

# 1 John 3:6 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT

CLICK VERSE

To go directly to that verse

- [1 John 3:1](#)
- [1 John 3:2](#)
- [1 John 3:3](#)
- [1 John 3:4](#)
- [1 John 3:5](#)
- [1 John 3:6](#)
- [1 John 3:7](#)
- [1 John 3:8](#)
- [1 John 3:9](#)
- [1 John 3:10](#)
- [1 John 3:11](#)
- [1 John 3:12](#)
- [1 John 3:13](#)
- [1 John 3:14](#)
- [1 John 3:15](#)
- [1 John 3:16](#)
- [1 John 3:17](#)
- [1 John 3:18](#)
- [1 John 3:19](#)
- [1 John 3:20](#)
- [1 John 3:21](#)
- [1 John 3:22](#)
- [1 John 3:23](#)
- [1 John 3:24](#)

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD AND HIS CHILDREN  
Click chart to enlarge  
Charts from [Jensen's Survey of the NT](#) - used by permission  
Another Overview Chart - [1 John](#) - [Charles Swindoll](#)

BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP		BEHAVIOR OF FELLOWSHIP	
Conditions of Fellowship	Cautions of Fellowship	Fellowship Characteristics	Fellowship Consequences
Meaning of Fellowship 1 Jn 1:1-2:27		Manifestations of Fellowship 1 Jn 2:28-5:21	
Abiding in God's Light		Abiding in God's Love	
Written in Ephesus			
circa 90 AD			

From Talk Thru the Bible

**1 John 3:6 No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him:**

**Greek** - pas o en auto menon (PAPMSN) ouch hamartanei (3SPA) pas o hamartanon (PAPMSN) ouch eoraken (3SRA) auton oude egnoken (3SRA) auton .

**ESV** - No one who abides in him **keeps on sinning**; no one who **keeps on sinning** has either seen him or

known him.

**NIV** - No one who lives in him **keeps on sinning**. No one who **continues to sin** has either seen him or known him.

**Wuest** - Everyone who in Him is constantly abiding is not habitually sinning. Everyone who is constantly sinning has not with discernment seen Him, nor has he known Him, with the result that that condition is true of him at present.

- 1Jn 2:28 Joh 15:4-7
- 1Jn 3:2,9 2:4 4:8 5:18 2Co 3:18 4:6 3Jn 1:11
- [1 John 3 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **ABIDERS DON'T SIN HABITUALLY SINNERS DON'T ABIDE AT ALL!**

See Thomas Manton - [1 John 3:6 - No one who abides in him keeps on sinning](#)

**YLT** - every one who is remaining in him doth **not (ou)** sin; every one who is sinning, hath **not (ou)** seen him, **nor (oude)** known him.

**Comment:** From **Young's Literal translation** it is easy to see John's three negatives and it is notable that all three in Greek signify **absolute** negation or categorical denial of what follows! John is saying that the one who abides in Christ is one who absolutely does not manifest a lifestyle of continual, habitual, unabated sin. To the contrary, if one continually lives a life of sin, in simple terms, they don't really know Jesus. Regardless of what they profess, they are not truly born again! They may cry "Lord, Lord" (Mt 7:22-note) but they do not continually do the will of the Father in heaven (Mt 7:21-note). Beloved, do not be deceived! Genuine salvation results in a new creation, a new lifestyle, a new direction. No it is not *perfection*, but it is a new *direction*!

1John 5:18 makes a similar statement in the first clause...

**We know that no one who is born of God sins (present tense);** but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. (1John 5:18)

**No one who abides in Him sins** - If we abide in Christ, we cannot live in sin! Sin is no longer our master. Genuine believers cannot live a lifestyle of sin.

**Who** is the one who **abides in Him**? Some say this speaks of the **practice** of a believer abiding (thus speaking of fellowship with Christ) but others say it describes the **position** of the believer (thus speaking of identity as a follower of Christ). Remember that **context is king** in interpretation, so what is the immediate context? While there is not a **"but"** separating the first clause from the second, when one compares these two clauses, they clearly depict a striking contrast - the first person abides in God in contrast to the second who does not abide in God because he has neither seen nor known Him. Clearly the latter clause depicts an unbeliever, not having seen or known God. And so he sins habitually because he does not have God's Spirit within to give him power not to sin. On the other hand, the first clause depicts a believer (defined as one who abides in God) and because he abides in God (i.e., that is his position), God's Spirit abides in him and gives him power to not sin continually (i.e., that is his practice).

Here is an example from **Thomas Constable** (whose expository notes are often quoted on this website as they are generally well done) of what I consider to be an erroneous interpretation of what John is saying. Constable comments "*If **abiding in God equals being a Christian**, this verse appears to contradict what John wrote in 1:8 and 10 (Ed: but see Hiebert's and Stott's comments below). There he said that Christians sin (cf. 2a:1; 15; 29; 3:12, 18; 5:16, 21). It also seems to contradict personal experience since genuine Christians do indeed sin.*" Yes, Christians do sin as all believers know too well! But a Christian does not go on sinning (**sin** is in the **present tense**). I realize that some like **Grant Richison** (his commentaries are also well-done and are quoted on this website) say the **present tense** does not speak of habitual action in this verse ([Zane Hodges \[see his unusual teachings\]](#) takes a similar position), but he has to say that in order to make the the first clause speak of **fellowship of the believer** rather than **identity as a believer!** (**For more detail see [Harris' discussion on the present tense in this passage](#)**) Beloved, do not be deceived! (1Jn 3:7-note) If the bent of one's life is **continually toward sinning**, how can one even remotely claim to be a follower of Christ? How can one claim to have the indwelling Holy Spirit if the entire tenor of their life continually gravitates toward unholiness? This is a dangerous teaching and one to which our Lord Jesus surely warned in the Sermon on the Mount, declaring to those who "*professed*" to know Him (They said "Lord, Lord," etc - Mt 7:21-22-note) "I never (at any time) knew you (speaks of intimacy, of union). **Depart (present imperative)** from Me, (**Why? What was Jesus' criterion?**). You who **practice (present tense** - the same tense as **sin** in 1Jn 3:6) lawlessness (which John calls **sin** in 1Jn 3:5-note)." (Mt 7:23-note).

