

WHY CHRISTIANS SIN & THE SOLUTION TO CHRISTIAN'S SIN

THREE-FOLD CONFLICT & THREE-FOLD PROVISION

“Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. BUT your iniquities have separated between you and your God. And your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear,” Isaiah 59:1, 2.

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”



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WHY CHRISTIANS SIN AND THE SOLUTION FOR CHRISTIANS SINNING

No division of the biblical doctrine of sin is more extensive or vitally important than that which contemplates the Christian's sin. Yet, it will be observed in systematic theology, as set forth in written standard works as taught in seminaries generally, does not recognize this feature of the doctrine. The loss to the theological student is beyond calculation, for when graduated and ordained to the ministry of God's Word, he is at once constituted a doctor of souls and the majority of those to whom he ministers will be Christians who are suffering from some spiritual injury which sin has inflicted upon them.

What Christians, waging as all Christians do, a simultaneous battle on three fronts, the world, the flesh and the devil, is not often, if not almost constantly, in a state of spiritual injury? 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 Christians sins and its divinely provided cure, that he cannot diagnose even his own case or apply the healing to his own stricken soul.

Though the pastor is a doctor of souls, his first responsibility to others is to so teach the members of his flock with regard to the whole subject of sin as related to the Christian, that they may themselves be able to diagnose their own troubles, and apply intelligently to their own souls the Divine cure.

The Bible proposes no intermeddling human priest or romish confessional for the child of God. It does propose an instructed pastor and teacher and a worthy ministry on his part in that field of truth which concerns the spiritual progress, power, prayer, and potency of those of God's redeemed ones who are committed to his spiritual care. The blight of sin upon Christian experience and service is tragic indeed, but how much more so when pastor and people alike are ignorant about the most elementary features of the well-defined,

and divinely revealed steps to be taken in its cure by Christians who are injured by sin.

In approaching this great theme, it will perhaps tend to clarify this aspect of doctrine if the Christian's relation to each of the four major features of sin, which are considered separately. Personal sin, imputed sin, and the transmission of the old sin nature. Man under sin, estate under sin.

Because of the unlikeness to God, personal sin is always equally sinful and condemnable whether it be committed by the saved or by the unsaved, nor is there aught provided in either case for its cure other than the efficacy of the all-sufficient blood of Christ. That is the blood has been shed and its saving, transforming application awaits faith's appropriation over against this it is written of the Christ, "That if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1:7. Most significant indeed is the use here of the present tense. It is while Christians are walking in the light that He has both fellowship, "which is with the Father and His Son." Verse 3, and perpetual cleansing by the blood of Christ. The cleansing, it is evident, depends upon the walk, as does the fellowship, but all that the walk implies must be discerned if the doctrine involved is not to be distorted.

"To walk in the light," is not to be sinless. That would consist on "becoming the light." While walking in the light is responding to, and being guided by, the Light, "and God is Light" verse 5. In a practical way, it means that darkness is there. It is judged and put away by His GRACE and power.

This conception is in harmony with verse 9, that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The blood of

Christ must be applied and it is when the Christian confesses his sin to God.

It must be observed, however, that while sin is always exceedingly sinful and its cure is by the blood of Christ alone, the Divine reckoning and consequent method of remedial dealing with the Christian's sin, because of his background relationship to God, is far removed from the Divine reckoning and remedial dealing with the sin of unregenerate persons who sustain no such relationship to God.

The Divine forgiveness of sin for unregenerate men is available only as it is included in the sum total of all that enters into their salvation. There are at least 34 Divine undertakings, including forgiveness, which are wrought simultaneously and instantaneously at the moment the individual is saved and this marvelous achievement represents the measureless difference between those who are saved and those who are not saved.

Deeply in error, indeed, and dishonoring to God, are those current definitions which represent the Christian to be different merely in his ideals, his manner of life, or his outward relationships, when in reality, he is a new creation in Christ. His new head-ship standing being in Christ, every change which is needed has been wrought to conform him to his new positions and possessions.

Forgiveness, then, in its positional aspect, Colossians 2:13, is final and complete and of the Christian thus forgiven it may be said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," Romans 8:1. "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

However, this is but a part of all that God accomplished in His salvation. Unregenerate men are not encouraged to seek forgiveness of sin alone, or any other individual feature of saving GRACE. If they secure forgiveness, it must come to them as a part of and included in, the whole Divine undertaking.

