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W. O. Vaught

Ouachita Baptist University

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THE SINLESS CHRIST

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF 1 JOHN
NUMBER 16
1 JOHN 3:4-5

Dr. W. O. Vaught
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

1 JOHN 3:4-5 "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

If this part of the Bible is ever to be understood, we must understand the difference between principle and practice. If you do not understand the difference between principle and practice, you can read these verses and conclude that you are not even a Christian. Later on in this chapter when it says, "Whosoever is born of God is perfect" you know immediately that cannot mean you or me, for we are neither one perfect. It has to be talking about principle.

Illustration

All women, at some time or another back in their young and romantic days, dreamed that they would have a perfect husband. That is principle and not practice. Every romantic, young woman at some time set up norms and standards concerning what she thought a perfect husband ought to be. Then she dreamed she had this perfect husband. Then one day some man came along with a mouth full of teeth and the right flare for her and she found herself standing at the altar saying, "I do." Now she had that husband, in practice, but not in principle. She found that a good many of those norms and standards in her dream have gone out the window. She has the real husband, not the perfect one of her dreams. Now to be sure, he has a good many of those norms and standards, but also a little monster thrown in. In this way one comes to realize that there is quite a difference in principle and practice. In principle it ends, "They lived happily ever after" but quite often in practice it doesn't work that way.

God's Perfection

But remember this--God has perfect norms and standards and when we believe in Christ and are born again, everything God does for the new believer is perfect. We have eternal life and that's perfect. We have his righteousness and that's perfect. That phrase "in Christ" is a phrase that describes our perfect position.

God Not The Author Of Sin

Now God is not the author of sin, never has been and never will be. God does not promote sin. God does not solicit to sin. Therefore, God does not make any place for the old sin nature in his norms and standards. Why should he? He provides salvation for the old sin nature but never condones it. But in practice the believer still has an old sin nature. After we are saved we can't say we have no old sin nature and we can't say that we haven't committed acts of sin. Now that's practice. There is no such thing in this earth as sinless perfection. That is a state reserved for heaven.

Look at verse 6. This is principle, not practice.

"Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him."

Look at verse 7. This is principle, not practice.

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

Look at verse 9. This is principle, not practice.

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Make A Distinction

To ever understand these verses we must make a sharp distinction between principle and practice. We must know the difference between the divine norms and standards and the actual living out of these things in our every day lives. Principle and practice are all the same with God, but as long as we live in this earth and have an old sin nature, it will never be the same with us. One day, when we lose our old sin nature and all human good is removed from us, then our principle and practice will be the same.

Look at verse 10. This is principle and not practice.

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

Let us now come back to verse 4 and see what it says.

1 JOHN 3:4 "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." The title of this verse is carnality and carnality is an absolute. Carnality is not relative. In principle, one sin is as bad as another. Now, I know you do not think this way, There are certain sins that shock you, and when you see people commit these sins then you think it is terrible. But in practice, one sin is as bad as another, for any sin takes you out of fellowship and causes you to be in carnality. The real key in this verse is this phrase "Whosoever committeth sin." The word pas can be translated all, or whoso, or whosoever. In this verse, whosoever must be clearly defined. This whosoever is going to be used again and again in this passage, and in different verses whosoever will refer to different people. In some verses, it refers to the carnal Christian and in some verses it refers to believers in fellowship. The word committeth is the present, active, participle of poieo which means "to do." So this sentence says, "Whosoever does the sin also does the transgression of the law." In verse 6 we have "Whosoever abideth in him" and this refers to the believer in fellowship, a believer controlled by the Holy Spirit. Then in the middle of verse six, the whosoever applies to an unbeliever. In verse 9 the whosoever refers to a spiritual believer. Spirituality is an absolute and you can't be part spiritual and part carnal. You are one or the other. You are either in the bottom circle, or you are out of the bottom circle. You are either spiritual or carnal, one or the other. When you are under the control of the old sin nature, you are carnal. When you are under the control of the Holy Spirit, you are spiritual. The whosoever in verse 10 is an unbeliever and we will study that in detail when we come to it.

