



Conducted by
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"John says, 'If we say we have no sin we lie.' He also says, 'He that committeth sin is of the devil' (1st John 3:8). What, therefore, is meant by 'committeth sin' in this context, and how can we be 'without blemish' as per 2 Pet. 3:14?"

In 1st John 1:8 we read, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Before however, we can say anything meaningful we must examine all aspects of the question.

SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS AND REASONING

In the Roman letter, Paul has some very telling arguments. In 5:12 we read, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Again in Rom. 3:10,23 Paul says "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one" . . . "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Let us try to understand each point which is made.

"Sin entered into the world." Now if I 'enter' a room, I must be 'outside' the room before I can enter it. It is quite obvious that Paul in Rom. 5 is referring us to the Garden of Eden, because he mentions "Adam's transgression." It is equally obvious that God did not make Adam a sinful person; everything that God made was good; it couldn't be otherwise. Therefore we can only conclude that Satan, in rebellion against God, had transgressed God's law; God had decreed this as SIN. Satan, and those angels who followed him, had been banished from Heaven. Hence, he 'entered' the garden from some other place, intent on mischief against God's Creation. So entered death also, and death passed upon all men.

God's word is truth. Therefore, if the Bible says that all have sinned - both Jew and Gentile - then we can see the force of the scriptural argument in John, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Truth says that all are sinners, and until people can rid themselves of self-deception, and acknowledge this fact, then they will never be saved. We shall also need to see how this teaching affects those sinners who "have been saved by grace."

We must also try to understand that it was 'sin' that entered into the world, not 'sins.' I know this may be looked upon as a fine distinction, but I am looking at Satan and equating him wholly and completely as SIN. He entered the world of God's Creation and he has never left it since. The pervading powers of darkness, evil, and ultimate death are the hall-marks of his presence. Peter says that "he goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." We often say that the world is a dark and evil place; think what it would have been like if the Eternal Light had never entered the hearts and minds of mankind. Try to think of what Hell is like in the abyss of darkness, and then, dear Christian, try to put 'sinning' into perspective.

"HE THAT COMMITTETH SIN"

The verb 'to commit' is a Transitive Verb, i.e. it needs an object in order to make its meaning clear; in this case the object is sin. One meaning of the verb 'to commit' is 'to perpetrate'; a secondary meaning is to perpetrate such actions as will place us in a hazardous situation. If we perpetrate acts of sin, then so far as God is concerned such acts will place us in an extremely hazardous situation relative to Him.

Any act of sin which we may commit can be done in one of two ways; either *ignorantly* or *with knowledge*. In English law, ignorance of the law is not a defence. So far as God's law is concerned (and I am not speaking of the law of Moses) I feel sure that ignorance of His revealed will cannot help us very much. If we are serious about doing God's will, then

we shall study it in order to do it; if we are incapable of studying it, then that should be taken care of by the teaching ministry of the Church. In any case, we should not be ignorant of what God would have us do because we are more interested in other things, or even indolent in studying the scriptures. If, on the other hand, we commit sin with knowledge, then this would seem to be a deliberate act of rebellion against God. Furthermore, if I know what I ought to do, and fail to do it, then again I could lapse into a sinful state. "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." There will be few excuses for sin when we stand before God.

MISSING THE POINT

We must not, however, miss the cardinal point that John makes with regard to all this. In 1 John 2:1 he says, "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (but read on). Is it possible for this desirable state of affairs to happen as we grow into Christian maturity? Why does the Holy Spirit through John say it if it is not possible? Many Christians have this strange idea that spiritually, in the mind, they can progress to spiritual maturity, but simply because their spirits are encapsulated in flesh, the flesh must automatically go on sinning. What did Paul mean when he said, "I buffet my body daily, and bring it into subjection lest, having preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." He knew that the body could be kept in control, indeed had to be. Furthermore, what is the Holy Spirit doing in our lives? If we go on sinning in the flesh, are we not 'quenching' Him?

What is the whole burden of John's teaching? Surely it is love; love of Christ, love of the truth, love of the brethren. But how can we love Christ if we are not intent in doing His will? How can we love the truth if we are not really concerned as to what the truth is? How can we love the brethren if we are envious, and cling to bitter disputes of the past? Brethren, we need to grow. We should reach the stage in our Christian lives when the advocacy of Christ regarding our sins is required less and less. I have heard some Christians say that they sin dozens of times every day. It is impertinent of me to ask, "Why?" Make no mistake, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." 'Of' is a preposition indicating, among other things, 'cause and agency.' It is Satan who is the prime cause of sin, and when we go sinning we are acting as his agents. We, supposedly the executive arm of God's will on earth, acting as agents for the one who was responsible for the ignominious death of God's dear Son! How do we have the temerity to seek the advocacy of Christ and yet continue to engage ourselves in the sin which put Him on the Cross? Either we are extremely naive, or we have not begun to understand the depths of the love of our Heavenly Father and His Christ.

WITHOUT BLEMISH

2 Peter 3:14 says, "Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." What are the things we are looking for according to Peter? We look for the day of the Lord, the promise of new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. In short, we are looking for that eternal abode to which all faithful saints are bound.

Therefore, Peter gives a warning. If you are *really* looking for such things, and trying to hasten their coming, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. To be 'diligent' means on our part unremitting work toward the objective. With such an objective in view, there will be no time, nor inclination, to follow the devious wiles of Satan. We shall have our eyes fixed firmly on the Lord and the goal before us. It will not be just a few prayers and an intermittent reading of the word, but a burning desire to really know Him, not just to know something about Him; it will be love casting out all fear of failure. Be assured of this; Satan will wage an unremitting war against our faith until the very day we die; we can survive this war only if we diligently seek Christ, and do our utmost to avoid sin. He will see to it that any blemish which comes our way inadvertently will be removed by His advocacy. May the Lord bless us in our search for purity in Christ.

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