

Forrest Wychopen

the DOCTRINE
of
SIN

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The Doctrine of Sin
By Forrest Wychopen

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Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Bible.

Any Scripture with **bold** or *italics* sections are emphasizes placed at the discretion of the author for the purpose of drawing the reader's attention to a particular truth.

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Introduction

The doctrine of sin is a significant topic because of its relevant, daily application to our lives. Understanding this Biblical doctrine is not only essential in determining our eternal destiny but it is equally important in living the victorious and practical daily Christian life.

My commentary provided in this resource is fallible. Although I have written with great caution and attention to Biblical accuracy there will certainly be mistakes or points of disagreement. My motivation for writing this resource is *not* so I can teach others how to live the best life or to set them straight. It is intended for my own good. It is the “rooting” and the “cultivating” of God’s truth in my own heart and mind.

In addition, I want you to know that I’m not writing from the perspective of a victorious soldier who is clad in God’s armor standing on the mountaintop with a sword lifted high to the heavens while I pound on my breastplate. Most of my thoughts are cultivated from the lowest valley where I search for a drink of living water. These insights come to you in a spirit of brokenness and humility—not boastful superiority.

If you benefit from my personal lessons I am sincerely grateful—I am praying that you will. But for those of us who confess Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Saviour the goal is actually the same. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). We will all begin to live the victorious Christian life when our existence becomes wholly Christ, and He becomes our life!

Exhorting you to abide in Christ,
Forrest Wychopen

In The Beginning

It is no mystery—even the most casual minded student of Holy Scripture knows God did not create or form the first man with an imperfect or flawed nature. The word *nature* is defined, in part, as the inherent character or the basic constitution of a person. Human nature simply refers to humankind’s original or natural condition. (*Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary.*)

Some distinctions, however, should be made before we attempt to apply the word nature to the Biblical doctrine of sin. In the New Testament, depending on its context, *nature* (phusis) could simply refer to the nature of things, the force, laws, and order of nature. For example, the land, seas, sky, animals, fish, insects, flowers, fruit, and wind all have a distinct nature.

Nature also describes the sum of innate properties and powers by which one person differs from another and describes their distinctive native peculiarities. All of us have a distinct and peculiar nature regarding our ethnicity and surrounding culture. I grew up in Texas and have native peculiarities that match that of a Texan. It goes without saying; all human beings possess a human nature.

But nature is a much broader term than simply addressing the outward physical peculiarities or distinctions of a person and his unique surroundings. Nature also describes the character or the condition of a person. Some people are kind, thoughtful, humble, and generous, while others are mean, inconsiderate, prideful, and stingy. We even refer to some people as “good-natured,” while identifying others as “bad-natured.”

Sodomites have developed a nature that can be identified as perverse, wicked, and one that is contrary to the way God created humankind. “For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their **women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:** And **likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman,** burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Romans 1:26–32).

In other words, in the original creation and design of humanity God created *one man* for *one woman*; but through “vile affections” and “burning lusts,” some have corrupted the original and natural condition of God’s design. That’s crystal clear in scripture.

In The Beginning

All unbelievers are described as being dead in trespasses and sins as a result of their distinctive behavior. “And you hath he quickened, who **were dead in trespasses and sins**; [*Scripture teaches that we were dead in trespasses and sins as a result of our prior walk and distinct behavior.*] Wherein in **time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also **we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind**; and **were by nature the children of wrath**, even as others” (Ephesians 2:1–3). We all became the children of wrath as a result of fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.

If you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour you can, and should, rejoice that through the Heavenly Father’s exceedingly great and precious promises you are a partaker of the divine nature and are no longer the child of wrath. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power **to become the sons of God**, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12). “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be **called the sons of God**: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, **now are we the sons of God**, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:1–3).

THE “NATURE” OF THE FIRST MAN

What was the nature, the **original** or **natural** condition, of the first created man, Adam? “And the Lord God formed [*yatsar—to form, fashion, or frame*] man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).

The word *soul* (*nephesh*) simply refers to self, life, creature, person, appetite, mind, living being, desire, emotion, and passion. The soul of man is that which breathes. It is the breathing substance or being and refers to the inner being of man. The soul is a living being.