Let us get a corrected translation of this verse and work from it.

"Whosoever doeth the sin also doeth the transgression of the Law."

This is a believer living under the control of the old sin nature

The second sentence in this verse says, "For the sin is the transgression of the law." "The sin" is a reference to carnality. "Is" is the present, active, indicative of eimi. It means "keeps on being the transgression of the law." A believer out of fellowship is violating divine norms and standards. This actually says, "For the sin is the lawlessness." When you are under the control of the old sin nature, you cannot fulfill divine norms or standards.

1 JOHN 3:5 "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." This verse leads us back to something we know. Here we have oida in the perfect tense used as a present tense. This is a statement that tells us carnality was defeated at the cross. The word for "he" is ekeinos and refers to Christ and this introduces a principle. This is a salvation doctrine which we hold in our human spirit as a frame of reference. This is why it is so necessary to have truth in the human spirit so we can counteract against sin and respond with assurance and certainty. Next we have the word phaneroo which is an aorist, passive, indicative and refers to the time when Christ left heaven and came to earth. He received this manifestation and this word states the reality of his coming. The word "that" introduces a purpose clause. "He might carry away" is the aorist, active, subjunctive of airo. The aorist tense refers to the time of the cross. The active voice means that he, himself, did the carrying away of our sins. The subjunctive mood goes with the purpose clause and shows that this was the purpose of his coming to this earth. This was his main purpose in going to the cross.

The Work Of The Cross

The blood Christ shed on the cross speaks of this work he did. The work Christ did on the cross means he actually reached out and picked up all the sins of the human race and carried them away. In order to do this, he had to be sinless. So, we read, "In him is no sin."

THE DOCTRINE OF THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

1. Christ did not have an old sin nature.
This verse we have just studied makes this definite statement. 1 John 3:5, "In him was no sin." Furthermore, Christ did not commit any personal sins during his life on earth.
HEBREWS 4:15 "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."
1 PETER 1:2 "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."
2. Christ was tempted in the area of his humanity.
This is the story of Matthew 4:2-11.
3. All temptations came to Christ from the outside.
This means that all temptations came to Christ from outside of him because he had no old sin nature within him. Our temptations come from the inside because we have an old sin nature. Adam was created without an old sin nature and was tempted in his volition. But Christ was born without an old sin nature.

4. All temptations that came to Christ were directed toward his humanity. The human nature of Christ was temptable, but his divine nature was not temptable.
JAMES 1:13 "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man:"
5. Christ resisted the greatest of all temptations in Gethsemane. He actually faced the cross in Gethsemane. This was a volitional test as recorded in Matthew 26:39 and Mark 14:35-36 and Luke 22:42. The first Adam failed in this volitional test but the Second Adam did not fail in this test. The first Adam went negative but the Second Adam went positive.
6. Christ's humanity was temptable but his deity was not temptable. In his humanity he could sin, but in his deity he could not sin. God cannot sin.
7. Conclusion
In the hypostatic union of Christ, he was temptable but unable to sin. The temptations were bona fide temptations but he never sinned.
(Illustration--You can take a copper wire and bend it and break it. But once you have welded it to a steel bar, you cannot bend it or break it.)
8. Christ suffered certain limitations in his humanity. He had physical weakness, he got hungry, he got thirsty, he became weary. But none of these human limitations have anything to do with his immutable holiness.
9. Christ is posi non percari (Able not to sin).
non posi percari (Not able to sin).
God is never the source of evil under any circumstances. Evil comes from the angelic and human negative volition but never from divine sovereignty.
10. Jesus Christ was unable to sin when filled with the Holy Spirit (which was all the time). The Holy Spirit is God and God cannot sin. Christ's volition was involved in not sinning.
11. Jesus Christ was never commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He was always filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was given to him without measure.

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