

# UPON THE ROCK

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## A Study of Sin

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Upon the Rock is published bimonthly for the purpose of setting forth sound biblical material concerning first-principles and evangelism. We strive to print articles that are informative for Christians and non-Christians

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## The Origin of Sin on Earth

Larry Reynolds

The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings. It tells us beginnings of the heavens, earth, vegetation, animals, birds, fish, man, marriage, languages and the origin of sin on earth. The book of Genesis is a relevant book for our needs today. It answers many of the questions that man is asking. It answers where man came from and why he suffers today. It also reveals that God made everything good. That includes the first human beings, Adam and Eve. Everything on earth was good and wonderful but then something bad and tragic happened. *“And the LORD God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Genesis 2:16,17). Man fell for Satan’s deceptive tactics (Genesis 3) and violated God’s command. Adam and Eve listened to Satan and allowed sin to come into their life. Satan tempted Adam and Eve with a lie and they believed it, *“you shall not surely die”* (Genesis 3:4).

Adam and Eve learned the hard way. They listened to Satan and became sinners. They heard a lie, believed a lie and obeyed a lie. They turned their backs to God and disobeyed His commandment. Stop and consider the change in their lives because of sin, they felt guilt (3:8), fear (3:10), shame (3:7), death (3:16), separation (3:23-24), subjection (3:16), sorrow (3:16) and servile toil (3:17,19). They would suffer the consequences of their transgression and be cast out of the garden. Satan did not tell them that he would control their life if they listened to him. Satan did not tell them that sin would separate them from God and all His goodness. Satan did not reveal how sin would ruin their life...and eternity. Nor does he reveal these things today. But we can learn these lessons from the book of Genesis.

Mark your calendars now for:

Upon the rock Lectureship  
February 23-24, 2008

West Side Church of Christ  
6600 W. Kilgore Ave.  
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We hope to see you there!

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Hear - (Romans 10:17; Matthew 7:24-27).

Believe - (Hebrews 11:6; Mark 16:15-16).

Repent - (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Luke 13:3).

Confess - (Matthew 10:32,33; Acts 8:36).

Be baptized - (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27).

Live faithfully unto death - (Rev. 2:10).

The New Testament makes reference to the origin of sin in Romans 5:12-21 *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned-(For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous. Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* Every person is tempted to commit sin but being tempted does not make you a bad person. Even Jesus, when He was on earth, was tempted by Satan. The difference was, Jesus did not listen to Satan’s temptation. Jesus did not sin even though he was tempted to do so.

Jesus was the only person ever born who did not commit sin. The good is, that although you and I are tempted to commit things against the will and law of God, we can overcome Satan’s temptations.

*“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted. “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (James 1:12-15). Sin causes a lot of problems for our human family. There is nothing good that can be said about sin. Satan is the origin of sin. He tempts us by appealing to the “lust” of our flesh, “lust” of our eyes and the pride of life.*

The book of Genesis also reveals the hope for man’s sin in Genesis 3:15 *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.”* Christ would come from the seed of woman to take away the sins of mankind. *“And she will bring for a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins. So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, “God with us” (Matthew 1:21-23). Our Savior came from heaven and took on the form of flesh to live His life on this earth. He was tempted by Satan through the same avenues we are tempted, but was faithful to His father. His heel was bruised when he suffered the death on the cross. He bruised Satan’s head when He rose from the dead. “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold. I am alive forevermore, Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Revelation 1:18). Again in the book of Revelation reveals the remedy of sin. “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Revelation 1:5). Thank God for the blood and the death of our Savior*

**everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”** (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, emphasis mine, SPM). God is love, and light, and mercy, and forgiveness. Eternal separation from the Almighty is to be forever severed from warmth of His love and the light of His presence. In hell, all who refused to obey God will desire the opportunity to obey. All who averred that God does not exist will know He is, and will want to know Him. Those who once tasted of the heavenly gift (Hebrews 6:4), but turned aside from the truth will want to taste of His goodness once again. Yet, none will be able to cross over that great gulf that stands between the saved and the lost, the faithful and the unfaithful, Paradise and Torment, heaven and hell (Luke 16:26). Forever separated from the source of love, light and life. The unending separation of man from God should cause us to avoid hell at all costs!