I love **C H Spurgeon's** approach of letting the plain sense of the text speak plainly! - This plain, simple verse, has been twisted by

some who believe in the doctrine of perfection, and they have made it declare that it is possible for some to abide in Christ, and therefore not to sin. But you will remark that it does not say, that some that abide in Christ do not sin; but it says that none who abide in Christ sin. "Whosoever abides in Him does not sin." Therefore this passage is not to be applied to a few who attain to what is called by our Arminian friends the fourth degree—perfection; but it **appertains to all believers; and of every soul in Christ it may be said, that he does not sin. In reading the Bible, we read it simply as we would read another book. We ought not to read it as a preacher his text, with the intention of making something out of every word; but we should read it as we find it written:** "Whosoever abides in Christ does not sin." Now we are sure that cannot mean that he does not sin at all, but it means that **sins not habitually**, he sins not designedly, he sins not finally, so as to perish. The Bible often calls a man righteous; but that does not mean that he is perfectly righteous. It calls a man a sinner, but it does not imply that he may not have done some good deeds in his life; it means that that is the man's **general character**. So with the man who **abides in Christ**: his **general character** is not that he is a sinner, but that he is a saint—he sins not openly and willfully before men. In his own heart, he has much to confess, but his life before his fellow creatures is such a one that it can be said of him: "Whosoever abides in Him does not sin; but whosoever sins [the sins of this world. in which the multitude indulge] hath not seen him, neither known him."

**Hiebert** (who is an excellent expositor with great expertise in the original Greek) explains that "Everyone in the first group (**Ed**: "No one who abides in Him sins") is characterized by his **abiding relationship with Christ**: "Whosoever abides in Him sins not" (literally, "every one in Him abiding not is sinning"). The position of "**in Him**" (en autō) between the article and the present participle marks **his ongoing relationship with Christ as an essential feature of his identity. He continually "abides" in Christ as the true sphere of his life, dwelling in Him in Whom there is no sin.** This relationship of remaining "in Him" implies obedience to Him (Jn 15:10) rather than following his own will. Of such a one John asserts that he "sins not" (ouch hamartanei), **does not continue in willful, habitual sin.** John has already indicated that the believer cannot claim never to commit an act of sin (1Jn 1:8–9-note; 1Jn 2:1-note). Sin may enter his experience as an exception which calls for immediate confession and cleansing; he is not at liberty to make occasional excursions into sin but should continually seek to avoid any lapse into sin. John's apparently contradictory statements concerning sin and the believer reflect that inner tension which Paul discusses in Romans 7:1-25-note. ([1 John 2:29-3:12 Online](#)) ([The Epistles of John- An Expositional Commentary](#))

**John Stott** - The logical deduction follows (the truth in 1Jn 3:5-note). If the eternal nature of the Son of God is sinless, and if the purpose of His historical appearing was to remove sin, then **no-one who lives in Him (Ed: "abides in Him")** keeps on sinning, **while, on the other hand (Ed: Note how Stott also sees a contrast), no-one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him.** It is typical of John's method that he should drive the truth home by this double hammer-blow about sinning and not sinning. ([The Letters of John by John R. W. Stott](#)) (Bolding added for emphasis).

**Wuest** who is well known for his expert writings on the Greek comments that "The words **abides** and **sins** are used here to designate a certain class of individual. Character is shown by one's habitual actions, not the extraordinary ones The tense of the verbs is **present**, the kind of action, continuous, habitual. Thus, "every one who habitually is abiding in Him," is a **saved person**, and, "every one who habitually is sinning," an **unsaved person. A Christian as a habit of life is abiding in fellowship with the Lord Jesus.** Sin may at times enter his life. But sin is the exception, not the rule. The unsaved person as a habit of life sins continually. "**Sins**" is **present tense**, continuous action being indicated. **The person who is abiding in Christ is not habitually sinning. The child of God as a habit of life, does righteousness, and sin is not a habit with him.** John is not teaching sinless perfection here. Vincent says: "John does not teach that believers do not sin, but is speaking of a character, a habit. Throughout the Epistle, he deals with the ideal reality of life in God, in which the **love of God and sin** exclude each other as **light and darkness.**" He does not deny that a Christian sins at times. Indeed he admits the possibility of sin in the Christian's life in 1Jn 1:9-note, and forbids sin in 1Jn 2:1-note. **What John denies here is that a Christian sins habitually. He denies that the life of a Christian is wholly turned towards sin as is that of the unsaved person.** ([Word Studies from the Greek New Testament](#)) (Bolding added)

**Tom Wells** comments on **No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him** - Here "**abiding**" is described in such a way that it must be true of every Christian. The argument runs thus: (i) If a man sins, he does not abide in Christ. (ii) Such men who sin and do not "abide" have neither seen or known Christ. (iii) Therefore, by definition, anyone who is a Christian abides; anyone who abides is a Christian. There are no non-abiding Christians. All others have neither seen nor known Christ. ([Pitfalls in Understanding 1 John](#))

**John MacArthur** on **abides in Him sins** - John taught that no one who sins (the present tense of the verb again denotes the habitual action of defiance and rebellion by a fallen heart) can also abide in Christ. It is not that people who become Christians will never sin again (1:8), but they will not live as they did, because no one who sins consistently or habitually in the pattern of the unregenerate has seen Him or knows Him.

