

I JOHN: DISCERNING TRUE FROM FALSE SPIRITUALITY

Part III: Properly Addressing Sin In True Spirituality

(1 John 1:8-2:2)

I. Introduction

- A. Francis Schaeffer predicted that the American Church would become "inconsequential" due to a false concept of spirituality (Brannon Howse, The Coming Religious Reich, 2015, p. 45), one reason being its errant views of sin and of handling it: some hold the Catholic Mass is a propitiatory sacrifice, some hold one can by works produce his own atonement, some hold a Christian can attain sinless perfection, some hold Christ died only for the elect so that the non-elect cannot be saved and some do not think they are sinners in need of salvation.
- B. John in 1 John 1:8-2:2 told of the right ways of addressing the sin issue, so we view this passage for insight:

II. Properly Addressing Sin In True Spirituality, 1 John 1:8-2:2.

- A. Having mentioned in 1 John 1:7 that true spiritual fellowship that arises from heeding God's Word also brings the added blessing of Christ's atonement (represented in the term "blood") of cleansing one from all sin, John shifted his discussion into the subject of sin and of properly handling it in 1 John 1:8-2:2.
- B. Thus, John wrote that if we believers, the Apostles and the believers to whom John was writing (1 John 1:1-7), claim that "we have no sin," we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us, 1 John 1:8. Since 1 John 2:1 states we believers are able by God's power to **avoid committing acts of sin**, the term "sin" in 1 John 1:8 must mean the **sin nature** in the **believer**, Romans 7:13-25; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 1 John 1:8.
- C. Indeed, Romans 5:12 and Psalm 51:5 teach the doctrine of original sin, that every mortal at conception inherits the sin nature due to Adam's fall into sin so that if left to ourselves, we each are doomed to hell, Romans 3:20; 6:23. Thankfully, personal faith in Christ leads to God's gracious justification of the sinner, Romans 3:21-28. However, no believer in this earthly life ever reaches ultimate sanctification where his sin nature is eradicated, for the removal of the sin nature occurs only at the rapture by the power of God, cf. 1 Corinthians 15:54-57.
- D. As believers who have been justified by faith, if we then confess our acts of sin committed as believers, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all other unrighteous that we often are not even aware exists in coordination with our known, confessed acts of sin, 1 John 1:9. This cleansing is not by works of penance, a confessional, partaking of the Mass, etc., but by the believer's mere confession of sin to God!
- E. Lest we believers claim we have not sinned as believers, John revealed that every believer sins even after salvation in Christ, that to deny this fact is to make God a liar with His Word not being in us, 1 John 1:10.
- F. In writing these truths about sin to fellow believers, the Apostle John did **NOT** mean to imply that the presence of the sin nature that leads believers to sin should lead to the believer let himself live a life of sin interrupted by bouts of the confession of sin to God. To the contrary, John wrote so that believers might not commit acts of sin, 1 John 2:1a. Sinless living is possible only as the believer relies on the Holy Spirit for the power to boycott the control of the sin nature and produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit, Galatians 5:16-23.
- G. However, if any believer commits an act of sin, he needs to know that he has an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, 1 John 2:1b. This advocacy is illustrated in Zechariah 3:1-7: there, Satan stood at the right hand of Joshua, Israel's high priest to resist him by charging him with his acts of sin while the Angel of the Lord, the Preincarnate Christ, rebuked Satan to plead for the cleansing of Joshua so that he could continue to be an effective servant of God. Applied to us, we have Jesus acting as our "trial lawyer," our Advocate, to intercede for us when we sin so that if we confess our sins, God will throw the charge of Satan regarding our sin out of court (Revelation 12:9-11), and we can be cleansed to continue living for the Lord!
- H. Jesus is not only our Advocate, but the Propitiation, the satisfaction of God's wrath against sin not only for believers, but for the whole world, 1 John 2:2. This means that Jesus' atonement covers the sins of the entire world of those who will believe as well as those who will not believe in Him, cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19-20. We thus believe in the Unlimited Atonement of Christ opposite the Limited Atonement view of some Calvinists.

Lesson: John noted that all men inherited Adam's sin nature, but that Christ's atonement paid for all those sins that whoever believes in Jesus for salvation is justified. However, as we believers still have sin natures, and all of us have committed acts of sin, if we confess those sins to God, He is faithful and just to forgive us of those sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This provision is not meant to suggest that we believers tolerate continuing to commit acts of sin interrupted by confession, but to give assurance that forgiveness is available if we do sin.

Application: May we heed John's directives on the issue of sin that we might function in true spirituality with God.