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EXPRESSION NOT SUPPRESSION



By Grant Hawley

"Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God" - 1 John 3:9

INTRODUCTION

Brad is a believer in Jesus Christ, even a leader in the church, but he has a problem when he's in his car. His temper tends to flare up. "It's just that everyone is so inconsiderate when they drive" he would tell himself. One day he was behind an elderly lady at a street light waiting to make a left turn. More than once there was plenty of room to go (in his opinion), but she hesitated. After the light turned red for the second time, he yelled out an expletive in anger. Just then he looked over and saw that a little girl was standing on the street corner near him. Had she seen him? What if her family was from his church? He was overcome with conviction and determined never to burst out in anger like that again.

About a week later he was driving home after a hard day of work and got stuck behind a car marked "Student Driver" at the very same light. He was in a hurry again and the light went from red to green, and back to red. He still sat there. He loosened his tie a bit and started to grip the wheel. The light turned green but he was still waiting. He started to sweat a bit-red. Through clenched teeth he said, "Just calm down, it's OK," but he had to grip the wheel tighter to keep from shouting. Finally the driving student, crying from fear made her left turn, followed by Brad. As he drove off, Brad thought, "They really need to put in a left-turn arrow there."

STOP SUPPRESSING, START EXPRESSING

His temper did not explode, but can we consider that true victory? Did he "more than conquer" his temper problem? Of course not. But victory in the Christian life is not to be a life of suppression but one of expression. In other words, if we are truly experiencing victory in the Christian life, we will be obedient, not out of suppressing our inward desires but out of an expression of Christ's life which is in us.

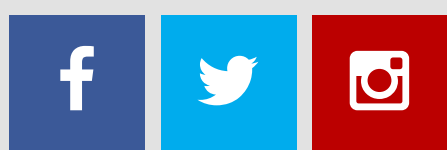
This is the meaning of 1 John 3:9 "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God." This verse has been badly abused by many from different theological perspectives. Some would suggest that this means that a Christian is completely incapable of sinning, but this cannot be the case because 1 John 1:8 says, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Some from another perspective soften the verse to say, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin continually," but that is an attempt to push the Greek present tense much further than the grammar allows. And let's be honest with ourselves; nearly every Christian sins continually (though he does not have to) whether it is wrong beliefs, a broken relationship, a touch of legalism here and there, or simply a desire to live for God through our own strength ("...whatever is not from faith is sin" Rom 14:23).

This verse, along with the rest of First John, is not a test of whether or not we are God's children. There's only one test for that-do you believe in Jesus? What this verse does mean is that we have a new life from God inside us which when it is let out, is incapable of doing anything that does not please God. This is because this life is Jesus Christ Himself living in you, and as the Eternal Son of God, He is not able to do anything that is not pleasing to Him.

That is solid truth that you can count on. He is in you and He is much more powerful than sin. Rather than using your own strength to suppress your natural self, live out His self.

"I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

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MINISTRY PURPOSE

BOLD GRACE MINISTRIES EXISTS TO:

Unite believers under the banner of God's grace (Eph 4:3-6), **share** the gospel and aid those who will proclaim it faithfully (Rom 10:14-15), **increase** believers' confidence in the power of the indwelling Christ (Gal 2:20), **love** without hypocrisy (Rom 12:9a), **proclaim** the hope of Christ's glorious kingdom (Rom 8:18-21), and **equip** the saints to share Christ's matchless grace and love with others (2 Tim 2:2).

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