

Call to Obedience # 446
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
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WHAT ABOUT THIS THING CALLED SIN?

Not too long ago I listened to a Bible program on the radio. A Bible scholar was available to answer questions. A listener called in and asked the following question: “Are homosexuals and transgender people under the condemnation of God?” The Bible scholar responded by saying something like this: No more than us Christians. For we all have sinned and we all do sin. Sin is sin. Therefore, we have no right to judge anyone.

This is my response: “If all sin is the same and we all keep sinning, then we would all go either to heaven or to hell together. If this were true, indeed, King David and King Herod would be spending eternity together.” This is not true and so let us start by observing the Greek and Hebrew languages in which our Bible was written. They contain over two dozen definitions of words for our one English word “sin,” and this fact is enough to tell us that not all sin is the same.

So in this study of “sin,” definitions range from *willful sin* (Heb. 10:26) on the one side of the spectrum to *sins of ignorance* (Lev. 4:13) on the other side of the spectrum. The judgments for the sins or punishments are also far apart. In the light of today’s judicial system, a willful sin may receive the death penalty and the one who sinned out of ignorance would receive no more than a slap on the hand. In the first case, the damage done is immense and in the second, it is minuscule. Look at the Scripture and see how Jesus also makes this distinction very plain in His own words: *And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes...* (Luke 12:47-48).

Now let us further investigate willful sin. Observe the seriousness of willful sins in the life of a Christian, someone who has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb: *For if we deliberately continue to sin after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but only the terrifying prospect of Judgment, of raging fire that will consume the enemies* (Heb. 10:26-27 CJB). Do we understand that this verse refers to the unbridled wrath of God? Willful sinning is very, very, very bad. The Apostle John tells us that willful sinning is totally out of the nature of a Christian by saying: *No one*

who has God as his Father keeps on sinning, because the seed planted by God remains in him. That is, he cannot continue sinning, because he has God as his Father. Here is how one can distinguish clearly between God's children and those of the Adversary: everyone who does not continue doing what is right is not from God (1 John 3:9-10 CJB).

As long as the seed of God is in you, which is Christ, you will not sin willfully. Willful sinning in the life of a Christian is an insurrection against the throne of God; it is rebellion; it is wickedness of the highest degree. It is not only breaking the law, but it breaks off your relationship with God. David knew that he had done so after he committed adultery, and so did Judas when he betrayed the Lord. Do not fool yourself; if you sin willfully, you do not care about God; you just care about yourself. If you sin willfully, you do exactly what the devil wants you to do. Willful sinning, in the end, will receive the same judgment as those who commit the unpardonable sin: perpetually resisting the Holy Spirit.

The best place to find examples of willful sin is from the Ten Commandments, where God laid the foundation for understanding what sin is all about. Yes, *by the law is the knowledge of sin* (Rom. 3:20). If we do not get it here, we just do not get it.

Transgressing any of these Ten Commandments is willful sinning because God has both written these laws with His own finger on tables of stone and He has also written them in your heart. You should know better than to violate these laws. Do not hide behind the cliché that it is all about Jesus. No, it is all about the Ten Commandments as well. God drove Adam and Eve out of His presence because they broke the eighth commandment. The Holy Ghost killed Ananias and Sapphira on the spot for having found no repentance in them because they broke the ninth commandment. So here is a refresher of some of them:

To love something else more than God is a willful sin.

To violate the Sabbath is a willful sin.

To dishonor father and mother is a willful sin.

To murder is a willful sin.

To commit adultery is a willful sin, etc.

To violate any of the Ten Commandments makes you immoral and unfit to follow Jesus. To violate these laws is to be a spot or blemish in the church

and it is time to repent and get right with God instead of staying in the church while pretending and playing games.

From this we know that there is a lot of clarity on this side of the spectrum when it comes to willful sin. We know when we cross the line. And, of course, every willful sin has a root system to it. It has a root system of prior neglect in the spiritual disciplines such as in prayer, Bible reading and witnessing. That means that no willful sin is ever an accident. It is always preceded by the mindset of a backslider.

Going deeper, there are also two major distinctions when it comes to willful sins: these are sins against God and sins against man. For example, not loving God with all of our heart is a sin against God, and not loving our neighbor is a sin against our fellow men. Of course, essentially, if we sin against one, we sin against the other. Then there are also these two categories: the sins of the flesh and the sins of the spirit. Jesus said: *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies* (Matt. 15:19). Looking after a woman to lust after her is a sin of the spirit; going to bed with her is a sin of the flesh; hating someone is a sin of the spirit; killing someone is a sin of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). The sins of the spirit are also called the sins of the carnal nature which must be crucified continually.

Now let us consider the other types of sins which the Bible expresses as *sins of ignorance*:

- 1) Sin as missing the mark;
- 2) Sin as diminishing what should have been given in full measure;
- 3) Sin as falling short of the glory of God, etc.

When it comes to sin which involves missing the mark, we come to the most ancient definition of sin which comes out of the world of archery. It is aiming at the bull's-eye but still missing it. And it is here through our weakness and frailty that it becomes difficult at times to know if we missed the bull's-eye a little or hit it relative to sinning or not. When it comes to sin where one has not given in full measure, it is not always clear to us whether we have given in full measure or not. For example, the disciples were praying with Jesus in the garden and then fell asleep on Him. Did they miss the mark? Did they give in full measure? We do not know, but what we do know is that Jesus was very kind and gracious to them. He loves us and will be very kind to us in similar circumstances. Praise the Lord! Of course, the devil tries to confuse us and always attempts to add his verdict to discourage us.

So then how can we, who are trying our best to please Jesus every moment, live in peace with ourselves and our Lord. First of all, God is delighted every time we do our best. Secondly, our God is as able to restore His saints as easily as He is able to keep His saints. He restored Abraham after he slept with Hagar, Moses after he struck the rock twice, David after he committed adultery and Paul after he reviled God's high priest (Acts 23:2-5). The following is what you will need to do if you are still not clear:

1) Fix your eyes on Jesus and get into praise. It always leads to more light.

2) If still in doubt about whether you have missed the mark, ask for forgiveness. Receive it and immediately get out of the mud. God's warriors hate being in the mud and they get out as soon as they get in, just as Peter did right after he denied our Lord, he went on to strengthen his brothers. Do likewise at once.

3) And whatever other shortcomings you may have and if you have walked in the light, be comforted with this: your misjudgments, your slowness in responding, your lack of sensitivity, etc. will all be taken care of by the blood of the Lamb. We know that all sins separate us from God, but the Apostle John also said: *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin* (1 John 1:7). So if you keep following Jesus, all is taken care of. Marvelous, marvelous, marvelous! God is not a nitpicker with His children, He wants us to keep busy and continue walking with Him.

With that, by the blood of the Lamb and as you walk in the light, you are no longer a sinner, but a saint as the Apostle Paul calls his Christian brothers. And Jude affirms that God is able *...to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy* (Jude 1:24). So, is all sin the same? Absolutely not! Are God's people called to ignore the sins in others? Also absolutely not! We are still called as Christ's ambassadors to call sinners to repentance and that includes those who are in deep perversion (Rom 1:24-32). And in the end, the wicked shall be cast *...into a furnace of fire...*, but the righteous shall *...shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father...* (Matt. 13:42-43).

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