

Bible Greek VPOD - Intermediate Greek

Lesson 14

Keeping oneself pure (3:4-9)

1 John 3:4-9

⁴Everyone who does sin indeed the transgression is made and the sin is the transgression. ⁵And you have known that he was made manifest so that he took away our sins, and sin is not in him ⁶Everyone that abides in Him does not sin, everyone who continues to sin has not seen him neither has known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you, he who does the righteousness is righteous even as that one is righteous. ⁸He who does sin is of the Devil, because the Devil sins from [the] start. Into this the son of God was made manifest in order that he might break the works of the Devil. ⁹Whosoever has been born of God, he does not continue in sin, because His seed remains in him, and he is not able to sin because he is born of God.

4 Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν την ἀμαρτιαν και την ἀνομιαν ποιεῖ, και ἡ ἀμαρτια ἐστιν ἡ ἀνομια. 5 και οἶδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερωθη, ἵνα τας ἀμαρτίας ἄρη, Και ἀμαρτια ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν. 6 πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μενων οὐχ ἀμαρτανει πᾶς ὁ ἀμαρτανων οὐξ ἑωρακεν αὐτον οὐδε ἔγνωκεν αὐτον. 7 Τεκνια, μηδεις πλανατω ὑμᾶς· ὁ ποιῶν την δικαιοσυνην δικαιος ἐστιν, καθως ἐκεῖνος δικαιος ἐστιν· 8 ὁ ποιῶν την ἀμαρτιαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβολου ἐστιν, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διαβολος ἀμαρτανει. εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερωθη ὁ υἱος τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα λυση τα ἔργα τοῦ διαβολου. 9 Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημέος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀμαρτιαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπερμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μενει, και οὐ δυναται ἀμαρτανειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγεννηται.

Introduction

Chapter three starts out like chapter two – with the subject of knowledge and deeds (compare 2:3-5 with 3:4-9) and an exhortation to live up to the calling, as it is written, “what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God.”

For John, true believers have known Him (perfect tense), but they also continue to know how to function in the Christian life relaying upon Him, being sensitive to the word of God

through the Spirit's work of conviction and teaching. This section has served to be one of the most controversial in history as some have used it to prove that once a person is saved they are perfect in some way in that they cannot sin. The result of this teaching has been devastating. For example, after the great Roman persecutions, there arose a great debate whether to let those Christians back into the Church that chose to renounce Christ instead of being martyred. Some argued that those who renounced Christ cannot be true believers since that is a sin and a true believer cannot sin.

Throughout Church history the subject of the Christian and sin has continued to find a small group that holds to some form of perfectionism. Though the majority within the Church has had the orthodox view that the Christian can and does sin – to say otherwise, is blasphemy and makes man God! After all, John has already said in 1:8: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” But, history reveals a great deal of confusion concerning this matter and John points out that sinful man mixed with a Satanic lie moves the matter from the rational to the emotional. Part of the problem can be traced through history to the fact that the Scriptures have been, for the most part, translations into other languages, leaving the truth buried deep in an obsolete language that few bother to learn. It is the job of the expositor to dig out the details of the meaning of the passage and to explain the text just as the Jews had to do when they returned to the land after their exile in Babylon. They almost lost their language during their captivity, but the priests brought out the Scriptures, read them, and explained them to the people (Neh. 8:5-9).

And it is here that the apostle moves to the middle of his argument concerning the believer's walk. In the opening verses, John gives us the theme concerning the believer and the problem addressed in the letter:

This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:5-10)

This section requires the non-native Greek speaker to observe closely the verbs, as Drs. Dana and Mantey write, “No element of the Greek language is of more importance to the student of the New Testament than the matter of tense. A variation in meaning exhibited by the use of a particular tense will often dissolve what appears to be an embarrassing difficulty, or reveal a gleam of truth which will thrill the heart with delight and inspiration...The development of tense has reached its highest in Greek, and presents its greatest wealth of meaning. ‘Among all known ancient languages none distinguishes the manifold temporal (and modal) relations of the verb so accurately as the Greek.’”¹

¹ Dana & Mantey, pp. 176-177.

A believer's sin is still sin – sin is lawlessness (3:4a)

3:4. Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.

(Everyone who does sin indeed the transgression is made and the sin is the transgression). John has to define the relationship of sin to the law for this Church infected by Greek culture and philosophy. If Jesus died for all my sins, then why do I care whether or not I sin? Everyone who actively commits sin is also transgressing the law. Someone might say, I thought the law was done away with (cf., Rom. 10:4), if so, how can John make this statement? Jesus came to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17), to make the law complete. The Mosaic law is divided into three parts: the ceremonial, the judicial, and the moral. There have always been some universal laws placed upon man even as it existed before Moses. With the Old Covenant (Mosaic law) certain laws were made specific for the nation Israel to point out sin. Now we have the law of God that is to be placed in the heart of man by the New Covenant (cf., Jer. 31; Heb. 8). The New Covenant concerning the law of Christ, or the law of love, is what is in view (cf., John 13:34-35; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-14). And within the commands of God to love your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself, all the commandments are summarized (Matt. 22:37-40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14) and a transgression of this law is viewed as lawlessness. John means to develop the contrast between what Paul calls the law of sin and death and the law of the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2) - this is the battle in the believer between the flesh and the new man.

In this case *πάς* (*pas*) adj.a.m.sg., “all,” or “every man” includes everyone, not just everyone in a particular group, but everyone. Notice the accusative adjective is placed at the head. This might better be translated with the participle first, (*ποιεῶ* (*poieo*) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., “to make,” or “do”): “he that continues to do sin also does the transgression, everyone [there are no exceptions].” Dr. Lenski translates, “Everyone doing the sin is also doing the lawlessness.”