Knowing all of these things revealed about hell, who would want to go there? You may think that no one would willingly choose to spend eternity in hell. However, each day multitudes slip into eternity having decided that heaven was not worth living for the Lord. They have decided to spend eternity in hell! Don’t choose the same fate for your eternal soul! The bliss of eternal day can be yours if you will obey the gospel and live faithfully. Don’t spend eternity regretting your disobedience.

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(I use this term accommodatively) will find those in hell with no less days to suffer. Take note also that hell is often described as a place of “outer darkness” (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). Most of us have experienced darkness to some degree. It is a rather dismal feeling when one is unable to see. However, very few know what absolute darkness is like. It is a darkness so daunting that it is almost as if you can “feel” it. Hell will be void of any light whatsoever. This absence of light makes even the place of eternal fire a cold place, uninviting, utterly despairing. “And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night” (Revelation 14:11). The hopelessness of hell should cause us to want to avoid it at all costs. The torment never ends; the darkness never gives way to light; the opportunities are no more. There is no hope!!! What absolute and utter despair!

### Unending Separation

The greatest tragedy to be suffered by those in hell will be the never-ending separation that will take place in the last day. The sheep [the faithful] will be separated from the goats [the unfaithful] (Matthew 25:31-46). On that day, husbands will be eternally separated from their wives; parents will be separated from their children; friends will be separated from friends. How truly sad that day will be! There will be no hope of reunion with those who have gone onto eternal bliss. Indeed, “there’s a sad day coming, when the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left” (“There’s a Great Day Coming,” Will S. Thompson). Sadder still is the fact that in hell man will be eternally separated from Him Who created and sustained him. Paul would write, “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: **who shall be punished with**

which allows us to live again.

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### What is Sin?

Jim Bullington

What a simple writing assignment! Surely everybody already knows what sin is. However, since everyone already knows, this writer has a REAL problem! How do I hold the interest of *would-be* readers so that they become *actual* readers. Won’t all the readers just turn the page to the next article seeking more challenging information? Well, maybe so, but I beg of you, don’t do it just yet!

### Not Everyone Knows What Sin Is

First of all, this writer will demonstrate that it is NOT THE CASE that everyone knows what sin is! Neither is it the case that everyone who calls himself or herself “Christian” knows the definition of sin. Furthermore, it is not even the case that all religious leaders and/or ministers who verbally claim allegiance to Jesus know the definition of sin. Maybe it is the case that you — the reader — do not know the definition of sin and who or what determines if a given deed or thought is sinful. In any case, it is certain that the general populous of the United States either does not know (or does not care) what constitutes sin; shocking, but true, words!

### Sin is Defined by God and NOT by Man

A few preliminaries will help to focus our minds on relevant matters. First of all, if sin exists as it is used in this article, there must also

exist an absolute standard of right and wrong. Further, in order for there to be an absolute standard of right and wrong, that standard must exist outside of man himself (i.e. it must exist in a **supernatural** realm). These preliminaries are entirely consistent with the message of the Bible and its definition of sin.

In as much as sin exists and it can be adequately defined as the transgression (stepping across the boundary) of one of the absolutes of right and wrong, we can further understand that my definition or your definition has no effect on sin or whether or not it exists. Should I choose to define sin out of existence, my actions have no effect on the real and absolute existence of sin in as much as it exists apart from me and my existence. The bottom line of this reasoning is intended to show that sin and its definition remains the same apart from any action or lack of action on man's part. Or, to put it as a friend of mine did recently, "The list of what is or is not sinful has not changed; my attitude toward the list may have changed, but the list has not!"

