

The Wickedness of Sin

The doctrine of sin is one that is much neglected by the Church and Christians at large in today's culture. People no longer want to discuss the matters of sin because the heart of man is prideful and fights against reflection upon the sinful nature. If we understood the depth of sin from which we were saved, we would see God magnified and exalted in His mercy more so than ever before and our hearts would mourn, break, and plead for the salvation of all those around us, possibly your closest friends and family members who know not Christ. The first thing I would like to lay out for your study on this vastly important issue is what has been known for centuries in the Christian Church as Depravity. Now Depravity does not refer to how sinful a person can be when it comes to their actions, but rather how sinful every individual is concerning their heart. Depravity is not what man does, but who he is. These people are not necessarily (although they could be) blasphemers, drunkards, murderers, thieves, adulterers, or morally unclean in any particular way. They may be far from it, in fact they most likely are not hostile to the idea of church and they may even attend one every Sunday. These people would describe and consider themselves good, and you yourself may not disagree but the Word of God gives us a warning concerning the heart of man in comparison to his outward appearance. Proverbs 30:12 says "This is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." These people may not seem to be hostile toward God or even people, but according to Titus 3:3 we all once were.

All men while in the flesh are blind to the things of God. According to Psalm 36:1 "Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes." They do not see a need to fear Him or give Him reverence, and even though they know their own wickedness, they have blinded themselves to it and convinced themselves they really are not that bad! But God's Word reminds us of our previous state of blindness and the blindness of the whole world that even when Christ is right in front of them, they refuse to see. They are spiritually blind. Romans 11:8-10 says "just as it is written, "GOD GAVE THEM A SPIRIT OF STUPOR, EYES TO SEE NOT AND EARS TO HEAR NOT, DOWN TO THIS VERY DAY." And David says, "LET THEIR TABLE BECOME A SNARE AND A TRAP, AND A STUMBLING BLOCK AND A RETRIBUTION TO THEM." LET THEIR EYES BE DARKENED TO SEE NOT, AND BEND THEIR BACKS FOREVER." To this very day this remains true. It was true in Paul's time and it most certainly is in our time as well (Acts 28:27, Mark 8:18, Psalm 115:5). Man is not only spiritually blind but all men are also spiritually deaf to the things of God. Psalm 115:6 tells us "They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell" (Psalm 38:13; 58:4; 135:17, Jer. 17:23; 44:5, Zech. 7:11, Matthew 13:15) and "Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear" (Deut. 29:4). Christ would come and live amongst such as these, He would then later be preached to multitudes more, yet they having ears could not hear (Ezekiel 12:2). It is so natural in man to hear things which pertain to the true God and then to be offended, turned off, or even apathetic but I tell you if the truth of Christ does not stir religious affections in your heart, if the talk of God does not define the sum of your conversations, the work of your hands, and the meditations of your heart and mind, you are no different then the rest of humanity. Paul elaborates in Acts 7:51 "You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as

