

SESSION TWENTY-TWO

"Parrasia" At The "Parousia"

(Having Confidence at Our Lord's Return)

1 John 2:28—3:24

I. THE STRUCTURAL IDENTIFICATION

- A. Does the chapter break at 3:1 mark the beginning of the new section? No!
1. The thought of Christ's *appearance* in 2:28 is reiterated in 3:2.
 2. 2:28-29 forms an *inclusio* with 3:9-10
 - a. "born of Him" -- "born of God"
 - b. "practices righteousness"
 - c. abiding concept: "abide in Him" (2:28) vs "His seed abides in him" (3:9)
 - d. "He appears" -- φανερωθῆ (2:28) with "obvious" -- φανερά (3:10)
- B. Significance
The idea of abiding in Christ to be prepared for the Lord's return (2:28-29) is fundamental to what the author is discussing in 3:1-10.

II. THE MAJOR INTERPRETATIVE DIFFICULTY

- A. The Problem: What is John trying to say in 3:6 and 3:9?
- B. Various Solutions:
1. Present Tense of Verb: Habitual [so *NIV* and many commentators]
 - a. Greek Construction
 - (1) 3:4 – ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν (pres. Ptc.) Lit: "who does sin"
 - (2) 3:6 – οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει (pres. Indic.) Lit: "sins not"
 - b. Present tense verbs are understood as "habitual." Hence, John is not talking about sinning in an absolute sense but about the person who habitually sins. Hence, translate as "continues to sin."
 - c. Problems:
 - (1) This involves a grammatical subtlety for which there is no further contextual clarification
 - (2) Those who take this position are inconsistent: don't translate other present tense verbs in 1 John this way (e.g., 1:9 – "habitually confess sins")
 - (3) 1 John 5:16 would make no sense – "if anyone sees his brother *continuously* sinning not to death"

2. The ideal view
 - a. Elaboration: the author is speaking of an ideal not fully realized in present experience (pardonable exaggeration) [so I. Howard Marshall]
 - b. Problem: not convincing and lacks support (how can we be sure that it was meant to be understood this way?)

3. Absolute Contrast [so Hall Harris]
 - a. Elaboration: the author is presenting two extremes, true Christians who abide and practice righteousness in contrast to those like the false teachers who do not consider moral behavior as important. Harris takes it that 3:9 has in view the specific sin of not loving one's brother.
 - b. Problems:
 - (1) Harris's view retains the idea that one who habitually sins must not be a true believer [For him, true Christians will only *occasionally* sin].
 - (2) This view does not do justice to the admonition for Christians to "abide in Him" (2:28) [for Harris, all Christians *abide*].

4. Inward Obedience View [so Zane Hodges]
 - a. Elaboration: John is speaking in a very absolute sense, i.e., there is absolutely no sin that takes place. Hence, John must be speaking not of the person as a whole, but only of his inward regenerated nature. Every believer is totally free from sin at the level of his inner being.
 - b. Possible Support:
 - (1) The connection between vs 5 and vs 6 (the statement "in Him there is no sin" should define what "abiding" in Him means in vs 6)
 - (2) Possible support for this theory from Rom 7 (see 7:22-25)
 - c. Problems:
 - (1) Hodges takes "purifies himself" in 3:3 as the inward purification at new birth by the exercise of faith, but the parallel in 3:7 about "practicing righteousness" refutes this. [The word "just as" (Gk καθὼς) does not need to mean "to the degree." More of a *causal* sense.
 - (2) Must qualify vs 3:6 ("sins"). 1 Jn 1:8 – of course we have sin. So after stating that the "sinning" is absolute, he says in 3:6 that it is not absolute.
 - (3) This view does not do justice to the biblical use of the concept "of the devil." In Jn 8:44-47 and Acts 13:10, unsaved individuals are likely in