The Holy Bible says that God “formed man of the dust of the ground” and that He “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” and that “man became a living soul.” The first man was created by God who is perfect, righteous, and holy in every way. Adam was formed in the likeness and in the image of God. The **original and natural condition** of Adam, therefore, was perfect because “God formed him” and “God breathed into him” the breath of life. Adam was not divine like God but he was a human being with absolutely no sin in his original condition.

“And God said, Let us make man in our *image* [*tselem—image, likeness (of resemblance)*], after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:26–27).

In The Beginning

For additional clarification on what it means for Adam to have been created in God's own image, I have provided a well-written excerpt (with permission) taken from GotQuestions.org, founded by S. Michael Houdmann, under the question titled: "What does it mean that man is made in the image of God?"

Accordingly, man is unique among all God's creations, having both a material (body) and an immaterial (soul / spirit) part. Having the "image" or "likeness" of God means that we were made to resemble God. [*Adam did not possess an "exact" image or likeness of God in that he was divine, sovereign, all knowing, ever present, and all powerful.*] Nor did Adam resemble God in the sense of God's having flesh and blood. Scripture says that "God is a spirit" (John 4:24) and therefore exists without a body. However, Adam's body did mirror the life of God, insofar as it was created in perfect health and was not subject to death. [*Adam only became subject to death if he disobeyed God's specific command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thus changing his original and natural condition.*]

The image of God refers to the immaterial part of man. It sets man apart from the animal world, and fits him for the "dominion" God intended (Genesis 1:28), and enables him to commune with his Maker. It is a likeness mentally, morally, and socially.

Mentally, man was created as a rational, volitional agent—in other words, man can reason and man can choose. This is a reflection of God's intellect and freedom. Any time someone invents a machine, writes a book, paints a landscape, enjoys a symphony, calculates a sum, or names a pet, he or she is proclaiming the fact that we are made in God's image.

Morally, man was created in righteousness and perfect innocence, a reflection of God's holiness. God saw all that He had made (mankind included) and called it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Our conscience or "moral compass" is a vestige of that original state. Whenever someone writes a law, recoils from evil, praises good behavior, or feels guilty, he is confirming the fact that we are made in God's own image.

Socially, man was created for fellowship. This reflects God's triune nature and His love. In Eden, man's primary relationship was with God (Genesis 3:8 implies fellowship with God), and God made the first woman because "...it is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). Every time someone marries a wife, makes a friend, hugs a child, or attends a church, he is demonstrating the fact that we are made in the likeness of God.

In The Beginning

Since Adam was created in God's own image, he had the capacity to make free choices. Although he was given a righteous nature [*the word nature referring to his original or natural condition*], Adam made an evil choice to rebel against his Maker. He disobeyed God's specific command. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it:** for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16–17).

Adam disobeyed God (Genesis 3:6) and in so doing, he marred the image of God within himself, and he passed that damaged likeness on to all his children, including us. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and **death by sin;** and so **death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned**" (Romans 5:12). Today, we still bear the image of God (James 3:9), but we also bear the scars of sin. Mentally, morally, socially, and physically, we show the effects of this reality.

GOD DID NOT CREATE SIN

Of course, every true believer knows that there is absolutely no sin in God. There is no darkness in God. There is no iniquity or unrighteousness in God—ever. Everything He formed and created was very good. "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, **it was very good....**" (Genesis 1:31). Therefore, we can accurately conclude that the first man, Adam, was not created with an innate character which was "conditioned" to sin because of the utter impossibility for God to create something sinful or evil within a person.

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that **God is light,** and **in him is no darkness at all**" (1 John 1:5).

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: **for God cannot be tempted with evil,** neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13).

"**Every good gift and every perfect gift** is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

If God created Adam with an original and natural condition void of sin, why did he sin?

Adam possessed a free will. God equipped Adam with the ability to choose. There would have been no need for God to command Adam, "thou shalt not eat of it" if Adam did not possess a free will. Adam would have simply done what he was created to do. Be sinlessly perfect. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it:** for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:16–17).

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In addition, God gave Adam the responsibility of exercising his free will in giving names to every living thing. This also confirms that Adam was created with intellect, wisdom, and understanding. “And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him” (Genesis 2:19–20).

Since Adam possessed a free will, he had the God-given ability to either obey or to disobey the divine instructions of God. By the term “free will” I simply mean that God did not dictate or control Adam’s choices. Controlling man’s will is known as “quietism” and true Christians reject its heretical teaching.