In this phrase, both sin and transgression are the subjects linked by a coordinating conjunction and the sense of both the participle and verb is durative. The word for sin is tightly connected with the adjective “everyone” but the emphasis is placed upon the individual performing the *ἁμαρτία* (*hamartia*) a.f.sg., with def. art., “the sin,” as the participle takes the adjective – this person is known as a sinner. The definite articles serves to point out the sin in question – a real sin actually being committed. The conjunction is translated “indeed” (*καὶ* conj.), since a link between the individual to the sin is indeed a definite transgression (*τὴν ἀνομίαν*) which places unity and equality with the two words, sin and transgression, placing them in legal language, a crime. “The transgression” is the word *ἀνομία* (*anomia*) a.f.sg., with def. art, “iniquity,” “unrighteousness,” “transgression,” lit., “without law.” Remember, God is a God of law, whether the law governs the natural laws of physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, language, government, or His commands, a transgression of a law has its consequences. Transgressing God’s law is what the Bible is about and has its consequences too. In the Old Testament, transgressing the Law, that is, the law God gave to Moses for the nation Israel, resulted in a just restitution. Transgressing a law against others in the community required restitution, a reconciling between the two parties with some in the form of financial recompense. Transgressing a law against God, likewise, required restitution in the form of an animal sacrifice, or some other act, but is always required a sincere acknowledgement (confession) of the specific sin, calling it like it is, and resulting in repentance, that is to say, turning away from that sin.

For the dispensation of the New Testament, the law still exists, but not as in the Old Testament. The NT law is summed up in the commands of Christ: love thy God with all thy heart and love thy neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-40). This is the law that is governed by the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31). What happens when this law is transgressed? The person actively doing (ποιεω (poieo) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg.) the sin, αμαρτια (hamartia) n.f.sg., with def. art., “sin,”) also is said to be transgressing the law (εστιν η ανομια). What does this mean? Does it mean we are should be a law keeper? Absolutely, the law of Christ is a requirement in the dispensation of the Church (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). Does keeping the law save us? No! Keeping the law never saved anyone. The law is a way of life, so the law of Christ speaks of *agape* love, a giving love, as Galatians 6:1-2 expresses:

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 6:1-2)

The first century saint was being confused because of the error taught in the Church by the Gnostics who viewed sin in a perverted way and on the other extreme the Judizers who wanted to live under the law. One of the greatest truths of the Bible is the truth that the law is spiritual. That means that although the law has a judgment aspect it is intended to have a love aspect as well. The law involves a cold hard fact, but provision is made for those who are not able to perform in some way the letter of the law. This is what is called in theology the goodness of God. Mercy abounds in the law. This is what stumbled the Jewish leadership when Jesus performed His miracles on the Sabbath. Did Jesus break the law? I thought He held the law perfectly. He did uphold the law and obeyed the law, it is just that He understood the law completely, that is, He understood, the provisions relating to the grace of God. For example, when He healed the lame man at the pool or the blind man, the Jewish leadership accused Him of breaking the law because did not keep the Sabbath (John 5; 9). It is clear that Jesus broke their traditions but not the law².

The sin issue defined (3:5-9):

1.Christ came in the flesh to take away sin - the legal act (3:5a)

3:5. και οιδατε οτι εκεινος εφανερωθη, ινα τας αμαρτιας αρη, (And you have known that he was made manifest so that he took away our sins). This is the second time John has stated that Jesus came in the flesh for the purpose of taking away our sins (2:2; 3:5; 4:10). And how does He do that? By being faithful to the Old Testament prophecy of Isaiah 53 – to die on the cross, performing a vicarious sacrificial work. John continues the thought (και conj., and, even, also, indeed) by saying that the sinner who is now saved has completely seen the picture. Remember, ειδω (eido) Perf. Act. Ind. 2pl., means primarily ” to see,” and hence, is often translated “to know,” and in this case the Holy Spirit has performed the illumination and the individual has seen clearly the doctrine of Christ's death as a substitute for the sinner. And they know this

² Over the years, the Jews had devised additional rules and regulations concerning the Sabbath. By Jesus' day there were 39 different classifications of work. Man must be careful not to add to God's word, whether it is the Jew or the Church, when tradition adds to the Word of God, tradition must be thrown out!

completely as the perfect tense point out. Because Christ came in the flesh the picture has been made complete. His manifestation in the flesh made the legal act complete.

The conjunction *οτι* (*hoti*) conj., is common for introducing an objective clause after verbs of knowing, seeing, and saying, so is translated “that” and is combined with the far demonstrative *εκεινος* (*ekeinos*) dem. pron. n.m.sg., “that,” which is usually translated just “that He was manifested.” The wonderful word *φανερωω* (*phaneroo*) Aor. Pas. Ind. 3sg., “to make manifest,” “visible,” or “known,” conveys the manner in which God came in the flesh. We call this the incarnation, but the Greek is simply – the *phaneroo*, the manifestation of God as the aorist brings out the idea of appearing in history as a single event. This manifestation cannot be confused with anything other than His birth since the passive says He was a passive participant. He was created in the womb by the Holy Spirit, was brought about in a normal human birth and came into the world like a normal man, so as to represent mankind in His life and death. But because of His miraculous conception, that is, His conception by the Holy Spirit, He could be called perfect by God, since only God is perfect. What an incredible thing this God-Man is. He is truly the only begotten of God, the only One who ever was or ever will be like this.