### **Even Bible "Believers" and Professing "Christians" do not Know What Sin Is**

Does everyone know what sin is? An even more fundamental question is this: Does everyone believe that sin exists? More pointed is the question, "Do all who profess to believe in God and/or the Bible know what sin is?" Well, whether we want to believe it or not, we live in a world that does not generally acknowledge sin! Neither does it acknowledge the existence of God, at least the God of the Bible! There are many, many gods, but only one God of the Bible. If that God does not exist, then what is the definition of sin, and who says that is **the** definition?

agonizing punishment alone should cause us to avoid eternity in hell at all costs. But consider further miseries that man will be made to suffer in eternal damnation. Those in hell will find themselves surrounded by the vilest, most wicked people the world has ever known. Hell will be populated by the Hitlers, the Stalins, the Husseins, and such like. It is often said that misery loves company, and such is certainly true as some of the most wicked people our world has ever encountered spend eternity in the fires of hell. Satan and his evil minions want all of mankind to join them in hell. However, let us not think that the populous of hell will be made up entirely of the wicked and vile. There will also be many morally upright, religious people who will be eternally lost. Multitudes will be shocked in that day when they realize that they have not fully complied with God's word (Matthew 7:21-23). What unspeakable misery to be made to join these wicked souls in eternal punishment. Perhaps one of the worst punishments man will be made to endure in hell is the ability to recall lost opportunities. Just think, you will have all eternity to think about and to regret not turning from your sins! The rich man remembered his five brothers who were soon to suffer the same fate if their lives did not change (Luke 16:27). How miserable to live day after day knowing that you have wasted chance upon chance to obey God, and to realize that those opportunities are no more! Hell will certainly be a place of unspeakable misery.

### **Utter Despair**

Hell will be a place of absolute hopelessness. There will be no calendar in hell so that man may mark off the time until his punishment is over. One can often endure almost unbearable pain with a glimmer of hope that it will cease. Even those sentenced to life in prison know that their sentence will ultimately come to an end. Not so with the sentence of eternal condemnation. Each passing day

consequences of sin are far, far worse. If only the world would realize that unforgiven sin carries with it everlasting penalties, men would be less apt to succumb to temptation. Oh, the bitter fate that awaits all who refuse to turn from their sins! The Bible paints a very bleak picture of the future of those who repudiate God's will. Those who carry their sins to the judgment will learn the horrible, but all too real, cost of the refusal to repent and obey God. What are the eternal consequences for those whose sins are not covered by the blood of Christ?

### **Unspeakable Misery**

Hell is described as a place of unfathomable horrors. It is called a place of unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12). Hell is a place of "outer darkness, [where] there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12). To those who do not obey shall be spoken the words, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). Mark describes hell as the place "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44). It is a place of torment (Luke 16:24-25). The eternal abode of the wicked, the rebellious, the sinful will be a lake which burns with fire and brimstone (Revelation 21:8). All of these terrible depictions of eternal torment are given that man might turn away from his sins so that he will not be made to suffer all of these things. While these vivid horrors are given in terms that finite, physical man can understand, it must be realized that hell will be the abode of those souls that have been banished from God's presence. Will there be literal fire in hell to burn literal bodies? Man will not have a physical body in eternity, but the rich man was still tormented in the flame. God can and will punish for all eternity those who refuse to obey His will, and however that punishment is doled out or made to come to pass rests in the hands of the judge of all the earth. The

A Universalist *thinks* he knows the definition of sin, but he cannot be sure. Almost too absurd to be true, but some claim to be Biblical Universalists or even Christian Universalists. What all Universalists have in common is their denial of absolute truth and/or the ability of anyone to possess **any** aspect of absolute truth. Yet, they claim to know for sure that those of us who hold any portion of truth as absolute are absolutely wrong and have committed, as one Universalist styles it, the "sin of fundamentalism." There is no way to describe this thinking other than by the word bizarre! The only thing they know for sure is that those of us who know anything for sure are wrong! And they know that! Hmmmmm!! The legs of the lame are truly not equal (see Proverbs 26:7)!!