Quietism is a system of religious mysticism holding that perfection and spiritual peace are attained by *annihilation* of the will. In other words, quietism teaches the passive absorption of God and divine things. It teaches that we have no will of our own and simply do what God dictates or programs us to do. If this were the case, none of us would ever commit random acts of sin. We all understand that God has no darkness in Him at all, and He is holy and perfect. If God annihilated our will with perfection and spiritual peace there would never be a sinful thought, word, or deed in any of us. Temptation would not faze us if God “controlled” our will.

THE TEMPTATION TO SIN

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden” (Genesis 3:1)?

The text here does not clearly identify the serpent as Satan, but other passages in the Bible do make it clear that this is Satan appearing as a serpent.

Ezekiel 28:13–19 reveals Satan and tells us that he was in Eden. Isaiah 51:9 associates a serpent or a dragon as Satan. Revelation 12:9 says, “And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” And Revelation 20:2 says, “And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.”

The Hebrew word *subtle* (aruwm) translates subtle, shrewd, crafty, sly, or sensible. Satan chose the most subtle beast of the field as his instrument to tempt God’s “very good” creation to do evil. The temptation to disobey God appealed to the heart and to the mind or the thinking capacity of Eve. “Yea, hath God said?” Temptation to do evil is always a contradiction to God’s Holy Word, isn’t it? Of course, as he always does, Satan added his lies. Observe his subtlety in the following discourse.

In The Beginning

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, **Ye shall not surely die**: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and **ye shall be as gods**, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:1–5).

It was at this point the original and natural condition for Adam and Eve was about to change for the worse, not because God made them that way but because they willfully chose to disobey the direct commandment of God with their free will. The inherent or natural character of Adam and Eve changed forever at the moment they sinned.

“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

THE “CHOICE” TO SIN

Why did Eve submit to the deceptive and beguiling temptation of Satan?

The Bible points out that it was Eve who was deceived. “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Timothy 2:14). But we also know that Adam was with her and that he also, with his own free will, ate of the forbidden fruit. “...and gave also unto her husband **with her**; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6).

There have been various explanations as to why Adam also disobeyed God but rather than proclaiming one of those ideas as inerrant truth, I’ll just state what the scripture says. Eve was tempted and beguiled. “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3). Adam was with her and he also ate. They both ate of the forbidden fruit. Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying the clear commandment of God (Genesis 3:6).

Let’s examine more closely humankind’s first sin. By looking carefully at some key words, we can identify the true source that led Eve to submit to the subtle wiles of the devil. Here is Satan’s “subtle” temptation to disobey God. “And the serpent **said** unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4–5).

In her heart Eve reasoned: “And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6).

In The Beginning

What led Eve to a choice of disobedience?

Don't be too quick to blame the devil. The word *saw* (raah) means to see, look at, inspect, perceive, or consider. In addition, it means to observe, give attention to, discern, distinguish, and gaze at. It means that Eve gave more than simply a physical and visual look or quick glance; it involved her perception, feelings, and discernment which are all functions of the heart. The word *pleasant* (taavah) means desire or wish and speaks of the longings of one's heart. And the word *desired* (rhamad) means to desire, covet, take pleasure in, and delight in.

From this we clearly understand that Eve's desire came from within. It came from her heart. Her sin was not in the fleshly eyeball. Sin came from her **heart**. It was not the actual fleshly brain matter that considered or discerned a course of disobedience. Disobedience formed in her **heart**. After hearing the temptation, her fleshly ear drum did not long to be wise. The longing came from her **heart**. Her fleshly hand did not move with self-willed or independent action apart from the direction of her **heart** and mind. The fleshly members of her body were certainly *instruments* of unrighteousness but the desire, longing, and wish was not planned or developed in her outward fleshly or bodily members; it was from within.

When Cain murdered his brother the hand of flesh or arm of flesh did not conspire to commit the murder. The murder was planned and carried out first in his **heart**. The hand and the arm were instruments used by the wickedness of his **heart**.

When King David walked out on his balcony and gazed at Bathsheba, it was the imaginations of his **heart** that led him into an adulterous affair and, subsequently, orchestrated the plan to murder Bathsheba's husband, Uriah.

Jesus Christ teaches us this important truth.

“There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, **That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.** For from within, **out of the heart of men**, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **All these evil things come from within, and defile the man**” (Mark 7:15–23).