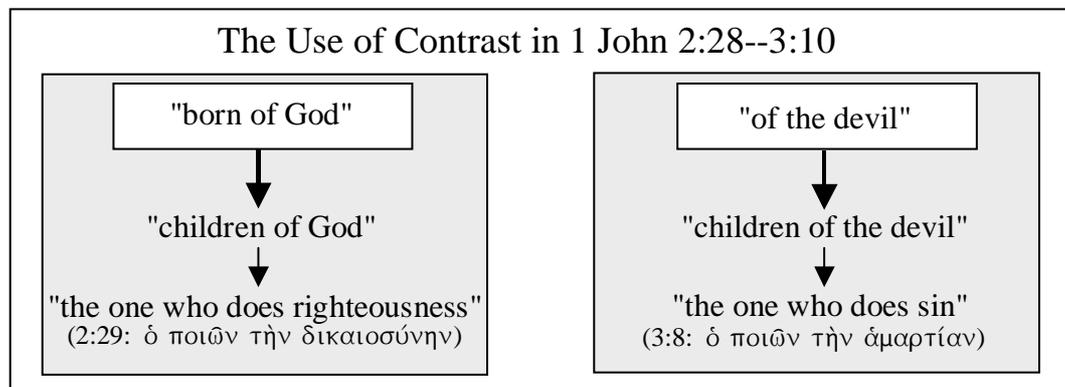
view. [Hodges takes 3:8 to mean the person (i.e., a Christian) who is under the influence of the devil].

- (4) To say that "*not sinning*" means "not sinning at the inward level" would have to imply that "doing righteousness" is only at the inward level. Note that John says those who are born of God both "do righteousness" (2:29) as well as "do not sin" (3:9).

C. Towards a Better Solution

1. Key Observations:

- a. 1 Jn 1:8 -- John has already stated that Christians would be deceiving themselves if they said they had no sin (cf. 2:1). He is not contradicting himself in chapter 3, and therefore his statements cannot be taken in an absolute sense.
- b. "of the devil" (3:8) -- two reasons suggest that this is looking at non-Christians
- (1) Biblical parallels in Jn 8:44-47 and Acts 13:10
 - (2) In 1 Jn 3, those who are "of the devil" are in contrast to those who are "born of God"
- Implication: from 3:8, the one who practices sin is of the devil, and thus a non-Christian. So, John seems to be contrasting a non-Christian perspective from a Christian perspective.



- c. 1 Jn 3:7 -- "let no one deceive you"
This thought was seen earlier in 2:26 in regard to the antichrists (false teachers) who were attacking John's readers with heretical teaching in contradiction to the apostles. This implies that their doctrine had at least an element of pre-Gnosticism to it, i.e., that moral behavior was not important. Thus, what John writes is written with the non-Christian false teachers in mind—they are the ones who effectively advocate sin and "practice sin."
2. Proposed Solution: Contrast of Principles View
 - a. Elaboration:
John is writing to correct the teaching of the false teachers that moral behavior was inconsequential. They are the ones "who do sin" (as non-Christians) in contrast to John's readers who "do righteousness." [Thus, to "do sin" is to adopt their attitude toward sin]. The false teachers (and those who follow their deception) live indifferently to sin, as though it does not matter. Christians (those "born of God"), however, cannot afford to adopt this philosophy, because they face the judgment seat of Christ at the Savior's return. Hence, Christians shun the notion of "doing sin" and instead operate by the principle of "doing righteousness."
 - b. Implications:
 - (1) Not all Christians "abide in Him"
 - (2) Some Christians will face "shame" at the return of Christ
 - (3) The matter of "doing righteousness" versus "doing sin" is not a matter of how much one does, but a matter of what principle he is choosing to operate by.
 - (4) This passage should not be used for "testing" whether one is or is not a Christian—based on the presence of sin in one's life. [The person who lives by a philosophy that sin does not matter is not a Christian, but a Christian can certainly struggle in sin].
 - (5) The wise Christian ("he who has this hope"—vs 3) will seek to purify himself, knowing that He will one day meet Christ face to face

III. SELECTED COMMENTS ON 1 JOHN 2:28—3:10

- A. The need to “abide in Him” and “purify oneself” in preparation for His coming (2:28—3:3)
1. Verse 2:28
 - a. “Abiding in Him” is defined in 3:24 as obedience (recall 2:6). This is confirmed by 3:6. Thus, not all Christians abide in Christ.
 - b. The reason for the urgency of “abiding” is given in 28b—that we may have confidence upon His return. The word *παρρησια* means “boldness, courage,” and John is thinking of the confidence/boldness at the judgment seat of Christ (note 4:17). “Abiding” is Christ now will thus prepare us for the judgment seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:10; Rom 14:10-12).
 - c. “shrink away . . . in shame” is one word in the Greek (*αἰσχυροθῶμεν*) and simply means to be “put to shame or be disgraced” [“shrink away” would reflect a *middle voice*, but this is passive].
 2. Verse 2:29

