

HAMARTIOLOGY (26)

(Reason #2) - One reason why believers will have problems is because of contact with sin.

The believer who sins and does not resolve it loses fellowship with God (**I John 1:3, 6-7**), joy (**I John 1:4**); fellowship with other believers (**I John 1:7**), a sense of security (**I John 2:5; 5:13**), confidence in prayer (**I John 3:19-22**), and joy at the thought of Christ's return (**I John 2:28**).

It is critical to the life of a believer that sin be exposed and eliminated, so it is imperative that a true church of God expound the Scriptures and give an accurate understanding of the doctrine of sin.

(Reason #3) - The believer's life is a constant struggle against sinful things. **Ephesians 6:12; I John 2:16**

(Reason #4) - Every believer will have moments of failure in sin. **Ecclesiastes 7:20; I John 1:8**

Dr. Chafer, in speaking about pastors who many times have to deal with sin and sin issues, said, "The soul doctor himself does not escape this conflict and sad indeed is his plight if he is so ignorant of the essential truths regarding the Christian's sin and its divinely provided cure, that he cannot diagnose even his own case or apply the healing to his own stricken heart" (*Ibid.* p. 325). Dr. Chafer's point is well made - it is imperative that leaders know the truth about sin for they are destined to have their own bouts with it, so they must know how to face it and deal with it so it does not fester and reach a level in which self-judgment is not enough.

(Reason #5) - Every believer must take care of his own sin problem. **Romans 14:12; II Corinthians 5:10; I John 1:9-10**

There is no place in the New Testament where a child of God is encouraged to seek out a human priest or to go into some manmade confessional in order to find a cure for sin. Each and every believer is personally responsible to face up to and deal with his own sin problems, and each and every believer will personally be held accountable in regard to this. Failure to understand and personally apply this truth to one's own life will ultimately lead to some negative and devastating consequences.

It is extremely important for a believer to understand his relationship with God and with sin, for much in the Christian life hinges on this very issue.

QUESTION #14 – What are attitudes a believer must avoid when it comes to sin?

(Attitude #1) - A believer must avoid an attitude that thinks a believer is exempt from sin.

The theological name for this faulty line of thinking is perfectionism. Perfectionism is basically the belief that it is possible for the believer to live a sinlessly perfect life, completely exempt from sin, thus never sinning. This attitude is totally false and cannot be supported Biblically (**i.e. I John 1:8**).

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When the Bible speaks of perfection (**i.e. I John 2:5**), it is really presenting the idea of moving in a direction of complete maturity in the things of God (**i.e. Ephesians 4:13**). Part of being mature is recognizing one's own sinful condition and facing it honestly before God. Moving toward perfection, in N.T. terms, is not so much a contrast between what is perfect and what is sinful, but more a contrast of who is mature and who is immature. Even the best and most mature of believers still have moments of failure, but they immediately handle the sin in a mature manner (**I John 1:9**). Paul still struggled after over twenty-five years of ministry (**Romans 7:23-24**), and he classified himself as the foremost of sinners near the end of his impacting life (**I Timothy 1:15**). We must avoid any attitude that thinks a believer is exempt from sin.

(Attitude #2) - A believer must avoid an attitude that thinks a believer is exempt from obedience.

The theological name for this faulty line of thinking is antinomianism. Antinomianism is basically the belief that a believer has total freedom to do whatever he wants and is not required to obey the Word of God. The word "anti nomian" literally means against the law. This type of thinking typically leads to a very licentious lifestyle.

The real key to a proper attitude is found in **I John 1:7**. This verse does not teach perfectionism or antinomianism, but a life that is continually walking in light. Dr. C. I. Scofield writes: "Walking in the light is explained in vv. 8-10; Ephesians 5:13. Through the Word of God the indwelling Holy Spirit shows the Christian that he (1) still possesses an old nature (v. 8), and (2) needs forgiveness for his sins (vv. 9-10). The blood of Christ is the divine provision for both. To walk in the light is to live in fellowship with the Father and the Son. Sin interrupts fellowship but cannot change relationship. Confession restores fellowship and immediate confession keeps fellowship unbroken" (*The New Scofield Study Bible*, NASV, note 3, pp. 1756-1757).

QUESTION #15 – What are the sin enemies of the believer?

Enemy #1 - The believer is in war with the world.

When we use the term "world," we are thinking of the entire cosmos including its objectives, philosophies, and attitudes which are clearly against God and His Word. Worldly things are opposed to godly things. The world and its entire system is at war with the believer.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer has well-observed: "This cosmos system is largely characterized by its ideals and entertainments, and these become allurements to the Christian who is in this cosmos though no part of it. These features of the cosmos are often close counterfeits of the things of God and in no place does the believer need divine guidance more than when attempting to draw a line of separation between the things of God and the things of Satan's cosmos. In their far-flung realities, the things of God are wholly unrelated to the things of Satan. It is at the borderline that Satan confuses the issues. ... The world presents a constant hazard to the child of God and his liability in the direction of that form of sin which is worldliness and ever a reality" (Vol. 2, p. 330).

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Enemy #2 - The believer is in war with the flesh.

We have a dark side that is an enemy of our godly side, which is our fleshly sin nature. This nature is characterized by ungodly lusts and attitudes (i.e. **I John 2:16**) and is at constant war with our godly nature (**Romans 7:25**).

As long as we are in this mortal body, our flesh will be in constant conflict with God's Spirit that lives in us. It is from our flesh that evil thoughts, desires, and actions arise (**James 1:13-14**).

It is only as one yields to the Spirit of God that victory will occur. The consistency of a Spirit-controlled life is the key to rare moments of victory for the flesh. By focusing our minds on the things of God and by yielding to the Spirit of God, a victorious spiritual life can be lived even though we have our flesh (**Romans 8:1-15**). The Apostle Paul said it simply and succinctly when he said, "But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (**Galatians 5:16**).

Enemy #3 - The believer is in war with Satan.

The Bible makes it clear that Satan is continually stalking the believer (**I Peter 5:8**). He is a crafty, subtle, and dangerous enemy who can and will strike out at believers from many angles. He will lash out from several directions - sickness, loss of a loved one, or great financial calamity, as revealed in the book of Job. He may pit one believer against another in some egotistical, pride issue. He may use lusts, education, philosophy, or any other worldly tactic to draw the believer away from a path which is righteous, true, and sound. He is not to be ignored for he will not just go away. Paul believed Satan's ways were to be clearly seen and understood (**II Corinthians 2:11**). Satan has split churches, destroyed churches, ruined relationships, and demolished lives. He is a fierce enemy who is in constant war with us.

We do have armor which is able to defeat him (**Ephesians 6:13-18**). We do have someone in us who is always greater than the one attacking us (**I John 4:4**). We are to resist him and he will flee from us (**James 4:7; I Peter 5:8-9**).

Satan will use the world and the flesh in an attempt to influence the believer. He is wise and powerful; and anyone who takes him lightly is foolish, and it is no wonder so many believers are being defeated by him.

QUESTION #16 – Is it possible for Satan to actually possess a believer?

Our contemporary issue of theology that has just recently given, rise to a variety of theological notions is understanding the mechanics of an actual satanic attack against the believer. To state the matter clearly - when Satan attempts to devour a believer, does he have the ability to enter the believer in order to carry out his attack? Another way to ask this question is whether or not Satan can attack the believer from without, from within, or both. Is it possible in any satanic attack for Satan to actually possess a believer?