Forgiveness of sin and salvation are not synonymous terms. On the other hand, when sin has entered into the life of a Christian, it

becomes a question of sin and sin alone which is involved. The remaining features of His salvation are unchanged. This truth is well illustrated in which the remedy for personal sin of the unregenerate was seen to be both forgiveness and justification, that is not only forgiveness which cancels the offense, but justification which secures a perfect standing before God. It is never implied that a Christian should be justified again after he is justified by his initial faith in Christ, but he must be forgiven as often as he sins. Thus the terms of cure which are divinely imposed respectively upon these two groups, the saved and the unsaved, must be different, as indeed they are.

The difference between the Divine dealing, the method of dealing with the sins of regenerate men as in contrast to the Divine method of dealing with the sins of unsaved members of the human family is a major distinction in doctrine, which if confounded, cannot result in anything short of spiritual tragedy for all concerned.

The preaching of the Armenian notion that, having sinned, the Christian must be saved again, has wrought untold injury to uncounted millions, but even a greater disaster has been wrought by the careless misguided preaching to unregenerate people of a repentance as a Divine requirement separate from believing, of confession of sin, as an essential to salvation, and of reformation of the daily life as the ground upon which a right relation to God may be secured.

The Scriptures distinguish with great clarity the Divine method of dealing with the sins of these two classes. In 1 John 2:2 we read, "And He is the propitiation for our sin, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world." No consideration can be given here to the interpretation of this passage which is offered by the advocates of a limited redemption theory.

Without question, the passage sets up a vital contrast between "our sins," which could not refer to those of the mass of unregenerate beings, and "the sins of the whole world," which classification as certainly includes more than the sins of the regenerate persons of hu-

manity, unless language is strained beyond measure in the interests of a theory.

This passage is a great revelation to unregenerate men. Because of Christ's death, God is now propitious toward them. But who can measure the comfort to the crushed and bleeding heart of a Christian when it is discovered to that heart that already the very sin so much deplored had been borne by Christ. And that on the most righteous basis, the Father is now propitious towards the suffering saint, a propitiation so real and true that the Father's arms are out-stretched to welcome the returning Christian, who like the prodigal, makes unreserved confession of his sin?

It will be well remembered that according to the infinite accuracy of the Scriptures, the prodigal is kissed by the father, even before any confession is made. Thus it is disclosed that the father is propitious toward his sinning children even before that child can be supposed to have merited anything, either by repentance, restitution, or confession. How persistent is the thought that God's heart must be softened by our tears. And yet how marvelous is the assurance that Christ is already the propitiation for our sins.

The first five chapters of the letter to the Romans present the fact of the unregenerate world's position before God and set forth the ground of the Gospel of God's saving GRACE, but chapters six through eight are addressed to regenerate men and have to do with the problem of a holy walk and the Divine provisions thereunto.

This sin problem, as it concerns the believer, is not in view in the first five chapters of Romans, nor is any phase of salvation as it concerns unbelievers to be found in Romans. Chapters six through eight, similarly, the hortatory portions of all the epistles are addressed to those who are saved. They could not be addressed to unsaved men since the issue between God and them is not one of an improved manner of life, it is rather the reception of the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, which gift is conditioned not upon any manner of works or human good or human merit, but upon saving faith in Christ alone.

In the case of the Christian, as in contrast to the unregenerate, the field of possible sin is greatly increased. Having come into the knowledge of the Truth, the Christian, when he sins, offends against greater light. Likewise, he sins against God in the sphere of that new relationship which exists between a son and a father. It will be seen that the Christian, being a citizen of Heaven, is normally called upon to walk worthy of that high calling. Ephesians 4:1, "I Therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." That high standard is no less than the ideal of Christlikeness. "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain," Philippians 1:21. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," Philippians 2:5. 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Such an ideal is wholly unknown to those who are unregenerate who make up this cosmos world. It is not unreasonable that requirements which are impossible to human ability are addressed to the Christian since he is given God the Holy Spirit, whose power is ever available, but the range of and for possible failure is here, as in the instances cited, wide indeed. That the manner of life which becomes the child of God is supernatural, is constantly applied in the Scriptures which guide him in his manner of life.

It is written, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Corinthians 10:5. 1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Ephesians 5:20, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," Ephesians 4:1, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."

