

Three different definitions of Christianity



It's about orthodox **doctrine**.



It's about personal **piety**.

1 John 3



It's about social **justice**.

James 2

Problem Passages

**Biblical texts
that seem to contradict
the Gospel Story,
other texts,
and common sense.**

Problem Passages

**Difficult texts do not lend
themselves to definitive or
dogmatic interpretations.**

A. W. Tozer

“The holy man is not one who cannot sin. A
holy man is one who will not sin.”

Asa Mahan

“There is positive evidence that some did
attain to a state of entire sanctification.”

1 John 3:2-10

“² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. ⁴ Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ **No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.** ⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸ the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ **No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he 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.”

Possible interpretations

- 1. Christians cannot sin.**
- 2. Christians do not continue in (practice) sin.**
- 3. Christians do not willfully sin.**

Our experience argues against these interpretations.

1 John 1 argues against these interpretations.

The assumption behind the N.T. epistles argues against these interpretations.

The Gospel argues against these interpretations.



Christian identity and sin

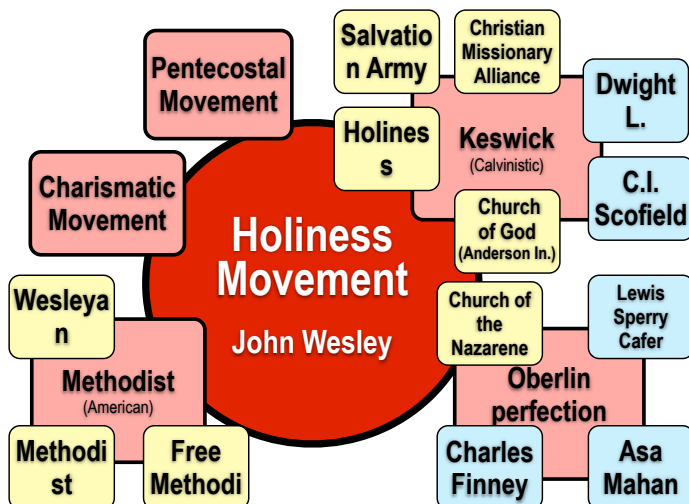
	Change mind about Christ and self	Be willing to turn from all known sins at conversion	Be willing to keep on turning from all known sins	Turn from all known sins	Keep on turning from all known sins
Holiness					
Arminian					
Calvinistic					
Lutheran					
Radical grace					

John N. Oswalt
(Wesley Biblical Seminary)

“A Christian cannot live in known sin and remain in a saving relationship with Christ.”

Leonard Ravenhill
(British evangelist)

“Get rid of this bunkum about the “carnal Christian.”
Forget it! If you’re carnal, you’re not saved.”



1 John 3:2-10

“ 6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. 7 Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 9 No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he 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.”

Spirit & Context

Interpretation of Scripture is challenging.

1. Life context
2. Literary context
3. Historical context
4. Theological context

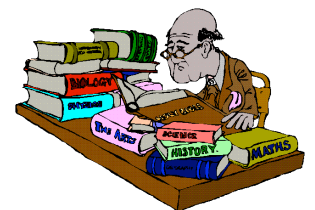


1. Life context

Interpretation of Scripture is challenging.

Sinless perfection is not observed to be the experience of any let alone every Christian.

Holiness sects claim that we need not sin but not that we cannot sin.

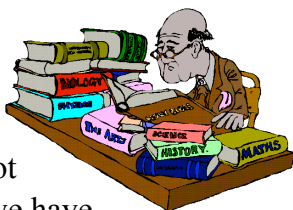


2. Literary context

Interpretation of Scripture is challenging.

1 John 1:8-10; 2:1

“8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . . 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” “1 And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,”



3. Historical context

Interpretation of Scripture is challenging.

1 John 2:26 “These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.”

(Gnosticism taught that what we did in the body was unimportant.)



4. Theological context

Interpretation of Scripture is challenging.

The Gospel story emphasizes what God has done for us in Christ through faith (not in and through us to fulfill the Law).



A possible interpretation

4. The Spirit of Christ cannot sin.

“Cannot sin” is the key to this interpretation.

That which is “born of God” is the Spirit of Christ in our “new man.”

“Abiding” (which is relative) is an emphasis in John’s writing.

This interpretation is consistent with the Biblical, theological, historical, and life contexts.

This interpretation is consistent with the Gospel.



Hebrews 6

“1 Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a **foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God**, 2 of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3 And this we shall do, if God permits. 4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then have fallen away, **it is impossible to renew them again to repentance**, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.”

1 John 1:5-10; 3:2-10 Paraphrase

“We are born again with His Spirit installed in us. The life of Jesus as manifest in His Spirit will not and cannot sin. To the extent that we are born of, abide in, and walk in His Spirit we will not and cannot sin either. Therefore, walk in the light and power of His Spirit so that you have intimate fellowship with him and thereby avoid sin.

No one lives a life free from all sin and Christ’s blood continues to cleanse us when we sin.”

Two systems of reconciliation between man and God

Paraclete (Enabler)

Jesus' Spirit enables us to be holy through an infusion of his righteousness in us.



Surrogate (Substitute)

Jesus is our holiness through an imputation of his righteousness to us.

1. Our legal standing in Christ



Charles Spurgeon

"Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. Better still, Christ is our holiness."

Our identity and witness

Paraclete (Enabler)

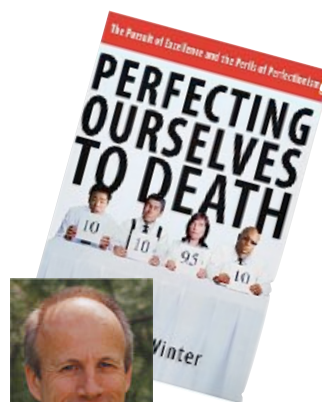
Jesus' Spirit is the Power of our ministry in the world.



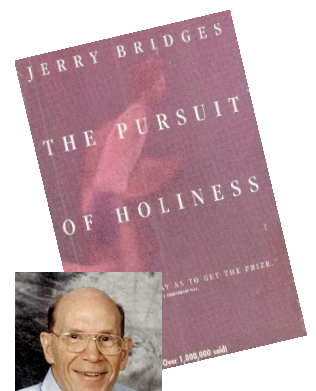
Surrogate (Substitute)

Jesus' Cross is the Good News of our message to the world.

2. Our identity & witness as Christians



Richard Winter



Jerry Bridges