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Our aim is to regularly post a new lesson on the first part of each month. So if you wish to follow this course of study, please check regularly each month. If no new lesson appears at the beginning of a particular month, it indicates that we were unable to get it ready in time. In such a case, please check for it after the first of the following month. Your questions or comments are welcomed and will be responded to as much as possible.

PATHWAY OF LIGHT STUDY COURSE

by R. W. Young

“But the path of the just is as a shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day.” (Prov. 4:18)

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of Yahweh; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” (1 John 5:13)

LESSON 160, 1 John chapter 3 continued

As we have seen, the apostle John tells us that those who are truly looking forward to becoming like Yahshua when they see Him at His return, will be striving toward that goal in the meantime. This is what he calls “walking in the light” in chapter 1, verse 7. As he said there, those who are doing this are being continually cleansed by the blood of Yahshua. That means, therefore, that they are assured of salvation and eternal life as long as they are walking in that light.

However, those who are not so walking “in the light of the knowledge of the glory of Yahweh in the face of Yahshua the Messiah” (2 Cor 4:6) are sinning. As John says, they are practicing lawlessness, for “sin is lawlessness”.

Then, John points out that Yahshua was manifested (as Yahweh in the flesh – 1 Tim 3:16, John 1:14 et. al.) to take away sin and there is no sin in Him. Therefore, he tells us the one who abides (or dwells) in Yahshua does not sin, and those who do sin have neither seen Him nor known Him. He continues on in this vein of teaching.

VERSES 7-10 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (8) He that committs sin is of the devil; for the devil sins from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of Yahweh was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (9) Whosoever is born of Elohim does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of Yah. (10) In this the children of Elohim are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever does not righteousness is not of Elohim, neither he that loves not his brother.

John draws the simple conclusion that the one who does righteousness is righteous, and, then, adds “even as He” (Yahweh- Yahshua) “is righteous”. You might say, “elementary, my dear Watson” (to use s Sherlock Holmes expression) meaning, of course, that it is self evident and should not even need mentioning.

So, why would John mention it? No doubt, then as yet today, there were those who taught that faith was enough to establish you as being righteous in Yahweh’s eyes even though you continued to live in sin. This of course is something that James, and even Paul (Gal 2:17; Rom 3:31) clearly deny. So that teaching, that you can continue in sin and still be righteous before Yahweh, this apostle, John, also clearly refutes.

In fact, John plainly says the one who “commits sin” is of the devil. He points out again that Yahshua came to destroy the works of the devil and that the primary purpose for which Yahshua came was to destroy the works of the devil.

He tells us that the person who is born of Yahweh, who is a child of Yahweh, does not commit sin. In fact, because Yahweh’s seed (His life substance) remains in the one born of Yahweh, he cannot sin.

Therefore, this is what shows who are born of Yahweh and who are children of the devil. Whoever does not do righteousness is not of Yahweh. And anyone who doesn’t love his brother is not of Yahweh. That is to say, no one who does not love others human’s, and especially other followers of Messiah, is a true child of Yahweh. He is not a believer and, therefore, does not have eternal life.

One thing that needs to be repeated here is that John is not saying that anyone who commits a sin at any time is not born of Yahweh. He had already said that if we are walking in the light (pressing on toward becoming sinless like Yahshua) all the while we are doing so the blood of Yahshua keeps cleansing us from all sin. If we had no sin, we would not need the blood to keep cleansing us from sin.

We have not yet come to that kind of absolute perfection that we will have when we see Yahshua and receive complete knowledge of what it is to be fully righteous in the image of Yahweh as seen in Yahshua. At the present, we are being changed into His likeness, “from glory to glory”, as by the Holy Spirit we keep increasing in the grace and knowledge of Yahshua Messiah, the knowledge of Yahweh. (2 Cor 3:18: 2 Pet 3:18)

If John meant that the one born of Yahweh cannot sin in the absolute sense, because His seed remains in him, then, he would not have said in chapter 2, verse 1, not to sin. Why tell us not to sin, if we cannot do so anyway? There he says, if any man does sin, Yahshua is our advocate and the propitiation for our sins.

What John is saying when he says the one born of Elohim does not commit sin and cannot be committing sin, because he is born of Elohim and, therefore, cannot commit sin, is not that such a person is unable to commit a sinful act, but that he cannot be living a sinful life. He cannot be practicing sin on a continual basis. Known sin cannot be a regular part of his or her life. This I have pointed out before, but felt it should be restated here as well.

