

⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you.
Whoever
 practices righteousness
is righteous,
 as he is righteous.

⁸ Whoever
 makes a practice of sinning
is of the devil,
 for the devil has been sinning from the beginning.¹

The reason
 the Son of God appeared
was to destroy the works of the devil.^{2 3}

⁹ No one born of God makes a practice of sinning,
 for God's seed⁴ abides in him;
and he cannot keep on sinning,
 because he has been born⁵ of God.⁶

¹⁰ By this
 it is evident who are the children of God,
 and who are the children of the devil:⁷
whoever
 does not practice righteousness
is not of God,
nor is the one
 who does not love his brother.⁸

¹ John 8:44.

² Note the contrast between Satan and the Son of God. Satan seeks only to destroy, but Jesus comes to save. This heightens the difference between the two “sides.” To compromise or give into Satan is to stand against the work of Jesus. Thus sin is not merely “disobeying” God, it is rebellion against Him and contributing to the destruction He is working to restore.

³ Go back to 1 John 3:5. Jesus came to take away our sins. This is what it means to destroy the works of the devil (see also Heb. 2:14 or Revelation 12).

⁴ God's seed elsewhere in Scripture is the Word of God (see 1 Peter 1:23, James 1:18 and remember Jesus' parables about the Sower and the seed, e.g. Matt. 13:3ff.).

⁵ John 1:12-13. What does it mean to be born of God? We look to baptism (John 3:3, 5) and the Word of God, which create faith in Jesus.

⁶ This verse must be understood with what was said earlier in 1:8, 10. The distinction is not that Christians never sin, but that they cannot make a practice, a lifestyle of sinning. In 1 John 2:1, John even told us what we must do when we sin, we repent. We have an advocate, Jesus, who atones for our sins, forgives us, and gives us His righteousness.

⁷ In John's framework, there are not three sides or one group to which people belong, there are only two: God's side or devil's. That's why so many of his contrasts are in opposing terms. There is no third, or middle, option.

⁸ Notice in both of these there are clear “tests” of what it means to be a child of God. The things John says here do not merely add up to “he isn't a bad person,” but rather point to the positive fruit of the Spirit, acts of love. If you're not showing the love of God in your life, John is questioning whether God's love is in yours. The focus is on the active nature of our faith (see Matt. 7:20; James emphasizes this too).