

TEST 2: TURNING AWAY FROM SIN AND ITS ENSLAVEMENT

1 JOHN 03:04–09

Introduction

Do we really love God? There are six tests that show us. This is the second test: Have we turned away from sin? Have we been born of God?

=> If we live in sin, if we are enslaved by the habits of sin, this is a clear sign we do not love God. But if we have turned away from sin, if the habits of sin have been broken by Christ and permanently conquered in our lives, this is a clear sign that we love God.

=> If we have been born of God, if we have participated in the divine nature of God, then we love God. If we have not been born of God, if we have not participated in the divine nature of God, then we do not love God.

When we love someone, we want to know and please him. We want his approval and acceptance; therefore, we do all we can to please him. So it is with God. If we love Him, we want to know Him and please Him. We want His approval and acceptance; therefore, we do all we can to please Him. God is righteous; He is pure and holy. There is no sin in Him at all. Therefore, the person who loves God lives a righteous life, a pure and holy life. He does not live in sin; he does not practice sin. He lives in righteousness and he practices righteousness. He does all he can to please Him whom he loves — the Lord God Himself.

This is the second test, the test that shows whether or not we love God. Have we turned away from sin? Have the habits of sin been broken and conquered in our lives? Have we been truly born again by the Spirit of God?

- I. The need for deliverance: man is sinful (v. 4).
- II. The provision for deliverance: Christ took away our sins (v. 5).
- III. The proof of deliverance (vv. 6-7).
- IV. The great conquest of Christ in deliverance (v. 8).
- V. The result of deliverance: being freed from living in sin (v. 9).

I. 1 John 03:04 Man is Sinful

There is the need for deliverance. Man is sinful and he breaks the law. Few people like to be called a *sinner*. Some people even react to the statement that men are *sinners*. There is a reason for this. To most people sin is thought to be the gross sins of society, the crimes that make the headlines of our newspapers and telecasts. The sins committed by most people are not thought to be that serious. Most people think that what little wrong they do could never be interpreted as sin. Therefore, to them they only commit...

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- a mistake
- a psychological quirk
- an irrational act
- a shortcoming
- a flaw of nature
- a social flaw
- a failure
- a bad decision

This is not what sin is, not to God and not to the Bible. Sin is the *lawlessness*. It is violating the law of God.

- => Sin is choosing to go one's own way in life, doing one's own thing instead of doing what God says.
- => Sin is living like one wants instead of living like God says.
- => Sin is disobeying God, not doing what God says to do and doing what God says not to do.
- => Sin is disbelieving God instead of believing what God says.
- => Sin is ignoring God and neglecting God instead of following and worshipping Him as He says.
- => Sin is rebelling against God instead of doing what God says.
- => Sin is rejecting God and denying God instead of confessing God and becoming a follower of God.

And note: God is perfect. Therefore, only perfection is acceptable to God. This is shocking; nevertheless it is true. If God lets anything less than perfection into heaven, then heaven would no longer be perfect. Therefore, God can never accept anything other than perfection. This is what sin is: imperfection — falling short of God's glory and of God's perfect nature. Consequently, man not only does things that come short of God's perfection; man himself is short of God's nature.

- => Man is a sinner. He himself is *short of God's glory, short of perfection*. Therefore, whatever he does is short of God; man's acts are imperfect. At the very root of things, this is what sin is: it is imperfection; it is being and coming short of God's glory and nature. It is not only that we do things that are short of perfection, but we ourselves are short of God's glory, short by nature, short of what we should be.
- => Man is not only a sinner, he is sinful. The reason he is sinful is because he has *broken God's law*. If he had never broken the law of God, then he would have dwelt in the perfect nature of God. He would have always obeyed God; therefore, he would have lived in the glory of God and never come short of God's will and nature. It was lawlessness, going against God's law and nature, that caused the fall of man. Therefore, sin is lawlessness, disobeying God's law, falling short of what God says.

Rom 3:10-19 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips."

“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

Gal 3:22 *But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.*

1 John 1:8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

1 John 5:4 *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

1 John 5:17 *All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.*

Gen 6:5 *The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*

Psa 53:3 *Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.*

Prov 20:9 *Who can say, “I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin”?*

Isa 53:6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Isa 64:6 *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

1 JOHN 03: 04 SIN

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. 1 John 03:04

There are a number of Hebrew words and a number of Greek words for sin in the Bible. A literal translation of the major words will show the meaning of sin.

