

TEXT SERMONS

Title: **IS SIN STILL AROUND?**

Writing in Associated Content News, June 24, 2009, Vincent Summers asked, “ Whatever Happened to **Sin**? Where Did it Go?” Our condolences on the **passing** of sin. It was once part of the English language. It is used in speech less and less. Sin, or should we say, that which was **formerly known as sin**, is no longer in vogue. It is not proper, not correct to identify something as being sinful anymore. It is a choice, an alternative, a viable option one simply chooses or does not choose to make. If sin is dead, what is the weapon that killed it?”

This is not just a query in the USA but it is a subject of interest in England as well. J. Henry, reporting in **The Telegraph** (UK), December 8, 2008 about words associated with Christianity and British history being taken out of the children’s dictionary, wrote: “Oxford University Press has removed a number of words associated with Christianity from its latest edition of the **Oxford Junior Dictionary**, including “sin”, “devil”, “psalm” and “saint”. The publisher says the changes have been made to reflect the fact that Britain is a modern, multicultural, multi-faith society. With fewer children in the UK exposed to Christian teaching than in past years, and references to biblical terms being purged from school textbooks, it’s hardly surprising that these words are dropping from everyday language—and hence from the dictionary.”

On July 16, 2009 Byron Barlowe, Editor/Webmaster, *Leadership University* wrote: “Not surprisingly, attitudes toward sin seem to have changed and it has become less common--even laughable--as a topic. Do we really still believe in sin or are there psychological and emotional causes to behavior that mitigate our so-called guilt? Could it be that sin--determined by a fixed set of norms--is the best explanation for the behavior and problems we see in our world? Whether or not you believe in the biblical concept of sin, open-mindedly consider the claims that there are standards that derive from a higher source than society.”

The Bible introduces the subject of sin. Between Genesis 1:31 and 6:5 something terrible happened! But let’s get it straight from the Bible. In the first chapter of Genesis it is recorded that, “God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.” (Gen. 1:31) Following that statement it is not long until we read that, “Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Gen. 6:5)

What happened in Eden between God and Adam and Eve is referred to as “The Fall” – the descent of humankind from the lofty pre-sinning state of innocence. This teaching is sadly neglected in many pulpits today and the consequence of this silence is that there are several generations of church-goers who are deplorably ignorant of this most basic biblical truth. Instead, in some churches, there has been a continuous emphasis upon man’s greatness, his dignity, his dominion, his ascendancy, not his fall. Today many speakers pass over the uncomfortable reality of sin to focus on “feel-good” themes. What is happening in Christianity? Has sin disappeared or is it still around?

If we have outgrown sin, if sin is passé, if it is “no longer in vogue,” what does one do with the statement by Jesus in Matthew 15 in which He declared, “out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” (v. 19) Was

Jesus mistaken? Has the human race outgrown sin?

God created a “sinless couple” when He created Adam and Eve. Yet they chose to sin because they were created with freedom to choose. As a consequence, all of their descendants have been infected with the sin disease. The medical profession, the scientist or the philosopher cannot correctly diagnose this malady which afflicts and affects the whole human race. Shouldn't we then turn to the Creator for help in understanding the epidemic that continues to ravage every strata of human existence?

What is needed then, is a return to the biblical account of man's descent into sin – called, by theologians, The Fall. This subject is one of greatest importance for it supplies, from God's perspective, the explanation for the violence and vileness that plaques all societies. It answers the “why” of the robberies and rebellions in the world; it reveals the reason for hurt and hatred, wars and wrongs.

In view of the significance of the Bible teaching about the Fall of man, let us consider the subject as follows: Sin's Cause Stated; Sin's Curse Substantiated and Sin's Cure Supplied.

I. SIN'S CAUSE STATED.

In stating the case for the Fall of man, resulting in human depravity, there will be two considerations: first, It's Essence, and secondly, It's Extent.

A. As To It's Essence.

Genesis chapter three is one of the most important chapters in the Bible, for therein is revealed the reason for the present degenerate condition of the world of mankind. Here we are shown how human beings became sinners. If one rejects what is revealed in Genesis three, then the remainder of divine revelation is rendered incomprehensible, for if there are no sinners there is no need for the Bible's moral teachings and especially no need for the whole of God's redemptive plan in Jesus Christ.

Kenneth L. Woodward wrote an article for Newsweek Magazine titled, “What Ever Happened To Sin?” and in his opening paragraph described what happened in the Garden of Eden, according to his understanding. He summarized what happened as follows: “As the Bible tells it, Adam and Eve first disobeyed their creator, finding his command not to eat the fruit of a particular tree in Eden an intolerable limit on their freedom to choose. In shame, the first couple then hid from God when he came searching for them. Flushed with guilt, Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent. The results of that original sin, the Book of Genesis implies, are still around for all of us to see: estrangement from God, from nature, from each other and from ourselves.” (Newsweek, February 6, 1995) That fairly well sums up what happened in the Garden of Eden.