### **Sin is not Merely Breaking the Ten Commandments**

Some believe that sin is defined by a breaking of the Ten Commandments. Even those who do not overtly state this believe, affirm it by implication in as much as they think that the way to heaven is merely to respect and obey these ten most sacred Old Testament ordinances. Entire ministries are founded on these principles and denominations adhere to these tenets. While every Law that God has ever given is important in some regards, not every law that God has ever given is currently in force! It does not dishonor God to recognize the laws that He has revoked, superseded, or changed any more than it dishonors our country to acknowledge that women really do have the right to vote! Some laws of God were given for specific timeframes and/or to specific people or groups of people. Such was the case with the Ten Commandments as a set of binding laws. Their purpose was served in protecting Israel from self destruction and in causing sin to appear exceedingly sinful. However, Christ was the purpose (end) of The Law according to Romans 10:4. He took the Old Law out of the way by nailing it to His cross (Colossians 2:14). Sin was not entirely defined as merely keeping the

Ten Commandments even before Christ came and it certainly is not now!

In an attempt to show that God's laws have never changed, some cite Hebrews 13:7 which merely states that Jesus Christ does not change. To affirm that the Law has changed does not affirm that Jesus or God has changed. If ANY law was ever given to man for the first time, then there was a time when that law had not yet been given. Did God change when He gave the Law? This argument is absurd and irrelevant!

### **God is NOT the Source of Sin, but He IS the Source of its Definition**

Man, as we know him, could not have been created without the power of choice. His power to choose implies the ability to choose evil or good. Unless those choices existed, then man was not and cannot be a creature of free will or, by implication, accountability. Yet God made him a being with rational thought processes that include thinking about the consequences of his actions. It is this ability that sets man apart from the world of the unaccountable animals around him. God did not make man sin; man chose to sin. By implication, the definition of sin was merely failing to do God's will (see Genesis 3). The reality of sin brought about the need for redemption, otherwise death was the only possible destiny of those who sinned; this was not God's plan! God defined sin by expressing what man ought to do, but He did not create it!

### **Sin, When it is Full-Grown, Brings Forth Death, But...**

It is not a question of will I sin; rather, it is a question of what will I do about the sins I commit. Thankfully, God provided a remedy for the effects of sin through the blood of Jesus Christ (see John 3:16).

In this issue of *Upon the Rock* we can read of the origin of sin, what sin is; what our attitudes should be toward sin. We can read about how to overcome sin; how to obtain forgiveness for them, and what will be the ultimate end of one who dies in his sin. The purpose of this article is to try to get us to pay a little more attention to the pain sin brings to this world, and to those who commit it. The next time you hear your preacher talk about sin, put your fingernail clippers down, ignore the baby in front of you, and listen to what the Bible says. It just might save you a lot of heartache, and if you put the truth into practice, it will save your soul.

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## **The Eternal Consequences of Sin**

Patrick Morrison

Sin is deceptive. It guarantees pleasure, popularity, and myriads of other benefits and blessings, but it fails to deliver what it has promised. Man has always struggled, and will continue to struggle, with the false advertising of iniquity. It would likely be deterrent enough if man could see the immediate consequences of his giving into temptation. Sin in many instances initially costs man his health, his wealth, his family, his friends, his reputation, his livelihood, and so many more devastating effects that have not been listed. If man would wake up and see what sin may cost him right now, he would be less likely to engage in it. But alas, many escape these initial consequences of sin, and think that no penalty remains for their transgressions. Having been spared the aftermath of sin, myriads believe that they will "not have to pay the piper." As tragic as the immediate cost of sin can be, and often times is, the eternal

to give up hope. What is the cause of this scene played out all over the world? Sin!

Think of a little girl in her bedroom, even this very night, who will get sick in the night. She will do what nearly every child does when sick; she will call out for her mom. The only problem is, her mother will not be there to comfort her. Mom sought greener pastures in the form of another man, and chose to leave her husband, house and children, giving it all up for a man worthless enough to be willing to break up a home for pleasure. The dad will go to his daughter when she cries out, but it just won't be the same. No one can replace a mom.

