

Howdy. It's good to see you. We are in 1 John 3 tonight. While you're turning there, let me say this. My wife and I live in College Station. We work among the Aggies and are thrilled to do so. But when we moved from Dallas to do that, we were thrilled to move, we're glad to be there, but the most difficult part of moving for us was leaving this place. This has been a dear place to us and a source of much refreshment in our ministry. When Charles Spurgeon was doing his great ministry in London, he would often call in the Evangelist D.L. Moody to preach for him. And D.L. could not take his place in front of Spurgeon's congregation without first stopping to declare how significantly Spurgeon's ministry had impacted him and his ministry and his life. And so before I even begin, I just need to say the staff here has been a great blessing to myself and to my wife. There has been many an evening that we would come in here weary in the work and find ourselves refreshed in the service and then in the friendships we've formed in this church as well. So, I hope you are praying for your leadership as members of this church who are going deeper into the community, because there's life here. It's a beautiful place. So, it's good to be back.

With that said, let me read to you 1 John 3, starting in verse 1. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother."

Let me pray for us. "Father, I pray in these few minutes together as we gather around Your word, might You do something greater than we can produce ourselves? I pray You would allow us to commune with the Holy Ghost. I pray that You would clear our minds, Lord, so that we could hear the truth of what it is our Savior came to do, and God, that that would grip us and begin to affect us and change us. God, may we be like beggars around a fire, may we gather around Your word and find warmth there and light there. And we know that's something that only You can do. And so, we ask for Your grace." And I'd ask you to take a minute and just pray for yourself and ask Him. Say, "Lord, will You teach me something deep in my heart about You tonight?" And then, if you would, pray for me, that God would speak through me that would make sense. "Well Father, we love You and we trust You. Do with this time what You will. And we pray that in Jesus' name. Amen."

My brother's a Navy SEAL, which makes family time lots of fun because he always comes back with great stories. Because pretty much, when he's home training in the States, he does what I think most dudes in here would love to do on a daily basis. So, if you're a student, while you're in class studying the finer points of geometry, he was studying the finer points of how to use a grenade launcher. While you're at your desk answering e-mails, getting back to guys, he's out in the jungle trying to figure out how to stalk a guy. That's how he lives his life. I remember one time we were going

to a wedding together and he had just gotten back from “drive fast school,” and so on the way there, he was showing me the finer points on how to take a vehicle up to 90mph and then use the brake to do a 90E turn. And I was going, “Great. I’ll use that next time I’m late for church or whatever. It’s wonderful.” But I remember one time I want to visit him and he had just gotten back from school, and he was excited to show us the video from it. And the school he had just come back from was called HALO school. HALO stands for High Altitude, Low Opening. It’s a parachuting school. And this one was not particularly only for SEAL’s; anyone could go. And so, as we’re watching this video, they take these guys and give them maybe half a day of class time. And then by day two, they’re pushing them out of airplanes. And so, as the video begins, it’s nothing short of hilarious. Because firstly, they look terrified and secondly, they put them in these baby blue outfits with big handle bars on them, so when they’re out in the air, the guys can move them around because they don’t know what they’re doing. And beyond that, the first guy who jumps out of the plane, I’ll never forget him. Even if you’ve never jumped out of a plane, you get the idea that when you go out, you kind of want to plane out, go horizontal. He gets out of the plane and the first thing he does is he starts running. I mean, we’re all watching him and we’re like, “Brother, there’s no traction. Lean! It’s not going to work.” He keeps doing that, and all of them are opening their mouths, which makes your lips flap like crazy. It just looks silly, alright. But with each successive jump, they learn a different skill. And so, after the next jump, they learn how to use the exact motions to rotate their body. Then they start learning how to tack at a hundred miles an hour. And with each jump, they start to look less and less funny and more and more impressive. And by the end of the video, I noticed in the room, we weren’t laughing at all. Because on that final jump, they were out of their baby blues and they are into dark jungle colors, into greens and blacks and they had about 60 lbs of gear tied to them, including weapons on their chests. And as they loaded up on that plane, they didn’t look nervous. And when they got the signal, they dove out of the plane without hesitation. And we quit laughing because, as we were watching them descend, it occurred to us: these guys weren’t just taking a parachute class for fun. These were warriors, and they’re preparing to insert behind enemy lines. High altitude is so the enemy won’t hear the plane. Low opening is so you spend the minimal time possible as an open target. And the reason these guys are diving out of this plane is because they are warriors on a mission: to rescue those who are oppressed and to wreak havoc upon those who oppress men.