But let God tell us what happened next: “The LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of

the tree, and I ate.” And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Genesis 3:9-13)

A biblical definition of sin.

What is sin? The apostle John gives this definition: "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). According to John, one of Jesus' closest disciples, sin relates directly to God's law. The apostle Paul writes in Romans 7:7: "Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'"

The original sin was breaking God's law. God's stated His law as follows: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Gen.2:16-17) When Adam and Eve disobeyed God that one act was a revolt against the Creator, an insurrection against His supremacy, a rebellion against His authority, a resistance of His will, a rejection of His edict: "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat." (Gen.2:17)

Our ancient parents lived in a perfect environment. They had a beautiful paradise to call home with everything provided for them. One day a cloud darkened the glory of Eden's blue sky when the sly and subtle serpent, the devil, slithered his way into their lives. A smooth talker he was and soon snared Eve who, breaking God's law, partook of the fruit forbidden and gave to Adam and he too stepped over the line God had drawn and together they fell out of divine favor. Heaven wept as the curtain dropped on that dark scene.

In sinning, Adam acted as the head of the human race. Consequently, when he sinned, all his progeny sinned; when he fell, his descendents fell. "through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation..." (Romans 5:18) Thomas Boston wrote, "Adam's sin corrupted man's nature and leavened the whole lump of mankind. We putrefied in Adam as our root. The root was poisoned, and so the branches were envenomed."

In the same vein the Apostle Paul wrote, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12)

We are members of a cursed head, branches of a condemned tree, streams of a polluted fountain! The Psalmist confessed, "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." (Psalm 51:5) We are replicas of the representative of the race, a chip off the old block. This is no theory of human flagellation but a fact of divine revelation. And that is the essence of the Bible truth of The Fall resulting in the state of human depravity requiring God's redemption for restoration.

B. As To It's Extent.

What is the degree or depth of the race's fall which is the result of the original sin?

The doctrine of mankind's fall from his once lofty position of innocence in his original created state resulted in what is referred to as the doctrine of Human Depravity. Our English word "depraved" is taken from the Latin "depravatus" which means "twisted, wrenched from the straight line." The root of the word is "pravus" which means "crooked." Therefore, to speak of the doctrine of human depravity is to speak of the twisted, wrenched and crooked nature of man.

Sin penetrates and permeates every segment of society. It has been so in all times, and all climes. It is the past-time of men both of high esteem and low estate. The most complete description of the corruption of sin is to be found in Romans chapter three: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God; they have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Romans 3:10-18)

The Bible truth of The Fall teaches that mankind is born spiritually dead. (Eph.2:1) That means that the condition cannot be remedied by mere education or an improved environment. When man departed from his original state of holiness he plunged himself into an awful gulf of sin, misery and despair that can be remedied only by divine intervention.

William Shedd wrote, "The depravity or corruption of nature is total. Total depravity means the entire absence of holiness. A totally depraved man has no holiness." (Shedd's Dogmatic Theology) John Fletcher said, "Take away the doctrine of the Fall, and the tower of evangelical truth built by Jesus Christ is no more founded upon a rock, but upon the sand. Shall we charge the Son of God with the unparalleled folly of coming from heaven to atone for sinless creatures, to relieve persons not condemned, to redeem a race of free men, to deliver from the curse a people not accursed, to save from hell people in no danger of going there?"

Truly, mankind by nature, is in a lost and perishing condition, conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5); "alienated from the life of God" (Eph.4:18); dead in sin (Eph.2:1); "children of wrath" (Eph.2:3). The Fall has warped the conscience, disabled the will, bankrupted morals and hardened the heart. The unrepentant sinner is denied heaven and is destined for hell.

This truth is foreign to many in the pew and some in the pulpit in our day. We are the heirs of generations of the teaching of evolution which sees man in an ever ascending spiral, rising higher and higher from the depths until he becomes a god. Though the evolutionist cannot get away from the fact that man is a very imperfect creature, they are far from admitting that he has become less than he was originally, for such an admission would sweep away their refuge of lies. The evolutionists will not accept the Genesis account of anything because if they admit the truth concerning creation, they

will have to admit the truth set forth in the same chapter that man has sinned and therefore is a sinner, and that God is holy, and the only way that the two can get back together in the relationship and fellowship that existed before the Fall is through the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have reviewed the doctrine of The Fall and the depth of depravity to which mankind fell. Now, to substantiate the Bible's claims with some practical observations.