The purpose of this manifestation is given to us as the *hina* clause (*ινα* conj., “that,” “in order that,” “so that”) points out that our sins are carried away by the passing of His visible appearance. One of the great truths of Scripture is found in this word *αιρω* (*airo*) Aor. Act. Subj. 3sg., “to raise up,” “to take upon one’s self,” or “to bear away what has been raised.” He took our sins (notice the plural *αμαρτια* (*hamartia*) a.f.pl., with def. art., sin, to miss the mark), the definite article pointing out the definiteness of the sins that are ours. This is a purpose clause so the aorist subjunctive expresses the idea of the bearing of our sins is contingent upon certain existing and known conditions, and hence, the action is objectively possible, so the translation “he might take away our sins.” It is as though the Greek gives us the doctrine of “expiation” and the full meaning of the scape goat in this one word *αρη*. Jesus Christ bore our sins on the cross and took them away; they are no longer visible to God since He carried them away. The possibility of forgiveness of sins is everywhere present in the doctrine of salvation. The objective fact of Jesus Christ’s appearing in the flesh, dying on the cross and being resurrected secured the “existing and known condition,” but the individual’s sinful condition is also included in the “existing and known condition.” John draws a distinction between propitiation (placating the wrath of God) and expiation (removal of sin, guilt, and wrath).

Notice in the gospel of John, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the “sin” [collective sin] of the world. But here he points out “sins” [pl.] in order to clarify the point of the individual’s many sins, making a theological distinction in Jesus’ death as covering both inherited sin (imputed sin), and the individual’s sin. One cannot blame Adam for his or her sin and one cannot say Jesus Christ paid the price for Adam’s sin but not my sin. Just as Adam’s sin is imputed or reckoned (Gr. *λογιζομαι*, cf. Rom. 4:11, 22,-24; 5:3) to all mankind, so Christ’s righteousness is imputed to mankind. This speaks of the three great doctrines of imputation: Adam’s sin is imputed to mankind (Rom. 5:12-21); Man’s sin is imputed to Christ (2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Pet. 2:24); and Christ’s righteousness is imputed to believers (2 Cor. 5:21; Isa. 53:6).

2.In Him is no sin - the righteous example (3:5b)

Και αμαρτια εν αυτω ουκ εστιν. (and sin is not in him). Finally, the apostle concludes this statement by adding the conjunction *και* “and,” (or maybe, indeed) a sin (*αμαρτια* (*hamartia*))

n.f.sg.) is not ἐν (en) prep., “in” Him. Notice, there is no definite article, so the meaning is “any sin,” or “not a single sin” is in Him. This speaks of the doctrine of the God-man nature of Jesus Christ. He was sinless in every way and satisfied the OT prophecy that he knew no sin on a human level (Isa. 53; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26 1 Pet. 2:22,), and further speaks of the theological/legal connection of the one that is the substitute, being offered up to God as being spotless (1 Pet. 1:19). Just as verse three states “just as He is pure,” so the statement “in Him there is no sin.”

The phrase places sin at the head in order to emphasize the sinless nature of Christ. His purity and sinless nature should move us to be like Him and put off sins. Dr. Lenski writes, “As Christ is pure, and sin is not in him, they must ever be purifying themselves, and when they find themselves sinning must flee to their Advocate with his expiation for such sins (2:1,2).”³

John highlights the distinction between positional salvation and experiential salvation. Our position is “in Christ,” we stand legally acquitted before God because of what Christ did on the cross. Our sins are forgiven – past, present, and future sins are all covered by Christ on the cross. But our experience in this fallen world is another story. We are sinners who are implored to not sin.

3. Abiding in Him moves one not to sin – you are known by your associates. (3:6a)

3:6. πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μενων οὐχ ἁμαρτανει (Everyone that abides in Him does not sin). The teaching of abiding in Christ reaches its high point and value in this little phrase. A believer is not known as a sinner! If a person believes in Christ as savior, then he or she is saved and declared righteous by God. All their sin is covered by Christ’s death on the cross, not just some sin, but all, for He was sacrificed once for all (Heb. 10:10). This person is seen by God in the throne room as sinless because Christ removed that sin and His righteousness is imputed to the believer. But personal sin is still a problem in the believer’s life. The picture is drawn in Scripture that the Devil (the accuser, slanderer) is ever present accusing and exposing the believer’s sin in the throne room (Job 1:6-12; 1 John 2:1-2), but our Advocate, Jesus Christ, continues in our defense, testifying, “I paid the price for that sin, too.”

If a person is abiding in Christ, then he or she will put off the sin that has a hold on them. Abiding in Christ and His word serves as a preventer of the Christian from falling into the temptations and deceptions of the Devil. The word “abiding” means an active relationship and fellowship with Jesus Christ. The opening adjective πᾶς (pas) adj.n.m.sg., “every man,” or in general, “everyone,” identifies the subject of the literary couplet of this verse: “anyone who abides in Him... anyone who continues to sin...” The first part of the couplet defines the state of the person, that is, “trusting in God,” and serves as a statement of fact for one who overcomes sin, and further the motivation to mature in Christ. Not like the Gnostic who believed that some of them achieved maturity and perfection in this life⁴. And in fact, said “they reached such an advanced stage in spiritual experience that they were ‘beyond good and evil’. They maintained

³ Lenski., p. 456

⁴ Lenski notes, “Perfectionists misunderstand this statement and think that it refers to total sanctification: has stopped sinning altogether. They disregard the tense. They ignore 1:8-10; 2:1, 2; 3:3.” P. 458

that they had no sin, not in the sense that they had attained moral perfection but in the sense that what might be sin for people at a less mature stage of inner development was no longer sin for the completely ‘spiritual’ man.”⁵

To say one is “in Him” means one is “in Christ” or has a particular belief that has its message based on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. This person is a professing Christian, and in fact, this professing Christian is one who abides in Christ. The participle μένω (meno) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., “to remain,” “abide,” or “dwell” is part verb, part noun, thus making this individual a person who is a person who currently stands before God relying upon Him to cleanse them and has the sense: he who continues to abides or remain in Christ. The tenses of this verse scream out the distinction between two types of people. The true Christian practices what he preaches so the present tense is used, whereas, the false Christian’s actions have there foundation in not knowing, and in fact, the knowledge has never been there – it is the perfect tense. Where the true Christian acknowledges the saving work of Jesus on the cross, and hence, is seen as abiding in Christ, that is, not calling Him a liar and enjoying the freedom of not having his own sin condemn him, but rather, he continues to not continue in sin (ου part., not; αμαρτανω (hamartano) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., “to sin”) because he still holds and acknowledges the truth of his sinfulness.