**Cole** on **abides in Him** - **Abides** is John's word for fellowship, but we need to understand that in his mind, **every Christian abides in Christ. The idea that there are two types of Christians, those who abide in Him and do not sin, and those who do not abide and do sin, was foreign to the apostle's thinking.** The word **abide** in 1Jn 3:6 is parallel to is **born of God** in 1Jn 3:9 (**Ed**:

Which shows the vital importance of **Keeping Context King** in order to arrive at a correct interpretation!). This is further evident by the fact that John adds (1Jn 3:6), "**no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.**" The false teachers claimed to have special revelation or knowledge of Christ. John says that their sinful lives betrayed them. His point is that anyone that knows Jesus Christ as the holy, sinless Savior, Who came to offer Himself on the cross to forgive our sins, **does not live in sin. If someone lives in sin, it shows that he has not seen Jesus as He revealed Himself, and does not know Him as Savior.** ([Sermon](#)) (Bolding added)

**Wiersbe** on **abides in Him** - 1Jn 3:6 ought to read, "Whosoever abides in Him **does not habitually sin.**" Ephesians 2:1–3-note makes it clear that the **unsaved sin constantly** because they live in the flesh and for the devil. But the Christian has a new nature within (**Ed**: cp Ezek 36:27) and is no longer Satan's slave. (Expository Outlines on the NT) (Bolding added for emphasis)

**Albert Barnes** - those who are true Christians do not habitually sin.

**S Lewis Johnson** on what John means by **abides** in this context - **Abiders** do not sin, is what he says. What does it mean to **abide**? To realize our oneness, taking his view of things, understanding sin as he understands it, understanding law as he understands it, understanding righteousness as he understands it, understanding guilt as he understands it, understanding holiness and desiring holiness, that would be reflective of being in him. But on the other hand, non abiders, this is why John's words are so blunt, non abiders have "not seen him, neither known him." ([The Inadmissibility of Sin](#))

**George Findlay** flatly states that - Not only is the practicer of sin ipso facto out of Christ; his life argues that he always has been so, and that his **Christian profession** was never genuine. "Every one that sins has not seen Him nor known Him." The same thing St John had said of the "many antichrists," extruded from the Church and seducing its membership: "they went out from us, but they were not of us" (1Jn 2:19). Their outer severance and overt rebellion against the law of Christ disclose a radical difference of spirit in them. Men of **religious profession** living in deceit or impurity or lovelessness, who reconcile themselves to sinful practice and yet deem themselves Christians, had from the beginning (the Apostle supposes) no proper knowledge of the Lord they profess to serve. They have never truly seen what Jesus Christ is like nor come to any real acquaintance with Him, or they would recognize the absurdity of their position. For his own part, the writer felt that once to have known the Lord makes any other ideal impossible; once and for all, **the love of sin was killed in the disciple by the companionship of Jesus** He would no more think of returning to it now, than the civilized man of reverting to the tastes of the savage, or the philosopher to the babblings of the child. "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" cries the young prophet Isaiah; his purged lips could not after this return to their uncleanness (Isa. 6:5–7). "The time past may suffice" to have wrought folly, to have lived in envy and malice. The sun is up! who that sees it can longer walk as in darkness? ([1 John 3:4-9 Commentary - scroll down to page 252](#))

**The practical application of John's teaching is that if one professes to know Christ and yet demonstrates relentless rebellion against God, they do well to do some serious soul searching** lest they deceive themselves and end up hearing Jesus' command to "**Depart!**" (Mt 7:23) Paul alludes to the need for all of us (yours truly included) to perform self-examination writing **Test** (**present imperative**) yourselves [to see] if you are in the faith; **examine** (**present imperative**) yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?" (2Cor 13:5-note)

**W Harris** on **abides (meno)** - The meaning of menōn, "resides" in 1Jn 3:6. Here the verb menō refers to **the permanence of relationship between Jesus and the believer**, as in 1John 2:27 and 1Jn 2:28. It is clear that Jesus is the referent of the pronoun translated "Him" in the phrase en autō, "in him" because He is the subject of the previous discussion in 1Jn 3:5. ([Exegetical Commentary on 1 John 2:28-3:10](#))

**Abides** ([3306](#))(**meno**) in simple terms means to remain in the same place or position over a period of time. It means to reside, stay, live, lodge, tarry or dwell. **Meno** describes something that remains where it is, continues in a fixed state, or endures.

John uses the **present tense** to emphasize the continuing aspect of this abiding. Some say that this is not the case, that only those who are not sinning are abiding in unbroken fellowship. While there is certainly truth in that statement, that is not what John is saying. The **present tense** signifies continually abiding in Jesus, in covenant with Him, in oneness with Him. Positionally this truth cannot be changed for HE is the one who keeps us in the position of abiding. That's what John is describing. Not a on again, off again abiding, but a continual abiding. In support of this interpretation, note that other 3 verses later John uses the same verb meno in the present tense to describe God's seed abiding in us. Does God's seed abide in us some days and not others? I don't think so. His seed abides continually, just as His children abide in Him continually. One reason some commentators don't like this interpretation is because of the clear implications. John's point is simple and clear - abiding in Jesus is incompatible with a continuing in a lifestyle of rebellion against God. In fact, if one practices the latter (regardless of their profession), John says they are fooling themselves. They don't know Jesus and one day He will say to them "I never **knew** you. **Depart** from me, you who **practice** (**present tense**) **lawlessness.**" (Mt 7:23-note).

