

WHERE HAVE ALL THE SINNERS GONE?

In the public discourse today — whether in print, on cable TV or in the “cloud” and its “blogs” — there are many ills placed at the national center-stage of what we must endeavor to eradicate: from social injustice, to inequality, to poverty and on and on.

However, there is nary a mention of “sin,” as the source of the nation’s problems and of the world’s troubles. The public orthodoxy and the public discourse eschew the word “sin”: even its mention is repudiated, as the symptom and mark of condemning and unforgiving hearts. The wholesale repudiation of even the mention of “sin” is accomplished by the misleadingly ennobling means of invoking the woman at the well, whom Jesus “forgave and did not condemn.”

Indeed, He did so; but, for our own good, we must remember that there was more to that conversation — much more:

John 8:11b *And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.” [NKJV]*

However, in these days of ours, we do not hear, nor read, nor remember of the instruction to “sin no more.”

Rather, we often do easily admit to “inappropriate behavior” or “lapses of judgment” or “past mistakes” and the like, while the bystanders — in unity with their leaders — chant: “Who am I to judge?”

Never we admit to having “sinned,” let alone that we might “confess” our sins. Rather, we satisfy ourselves with the vague: “just forgive, as Jesus forgave” and hide, with all diligence and hurry, Jesus’ requirement: “sin no more.”

A “mistake” or a “lapse in judgment” is like neglecting to prepare when rain is in the forecast, but a “sin” is altogether different.

A “mistake” can be remedied by buying an umbrella, while on the way, but of “sin” one must “repent”; because sin — first and foremost — is an offense to the Almighty Lord, as David [the man whose “heart was after the heart of God” (**Acts 13:22**)] recognized immediately, when confronted with his adultery and murder:

2 Samuel 12:13a *David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the Lord.” [NRSV]*

Sin harbors deathly and deadly consequences, because it imports God’s punishment — or the repayment by Christ’s atonement, in order to be spared the just punishment of God.

As Jesus explained to the invalid of 38 years, whom He had just healed of his handicap:

John 5:14b, *“Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you.” [NLT]*

And the Apostle Paul, branded “sin” famously and concisely:

Romans 6:23a *For the wages of sin is death, [NRSV]*

As Jesus warned, “something even worse happens” indeed: that is death — “spiritual death.”

We know what physical death is: “spiritual death” is even worse than death of the flesh, because it is the death and negation of spiritual, eternal life, which, as Jesus taught us, is:

John 17:3 *“Eternal life is knowing thee, who art the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” [KNOX]*

Thus, “spiritual death” is not being able to know the only true God and being altogether cut off and away from Him. That is the outcome or wage of sin.

No wonder the world is indeed in deep trouble.

David did not argue his case as a “lapse of judgment” nor as “inappropriate behavior.” Rather, David: first, recognized his sin; second, recognized that his sin was against God and third, he confessed it immediately.

Nevertheless, today our world thoroughly ignores sin and never even mentions it: sin seems to have disappeared and gone away altogether.

As the Apostle Peter explained to the people in Solomon’s Portico, indeed sins may be made to go away:

Acts 3:19 *“Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.” [NLT]*

The way to accomplish this is by repenting: Jesus had earlier expressed it sternly:

Luke 13:3b *“..... And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God.” [NLT]*

In sum: the atonement is accomplished and done once for all. All we have to do is receive it: that is our responsibility, which we satisfy by confessing our sin, repenting and turning to God, rather than turning to friends or to fawning reporters.

God’s grace is indeed free, but it is not cheap nor is it a *freebie*: it meant the Cross for Him and it means confession and repentance for us. There is no other way.

1 John 1:9 *But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. [NLT]*

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It is true that Jesus did not come to condemn the world: He did not need to do so, because — as He explained to Nicodemus — the world stands condemned and not only condemned, but condemned already, under the load of hidden, unconfessed and therefore unforgiven sin.

John 3:18b "..... those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God." [NRSV]

Without confession and repentance of sin, the atonement is of no avail: one is still immersed among those, whom Jesus declared to be condemned already.

His forgiveness applies, if we confess: if we do not confess, and, in fact, if we do not even recognize sin, there is nothing that He is asked to forgive and hence there is nothing that is forgiven.

It cannot be a surprise that "receiving" requires "asking":

Matthew 7:7 "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." [KJV]

If we do not acknowledge sin and confess it, we simply continue to carry its full load with its deadly consequences.

Therefore, a world that does not recognize sin is in the condition we well know — described by the Apostle John:

1 John 5:19 *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. [KJV]* since:

Romans 3:23 *All have sinned and fall short of God's glory, [CEB]*

In conclusion: we ourselves must be aware of our sins and not sweep them under the rug, as "inappropriate behaviors": we need to know that indeed God's perfection is so complete that there is no way for us to expiate our sins. That is indeed why Jesus, the One without sin, died on the Cross and was resurrected.

That is what He did, which we could not have done ourselves, but there is something for us to do as well: confession and repentance, so that His atonement may be applied to us and His forgiveness received by us.

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WE ARE HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT.**