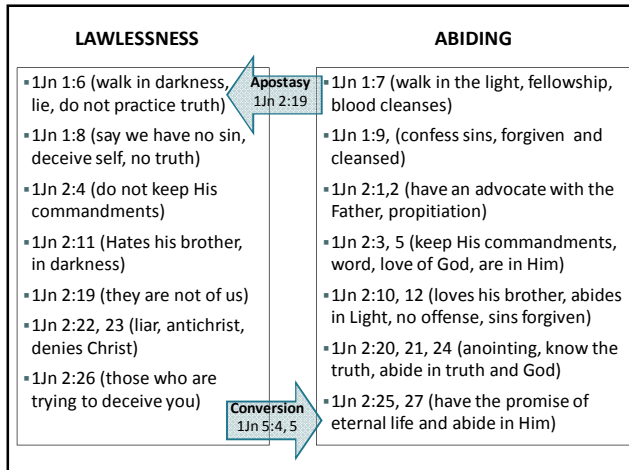
The Abiding Ones Are Not Sinning

1John 3:6 (LEV)

Everyone who resides (*abides = meno_*) in him **does not sin**. **Everyone who sins** has neither seen him nor known him.

- “Everyone” is *pas ho* and denotes “each one”
- This verse has raised a lot of questions in church history because of 1John 1:8 and other passages
- “Seen Him” is similar to John 14:9
- John contrasts those who are lawless with those who abide; these are large and inclusive categories





Implications and Applications

- Among those who do abide in Christ, we should not create needless comparisons.
- We should treat all who abide in Christ with love and kindness.
- Abiding in Christ implies drawing near to God, not necessarily feeling near to God.

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We Must Abide and Not Compare

2Corinthians 10:12 (NASB)
For **we are not bold to class or compare ourselves** with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.

- We do not know the heart and therefore lack the means to decide who is more pious
- Only God knows the motives of the heart
- Those abiding in Christ will one day be with Him and will be glorified (Romans 8:17)

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Those Who Abide Must Love

John 15:12 (NASB)
This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.

- Those who do abide in Christ are both loved by Him and express love to one another (1John 4:16)
- We are never in the category of the “lawless” who despise the people of God
- Love does imply correcting error for the good of God’s people (James 5:20)

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We Must Draw Near to God

Hebrews 10:22 (NASB)

let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

- The gospel tells us the only way to draw near to God
- Those who believe in Christ alone are cleansed from the inside out
- It is only through the gospel that we move from lawlessness to abiding

Feeling Close to God Proves Nothing

Acts 7:22 (NASB)

So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects."

Acts 4:12 (NASB)

"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