**Charles Ryrie** - The lifestyle of the believer who keeps God's commands (abides) will be obedience, not sin. The lifestyle of the one who keeps on sinning demonstrates that he does not know God... Habitual actions indicate one's character.

**Nelson's NKJV Study Bible** - Habitually sinful conduct indicates an absence of fellowship with Christ. Thus, if we claim to be a Christian but sin is our way of life, our status as children of God can legitimately be questioned.

**John MacArthur** on **no one who sins** - the sense conveyed here is the idea of habitual, constant sinning. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. If no check against habitual sin exists in someone who professes to be a Christian, John's pronouncement is absolutely clear—salvation never took place.

**Guzik** - It is very important to understand what the Bible means - and what it does not mean - when it says does not sin. According to the verb tense John uses, does not sin means does not live a life style of habitual sin. John has already told us in 1 John 1:8-**note** If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. In 1 John 1:8, the grammar indicates John is speaking about occasional acts of sin. The grammar of 1 John 3:6 indicates that John is speaking of a settled, continued lifestyle of sin. John is not teaching here the possibility of sinless perfection. "The present tense in the Greek verb implied habit, continuity, unbroken sequence" (**Stott**); the **NIV** has the right idea when it translates these verbs with phrases such as *keeps on sinning*, *continues to sin*, and he *cannot go on sinning*. **John's message is plain and consistent with the rest of the Scriptures It tells us that a life style of habitual sin is inconsistent with a life of abiding in Jesus Christ.** A true Christian can only be **temporarily** in a life style of sin. Paul's teaching in Romans 6:1-23-**note** is a great example of this principle. He shows us that when a person comes to Jesus, when his sins are forgiven and God's grace is extended to him, he is radically changed - the old man is dead, and the new man lives. So it is utterly incompatible for a new creation in Christ to be *comfortable* in *habitual* sin; such a place can only be *temporary* for the Christian. In some ways, the question is not "*Do you sin or not?*" We each sin. The question is, "**How do you react when you sin? Do you give into the pattern of sin, and let it dominate your lifestyle? Or do you humbly confess your sin, and do battle against it with the power Jesus can give?**" This is why it is so grieving to see Christians make excuses for their sin, and not humbly confess them. Unless the sin is dealt with squarely, it will contribute to a pattern of sin that may soon become their lifestyle - perhaps a secret lifestyle, but a lifestyle nonetheless. What is important is that we never sign a "peace treaty" with sin. We never wink at its presence or excuse it by saying, "Everybody has his own sinful areas, and this is mine. Jesus understands." This completely goes against everything we are in Jesus, and the work He has done in our life. ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

**Daniel Akin** - 1Jn 3:6 logically and necessarily flows from 1Jn 3:5. Because there is no sin in Jesus, no one who abides in Him keeps on sinning. In fact, if one does continue in a pattern or practice of sin, another logical and necessary conclusion must be drawn: "everyone who sins [keeps on sinning] has not seen Him or known Him" in a personal, saving relationship. John's theology is flawless. If the sinless Son of God appeared in history to take away sin, how is it possible to abide in Him and sin at the same time? The answer is, you can't. It is impossible. Some have understood 1Jn 3:6 and 1Jn 3:9 to affirm sinless perfection in this life. This, however, would contradict what John said in 1Jn 1:8, 10-**note**. No, the use of the **present tense** verb in 1Jn 3:6 and 1Jn 3:9 help us see what John is saying. Because of the new birth, we have a new nature. Because Christ has taken away our sins, we have a new liberty and freedom (**Ed**: cp Jas 1:25-**note**). Sin no longer dominates us or enslaves us (**Ed**: Ro 6:11-14-**note**). Sin is no longer the character and conduct of my life. Because I now abide in Christ and in the power of His person and work in the Gospel, **I may fall into sin, but I will not walk in sin. Sin will not be my habit; it will not be my normal practice I no longer love sin; I hate sin. I no longer delight in sin; I despise sin.** In my union with Christ, which is another way of saying abiding in Christ, I have experienced a definite and decisive break with sin. It no longer rules me. Christ does! A life of living in sin and living in the Savior is an oxymoron. It does not make sense. It is spiritually absurd. ([Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, 3 John - Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary- Dr. Daniel L. Akin, David Platt, Tony Merida](#)) (Bolding added)

**Holman NKJV Study Bible** - John was aware that Christians sin (1Jn 2:1-**note**). They can receive forgiveness through Jesus' death (1Jn 1:7-**note**) as they confess their sins (1Jn 1:9-**note**). In condemning whoever **sins**, John had in mind flagrant sin by false "believers" whose confession of Jesus was feigned (1Jn 2:23-**note**), whose love was set on the world rather than God (1Jn 2:15-**note**), and whose obedience was lacking (1Jn 2:4-**note**). Jesus Himself warned about people who called Him "Lord" and did great things in His name, but ultimately were not genuine disciples (Mt. 7:21-23-**note**).

**Sins** ("**keeps on sinning**" = **ESV**) ([264](#))(**hamartano**) in the **present tense** means continually misses the mark, living a lifestyle which is contrary to the will and law of God.

**ESV Study Bible** - To confess the Son and to have the Father (1Jn 2:23) profoundly alters daily living... True followers of Christ do not recklessly and habitually violate what their anointing (1Jn 2:20, 1Jn 2:27) has planted within them (see 1Jn 3:9–10). Those who do habitually sin have neither seen him nor known him. They are not genuine Christians.

**A T Robertson** (well known expert in Greek Grammar) on the two uses of sin - Linear present (linear *menōn*, keeps on abiding) active indicative of *hamartanō*, "does not keep on sinning." Present (linear) active articular participle like *menōn* above, "the one who keeps on sinning" (lives a life of sin, not mere occasional acts of sin as *hamartēsas*, aorist active participle, would mean).

