

Briefing Document: 1 John-Lesson 58 Incompatibility with Sin

April 15, 2026

Executive Summary

The following briefing examines the theological necessity of a transformed life in the believer, as outlined in 1 John 3:4–10. The central thesis is that sin is fundamentally incompatible with the new nature of a Christian for three primary reasons: the internal writing of the law through the New Covenant, the work of Jesus Christ in removing sin, and the destruction of the devil's influence in the believer's life. True salvation is not merely a forensic declaration of justification but a radical regeneration that replaces a heart of stone with a heart that delights in righteousness. Consequently, a habitual, unbroken pattern of sin is evidence of a lack of genuine union with Christ.

The Transformative Nature of the New Covenant

Salvation involves an ontological change where the individual is made a new creation. This transformation is rooted in New Covenant theology, which moves beyond simple justification to include regeneration and conversion.

- **Internalization of the Law:** Under the New Covenant, God puts His law in the minds of believers and writes it on their hearts (*Jeremiah 31:33*). This creates an internal disposition that longs to obey rather than a rebellious spirit that resists external commands.
- **The Role of the Holy Spirit:** As promised in *Ezekiel 36:26–27*, God gives the believer a new heart and a new spirit, placing His Holy Spirit within them to cause them to walk in His statutes.
- **The Example of David:** Psalm 119 serves as a tribute to the believer's delight in and desire to keep the law written on the heart, a result of the transformation applied even to those looking forward to the work of Christ.

Sin and the New Nature

While a Christian may still struggle with the "unredeemed flesh," the truest element of their new nature is a love for God's law.

- **The Struggle with Flesh:** Romans 7 describes the agony and grief a believer feels when they sin. This struggle exists because the new disposition, energized by the Holy Spirit, drives the believer toward righteousness and away from sin.
- **Crucifixion of Passions:** According to *Galatians 5:24*, "those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." The passions that once drove the life of the individual are now part of their history, not their current identity.

- **Incompatibility with Lawlessness:** Because a believer is renewed in the image of their Creator (*Colossians 3:10*), they can no longer be habitually lawless. They respect and delight in the law from the heart.

The Work of Christ in Removing Sin

The manifestation of Jesus Christ was specifically intended to deal with the presence and power of sin in the believer's life.

Justification and Sanctification

Salvation includes both the forensic declaration of righteousness (justification) and the real separation from sin (sanctification).

- **Justification:** The doctrine of imputation and substitution where God declares the sinner just because their sins were imputed to Christ.
- **Sanctification:** A real cleansing and purging of sin. John emphasizes that Christ appeared to "take away"¹ sins, meaning to lift or remove them (*airō*), rather than merely covering them.

Purpose of Christ's Appearance

The document highlights that Christ's mission was not solely eschatological (future deliverance) but also practical for the present:

- **Redemption from Lawlessness:** As stated in *Titus 2:14*, Christ "*gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.*"
- **Union with the Sinless One:** Because there is no sin in Christ (*1 John 3:5*), those who abide in Him cannot maintain a relationship with sin. Union with Christ necessitates a dramatic change in conduct.

Union with Christ and Victory over Sin

The believer's union with Christ is described as a spiritual immersion into His death and resurrection.

- **Burial and Resurrection:** In *Romans 6:4*, it is noted that believers are "*buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*"
- **Freedom from Slavery:** The "old man" was crucified so that the body of sin might be done away with, ensuring believers are no longer slaves to sin (*Romans 6:6*).
- **Slaves of Righteousness:** Having been set free from sin, the believer becomes a slave of God, resulting in holiness and eternal life (*Romans 6:22*).

The Conflict Between Christ and the Devil

John draws a sharp contrast between those who practice righteousness and those who practice sin, identifying the source of their behavior.

- **Destroying the Works of the Devil:** Christ was manifested⁴ specifically to destroy the works of the devil in the lives of His people.
- **The Source of Sin:** He who practices sin⁵ is of⁶ the devil (*1 John 3:8*). This indicates that the origin of such behavior is the kingdom of darkness.
- **The Manifestation of Salvation:** Salvation is not a historical event that allows for a life of license. If a person is truly saved, it is manifest in a pattern of righteousness. As *1 John 3:7* states, "*He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.*"

Greek Vocabulary Guide

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Definition
Oida ¹	<i>oy-dah</i>	To know, to understand; often referring to deep, experiential knowledge.
Airō ²	<i>ah-ee-ro</i>	To lift up, to remove, or to take away.
Phaneroō ³	<i>fan-er-o-o</i>	To make manifest, to appear, or to be revealed.
Poieō ⁴	<i>poy-eh-o</i>	To do, to make, or to practice; indicates habitual action.
EK ⁵	<i>eck</i>	A preposition denoting origin or source; "out of" or "from."

¹ *1 John 3:5* indicates the believer "knows" (*oida*) the purpose of Christ's appearing through experience. ² In *1 John 3:5*, Christ came to "take away" (*airō*) sins, meaning to lift them from the believer. ³ The term for Christ being "manifested" (*phaneroō*) is used for both His first and second coming. ⁴ The word "practices" (*poieō*) in *1 John 3:8* refers to the habitual "doing" of sin. ⁵ The "source" (*ek*) of one who practices sin is identified as the devil.