

## Cannot Sin - cont.

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There are Christians living today who actually do not make a practice of sinning. They dress right, talk right, think right, and act right. They read their Bibles regularly, study, and pray often. They attend all the assemblies and are active members. They act spiritually mature in all situations in life. They are kind, generous, and benevolent to all. They abhor evil and cleave to good. They act right in the home, at work, and in society. They do not make a practice or habit of sinning because God's seed continually abides in them.

To be a Christian who does not make a practice of sinning, we must allow God's seed to continually abide in us (Jn. 5:38; 15:5,7). There are admonitions in John's epistle about the concern of continual abiding (1 John 2:6,10,14,17,27,28; 3:6,9; 3:14,17,24; 4:13,15,16), the condition ("if" of continual abiding (1 John 2:24; 4:12), and the consequence of not continuing to abide (2 John 9).

A true child of God who is born of God "cannot sin" (KJV, present tense); that is, "he cannot keep on sinning" (ESV). As a sinner outside the body of Christ, do you need to come and be "born of God" today? As an erring child of God who was once "born of God", do you need to repent and stop sinning? As a faithful child of God, keep practicing righteousness (1 John 2:29), brotherly love (1 John 4:7), faith (1 John 5:1,4), and purity (1 John 5:18).

- Chris Reeves -

## Sentence Sermons

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- There is no such thing as "idle gossip"; it's always busy hurting someone.
- God will not listen to you when you do not listen to him.
- Christianity is not half-hearted service, but whole-hearted sacrifice.
- The Bible was not given just for our information, but for our transformation.
- If you are too busy for God, then you are busier than God wants you to be.

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# THE WARFIELD BULLETIN

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November 10, 2019



For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.  
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

# He Cannot Sin, Because He Is Born of God

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*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.*  
- 1 John 3:9 (KJV) -

What does 1 John 3:9 mean? It says “cannot sin” in the *King James Version*. Does this verse teach that a Christian is incapable of committing sin? Does it teach that it is impossible for a Christian to sin? One basic rule of hermeneutics (Bible interpretation) is that one can never correctly interpret a passage in such a way as to cause it to contradict another plain passage. One must also examine the immediate context for clues to understanding the difficult passage in question. So what does this verse teach?

Some believe John is teaching that a Christian will not commit a particular type of sin like the unpardonable sin (Mark 3:29), a willful sin (Hebrews 10:26), or the sin unto death (1 John 5:16-18). This view does not fit the immediate context of sin in general (1 Jn. 3:4). Some believe John is teaching that one will not sin at all after becoming a Christian. This view does not fit with the rest of 1 John (1:8 – 2:2; 5:16) or the rest of the New Testament (Galatians 6:1). Some believe John is teaching about the new Jewish age of the Messiah in which sin would be all together destroyed. This view does not fit with New Testament view of the Messianic age (Matthew 18:21-35).

Some believe that John is making a contrast between the ideal Christian (1 John 3:9) and the real Christian (1 John 1:7-10; 2:1-2). This view has some merit, but it does not take seriously the present tense verbs in the immediate context (1 Jn. 3:4-10). Some believe John is teaching a difference between an unbeliever and a believer; what is “sin” for the unbeliever is not “sin” for the believer. This view does not fit with the Bible teaching that all sin is sin (1 John 5:17). Some believe John is using hyperbolic exaggeration to make a point against the Gnostics. This view presupposes the use of a figure of speech in an otherwise literal narrative on the subject of sin.

John is actually teaching against the Gnostic heresy that makes all flesh inherently evil and that one will continue to sin as long as he is in the flesh; therefore, don’t worry about your sinning; continue living in your sin and enjoy it (for the Gnostic view of Jesus and the flesh; see 1 Jn. 2:18,22; 4:2-3; 2 Jn. 7). In 1 John 3:4-10, John is teaching that a child of God may sin, but he does not make a practice of sinning in his life. Unlike the Gnostic, the Christian is concerned enough about sin to stop it and practice righteousness.

We are “born of God” when we are “born again” of water and Spirit (John 1:13; 3:3-8). We are “born of God” when we are “begotten again” by God’s word (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). All true children of God who are born of God do not commit sin; that is, they do not make a habit or practice of committing sin; their life is not characterized by sin

(1 John 3:6; 5:18).

The present tense of these verbs is important to notice in the context (see the present tense verbs in 3:4-10). The present tenses are not readily noticeable in the *King James Version*. However, continual, on-going action (not just action in the present) is what the Greek tense portrays here. “Practices sin” is found in the NASV, NIV, ESV, etc. A Christian might commit a sin (1 John 1:7 – 2:2; 5:16), but he does not make a habit or practice of sinning; he does not continue in sin; he does not lead a life of sin; he does not go on sinning day-to-day (1 John 2:1,15; Romans 6:1-2,6,12,15; Colossians 2:11).

A Christian who makes a habit or practice sinning is of the Devil, not God (John 8:34,44; 1 John 3:8,10; 5:18; Acts 13:10; Matthew 13:38). When a Christian continues sinning, he acts like the Devil and he shows that he is not a true child of God!

God’s “seed” is God’s word in the heart (Luke 8:11; 1 Peter 1:23) and God’s word in the heart keeps us from sinning (Psalm 119:1-3,11). God’s children are of such a spiritual nature and mind-set that they do not practice sinning (2 Peter 1:4; 1 Jn. 1:5-6). God’s children, instead of practicing sin, are going to practice righteousness (1 Jn. 2:29), brotherly love (1 Jn. 4:7), faith (1 Jn. 5:1,4), and purity (1 Jn. 5:18).

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