Contemplate all of our senior citizens who do not get the quality care they need in some nursing homes and hospitals because of the huge shortage of healthcare providers. What does this have to do with sin? Since 1973 some 47 million women have chosen to end their pregnancies by abortion (<http://www.abortionno.org/Resources/fastfacts.html>). We could talk about this ungodly practice, but the point I want to make is this: Think of the nurses, doctors, preachers, leaders, etc. this country has eliminated by abortion. Would one of the 47 million babies have found the cure for cancer? Would they have been the one to bring peace in parts of the world that have not known peace? How many would have possessed the care and compassion to take care of the elderly in our nursing homes? The world will never know. Sin affects everything!

More and more scenarios could be told, but surely we get the point. Sin not only devastates souls for eternity, but it ruins the lives, sometimes it ends the lives, of so many in this world. It is not my intent to sensationalize sin, but rather, to try to paint an accurate picture of its consequences. Actually, it is not possible even to begin to describe the awfulness of sin.

Those who believe and are baptized will be saved [from sin] (Mark 16:16). Death is an option, but life through the Son is a much better one. "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve..." (Joshua 24:15).

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## My Attitude Toward Sin

Phil Grear

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:10-14).

These two men illustrate clearly different attitudes toward sin. Both were sinners needing the saving grace of God, although only one realized it. One thought himself capable of handling his own spiritual needs, the other realized his complete reliance on God's mercy.

Since Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3) sin has been a powerful force in the world. None of us is above its destructive and deadly influence. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23). We have no greater

concern than removing sin and its consequences. “For the wages of sin is death.” (Romans 6:23).

How we deal with our sin problem is determined entirely by our attitude toward it. There are both improper and proper attitudes toward this eternally destructive force, and which we choose will shape our eternal destiny.

### **Improper Attitudes Toward Sin**

*“I’LL DENY IT.”* This is the attitude of the Pharisee in Jesus’ parable. He was the epitome of a godly man. All you had to do was ask him. He would tell you. He spent his entire prayer telling God how good he was. No man can be right with God who will not admit his sin. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (1 John 1:8-10). Only when I admit my sins can I know the cleansing power of the blood of Christ (1 John 1:9).

*“I’LL JUSTIFY IT.”* I’ll make myself feel better by noticing others who do worse. Somehow it makes me feel better to find someone I think is more sinful than I am. But sin is sin, and the wages of all sin is death. I make a serious mistake when I attempt to justify myself by comparing myself with others. “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.” (2 Corinthians 10:12). “I thank thee, that I am not as other men are” is not an excuse for sin.

*“I’LL TRIVIALIZE IT.”* The human mind has an amazing ability to minimize things of great importance, and sin is no exception. “If this is the worst sin I have, then surely God will overlook it.” But sin is sin,

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Genesis 3:1-6).

If people would even begin to grasp the consequences to the world because of the actions committed that day they would never dream of letting their minds drift from its magnitude. Another writer will talk about the eternal consequences of sin entering in the world, but for a moment let us try to paint a picture of the earthly consequences of sin in this world.

Imagine a little boy throwing a ball up in the air to himself in his front yard just before dark. He was supposed to have a playmate to catch his throws and toss them back to the little boy. Right before his dad left for work, he promised his son that as soon as he returned from work they would play catch. Instead of going home as he promised, however, the man made his nearly daily stop at the bar, and there he’s perched while his son waits. The boy knows he should not have expected his dad to keep his word, but he just doesn’t know enough

Forgiveness of sins is a blessing and a beautiful privilege that we may not fully appreciate on this side of eternity. While sin sometimes has immediate consequences, the truly frightening consequences are those that are eternal. Thankfully, because of the Lord's sacrifice and the love of our Father, we can be forgiven of our sins and escape those eternal consequences.