And I’ll never forget, as I watched that video, it was very clear in my mind, I thought the sentence, “Now that is Christmas.” Now, I don’t know about you, how you answer the question when someone asks you “What does Christmas mean to you?” or “What do you think about when you think about the holidays?” I know it’s not Christmas time, but next time it comes around, when someone asks you that question, can I give you a one word biblical answer? Next time someone asks you, “What does Christmas mean to you?,” you can look at them and instantly say, “When I think of Christmas, I think of destruction. Yeah, the reason for the season is destruction. That’s what I think.” And you’d be biblical in saying that. Now how do I get there? 1 John 3:8, “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.” Jesus came to destroy something. And the reason we celebrate Christmas is because God wanted something destroyed. Now you hear that and go, “Wait a minute, wait a minute. I thought Jesus came to save. I thought Jesus came to bring peace. I thought He came to heal. What are you talking about He came to destroy something?” Well, just follow it for a minute because it makes sense. To say Jesus wants to save necessarily assumes that something was holding you captive. To say that He’s bringing peace suggests that there was a prior state where there was no peace; there was chaos. To say that He came to heal necessarily assumes that there was some kind of sickness or disease ravaging you that He had to extract. And so to bring liberation, it required destruction. And if we’re really going to appreciate our God and what our Savior is accomplishing in this world, we have to grip the reality that our Jesus wants something destroyed.

And so, we’ve got three questions that come out of that. Number one, what did He come to destroy? Number two, how did He do it? And then number three, how do we participate in that destroying work? The first two questions, we’re going to answer tonight as we set this up, and the third question, we’ll answer next week as we unpack the practical ramifications for us. But to set it up tonight, we have to ask and answer the questions: What did He come to destroy and then how did He do it? And then, as we work it into our lives, we’ll talk about, “Now, how do I participate in my Savior’s

destroying work? And so, the first question is, "What did He come to destroy?" And this text will say, Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. Now I find it interesting that when you hear that, this idea of this warfare, whenever you see like a spiritually pregnant movie that's out nowadays, they all depict the scene as a world of war. "The Matrix," you've got Neo battling it out. You've got "The Chronicles of Narnia," a big lion stirring things up. You've got "Lord of the Rings." All these spiritually motivated movies depict a world at war. But it's not just the movies. The New Testament does this. C.S. Lewis, that Oxford don back in the 1940's who converted from Atheism to Christianity, had this to say, "One of the things that surprised me when I first read the New Testament seriously was that it talked so much about a Dark Power in the universe--a mighty evil spirit who was held to be the Power behind death and disease, and sin. The difference is that Christianity thinks this Dark Power was created by God, and was good when he was created, and went wrong. [Yet Christianity asserts] this universe is at war."

Now, I imagine some of you in here saying, "Jesus at war with the devil? I mean devil? Isn't that kind of Middle Ages, like a guy with horns, red jumpsuit? I mean, are you being serious right now?" Well, if you don't like that or don't want to believe in that kind of person, then you have to construct a philosophical system that gives you sufficient answers for how something as beautiful as humanity can do the horrible things we do to each other. If you're going to say, "I don't buy that," then you've got to find a way to make sense of 300,000 dead in Somalia because warlords use hunger as a weapon. How do you make sense of that? You say, "Well, they lack education in Africa. When Oprah gets done down there, everything will be great." Well fine, but how do you explain Nazi Germany? 1.5 million dead, killed by the most educated nation on the planet at that time. What do you do with that? "Well, we've evolved since then." Then how do you explain the chaos in the Middle East? How do you explain the 1.7 million murdered by their own government in the 20th century? How do you explain what we see splashed across the news as people murder each other in the selfishness that abounds in our culture? How do you explain what goes on in your own heart? I mean, we violate our own sense of morality, don't we? If you don't believe there's evil in the world, just go work in the nursery. I remember a buddy of mine, I went to his house one time, showed up, knocked on the door, he didn't answer. I opened the door and saw him, he was just sitting there staring at his little baby. I said, "Mark, what's going on?" He said, "That child has known nothing but love." I said, "I believe that," because he was a minister. He said, "He's never seen any violence, never done anything like that." And I said, "I believe you." And he goes, "And yet today, his sister had a toy he wanted and so he slapped her in the face." And he said, "Mankind is evil." And I said, "You're right." There's something wrong with this world; there's a sickness that pervades us all, and we know that. And the Bible will say there's a person behind it, and all this sickness is orchestrated. And Jesus will call him "the ruler of this world" in John 12. Paul will call him "the god of this age." The apostle John will say, "We know we're of God, yet the whole world lies in the power of this evil one, and he's working." Ephesians 2 says he is even now at work in the sons of disobedience, which I think sounds like a really bad band name, but it's talking about us, that he's working in people and he's wreaking havoc in us.