“Walk in the light,” 1 John 1:7. “Walk in love,” Ephesians 5:2. “Walk in the Spirit,” Galatians 5:16. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,” Ephesians 4:30. “Quench not the Spirit,” 1 Thessalonians 5:19.

A greater responsibility of daily life and service, due to the exalted position which it occupies, implies that, in the usual experience, the Christian will need a constant recourse of Divine forgiveness and to be restored by GRACE to Divine fellowship.

Recognizing the imperative need, the Word of God presents its extended teaching regarding the cure of the believer’s sin, a doctrine which has no counterpart or parallel in the Truth which belongs to the unregenerate. Continuing the contemplation of the stress which is imposed upon the Christian because of his position and relationships, certain conflicts are emphasized in the struggle which is common to all who are saved. It is generally and properly taught that the Christian conflict is three-fold. Namely:

- A. Against the world
- B. Against the flesh
- C. Against the devil.

By this it is asserted that the Christian’s solicitation to evil will arise from any or all of these three sources. It is of supreme importance, then, that the child of God be intelligently aware of the scope and power of each of these mighty influences.

A. The World.

Of the three Greek words which in the Authorized Version are translated, by the English word “worlds,” but one COSMOS presents the thought of a sphere of conflict. This word means, order, system, regulation, and indicates that the world is an order or system but in every instance, and there are many, where a moral feature of the world is in view, this COSMOS world is said to be opposed to God.

The 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. It is indeed true, as just stated, that the believer is in the world, but not of it. Taken out of the world system by the new creation relationship, believers are no longer any more a part of the world than is Christ, but Christ has sent them into the world even as the Father sent Him into the world, not to be conformed to it, but to be witnesses in it. John 17:18, “As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” One and only one plan is provided for a victory over the world. It is stated in 1 John 5:4, “And this is the victory that overcometh (overcame) the world, even our faith.”

Reference here is not to a present vacillating faith. The past tense is used by looking back to that faith which identified the believer with Christ. Thus the apostle goes on to say, “who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.” Though there is a need that it shall be claimed as a present experience, the victory is Christ, and all in Christ are already equipped by the indwelling Spirit to be more than conquerors.

The world presents a constant hazard to the child of God and his liability in the direction of the form of sin, which is worldliness as ever a reality. Worldliness is a mental attitude.

B. The Flesh.

The recurrence of this subject at various points in an orderly system of doctrine is necessary and indicates its immense importance. In its moral significance, it denotes that which is the very structure of the being of the unregenerate man. It remains as a vital part of the regenerate persons being and abides and is

the occasion of an unceasing conflict against the indwelling Holy Spirit so long as there is life in the mortal body. Proof has been adduced that the flesh, in its moral significance, is incurably evil in the sight of God. From it all manner of evil thoughts, evil desires, and evil actions arise. It is only as the believer experiences the larger restraining power of the Holy Spirit that he will be able to live above the incitements and proclivities of the flesh. It was subsequent to his experience of regeneration that the apostle testified of himself. "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," Romans 7:18. He also asserted that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and that these are always contrary the one to the other," Galatians 5:17. He also enumerated, "The works of the flesh," Galatians 5:19-21.

All this, it will be observed, is said to be the experience of these regenerate persons. Galatians 5:16 discloses the one only relief. "This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." The passage is not an instruction to an unregenerate person, nor does it imply that the fallen nature, the old sin nature, which is the evil principle in the flesh, will ever be eradicated.

God is no more proposing eradication of the flesh than of the world of the devil. The Divine method is the same in each of these three conflicts. The victory is gained by the superior, overcome power of the filling of the Holy Spirit. "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be ye constantly filled with the Spirit," Galatians 5:18.

C. The Devil.

Closely related indeed, are the Christian's three enemies. The world, the flesh and the devil.

Especially related are the world, or the satanic system, and Satan, who is the "god" and the "prince" of that system. However, the world and the flesh are impersonal influences, while Satan, the wisest of all created beings, is

personal. He is the one who exercises deceit, wiles, and or artifices against the children of God.

There is no conflict between the unregenerate men and Satan. They are energized by him, Ephesians 2:2. "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." On the other hand, the Christian is in the center of the most terrible, supernatural warfare. It is described in Ephesians as a wrestling. The word implies the closest life and death struggle, hand to hand and foot to foot, of a tug of war.