There should be no doubt in any of our minds. “For from within, out of the heart of men...**all these evil things come from within**, and defile the man.”

In The Beginning

Eve saw “that the tree was **good for food**, and that it was **pleasant to the eyes**, and a tree **to be desired to make one wise**.”

But didn't God create all of these things and therefore to blame? Genesis 2:9 tells us, “And out of the ground made the Lord God to **grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight**, and **good for food**; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, **and the tree of knowledge of good and evil**.”

God did indeed create every tree to be pleasant to the sight, good for food, and also the tree of knowledge of good and evil, however, God also specifically commanded Adam, “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it**: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17). God *did not* create sin!

We conclude that God created Adam as a sinless human being who possessed a free will. With his mind and heart, Adam knew to do good but did not do it, thus he became a sinner and blemished the perfect creation of God. Adam and Eve's *nature* became different than its original or natural condition.

The Result of Sin

Sin will take you a lot farther than you wish to go, keep you there a lot longer than you wish to stay, and cost you a lot more than you are willing to pay! The consequences of Adam and Eve's sin changed the path of life for *all* humankind.

MANKIND'S INNOCENCE WAS GONE

“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3:7).

This verse does not imply that their physical eyes were completely “sealed off” prior to their sin. Of course they could see. But after their sin they “saw” things much differently. “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.”

The word *knew* (*yada*) means to know or learn to know. It means to perceive and see, to find out and discern, to discriminate, to distinguish, and to know by experience.

A toddler will crawl around on the floor or walk around the room without a stitch of clothing on and have absolutely no shame or awareness of their nakedness. But at a very young age the shame of being naked and the awareness of needing to be clothed become a reality. Their “eyes” are opened. There is a built in conscience that is revealed at an early age.

Why is this? “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Does a child possess shame because we “tell” them or train them that there should be shame and embarrassment when they are without clothing? Do they learn this particular behavior as a result of parental instruction and guidance? The shame of being naked in public places is a natural and instinctive part of their sinful condition. My wife and I did not need to teach any of our children that it was wrong to walk around naked. Of course, as parents, we made the choice to clothe our children so you may be thinking that the choice was made for them. But I can assure you that there was a natural awareness and humiliation in their heart that compelled them to keep their clothes on!

Remember, the original and natural condition of Adam and Eve was not created like this. They had no shame of being naked. Their shame of being naked came after sin. “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). It was only after the sin of disobedience that their original and natural condition changed. Sin changed the former “natural” condition.

The Result of Sin

MANKIND'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD CHANGED

“And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden” (Genesis 3:8).

Adam and Eve experienced guilt for the first time as a result of their disobedience to God. Their shame and guilt prompted them to hide or withdraw from God because they had awareness of wrongdoing (sin). It is interesting to note that the word *presence* (paniym) literally means face. They hid themselves from God's face and they would not face Him.

As a young boy I recall the struggle to look into the face of my mother when I had disobeyed a direct command. We have all experienced a parent manually turning our face to theirs in order to make eye contact as they said, “Look at me!” The guilt and shame of wrongdoing (sin) prompted us to look down or away—hiding our face.

Why is this? “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

I did not teach or train my children to feel shame when they disobeyed me or their mother. It is their instinctive and natural condition to experience guilt and shame when they did wrong. And it is their instinctive and natural condition to avoid facing us and looking directly into our eyes when confronted with that sin.

MANKIND “FEARS” GOD

“And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself” (Genesis 3:9–10).

Prior to sin, Adam enjoyed perfect harmony and fellowship with God. After sin, however, he felt the emotion of being afraid, something he had not known before. As a result of being afraid he hid himself. Why the sudden change? Adam's fear came as a result of sin.

I recall experiencing the feelings of fear and terror when I was a young boy. While visiting my cousins I broke my aunt's thermometer which she had specifically instructed me not to play with. I was so horrified for doing something wrong that I hid in the closet. I was consumed with guilt. I could not face her! When she discovered me in the dark closet she asked why I was hiding. With tears filling my eyes and a quivering voice I explained that I had broken her thermometer. To my surprise she forgave me and did not send me to a horrifying final execution! That's grace!