What is his work? This passage will say the one who practices sin is of the devil and the devil has sinned from the beginning. The devil's work is sin. What is sin? Quite simply, it is there is a mark we're supposed to hit and we did not hit it. There is a place that humanity was meant to be and we are not there. We've failed in what God created us to be. That's sin. We're not who we were designed to be. Earlier, did you notice in verse 4, it will say that everybody who practices sin practices lawlessness? Sin is lawlessness. The work of this devil is to get us to sin, and by doing so, we commit lawlessness, we violate the laws of God. Now, when I say that, don't get a picture in your mind of God with a little list of rules and whenever you break them, He's like, "Did you just cuss? There's no cussing around here. You're out. Get out of heaven." That's not what I'm saying. When it says it's lawlessness, the idea it carries is there are fundamental laws that God put in place when He made the universe, and He did it so that all would work in harmony and work well. So there are physical laws that He created worlds to rotate in a certain way. He created days and seasons and years. Proverbs 3 says that it is by wisdom that God founded the earth and that all wisdom's ways are peace. That's the word "shalom." It carried the idea for the Hebrew of all working as it should and being blessed. The idea is that when God made the world,

it made sense; everything fits together. The sky lets down rain that waters crops that brings forth food that we eat as we till the soil to raise crops. And there's this way the world works that makes sense, and when we fit into the rhythm of it, that's peace. That's how it should be. That's shalom. And it's not just the physical world. There's a relational sense that this is true as well, that God created men to love women and to cherish them and to see them as the very image of God. And He created women to honor men and respect them and encourage them as they move about their life. He created parents to love children and to cherish the gifts God put in them and to see those rise up and serve the common good. He created humanity to work according to a certain pattern, that as we worship Him, move in His creation, love one another, it all works as it should in harmony. That's the law He set out for humanity to work in.

And yet Satan sees this and his goal is to get that to come unraveled. And did you notice that the text says that he has been sinning since the beginning? At the very beginning, he attacked the system to overthrow it. That's why you see in Genesis, God created a man to rule, He gives this woman to be led by him and encourage him as they rule over the animal realm. And yet when Satan enters the garden, he takes the form of an animal, to deceive this woman who gives her husband a temptation that he grips and ends up violating the very God he was meant to serve. And Satan takes this divine order of God and he flips it and he makes chaos and he convinces humanity that, to really enjoy life, we have to run from the author of life. And you see humanity decide, "Forget how God wants us to work. I'm going to do whatever I want for my kingdom, my power, my glory." And in that moment, we are severed from our head. You see when God comes back in and He sees the rebellion of humanity, He says, "The ground's cursed because of you." He says this world's not going to work the way it should anymore. And then He'll go on to say "Interpersonal relationships are broken now because you've severed yourself from Me." Do you remember when He came in and called the man to accountability? He said, "What have you done?" And the man, rather than taking responsibility, says, "The woman whom You gave me gave me the fruit and I ate." The man who was supposed to be responsible blames everybody else. "The woman You gave me, she gave me the fruit. So you all work it out. I'm going to go hang with the monkeys." Adam abdicates leadership.

And so God, by the end of it, looks at the woman and says, "There's going to be interpersonal relationship now. Because of you, your desire will be for your husband but he'll rule over you. There's going to be conflict between the sexes." I imagine by that point, Eve's going, "You're darn right. There's conflict right now. Just wait 'til You leave. I'm going to beat him..." I mean, there's some issues in humanity. And at the very beginning when Satan seeks to overthrow the system, you see chaos enter this world. And every psycho that picks up a gun to slaughter innocent people and every cursed moment where we say a hurtful thing to somebody because we just don't feel like being nice and "I've had a hard day, I don't deserve it", every sick thing that permeates our world came from this. He came into the world of God and he brought chaos, and it permeates us all.

