

LESSON 4: JESUS, THE WAY TO FORGIVENESS

Many people think that sin is nothing more than a violation of human relationships. They consider an action sinful only if it is frowned upon by society, if it violates their own conscience, or if it is harmful to someone. To such people, correcting sin is nothing more than making things right with other people. When this is done they feel a peaceful release.

But sin is more than this. Sin is any deviation from God's will.

"All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17). It may be doing what God disapproves. "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4)

Or, it may be failing to do right. "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

The grossest behavior toward another human being is sin only because it violates God's law. After committing adultery and murder, David wrote in a Psalm to God: "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." (Psalm 51:5)

This means that sin is more serious than most people realize and it explains the penalty attached to it: "For the wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23)

It means, also, that no man is forgiven until all is right with God.

THE PROBLEM OF SIN

Making a sinner right with God is not easy -- even for God. God is perfectly HOLY, and holiness makes any truce with sin impossible.

"Your throne, O God is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness." (Psalm 45:6-7) God is infinitely JUST, and justice demands that He punish sin with that penalty which His justice prescribes for the guilty -- death.

"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience." (Ephesians 5:6)

These facts involve men in a terrible predicament. He is a sinner. The very nature of God demands separation from man and man's punishment by death.

Man is helpless to solve the problem. He cannot deny the fact that he is a sinner; and no good works he may do can make him innocent. A man who has committed an undetected murder is not made innocent by living the rest of his life by the law.

Doing other things God has required does not give us credit to apply against our sins. Once we are sinners, we are as dead men.

"So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" (Luke 17:10)

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, has made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." (Ephesians 2:4-5) God's love and grace do not compromise His holiness or justice. He struck the blow which justice required. But His love provided His own Son as a shield to receive the blow in place of sinful man.

"...He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken." (Isaiah 53:8) These words, written hundreds of years before Christ, were fulfilled in His death on the cross. A shield or protection from punishment is called a propitiation.

"And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." (1 John 2:2)

FORGIVENESS CONDITIONAL

Though Christ is the propitiation for "the sins of the whole world," not all will be saved by Him.

"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." (Hebrews 5:9)

Obedying Christ requires BELIEVING, having FAITH in Him. If He is THE WAY, we must put our trust in Him. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 26:31)

This faith, of course, must be strong enough to create in us a resolve to turn from sin. This is REPENTANCE. "And these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30)

Our faith must be strong enough to prompt public CONFESSION. "For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." (Romans 10:10)

And we must believe sufficiently to be BAPTIZED. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16)

This baptism puts us into Christ where we are children of God by faith. "For you are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3:26-27)

It is when we are buried with Christ in baptism that God makes us alive. "Therefore we were buried with Him by baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4)

Once we are in Christ and have this new life, we are forgiven of our sins when we continue to comply with God's conditions of forgiveness. "But 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 cleanses us from all sin...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)

Questions for Lesson Four

1. All _____ is sin. (1 John 5:17)
2. The penalty (wages) of sin is _____. (Romans 6:23)
3. The Lord loves _____ and hates _____. (Psalm 45:7)
4. When we have done all we have been commanded to do we are still _____ servants (Luke 17:10).
5. God is rich in _____, has great _____, and saves us by His _____. (Ephesians 2:4-5)
6. Christ is the _____ for our sins. (1 John 2:2)
7. In Christ we have _____ of sins. (Ephesians 1:7)
8. Christ is the source (author) of salvation to all who _____ Him. (Hebrews 5:9)
9. God commands all to _____. (Acts 17:30).
10. Confession must be made with the _____ unto salvation. (Romans 10:10)
11. One who believes and is _____ shall be saved. (Mark 16:16)
12. The _____ of Jesus Christ purifies (cleanses) from sin. (1 John 1:7)
13. Baptism is to be in the name (by authority) of _____. (Acts 2:38)
14. The believers who were baptized in Samaria were (a) infants (b) children or (c) men and women. (Acts 8:12)
15. Saul was told to be baptized (a) to please his parents, (b) that sin might be washed away or (c) to obtain a certificate. (Acts 22:16)
16. We are baptized into (a) the denomination of our choice, (b) Christ or (c) a local church. (Galatians 3:27)
17. Baptism is (a) a sprinkling, (b) a burial or (c) pouring. (Colossians 2:12)

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