1. Sin is unbelief, the failure to believe God (Mt. 13:58; 17:20; Rom. 3:3; 4:20; 11:20, 23; 1 Tim. 1:13; Heb. 3:12, 19).
2. Sin is missing the mark, falling short of the glory of God (see Rom. 3:23).
3. Sin is error, making a mistake; a wandering off of the right path (Rom. 1:27; Jas. 5:20; 2 Pet. 2:18; 3:17; Jude 11).

4. Sin is ungodliness and unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18; 11:26; 2 Tim. 2:16; Tit. 2:12; Jude 15, 18).
5. Sin is transgression, a stepping outside the law (Rom. 3:23; 4:15; 5:13, 20; Heb. 2:2; 9:15).
6. Sin is trespassing, intruding where one should not go (see Eph. 2:1).
7. Sin is disobedience, a refusal to listen and hear and do (Eph. 2:2; 5:6; Col. 3:6).
8. Sin is lawlessness, rebellion, a rejection of God's will and law (1 Jn. 3:4).
9. Sin is iniquity, doing evil, an inward contempt that leads to the continual practice of sin (Mt. 7:23; Rom. 6:19; 2 Th. 2:3. Cp. Rom. 1:21-23.)

All men have sinned (Rom. 3:23). Sin first entered the world through Adam (Rom. 5:12). Because of sin, all men are spiritually dead, forever, and are destined to die physically (Rom. 6:23; cp. Gen. 2:17; 3:19; Ezk. 18:4, 20). But there is a deliverance from sin and from its penalty — the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; Heb. 9:26). (See *Sin*, 2 Pet. 1:4.) □

II. *1 John 03:05 Deliverance through the Death of Jesus*

There is the provision for deliverance. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth to take away our sins. How is this possible? How is it possible for Christ to actually remove our sins and take them away so that God can accept us? By living a sinless life. Note the words of the verse: “in Him is no sin.” When Jesus Christ came to earth as a Man, He lived a sinless life. He was perfectly righteous, the very embodiment of righteousness. He secured the perfect and ideal righteousness; He was the Perfect and Ideal Man. Therefore as the Ideal Man, whatever Jesus Christ did could stand for and cover man. What does this mean? Simply this: when Jesus Christ died, His death was the perfect sacrifice for sins. He was the Perfect Man so He was able to die as the perfect sacrifice. God was able to accept His death as the perfect sacrifice for sins.

What happens is this. When we really believe in Jesus Christ, God counts the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us. God no longer sees our sins, for Jesus Christ took them and died for them. They are thereby removed from us, and we are counted free of sin. They are gone forever because Jesus Christ took them upon Himself and died for them. Consequently, being free of sin, we become acceptable to God.

Thought 1. This is the great love of God for man, the giving of His Son to die for the sins of man. If a person truly loves God, then that person bows in humble adoration before God's Son. The person loves God because God sacrificed His own Son in order to save man. This is the test of our love for God: Have we turned from sin to God's Son?

John 3:16-17 “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 Tim 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners — of whom I am the worst.

Heb 9:28 So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

1 Pet 1:18-19 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 John 3:5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

III. 1 John 03:06–07 Proof of Deliverance: Living in Christ

There is the proof of deliverance. A person lives, abides in Christ if he has turned from sin. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Saviour from sin, we begin to *live in Him*. Remember what *living in Christ* means: to dwell, continue, stay, sojourn and rest in Christ. It means to live and move and have our being in Christ. We just begin to live and dwell in Christ, all that He is and all that He taught. Note three points.

1. If we live in Christ, we do not continue to sin. If we have really accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we love Him because He died for us. Christ paid such an enormous price to take away our sins that we want to please Him. We dare not do anything to hurt Him or cause Him pain; therefore, we do all we can to please Him. The major thing we do is to turn away from sin and begin living in Christ. Our desire is not to walk in sin, but to turn away from sin and to break the habits of sin — all for Him, all because our hearts and lives now belong to Him who has loved us and given Himself for us.

Thought 1. This is the proof of whether or not we love God: Have we accepted Jesus Christ as our Saviour from sin? Are we living, abiding, moving, and having our being in Him, in all that He is and in all that He taught? Have we turned away from sin, from practicing and living in sin?