Dr. F.F. Bruce says, “In saying that no one who ‘abides’ in him sins, John is not asserting that it is impossible for a believer to commit an occasional act of sin. He has already pointed to the provision made for such an emergency by means of confession (1.9) and Christ’s activity as His people’s Advocate (2.1f), and has warned his readers against unfounded claims to be sinless within or without (1.8, 10). What he does assert is that a sinful life does not mark a child of God, so that anyone who leads such a life is shown thereby not to be a child of God...Fellowship with the sinless One and indulgence in sin are a contradiction in terms.”⁶

4.Continuing in sin is not compatible with following Him (3:6b)

πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτανων οὐξ ἔωρακεν αὐτον οὐδε ἔγνωκεν αὐτον. (Everyone who continues to sin has not seen him neither has known him). Again the subject is found in everyone (πᾶς adj.n.m.sg., “all,” “every”) that is in the Church and professes Christ. If this person continues in their sin, as the present tense of the participle αμαρτανω (hamartano) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., “to sin,” communicates, this person is known as an active, open sinner. Did you catch the difference in the participles? The true Christian is one who is an abider, whereas the false Christian is one who is a sinner! What a striking difference identified in the grammer of the two persons.

Characteristic	Present Participle
True believer	Continues to be an abider in Him
False believer	Continues to be a sinner

⁵ FF Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistels of John* (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 2004), p. 26

⁶ F.F. Bruce, p. 90

The false Christian is called an unbeliever because he or she does not (ου part., not) οραω (horao) Perf. Act. Ind. 3sg., “see with the eyes,” or “see with the mind,” and means, he has never seen/known! The perfect tense is complete and you could say this person has never seen, or theologically, never been illuminated by the Holy Spirit. This person does not see, nor has he ever seen the big picture because he has never been born again – the eyes of his heart have never been opened. The personal pronoun αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3a.m.sg., “him” points to either God the Father or God the Son. But because the Father has been revealed through the Son, they are in essence one. That is to say, the object of this sight and knowledge has to do with the Son. Have you seen Him? Do you have the whole picture of who He is and what He did in the flesh on the cross for mankind? If you can say yes, then you know Him, but the false brother in the Church neither (ουδε conj., “neither”) has seen Him, nor γινωσκω (ginosko) Perf. Act. Ind. 3sg., “has known” Him. The perfect stresses the point of the individual’s complete lack of acceptance of who Christ is and the fact of His death on the cross covered his or her sin.

5. There is deception being taught concerning sin (3:7a)

3:7. Τεκνια, μηδεις πλανατω υμᾶς (Little children, let no one deceive you). The warning is addressed to the τεκνιον (teknion) voc.n.pl., “little children,” the weakest within the Christian community. They are the ones needing special instruction and protection due to the influence false teachers have upon them. They have not yet been through the tests and trials of the Christian walk, they are not yet battle hardened to the tricks of the Devil. John declares “let no one deceive you!” This is the third time he has talked about deception and the believer. Notice the progression of deception as it reaches its height of instruction here:

Deception (πλαναω) and its relation to sin:				Our relation to sin
Present Active Indictive	1:8	If we say we have no sin	<u>we deceive</u> ourselves	Our sin and self-deception
Present Active Participle	2:26	These things I have written to you concerning	<u>those that deceive</u> you	Outside sin and deception
Present Active Imperative	3:7	Little children	<u>let no one deceive</u> you	Exhortation to not sin

The adjective μηδεις (medeis) adj.n.m.sg., “no one,” or “nothing,” is translated “no one” or “no man” since it is masculine and means a person and not an abstract thing. “No one” is the subject of the phrase whose purpose is to πλαναω (planao) Pres. Act. Impv. 3sg., “to cause to stray,” “lead astray,” or “deceive” those in the Church. The imperative is often translated “let no one deceive you!” What is it that you should look for in order not be deceived? John tells us next.

6. Practicing righteousness is compatible with following Christ (3:7b)

ὁ ποιῶν την δικαιοσυνην δικαιος ἔστιν, καθως ἐκείνος δικαιος ἔστιν (he who does the righteousness is righteous even as that one is righteous). Nicoll says, “The Apostle cuts away vain pretences by a sharp principle: a righteous character expresses itself in righteous conduct. Christ is the type. He was ‘the Son of God,’ and if we are ‘children of God,’ we must be like Him.”⁷ A righteous person performs righteous conduct. The person in the Church who does not live a righteous life is suspect. The Christian should exhibit a changed life not only by word but by deed. This is expressed in the Greek by the participle ποιεω (poieo) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., “to make,” or “do,” and is translated, “he who does” in the sense of acting rightly according to a standard given. That standard given by God is called δικαιοσυνη (dikaiosune) a.f.sg., with def. art., “righteousness,” and since this a thing of God “justice” also comes with this word. As you can see, there is a right thing to do and a wrong thing to do. Anything that is not according to His commands is deemed unrighteous, and anything according to His commands deemed righteous. The actions of the Christian are measured against what God has to say about the subject. Can a starving Christian steal? Modern American humanism says yes, but God says no. The answer to this question is not based on a relative standard. The answer is never, because God said so!

