

"HE THAT IS BEGOTTEN OF GOD DOES NOT PRACTISE SIN"

**"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not.
And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus
Christ the Righteous." – 1 John 2:1.**

ACCORDING to history the Apostle John at the time of writing this Epistle was quite an aged man. He was the last of the Apostles to die, according to tradition. In his ripe age he had naturally a tender, fatherly feeling toward all the Church; he had become very mellow in character through his experiences. According to the original, our text would more properly read: "My darlings, these things write I unto you." The translators have taken the liberty of saying "little children" instead. A little child is always considered a darling.

St. John was especially spoken of as "the disciple whom Jesus loved"; this is the Apostle's own testimony. He seemed to be of a peculiarly loving disposition, combined with great force of character. And now as his pilgrimage neared its close, his heart went out in loving solicitude toward God's "little children." He had, in the chapter preceding our text, been pointing out that sin is a trait or quality of perversity which affects all. The Apostle declared that if any man say that he has no sin, he deceives himself – he is a liar, and makes God a liar. We are all sinners, as facts and Scripture testify. St. John thus impresses upon us that if we say we have no sin, we are displeasing to God, who is pleased to have us acknowledge our sins and apply for cleansing, seeking to put away sin so far as possible.

The Apostle says: "These things I write unto you that ye sin not." He does not say: Yes, we are all sinners – we cannot help it – and must continue in sin. No! But he says: Realizing that you

commit trespasses which are contrary to the desire of your heart, remember that there is a place to go, a Mercy Seat, where you may confess your sins and obtain forgiveness. Remember that "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Remember that He gave Himself a Ransom-price for all, and that the merit of this price was applied by imputation on our behalf. Remember that all the sins of the flesh are forgivable through faith in His blood. Bear this in mind, too, that He knows that with our imperfect flesh we cannot as New Creatures do perfectly, and it is because of this that God has constituted Him our Advocate and Head over all things.

OUR HIGH PRIEST GRANTS ABSOLUTION

Our Father knows that we all come short on account of the weaknesses of the flesh. Jesus laid down His life to absolve us from sin and to restore us to the Father, and He has appeared in the presence of God as the Advocate for all those who, during this Gospel Age, turn away from sin and consecrate their lives to His service. Thus we see that the righteousness of Christ, through the great offering for sin which He made (His own body of flesh), is the basis for the forgiveness of our sins. And the blessing and privilege of going to the Throne of Grace for mercy and pardon for daily shortcomings is ours because we are the children of God, because we have come into the relationship of sons. We have a standing with the Father through the imputed merit of Jesus. Jesus does not advocate for others than the people of God. It is not the Father's purpose that He shall advocate for the world; God's dealing with the world will be quite different.

The One who is now our Advocate will soon take the Church class to Himself. As the great Priest after the Order of Melchizedek, He will then reign over the world for a thousand years – not as Advocate, but as Mediator between God and fallen man. He will do a work of restitution for the world during this reign of a thousand

years, and will bring up to perfection all who will avail themselves of the privileges and blessings granted during that period. At the close of the Millennium, when mankind are perfected, Messiah will turn them over to the Father: they will not need a Mediator after they have become perfect. So we see the difference between the Advocacy of Christ for the Church and His future work as Mediator for the world of mankind.

SEEMING CONTRADICTIONS HARMONIZED

The Apostle John in this same Epistle says: "He that is begotten of God sinneth not." How can this be true? Is the Apostle contradicting himself? Does he here say that "he that is begotten of God *sinneth not*," and does he say in our text that there is danger of our sinning? And again, that we would be lying if we denied that we have sin? What does he *mean* by the statement, "He that is begotten of God sinneth not"?

We reply that that which is begotten of God is the New Creature – the holy will, the new soul. But this New Creature has only the mortal body in which to operate; God promises to give a new body to the New Creature in the resurrection. In the meantime, however, he is required to live under the present imperfections of the human body, and by his good fight against the weaknesses and sins which are entrenched in his flesh he will show either his loyalty to God and to the principles of righteousness or his disloyalty. If he be overtaken in a fault, either through ignorance or through temptation which he cannot control, it will not be sin on the part of the New Creature, but an infirmity of the flesh. Nevertheless, he must go to God for forgiveness for these trespasses.

But the New Creature sinneth not – he "does not practise sin" – as the *Emphatic Diaglott* translates this passage. He who *loves* sin will *sin*; he who does not love sin will **[R5491 : page 202]** not sin *wilfully*. He might be entrapped through his weak flesh, or fall into a snare of the Adversary, but this would be unintentional on his

part. And Jesus, our Advocate, will intercede for such sins, but not for deliberate sin. Jesus did not die for wilful sins of the New Creature, but for sins due to the fall – Adamic sin. So if any sin wilfully as a New Creature, he perishes thereby. Our first life was in Adam; our first death was the Adamic death. When we accepted Christ and the New Creature was begotten, our second life was begun. Now if such a one should be guilty of wilful sin, he would no longer have any standing whatever before God; he would again come under the sentence of death – the Second Death.

SLACKNESS IN THE NEW CREATURE

We might remark here, incidentally, that sometimes there is a kind of mixed condition; the New Creature has been slack in guarding against temptation, and has yielded with some degree of culpability. To the extent that the New Creature has been derelict, negligent, the face of the Lord will be darkened to him. If the flesh start to do [R5492 : page 202] wrong, the new will is not to consent to, or allow the wrong. The New Creature is to mortify, put to death, the flesh. To whatever extent he is slack in this matter, to that extent it is sin. A full sin would be a *full* consent of the new will, a full turning away from God.

But the flesh might have certain desires and temptations, and there might occur a partially wilful sin. In such a case stripes would be administered in proportion to the wilfulness. Such an individual might get into a place where he would be spiritually sick, so that the Lord would entirely shut him off from the light of His countenance. The Apostle James points out that the only proper action then would be for the individual to apply to the Elders of the Church, the seniors of the Church, the spiritually minded ones, that they go with him to the Throne of Grace in order that he might obtain mercy and be reinstated.

Seniors, spiritually minded ones not Elders, might do this service for the one who is sick, but preferably it should be the chosen

Elders of the Congregation. This course would be a very humiliating one for the sin-sick brother, but such action might save that soul from death by a proper humbling of *self* "under the mighty hand of God." Thus such a one might be recovered and become again a true child of God.

CHRISTIAN, WALK CAREFULLY!

If we realize that through lack of proper watchfulness, or through some infirmity of the flesh, we have taken a wrong step, contrary to the Lord's will and to our interests as New Creatures in Christ, let us lose no time in retracing the step and in calling upon the Father for forgiveness. "We have an altar whereof they have no right to partake who serve the [typical] tabernacle"; an altar not sanctified by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the precious blood of Christ; and we are urged to "come boldly [with holy courage and confident faith] to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 13:10; 4:16.) How blessed this Throne of Grace, this Mercy Seat, provided by our Father's love! How undone we should be without it! Yet, beloved, let us walk with great carefulness – let us never presume upon the mercy of our God by being careless of our steps. Let us, instead, with earnest prayer and watchfulness, "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling," while our Father "worketh in us both to will and to do His good pleasure." – Philippians 2:12,13.

"Christian, *walk carefully!* oft wilt thou fall,
If thou forget on thy Savior to call.
Safe shalt thou walk through each trial and snare,
If thou art *clad in the armor of prayer!*"

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