“Doing righteousness” logically follows for the Christian: the Lord Jesus is righteous, and our goal is to be like Him. The concept of “doing righteousness” means the practice of holiness (see Rev 22:11). John is not saying that everyone who seeks to be morally upright is “born of Him” (proper belief is also required—so 5:1). But a desire for true holiness springs from the fact that one has experienced the new birth.
 3. Verse 3:1

Obviously, “children of God” are to be distinct from the unsaved world.
 4. Verse 3:2

To “see Him just as He is” is to see His righteousness, as John just mentioned in 2:29. Our experience of beholding Him in His righteousness will bring about our total transformation.
 5. Verse 3:3

The idea of “purifying oneself” can have a ritual connotation (so Jn 11:55; cf. Acts 21:24,26; 24:18), but it can also have the idea of a repentant submissive heart unto God (so James 4:8). Thus to “purify oneself” means to have the right heart attitude before God with sin being dealt with and put away.
- B. The Deception of those who “do sin” (3:4-10)
1. Verse 3:4

The expression “do sin” in the Greek has the same construction as “do righteousness” in 2:29 (see chart above). The person who “does sin” does not

necessarily mean one who *continuously* or *habitually* sins, but the false teachers who advocated that sin did not matter. There is such a thing as God's law that one ought to submit to [but not the Mosaic Law of the OT].

2. Verse 3:5
Those who say that sin is not an important issue face two problems: (1) there would have been no need for Christ to have appeared in His first coming to *die for sins* (cf. John 1:29); and (2) Christ Himself is without sin [why did He feel a need to live righteously? The fact that He did implies that it is important].
3. Verse 3:6
John returns to his concern that Christians "abide in Him" (so 2:28). *Abiding* involves *not sinning*, which obviously implies that many Christians are not "abiding in Him." The Perfect verbs "seen Him" and "knows Him" are best understood as *Intensive Perfects*.¹ This stresses the results or present state produced by a past action (not that they have never done so). These ideas are experiential: we cannot experientially *see Him* or *know Him* by sinning (cf. 3 John 11 where the idea of "seeing Him" is the outcome of not doing evil; the verse implies that a Christian can be guilty).
4. Verse 3:7
This verse suggests that a false doctrine about sin was being promoted by the false teachers (recall 2:26). We can be *righteous* like our Lord (sanctification—not sinless perfection) by "doing righteousness."
5. Verse 3:8
The one who "does sin" (lives with a philosophy of sin like the false teachers) is of the devil—he is unsaved. He is doing what the devil has always wanted to see done, i.e., for people to sin. Christ, however, wants to "destroy" the devil's works. The word "destroy" (Aorist of λῶω) can mean to break something (Jn 10:35) or undo something (Jn 1:27). Thus, because of Christ's work in His first coming, believers do not have to sin. We are no longer slaves to sin (don't have to sin).
6. Verse 3:9
The verse is not saying that a believer will not commit *a sin* (recall 1:8; 2:1), but that he does not live with the view of the false teachers toward sin (act as though it does not matter). Believers, even when they continue in a sin pattern, feel a grief about their sin. They can harden their hearts until the point that their consciences become seared, but they do not say that sin does not matter. His "seed" in us alerts us that sin is wrong. This could be either His Holy Spirit (Jn 3:5; 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13) or the Word of God (1 Jn 2:14; cf. Jn 15:7). Now that we are born again, we are not morally neutral—there is an inner sensing that sin is wrong. Verse 9b must be

¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 574-76.

understood in light of the context—not an absolute statement but that he cannot sin *in this way* because of the new birth.

7. Verse 3:10

Since this is the final statement of the section, John is probably aiming his remark at the false teachers and their teaching about sin. Those who don't promote "doing righteousness" are of the devil and should not be listened to. The concern about *holiness* also pertains to loving one's brother, a thought which launches the next section in 3:11-24.

FINAL LESSONS FROM OUR STUDY