And God, when He looked at that scene, He did not look at this and go, "Mankind, you had better clean this up. You made a mess here. I'm going to give you a list of things to do and I'm going to leave for about a millennia. When I get back, I want to see some shalom in here, pronto." Is that what He did? Did God give us a list of rules to follow? No. And I love the way He did it. He took a moment in His conversation, and He turned and looked at the serpent, the one who deceived and violated them. And He said, "I'm going to put hatred between you and this woman and between your seed and hers." And then He addresses the seed of a woman with a singular male pronoun. "He will crush your head." And He talks about this boy who's the seed of a woman, which is a very weird thing to say because women don't have seed. I'm not really going to go into details on that. If you've got questions, you can ask Matt when he gets back or Josh or somebody else. But there's this peculiar boy who's born of a woman, and in that moment, God says, "This boy, He's going to arrive and He's going to crush your head while you bruise His heel." And God's answer to the dilemma of sin is "I'm sending a hero in, and He's going to destroy the one who hurt you and rescue you from what you're reaping right now." Do you see

that? God's solution is a Savior. And so He sends Jesus, the early church fathers called this the *protoevangelion*, "the first gospel." And the answer is that a man is coming to destroy the one who hurt us.

And how did He do it? This text will say that when He arrived on the scene, Jesus destroyed the works of the devil by His appearing. When Jesus arrived on the earth, it was a landed invasion. That's why, if you remember in the gospels, when Jesus arrives on the scene, sure you get Luke with all the singing, angels are all freaking out "Glory!", all these pregnant women, Elizabeth and Mary are singing back and forth to each other, "I'm pregnant!" "I'm pregnant too!" They're all excited over here. Luke's like a big musical, but when you get over to Matthew, you don't have any of that. But what you do have is, when Jesus arrives on the scene, Herod starts slaughtering babies because he's so terrified of that boy. And so, you see warfare at the very beginning of Jesus' life. What happens when Jesus launches His earthly ministry? Do you remember at 30, when He comes up, Holy Spirit lands on Him when He's in that water, Father says, "That's My boy" and identifies Him? What's the next thing that happens? Satan comes after Him and begins to question who He is. ".If you are the Son of God..." Do you remember that? He's trying to get Him to usurp His Father's authority. "Why don't You go this way instead of that way?" And Jesus is not buying any of it. You remember? He's just firing off Deuteronomy quotes left and right. And then finally, in an act of desperation, Satan says to Him, "I will give You everything if You stop doing what You're here to do." I mean, has Satan ever offered that to you? I mean, the best he give us is, "Maybe you should look at porn. Maybe that will feel good for about 15 minutes." And you're like, "15 minutes? That's cool." I mean, that's the best he'll give some of us, right? But he looks at Jesus and says, "Everything! Just stop doing what You're here to do." And do you remember, Jesus just looked at him and said, "No, sorry. Can't help you." And He walks off. And the next thing we see Him do is walk into that synagogue in Nazareth, He asks for the scroll and they hand Him Isaiah. And He flips to that section, and He says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. He's anointed Me to preach the good news to the poor." We know that. Jesus preaches good news, He loves the poor people. But the next thing He says is "to proclaim release to the captives. The hero's here, and I'm here to release those in bondage." And He says, "This is being fulfilled right now. Watch me." And He steps out. And He begins to do damage against the kingdom of darkness. Where He sees disease, He pulls it out of people. Where He sees women who have been sexually violated and emotionally abandoned, when He sees hurting people, He takes their shame away. When He sees men who have thrown their lives away chasing after money and have ostracized every friend in the world, He brings grace into their wrecked life. And you see Him bringing peace back to a people who didn't have it, and the kingdom of darkness is terrified. Do you ever wonder why all these demons start screaming when Jesus shows up on the scene? Do you ever wonder about that?

