

Sin An Outdated Concept?

When did you hear the term “sin” the last time? We do not talk much about it any longer. If you make a mistake society would suggest not to admit it. You could possibly damage your feeling of self-worth or others could turn against you, some would argue. Therefore, mistakes should not be admitted. Yet we know that not everything is okay with us, and sometimes we may suffer because of it. So, let us face the problem rather than running from it. What do we know about sin?

I. The Bible and Sin

(1) What is sin?

John 16:9 - Sin is separation from God (see Gen 3). Sin is not to believe in Jesus.

1 John 3:4 - Sin is lawless, transgressing God's commandments.

John 8:34 - Sin is slavery.

James 4:17 - It is not to do what is right, although we know what should be done.

(2) Who is a sinner?

Rom 3:9-12, 23; - Everyone including myself.

1 John 1:8 Matt 5:21, 22, - There is nobody who has not transgressed the Law of God explained by Jesus.

27, 28 Heb 4:15 - The only exception is Jesus.

(3) What are the consequences of sin?

Gen 3:16-19; 4:8 - Pain, suffering, sickness, and whatever is negative

Rom 6:16, 23 - Death Thus, all of us are affected.

II. The Reality of Sin

Although it is common to deny the reality of sin, it can be seen everywhere. It is manifested on a large scale in wars, “ethnic cleansing,” terrorism, oppression of and crimes against other nations, cultures, or people, etc.

It is also a reality on the individual level. A telling description is found in 2 Tim 3:1-5. Sin not only influences all our relationships to God and other people but even our own mental and physical health.

Psychosomatic medicine has shown, that hatred, the desire to take revenge, anger, wrath, etc.--what people may call “little sins”--may cause physical problems as severe as--in some cases--death. Psychological problems and inner tensions may lead to problems with the nervous system, strokes, high blood pressure, heart attack, digestive disorders, colon ulcers, urogenital problems, allergic reactions, infections, eye and skin diseases, etc. On the other hand, faith in God, prayer, confession, and attendance of church services have a positive impact on health (Gary E. Fraser, Diet, Life Expectancy and Chronic Disease, Oxford University Press 2003, pp.153-159; Gary L. Hopkins and Joyce W. Hopp, It Takes a Church, Pacific Press 2003, pp. 78-85). As sin destroys the entire human being, so real conversion makes whole the entire human being.

III. Solutions of the Sin Problem

(1) Situation:

Jer 13:23 - We are not able to solve the sin problem. (See Achan in Josh 6:18 and Josh 7, but David in 2 Sam 11 and 12:1-13.)

(2) Solution:

2 Cor 5:21 - In Jesus God has provided a solution for the sin problem. Jesus took our place so that we may be free. 1 John 2:1 - Jesus is not only our Savior but also our advocate.

(3) Conditions:

John 6:47, 51 - We must believe and commit ourselves completely to Jesus.

1 John 1:9 - We must confess our sins to God and accept his forgiveness.

This includes:

- (a) Repentance (Acts 2:38; 17:30)
- (b) Admitting the wrong if necessary also (Luke 15:18-21)
- (c) Turning away from sin (Prov 28:13)
- (d) Restoration (Eze 33:14-16; Luke 19:8)
- (e) Willingness to forgive others (Matt 6:12, 14, 15; Luke 23:34)
- (f) An active attempt to be reconciled Matt 5:24)

(4) Results:

Inner peace, joy, restored relations, a good conscience, eternal life with God

IV. Sin and Us

God is willing to forgive and to grant us a new beginning. He only waits for us to turn to him—Isa 1:18. Jesus takes away our sin—John 1:29.

"Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honoured of God and who stood highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven." GC 493. When he was "no longer free to stir up the rebellion in heaven, Satan's enmity against God found a new field in plotting the ruin of the human race." PP 52. The Bible clearly tells the story of the temptation and fall of our first parents: "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." Romans 5:12. As the result, the world was blighted with the curse of sin and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death.

I-THE SIN PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION

This sin-darkened earth was not left without hope. In the courts of heaven it was decided that the Son of God should be sent to us, "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21), and to "destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8). Sin had originated in the self-seeking exaltation of Lucifer; the plan of salvation in the self-sacrificing love of God. So great was His love for us that He consented to sacrifice His best, to save at least some of us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but

have everlasting life." John 3:16. And His Son volunteered to make the great sacrifice and pay the price of our redemption. So He chose to step down from the throne of the universe, leaving the glory that He had with the Father, that He might bring help to this benighted and perishing world. Jesus, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philipians 2:6-8.

Notice that Jesus came in "the form of a servant," "in the likeness of men." Before His coming, provision had been made for His incarnation. He said, "a body hast thou prepared me" (Hebrews 10:5). The glory of His divinity, which we could not have endured, had to be veiled in the flesh of humanity, that He might draw near to fallen men. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same [flesh and blood]... Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren." Hebrews 2:14, 17. For this reason the "Son of God" was also called the "Son of man."

"By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey." DA 24.

When humanity and divinity are associated in the same person, complete victory over sin and perfect reproduction of Christ's character in man, is possible. This fundamental truth was expressed by Paul in these words: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Philipians 4:13. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:3, 4.

