

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Looking for feedback: Sinning And The Greek Present Tense**Looking for feedback: Sinning And The Greek Present Tense - posted by bobmutch (), on: 2008/12/8 10:54**

Here is an article I wrote and I would like some feed back on this position. Also if those that have a good Greek understanding can weight in on this that would be helpful also.

Some make a plead that sin is consistent in the life of a Christian by claiming that the words continuous, constantly, habitual, or practice must be added to Greek verbs or participles that are in the present tense.

For example 1Joh 3:8 says "he that committeth sin is of the devil" (KJV). They would translate this as "he that continuously committeth sin is of the devil" (Modified). The KJV translation would viewed as a one time sin and then a person would be of the devil. The modified translation would be viewed that only a person who continuously commits sin would be of the devil.

The New Testament was originally written in Greek and our English versions of the New Testament were translated from Greek to English. Some will hold that because the Greek word $\epsilon\lambda\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ (poiōn) in 1Joh 3:8 that is translated "committeth" is in the present tense and this mean you must continuously commit sin for a period of time before you are deemed to be of the devil.

If you ask them how long a person much commit sin before it would be considered continuous most would tell you only the Lord knows, thus leaving it ambiguous.

This claim leaves us with the following questions. Do you have to commit sin continuously before you are a servant of sin (Joh 8:34)? Must you walk in darkness for a long period of time before you lie when you say you have fellowship with God (1Joh 1:6)? Do you have to practice denying that Jesus is the Christ before you are a liar (1Joh 2:22)? Do you have to habitually hate your brother before you are a liar (1Joh 4:20)?

In these four above scriptures the English verbs in bold are translated from a Greek verb or participle that is in the present tense. While Greek scholars will all tell you that the present tense of Greek verbs or participles denotes continuous action or action in progress, we need to look to the Bible to see what these scriptures mean.

There clearly is a place to look at the Greek when we are interpreting what different scriptures mean. But when you have a difference of opinion both sides can digress to getting support from the Greek scholars that support their point of view and many times this leaves neither side any further ahead.

The average Christian doesn't have enough of a foundational understanding of Greek to be able to really tell which Greek scholar is right is wrong. Primarily we should be looking to God for direction. We have the promises of the scripture that the Spirit of God will guide us into all truth (Joh 16:13) and that if we do his will we "shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God" (Joh 7:17).

In the case we are looking at one Greek scholar will say if the Greek verb or participle is in the present tense it has to mean continuously or habitually, and the other will say they can be translated continuously but they also can mean a single action and should also be defined by context, by considering the definition of the Greek word, and unanimity of scriptures.

There is a very simple answer for this seeming difficult question. All we have to do is look at scriptures where the Greek verbs or participles are in present tense and have to do with keeping God's commands and see what the results are of also changing those scriptures to to read continuous.

While we hear the plea for continuous, constant, and habitually when it comes to scriptures that imply that those that break God commandments are not Christians. But I have yet to find these same people pleading for continuous tense when it comes to scripture that discuss Christians keeping Gods commandments. Let me explain by example so you can see what I mean.

In 1Joh 2:29 it says "every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." (KJV). In this scripture the Greek participle that

is translated "doeth" is $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\iota$; (ποιεῖ) and is in the Greek present tense. If we follow the same example of those that make allowances for sin by translating 1Joh 3:8 to "he that continuously committeth sin is of the devil" (Modified) we will also have to translate 1Joh 2:29 as "every one that continuously doeth righteousness is born of him" (Modified).

If you choose to add the word continuously because the Greek verb or participle is in the present tense in one scripture you will have to do it to all present tense Greek verbs or participles or prove yourself to be bias.

When you apply this principle to both scriptures they no longer are consistent. So now we have "every one that continuously doeth righteousness is born of him" (1Joh 2:29) which literally means that those that are born of God will continuously do righteousness. So in this scripture just one sin and the person would no longer be do righteousness continuously.

Let's compare that to 1Joh 3:8 where those that hold that intermittent sinning is compatible with being born again and see what happens when the word continuously is added. "He that continuously committeth sin is of the devil" (1Joh 3:8) now means that only when a person is continuously disobedient they are of the devil. If they commit sin intermittently they are not continuously disobedient and therefore they are not of the devil.

The addition of the word "continuously" to both of these scriptures has created an inconsistency that was not there before. One scripture now means "we know those that are born of him will continuously do righteous" and the other scripture means "only he that is continuously disobedient is of the devil".

But when you remove the word "continuously" from both scriptures they become consistent with each other. "Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" 1Joh 2:29 and "He that committeth sin is of the devil" 1Joh 3:8.

While those have been confused by the teaching that all Christians will intermittently sin may plead foul and try to find some way to make an excuse of the sin they have been taught they must commit, those that are honest will refuse to pull the Word of God down to their level of living and instead will look to God for grace that will make them "free from sin" (Rom 6:18).

Advanced Study:

The following is a list of scriptures in the first letter of John where the Greek verb or participle is in the present tense. To be consistent with adding continuously to 1Joh 3:8 you would have to add continuously to all these scriptures or show that you are bias. In each of these scriptures the English verb is linked to a Greek-English Interlinear where you can hover over the Greek verb or participle and a pop up will show the parsing of the Greek word so you can see that it is in present tense.