**Peter** taught a similar truth writing "Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose (cp 1Pe 2:21-**note**), because he who has suffered in the flesh **has ceased from sin** (not speaking of so-called "sinless perfection," but

of a general lifestyle dominated by sin), so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God." (1Peter 4:1-2-note) As **Ryrie** says "The thought is this: Christ suffered in the flesh. He is your example. So, arm yourselves by taking the same view of suffering as Christ took, which is to accept it in the will of God. Thereby the **dominion of sin** is broken in practical experience."

**Nelson NKJV Study Bible** - if we claim to be a Christian but sin is our way of life, our status as children of God can legitimately be questioned.

**Matthew Henry** - "Practical renunciation of sin is the great evidence of spiritual union with, continuance in, and saving knowledge of the Lord Christ."

**Marvin Vincent** (an renowned Greek scholar) - "John does not teach that believers do not sin, but is speaking of a character, a habit; throughout the Epistle he deals with the ideal reality of life in God, in which the love of God and sin exclude each other as light and darkness."

I like the way old **John Trapp** explains that one who abides in Christ cannot sin as their habitual way of life -**Sin may rebel, it cannot reign in a saint**. He sinneth not sinningly... **he loves not sin, he lies not in it** but rises again by repentance, and is restless till that be done, and done to purpose.

**Chris Benfield** comments that **sins** in 1Jn 3:6 "has the idea of "continuing in sin; to go on sinning and sinning John speaks of those who live in sin, never having been born again in Christ. Those whose lives are dominated by sin, marked by a continual desire to please the flesh, have not encountered the Lord, nor are they known of Him. That certainly blows a large hole in the argument of: "what can a little sin hurt?" Many see no real consequence of their sin, especially while they are young. They feel as if they are entitled to live a little and indulge themselves. Continuing in sin, with no desire for reconciliation to God through sanctification in Christ, confirms one is apart and separated from the Lord in their sin."

**H A Ironside** - Next the apostle went on to show what holiness really means in the Christian's life. "Whosoever abides in Him sins not [is not characterized by sinning]: whosoever sins hath not seen him, neither known him" (1 John 3:6). This verse used to trouble me, because I was not clear about it. I used to read it as though it said, "Whosoever commits a sin hath not seen him, neither known him." Verse eight was particularly disturbing: "He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning." And as I got my eyes off the Lord and allowed myself to fall into something that dishonored Him, those words were the torment of my life-"He that commits sin is of the devil." This verse seems to say that whoever sins has never been a Christian at all. I was greatly troubled, for I knew I had not gotten to the place of sinless perfection, even though I was trying to get there in those days. I was so sure I was born of God-that I was converted-but wondered if it had all been a mistake. I went to a teacher and asked him about this, and he said, "You have been converted all right, but every time you commit a sin you become unconverted again, and a child of the devil once more." (**Ed: Which of course is total heresy!**) That made me even more bewildered than before, and I wondered how I would ever know when I was converted to stay. If I were converted over and over again how would I know for sure that I was still converted just before I died? I might suddenly become a child of the devil again and miss everything. What a relief of mind it was to get a better understanding of the tense of the verbs! Contrast 1John 3:6 with 1John 2:1-note, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He does not say if any man sin he ceases to be a child of God, but, "We have an advocate with the Father." The word sin is in the **aorist tense**, and refers to a definite action at a given point of time, "If any man should fall into a sin." But chapter three verse six (1 John 3:6) is in the present continuous tense (**present tense**), "**Whosoever goes on practicing sin, whosoever makes it the habit of his life to live in sin**, hath not seen Him neither known Him." Peter fell into grievous sin, and that sin was repeated and repeated. But when the Lord turned and looked at him, he went out and wept bitterly. His heart was broken because of his failure, and he was soon restored. **True believers fall into sin if for a moment their eyes are taken off the Lord Jesus Christ. But the advocacy of the Lord Jesus begins at that moment, and He restores their souls. (1 John 3 Commentary - Ironside's Notes on Selected Books)**

## WHEN SEEING IS BELIEVING

**No one who sins has seen Him or knows Him** - **No one** is literally all (every one), which in essence means all without exception. Sin practitioners are not Savior seers! To all who do not know Jesus in this life, He will declare "I never knew you" (Mt 7:23-note)!

**Hiebert** goes on to explain that in the "second group John asserts that "whosoever sins has not seen Him, neither known Him." The construction again depicts a distinct class, all of its members **characterized by the practice of sin as the ruling principle of their lives**. The basic contrast between the two groups is sharply drawn; the first is marked by a **continuing relationship with Christ**, the second by the **continuing practice of sin**. There is also a strong contrast in the negative expressed concerning each group; the first group **does not practice sin**, but the second group "has not seen Him, neither known Him" (ouch heōraken auton oude egnōken auton). The two negations (ouch... oude) concerning the second group are not identical in meaning. The first verb, "has

seen" (heōraken), here does not refer to a literal seeing of Jesus in the flesh, as in 1Jn 1:2–3-note, but denotes a spiritual vision of Him through faith (cf. "eyes of your heart may be enlightened" = Eph 1:18-note; "seeing Him Who is unseen" = Heb 11:27-note); he has never arrived at a clear perception of the true nature of the incarnate Christ. The second verb "known" (egnōken) denies that he has entered into a personal relationship with Him so as to become familiar with the characteristics of the incarnate Christ."(1 John 2:29-3:12 Online) ([The Epistles of John- An Expository Commentary- D. Edmond Hiebert - Highly Recommended](#))

**Sins ("keeps on sinning" = ESV) (264)(hamartano)** in the **present tense** describes continually living a lifestyle which is contrary to the will and law of God. This lifestyle testifies to the fact that they are not regenerate. To say that this description applies to a genuine believer as some do, is to simply not allow the text to say what it says! Be a Berean!