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## Earthly Consequences of Sin

Mark Reynolds

I have been preaching full time for a little over twelve years; no doubt that seems like a long time to some, and a very short time for others. In my twelve years of preaching, however, I have noticed some things while standing behind the pulpit. One of the most eye-opening things I realized almost right away is the strange phenomenon that many people, both old and young, believe that a preacher is struck blind each time he steps behind the pulpit. This must be it. Why else would people do some of the things they do during the preaching unless they believed the preacher was blind and could not see their actions? I have seen people pass notes, carry on conversations, play with babies, sleep, clip and clean their fingernails, and the list could go on. One of my favorite preachers even told of a time when the song leader took off his shoes and socks and clipped his toenails! Yep, people must think we're blind. Either that, or those people do not have respect for the preaching of the Word of God.

Every passage of the Bible read from the pulpit should have our undivided attention, but perhaps none more than the following:

and God can overlook no sin. Look what it cost God to eliminate sin. My sin cost Jesus his life. "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matthew 26:28). Would you pass something off as "not too bad" if it cost the life of your child?

*"I'LL IGNORE IT."* If I just go about my life and not think about it, then sin is not an issue. If I ignore it long enough, then it will be forgotten. But the consequences of sin have a way of cropping up when least expected. I cannot get away with it. "Behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23). I may live long enough on this earth to forget a sin, but unless it is forgiven by the blood of Jesus, I will face it again on the day of judgment.

*"I'LL HIDE IT."* If I can cover it up so no one knows about it, it will be alright. David attempted to hide his adultery with Bathsheba by having her husband murdered. But there were two people from whom he could not hide it. He could not hide it from himself. "My sin is ever before me." (Psalm 51:3). And he could not hide it from God. "But the thing David had done displeased the Lord." (2 Samuel 11:27).

## Proper Attitudes Toward Sin

*"I'LL MOURN FOR IT."* "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4). Realizing what sin cost God should cause me great sorrow. Think of the pain my sins caused God. Jesus' horrible suffering was because of what I did! The publican felt tremendous grief for the sin he knew was in his life. He stood off away from everyone else in the Temple and "would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying,

God be merciful to me a sinner.” (Luke 18:13). As a result he went “down to his house justified.” (Luke 18:14).

*“I’LL ADMIT IT.”* David’s sin was there until he finally admitted it. When forced by the prophet Nathan to face what he had done, David responded by saying, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Only then could Nathan say, “The Lord hath also put away thy sin.” (2 Samuel 12:13). Unconfessed sin can never be forgiven.

*“I’LL REPENT OF IT.”* “Repentance” means a change of mind and heart. I no longer attempt to rationalize, explain, or justify my sin. I take full responsibility for it, and determine to eliminate it from my life with God’s help. “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3).

*“I’LL HAVE IT REMOVED.”* Only the cleansing blood of Jesus can do this. It is the only thing in existence with the power to cleanse me of my sin. “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” (Revelation 1:5).

To contact that cleansing blood I must submit to the teachings of Christ and yield to him in humble obedience. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3-4). Since Jesus shed his blood in his death, I must be in his death to contact the blood. I enter his death in the waters of baptism. “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16).

I must constantly examine my attitude toward sin. I surely do not want to face God someday with an improper attitude toward that

One of our limitations is that we cannot go back in time and undo things we regret, therefore, once a sin is committed there is nothing we can do to take it back. God however, is not bound by human limitations and has provided a means of returning us to our original sinless condition. Not only are we rendered favorable, our sins are actually removed as if they had never been committed. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). “He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalms 103:10-12).