your fathers did" in effect saying that the heart of man is corrupt and dead. Genesis 6:5 teaches us "...the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." We do not just do bad things but men themselves are bad. All men are bad, not one is good in the eyes of God, they continually convince themselves of their own goodness foolishly as if there is not a standard already set, and one set by God. John Calvin once said "Man's mind is like a factory of idolatry and superstition; so much so that if a man believes his own mind it is certain that he will forsake God and forge some idol in his own brain." We as a church avoid talking about sin, and as Christians ignore the problem amongst our family and friends altogether almost as if we want to live in ignorance, as if that will solve the problem if we simply don't talk or think about it. But God has brought a charge against us in His Holy Word. He will not let us off the hook and reminds us numerous throughout the Scriptures. In Gen. 6:5,11-12 we learn that "...the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually...Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth." We drink iniquity like it is water, and our hearts are so corrupt that no one can understand it (Job 15:16, Jer. 17:9). In fact, there is not one person who does good, not one person in all of existence who is searching for God, there is not one righteous person, no, not even one! There is no fear of God before their eyes (Romans 3:9-18). All their good deeds in the eyes of God are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). This is God's account of us and it only gets worse the more we read the Bible. In fact He says in Romans 6:20 that we were all in bondage and enslaved to sin and the lusts of the flesh and we were unable to do anything righteous. We may think our selves, our families, our friends are good, but at the end of the day when we are standing before the Almighty Judge of the universe there is not one reason why He should not damn us all to hell. We must realize this in order to understand the great price paid on our behalf on the cross. The punishment that we deserved was either taken on our behalf by Christ or we will take it upon ourselves. I pray none of you are deceived, not only of yourselves, but most importantly the urgency you should have with giving the Gospel to all who come in contact with you. Here is a little test of your salvation based from Romans 8:7-8 which says "because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." Now let us take a look at this text for a moment. The mind set on the flesh. For Christ says in Matthew 12:34 "For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart." How much does our mouth speak concerning the Excellencies of God? Do we speak concerning Him even once a day? Or if we were to add it all up would anyone be content with saying that they spoke of their Lord even an hour? If you find it hard to see Christ being the outpouring of your mouth then that tells you something of your heart. Do you get more excited to spend more time talking about frivolous things which are passing away such as the weather, sports, movies, music, other people, or are your emotions heightened when speaking about our Lord? If He is not the outpouring of the heart then it is impossible to claim He is ruler of the heart.

Let us take a look at one final text, for the application. Let us turn again to the Word of God found in Romans 6:15-18. As we focus on the life of the believer in verse 18, it is important to make two statements: (1) we did not free ourselves. We were dead, blind, deaf, and dumb to

the things of God. We did not want them, we did not see them, we did not like them, we did not choose them. We were not wiser in such a way than those around us to choose to free ourselves from sin and the old man. In fact, we were devoted to our old self, loved our old master, hated God. We were according to Romans 6:20 free in regard to righteousness. We were by nature children of wrath, and we hated Him. We hated His beauty, His majesty, His glory, and we most certainly hated His rightful place as ruler over His creation of which we, as creatures, are a part of. And (2) He made us alive to Him. He made us slaves of righteousness. Romans 5:8 proclaims "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." In the death of Christ we were bought, and through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, we have a new man, we are born again, and we are freed by Christ to live for Him. John 8:36 also attests that "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." It is all dependent upon the Son, therefore, if we are not made free, we will not be free to live for righteousness, but instead entangled in the lusts of the flesh unable to even obey God. Turn once again to Romans 6:18 and read it carefully. It is to you professed believer that the following phrase of Paul should cause to examine your heart and your profession. "Having been freed from sin." It is a reality, it has already taken place, it is in the past tense and if this is the case, then the preceding must be true of you. You must be slaves of righteousness.

Now this means that we have a new heart that is alive in Christ, not one of stone that is dead, but one that is alive, and is a slave to its new master. It does not mean we are free from sin in every respect, it does not mean we quit sinning, or that all the remnants of sin are removed from our lives. It is not sinless perfection, but that simply we are no longer its slave. We could never have obeyed God or truly pleased God while we were in the flesh. However, now having been purchased by the blood of Christ, our affections lie in a different place. Our hearts, minds, and delights are no longer bound to finding satisfaction in the fleeting lusts of the flesh as what previously marked our joy, but now our hearts, minds, and satisfaction are marked by our love for our new master, as we are His servants. We as new believers do not take joy in unrighteousness. Although we do sin, we do not love our sin. We are grieved, we mourn, we hate our weakness when we fall short, and we run to our Master and mourn for offending Him. We do not take joy in it as we formally did in our rebellion. When we sin it cuts our soul in two. We are not indifferent towards sin any longer and we are at war with our own flesh as slaves to a righteous God. Martin Lloyd Jones said "You cannot be a Christian without this being true of you- you are no longer under the slavery, the tyranny, the dominion, and the whole bondage of sin." The fact that we believe the True Gospel of Jesus Christ is evidence enough that the bondage of sin has been destroyed, because it is foolishness in the eyes of men to believe the Gospel, and they will not love it and live for it. Therefore, the true believer lives the Gospel and not abounding or neglecting the precious work of our beloved Savior on the Cross. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 reveals "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." We do not live with a veil over our faces, nor would we (who love the glory of Christ) hide our eyes from it but rather we love the glory of Christ and He has authority, rule, and sole influence over our affections and joy. It is the power of Grace to not just purchase us from death and hell, but

