Can the Believer Sin?

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

Having correctly understood that the Believer is filled with the Holy Spirit of God, some Christians incorrectly assume that they can no longer commit sin, implying that all their thoughts, words, and actions are now directly inspired by God. They often cite where the Apostle John says a Believer *"cannot sin, because he is born of God"* (1 John 3:9). But the Greek shows that John is talking about "practicing" or "continuing in" sin—he is not saying that a Christian cannot fall into sin.

We need to look no further than Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, for although Paul referred to the Believers in Corinth as *"the church of God...sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling"* (1 Cor. 1:2a), he admonished them (1 Cor. 4:14) concerning their *"quarrels"* (1 Cor. 1:11), *"arrogance"* (1 Cor. 5:2), *"immorality"* (1 Cor. 5:1), for how they *"wrong and defraud"* others and even brothers in Christ (1 Cor. 6:8), for how they were *"sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak"* (1 Cor. 8:12). If it was impossible for Believers to sin, Paul had no case to admonish Believers to cease sinning and to avoid sinning in future!

Paul convicted these Believers of their sin, that they would see it and confess it to God, being restored to a right relationship with Him, for the Believer cannot be in communion with Christ if there is un-confessed sin in their life. As Isaiah said, *"Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear"* (Isaiah 59:2). Yet, *"if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Yes, *"draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you"* (James 4:8-10).

Believers must take care to not dress up their sinful desires as if they are "of God" to justify their behavior, for they will become self-righteous, arrogant, prideful, and abusive in the Church of Christ. It also proves a false witness to non-believers, for if we say we have no sin when we sin against non-believers, we lie and distort the truth of Christ. There is a serious problem of un-repentant sin in the Church today, and we are not in communion with Christ! How could we be, adding self-justification upon self-justification for our sins, rather than confessing them to God under the true Justification of Jesus? God's Word is very clear that the Believer will struggle with sin in this life—and this struggle in itself is a sign of the Holy Spirit in us, for we are being sanctified from sin in our lives (set apart and cleansed for God by the Holy Spirit).

May we face and acknowledge sin in our lives, confessing it to Jesus, that our precious communion with Him would be restored and we might mature and grow. As a child confessing his disobedience to his father is lovingly restored to a right relationship, may we seek our Father's face at all times (especially when we have sinned), knowing that to His precious Children, He is gentle, loving, forgiving and *"a rewarder of those who seek Him"* (Heb. 11:6). May we *"examine"* ourselves (1 Cor. 11:28) and pray like David, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way"* (Psalm 139:23-24). Even so, Amen.