

“HE CANNOT SIN”

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes in the scripture, the statement is made “He doth not sin”, with reference to his actions in a particular situation. The expression, “HE CANNOT SIN” is found one time in the Bible. This expression is found in 1 John 3:8-9. Follow along in your New Testament, and let’s read the passage together. (Read);. Note that in verse 9, John speaks of one who has been “born again”, that “cannot sin.” Does this mean that once a person becomes a Christian, that he absolutely cannot sin? Does this mean that when one is baptized, and DOES do something he knows to be sinful, **that** he needs to question his conversion, for John says he “cannot sin”, and now he “has sinned?” Several years ago I conducted a gospel meeting for a small congregation in north Texas, and an elderly gentleman, around 80 years of age, informed me that HE had not committed one single sin since his baptism. Then he had the nerve to say that Jesus sinned one time in His life on earth. This appeared to be suggestive of his own life being superior to that of Jesus. He committed sin by even saying he had not sinned (1 John 1:8). Let’s examine the text closely, and try to determine just what John meant when he made the statement, “he cannot sin.” Our lesson will have 4 points.

DISCUSSION

I. 1st, the word “cannot” sometimes refers to something that is IMPOSSIBLE.

A. There are 2 things the scripture specifically states that GOD “cannot” do.

1. He cannot be **tempted to sin**. Jas. 1:13

a. God cannot be tempted to sin because He is “holy” (above sin), while temptation is for those living “in flesh”. Jas. 1:14-15; Matt. 26:41

b. IF God came in the flesh, He COULD be tempted, and He DID come in the flesh in the person of Christ, or Immanuel, and He **was** tempted. Matt. 1:20-23; Heb. 4:15; 1 John 2:15-17; Matt. 4:1-10 (Discuss as needed).

c. Jesus did not sin, because he WAS the perfect “WORD”, and His divine nature kept Him from sinning, as He did not “yield” to sin.

2. Neither can God **lie**. Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:17-18

B. God’s divine nature will never change, so He will never be tempted or lie.

II. 2nd, the word “cannot” can refer to something that IS POSSIBLE.

A. Every man is tempted (Jas. 1:14), and will sin when he **yields** to it. Jas. 1:13-15

1. All mankind has become guilty of sin except Christ the Lord. Rom. 3:9-12, 23

2. Christ was the ONE exception to all being guilty of sin. 1 Pet. 2:21-22

B. Even the **context** of John saying a Christian “cannot sin”, teaches that we **can** indeed sin against God. 1 John 1:7-10; 2:1-2; 5:16-17.

1. There IS a sin which is unto death, if the sinner does not repent of it, and there IS a sin not unto death, if one does repent of it, but there is “sin” in both places.

2. The point is, sin **does exist** in the life of every being at some point, but can be removed when repented of.

a. Some reprobates “cannot cease from sin” until they decide to do so, which is seldom. 2 Pet. 2:14

b. If “cannot” means impossible, then the sinner cannot be saved.

c. I cannot ever have a “head-on” collision on the highway IF both I and the oncoming traffic stay on our sides of the road.

III. 3rd, the words “cannot sin” may refer to something one CANNOT AFFORD TO DO.

- A. When Balak tried to entice the prophet Balaam to pronounce a curse upon Israel, he responded by saying, “Though Balak give me his house full of gold and silver, I **cannot** go beyond the word of the Lord, to do less or more” (Num. 22:18)
1. He knew it would be possible to at least try to pronounce such a curse, for he later changed his mind and tried to do so, but every time he would open his mouth a blessing would come out instead of a curse, and he finally admitted “I have sinned” in so doing (Num. 22:34).
 2. Joseph of the Old Testament refused to be immoral with Potiphar’s wife, because he did not want to sin against God. Gen. 39:9
 - a. Surely, Joseph COULD have committed fornication with Potiphar’s wife.
 - b. But, he could not, and be right with God, and his philosophy was, “I **can** but **I cannot.**”
 - 1) A man who **can** be unfaithful to his wife, simply **cannot** afford the consequences he may face—the loss of his wife, and possibly the loss of his soul in hell.
 - 2) A woman who **can** be unfaithful to her husband **cannot** intelligently face fact that she will have to lie to cover up her “moment of pleasure”, the emotional damage it will bring to her, as well as the loss of her marriage and children, and ultimately the loss of her soul.
- B. Many times some are baptized, and for a moment feel the cleansing of their soul from sin, but in a moment of weakness or temptation, they find that they DO sin.

IV. 4th, the term “cannot sin” can mean one simply cannot go back to the habitual practice of sin after having been saved from it.

- A. The words “committeth sin” of 1 John 3:8 are in the present tense, suggest continuous action, and the thought is, he just **cannot** do that, even though he **can** if he wants to give up his enjoyment of salvation and the hope of heaven.
- B. Then, the term “**cannot sin**” in 1 John 3:9 (the very next verse) also suggests continuous action in sin, as a way of life: For two reasons, as the text shows.
1. 1st, he cannot go on practicing sin because the “**seed**” (the word of God, the seed of the kingdom) “**remaineth in him**”. 1 John 3:9AB; cf Luke 8:11-12; Psa. 119:9-11
 2. 2nd, he cannot go on practicing sin because “**he is born of God,**” and is now a partaker of “the divine nature” of God, and is now able to say “NO” to Satan, and absolutely **means** it. 1 John 3:9C
 - a. One who is baptized into Christ, to become God’s child, needs to live in accordance with their godly nature. 2 Pet. 1:3-4
 - b. We are to be holy because God is holy. 1 Pet. 1:16

CONCLUSION

I. Illus. A NEW DRESS.

I think I can illustrate this lesson with a woman who buys and expensive new dress. It is **IMPOSSIBLE** for it to get soiled as long as she keeps it on a hanger in a closet. However if she does wear it, it **IS POSSIBLE** for it to get stained, and will need cleansing. But if does wear it, she **CANNOT AFFORD** to wear it often, because it will wear out. However, she does **not** wear it as a **HABITUAL PRACTICE**, when it IS soiled, but has it cleaned regularly to keep it from wearing out.

So it is with SIN. 1. We **“cannot sin”** in infancy before responsibility begins. 2. We **“can”** sin when we become responsible for our actions. 3. We **“cannot afford”** to sin regularly and habitual if we consider the consequences. 4. So, though we cannot live a perfect, sinless life, we do not **“habitually practice”** to sin, but endeavor to please God and seek His forgiveness when we DO sin.

II. Exhortation.

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