

# Does Practice Make Perfect?

1 John 3:4-10

John begins this section of his letter with the instruction, “Abide in him” (2:28). In 2:28-3:3, he encourages his readers to look forward to the return of Christ. “Because Christ is coming soon,” he argues, “we should avoid sin so we are ready to meet him.” In 3:4-10, he encourages his readers to look back to the death of Christ. “Because of what Christ did on the cross,” he says, “we should avoid sin and practice righteousness.”

## Don’t be deceived about sin (7)

Option #1: Real Christians do not sin, period.

Option #2: Real Christians might commit minor sin, but nothing major like murder.

Option #3: Real Christians don’t sin because God has a different standard for them than He has for unbelievers.

Option #4: Real Christians don’t sin in their “new nature” although their old nature might slip up from time to time.

Option #5: Real Christians sin in reality but have an ideal goal or standard not to sin.

Option #6: The real Christian does not commit habitual, consistent sin as he did before salvation.<sup>1</sup>

**Because of what Christ did on the cross, we should avoid sin and practice righteousness.**

|                                    | Verses 4-7 <sup>2</sup>                         | Verses 8-10  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| The introductory phrase            | “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning” (4)  | “Whoever makes a practice of sinning” (8)                                      |
| The theme                          | The nature of sin is lawlessness (4)            | The origin of sin is the devil (8)   |
| The purpose of Christ’s appearing: | “... he appeared to take away sins” (5)         | “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (8) |
| The logical conclusion             | “No one who abides in him keeps on sinning” (6) | “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning” (9)                           |

## How should a believer handle sin?

1. Pursue holiness, but don’t expect perfection (1:8)
2. Acknowledge your sin quickly (1:9)
3. Remember that you have an Advocate (2:1)
4. Remember that Christ died for your sins (2:2)

**Will you practice . . . Sin  . . . Righteousness  ?**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *How to Be a Christian Without Being Perfect*, by Fritz Ridenour. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1986, p. 119-120.

<sup>2</sup> Chart adapted from *The Epistles of John*, by John R. W. Stott. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960, p. 121.