II. SIN'S CURSE SUBSTANTIATED.

Adam and Eve are the only human beings who ever became sinners by sinning. All other members of the race commit sin because they are born sinners. If there is one word which fitly substantiates the Bible's teaching about man's condition it is the word "sinner." It cannot be denied that the world is populated with sinners.

Although the Word of God is authoritative in itself and needs no confirming, there incontrovertible evidence, abundant proof that sin is the most dreadful malady in the world. This is substantiated by the plain, hard facts of history, observation and experience. Consider then, the presence of sin's curse proven and the prevalence of sin's corrupting power.

A. The Presence Of Sin's Curse Proven.

One sin brought sorrow and death into the world; one sin drove Adam and Eve from the garden and it was one sin that brought a curse to the creation and the creature. In spite of the fact that in Romans 8:23 we read that, "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now," there are some who prefer to believe that sin is only imaginary.

The limerick about the Faith-Healer of Deal, in a humorous way, exposes that fallacy:

"There was a Faith-Healer of Deal
Who said, 'although pain isn't real,
When I sit on a pin,
And it punctures my skin,
I dislike what I fancy I feel."

The point of the matter is that you cannot dispose of the sin problem as easily as that. Anything that is so devastating as to cause all of creation to groan in pain cannot be an illusion.

We do not have to go outside of Genesis chapter three to find proof of the curse which came as a consequence of Adam's transgression. There we read of three consequences that we continue to experience:

Sorrow and Pain - "To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children." (Gen 3:16) Pain in any form is part of the sin curse that passed upon the whole race.

Toil and Trouble - "To Adam He said Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread...." (Gen.3:17-18)

Is there a man who would deny that his livelihood depends upon some form of work, labor, toil even sweat? In Eden's pristine paradise God provided all that our ancient parents needed. Paradise was lost because of sin and the consequences of sin remain with us to this present day.

Decay and Death - "...until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you are, and to dust you shall return." (Gen.3:17-19) "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sindeath spread to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12)

Such has been the lot of Adam's race in every generation, in every part of the earth. The consequences of the curse of sin are all around us. Who would deny that there is pain, a cursed earth, decay and death?

B. The Prevalence Of Sin's Corrupting Power.

How wide spread is the curse of sin? From God's perspective, "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one." (I John 5:19) Sin has corrupted every segment of society. It is one seething, struggling mass of discontent, envy, greed, jealousy and hatred. Why? "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom.3:23) Sins prevalence is all-pervasive.

Tears attest to it, sighs acclaim it, police pursue it, courts sentence it, penal institutions punish it, doctors prescribe for it, pharmacists medicate it, battlefields are scenes of it, hospitals house it, homes are broken by it, lives are ruined by it. Sin's corrupting power is world-wide, impacting all mankind negatively.

Yet, "Fools mock at sin." (Proverbs 14:9) Sin has been labeled as: "psychological hysteria", "physic rebellion", "error", "mistake", "flaw", "immaturity" and "youthful indiscretion." One cannot drown the stench of sin's putrefaction under flood-tides of philosophical perfume! No language lending respectability to sin improves sin. The pig-pen is not made any less a pig-pen by planting flowers around it. Leprosy is not changed by clothing the victim in fine garments.

Sin is not to be treated lightly, it is not a play thing although movies, television programs and magazines portray it up as "fun!" One writer put it this way: "Sin makes all that is beautiful ugly; all that is high is made low; all that is promising is wasted" until "life is like the desert – parched and barren. Sin, then, is not wise, but wasteful. It is not a gate but a grave." (C. Neil Strait)

MAN'S VIEW vs. GOD'S VIEW OF SIN

Man calls it an accident; God calls it an abomination.

Man calls it a blunder; God calls it blindness.

Man calls it a defect; God calls it a disease.
Man calls it a chance; God calls it a choice.
Man calls it a fascination; God calls it a fatality.
Man calls it an infirmity; God calls it an iniquity.
Man calls it liberty; God calls it lawlessness.
Man calls it a trifle; God calls it a tragedy.
Man calls it a mistake; God calls it madness.
Man calls it weakness; God calls it willfulness.

By whatever name sin is identified, it is the universal curse brought upon the creature and the creation by the willful act of rebellion by the first family on the earth. Before The Fall, the creation and the creature lived in perfect harmony and indeed shall do so when the curse is lifted in the coming Kingdom of God upon earth. Then:

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.
The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.
The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:6-9)

Presently the entire earth and all that is in it is out of kilter. Why? Why is it that the conditions described in Isaiah 11 do not prevail today? It is because of the curse of sin. The prophetic passage in Isaiah 11 brings into focus the prevalence of sin's corrupting power.

For such a universal plague there must be a unique cure. Sin cannot be dealt with as though it were an outbreak of measles. A radical disease of the soul demands a radical cure and only the God against Whom all sin is committed can provide that cure. What is the cure for sin's curse?

