

cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10 By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. NASB

When John discusses the idea of **“practicing sin”** he refers to the idea of ongoing serious unrepentant sin and not the daily struggle against sin that every Christian faces. The present tense of the Greek verbs here speak of **continual or habitual activity**. This is seen clearly in the severity of the language of the context. When he says that **“no one who is born of God practices sin”** and **“cannot sin,”** the statement could not possibly be true, since all of us who are born of God do in fact continue to sin throughout life. Consider the idea, do you ever sin? What John refers to is the person who lives in licentiousness wherein they have no will to struggle against sin but continue in the practice of serious sin unabated by a desire to surrender to the law and Spirit of God. The subject of John’s reference is a person ruled and dominated by sin, but Christians have been freed from the ruling or dominating power of sin (Rom 6:5-10, 22). It is the **antinomian** attitude which Paul denounces in Romans 6:1-2, **“shall we continue to sin that grace may abound?... may it never be”** is his answer.

Romans 6:1-2 – 1 What shall we say then? **Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? 2 May it never be!** How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 NASB

Paul later describes the great **warfare** in the Christian life **against sin** which seeks to dominate us, but inwardly we **“delight in the law of God”** struggling against sin both without (word and deed) and inwardly (thought).

Romans 7:19-25 - 19 For **the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.** 20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, **but sin which dwells in me.** 21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. 22 **For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, 23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.** 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? 25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. NASB

It is very apparent that Paul generally characterizes the Christian life as having a **struggle between the flesh and Spirit** as a **normative and ongoing** reality, to which he gives the directive for Spirit dependent self-denial, **“so that you may not do the things you please.”** These **“things you please”** he describes as **“against the Spirit”** as he describes the ongoing **“desire of the flesh”** or sinful nature.

Galatians 5:16-18 - 16 But I say, **walk by the Spirit,** and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For **the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another,** so that you may not do the things that you please. **18 But if you are led by the Spirit,** you are not under the Law. NASB

He further describes the **ongoing mortification** of the flesh in Spirit led effort as our **obligation** to God as His sons.

Romans 8:12-14 - 12 So then, brethren, **we are under obligation,** not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — 13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; **but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.** 14 **For all who are being led by the Spirit of God,** these are sons of God. NASB

Of course the struggle against sin has always been a struggle for the people of God, a fact to which the **Old Testament** is a glaring witness. The righteous man **Noah** was not free from sin as his drunkenness testified (Gen 9:21). **Abraham** the friend of God also did not fully believe God’s promise to give Him offspring through Sarah, and sinfully sought it another way with Sarah’s handmaid Hagar (Gen 16:1-4). **Isaac**, the man of faith (Heb 11:20) lied to Abimelech that Rebekah was his sister (Gen 26:7). **Jacob** deceived his father Isaac (Gen 27:18-29). **Moses** displayed his sinful anger against the people (Num 20:10) and his lack of trust in God’s Word