1Jn 2:5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

1Jn 2:29 If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.

1Jn 3:7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

1Jn 3:22 And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

1Jn 3:24 And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.

1Jn 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

1Jn 4:12 No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

1Jn 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

1Jn 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

A Look At Bible Translations

Most Bible versions endeavor in their translate of the scriptures to stay free from translating according to doctrinal. In the following comparison I will show the Bible versions that have translated 1Joh 3:8 so as to make room for sin in the Christians life and show if they have translated other present tense Greek in the same way.

Not Implying Continuous Action in 1Joh 3:8:

(ASV) he that doeth sin is of the devil;

(KJV) He that committeth sin is of the devil;

(NIV) He who does what is sinful is of the devil,
(NKJV) He who sins is of the devil,
(NRSV) Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil;
(RSV) He who commits sin is of the devil;
(YLT) he who is doing the sin,

Implying Continuous Action in 1Joh 3:8:

(AMP) he who commits sin
(NAS77) the one who practices sin is of the devil;
(NASB) the one who practices sin is of the devil;

Implying Continuous Action in the Advanced Study List of Scriptures AMP 1/9, NAS77 2/9, and NASB 2/9:

1Joh 2:29 (NAS77) you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

1Joh 2:29 (NASB) you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

1Joh 3:7 (AMP) Boys (lads), let no one deceive and lead you astray. He who practices righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.

1Joh 3:7 (NAS77) Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

1Joh 3:7 (NASB) Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous;

Re: Looking for feedback: Sinning And The Greek Present Tense - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/8 15:06

The Greek of 1 John 3:8 has a definite article in the nominative followed by the present participle. This conveys the sense of a fixed characteristic. When this form is used with the word for believe it has the effect of characterizing someone as a believer. ie the believing one.

Consequently your verse in 1 John 3:8 characterizes the one as a 'sinning one' in other words 'a sinner'. It clearly implies that John has in mind someone whose life is characterized by a steady pattern of sinning. It does NOT mean, as you imply, that a single act of sin puts someone outside the family of God.

Re: - posted by bobmutch (), on: 2008/12/8 15:52

philologos:

>>>The Greek of 1 John 3:8 has a definite article in the nominative followed by the present participle. This conveys the sense of a fixed characteristic. When this form is used with the word for believe it has the effect of characterizing someone as a believer. ie the believing one.

So how would you apply this principle to 1Joh 2:29, 3:7, 3:24, 4:7, which have the definite article in the nominative before the participle in the present tense?

>>>It does NOT mean, as you imply, that a single act of sin puts someone outside the family of God.

So let me ask you this. Would you feel the scriptures teach if you have hatred for your brother that you are a murderer and "that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1Joh 3:15).

Also would you feel that you have to commit sin continuously before you are a servant of sin (Joh 8:34)? Must you walk in darkness for a long period of time before you lie when you say you have fellowship with God (1Joh 1:6)? Do you have to practice denying that Jesus is the Christ before you are a liar (1Joh 2:22)? And do you have to habitually hate your brother before you are a liar (1Joh 4:20)?

Thanks a lot for your response on the Greek end of things. I will check this out with a Greek teacher associate.

Re: - posted by philologos (), on: 2008/12/9 7:37

Quote:
-----So how would you apply this principle to 1Joh 2:29, 3:7, 3:24, 4:7, which have the definite article in the nominative before the participle in the present tense?

There are referring to someone who has the permanent characteristic of behaving righteously. Someone can have a characteristic pattern of behaviour and yet on occasion act 'out of character' without that altering the basic underlying character. One sin does not make a person a sinner and one act of righteousness does not make a man righteous.

Quote:
-----So let me ask you this. Would you feel the scriptures teach if you have hatred for your brother that you are a murderer and "that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" (1Joh 3:15).

I have dealt with this in the separate post. It is a reference to one whose permanent characteristic is that he is a 'brother hater'.

Quote:
-----Also would you feel that you have to commit sin continuously before you are a servant of sin (Joh 8:34)? Must you walk in darkness for a long period of time before you lie when you say you have fellowship with God (1Joh 1:6)? Do you have to practice denying that Jesus is the Christ before you are a liar (1Joh 2:22)? And do you have to habitually hate your brother before you are a liar (1Joh 4:20)?

You are still putting the cart before the horse. The characteristic of a slave of sin is that he continues in sin. Someone who continues, as a characteristic, in sin is showing himself to be a slave of sin.

Yes, you do have to habitually hate your brother before the Greek would express it with a nominative article followed by the present participle.

Perhaps Mark 6:14 will illustrate the point. The KJV has 'John the Baptist' here. Technically it is this same nominative article followed by the present participle ie 'the (one) baptizing'. It is quite legitimate to translate this as The Baptist. It is John's permanent characteristic that he was 'the (one) baptizing' or 'the baptizer'. That does not mean that a single act of baptism makes John a 'baptist' but the whole thrust of his life. That does not mean that John was unable to 'not baptize'. He wanted, if you recall to 'not baptize' Christ, but the whole characteristic of his life was that he was 'the baptist'. In a similar way the verses you have quoted do not mean that a 'righteous man' cannot perform an unrighteous act.