it is the power and nature of true grace to reign and transform our hearts, minds, and lives. Those who claim to be under grace but continue to live as a slave to sin, unrepentant, unchanged, and stagnate in their walk with Christ, nullify their claim by their lives.

Therefore beloved, there is no such thing as a carnal Christian. A Christian who delights in wickedness, and who is not grieved when they sin against their Master, is a contradiction in terms. It cannot be, because it is absolutely not true. As John Calvin once said "To claim faith without works, is like claiming a fire when there is neither flame, nor heat." Those who walk around claiming to be Christians, yet a joy does not come to their hearts when the Word is preached are not believers, if they do not hunger and thirst for righteousness but are content with living apathetic lives, they have no seat at the table of the Lord. Those whose lives and very conversations are not summed up in Christ's Glory are not Christian. You may see this in your friends or family members. And I pray to God it is not the case for any of you. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling... be sure of your election. Ask yourself if slavery describes your devotion to Christ. Matthew 6:24 tells us that "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." Theologian Charles Hodge once beautifully summed it up by saying that "a freed slave does not continue to be subject to his former master."

In conclusion Beloved, I would like to express the importance of Christ. We as believers realize that Christ paid all the cost of our judgment on the cross. He bore the wrath of God Almighty for the offence we were before His eyes. We as believers strive to put to death our sin, not because we just want to live moral lives, or have adopted a Christian ethic, but because the Work of the Holy Spirit causes our hearts to be in anguish as we realize the sins we commit caused the pain and death of our Lord. We should not live neglectful of that fact. Likewise we should not live in perpetual unrepentant sins because we realize it is Christ who died for them. We do not take joy in His pain, because we love and serve Him our new Master. We are not Christians because we made a profession or decision for Jesus, but our assurance comes because of the evidence of the continued work of the Holy Spirit conforming us closer to the image of Christ in our lives. Or do you foolishly think God only does this work in some of His children? I tell you today and pray it brings hope to your heart, God does this work in all His children and not just among those who are aspiring to be preachers and teachers, but to everyone who calls upon the Name of the Lord. There is no such thing as a carnal, perpetual, godless Christian. God will not fail to bring His children into a state where they actually love Him. God will not fail. New Christians live a different way because they have a different Master who has made them His slaves and they love it! It could not be said better then by the mouth of Jesus Christ Himself, "So then, you will know them by their fruits" Matthew 6:20.

Soli Deo Gloria,

Peter Sammons

The Master's Seminary Student

26415 Josel Dr.

Santa Clarita, CA 91387

solideogloriaministries@yahoo.com

I pray you are encouraged by what you just read. If there is any way my wife and myself can be more of an encouragement for you, please feel free to contact us. If you have any questions regarding the letter or those to come, feel free to email me at the email address shown above. Gabrielle and I would like to pray for you, you can email us your prayer requests or write them in the space provided. Thank you for your support, through prayer and fellowship. This letter is now apart of your personal ministry, feel free to copy and spread it as much as you would need to, but please do not alter its content. If you know of someone who would like to be added to this free tri annual letter send their address to my email. Thank you again, and may God be exalted as head above all things in your life!

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- Yes, I would like to continue to receive your letter Studies in the Scriptures
- I would like to receive them electronically my email address is _____
- Yes, I would like Gabrielle and Yourself to pray for me, my prayer request is:

- I would like to help support your continued studies as you train at The Master's Seminary I give this gift, by the Grace of God and for His glory
- I, Promise to pray for Gabrielle and your studies at least ___times a week
- I, would like to give this one time gift of _____
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