

# WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BORN OF GOD?

I John 3:9-10; 5:18

"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. {10} 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" (I John 3:9-10).

"We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (I John 5:18).

The verses which serve as our text are an important part of this epistle, and an understanding of them is necessary to an understanding of the whole. Furthermore, what is taught in these verses is very germane to the problems created in recent years by some of our brethren who, in advocating their denominational positions, think they have found something new.

Let us notice from these verses some appropriate and very valuable lessons.

## DISCUSSION

### I. NOTICE WHAT IS MEANT BY THE WORDS *DOTH NOT COMMIT SIN, CANNOT SIN, AND SINNETH NOT*

- A. Some say this means the child of God lives a perfectly sinless life.
  - 1. If so, then anyone who commits a single act of sin proves thereby that he is not a child of God.
  - 2. If so, then this epistle contains a serious contradiction. (Cf. 1:7-10; 2:1.)
- B. A distinction between the tenses of the verbs used in these verses is evident in the original.
  - 1. I John 1:8--"If we say that we have no sin . . . ." (Aorist tense.)
  - 2. I John 2:1--"that ye sin not . . . but if any man sin" (Aorist tense.)
  - 3. I John 3:9--"doth not commit sin . . . cannot sin" (a form of the present tense, which means continued action.)
- C. These verses state emphatically that the child of God simply cannot continue to practice sin.
- D. The reason he cannot keep on practicing sin is stated: "for his seed remaineth in him."
  - 1. The seed is the word of God (I Pet. 1:22-23; Luke 8:11).
  - 2. While one walks in the light of the word of God he will still commit momentary acts of sin (I John 1:7-10). For these he has the benefits of the blood of Christ and he has Jesus Christ as his advocate (2:1).
  - 3. But one with the seed remaining in him cannot live a life of habitual sinful practice.
    - a. Young men and young ladies who are dating cannot park and engage in licentious practices, for the word of God says in I Timothy 5:22: "Keep thyself pure." It also says, "Flee also youthful lusts" (II Tim. 2:22).

- b. Christians cannot feed their minds on filthy movies and television shows, for the word of God says in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." It also says, "Abstain from fleshly lusts" (I Pet. 2:11).
- c. Husbands and wives cannot flirt with those to whom they are not married, for the word of God says, "Flee fornication" (I Cor. 6:18). It says also in I Thessalonians 5:22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil."

## **II. NOTICE THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE VERSES WITH REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT DOCTRINE OF GRACE BEING TAUGHT BY SOME**

- A. Some actually use the grace of God to encourage people to sin, whether they realize it or not. (Cf. Rom. 6:1-2.)
  - 1. One lady explained why she changed congregations by saying, "Over here we have grace."
  - 2. One young intern at a large church in Alabama excused his lack of Bible study by saying, "The grace of God will take care of me."
- B. Some have said they know they are living in adultery because of an unscriptural marriage, but say they believe the grace of God will take care of them.
- C. Grace is always mentioned as an incentive not to sin, and never as encouragement to sin. These verses in I John show that one who is God's child cannot persist in sin.

## **III. NOTICE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BORN OF GOD**

- A. The word *born* is from the same Greek word which occurs 41 times in the first chapter of Matthew, and is translated "begat" 39 of those times.
- B. The ASV translates: "Whosoever is begotten of God . . . ." Brother Guy N. Woods, in his commentary on I John, says the American Standard rendering is to be preferred, but that it "does not fully and adequately convey the meaning of the text."
- C. The idea is that what John here declares, he declares concerning those who are God's children.
- D. Jesus' statement to Nicodemus (John 3:5).
- E. Peter's statement (I Peter 1:22-23).

## **CONCLUSION**

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus says: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." To seek the kingdom of God is to seek to enter into it as we have pointed out. To seek his righteousness is to seek to live in harmony with all his commandments (Psa. 119:172). Place that in the context of I John 3:9-10 and I John 5:18.

John 3:3-5 places emphasis upon the necessity of becoming children of God by being born into his family. These verses place emphasis upon living as children of God after we have

been born into his family.

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