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Recommended Citation

Vaught, W. O., "Abide with Him and Sin Not" (1978). *Vaught Sermon Notes: John*. 3.
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ABIDE IN HIM AND SIN NOT

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN
NUMBER 18
1 JOHN 3:6-8

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1 JOHN 3:6-8 "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

In order to have the key that gives understanding to this passage, we must have ability to distinguish between principle and practice. Quite often our practice does not line up with principles. We saw this last time in the discussion of verse 6a.

Back in verse 4 of this chapter we saw that "whosoever" applied to the carnal believer. In the first part of verse 6 we saw that "whosoever" applied to the person in fellowship, the person filled with the Holy Spirit. But these are statements of principle. Here in the last part of verse 6 we have a "whosoever" that applies to the unbeliever. So, you see, the "whosoever" is determined by the context, by the words that go along with it.

No Difference In Conduct

There is no difference between the carnal believer and the unbeliever in practice, in conduct. In fact, you can't tell one from the other. They both do the same things and they are both controlled by the old sin nature. One is saved and the other is unsaved in principle. But in practice they both do exactly the same things. A carnal believer out of fellowship will do exactly the same things that the unbeliever does. You can't distinguish between the accomplishment of an old sin nature of a believer and the old sin nature of an unbeliever. From the standpoint of function or production, they are similar. The carnal believer acts as if he had not been saved at all.

The Unbeliever Described

Here in 1 John 3:6b we have the words "whosoever sinneth" and this is a present, active, participle of hamartano. It means to be in error, to miss the mark. It means to fail to measure up to the standard of God's perfect righteousness. This is a present tense and it means he keeps on sinning this way, it is the custom of his daily living. The active voice means that this "believer" is the one who does the sinning himself. The participle means that this is the daily conduct of all unbelievers and is a law of life for the unsaved man. In this state he has not or cannot know God. "Hath not seen him" is a perfect tense and is a reference to negative volition at the time of gospel hearing. "Neither known him" is another perfect of ginosko and this is a reference to the lack of doctrinal knowledge in the mind. Horao is the verb used for a panoramic view and ginosko is the verb used for knowing something from experience.

Why The Unbeliever Can't Understand

The unbeliever does not have a human spirit so he can't understand the gospel when it is presented to him. The only way he can understand it is for the Holy Spirit to make it clear to him. And in an unbeliever

the Holy Spirit always doubles for the unbeliever's human spirit (which he does not have until he becomes a believer) in order to make it possible for the unbeliever to believe. At that point the volition must act, but if he responds with negative volition, then he cannot believe. That is exactly what we have here. The phrases "hath not seen him" and "hath not known him" are phrases which relate to negative volition. The moment the unbeliever comes forward with positive volition his human spirit is activated and he is able to have faith. But the unbeliever can't see and he can't know. He is in darkness and just can't understand the plan of salvation. This condition is explained in 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This is a perfect photograph of the unbeliever, called in this verse the "natural man."

The spiritual believer has both seen him and has known him. But in sharp contrast to this, the unbeliever neither hath seen or hath known Jesus Christ.

By combining these two statements in verse 6, we can reach certain conclusions.

1. A progressing believer is one who takes in doctrine on a daily basis and is in the process of building an edification complex in his soul.
2. A retrogressing believer is failing to take in doctrine and is in the process of building scar tissue up in his mind. This is the believer who goes farther and farther away from God.
3. Therefore, we must conclude that a believer is either making progress or is retrogressing. You either grow in grace or you decline into reversionism. There is no such thing as a Christian standing still. He either goes up or down. This is an absolute.

1 JOHN 3:7 "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." We move on to another principle in this verse, and the principle is this--The progressing believer produces divine good. The term for "little children" is from teknion and refers to a baby Christian who instead of taking in doctrine, is retrogressing and is building up scar tissue in his soul. In the previous chapter teknion was used in exactly the same way.

1 JOHN 2:1 "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:"

1 JOHN 2:12 "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake."

1 JOHN 2:13 "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father."

1 JOHN 2:18 "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that anti-christ shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

1 JOHN 2:28 "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

In all these verses the word "little children" refers to the baby Christians who refuse to take in doctrine and therefore, are slipping back. You will run into a commentary now and then that tells you this is a term of affection, a term of endearment. Well, please don't fall for that line. Teknion refers to a baby Christian who is failing to take in doctrine. It refers to a believer who is under discipline because of the lack of doctrine in his mind and for outright disobedience. A retrogressing believer is very easily deceived. That is why John gives this warning to a sleepy, negligent believer. "No man" is from medeis and is made up of mede his and means "no one." It refers to both male and female. Next we have a present, active, imperative of planao and it means to lead astray, to seduce, to lead into falsehood. Next we have a present, active, imperative of poieo and should be translated "the one doing righteousness." "Is righteous" comes from dikaiousune and it means fair, equatable, and this word has a grace meaning. This is a principle to get this retrogressing believer back on the right road so he can start learning doctrine again.

