

SIN and SALVATION

“GUILTY AS SIN”

Of course the Bible has much to say about sin. Some people are fond of quoting parts of passages such as Romans 3:23 and say “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” without including “and are justified freely by the grace that came by the redemption of Christ Jesus.”

Many years ago in a quaint Vermont church, a young man in the pew ahead of mine stood up and asked for prayers for the salvation of his aunt and uncle. I remember how odd this sounded to me at the time. In particular, the word “salvation” rang out as a term quite foreign to the current vocabulary of that parish and I had to stop and wonder why. In time, after study and reflection, I determined that the answer lay in the popular liberal theology of the day, where the concept of salvation had become less important, primarily because that of sin had also been reduced. I realized then, that we seldom, if ever, were hearing that word properly used either.

The move to liberal religion and its associated political correctness by many mainstream denominations has watered down and misrepresented the very core of Christianity. Indeed, pastors have been hired by “christian” churches who do not completely and accurately espouse the Gospel found in the Holy Bible. While it “feels good” at the time, and may serve to increase membership, the net effect of this shortcoming is loss of life. I believe this approach has been

adopted by many clerics and congregations to this very day; by those who consider themselves to be wholly under the banner of Christ. However, unless the points of sin and salvation are presented by a pastor who honors Jesus the Son of God for His obedient work on the cross to atone for our sins, one should question the claims and teachings of that church or individual.

Unfortunately, our society at large, increasingly holds the erroneous thought that “there is no sin”. It would appear that those who hold this belief subsequently feel that there is no logical need for a Saviour either. This is a natural outcome when the Word of Truth is laid aside and its teachings suppressed or limited in a way that the truth is twisted to meet man's desires instead of God's.

WHAT THEN, IS SIN AND WHAT ARE ITS EFFECTS? HOW DOES IT FIT INTO OUR SITUATION WHEN WE STAND BEFORE GOD? WHY WE CAN'T STAND AND HOW WE CAN...MANY QUESTIONS!

Let's start here –

Genesis 4:7 contains the first mention of sin (i.e., the word itself) in the Bible. Three important truths about sin are stated in the words spoken to Cain by God:

1. Sin is crouching at his door.
2. It desires to have him.
3. He must master it.

At this time, Cain is very angry because God prefers his brother Abel's offering over his. Although God tells Cain

that he will be accepted if he does what is right, Cain ultimately ends up killing his brother. God punishes Cain, most notably by sending him away into restless wandering where he will be hidden from God's presence.

This being “without”, alone and separated from God is a terrible prospect for any of us to contemplate. Human companionship cannot make up for this loss nor can any amount of wealth and power.

Question: – Do we sin against God, man or both?

Some time ago, a friend asked whether it was possible to sin against another person, wondering if the term should only be applied to our relationship with God alone. I first thought of the terrible effect of sin whose presence in our lives separates us from God and makes us spiritually dead. I quickly realized that sin also separates us from each other as well. Although our Heavenly Father is loving and kind, he is also a holy and just God, who unlike us, cannot countenance sin. To start to understand this concept, you might ask yourself this question; is there something I can't stand to be around, to either see, hear or smell, that sickens me and is the total opposite of my character. Maybe you don't, for we humans have an innate ability to rationalize situations and events whereby we are able to entertain all manner of thoughts, words and deeds (I know, I've done it myself) and dismiss them as little nothings. We are especially good at this over a period of time, when little steps are taken in a direction that ultimately lead to an amount of sin that is larger than we initially intended. God, however, does not

rationalize and say our sin is okay, but being just, requires payment and a penalty.

But what is sin, anyway? To put it in dictionary terms, it is the breaking or transgression of a moral code, principle or law. All good things are from God and His Word is law. He is the very source of any good principle we might esteem as true. He is even more than the source, if we could but understand what it is to be the "I AM". So the answer to the first part of the question is; anytime we sin, we sin against Him. When this happens, we will not be able to approach His throne and be near Him, without paying the penalty for our error and possessing a contrite heart.

Is this not similar to what we humans experience in life? Think how you feel when someone breaches faith with you and treats you in an unfair or unjust manner. Countless are the times on this earth when one individual has shut another out of their life for mistreatment or wrong doing, even within families. Relationships suffer greatly from the result of sin. When we do not love each other as we should, and commit real sin on the human level, we do sin against that person and against God at the same time. Thus we are separated from both God and the individual we sinned against. This answers the second part of the above question and is born out in Matthew 6:14 where Jesus clarifies what is meant in the Lord's prayer by stating that we should forgive men when they sin against you.

This starts to answer the unasked question of what we should do about sin when we realize its presence in our being?

