

1 John 3:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.

Analysis

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. This verse presents a stark contrast that has challenged interpreters. "Whosoever abideth in him" (pas ho en autō menōn) describes continuous fellowship with Christ. "Sinneth not" (ouch hamartanei) uses the present tense, indicating not absolute sinlessness but the absence of habitual, characteristic sin. The one abiding in Christ does not make sin their practice or lifestyle.

The second clause intensifies this: "whosoever sinneth" (pas ho hamartanōn)—again present tense, habitual action—"hath not seen him, neither known him" (ouch heōraken auton oude egnōken auton). The perfect tenses indicate permanent states resulting from past actions. Those who practice sin demonstrate they have never truly seen or known Christ. This doesn't mean Christians never sin (1:8), but that habitual, unrepentant sin is incompatible with genuine saving knowledge of Christ.

This verse upholds the doctrine of perseverance—true believers continue in faith and holiness. It also provides a test for assurance: Do you practice sin as a lifestyle, or do you abide in Christ and pursue holiness? Sin's presence doesn't prove we're not Christians, but sin's dominion does. The distinction is between struggling against sin while abiding in Christ versus comfortably practicing sin without conviction.

Historical Context

Jewish Christianity emphasized that faith produces obedience. James wrote that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). John applies this to the specific test of lifestyle sin. The Johannine community faced false professors who claimed Christian identity while living in moral compromise. John's stark language exposes such pretense.

The verbs "seen" and "known" recall Jesus's promise that those who have seen Him have seen the Father (John 14:9) and that eternal life is knowing the true God and Jesus Christ (John 17:3). Saving knowledge involves personal relationship, not mere intellectual assent. Such relationship transforms behavior. Those who truly know Christ cannot persist in willing rebellion against Him.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do you reconcile this verse (abiding in Christ means not practicing sin) with 1:8 (claiming sinlessness is self-deception)?
2. What's the difference between a Christian who struggles with sin while abiding in Christ and a false professor who practices sin?
3. If habitual sin indicates never truly knowing Christ, how should this affect our evangelism and discipleship?

Interlinear Text

πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτόν μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνων πᾶς
Whosoever ^{G3588} **in** **him** **abideth** **not** **sinneth** **Whosoever**
^{G3956} ^{G1722} ^{G846} ^{G3306} ^{G3756} ^{G264} ^{G3956}

ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἐώρακεν αὐτόν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν
^{G3588} **sinneth** **not** **hath** **him** **neither** **known**
^{G264} ^{G3756} ^{G3708} ^{G846} ^{G3761} ^{G1097}

αὐτόν
him
^{G846}

Additional Cross-References

3 John 1:11 (Parallel theme): Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.

1 John 2:4 (Parallel theme): He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 3:9 (Sin): Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1 John 4:8 (Parallel theme): He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

1 John 3:2 (Parallel theme): Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

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

2 Corinthians 4:6 (Parallel theme): For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:28 (Parallel theme): And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

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