One of the chief consequences of sin is that it separates us from God. “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). A holy God cannot be in fellowship with sin and as long as that sin exists, fellowship cannot. “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:5,6). Thankfully, God has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves, however, we do have something we must do to receive the benefit He offers. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:7-9).

destroys lives and ultimately brings about eternal death. Thankfully this grim and depressing subject has a light at the end of the tunnel. There is hope, there is an escape, there is an answer to sin. If you are looking for that answer on earth or in the mind of man you will never be satisfied. The answer to sin comes only from above. The plan and process of dealing with sin without destroying the sinner originated in the mind of God and was realized on a hill just outside the city walls of Jerusalem as Jesus of Nazareth was crucified for the sins of the world. Because of this event it became possible for man to experience forgiveness of sin.

### **Our Sin Debt Can be Forgiven because Jesus Paid the Price for Our Sins**

It is difficult to write about the forgiveness of our sins because it is hard to know where to begin. There are so many scriptures that explain to us what God did to remove our sins and why He did it. This entire issue could be written on the topic of forgiveness of sins and still not exhaust the magnificent picture painted by the Lord in His Word. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:1,2). The goal or aim is that we do not sin, but if we miss our goal, we sin. The word translated "sin" (hamartia), was an archery term that literally meant "to miss the mark." Although we may miss our goal and sin, all is not lost because God has provided an escape from the consequence of our sins. Jesus Christ is the "propitiation" (appeasement, to render favorable) for our sins. Our sins arouse the wrath and judgment of God (Ezekiel 18:20; Romans 6:23), but Jesus appeases that wrath and renders us favorable before the Father because of His blood sacrifice.

which cost him the life of his Son.

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## **Overcoming Sin**

A.J. Cox

### **Introduction**

Overcoming sin and remaining faithful to God are the chief concerns of those who truly live in view of eternity. This article will briefly address how a child of God may overcome the sin in his life and, thereby, remain faithful to the Lord. First, it is necessary to identify where sin begins, for only when we understand the root of the problem can we then find the solution. Second, some of the essential tools that are used in overcoming sin will be discussed. Throughout the paragraphs that follow let the reader bear in mind that while no man can overcome sin by himself, neither can God overcome sin without man's cooperation.

### **The "Heart" of the Matter**

If a person desires to overcome sin in his life he must first look within, for it is there that sin has its beginning. The heart of the matter is, as we sometimes say, a matter of the heart. In addressing the false notion that defilement came from without Jesus said, "There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile man....For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness,

deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.” (Mark 7:15, 21-23). Similarly Solomon wrote, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23). James explained the process whereby sin is conceived and born when he wrote, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” (James 1:13-15). Observe that James says that it is the lust in a person’s heart that conceives and gives birth to sin. From the beginning Satan has tempted man by appealing to the lusts in his heart, and he continues to work in this way (Genesis 3:1-6; Matthew 4:1-11; 1 John 2:16). If, therefore, a person is to overcome sin in his life he must address the condition of his heart.

In almost every instance where the “heart” is spoken of in Scripture it has reference to the seat of the intellect, the feelings and the will (Genesis 6:5; 18:5; Psalm 119:2). In other words, a person must “get his mind right” if he is to overcome sin. Paul made reference to this concept when he wrote, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:2). Observe that the transformation from conformity to the world to conformity to Christ begins in the mind. It is not enough, however, for a person to merely remove evil thoughts and desires from his mind, for the mind will not abide a vacuum. If a person does not replace those evil thoughts and desires with something else they will eventually come back in to fill the void. It is necessary to replace the love for the world with a hunger and thirst for righteousness (1 John 2:15; Matthew 5:6). The mind that previously dwelt upon fleshly and carnal pursuits must dwell upon spiritual things (Romans 8:5-7;

In another scene we have a homeless teenager, likely covered in filth, stinking of animals and probably alcohol too, slowly making his way down a long dirt road, having no money and facing starvation. Words could not explain the shame that he feels, but he tries anyway. “And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luke 15:21). In mid-sentence he is lifted off his feet by a man in fine clothes, who is weeping and laughing at the same time. This man is his father, and although he only wanted a job as a farmhand, he finds himself in expensive clothes, priceless jewelry, new shoes and the guest of honor at a welcome home feast.

