



“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)

“Sin pays its wage : death” (Romans 6:23)

“I feel sick when I look at the sin in my life” is the opening line to a song and it always makes me wonder whether I take sin seriously enough or whether I just make excuses or pretences, brush it under the carpet and pretend it isn't really a problem. Even as Christians it is a problem. Sometimes I think we forget about our own sin when we become Christians. We mustn't!

Sin is what separates us from God and what led to Jesus having to die on the cross. It was to bear *our* punishment that he was crucified. How often do we forget that and think of it in a general and not a personalised way? Sin is the failure to live up to God's standards and his laws. Can we really choose to ignore sin and its consequences in our lives and the lives of others? Can we afford to? As Christians it is an insult to God if we do so after all he has done for us.

We must also remember that it is not just “big” sins like murder, rape, armed robbery and so on which count. It is also lying to members of your family or employer, “borrowing” a book, a pen, using bad language, telling crude jokes (which are effectively making light of sin), spreading rumours, using the work

telephone or car for private business, watching films and videos that glorify wrongdoing. The list goes on.

It is true that we may not always stop ourselves sinning but with God's help, as we progress in our Christian lives, we should be able to sin less and less. Or to put it in a more positive manner, as someone once said, we should be gaining ever-increasing victory.

But first of all I believe we must *want* to stop sinning. We must be honest about sin in our lives, realise how serious it is, confess it to God, asking his forgiveness and calling on him to give us the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to overcome sin.

In the words of the old chorus:

There's a way back to God
From the dark paths of sin
There's a door that is open
And you may go in
At Calvary's cross
Is where you begin
When you come as a sinner
To Jesus

How can I make myself right with God?

If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.” (Romans 10:9-10 NLT, second edition)

The Bible says in Romans 1:17, *“The Good News shows how God makes people right with himself”* (NCV).

How does God make us right with himself? This is called the Gospel, and there are three points.

First, we can’t make ourselves righteous.

Heaven is a perfect place. There’s no sin, sadness, evil, or injustice. But here’s the problem: We are imperfect, and God can’t let sinful people into Heaven because then it would be full of sin, too.

Romans 3:20 says, *“No one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are”* (NLT, second edition).

The only people who think they can keep God’s laws are those that don’t know them, because God’s laws are perfection, and none of us are perfect. We cannot be made right on our own. So God had to come up with a plan.

Second, God sent Jesus to pay for our sins so we could be declared righteous.

When you break man’s laws, you pay man’s penalty. When you break God’s laws, you pay God’s penalty, which is eternity in Hell. Somebody has to pay for all the things you’ve done in life that hurt other people, yourself, and God.

God said, “I’ll send my Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty. He will take your place so you don’t have to go to Hell. You can be with me forever.”

Do you understand why the Gospel is called Good News? It means everything you’ve ever done or will ever do wrong in life has already been paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross. You have been made right with God.

“[God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy” (Titus 3:5a).

Third, we have to accept by faith what God did for us.

To be made right with God, just believe and accept by faith that what Jesus did on the cross paid for your sins. Then, you are a part of God’s family. You can live the way he wants you to live now and then go to Heaven in eternity. That is righteousness.

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Hallelujah! We can all be saved no matter who we are, what we’ve done, or how long we’ve done it.

Today is the day to settle this. If you are not sure if you are going to Heaven when you die, please pray this prayer: “Dear God, thank you that you made

me, that you have a plan and purpose for my life, and that you made me to know you. Thank you for the choice that you've given me to accept or reject your offer of salvation. Today I humbly ask you to save me — not based on what I've done but based on what Jesus Christ did for me. I don't understand it all, but as much as I know how I want to put my trust in your Son. God, I want to get to know you. I want to learn to love you. I want to hunger and thirst for righteousness the rest of my life. I put my trust in your grace and in your forgiveness. I want you to be the Lord of my life. Amen.”

Rick Warren www.purposedriven.com

Grace

There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels over one sinner who repents. Luke 15:10

Luke 15 consists of three stories or parables that Jesus told – the lost sheep, lost coin and the lost son (often called the prodigal son). The stories give us an insight into the heart of God, the God whom Jesus constantly reveals both in his actions and his teaching.

That God forgives sinners who come to him for mercy – rather than punishing us as we deserve – is remarkable. That God, in his compassion, searches out sinners, takes his love to a different level. This is the love that prompted Jesus to come to earth and die for us.

So often people who are not Christians – and tragically some who are – see God as a strict headmaster who governs by fear, imposing strict rules by which we are required to live. This passage reveals a God who loves to throw big parties. He rejoices in welcoming sinners and dining with them. Twice in this chapter we read the words “rejoice with

me”. We need to rejoice more when we see God in action and to be thankful that his gracious love is extended to us.

If you believe in Jesus, you can be assured of his unconditional love. Incredibly, the fact that you have accepted his forgiveness is the cause of rejoicing among the angels. It gets better: you have been invited to a party, and I have heard a rumour that it lasts forever!

That is who you are. That is how much God loves you. You don't have to earn it, which is just as well because you couldn't. So whatever you're doing today, do it in the knowledge that God loves you and that you don't have to prove anything to anyone. The following quote puts it better than I can.

“The grace of God means something like this: here is your life. You might never have been, but you are, because the party wouldn't have been complete without you” Frederick Buechner.

All the best thoughts in this devotion were shamelessly stolen from Daniel McGinnis, Encounter with God, Scripture Union 29 October 2019

Stuart Weir www.veritesport.org

He was holy, but he hung with the sinful / Drove out the wicked by flipping over tables in the temple / He took a wrongful death, yet he remained silent / But, he said he coming back, and he is bringing violence / So, are there two Christs totally unrelated / Or, maybe there's one Christ, and he's pretty complicated

- **Sho Baraka, “Maybe Both, 1865”**

Knee Polishing

What are your Easter prayers? How can the resurrected power of the risen Christ impact your life?

Sunday : that the resurrected power of the risen Christ will fill your life

Monday : that the good news of Easter will stir you to pass it on

Tuesday : that you will never doubt the truth of the gospel of Christ

Wednesday : that you may be a fruitful branch in the vine of Christ

Thursday : that you may never be tempted to deny Christ

Friday : that your sins will lead you to the foot of the cross in confession

Saturday : that the enormity of Christ's sacrifice will be made real to you

Atheist Prayer Line : you call up and it rings and rings and nobody answers

And for you older ones who might understand this one!

- One day little Johnny whispered to his mother in church, "Does the organist have that little mirror there to see if his hair looks ok?"

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