III. SIN'S CURE SUPPLIED.

Saving mankind from sin is the most important enterprise on earth for it is the only cause important enough to bring the Son of God to earth to die upon a cross! Calvary means, if it means anything, that there is something from which people need to be saved, namely, sin.

No man-devised substitute, whether ecclesiastical or governmental, medical or magical, tangible or intangible will remove the stain and stigma of sin and make the guilty conscience clean. Just what, then, specifically, is the cure for man's malicious malady, how is it obtained and what is the nature of the change it produces? First, what is the remedy?

A. Blood Is The Remedy.

Shocking as that may sound, it nevertheless is true. For those unfamiliar with Bible terminology, such a suggestion may seem repugnant if it originated with man. But what if such a cure were God's idea, would that attach acceptability to the remedy? This is what God says, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." (Hebrews 9:22) And He is not speaking about just any blood, but the blood of Jesus Christ shed upon the cross: "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." (1 John 1:7) And again, "Jesus Christ washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. 1:5) Paul speaks specifically of "the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20) and that we are "justified by His blood" (Rom. 5:9).

Charles H. Spurgeon wrote regarding forgiveness of sin as follows:

"Put up your money bags, they will not secure remission; roll up your diplomas, they will not secure remission; boast not of your superior culture, it will not get you remission; record not your deeds of philanthropy, these will not get you remission. But come! Here is remission: 'for without shedding of blood there is no remission.'"

The severity of the scourge of sin is seen in the remedy required for its forgiveness. As the old song says, "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus! What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus!"

Illust. Charles Swindoll writes about the malady of sin as follows: "During my hitch in the Marines, I was stationed on Okinawa where there was a leprosarium. At the time I was playing in the third division band in the Marine Corps and we went to do a performance. I had read about leprosy, but I had never seen a leper and I wasn't really prepared for what I saw. I saw stumps instead of hands. I saw clumps instead of fingers. I saw half faces. I saw one ear instead of two. I saw in the faces of men, women, and even some teenagers in anguish crying out. ... We could play music for them, but we could not cleanse them of their disease..... In Scripture leprosy is a picture of sin.....Only Jesus' blood has the power to cleanse us of our condition of sinful corruption." (Swindoll's Ultimate Book of Illustrations & Quotes)

B. Believe Is The Response.

The jailer of Philippi, realizing his plight at midnight, asked Paul and Silas the question that every sinner should ask and that is: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30) What must one do to be saved from sin? The Bible answer is, "*believe.*"

It is in the gospel of Jesus Christ that the response required of the repentant sinner for salvation from sin is made known. The Apostle Paul declares: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who *believes.*" (Rom. 1:16)

The action that brings liberation to sin's captives is contained in the Bible's most well-known and most often quoted verse: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes* in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) This is the same invitation that Paul gave to the jailer in Philippi: "*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31)

Lewis Sperry Chafer emphasized the requirement of believing as follows:

“Outside the doctrine related to the Person and work of Christ, there is no truth so far-reaching in its implications and no fact to be more defended than that salvation in all its limitless magnitude is secured, so far as human responsibility is concerned, by believing on Christ as Savior. To this one requirement no other obligation may be added without violence to the scriptures and total disruption of the essential doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Repentance is essential to salvation but is included in believing.” (Systematic Theology, Vol.3 page 371)

Not one human being who desires to be saved and who, being convicted of his sinfulness by the Holy Spirit and complying with the terms of the gospel by believing, will be denied salvation.

C. Birth Is The Result.

The first time we were born we were born physically and received the nature of our forefather, Adam. His was a fallen, sinful nature. That is why we need to be born a second time – have a spiritual birth, for in the second birth we receive a new nature, the nature of Christ.

Jesus Christ asserted the absolute necessity for the new birth when He said to a man named Nicodemus, “You must be born again.” (John 3:7) However, we cannot change our own nature. The disciples asked Jesus “Who can be saved? Jesus looked at them and said to them, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (Matt. 19:26)

As fallen sinners we need revivifying, regenerated by God’s Spirit for it is the Spirit of God Who gives life to lifeless souls (John 6:63), illuminates darkened minds, delivers from the dominion of sin and unites to Christ. Nothing short of the Holy Spirit’s heart-melting, faith-imparting operation brings anyone to appropriate the cross-work of the Lord Jesus which results in one being born again. Salvation therefore, is not simply having a new purpose in life but becoming a new person in Christ by the new birth. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (II Cor. 5:17)

CONCLUSION

Yes, sin and sinners are still around but God has provided the remedy by sending His Son, Who is the Savior from sin. By believing in Him the once ruined are redeemed! The dead are made alive! The lost are found! The fallen are lifted! The sinner is now a saint! That is the testimony of the twice born.

“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.” (Rev. 1:5-6)

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