The First Step Back

The first step back for the retrogressing believer is to be oriented to grace. This eliminates pride and self-righteousness and gives God a clear path in the mind. The Word of God is the foundation, but orientation to grace is the next step. This always leads to a relaxed mental attitude and this comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit and from doctrine. Then we move up to inner happiness and then to the capacity to love and finally we are in the penthouse called "The mastery of the details of life." This is an admonition to the teknions for they have been standing still so fast they are actually retrogressing.

A Continuous Process

We have the words "is righteous" but the Greek says "keeps on being righteous." This is a present, active, indicative of eimi and it means this has become a daily way of life for the righteous man. God has a game plan for every day and this is the man who keeps on following that game plan without fail. From time to time you will run into all kinds of Christians who all have some amazing plan for you so you can reach dedication or abundant Christian living. Now all of their schemes are incompatible with the plan of God and the grace of God. You can't read a book and make a dedication and become a sweet, sincere Christian by your own achievement. They say to you that if you will just make that certain decision, then you will vault yourself into super grace. That isn't so. The great believers are those who take in doctrine daily. Even Romans 12:1 doesn't teach rededication when you really understand what it says.

ROMANS 12:1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The only thing that will lead you to spiritual maturity is the erection of an edification complex in your soul. YOU CAN'T GET THIS BY A ONE-SHOT DECISION. They run down an aisle and get the rosy glow but it doesn't mean a thing. In fact, it is just setting them up for failure and disappointment on down the road. The one who keeps on doing grace orientation keeps on being right. You are right when you take in doctrine on a daily basis.

An Interesting Analogy

We now have the words "even as he is righteous." The "He" here refers to Jesus Christ. We have a present, active, indicative of dikaiois and it means he was always right in eternity past, he is right today, and he will be right through all eternity. So John wants to illustrate from this analogy how we too can always be right. Jesus Christ was right in everything because he was constantly filled with the Holy Spirit.

JOHN 3:34 "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him."

MATTHEW 28:18 "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

MATTHEW 18:28 "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you."

These and many other passages teach us that Christ was constantly filled with the Holy Spirit. This is why all of his production was divine good. When a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, all he can produce is divine good. When he is filled with the old sin nature, all he can produce is human good.

Two Ways To Produce Divine Good

The first way to produce divine good is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and this must be a daily task. Confess every sin and stay in fellowship for this is the only way to be filled with the Spirit. The second way to produce divine good is to exhale doctrine from the human spirit. You have to learn it in the mind and store it in the spirit before you can exhale it with the lips. We call this witnessing. You learn doctrine and then you have your gun loaded. Now you can speak out of the supply in the human spirit. This is exactly the way Jesus produced divine good all through his thirty-three years here on the earth. You get a picture of this in these verses.

LUKE 2:40 "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him."

LUKE 2:52 "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."

Remember this, you cannot apply doctrine from the human mind. You have to store it in the human spirit and from that point, you can exhale it and apply it. Intellectual comprehension is not enough and it does not necessarily mean spiritual progress. From the intellect we transfer what we have learned into the human spirit and it now becomes faith, it becomes the inner substance of our lives.

In addition to these two ways in which we produce divine good, there is a third way. You can produce divine good directly from the soul, provided your soul is lined up with an edification complex, then your soul produces divine good. Christ produces divine good from his soul, for we read of him, "He was full of grace and truth." Remember, the production of divine good brings happiness both in time and in eternity.

1 JOHN 3:8 "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil." The source of defeat and victory is outlined in this verse. "He that does sin" is the present, active, participle of poieo. It is a reference to the carnal believer of verse 4 but it also includes the unbeliever of verse 6. In principle they both produce the same thing. They both produce sins and human good. So they are not distinguished in principle. John lumps the carnal believer and the unbeliever together. The thing they have in common is that they both function under the old sin nature. It says, "They keep on being out from the source of the devil." We have the present, active, indicative of eimi and this means this is their constant state. The words ek diabolos means out from the source of the Devil. The Devil not only controls the unbeliever but he also controls the carnal believer. Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, is his name and he is the most attractive angel that was ever created. The word "devil" is a Greek word and "satan" is a Hebrew word and both are titles for Lucifer. The pattern for sin and the pattern for human good are exactly the same and the Devil produces both. Human good is just as much of the plan of God as sin is. "The Devil sinneth from the beginning" is a reference to the five "I wills" of Satan in Isaiah 14. Satan sinned from his volition, so this is one way we know that angels have a volition like humans. This sinning was from the source of himself. The remainder of this verse says, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifest, that he might destroy the works of the Devil." So much doctrine is involved with this statement, we will leave it for our next study.