Both of these stories have a single, common, central theme: forgiveness, a word that by definition means, “to give up resentment against or desire to punish; to pardon an offender.” Forgiveness means I have a right and a reason to punish you or hold something against you, but I choose not to. Sin has produced so many awful and terrible things in this world, as seen in these two stories: grief, anger, fear, separation. Additionally, way back in Genesis 3 the initial sin committed in the Garden of Eden demonstrated the awful emotions sin produces (shame, v.7; fear, v.8; and blame, v.12). Sin has produced many horrific things, but God has produced one glorious thing that overshadows and eliminates all of this wickedness. God provided forgiveness of sins.

Both of those scenes are beautiful and touching examples of forgiveness between men, and as beautiful as those two scenes are, neither can compare to the love and beauty that is seen in the forgiveness offered by the Lord. No doubt the things you have already read to this point in this issue concerning sin have been disheartening, discouraging and perhaps even terrifying. Sin is of the Devil, it is rebellion against an all loving and all powerful God, it

of Hebrews wrote, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25). The one who truly desires to overcome sin will take advantage of every opportunity to draw strength and encouragement from the assembled saints.

Overcoming sin does not mean that we achieve sinless perfection (1 John 1:8). It does mean that, with God’s help, we can change our hearts and become more like Him each day.

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## **The Forgiveness of Sin**

Brandon Britton

Can you picture a prince adorned in royal clothes, a crown on his head, jewels on his fingers and a scepter in his hand? This royal figure is not standing and giving some proclamation. Instead he is on his knees with tears streaming down his cheeks as he says, “Come near to me, I pray you...I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt...be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life...God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God...Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them” (Genesis 45:4-8; 50:21).

Colossians 3:1-3). Paul admonished the brethren in Philippi to fill their minds with the right things when he wrote, “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philippians 4:8). Admittedly, this is easier said than done, but if a person desires to overcome sin they must begin by changing their heart.

### **Some Essential Tools Used in Overcoming Sin**

Since God wants all men to overcome sin He has given us access to some powerful and essential tools (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). When used, these tools will help us in the difficult work of changing our hearts and minds. One of the tools God has provided to aid us in overcoming sin is His Word, the Bible. When the Lord Jesus Christ was tempted He resorted to the Word of God to resist the Devil (Matthew 4:1-11). Three times He replied “It is written,” and thus deflected Satan’s assaults (Matthew 4:4,7,10). The Word of God is both living and powerful. Like a sharp instrument in the hands of a skilled surgeon, the Word of God is able to root out the most deeply seated thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). The psalmist declared that the Word of God aided him in overcoming sin when he wrote, “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psalm 119:11). Similarly, the psalmist spoke of the power of the Word to change the heart and the mind when he said, “Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way” (Psalm 119:104). Only when we come to hate the sin in our life will we be able to overcome it. If a person is serious about overcoming sin he must equip himself with the Word of Christ and allow it to dwell in him richly (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Colossians 3:16).

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Another invaluable tool that God has provided to aid us in overcoming sin is prayer. In the Lord's example of prayer He instructed His disciples to pray, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). Likewise in the garden of Gethsemane, with the hour of trial upon them, Jesus said to Peter, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). Too often prayer is an untapped resource among God's people. Enormous strength and power to overcome sin is to be found in close and constant conversation with God. Sadly, however, many have not because they ask not (James 4:2). Perhaps some Christians feel that God will not hear and answer them. This simply is not true. God is more eager than the most loving human father to give His children good things when they ask him (Matthew 7:7-11). John wrote, "and this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15). It is certainly God's will that a person overcome the sin in his life. The one, therefore, who truly desires to overcome sin, will persistently and faithfully seek God's assistance through prayer.

Yet another invaluable tool that God has provided to aid us in overcoming sin is the church. It has often been observed that there is strength in numbers. Solomon expressed it thus: "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12). The support system provided by the brethren is a tremendous resource to the one who is seeking to overcome sin and temptation. For this reason the author