2. If we sin, then we have not seen Christ, neither known Him. This does not mean that we have to be perfect to be saved from sin. The Greek means this: if we continue in sin, if we go on sinning and sinning, then we do not really know Christ. A true believer is still short of God's glory; he still sins. He is still human flesh; therefore, he cannot keep from sinning — not all of the time, not perfectly. But sin is not the dominant focus of his life. He does not keep his mind on the comforts and pleasures and possessions of this life. His focus is Jesus Christ and His mission of righteousness and salvation. He gives of himself, all he is and has, to reach people for Christ and to minister to the desperate needs of the world. He works and labours and then keeps on working and labouring for righteousness and love upon the earth. But note: the person whose focus is still on the world and its pleasures and possessions — the person who continues to sin — that person has not seen Jesus Christ, neither known Him. Once a person sees Jesus Christ, once a person really knows Christ, that person focuses upon and gives his life to Christ. He turns away from sin and turns and follows Jesus Christ. He lives in Christ. He lives and moves and has his being in Christ, in all that Christ taught.
3. We can be deceived about the matter of sin and righteousness. Many think that they are saved and acceptable to God because they have...
 - professed Christ
 - attended church
 - read the Bible
 - been baptized
 - fellowshipped with Christians
 - prayed
 - joined the church

They think that if they do these things they can live like they want. They think that they can go ahead and enjoy a few of the world's pleasures and continue to seek after more and more of the world's comforts and possessions. And they think that God will still accept them. But note this verse:

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. (v. 7)

The only person who is acceptable to God is the person who lives righteously, who follows after the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The demand of Jesus Christ is clear.

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

Thought 1. Any person who follows Jesus Christ has to deny himself; he has to die to self. He has to give all he is and has to live righteously. And righteous living does not just mean living pure and clean lives. It means treating other people righteously. It means reaching out and helping all people, giving all we are and have to help them. It means not being unjust by hoarding and keeping more than we need. It means giving and living sacrificially to help those who are dying because they lack the bare necessities

of life. It means sacrificing all in order to carry forth the glorious message of salvation from sin, death and the judgment to come.

1 John 3:7 *Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.*

Mat 5:20 *“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Rom 10:3 *Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.*

Phil 1:11 *Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.*

1 Cor 15:54 *When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*

1 Tim 6:11 *But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.*

Titus 2:12 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

2 Pet 3:11 *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives.*

1 John 3:6 *No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.*

2 John 1:9 *Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*

IV. 1 John 03:08 Satan Cast Out by Jesus Christ

There is the great conquest of Christ in deliverance. Note two significant points.

1. The person who sins is *of the devil*. This is a shocking statement to some people, but Jesus Christ put it even more clearly:

John 8:44 *“You belong to your father, the devil and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”*

What does this mean? Note the words from *the beginning*. This means that Satan was the first person to ever sin. He began sin. He was the first person who ever rebelled against God and disobeyed God. Therefore, every person who sins is akin to Satan. He is following after Satan, in the footsteps of Satan. Morally and spiritually he is the offspring, the child of Satan.

One thing is sure: sin is not of God. God is not the Father of sin and evil and corruption and death. The devil is the father of such things. Therefore when we sin, we are not following after the Father of love and righteousness, we are following after the father of sin and death. Our behaviour is not *of God*, it is *of the devil*. It is by sin that we become...

- followers of the devil
- children of the devil
- servants of the devil

It is by sin that we have separated ourselves from God. It is sin that causes us to die and that is going to bring judgment upon us. It is sin that causes the righteousness and justice of God to fall upon us. It is sin that is going to separate the sinner from God for eternity. This is the reason God hates sin so much. God created man to live with Him, and sin has cut man off from God and doomed man to be cut off forever. But this is the glorious gospel: God is perfect love; He is the sovereign Majesty, the perfect Intelligence and Power of the universe. Therefore, God knows what to do about sin and He has the power to do it. God knows how to save man, and He is able to save man. God knows how to destroy the works of Satan and He is able to do it. This is the discussion of the second point.

2. This was the very purpose for the Son of God coming to earth, that He might destroy the devil's work. The devil's work is destroyed by the death of Jesus Christ. His power, rule and reign over lives is now destroyed — all by the death of Jesus Christ.
 - a. Satan's power *to charge men with sin* is now "cast out." Men now have the power to escape the penalty of sin. Christ took the sins of men upon Himself and paid the penalty for their sin. He died for the sins of the world.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

Rom 8:33 Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.

- b. Satan's power *to cause death* is now "cast out." Men no longer have to die. Christ died *for man*, became man's substitute in death.

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

- c. Satan's power *to cause men to be separated from God* is now cast out. Men no longer have to go to hell. Christ was separated from God *for man* (see note, Mt. 27:46-49). Man can now live forever with God.