Through His divine power (Romans 1:16) God has provided "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," making it possible for us to become "partakers of the divine nature" and grow in faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity, and all other fruits of the Spirit, in which we must abound to make our "calling and election sure." "For so [not in any other way, but so] an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:3-11.

II-GETTING RIGHT WITH GOD

The Bible tells us that all men have an inherent deficiency, which is fatal to them: "There is none righteous, no, not one. . . . For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:10, 23, 24. In other words: Through sin we have all lost an essential part of our being the glory of God, His moral image, His character, His righteousness-without which we are but hopeless sinners, doomed to eternal perdition. But thanks to a special provision of God, the fundamental need in our being can be supplied-God's righteousness can be restored in us-and we can have everlasting life. This is the essence of Paul's exposition.

From the very beginning, men have been trying to find their way back to God, and the question, "How then can men be justified with God?" (Job 25:4), has been repeated over and over since sin came into the world. But, sad to realize, by following their own ideas, men have generally missed the way.

When our first parents fell into transgression, and lost their white robe of innocence and righteousness, they tried to cover their nakedness with fig leaves sewn together. "This is what the transgressors of God's law have done ever since the day of Adam and Eve's disobedience.... They have worn the garments of their own devising, by works of their own they have tried to cover their sins, and make themselves acceptable with God." COL 311.

The controversy between Cain and Abel was not limited to those two brothers; it has continued all through religious history. "Abel was determined to worship God according to the directions God had given. This displeased Cain. He thought that his own plans were best, and that the Lord would come to his terms. Cain in his offering did not acknowledge his dependence upon Christ. He thought that his father Adam had been treated harshly in being expelled from Eden. The idea of keeping that sin ever before the mind, and offering the blood of the slain lamb as a confession of entire dependence upon a power outside of himself, was torture to the high spirit of Cain." TM 77, 78. "To outward appearance their religion was the same up to a certain point; but beyond this the difference between the two was great.... Abel chose faith and obedience; Cain, unbelief and rebellion." PP 72. The majority have always followed, and are still following, the way of Cain. They say to themselves, "I'm a sinner, but I'm not worse than other sinners in this world. I know I'm doing things that I shouldn't do. But everybody else is doing wrong things. God will finally have to make a special concession; He will have to lower His standard before He can get any of us into heaven; otherwise none will be saved. He knows I'm doing my best after all." This is how so many people deceive themselves, and there can be no greater deception than self-deception.

III-RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR TODAY

"O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day." Daniel 9:7.

1. What Is Righteousness?

There are some stock answers we are in the habit of giving. One of them is that righteousness is right doing. This is certainly true and we can show an inspired statement to that effect. We must not, however, pass by all the other statements. Sometimes we become experts at taking sentences out of context and ignoring the rest. If righteousness is nothing more than right doing, then all you would have to do to become righteous would be to concentrate on doing all the right things. There is a hidden trap here, however. Someone else maintains that righteousness is conformity to the will of God. That again is true and we can find an inspired statement for it also. But if you're not careful you can be led to think that all you have to do is to conform to the law of God. The danger is that this conformity can be merely external. And we can become like the Pharisees of old. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness." Luke 11:39.

We can go through other definitions and still find nothing but frustration until we come face to face with the only live definition: Righteousness equals the gospel of Jesus. Romans 1:17. "Therein is the righteousness of God revealed" in the gospel of Jesus. The only kind

of righteousness that this world has ever known in a real live person was in the Lord Jesus Christ. The best single definition for righteousness is Jesus. When we read, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness," what the verse is saying to us is: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after Jesus." An important breakthrough in our study of salvation by faith is that you don't get righteousness by seeking righteousness. Righteousness comes only by seeking Jesus. Jesus said in John 15:5, "Without me ye can do nothing." There are people out there in the world who are apparently doing great things without God, but they need to be reminded of who it is that keeps their hearts beating in their chests. What we need to understand from this text is that we are helpless to produce righteousness in ourselves, because righteousness is found only in Jesus. There is a vast difference, however, between being helpless and being worthless. Without Him we are certainly worth something. Jesus on the cross proved that every human being is worth the entire universe, yet when it comes to righteousness we are totally bankrupt. "There is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10). "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" Isa. 64:61.

"Sinful man can find hope and righteousness only in God: and no human being is righteous any longer than he has faith in God and maintains a vital connection with Him." TM 367.

2. Righteousness Through Relationship

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." Philippians 3:10.

There is an important and vital truth that all should understand, and that is, that the certainty and assurance of eternal life is not based upon our performance, but upon our being in relationship with Christ. That's why the question, "Do you know Him?" is an important question. It is so important in fact that Jesus equated "knowing Him" with "eternal life." "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3. Romans chapter 5, talks about the gift of righteousness, which is nothing less than Jesus Himself.

If we accept His gift today but don't stay with Him, can we claim we still have this gift? Let us repeat again the statement: "[N]o human being is righteous any longer than he has faith in God and maintains a vital connection with Him." TM 367. There is a text which should help us understand this truth, I John 5:12: "He that hath the Son hath life." What does it mean to "have the Son"? We say that we have a friend. I have a wife, you have a wife, or husband. What does that mean? It simply means that you have a relationship with that person. When the text says, "He that hath the Son," it means having a relationship with Him. We are made righteous so long as we are in Him. Righteousness is never independent of Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as righteousness apart from Jesus.