The participle says this person is known as a doer of “the righteousness,” a specific righteousness as the definite article points out; a righteousness that is from God. A righteousness that is defined to be righteous as the adjective δικαιος (dikaios) adj.n.m.sg., “righteous,” or “just” is used with the stative verb εἰμι and hence, one can translate, “the righteousness, a righteous one it is.” The adverb καθως (kathos) adv., “as,” “even as,” is a simile and defines the righteous act as patterned after His standard.

Notice the far demonstrative εκεινος (ekeinos) dem. pron. n.m.sg., “that,” is used to describe Christ’s righteousness. Is Christ’s righteousness far from our righteousness? Yes! But since His righteousness is imputed to us, we are to use His standard of life as a pattern.

7. Practicing sin is compatible with following the Devil (3:8a)

3:8. ὁ ποιῶν την ἁμαρτιαν εκ του διαβολου ἔστιν, (He who does sin is of the Devil). Man is capable of performing acts of sin that is why in verse seven the far demonstrative is used to distinguish our righteousness, even in a state of salvation, as different in quality than His righteousness, and hence, we do not measure up to Christ’s righteousness and cannot measure up in reality. Yet still, the believer can and is expected to be righteous, to perform righteous deeds in Christ’s name and to be holy - set apart to God.

John, however, makes a point that the one who performs sin is of (ablative – source or origin) the Devil. The same construction as found in verse seven is repeated here, the present participle of “to do,” ποιεω (poieo) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., “to make,” or “do” is translated “the one who does” ἁμαρτια (hamartia) a.f.sg., with def. art., “the sin” is of the Devil. This serves as a contrast between the person of verse seven who performs righteousness and the one who does not. One who does not do right sins, and the one who does sin is declared to be εκ (ek) prep., “from,” or “originates from” του διαβολου “the Devil.” The word Devil comes from

⁷ W. Robertson Nicoll, gen. ed., *The Expositor’s Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), vol. 5, p. 185

διαβολος (diabolos) adj.g.m.sg., “devil,” “false accuser,” “slanderer,” from the compound of δια (dia) “through,” or “by,” and βαλλω (ballo) “to throw,” “put,” or “thrust” as the Devil throws out slander. Slander is false accusation that is meant to cause harm and injury. This person is identified as being (ειμι (eimi) Pres. Ind. 3sg., to be, exits) from, or in the group aligned with the Devil. The definite article points to a specific person. The same person identified before as the Antichrist (2:22). The adjectives describe the character of this person as well as the person. You might say he is the slanderous one, the slanderer.

8. Who is the Devil? (3:8b)

ὅτι ἀπὸ ἀρχῆς ὁ διαβολος ἀμαρτανει. (because the Devil sins from [the] start). This phrase identifies the person’s character, that is, he has been in rebellion since the beginning. It is not clear where the Devil fell, we do know that he rebelled after the creation of the world but sometime before the incident of Genesis three. The conjunction οτι (hoti) conj., is translated “since,” or “because” and forms the reason or cause for sin, indeed the first cause in this case. Does this mean that all sin originates from the Devil, or just that all sin has its origin from that first sin which originated from the Devil? In this case the prepositional phrase is placed at the head of the phrase in order to emphasize something about the Devil. The Devil is right now in a state of being in sin and will continue to stay in that state until the consummation of all things by Christ.

The Greek preposition απο (apo) prep., “from,” or “out of,” speaks of origin either, “of the place whence anything is or comes from,” or “of origin of a cause.” Since the preposition modifies the noun αρχη (arche) g.f.sg., “beginning,” or “origin,” the idea is most likely that of origin of a cause, that is, he is the cause of sin entering the world. But, this is a present tense so the idea is the Devil continues in his sin (present of past action (perfective present⁸) – most translate, “he has been sinning from the start”).

9. God came in the flesh to destroy the works of the Devil (3:8b)

εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερωθη ὁ υἱος τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα λυση τα ἔργα τοῦ διαβολου. (into this the Son of God was made manifest in order that he might break the works of the Devil). What a marvelous summary statement this is! Into this state of affairs, that is, this sinful, fallen world, the Son of God came in the flesh to die on the cross which served to secure victory over the Devil. This means that one of the functions that Jesus died for was to secure an unchangeable victory over Satan, since His death cannot be undone! The payment has been made, propitiation has been satisfied, expiation performed, and victory secured.

The proposition εις (eis) prep., “into,” or “towards” describes the direction or rather the environment, since the demonstrative ουτος (houtos) dem. pron. a.n.sg., “this” is used; the two

⁸ Sometimes called the durative present and corresponds to the English present perfect, meaning, the action began in the past and continues into the present. This is different from a perfect tense in that the perfect is completed action in the past and the result exists in the present. The present does not speak about the completion of the act, only that it existed and continues to exist, and may speak of Satan’s sin, not in a single act, but his character in general as a progenitor of sin.

combining to point out the world and all that is in it in a negative sense. Into this sinful world, or into this state of affairs, the Son of God [Jesus Christ] φανερωω (phaneroo) Aor. Pas. Ind. 3sg., “was made manifest,” or “appeared.” This has a visible character as it is derived from the verb φαινω (phaino) “to bring forth into the light” and for a purpose; the *hina* clause ινα (hina) conj., “in order that,” or “so that” He will break the works of the Devil. The subjunctive λυω (luo) Aor. Act. Subj. 3sg., “to loose,” has the idea that by His incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection, that is, His perfect sinless life, perfect sacrifice, and resurrection are all summed up in “His manifestation” which secures a one time point in the past of undoing the works of the Devil. His manifestation was for the *purpose* of bringing about a possible loosening the bondage to sin for the individual. There is possibility for the individual to see the works of the Devil in his or her life completely removed. The picture is that of being chained to the Devil and sin, and the possibility that everyone can λυω loose those chains, because Christ secured victory for the believer. The aorist subjunctive with the *hina* is a result clause where the intent of Christ was to break the chains of the Devil, that is, the subjective here speaks of the intention of the act to break the works of the devil not its possibility – He really did break the works of the Devil.