One of my favorite conversations with Jesus is a group of people come up to Him one time and ask Him to explain His ministry, "What exactly are You here to do?" And Jesus gives them an answer...and if you're an Evangelist in here or have a moment where you're sharing the gospel with your friends, you might want to try this one on them sometime, just give it a go and see how it goes...Jesus comes to them and they say, "What is Your ministry about?" And He goes, "Let me tell you a story. Picture a really strong guy and he's got a bunch of stuff and no one will mess with him. And then a stronger guy comes up, beats him up and steals his things. Yeah, that's kind of what I'm here to do." Try that one sometime and see how it goes. "What is Christianity?" "Well, it's kind of like this big dude beating up on people. That's my gospel, yeah. Do you want to know Him?" Luke 11:21, "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil." Jesus came to kick some tail and take some treasure. That's us. That's why demons are freaking out. That's why He can even walk into churches and they'd start screaming. I don't know if any of us will ever have a situation where we walk in the door and someone starts screaming, unless your outfit totally doesn't match or you've got a really bad haircut and you walked in and they're like, "Oh girl, what happened?" That's probably the only time you'll get a scream when you walk in. Jesus walks into churches and people are like, "Son of God!" and they're on the ground. My favorite one, do you remember those demons who when He walks up, they start screaming and they say, "Son of God, have You come to torment us before the appointed time?" It's like they know a whopping's coming, they just thought He was a

little early. They were like, "Oh man, I thought it was Thursday. I'm not ready. So much to do." And Jesus begins to march to Jerusalem. He tells His boys, "I'm going to the cross." And Peter says, "Wait a minute. Crosses aren't for Messiahs. You don't need to do that." And when Jesus looks at him, he sees right past Peter to the author of that statement of denying the cross, and He says, "Get behind Me, Satan, because I'm moving towards something to set My people free."

And the day He arrived in Jerusalem, John 12 tells us that Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out." And on the night He was betrayed, John 16 tells His boys, "the ruler of this world is judged." How did that happen? Hebrews 2 says it this way, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery." How did Jesus destroy the works of the devil? By His appearing and by His presence on that cross, when He who knew no sin became sin for us. He didn't destroy the works with violence but by taking violence upon Himself. And all the wrath of God against the ungodliness that's been perpetrated against us and by us landed on that man. And He hung there and bore it, and He died from it. And yet He didn't stay dead. Colossians 2 will say, "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him." Jesus' presence on that cross took God's righteous judgment against our sin out of the way to free us from sin. And in doing that, it says He made a public spectacle of Him.

And it's interesting. Paul in 2 Corinthians will use that term, "triumph." He'll allude to a triumph three times as he describes Jesus' work on the cross. And his original readers would have what a triumph was. A triumph was an event; it was kind of like a parade. And you would have a triumph when you had a king and he would go out to war against an enemy army, maybe this enemy had taken captive certain lands or people of this king. Your king would march out to battle. And if he was victorious in battle, a runner would come back and tell the big city, "Hey, our king just won." And that city would get excited, because when your king wins, that means you get to stay alive, that means he's going to come back, that's a pretty sweet deal. So they start to get their city ready for his big homecoming party. And the mountains, they make them low; the valleys, they raise them up. They make straight a road prepared for their king to arrive. They start cleaning up the city. They're whitewashing everything. They're bathing the kids, putting new outfits on them, just waiting for the king to show up. And before he arrives, the king is out here. He's not going to arrive with the gore of battle on him. He's going to get dressed up in his finest clothing and he is going to mount on a white horse or maybe on a chariot pulled by a white horse. And then on the given day, he will ride into that city, their victorious king. And they would cheer, "Here is our king in all of his glory." And often in the triumph, it was the king first and then right behind him in the procession would be the enemy king whom he defeated. And often, that enemy king was naked, for no other reason than to make a public spectacle of him. Because being naked out in front of everybody is awkward, right? And so, it was meant to make fun of him. So the idea of a triumph is you would see your king go by in glory, you would cheer him, you would see your enemy who was oppressing people behind him and you would laugh at him because naked people look funny. And so, he would ride by and it was sort of this, "Yeaaaaa. Agh! You're naked." That was kind of the rhythm of a triumph. But there was one other group that would be in the triumph. At the end of the party would be those the king had liberated, and he would dress them in white linen and he would give them a censor of incense. And you would walk behind him and you would just swing it so that the whole city, you most of all, would be filled with the aroma of the victory of your great king. 2 Corinthians 2, "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place." Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and He did it when He appeared on that cross and took the consequences of sin far from us.