John makes a similar statement in his third epistle - "Beloved, **do not imitate** (present imperative) what is evil, but what is good. The **one who does good** (agathopoieo = to do good - present active participle = continually) is of God; the **one who does evil** (kakopoieo - present active participle = continually) has not seen God." (3John 1:11) So again John paints a striking, simple, straightforward contrast between **believers** and **non-believers** based upon their habitual practice (of good or evil). Obviously those who habitually do good will still do evil because they possess the fallen flesh, but committing evil is not their way of life. The upshot is that genuine believers do not habitually practice evil! Do not let anyone tell you that you can profess faith in Christ at some point in time and then spend the rest of your life doing evil! That is a lie and as discussed in this section, it is a lie that is being perpetrated by pastors and commentators that many would classify as "evangelical!" Beware! Heed the apostle John's clear warning in his epistles. The heretical teaching is not new! The **NET Note** on 3John 1:11 says "**The one who does what is bad has not seen God...** reiterates the common Johannine theme of behavior as an indication of genuine faith, found in 1 John 3:6, 10; 4:7, 20; and in the Gospel of John 3:17–21. By implication, the genuineness of Diotrephes' faith is called into question, because he has obviously done what is bad (3Jn 1:11b; cf. 3Jn 1:9–10). In John's terminology it is clear that the phrase **has not seen God** is equivalent to **"is not a genuine Christian"** (see John 3:17–21 and 1 John 3:6, 10; 4:7, 20)."

**Holman Christian Study Bible** - John was aware that Christians sin (1Jn 2:1-note ). **They can receive forgiveness through Jesus' death (1Jn 1:7-note ) as they confess their sins (1Jn 1:9-note ) . By everyone who sins has not seen Him or known Him, John had in mind flagrant sin by false "believers" whose confession of Jesus was false (1Jn 2:23-note ) , whose love was set on the world rather than God (1Jn 2:15-note ) , and whose obedience was lacking (1Jn 2:4-note ) . Jesus Himself warned about people who called Him "Lord" and did great things in His name, but ultimately were not genuine disciples (Mt 7:21-23-note ) . (1 John Study Notes - enter Scripture, select read in right column)**

**MacArthur** - If no check against habitual sin exists in someone who professes to be a Christian, John's pronouncement is absolutely clear—salvation never took place. (MacArthur Study Bible)

**Wycliffe Bible Commentary** on **abide** and **sin** - Both words are in the present tense and indicate the habitual character of the person. The person who is abiding in Christ is not able to sin habitually. Sin may enter his experience, but it is the exception and not the rule. If sin is the ruling principle of a life, that person is not redeemed (Rom 6); thus a saved person cannot sin as a habit of life. When a Christian does sin, he confesses it (1 Jn 1:9) and perseveres in his purification (3:3). The continuous sinner has not known God and is therefore an unregenerate person.

Earlier John had written that "The one who says, "I have come to **know** (**ginosko** also in the **perfect tense**) Him," and does not keep (**present tense** - as his general direction, not perfection!), His commandments, is a liar, and the truth (cp Jn 14:6!) is not in him." (1Jn 2:4-note ) **In short this person is not a believer as shown by his persistent disobedience!**

**Seen Him or knows Him** - These two phrases in simple terms are saying this person is not a genuine follower of Jesus Christ now and they never have been, regardless of what they may have professed (See discussion of John's use of **perfect tense** under "know"). Earlier John spoke of seeing Jesus explaining that "when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is." (1Jn 3:2-note) These individuals will not see Him in the same sense and certainly will not be like Him (glorified). On the other hand they will one day see Jesus when He comes as their Judge not their Savior - "BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and **every eye will see Him**, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen." (Rev 1:7-note, cp Php 2:9-11-note)

**Wuest** - He asserts that "**Everyone who keeps on continually sinning, has not seen Him neither known Him**" This is an unsaved person. The verbs "**seen**" and "**known**" are in the **perfect tense**, implying that he has neither **seen** nor **known** God in times past, with the present result that He is still invisible and unknown to him. The particular word for "**see**" here means "to see with discernment."

**Seen** (03708)(**horao**) means to literally to perceive by sight or to see and in this context speaks figuratively of spiritual sight. The Greek negative particle signifies absolute negation, categorically denying that had seen Him (spiritually speaking, with eyes of faith, "for faith is the assurance of [things] hoped for, **the conviction of things not seen.**" Heb 11:1). **Seen** and **knows** are both in the

**perfect tense** (see discussion under "knows")

**Jackman** - Earlier John referred to a literal seeing of Jesus in the flesh (1Jn 1:2–3), but here the emphasis rests on seeing the true nature and purpose of the incarnate Christ. The one who sees Christ for who he is and embraces his redemptive work is the one who abides in him. ([The Message of John's Letters Bible Speaks Today](#))

**A T Robertson on has not seen Him** - The habit of sin is proof that one has not the vision or the knowledge (egnōken perfect active also) of Christ. He means, of course, spiritual vision and spiritual knowledge.

**Bengel** on those who have seen Him and know Him - Light and knowledge produce likeness to God.

**Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges** - the habitual sinner does none of these things: sin is his ruling principle. And this could not be the case if he had ever really known Christ. Just as apostates by leaving the Church prove that they have never really belonged to it (1 John 2:19), so the sinner by continuing in sin proves that he has never really known Christ.—Seeing and knowing are not two names for the same fact: to see Christ is to be spiritually conscious of His presence; to know Him is to recognize His character and His relation to ourselves. ([1 John 3 Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon** - The man who dwells in Christ is the holy man; but the man who lives in Sin is no child of God, for he proves by his evil conduct that he has no vital union with Christ. The fruit of Christianity is holiness; and if thy life be a sinful one, if that be the main run and tenor of thy life, thou art none of his... If this declaration related to any one act of sin, none of us could ever say that we have seen or known him, but it relates to the habit of sin, — if we love sin, and live in sin, if the main course of our life is sinful, then we have “not seen him, neither known him.”