What, then, of the backslider, one who came to Yahweh through the hearing of the gospel and seemed to be born again, back then went back into sin? Is such a person automatically excluded from being a child of Yahweh?

This is a difficult question when you think of what John said here. But the answer is clear when you search the word.

Just as Yahweh called backsliding Israel to return, so does he call the backslidden believer to repent and return to Him. (Jer 3:12, 22; Hosea 14:4) Even the people of Laodicean assembly, whom Yahshua warned against becoming spewed out of His mouth, were called to repentance (Rev 3:19). They were told that they could still buy true gold (true faith) and beautiful white clothing (true righteousness) and have their eyes anointed with eye salve so they could see. (Rev 3:18)

The parable of the prodigal son is not primarily referring to one who never knew Yahweh. The prodigal son was a member of the father's household before he left. He spent all the fortune that the father had given him on riotous, sinful living. But when he came to his senses and humbly returned to seek mercy of the father to be a servant, the father welcomed him with open arms and a kiss. He gave him a ring and new clothes and a real feast.

So it is that Yahweh will welcome back the one who knew him, but backslid, if such a person will humble himself or herself and return to seek mercy. Yahweh's mercy endures forever to those who trust Him and those who love Him. Our sins might be as scarlet, but He will make them as white as snow, that is, make it as though we had none. They may be red as crimson, but He will make them like wool. (Isa 1:18)

Finally, in case anyone still thinks this matter, of Yahweh accepting the backslider who repents and comes back for mercy, does not apply to the New Covenant believer, they should read 1 Cor 5:1-5 and 2 Cor 2:6-8. Here we see one who was living in gross immorality such as even the heathen didn't do. He was turned over to Satan for the destruction of his body in order that his spirit might be saved (if he repented). Yet, this backslider apparently repented, for in the second letter to the Corinthians Paul told them to take him back in and show their love to him.

So, yes, a true believer, one who is born of Yahweh, can backslide and can repent and be accepted back. However, it is a dangerous thing to do for unless the backslider does return while he or she is able, but dies in that condition, he or she shall not enter into

eternal life. The scripture says very plainly that ‘the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of Yahweh’. (1 Cor 6:9; Gal 5:21)

The truth is that one who thinks they are born of Yahweh and backslides into a life of sin is giving evidence that they may not have been truly born again. He or she may not have been truly repentant and believing in the first place. If the backslider does not return in repentance before dying in that state, then, it is clear evidence that he or she was not one of Yahshua’s true sheep, but only had a false, quasi, conversion, for the scripture teaches that His sheep will follow Him. (John 10:27)

Therefore, the professed believer who does backslide has no reason to think he is one of Yahshua’s true sheep, or born again, no matter how great his or her experience of conversion has been. The only proof that they are truly His will be that they turn back to become obedient servants of His.

To those who said they had prophesied in His name, cast out devils in His name, and done many mighty miracles in His name, Yahshua did not say they were lying. He only said, “I never knew you, you lawless ones”. (Matt 7:21-22) He never knew, or recognized, them as truly being His own sheep.

So it is concerning the backslider: if he perishes in that unrighteous living, it is proof that Yahshua never really recognized him or her as being His true sheep. Therefore, any backslider is in danger of such being the case and of, therefore, going to hell. The only thing such persons can wisely do is to repent and turn back to obedience through faith in Messiah so that, if they were not truly a member of Yahweh’s family, they may become such, and if they actually were they will have evidence of such by turning to Him in repentance.

Without going him into that possibility (of a true believer backsliding, but having to return before the evidence restored that he is a believer and has eternal life) John simply gives a life of righteousness as the overall evidence that one is truly born of Yahweh. And a person’s life of righteousness is especially seen by the fact that he loves his brother. Indeed, as John brings out more specifically later, love to those who are born of Yahweh is itself evidence that we also been so born.

What should you do if you have been properly baptized, but do not have the evidence that you are born of Yahweh? You should make sure that you have truly repented and ask Yahshua to forgive all your sins, and ask Him to come and live His life in you by the Holy Spirit. Of course, if you have never been immersed in His name for the remission of sins, then, that is the initial step for you to take.

We plan to finish this chapter in the next lesson.