But that's not where it stopped. The second leg of His redemption process was when He comes and sets the captives free. He destroyed that work in that space-time moment, He hung on the cross and in that space-time moment when He comes and grabs you. And He takes a sinner, lost and dying in sin and says, "No longer. You're mine." And He pulls you out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved Son. This passage in 1 John will say it this way. He destroyed it by the appearing, and then it goes on to talk about those born of God, those who are no longer practicing sin because His seed abides in them. The idea is He's taken the consequences of sin out of the way, and then God comes and puts His seed inside, His Holy Spirit lands inside those who trust in Christ alone and He brings into you new life. So much so, it's like you're born again. You become this new creation, and the sin that dominated your life, He casts away from you. And so, He destroys sin at that moment on that cross, and at that moment, He comes to you, weak as you are, and says, "No longer a sinner, you are My child." And He pulls you to know Him and to walk with Him. He destroys the work when He rescues His people, and we're born again. Because the people of God, it says, no longer practice sin.

Now, we're going to close tonight, but I want to do it by touching one more implication, and like I said, we're going to work through some practical stuff next week. But to look at this, we've got to ask one question and it's this. He says, "No one who's born of God practices sin and he cannot sin because he's born of God." Now let me ask you an honest question. How many people were nervous when I was reading 1 John about Christians no longer sinning, no longer practicing sin and you're like, "Um....Uh....?" Was there anyone else who was freaking out just a little bit? Because what does that sound like? If you're a Christian, it means you don't sin anymore, right? That's kind of what it sounds like, and you're like, "Uh, I might have sinned today." Some of you are like, "I sinned on the way here. That's the only way I can get them in the car." Is this passage teaching sinless perfection? Do you have to be entirely holy in order to be a child of God? Well no. And there's two reasons we know that. Number one is because that verb tense is in the present active. It says "...no longer practices sin..." It carries the idea of a continuous activity. And so what it's saying is, when you are born of God, when you are rescued by Him, you no longer progressively, passionately, unrepentantly indulge in those very things He came to destroy. You don't do that, because when He lands in you, you want to get far away from that which caused the brutal death of your beloved king. And so when I look at that, those who are born of God no longer chase after, revel in, enjoy, dive headlong into, unrepentantly indulging in sin. So if you're in sin this evening and don't care one bit about that, you're like, "I don't care. That's fine. It's my life," the reality is, if you are chasing after that, I don't think you have the right to say, "Okay, I'm a Christian." This passage doesn't give it to you. Because the people of God no longer want to indulge in that which caused the crucifixion of their king. We want to move away from it.

Now, the reality is, does that make us holy? No, and you don't have to know Greek to know that. You could just read 1 John 1, where it says, "if anyone says he's without sin, he's a liar and the truth is not in him." So that tells you right there, it's not sinless perfection because John tells us, "If you say, 'I'm without sin,' then in that moment, you're lying, which is a sin." So if you say, "I'm without sin," you're sinning. That's a sin, sinner. So you can't do that. And so, all of us are going to struggle with sin. It's all in us. If you say it isn't, you're a liar. We all struggle with it. But let me close with this. The reality is, our great assurance that we're his people, we're a member of His rescued ones, is because we do struggle and because we see progress. Your greatest assurance that you're one of His people that He's rescued is that you see progress and you feel struggle.

Two illustrations and I'm done. The first one is my yard. When I moved to College Station, I bought a house for the first time. A first time homeowner. And before I got there, my home had been governed by a relocation company, that in my estimation was an evil overlord over my property. Because they took no care of it, they had no interest in its well-being, seen most acutely in the state of the yard. There was no grass. All was dead. That's not an exaggeration. No grass. And yet, there was a proliferation of weeds to such a degree that I don't even think you can grasp. Like I can fail to communicate to you the level of weeds in there. The horticultural chaos was unbelievable. The weeds were up here, there were bunches of them, they were robust, they were angry. There were weeds everywhere. Now let me ask you a