**David Allen** - In verse 6 John affirms that no one who “abides in [Christ],” meaning no one who is genuinely a Christian, “keeps on sinning.” The key here is the present tense verb expressing an ongoing sinful lifestyle. John has already affirmed the possibility that a Christian can sin. That is not his point here. He does not refer to an occasional specific act of sin but rather a lifestyle of sin. Such a lifestyle indicates someone who has neither “seen” nor “known” Jesus. The use of the word “know” here suggests knowledge based on experience. Not to “know” Christ here describes someone who is not genuinely saved. ([1-3 John- Fellowship in God's Family Preaching the Word](#))

In His great prayer Jesus said

And this is eternal life, that they may **know (ginosko)** Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent. (Jn 17:3)

**Knows (1097)(ginosko)** generally speaks of knowledge obtained by experience. Knowledge possessed through the intellectual process of learning is one thing. Knowledge gained by experience, by an active relationship between the one who knows and the person known, is far superior to the former. **Ginosko** describes the latter quality of knowledge. Every true follower of Christ has come to experience a personal, permanent possession regarding the Person of Christ (e.g., see ginoko in Jn 8:32, Jn 17:3, Php 3:10-note). As noted above, both **seen** and **knows** are in the **perfect tense** which speaks of a past completed action with ongoing results or relationship. In other words these individuals who were habitually practicing sin had absolutely never at a point in time come to spiritually perceive and personally know Jesus. Because they never knew Jesus, He will one day say to them "I never knew you." (Mt 7:23-note)!

#### **Knowing you Jesus**

Knowing you, Jesus, knowing You.

There is no greater thing!

You're my all, You're the best

You're my joy, My Righteousness

And I love You, Lord.

([Sing this song as prayer of praise to Him](#))

**Jackman** - To **know** (egnōken) him is to enter into that personal, dynamic relationship with him. It is not a mere intellectual assent or innate comprehension, but rather it is a knowledge based upon experience. It is the subjective appropriation of who Christ is and what he has done for sinful humanity. The verb is ingressive, which means that this knowledge is obtained rather than naturally possessed. It is coming to know him more and more in a personal way. The apostle asserts with absolute clarity that those who live in habitual sin have not seen Christ and do not know Christ. This is the same as saying they do not have a saving relationship with Christ. On the other hand, those who abide in him live a life marked by habitual righteousness and purity instead of lawlessness (rebellion) and disobedience. While the unbeliever lives in sin and has not seen or known Christ, the believer has terminated a life of sin for a life of abiding in him. The child of God has experienced a decisive break with sin. **Sin no longer controls his life.** ([The Message of John's Letters Bible Speaks Today](#))



**John Calvin on no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him** - According to John's usual manner he adds the opposite clause, so that we may know that it is in vain to claim faith in Christ and knowledge of him unless there is newness of life. For Christ is never dormant where he reigns, but the Spirit makes his power effective. It may rightly be said of him that he puts sin to flight, just as the sun drives darkness away by its own brightness. Again, this passage teaches us how strong and efficacious the knowledge of Christ is, for it transforms us into His image. So by seeing and knowing we are to understand nothing other than faith.

**William MacDonald** - This verse contrasts the true believer with one who has never been born again. It can definitely be said of the true believer that he does not go on sinning. John is not here speaking about isolated acts of sin, but rather continued, habitual, characteristic behavior. This verse does not imply that when a Christian commits an act of sin, he loses his salvation. Rather it says that when a person sins habitually, it is conclusive that he was never regenerated. **The question naturally arises, "When does sin become habitual? How often does a person have to commit it for it to become characteristic behavior?"** John does not answer this. Rather he puts each believer on guard, and leaves the burden of proof on the Christian himself.

**Sam Storms** - If Christ was sinless and came to remove sin, how can one abide both in him and in it simultaneously? The one who abides in Christ does not sin as a prevailing habit. Conversely, an undisturbed persistence in sin exposes the individual as one who has neither seen (with the eye of faith) nor heard him. ([1 John 3:4-10 Sermon Notes](#))

**David Jackman** - The important question, in the light of the cross, then becomes, 'Have my sins been taken away?' Verse 6 tells us that the answer lies in our present experience. Do I keep on sinning, or is my life distinctively different? 'Look at your lifestyle,' is John's message. There may be key moments of change to look back to, in a response at an evangelistic meeting, the signing of a commitment card, or events such as baptism or being received as a member of a local church, which all have their place in our spiritual pilgrimages. Nevertheless John does not ask us about those; he simply says, 'Do you keep on sinning?' The person who does has not yet seen or known Christ, in that personal way that is described in verse 6 as 'living in him'. If Jesus was sinless and came to this world expressly to take away our sins, how can sin be cherished by anyone who is really living in Christ?... The implications for us are clear. Fellowship with a sinless Saviour and continuance in our sins (keeping on sinning) are mutually contradictory. No compromise is possible. And the logical conclusion we are to draw is that we cannot expect to be confident on that day when we see Christ, if we are complacent about sin in our lives here and now. ([The Message of John's Letters Bible Speaks Today](#))