But before we go there, you may be asking how do we realize the presence of sin to begin with? The short answer is, that unless you are convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit (a gift of God) and in turn pay attention to His voice, you will not know it. The more you seek to approach God, the more His light will shine in your life and pierce the darkness therein. Simply put, if you are heading toward a relationship with God, you will become aware of your sin. Your action at this point is critical, for if you become hardened or calloused to your sin, you will have lost your way to new life.

A seeming paradox at this time may be the way you feel as you confront your sin. For if you continue in the Christian walk, you will cease to view sin as simply wrong action, and come to see that it extends to the very core of your being. You may well wonder if there is any hope.

MEET THE WORD

“BROUGHT TO LIGHT”

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. John 3:20

Jesus said to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

A simple question: how is it possible to love someone you do not know (or haven't yet met)? Remember the concept

we spoke of earlier: the more deeply we know someone, greater is the possibility that we may love that individual.

James 4:8 says “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” However, the process of getting to know God initially is usually difficult for us; for when His light of truth shines upon our lives, it illuminates every thought, word and deed, as well as the spirit or motivating force behind it. A simple analogy is to think of what is seen when a bright light is focused on every nook and cranny of what looks to be a fairly clean house. With the right flashlight, it’s not hard to find the dirt and cobwebs within. The analogy falls apart, however, when you realize that the dirty house can be cleaned with additional labor, while the misdeeds of our past life cannot be erased in such a manner. Nor can the stains and marks they have caused simply be washed away by human hands in an effort to provide the purity necessary for us to stand before God. To be convicted of sin, is to realize the existence of this condition in our very self.

Confronted then, with our own sin (which we ourselves can hardly stand if we are so convicted), we decide either to run away from God and occupy our minds with other things, or to fall on our knees in shame as we view the chasm between His righteousness and our sinfulness.

I don’t know about you, but normally I dislike it very much when someone finds a fault with me and brings it to light. That’s human nature for most of us. We can deny it all we want, but the truth about a matter doesn’t change. In addition, it certainly becomes easier to dislike the person who “found us out”. Normally, just to ask forgiveness goes

against the grain for most people, particularly if there has to be a contrite heart involved. For many people, the cost for a change of heart alone is too high a price to pay and for this sole reason, they give up seeking a relationship with God. Somewhere along the line, they also may realize that certain past wrongs may require compensation of some sort as well and that adds weight to the decision to avoid God's presence altogether.

So most people try to fill their life with all kinds of things that don't include Him. Some even take to trying to prove Him wrong and others become vociferous about denying His existence. Now it doesn't matter whether one is consciously practicing avoidance as described above or just doesn't know any better. The net effect of this error is a loss of life, both here in time and later in eternity.

The solution to the above concerns is straightforward. God sent His Son to atone for our sins. Christ, the Lamb of God, paid the penalty for you and I on the cross at Calvary. There is nothing to stop you from accepting God's gift of salvation but your acceptance of it. Do so with a contrite heart and God will bring you new life. It will not at once be perfect, easy or trouble free. In fact Jesus said we will experience worldly troubles, but with His love you can now live a joy filled life in this world as He prepares you for life with Him in eternity.

When Jesus said "the Kingdom of God is at hand", he meant for us to step into it today and start living there now. We then start to learn to live as His children, receiving guidance

and instruction from the Holy Spirit as the Father starts and finishes a good work in us.

As I said earlier: there is a greater sweetness, a full completeness, a perfect joy that can only be had through fellowship with God. The good news is; He has promised that those who seek Him, shall find Him. When this is accomplished, He has said that He will come in and “have dinner” with them. Here then, is a real friend, the likes of which the world cannot offer and cannot take away.

And so there it is; a life and death choice we all make, whether we know it or not.

APPLICATION POINTS

- ❑ Draw near to God – set aside time every day to get started on this.
- ❑ Read the first chapter of Romans – resolve to seek His face.
- ❑ Realize the penalty for your sin has been paid by the shed blood of an obedient Christ.
- ❑ Talk to God in prayer and accept the gift of Salvation he offers in Jesus as Saviour.
- ❑ Remember that although the this Salvation is freely given, it had a tremendous cost, which Christ paid for on the cross.
- ❑ Read the bible, start with Gospels and continue on so that you understand for yourself the truth contained therein – ask God to explain what you do not understand and wait patiently to be shown.

- ❑ Resolve to have one Master that you serve. Luke 16:13
- ❑ Remember that Jesus was at birth “very God” and as such was “sincere” or “without decay”; the same within and without. Resolve to be like Him and not “double minded” in your faith. James 1:8

SONG

Who's The Master?