

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

What Do Christians Do About Sin?

By Micky Galloway

What an important question! In our efforts to teach the lost, we often focus on what one must do to become a child of God. The Bible pattern teaches that one must hear, believe in Him, repent, confess his faith in Jesus as the Christ, and be baptized in His name. Jesus commanded the apostles, **“Go ye therefore, and make disciples of (teach, KJV) all the nations”** (Matt. 28:19). If the gospel is to be taught, we must hear the gospel. Faith in Christ is essential. Jesus said, **“for except ye believe that I am (he), ye shall die in your sins”** (Jn. 8:24). Repentance is essential. **“The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent”** (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a change of one’s mind produced by **“godly sorrow”** (2 Cor. 7:10), that results in a change of action or life. Confession of one’s faith in Christ is essential. Jesus said, **“Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven”** (Matt. 10:32-33). Baptism into Christ is also necessary. Jesus said, **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”** (Mk. 16:16). The very purpose of baptism is to wash away sin (cf. Acts 22:16). Peter said that baptism is **“unto the remission of your sins”** (Acts 2:38). It is at this point that the blood of Christ washes away a man’s sins as we are **“baptized into Christ”** (Gal. 3:27) and are raised to **“walk in newness of life”** (Rom. 6:3-4). We are then added by the Lord Himself to His church (cf. Acts 2:47). This is consistently illustrated in every example of conversion in the book of Acts.

What then is God’s plan to forgive the sins of Christians? In a recent conversation with a brother in Christ who has not been faithful, I asked, “What do you need to do?” My beloved brother answered, “I need to start going to church.” No, my dear friend, you need to repent! As a member of the Lord’s church, a member of the family of God; one must remain faithful in worshiping God, purity of life, and working for the Lord. It is summed up in these words, **“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”** (Rev. 2:10). One must be **“stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”** (1 Cor. 15:58). But what must one who is a Christian do when he sins?

Simon the Sorcerer had believed and was baptized. He was saved from his past sins. **“But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. And Simon also himself believed: and being baptized...”** (Acts 8:12-13). Afterwards he sinned and is identified as one perishing, **“in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”** Peter’s exact words to him were, **“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee”** (Acts 8: 22).

The erring child of God must repent. Repentance for my brother who sins means the same thing that it does for anyone else. Repentance is a change of mind toward sin, produced by godly sorrow that results in a reformation of life (cf. 2 Cor. 7:9-10). Repentance is not simply regret, sorrow, prayer, or fear. It is a change of mind; the decision to quit sin that results in a complete turning from evil. In the parable of the two sons Jesus illustrated repentance. **“But what think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son go to work today in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented himself, and went”** (Matt. 21:28-29). The rebellious son repented and went. Repentance then, is the decision, the determination to quit sin and obey God. When a child of God, who is leading a life of sin either by indifference and carelessness in respect to his duty to Christ and the church, or by a life of immorality and worldliness, comes to himself and repents, he quits the life of sin, turns from sin and obeys God. The prodigal son of Luke 15, came to himself, realized his condition and made a resolution and acted upon it; **“I will arise and go to my father...”** He determined to quit doing his own will and do the will of his father.

The erring child of God must pray. Peter commanded Simon to **“repent and pray”** (Acts 8:22). To pray means to beseech, seek, ask, entreat; in the New Testament it means requests addressed by men to God. Prayer must be made to God for forgiveness by the erring brother who repents. Simon called upon Peter, **“Pray ye for me to the Lord**

...” (Acts 8:24). Why did Peter tell the people at Pentecost to **“repent and be baptized...unto the remission of your sins”** (Acts 2:38) and tell Simon at Samaria to **“Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee?”** Indeed, there are two laws of pardon; one to the sinner who has not become a Christian and another for the erring child of God. Prayer is a privilege of the child of God. **“For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears unto their supplication: but the face of the Lord is upon them that do evil”** (1 Pet. 3:12). **“If we ask anything according to his will he heareth us”** (1 Jn. 5:14). We must ask in faith through Christ. **“And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”** (1 Jn. 2:1).

The erring child of God must confess his sins. One cannot pray to God for forgiveness unless he admits to himself and acknowledges to God that he has sinned. The command to repent and pray necessarily implies the confession of sins. James says, **“Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed”** (Jas. 5:16). John says, **“if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”** (1 Jn. 1:9). Hence, the second law of pardon includes repentance, confession of sins, and prayer. It does not include baptism, for baptism is a condition of forgiveness for those desiring to become children of God, members of His family, the church.

Any child of God who sins and refuses to comply with the second law of pardon, can no more expect remission of his sins than one formerly dead in his trespasses and sins can expect remission of his sins when he rejects the commandments of Christ to believe in Him, repent, to confess his faith in Jesus as the Christ, and to be baptized in His name.

In our efforts to save the lost, let us be thoughtful of our brethren who are overcome with sin. Paul writing to the churches of Galatia said, **“Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted”** (Gal. 6:1). Paul concluded in this context, **“So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith”** (Gal. 6:10). (No, he is not talking about hamburgers and hot dogs.) He is emphasizing teaching men how to live by the Spirit. I have a special responsibility to my brother who sins. James writes, **“My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins”** (Jas. 5:19-20). Even if it becomes necessary to discipline the sinner in a local congregation as Paul commanded the Corinthians and the Thessalonians: **“...if any man that is named a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no, not to eat”** (1 Cor. 5:9-11), **“withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly...”** (2 Thess. 3:6). Even then, let us never forget who he is. He is my brother! **“And (yet) count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother”** (2 Thess. 3:15). — *Fifth Street East church of Christ Bulletin*, October 13, 2019. ■



Sin is Universal

By Joe R. Price

“9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. 10 As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God’” (Rom. 3:9–11, NKJV).

Sin is ugly. Some people prefer not to think about it. They don’t want to talk about it. They want a gospel that is only positive and that does not explain, explore and expose the spiritual problems of sin. That is not the gospel of Christ. Some people redefine sin until it is almost nonexistent. Sin is too often couched in terms like “freedom of choice,” or “this is who I am,” or “it’s an illness,” in attempts to remove accountability for it. The Bible is not ambiguous about sin. It is real, and it is deadly. Sin means “to miss the mark.” Like an archer whose arrow misses the bulls eye, we have missed the target (God’s law, 1 Jn. 3:4). Sin is universal. We have all missed the mark, we have all sinned against God (1 Jn. 3:4; Rom. 3:23). Sin is an oppressive taskmaster who brings death to all over whom it rules (Rom. 6:23). One form sin takes is ignorance (v. 11). We cannot plead ignorance as a justification for sinning against God. Ignorance is not bliss, it brings eternal death (2 Thess. 1:8-9). Only when we are convicted of our sins will we turn to God for relief (Acts 2:37). And, He gives it in His Son (1 Jn. 5:11-13). — *Sword Tips*, March 26, 2019.

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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