**Lehman Strauss** - The Prohibition of Sin - **My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not...** (1 John 2:1) We have just seen that the principle of sin in the believer makes it possible for him to commit sin. And yet he is told to "sin not." The principle and possibility of sin is present, but the practice of sins is prohibited. This is a strange paradox to some, and it becomes even more confusing to those already confused when they read a verse such as the following: **Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whatsoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.** (1 John 3:6) In this verse there are two present tenses not to be overlooked. The first verb in the present tense is "abideth" To abide means to obey (John 15:10). If you are obeying you are abiding, and if you are abiding you are obeying. The second verb in the present tense is "sinneth not." The tense of both verbs means a continuous, habitual action. Every one who continuously and habitually abides in Him will not continuously and habitually keep on sinning. The text does not deny that a Christian ever commits an act of sin, but it does deny that a Christian sins habitually. Whosoever keeps on continually sinning has neither **seen** Him with the eye of faith nor **known** Him in experiential salvation. What is implied here is a ruling principle of life. **To continue to abide in Christ and to continue to practice sin are incongruous. The practice of sin excludes any professed knowledge of Christ** (Matthew 7:21-22). (Devotional Studies on John's Three Letters).

**Johnny Sanders** - II. HE WHO REMAINS IN CHRIST DOES NOT SIN, 1Jn 3:6. A. There Is no Contradiction in the Scripture. We are not going to gloss over what may seem to some to be a contradiction here. It is a fact that in 1Jn 1:8, John says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." It is also a fact that he says in 1Jn 1:10 that, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." And now, he is saying that "He who abides in Christ does not sin." Is he not saying here right the opposite of what he has said in chapter one? Absolutely not. Let me explain. In 1Jn 1:8 and 1Jn 1:10, John is dealing with the principle of sin that remains active in the heart even after one has received a judicial pardon for his sins. Justification is a metaphor of the court room. When you believe in Jesus Christ, God, the eternal and omniscient Judge, pronounces you just. When you sin from that time forward - and you will sin ("come short of the glory of God," Ro 3:23b) - we "have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (Ro 2:1b). When the lost person sins, he is in rebellion against the law of God and God will deal with him as his Judge. When the Christian sins, God will deal with him as Father, as a father dealing with a child. Chapter one teaches that even after we are saved, there is a sin principle (some call it the old sin nature) which remains in operation until we are glorified. Because of the sinful nature, the believer will commit acts of sin, and at times those acts may be shocking, not only to others, but also to the individual who commits them. Paul, in the section of Romans dealing with Sanctification, shares his personal testimony with us: "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man" (Rom. 7:19-22). Christians do, and will continue to commit acts of sin.

There is never a day that we do not need to confess our sins and receive God's forgiveness and cleansing (1 John 1:9). Now, John is going to make a statement that may seem to contradict 1Jn 1:8 and 1Jn 1:10, but in fact, there is no contradiction at all. **B. "Whoever abides in Him does not sin," 1Jn 3:6.** "Well," one may say, "that certainly sounds like a contradiction! Just read 1Jn 1:8-10; 2:1-21; and 1Jn 3:9 and see if you do not see a problem." Let us begin by admitting that this is not easy for one who is reading this in the English. However, in this text the key that unlocks the mystery to the truth is in the meaning of the Greek tenses. This verse does not claim that Christians will never commit any acts of sin (which would contradict 1Jn 1:8). The verb here denotes continuous action. This passage does not teach that a Christian never sins at all after his conversion. Those who claim that they can reach sinless perfection in this life cannot point to this verse as a proof text. The note in the Believer's Study Bible states, "The present tense, in this context, indicates the breaking of the perpetual hold of sin in the life of the disciple." **C. Whoever Abides in Him Does not Continually and Habitually Sin.** In Justification, we are delivered from the eternal penalty of sin. In Sanctification, we are being delivered from the power of sin. In Glorification, we will be delivered from the very presence of sin - for ever! The lost person, because he is a slave to sin and Satan, is presently under a sentence of death (John 3:18). His only hope is in receiving Jesus Christ by grace through faith. The Christian is one who has been born again, and is being nurtured and developed by the Holy Spirit. As you are being conformed to the image of Christ, there are many sins that should no longer be a problem for you. That does not mean that we do not sin, for we do (1 John 1:8). We must confess our sins and seek God's forgiveness (1Jn 1:9). There is no contradiction here. What John is saying here is that the born again believer in Jesus Christ will not continue in sin so as to make it his lifestyle. He will not sin habitually. That does not mean that we have some magic formula we can use to determine whether or not our neighbor is really a born again believer. The Believer's Study Bible Notes may help us: "The power to overcome habitual sin is based on the invulnerability of the believer to the ravages of satanic influence (1Jn 5:18), and on "His seed" remaining in him (1Jn 3:9). The expression "His seed" is a reference to the divine principle of life that abides in a man after regeneration in Christ. This principle prevents slavery to Satan and sin." **D. "Whoever Sins Has Neither Seen Him nor Known Him."** The person who continually sins so as to make it his lifestyle demonstrates that he has never known Jesus. Sadly, some have taught that one sin will condemn the believer to hell. A friend told me of the sermon he heard in his youth that troubled him for years. An evangelist stated a hypothetical situation in which the pastor of his church might be called on to visit a dying church member. He went on to say that if his buggy wheel hit a stump and he was thrown out of the buggy and hit his head on another stump and was killed, the pastor would spend his eternity in hell if he uttered a profane word before his head hit the stump. This is not what John is teaching. He says that when a person continues in sin, that is, sins habitually, he is demonstrating that he has never known Jesus Christ. He has no saving relationship with Him. You either abide in Christ or you abide in sin. Now, I would suggest that before we apply that to all the other members of our church, we apply it to ourselves first. If I can continue in sin, I must ask myself if I really know Jesus Christ. ([1 John Commentary](#))