1 Pet 3:18 *For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.*

Rom 8:11 *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

- d. Satan's power *to enslave men* with the habits of sin and shame is now "cast out." By His death, Christ made it possible for man to be freed from sin. The believer, cleansed by the blood of Christ, becomes a holy temple unto God, a temple fit for the presence and power of God's Spirit. Man can now conquer the enslaving habits of sin by the power of God's Spirit.

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

1 John 4:4 *You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.*

(See notes, Jn. 12:31-33; See *Judgement of World, Man*, Jn. 12:31; *Judgement of Satan*, Jn. 16:11; notes, Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-16.)

V. 1 John 03:09 The Result of Deliverance

There is the result of deliverance. The believer is free from living in and practicing sin. Note: the verb *to sin* is in the present tense. *To sin* means to continue in sin; to constantly sin; to practice sin; to habitually sin; to live in sin. This needs to be clearly understood. Scripture is not saying that a person reaches sinless perfection while on earth. No person can achieve the perfection of God and His glory. Such is utter nonsense according to Scripture. By his very nature, man is short of God's glory and perfection (see note, 1 Jn. 3:4). What then is the meaning of the words, "no one...born of God will continue to sin" and "he cannot go on sinning"?

A.T. Robertson, the great Greek scholar, says this: "he cannot go on sinning." Robertson adds, "Paul has precisely the same idea in Rom. 6:1... 'shall we continue in sin'" (*Word Pictures In The New Testament*, Vol. 6, p. 223). The Amplified New Testament has the correct idea based upon the Greek:

“No one born (begotten) of God [deliberately and knowingly] habitually practices sin, for God’s nature abides in him — His principle... remains permanently within him — and he cannot practice sinning because he is born (begotten) of God.” (1 Jn. 3:9)

Once the divine seed or nature of God has been implanted within the believer, the believer cannot go on living in sin. He cannot continue and continue to sin; he cannot practice sin habitually. The divine nature of God will pester and provoke the believer and convict him to the point that he cannot stand it. If he continues on and on in sin, it is clear evidence that he has never been born of God. The genuine believer loves God because of what God has done for him in Christ. God has loved man in the most supreme way possible, by giving up His Son to die for man. Therefore the believer loves God, loves Him with all his heart, and he wants to please God. It is also this that keeps the genuine believer away from sin. Remember what Joseph said when Potiphar’s wife tempted him:

Gen 39:9 *“No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”*

Note what it is that frees the believer from sin: being born of God, possessing God’s seed within him. What is the Seed of God?

=> It is the seed of the new birth.

John 3:3-5 *In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”*

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

=> It is the seed of the new person, the new self.

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

=> It is the divine nature.

2 Pet 1:4 *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

=> It is the imperishable, incorruptible seed of God’s Word.

1 Pet 1:23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Another way to say the same thing is this: the seed of God within the believer is the Holy Spirit, the very Spirit of God Himself. It is He who helps the believer to conquer sin and to keep from sinning. It is the Spirit of God who stirs the believer to love and focus upon Christ and His mission instead of upon the world and its pleasures and possessions. It is the Spirit of God who stirs the believer not to sin.

William Barclay, in his incisive way of expressing truth, says that John's discussion of sin can be stated in four stages.

- a. "The ideal is that in the new age sin is gone for ever."
- b. "Christians must try to make that true, and, with the help of Christ, they must struggle to avoid individual acts of sin, occasional lapses into that which is wrong, temporary departures from goodness."
- c. "In point of fact all men do have these lapses, and, when they have them, they must humbly confess them to God, who will always forgive the penitent and the contrite heart."
- d. "But, in spite of that, no Christian can possibly be a deliberate and a consistent sinner; no Christian can make sin the policy of his life; no Christian can live a life in which sin is dominant and decisive in all his actions. He may have lapses, but he cannot live in sin as the very atmosphere of his life."

Barclay continues:

"John is not setting before us here a terrifying perfectionism, in which he is demanding a life which is totally and absolutely without sin; but he is demanding a life which is ever on the watch against sin, a life which ever fights the battle of goodness, a life which has never surrendered to sin, a life in which sin is not the permanent state, but only the temporary aberration, a life in which sin is not the normal accepted way, but the abnormal moment of defeat. John is not saying that the man who abides in God cannot sin; but he is saying that the man who abides in God cannot continue to be a consistent and deliberate sinner" (The Letters of John and Jude, p. 96f).

1 John 2:1-2 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 1:6-10 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have

fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

1 John 5:4 *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.*

2 Cor 7:1 *Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.*

Heb 12:14 *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

1 Pet 1:16 *For it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

2 Pet 3:11 *Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives. ■*