Nor is the uttermost drive and power of Satan inspired by an enmity against regenerate men as such. His enmity is against God, as it has been since his fall in the unknown ages past. And against the believer only on the ground that he has partaken of the Divine nature. "The fiery darts" of the Wicked One are aimed at God alone. To possess the priceless indwelling presence of the Divine nature is to become so identified with God that His enemy becomes the enemy of the one who is saved.

Solemn, therefore, is the Divine revelation that the wisest of all created beings and the most powerful, is ceasing not to study the strategy by which he may snare the child of God, and were it in his power to bring that one to destruction. How unconcerned, unconscious, and ignorant Christians are. How ungrateful they are, because of their limited understanding, for the Divine deliverance wrought in their behalf every hour of every day. Yet how much of defeat, especially in the spiritual realm, is suffered by all who are saved because of their failure to wage their warfare in "the power of His might," who alone can give victory, and to "put on the whole armor of God." No more vital injunction was ever addressed to the Christian than that he must be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." "He must put on the whole armor of God that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," Ephesians 6:10, 11.

Faith, as it has been seen, is the only way of victory over the world and the flesh, but it is equally certain and according to the Word of God that faith is the only way of victory over the power of Satan. How assuring is the word, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world," 1 John 4:4. "Even Michael the archangel, when contending with Satan, did not in his own strength bring a railing accusation against him, but said, the Lord rebuke thee," Jude 9.

True, James states, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." But that is a word of admonition to those who have first submitted themselves unto God. James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

Likewise Peter declares in reference to Satan, "Whom resist steadfast in the faith," 1 Peter 5:9. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imagina-

tions, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Philippians 2:13, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Philippians 4:14, "Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction." John 15:5, "I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."

Quite apart from human opinion or experience which is of a contrary nature, it must be concluded that, in this three-fold conflict, there is nothing but defeat and failure in the path of the Christian should he not pursue the way of faith or dependence upon the Holy Spirit. The child of God must "fight the good fight of faith." His responsibility is not to war with his enemies in his own strength, but rather to maintain the ever triumphant attitude of faith.

The Three-fold Provision for the Three-fold Conflict of Christians

In recognition of the believers' conflict in the world, God has, in marvelous GRACE, provided a three-fold prevention against the Christian's sin. If the Christian sins, it will be in spite of these provisions. These great requisites are a revelation found in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

First, the Word of God.

The psalmist states "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee," Psalm 119:11. In 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 it is declared, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It is as His Word abides in the believer that he is in the place of spiritual achievement. John 15:7, "If ye abide in Me, and My Words abide

in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

There is little hope for victory in daily life on the part of those believers who being ignorant of the Word of God, do not know the nature of their conflict, or the deliverance God has provided. Over against this there is no estimating the sanctifying power of the Word of God. Our Saviour prayed, "Sanctify them through Thy Truth, Thy Word is Truth," John 17:17.

Secondly, the interceding Christ.

Again the psalmist records, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," Psalm 23:1. And the New Testament revelation of the interceding Christ is also broad enough to include His Shepherd care. Little did Peter know of the testing that was before him, or of his pitiful weariness, but Christ had anticipated it all. He could say in assurance to Pe-

ter, "I have prayed for thee," Luke 22:23. As in fact, He prays for all whom He has saved. It is probable that His high priestly prayer recorded in John 17 is but the beginning of His prayers. For "those whom Thou hast given Me," which prayer is now continued without ceasing by Him in Heaven.

On the ground of this unceasing intercession, the believer is assured of his security forever. In Romans 8:34 it is written that there is none to condemn since, among other efficacious forces, Christ "maketh intercession for us."

In like manner, the writer of Hebrews discloses the truth that Christ as Priest in contrast to the death-doomed priests of the old order, will never again be subject to death. He therefore has an unchangeable or unending priesthood, and because He abideth forever as a sufficient priest, He is able to save eternally, or as long as He remains a priest, those who come unto God by Him since He ever lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:23-25.

This guarantee of unending endurance, based as it is upon the absolute efficacy of the interceding Christ, is final and complete. But as has been said, the intercession of Christ is ever a preventative against failure as well as a security for the children of God.

The third is the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The saints of old, of the old order were reminded that it is, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," Zechariah 4:6. So as has been indicated before, every defense and protection as well as every victory for the Christian is dependent upon the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit controlling the believer by means of confession of sin.

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 Corinthians 11:30, 31, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." Isaiah 59:1, 2, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you that He will not hear." "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

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