

# LIVING RIGHT IN A WRONG WORLD

## STUDY TEN

### That Nasty Three-Letter Word

*1 John 3:4–10*

*The person who continually sins, who practices sin, who carries on a life of sinfulness, has not seen or known Jesus according to John. In fact, for that person God is a distant, peeved deity, walking around heaven with a big club, looking for somebody having fun so He can club 'em because they're enjoying life. The person without Christ will lead you to believe that's the kind of God you serve. But we, who have come to see and know Jesus as He is in truth, think otherwise.*

—Charles R. Swindoll

**O**UR society has given the boot to the word *sin* because it offends. It shines like a spotlight on the wrongdoing in our world, revealing the ugliness we prefer to hide. To shield the harsh glare, we've replaced *sin* with cloudy euphemisms, such as, *error, mistake, bad habit, misdeed, sickness, failure, weakness, fault* . . . to name a few!

But the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation, doesn't shrink from clearly naming our ever-present problem with that "nasty" three-letter word, *sin*. The Bible speaks so forcefully on our problem because we must first acknowledge the sickness in our soul before we will seek the cure. Paul explained the origin and deadly consequences of sin in his letter to the Romans:

*When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.* (Romans 5:12)

Sin's disease has infected every single human . . . except Jesus, the "One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15 NASB). Only He, the One who never sinned, presents the answer to our problem.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## That Nasty Three-Letter Word

1 John 3:4–10

Through Jesus' death and resurrection, He reversed the effects of sin and gave those who belong to Him the life-giving Spirit to free us from the power of sin that leads to death (Romans 8:2). Without the Spirit's strength, sin dominates. But where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* study, we explore 1 John 3:4–10. The apostle John picks up Paul's banner of truth about sin along with its origin and shows us how we can win the fight.



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Take a few moments to quiet your inner self and ask God to bless your time in this study.

*Father, how grateful I am that You are no distant deity. You have sent Your Son—my friend who is nearer than any brother or sister can be. Thank You for the warmth of Your Spirit. Thank You for the spiritual sight He has given the eyes of my heart. And thank You for His convicting presence which leads me out of darkness and onto the path of light for Your name's sake. I pray in the glorious name of Christ Your Son, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

According to Romans 5:21, God brandished a scepter called grace to deal a deathblow to the dominion of sin:

*So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*  
(Romans 5:21)

As Paul declared, we have a “right standing with God”—a new position in Christ, in which we possess the same blameless, guiltless, righteous verdict of God which Christ Himself received. However, while Christians are in Christ positionally, we still have a craving for sin, which Paul called “the desire of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16 NASB).

So, sometimes, we fall to temptation and sin. Through Jesus, thankfully, we have access to forgiveness and restoration (1 John 1:9). The false teachers in John's day, however, tried to convince Christians to unleash their sinful desires and ignore their sinful acts. *What heresy!* Let's learn how John responded.



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1 John 3:4–10



### Observation: Analyzing Our Sinfulness

Begin by reading *1 John 3:4–10*. Carefully note the angles from which John spoke of sin. Write below your initial observations.<sup>1</sup>

### The Practice of Sin

In *1 John 3:4, 8, and 9*, John repeatedly used the verb *sin* in the same verb tense. Remember the importance of repetition? It reveals an author's emphasis. What did John emphasize with his repeated use of the verb tense he chose? (Hint: you can see the repetition more clearly in the New American Standard Bible translation.)

*The practice of sin is the continual, persistent, habitual, sinful lifestyle. Every lost person habitually, persistently, continually practicing a lifestyle of sin practices lawlessness, because sin is lawlessness. The believer on the other hand battles the old sin nature with the Spirit of God who wants to produce righteousness. This battle causes us to go back and forth. Walking with God; walking away from God. Struggling with the Lord's will; cooperating with the Lord's will. It doesn't mean you're lost; it means you have an old sin nature.*

—Chuck Swindoll



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1 John 3:4–10

### The Nature and Origin of Sin

Looking for alike concepts helps us make great observations. John constructed two paragraphs (1 John 3:4–7 and 3:8–9) that follow a four-part parallel structure: subject, theme, solution, conclusion. These parallel ideas underscore and elucidate John's message.

#### Subject

Look at the first half of verses 4 and 8. With what key subject did John begin both verses?

#### Theme

Look at the second half of verses 4 and 8. How did John describe his key subject?

John described the nature of sin: lawlessness. Lawlessness signifies the ongoing, active rebellion against the will of God. Lawlessness not only shakes its fist at God's rule and tramples its feet on God's name, it also turns it back on God's face.

John described the origin of sin: the devil, who first instituted lawless living. He labors to inspire it in others. Despite how he's often portrayed, Satan is not a hideous being with protruding horns and fangs; rather, he's the most beautiful of all angels . . . and he uses his charm for the purpose of advancing his sinister plan of rebellion against God.



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### Solution

Read 1 John 3:5 and 3:8. Both verses present reasons why Jesus came. What are those reasons?

