

Analysis of I John 3:6, 9 & 5:18

Introduction

The epistle of I John is, without question, one of the most important in the New Testament because of the background of its origin. We are not sure just exactly when it was written, but it appears that if John the Apostle wrote it, and I believe he is the author, then it was very likely toward the end of his life, perhaps even close to the time he wrote the Gospel. One of the very interesting things to observe in I John is that he is dealing with some very specific issues, and it would appear, based on what we know in Church history, that he was writing in response to the influence that Gnosticism was beginning to have among the early Christians.

Gnosticism held some very interesting beliefs. One branch of Gnosticism lived a very ascetic life in self-denial of their ‘fleshly desires.’ This was done in order to reach that stage of the knowledge of God whereby they would eventually be absorbed into the ultimate fullness of the unnamed and indescribable Father (akin to both Buddhism & Hinduism). Conversely, the other branch of Gnosticism advocated a very licentious lifestyle in catering to every desire of the flesh because the flesh was evil anyway, and the only thing that mattered was the mind developing and growing in this ultimate knowledge of the unnamed Father.

Therefore, one can readily see how these very issues, and the subsequent issues emanating from them, were addressed in John’s epistle. For example, the emphasis on loving our brother, versus living in hatred and bitterness can be seen as a response to the belief of the second branch Gnosticism in that all that matters is ME, and what makes me feel good. Thus, as I am pursuing this ultimate knowledge of God, I can indulge my fleshly desires with unrestrained vigor, and NO ONE better get in my way! This pursuit of MY WANTS AND DESIRES as the single most important thing in my life is an intense drive to promote my own self-significance, and, therefore, that would include retaining anger and bitterness toward those who have hurt me at some point in the past and, in turn, blinding me to my own sin because I only see myself as a victim, not at all as a perpetrator. The reason for this is that when we think we have arrived, or are close to it, while at the same time retaining anger and unforgiveness toward some who have hurt us, we become very self-righteous in our judgment of others, but blind to our own sin, and our anger and self-pity actually exacerbate that blindness.

In addition, with the verses we are looking at about sin, John is making it abundantly clear that if someone truly has a living and abiding relationship with Jesus, even when we sin as believers, God’s “seed” within our hearts will eventually bring conviction, repentance, confession and brokenness over that sin. However, contrariwise, if a person claims to be a Christian, and yet involves himself in habitual sin without any remorse or conviction of the sin being wrong, then it is a safe thing to say that that person has never “seen Him,” and neither “knows Him.” Thus, for the latter, we are talking about a habitual, ongoing and continuous lifestyle of rejection of Jesus’ claims on one’s life, which is simultaneously perceived in one’s attitude, and subsequently in one’s actions,

even though the person may claim to have a relationship with Jesus. However, there is just no fruit, whatsoever, to indicate such a relationship does exist.

On the other hand, only God ultimately knows the heart of any individual, and we are at best only ‘fruit inspectors,’ and we can, unquestionably, be wrong in our appraisal of an individual. But what can bring out the truth about whether or not someone has a relationship with Jesus when they are involved in overt sinful disobedience is church discipline, as in the case with the young man who was having a sexual dalliance with his stepmother and was unrepentant about it (I Corinthians 5:1-8). In the instance with this young man, he ultimately did repent, confess and turn from his sin and apparently experienced a wonderful restoration (II Corinthians 2:5-11). However, had this young man not been a true believer and his heart was utterly hardened toward the Lord, even though he was a part of the ‘visible church,’ he would have gone from bad to worse, with no change whatsoever.

But once again, ONLY GOD ultimately knows our hearts, and if we are His, “He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness” Hebrews 12:10). Thus, if someone who is truly a born again believer begins to live a pattern of sinful behavior in his or her life, then, because he is a true believer, he “cannot *continue to live a life of overt, sinful rejection of Christ and His claims on his/her life*, because *he/she has been born of God, and that rebirth has established an ongoing and continuous relationship with God*” (I John 3:9).

I John 3:6

I. English - “No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him” (I John 3:6).

II. Greek Interlinear

πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει· πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων
Everyone who in Him abides not he sins; everyone who sins

οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν.
not he has seen him nor has he known Him.