By works (εργον (ergon) a.n.pl., with def. art., “the business,” “works,” “deeds”) is meant “the business,” of the διαβολος (diabolos) adj.g.m.sg., with def. art., “devil” in all that is summed up in the Biblical use of the word “the world,” and all things alienated from God – all his plans of evil and control over the nations and people. He is seen as the ruler of this world (John 12:31) working in the sons of disobedience (Eph. 2:2) using demons to carry out his deception (Dan. 10:31, 20). But here in relation to the believer and the Church, he tempts believers to commit evil and perverts the gospel. Here it may be he tempts believers with the pride of intellect, to cover up selfishness and a lack of love, for the big issue in this letter is fellowship.

10. Being born again means abiding in Christ (3:9a)

3:9. Πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτιαν οὐ ποιεῖ, (Whosoever has been born of God, he does not sin). The first phase is a statement of fact that finds its reason in the next phrase and is made even clearer and reaches a literary height by the final phrase. This is about the half way point of the letter and is by all intent and purpose the central point of the book. That is to say, this is a letter of exhortation addressing the daily walk of a believer and a person who is born again must not consider his or her sin as not a problem. This verse is the reason the early Church in general did not quote from this letter, because the Gnostics used this verse as a proof text to justify their sinlessness. The Gnostic believed that they could sin, but that some had reached such a height of maturity that they could say they were no longer sinners. The world always invades God’s camp of people. It did in the Old Testament with the various pagan cultures, it did in New Testament with the Greek philosophy and it does today with whatever worldly philosophy the people of a particular culture encounter. This is the story of man. This is one of the doctrines in anthropology – that man fails. What is man like? Jesus says – a sheep, ready to follow after whatever looks good, but regenerated man has a new capability to accept the things of God and a new capability to repent and trun away from whatever sin has hold of them and have victory over the sin. Does this mean that a man has victory over all the sin that he continues in? No, God works in time and space to give the individual victory and freedom from individual sin on a case by case basis.

Spiritual growth is the context, so they are all addressed as children of God. The infant to the father, the least mature to the most mature all have a problem with sin and it is God's business to weed out the individual sin of the believer in time through trials, but one who continues to work out his or her individual sin, even openly, must be corrected by Scripture, and if that sin continues, or they deny it is a sin, then that person has not been born again. John makes this clear by his use of the universal *πας* (*pas*) adj.n.m.sg., "all," or "every" *γεννω* (*gennao*) Perf. Pas. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., meaning "to beget, "be born," "all who have been begotten" of God (*εκ του θεου*) continue not doing sin. The word for begotten is a perfect passive participle, the perfect means that the act of begetting was completed in the past and continues in that state at the time of writing; the passive means it was by means of an external agent. So that this person is born again by God and as such, their character will change because they have the gift of the Holy Spirit that serves to convict and teach the individual, thus maturing them and their response will eventually be to turn away from that sin. How do you know one is born again? What is the test of a believer? John answered this question in John 3:18: "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

John uses the Jewish concept of begotten as a metaphor, that is, it is believed that a child inherits his or her father's nature through the seed, so that those who are born again possess and reflect the character of their father.

The one begotten has the proposition *εκ* (*ek*) prep., "from," or "out of" *θεος* (*theos*) g.m.sg., with def. art., god, God; which is a genitive of source clarifying the passive who performs the action, or clarifying that God is the agent. And since the person is begotten of God, he is no longer a slave to sin and through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, he does not continue doing a sin. The present active indicative of *ποιεω* (*poieo*) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., "to make," or "to do" means that the person is not longer actively performing a sin that was an active part of his life, a continuous active sin! Notice, *αμαρτια* (*hamartia*) a.f.sg., "sin," is placed at the head of the phrase, placing importance upon a sin as the object. Notice also the absence of the definite article making this "the nature of sin," or "does not go on doing sin." This sin which is not definite, that is, it is just one of many, but was an open sin at one point in time, is no longer a master over him, controlling him, he now is set free from it. What a story we have, a testimony of someone who was a slave to sin, but is now set free!

ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, (because his seed remains in him). This phrase has caused a great deal of discussion concerning what the seed is. Is the seed the Spirit of God, the word of God, or something else? The reason that the believer no longer continues in a particular sin is given by this purpose clause introduced by *οτι* (*hoti*) conj., "because," or "since." The believer continues to possess His (God's) *σπέρμα* (*sperma*) n.n.sg., "seed," "from which a plant germinates," "the semen virile," the word comes to the English as sperm and is used metaphorically as "a few survivors remaining for the next generation," or alternatively, "of the divine energy of the Holy Spirit operating within the soul of the believer." The word picture goes with the "born of God" analogy but, here, it seems to imply spiritual growth. That is what this letter is about – growing in God. There has been a lot of talk concerning what the seed is here; the Word of God, The Holy Spirit, the light, the truth, the commandment, the offspring of the Spirit, Jesus as the Word, or God's nature, but it seems better suited here simply as a figure for spiritual growth. The seed starts with personal regeneration with the believer being transformed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. This person is born again and is a "babe in Christ." The baby is

expected to grow in maturity through the process of experiential salvation or sanctification, putting off one sin after another. Each time sin is overcome, the believer grows in faith and love.