### Conclusion

John made parallel, concluding statements about the believer's habitual practice of sin (1 John 3:6 and 3:9). What are those statements?

Jesus came to annihilate the works of the devil. And not only to annihilate but also to reverse the effects of the devil's works. Jesus forgives our sin *and* gives us a new nature with new power to control our fleshly desires. The secret and mystery to our new nature and new power is credited to God's "life" (NLT) or "seed" (NASB) within us.



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### Interpretation: God's Seed

In *1 John 3:9*, John made the startling statement that Christians have within them God's seed. John might be referring to God's Word, the Holy Spirit, or the kernel-like beginnings of eternal life.

Consult your *resources* to study the meaning of John's phrase.<sup>2</sup> Which of those interpretations do you believe he meant? Explain why you chose that interpretation and its significance for believers today.



### Chuck's Commentary Insight

#### First John Theme: Regeneration

The New American Standard Bible properly translates the first part of 3:9 as “No one who is born of God practices sin.” And the inability to continually practice sin is a direct result of being “born of God” (3:9). This expression is a reference to the new birth of regeneration resulting in the abiding presence and internal working of the Holy Spirit. The “seed” that abides in the one who has been born again is a reference to the Spirit, though the work of the Spirit is always connected to the planting and sprouting of the Word of God (Matt. 13:1–23).<sup>3</sup>

After John explained how believers have God's seed in them, he drew a practical conclusion in *1 John 3:10*. What is this conclusion, and why is it important for us to remember today?



## That Nasty Three-Letter Word

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First John 3:4–10 reveals how John combated the teachings of false teachers. Christians need to always hold together both doctrine and duty, love of God and love of neighbor. Steer clear of any ministry that neglects one or the other.



### Correlation: The Christian's Struggle

In his letter to the Christian assembly in Rome, Paul wrote of the Christian's constant battle with sin. Read how he described this battle in [Romans 7:18–21](#).

What does this passage teach about a Christian's ongoing battle with sin, and how does this passage correlate with 1 John 3:4–10?

According to Romans 8:1–11, Christians possess the Spirit of God because we have been born of God. *How remarkable!* Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ because we are more than conquerors through Jesus who loves us and gave Himself for us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. What grace, what compassion!



### Application: Three Statements Worth Remembering

Chuck Swindoll ended his study of this passage with three statements worth remembering.

- 1) *We are all sinners.* “Jesus Christ came into this world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). We were all in the same sinking ship before Christ rescued us. As Christians, we shouldn't get a big head for being saved. Rather, in the power of the Spirit, we learn to despise our sin and align our lives with Christ.
- 2) *God loves sinners.* God extends patience and grace to both saved and lost sinners. God does not want anyone to eternally perish. He wants all to come to the Son and find eternal life in Him.
- 3) *The devil confuses sinners.* The devil wants saved sinners to think they're lost and lost sinners to think they're saved. But God's Word gives us the light of truth to combat Satan's lies.



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1 John 3:4–10

Pick one truth from this study that made you stop and think differently or one that really touched you in your season of life. Record that truth below and develop how you wish to apply it practically in your fellowship with Jesus.

We would be powerless against sin were it not for Christ's sacrificial death for our guilt, His resurrection from the dead for our eternal life, and His sending of the Spirit for our regeneration and perfection.

But thanks be to God that Christ paid the price for our sin, released us from our eternal prison, and healed us. One day we will be like Him because we will be with Him and away from the presence of sin.



### A FINAL PRAYER

Now take just a few moments to reflect on what you learned in this study. Consider how you can pray according to what you learned. End this study by translating what you learned into a prayer to God.

#### ENDNOTES

1. To review Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website [sts.insight.org](https://sts.insight.org).
2. If you do not have Chuck's *Living Insights* commentary on 1 John in your library, [grab a copy](#) at the Insight for Living Ministries web store. Chuck also recommends the *Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* as a good single-volume reference for studying the New Testament.
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on 1, 2 & 3 John, Jude*, Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary, vol. 14 (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2018), 85.

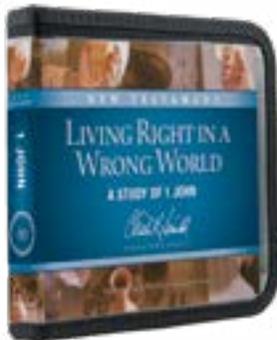


## That Nasty Three-Letter Word

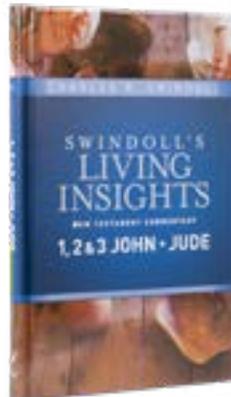
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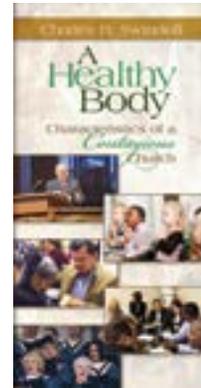
### Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Aaron Massey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