III. Amplified – “Everyone who is continually abiding, living, remaining, persisting and existing in Him does not continually wander from the path of uprightness and honor, to continually do or go wrong, continually embracing a lifestyle of overt, sinful rejection of Christ and His claims on his life as his Lord and Savior in a thoroughgoing, unrestrained disobedience; everyone who continually wanders from the path of uprightness and honor, to continually do or go wrong, continually embracing a lifestyle of overt sinful rejection of Christ and His claims on his life in disobedience, has never come to see Him or come to know Him at some time in the past resulting in a changed direction of one’s life.”

IV. Exegesis - The importance of this passage, as well as the other two you are interested in, is that it incorporates all of the above matters discussed in the introduction. First of all, we know this verse and the other two are not saying it is possible to live a life without

committing sin. If that was the case, then I John 1:8-2:2 would be absolutely meaningless. Therefore, these three verses have to be addressing something different with regard to sin, and it appears to me that what all three are talking about is a wholesale rejection of the truth of the absolute necessity of Jesus' blood as being the ONLY means whereby we as thoroughly corrupt human beings can find any forgiveness of and restoration from our sin. In addition, I John 3:6 in particular is saying that “*continually* abiding” in Christ is the precondition for one not to “*continually* sin.” Thus, the question arises as just what does “abide” mean if this is the criteria for someone to not “*continually* sin”? It must, out of necessity, be referring to our position in Christ, in which we are trusting in Him, and Him alone for the forgiveness of and deliverance from the entrapment of sin. This means that either a person is saved and standing in the righteousness of Jesus, or he is not. If not, then one will “*continually* sin,” that is, one will continually reject Jesus as the ONLY WAY in both attitude and lifestyle, and thus, they will “*continually* sin” and be separated from Christ by that unconfessed sin because they think they can atone for it themselves through their own efforts.

On the other hand, the person who is the believer, when he sins, he will eventually see and recognize it, confess it, repent of it and experience the cleansing of the blood of Jesus, as His restoring the true child of God to “being led by the Spirit and not fulfilling the lust of the flesh.” The latter is an ongoing process of every believer as we grow in Christ and “become conformed to the image of Christ.” However, for the person who is a “professor,” but not a “possessor,” he knows nothing of such a relationship, and, therefore, his life is “*continually* sinning” because he is not covered by the blood of Jesus, nor is he standing in His righteousness – he is standing in his own corrupt works, blinded by his false self-righteousness, which is the product of his spiritual, mental and emotional blindness and enslavement to sin. Indeed, he can do nothing else but ‘live in sin’ in this fashion because he has not been born again, and this is the ONLY life he knows!

I John 3:9

I. English – “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.”

II. Greek Interlinear

Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ,
 Everyone who has been begotten from the God sin not he does

ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν,
 because seed of Him in him it abides, and not he is able to sin

ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται.
 because from the God he has been begotten

III. Amplified – “No one who has truly been begotten by God through His Spirit at some point in the past, which always results in an ongoing, continuous and present day saving relationship with the Lord, does not continually wander from the path of uprightness and

honor, to continually do or go wrong, continually embracing a lifestyle of overt, sinful rejection of Christ and His claims on his life as his Lord and Savior in a thoroughgoing, unrestrained disobedience, and the reason for that is because God's seed (i.e., His Holy Spirit) continues to be present, abide, remain, live and sojourn within the person who is born-again; and furthermore, the person who is born-again is not even able to continually wander from the path of uprightness and honor, to continually do or go wrong, continually embracing a lifestyle of overt, sinful rejection of Christ and His claims on his life as his Lord and Savior in a thoroughgoing, unrestrained disobedience for one major reason, and that is because he has been begotten by God through His Holy Spirit at some time in the past, which has resulted in an ongoing, continuous and present day saving relationship with the Lord."

IV. Exegesis – This is one of the most powerful, and yet one of the most simple presentations of God's grace and mercy being demonstrated in the lives of His children through His love and His power of adoption and regeneration. However, before one can fully appreciate what is being said here, one must first of all understand the depth of man's corruption through sin. The following, therefore, are references to that sinful state and what that means for man:

- 1) Genesis 6:5: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."
 - a) The word "intent" in the Hebrew means *form* or *frame*; that is, not the thought itself, but its *framing*, in the same way you would lay the 'forms' or 'frame' for the shape of a patio that you are going to pour concrete into to make the patio. Thus, before you even mix the concrete, let alone pour it, you set your 'forms,' and then you pour the concrete into the area shaped by those 'forms.' Likewise, before our thoughts even become cognizant to us, or even take the shape of a thought, their very inception and formation is grounded in and permeated through with evil.
 - b) In addition, it is not just 'some' of our thoughts, but rather "every" beginning of "every" thought we have.
 - c) Thirdly, this is something that is going on 24-7; that is, all day, and every day!
- 2) Psalms 14:1-3: "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; there is no one who does good."² The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.³ They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."
 - a) The Hebrew word for "no" used in this passage is '*ain*, which is the strongest negative particle in the Hebrew Bible. It literally means "*non-existence*"; thus, the "fool" is actually saying in the strongest possible way that God doesn't even exist at all.
 - b) The other thing to note is that as God inspires the psalmist and speaks through him, He says, "there is no one who does good." The word "no" is also '*ain*, thus, God is saying, "*there doesn't even exist anyone* who does good."
 - c) In verse 3 we read "They have all turned aside; together they have become

corrupt,” and this is obviously referring to ‘all men’ everywhere, and at all times, just as verse 2 says, “The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men,” which is an all inclusive term, referring to the whole of humanity.

- d) The last point to make is that in the last part of verse 3 we read, “there is no one who does good, not even one.” Here too, the words “no” and “not” are *'ain*, and once again, the emphasis is indisputably clear – “*there doesn't even exist anyone who does good, there doesn't even exist one.*”
- 3) Isaiah 64:6: “For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”
- a) The reference to “one who is unclean” is talking about Levitical uncleanness, such as a leper, or someone who has touched a dead animal or person, or a woman who is in her menstrual cycle.
 - b) Thus, the reference to “a filthy garment” is actually referring to the used menstrual cloth a woman would use during her menstruation, and this was considered to be the apex of uncleanness for a woman. Anyone who touched her, and anything she sat on, laid on, or anything she touched during this time was considered totally unclean and had to be set apart for a whole day for purification:

When a woman has a discharge, if her discharge in her body is blood, she shall continue in her menstrual impurity for seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. ²⁰ 'Everything also on which she lies during her menstrual impurity shall be unclean, and everything on which she sits shall be unclean. ²¹ 'And anyone who touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. ²² 'And whoever touches any thing on which she sits shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. ²³ 'Whether it be on the bed or on the thing on which she is sitting, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening. ²⁴ 'And if a man actually lies with her, so that her menstrual impurity is on him, he shall be unclean seven days, and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean. ²⁵ 'Now if a woman has a discharge of her blood many days, not at the period of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond that period, all the days of her impure discharge she shall continue as though in her menstrual impurity; she is unclean. ²⁶ 'Any bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her like her bed at menstruation; and every thing on which she sits shall be unclean, like her uncleanness at that time. ²⁷ 'Likewise, whoever touches them shall be unclean and shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening. ²⁸ 'When she becomes clean from her discharge, she shall count off for herself seven days; and afterward she shall be clean. ²⁹ 'Then on the eighth day she shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young pigeons, and bring them in to the priest, to the doorway of the tent of meeting. ³⁰ 'And the priest shall offer the one for a sin offering and the other

for a burnt offering. So the priest shall make atonement on her behalf before the LORD because of her impure discharge.'³¹
"Thus you shall keep the sons of Israel separated from their uncleanness, lest they die in their uncleanness by their defiling My tabernacle that is among them."³² This is the law for the one with a discharge, and for the man who has a seminal emission so that he is unclean by it,³³ and for the woman who is ill because of menstrual impurity, and for the one who has a discharge, whether a male or a female, or a man who lies with an unclean woman. (Leviticus 15:19-33)

- c) Consequently, for our “righteous deeds” to be compared to a used menstrual cloth is saying that we have NO RIGHTEOUS DEEDS whatsoever!

The consensus, therefore, of these three scripture passages is that we are corrupt to the core, and being such, it is not within our nature to seek after God, but rather He is the one who is seeking after us. John said as much in I John 4:19: “We love, because He first loved us.” In addition, in the Gospel John quotes Jesus as saying, “No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44). That is, it is not within us naturally to come to God, confess and repent of our sins and commit our lives to Jesus as our Lord and Savior unless God, by the Holy Spirit, convicts and draws us to Jesus to make that decision.