The seed is a possession of αὐτός (autos) pers. pron. 3g.m.sg., “Him,” and one grows not apart from the Word of God, but the Holy Spirit works with the Word of God. There is no secret knowledge, special super spiritual person, or special way to grow; no, everyone that is a child of God has the seed and that seed works in the same way – through His Spirit, the Word, and personal experience to bring about personal growth that brings glory to Him.

That is why the child of God remains in Him, because His seed remains in him. The preposition ἐν (en) prep., “in,” is properly locative meaning the seed’s location is placed in man. The seed remains μένω (meno) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., “to remain,” “abide,” or “dwells” in the believer for all time. There is never a point in time when the believer does not possess God’s seed. Nicoll writes, “The germ of the divine life has been implanted in our souls, and it grows – a gradual process and subject to occasional retardation, yet sure, attaining at length to full fruition. The believer’s lapses into sin are like the mischances of the weather which hinder the seed’s growth. The growth of a living seed may be checked temporally; if there be no growth, there is no life.”⁹ This is an aspect of the law of love. God chastens those He loves. There is growth in the true child of God.

11. Being born again means putting off sin (3:9b)

καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτανεῖν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγεννηται. (and he is not able to sin because he is born of God). The born again person has been given the Holy Spirit who works with the word of God to convict the believer to repentance. This is the mechanism that works in the believer to change his or her life to be conformed to the image of God, to put away the old ways and to live a life pleasing to God. This is a general principle, what can be called the law of abiding in Christ. Our fellowship with Christ produces a result that moves us closer to Him and away from the works of the Devil. Being set apart by God means we are separated from the sins of the world, but we live in this world so how is it that we are separated? It is this seed that we possess that gives us a new ability, the Greek δυναμαί (dunamai) Pres. M/P Dep. Ind. 3sg., “to be able,” “to have power,” not to sin. Notice the ability is in the present tense as we “continue to be capable” of not sinning.” The present infinitive of ἁμαρτανῶ (hamartano) Pres. Act. Inf., is properly translated “continue in sin,” as the clause is a result of what follows. The Greek infinitive is here locative in scope¹⁰. John typically speaks in a Hebrew fashion, so it is here that he uses the classic verb + infinitive to function as an infinitive absolute, thus intensify or reiterating the verbal statement, “he shall surely not continue sinning.”

The ὅτι (hoti) conj., “because,” or “since,” points to the reason as “from God” (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ) this person “has been born.” The perfect passive of γεννάω (gennao) Perf. Pas. Ind. 3sg., “beget,” “be born,” is a completed act and the action was directed to him or her by an external agent. Because he is born of God implies that God has the power over the person’s life that He and He alone is able to bring about this change. And it is true that He works in His children as a potter working clay, freeing man from the slavery of sin, giving man a new capability to accept

⁹ Nicoll., p. 185

¹⁰ The infinite is simply a substantive of the dative or locative case (to/in sin), but the NT use sometimes reflects a Hebrew sense as an “ing” word, that is, it might better read, “go on sinning,” (anathrous: what is of the nature of sin. – Lenski)

the things of God. The reason we as believers cannot continue in sin is that God hates sin and the Holy Spirit's work in the believer is to conform us to the image of God, and to do that one must be kept pure by the renewing of the mind. The purpose of this work is to keep us in fellowship with Him and to hear us bring glory to Him, for He alone is Holy.

3:4 – πας ο ποιων την αμαρτιαν και την ανομιαν ποιει και η αμαρτια εστιν η ανομια (Everyone who does sin indeed the transgression is made and the sin is the transgression) : πας (pas) adj.a.m.sg., all, every; ποιω (poieo) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., to make, do: he who does; αμαρτια (hamartia) a.f.sg., with def. art., sin, miss the mark; και (kai) conj., and, also, even, indeed; ανομια (anomia) a.f.sg., with def. art., the condition of without law, iniquity, unrighteousness, transgression; ποιω (poieo) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., to make, do: he/she/it is doing; και (kai) conj., and, also, even, indeed; αμαρτια (hamartia) n.f.sg., with def. art., sin, miss the mark; ειμι (eimi) Pres. Ind. 3sg., to be, exist: he/she/it is; ανομια (anomia) n.f.sg., with def. art., the condition of without law, iniquity, unrighteousness, transgression.

3:5 – και οιδατε οτι εκεινος εφανερωθη ινα τας αμαρτιας ημων αρη (And you have known that he was made manifest so that he took away our sins) : και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; ειδω (eido) Perf. Act. Ind. 2pl., to see, know: you have seen; οτι (hoti) conj., that, because, since; εκεινος (ekeinos) dem. pron. n.m.sg., that; φανερωω (phaneroo) Aor. Pas. Ind. 3sg., to make manifest, visible, known: he was made known; ινα (hina) conj., that, in order that, so that; αμαρτια (hamartia) a.f.pl., with def. art., sin, to miss the mark; εγω (ego) pers. pron. 1g.pl., us; αιρω (airo) Aor. Act. Subj. 3sg., to raise up, elevate, to take upon one's self, to bear away what has been raised: he took away.

και αμαρτια εν αυτω ουκ εστιν (and sin is not in him) : και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; αμαρτια (hamartia) n.f.sg., sin, miss the mark; εν (en) prep., in, by, with; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3d.m.sg., him; ου (ou) part., not; ειμι (eimi) Pres. Ind. 3sg., to be, exist: he/she/it is.

3:6 – πας ο εν αυτω μενων ουχ αμαρτανει (Everyone that abides in Him does not sin) : πας (pas) adj.n.m.sg., all, every; εν (en) prep., in, by, with; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3d.m.sg., him; μενω (meno) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., to remain, abide, dwell: he who remains; ου (ou) part., not; αμαρτανω (hamartano) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., to sin, miss the mark.

