

6. Sin (2Q 2009—Walking the Walk: The Christian Life)

Biblical material: Isa. 14:12–14, Matt. 23:23, 25:45, Phil. 2:6–8, Heb. 1:1–5, Rev. 5:9–12.

Quotes

- I do not understand how a man can be a true believer in whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow and trouble. *John Owen*
- Do believe it, Christian, that your sin is a condemned thing. It may kick and struggle, but it is doomed to die. *C H Spurgeon*
- Sinners wilfully lose God for a friend. *Matthew Henry*
- If we be *ruled* by sin we shall inevitably be *ruined* by it. *Matthew Henry*
- We cannot think lightly of sin if we think honestly of its results. *David C Potter*
- We hate sin not merely because its consequences are disastrous, or its forms repugnant to our tastes and sensibilities, but because it is a reflection upon God. *J H Thornwell*
- The alienation of man from God is a fact. It is our business not to deny it but to end it. *William Temple*
- Sin stamps the devil's image on a man. *Thomas Watson*

Questions

Why is it so important to understand the nature of sin? Where did evil come from? How does God make right the wrongness of sin? How are we won back into a loving, saving relationship with our heavenly Father? What then is the cure for sin? As we understand how God does this, what insights do we gain into his character?

Bible discussion

Isaiah 14 reveals how Lucifer aspired to be like God, claiming power without responsibility. In his dealings with the self-righteous of his time, Jesus explained how their sin-blindness prevented his helping them (Matt 23:23). It's the lack of relationship that leads to the sins of omission (Matt. 25:45). Jesus' life and death was the very opposite of our sinful nature. He did not insist on his position, but took upon himself our human form and died at our hands to show us the full extent of his love (Phil. 2:6-8). Jesus expresses the character of God and cleanses us from sin (Hebrews 1:1-5) and ransoms us (Rev. 5:9). Bible definitions:

Sin. What is it? 1 John 3:4. Romans 14:23. What does it do? Isaiah 59:2. How do we begin? Psalm 51:5. Where are we? None righteous. All sinned. All righteousness. What is our experience? Romans 7:19.

Sin is far more than conscious acts of wrong, or blemishes and stains that need to be wiped away. Sin is a “cancerous” disease that is rooted in our very nature, and only as we are transformed and regenerated are we cured. “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” (Mark 2:16, 17.)

Comment

What is sin? Sin is the transgression of the law. That's the commonest definition. Does that mean that if we are in ignorance of the law then we are not sinning? Clearly

not: Paul reminds us that sin remains sin even though we may not be aware of it. So we need to revise our definition a little. Sin is not just a conscious breaking of some specific law. We may well be transgressing (breaking) laws we don't even know about. Does that make us innocent? Not at all. So then, what if we live absolutely exemplary lives, be very Pharisaical in our observance of each law in minute detail—does that make us sinless? Again, obviously not.

So what is a good picture for this sin problem? I once saw a poster for a Stallone movie with the slogan: "Crime is a disease. Meet the cure." Perhaps we can use that slogan, slightly altered: "Sin is a disease. Meet the cure, Jesus." As 1 John 3:4 NIV states: "Sin is lawlessness." There's another Bible definition that can help us here: Romans 14:13. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. A hard text, but when you break it down it's not so difficult. What's faith? Faith is trusting God, having confidence in him. So what is the opposite of faith? Distrust, not having confidence in God. So this definition comes out something like: Sin is not trusting God. When did Eve sin first—when she took and ate the fruit, or when she trusted the Devil and distrusted God as the Devil said "Ye shall not surely die"? That's the very heart of sin: an attitude that is distrustful of God, suspicious of him; one that says: "God, I may believe in you, I may even come to church regularly and profess to be a good Christian, but I don't want your help, I don't trust you to be with me in my life."

Sin is this antagonistic attitude, a spirit of rebellion that separates us from God. We have gone away from God, built a barricade between us and him, and like spoilt children refuse to come back to the only One who can really help us. So in desperation God broke through that barricade and came to us, to ask us to allow him to take us home again. Look at 2 Corinthians 5:15-21 again. We don't live for ourselves anymore. That spirit of self-centered rebellion is changed by our loving God, if we let him. We are remade by God into a new creation. The new has come. How? Through God's reconciliation. He reconciled us to him, not counting our sinful attitude against us.

In the same way that a doctor doesn't count a patient's disease against him, God doesn't count the sin disease against us. He doesn't intend for us to remain that way, of course. He intends to heal us, cure us. And the final statement sums it up: in him we might become the righteousness of God. *Become*. Not have, but in some way *be* God's righteousness. We are his demonstration of what he can do, how he can change sin-diseased humanity. That's how he brings us back home.

Ellen White Comments

All sin is selfishness. Satan's first sin was a manifestation of selfishness. He sought to grasp power, to exalt self. A species of insanity led him to seek to supersede God. And the temptation that led Adam to sin was Satan's declaration that it was possible for man to attain to something more than he already enjoyed, possible for him to be as God Himself. The sowing of seeds of selfishness in the human heart was the first result of the entrance of sin into the world. {WB, September 9, 1902}

Through sin the whole human organism is deranged, and the mind is perverted, the imagination corrupted. Sin has degraded the faculties of the soul. Temptations from without find an answering chord within the heart, and the feet turn imperceptibly toward evil. {MH 451}