question. How did my neighbors know that a new resident had moved into that property? Because I took a weed eater and went out there, and I began to mow through that. I felt like a little man in a big salad, because it's kind of all wet with green stuff flying everywhere. I took chemicals and started hosing them. My wife took seed and started planting them. How do you know that a new resident moved in? Because a couple months later, there were fewer weeds and there was more grass. Now, were all the weeds gone? No. And was there much grass? No, to such a degree that if you were to drive by my house three months later, six months later, someone might have driven by and if all they saw was my yard in that one moment, they might look at and go, "There's nobody that lives there because that yard's a wreck." But they have no right to judge that. Why? Because they haven't seen the progress. How do you know? Your great assurance that you're one of the people He's rescued is that as you look at your life over time, you see progress, that there are sins in my life that He's beginning to uproot if not pull out completely at least give me a longing to see them removed. And He's beginning to plant grass, that new desires for Him are growing. A desire for His word is rising up in me. Things that I used to have no interest in, spiritual things, now greatly interest me. You see fewer weeds and more grass over time.

But in a one moment snapshot, you can't really tell. So you who love to judge who's a Christian and who's not, you be careful because you just don't know in a moment. On the night Jesus was betrayed, two men went running off into the dark. One, the Bible tells us that Satan was in him and it was Judas. One went off and wept bitterly and came back to strengthen his brothers. It was Peter. And yet, if you and I were there that night watching those men run and someone would have asked us, "Which one is a Christian?," you'd probably say, "I don't know. Neither? Because they didn't look like it." But you'd have to watch over time to watch one of them self-destruct and one of them come back and begin to strengthen the brothers. Your great assurance comes in progress. You will struggle with sin, weeds grow and yet as a Christian, God will begin to destroy them in you and bring up new life. You see progress. But that progress in a struggle.

My last picture is of a battlefield. And if you've seen "Saving Private Ryan," that early gruesome scene on the beach is what is in my mind. In that moment as bombs blew up and bullets cracked by, there were two kinds of soldiers on that field. One looked very peaceful, very tranquil. One looked anxious, very nervous. One looked carefree and subdued. One looked terrified and anxiety ridden. What's the difference? This one was dead. And so when you're dead and a bomb goes off next to you, you're not going to jump because you're dead. Spiritually, if sin doesn't affect you, if seeing it in you, if seeing it in the world doesn't make you long to see it broken, doesn't make you want to flee from it, doesn't make you want to do something about it, if you have no interest in that at all, you don't care, you're just living life to seek your joy, your glory, the Bible will say the reason you're not cognizant of this great battle against sin is because you're dead. And yet, there's this other person who is very conscious of the battle with sin, and it will sometimes make you anxious and frightened and scared and you'll struggle. But can I tell you something? Your great assurance, Christian, that you really are a believer is the fact that you do struggle. So that very anxiety that you feel, the "When am I going to get this out of me? God will You please heal me of this. I'm tired of being addicted to that. Will You please heal this in me. I don't want that anymore..." that very cognition of a battle that causes you to pray like that is your greatest source of assurance. How do I know I'm one of His kids? Because I see progress and I see struggle. I see the battle and I want to run from that which my Savior hates and I want to see Him birthed up in me, that which is full of life and peace. Those are His kids.

Now the last question that we ask...this passage says that Jesus is coming back one day and He's going to take all sin out of the way. And we who have that hope, we purify ourselves. Now the question is, how do I do that? How do I, very practically, participate in this destroying work? That's next week.

Let me pray for us, "God, I want to pray for those in this room tonight who Your Bible says are held captive by the devil. God, I pray tonight that by Your grace You might awaken them to see the beauties of Jesus Christ and to be drawn to Him, to be convicted in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment, to see the evil in humanity and see that that same evil permeates them. And I pray tonight that they can even say, 'Oh God, rescue me.' I pray that you would be opening

their eyes to see the Savior who has come and they might reach out and be rescued. And if you've got questions, I pray you would ask a staff member here, maybe the person that brought you, because being a rescued one is the most important thing in this life. And God, for those of us who know You, who remember they day that You pulled us out of the muck, God, for those who struggle against sin, God, I pray that You would begin to birth up in us a greater and greater passion to see sin far from our lives and to see a purity and holiness grow up in us and to see the sin in this world beaten back, that we might be a part of Your rescuing work. God, even now give us a vision as we go back to our offices and our campuses. Begin to speak to us even now, God, of how we can be one who beats back the darkness and who brings life, that we might be a part of Your rescuing work. Have mercy on us, God. Bless us as we go. In Jesus name. Amen."

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