Jesus also made a rather emphatic statement about the eternal relationship He has with those who truly receive Him as Lord and Savior: “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day” (John 6:39). Thus, it is not we who are keeping ourselves because of our tremendous spirituality, but rather it is God keeping us, by the indwelling power of His Holy Spirit, who is His “seed” living and abiding in every true believer.

In conclusion of this analysis of I John 3:9, therefore, the one reason, and the one reason ONLY that we who are true believers “cannot *continue to sin*” (i.e., if we have truly been saved, we cannot continue to reject Jesus’ claim on our life as Lord and Savior, which claim results in a changed lifestyle, even when we may fall back into sin for an instant, or a period of time, but if we are truly saved, we will to fellowship with and obedience to Christ through repentance and confession of our sin) is because of the indwelling Holy Spirit, God’s “seed,” who lives and abides within us FOREVER!

I John 5:18

I. English – “We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him.”

II. Greek Interlinear

Ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ
We have come to know that everyone who has been begotten from the God
οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, ἀλλ’ ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτόν
not he sins, but He who was begotten from the God He keeps him
καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς οὐχ ἄπτεται αὐτοῦ.
and the evil one not he takes hold of him.

III. Amplified – “We came to know a long time ago, and the result of that knowledge has been proven true in our lives up through today, that no one who has truly been begotten of God by His Spirit at some time in the past, which always results in an ongoing, continuous and present day saving relationship with the Lord, continually wanders from the path of uprightness and honor to continually do or go wrong, continually embracing a lifestyle of overt, sinful rejection of Christ and His claims on his life as his Lord and Savior in a thoroughgoing, unrestrained disobedience; and the reason for that is He who was begotten of God through the virgin birth, Jesus, continually and forever keeps under guard and keeps firm, pays attention to and maintains him who was begotten of God by His Spirit, and the Evil One does not continually take hold of, fasten himself to, adhere to, cling to and make contact with the him so as to cause harm.”

IV. Exegesis – Here again we see the reaffirmation of the security a true believer has in Jesus, and in this particular instance, that security is juxtaposed over against the potential attack of Satan against the believer. And in this juxtaposition, John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us that Satan doesn’t control the true believer anymore because that believer is under the divine protection, care and keeping of Jesus. Therefore, even though Satan “prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (I Peter 5:8), he no longer has the power to *continually*, without any interference, ‘take hold of, fasten himself to, adhere to, cling to and make contact with the true believer so as to cause him harm’ in an unfettered and unrestrained manner as before when the true believer did not have a *saving relationship* with Jesus. Can Satan, through his spiritual, mental, emotional and physical attacks, cause a true believer temporary harm in this life, but not eternal harm, through deceiving him in order to give in to temptations in those areas? Without question, yes, he can. But can he on a *continuous, unhindered and unrestrained manner* afflict a true believer so as to cause him to renounce his faith in Christ and return to the world as an unbeliever? According to the overall truth of the Good News of salvation in Jesus, NO, HE CANNOT, and this verse says so quite affirmatively!

There are four very clear examples in the Bible of believers who yielded to Satan’s temptations for various reasons: Lot, Abraham, David and Peter. However, in the two examples of David and Peter, their counterparts also failed (e.g., King Saul and Judas),

and their failures tended to demonstrate that they really didn't have a saving relationship with the Lord. This is certainly true of Judas, and the witness of Scripture tends to support the belief that although Saul indeed had spiritual encounters with the Lord (e.g., I Samuel 10:1-13; 11:1-15), God's "seed" didn't "take root" in his heart, but his commitment was one of a shallow and superficial type, in keeping with the second "soil" described in Luke 8:4-15, and the result was that he "fell away" because there was not a true, saving relationship to begin with. And what a tragic end he met.

David, on the other hand, failed as egregiously as Saul, but when confronted with his sin, he *owned* it (II Samuel 12:1-15), versus blaming others for his failure as Did Saul continually. The same is true for Judas and Peter. Thus, even though believers can and do experience consequences in this life of giving in to the temptations and deceptions of the devil, he cannot hurt the true believer eternally, nor can he in any remote manner enter into a believer and 'possess his soul or mind,' which has been described by some today as being "demonized." However, I John 4:4 responds in the negative to that assertion that it is possible for believers to be "demonized": "You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." We can be attacked, assaulted, deceived and oppressed in mind and spirit by Satan, but we CAN NEVER AGAIN be taken over by the him because we are NOW IN CHRIST!