πας ο αμαρτανων ουχ εωρακεν αυτον ουδε εγνωκεν αυτον (everyone who continues to sin has not seen him neither has known him) : πας (pas) adj.n.m.sg., all, every; αμαρτανω (hamartano) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., to sin, miss the mark: he who sins; ου (ou) part., not; οραω (horao) Perf. Act. Ind. 3sg., to see with the eyes, see with the mind: he/she/it has seen; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3a.m.sg., him; ουδε (oude) conj., but not, neither, nor, a compound of ου (ou) not and δε (de) but, and; γινωσκω (ginosko) Perf. Act. Ind. 3sg., to know, understand: he/she/it has known; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3a.m.sg., him.

3:7 – τεκνια μηδεις πλανατω υμας (Little children, let no one deceive you) : τεκνιον (teknion) voc.n.pl., a little child; μηδεις (medeis) adj.n.m.sg., no one, nothing, from the compound of μη (ne) not and εις (heis) one; πλαναω (planao) Pres. Act. Impv. 3sg., to cause to stray, lead astray, deceive from πλανος (planos) wandering, misleading: he/she/it deceive; συ (su) pers. pron. 2a.pl., you.

ο ποιων την δικαιοσυνην δικαιος εστιν καθως εκεινος δικαιος εστιν (he who does the righteousness is righteous even as that one is righteous) : ποιεω (poieo) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., to make, do: he who does; δικαιοσυνη (dikaiosune) a.f.sg., with def. art., righteousness, justice; δικαιος (dikaios) adj.n.m.sg., righteous, just; ειμι (eimi) Pres. Ind. 3sg., to be, exist: he/she/it is; καθως (kathos) adv., as, even as, since, when, after that, a compound of κατα (kata) according to, down and ως (hos) as, like; εκεινος (ekeinos) dem. pron. n.m.sg., that; δικαιος (dikaios) adj.n.sg., righteous, just; ειμι (eimi) Pres. Ind. 3sg., to be, exist: he/she/it is.

3:8 – ο ποιων την αμαρτιαν εκ του διαβολου εστιν (He who does sin is from the Devil) : ποιεω (poieo) Pres. Act. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., to make, do: he who does; αμαρτια (hamartia) a.f.sg., with def. art., sin, miss the mark; εκ (ek) prep., from, out of; διαβολος (diabolos) adj.g.m.sg., devil, false accuser, slanderer, from the compound of δια (dia) through, by and βαλλω (ballo) to throw, put, thrust; ειμι (eimi) Pres. Ind. 3sg., to be, exists: he/she/it is.

οτι απ αρχης ο διαβολος αμαρτανει (because the Devil is sin from the [the] start) : οτι (hoti) conj., that, since, because; απο (apo) prep., from, out of; αρχη (arche) g.f.sg., beginning, origin; διαβολος (diabolos) adj.n.m.sg., devil, false accuser, slanderer, from the compound of δια (dia) through, by and βαλλω (ballo) to throw, put, thrust: αμαρτανω (hamartano) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., to sin, miss the mark: he sins.

εις τουτο εφανερωθη ο υιος του θεου ινα λυση τα εργα του διαβολου (into this the son of God was made manifest in order that he might break the works of the Devil) : εις (eis) prep., into, towards; ουτος (houtos) dem. pron. a.n.sg., this; φανερωω (phaneroo) Aor. Pas. Ind. 3sg., to make manifest, visible, appear, from the verb φαινω (phaino) to bring forth into the light: he/she/it was made manifest; υιος (huios) n.m.sg., with def. art., a son; θεος (theos) g.m.sg., with def. art., god, God; ινα (hina) conj., that, in order that; λυω (luo) Aor. Act. Subj. 3sg., to loose: he/she/it might break; εργον (ergon) a.n.pl., with def. art., business, work, deed; διαβολος (diabolos) adj.g.m.sg., with def. art., devil, false accuser, slanderer, from the compound of δια (dia) through, by and βαλλω (ballo) to throw, put, thrust.

3:9 – πας ο γεγεννημενος εκ του θεου αμαρτιαν ου ποιει (whosoever has been born of God, he does not continue in sin) : πας (pas) adj.n.m.sg., all, every; γενναω (gennaō) Perf. Pas. Part. n.m.sg., with def. art., to beget, be born: he who has been born; εκ (ek) prep., from, out of; θεος (theos) g.m.sg., with def. art., god, God; αμαρτια (hamartia) a.f.sg., sin, miss the mark; ου (ou) part., not; ποιεω (poieo) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., to make, do: he/she/it is doing.

οτι σπερμα αυτου εν αυτω μενει (because his seed remains in him) : οτι (hoti) conj., that, because, since; σπερμα (sperma) n.n.sg., seed, from which a plant germinates, the semen virile; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3g.m.sg., him; εν (en) prep., in, by, with; αυτος (autos) pers. pron. 3d.m.sg., him; μενω (meno) Pres. Act. Ind. 3sg., to remain, abide, dwell: he/she/it remains.

και ου δυναται αμαρτανειν οτι εκ του θεου γεγεννηται (and is not able to sin because he is born of God) : και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; ου (ou) part., not; δυναμαι (dunamai)

Pres. M/P Dep. Ind. 3sg., to be able, have power, to be able to do something: he/she/it is able;
αμαρτανω (hamartano) Pres. Act. Inf., sin, miss the mark; οτι (hoti) conj., that, because, since;
εκ (ek) prep., out of, from; θεος (theos) g.m.sg., with def. art., god, God; γεννωω (gennaο) Perf.
Pas. Ind. 3sg., beget, be born: he/she/it is born.