The Result of Sin

Of course, I could write pages retracing my life of sinful words, thoughts, or deeds but there is no need to convince you that I have and do sin. We have all felt guilt in our conscience as a result of wrongdoing (sin) and did not want to face an authority figure—or especially God.

Why is this? “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

We did not teach our children to have the emotion of fear when they willingly did wrong. It was a part of their original and natural condition following their sin.

MANKIND “BLAMES” OTHERS

“And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat” (Genesis 3:11–13).

Adam blamed God. “The woman **whom thou gavest** to be with me.” And Eve blamed the devil. “The serpent beguiled me.”

No longer did mankind possess perfect unity, peace, and harmony in his relationships. Suddenly there was division and strife between man and God and between husband and wife. The nature of Adam and Eve changed from its “original” design.

We have all blamed someone or something else for our sinful choices at one time or another.

Why is this? “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

I certainly did not teach my children the crafty art of blaming others for their own sin. Blaming something or someone else comes naturally, doesn’t it?

EVE’S ORIGINAL CONDITION CHANGED

“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Genesis 3:16).

The first change in Eve was that God greatly multiplied her sorrow in conception. “I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children.”

The Result of Sin

The word *sorrow* (etseb) means pain, hurt, toil, sorrow, labour, or hardship. As a man I am certainly not qualified to adequately describe the sorrow of giving birth to a newborn child but I have observed the pain, hurt, toil, labour and hardship of my wife giving birth to our children. I am glad that the sorrow does not remain after giving birth. I have observed the jubilant joy in Paula's countenance after giving birth to each of our four children.

The second change was in Eve's relationship with her husband. "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." This passage is better understood when we consider the meaning of some key words. The word *desire* (teshuwqah) literally means desire, longing, or craving. By itself this does not tell us very much but coupled with the phrase "and he shall rule over thee," we are able to understand more fully its true meaning.

What is meant by the statement, "he shall rule over thee"? The word *rule* (mashal) means to rule, have dominion, or reign. This verse literally means that after the fall Eve desired, longed for, and craved to rule, have dominion, and reign over her husband. Unfortunately, her desire would never be fulfilled as a direct result of her disobedience to God. God originally created them male and female with perfect harmony and oneness. The original and natural condition of Eve changed when she sinned.

We have seen this natural division even among our children. When my children played with other children from our church the boys always took a natural position of ruling, having dominion, and reigning over the girls—because they were boys. The girls, however, had something else in mind. They had a natural desire to rule over the boys. This fallen condition between man and woman is a clear and well established result of our sin. Today the world system is saturated with promoting and demanding equality between men and women. Men and women still fight!

Why is this? "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

In no way am I suggesting that a man should have the "sinful rule" over his wife, bossing her around a ruling the home as a carnal master. I'm simply stating what the Bible teaches. The good news is that in Christ Jesus we possess the new life that equips us to **love each other** the way God intended. The reality of our mortal existence still bears the fruit of Eve's sin.

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, **as unto the Lord**" (Ephesians 5:22).

"Husbands, love your wives, **even as Christ also loved the church**, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25).

The Result of Sin

ADAM'S ORIGINAL CONDITION CHANGED

“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:17–19).

The perfect garden that Adam had enjoyed tending prior to his sin was off limits. Adam's work was in *sorrow* [it's a bummer—*pain, labor, hardship, and toil*]. Outside the Garden of Eden the ground would be cursed and it would bring forth thorns and thistles. In addition, his work environment had changed; in the sweat of his face did he eat the bread of his labor. The life God intended for mortal man was over.

If you happen to get a thorn in your flesh remember this was not the original or natural condition for Adam. The next time you are working in the yard and sweat is pouring down your face, burning your eyes, leaving a salty taste in your mouth and dehydrating your body; remember that Adam's original and natural condition was not like this. The next time you are ill and not overly excited about having to get up out of your comfortable bed and go to work when you don't feel like it remember that Adam's original and natural condition was not like this. The next time, God forbid, you argue with your wife remember that Adam's original and natural condition was not like this. And the next time you cannot sleep at night because your child goes astray remember that Adam's original and natural condition was not like this.

Why is this? “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Sin's greatest curse is **DEATH!**

Death by Sin

Adam was created to live—not die. Keeping his original and natural condition, however, was contingent on his obedience to the clear command of his Creator.

“And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in **the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die**” (Genesis 2:16–17).

To *die* (muwth) literally means to die, kill, or have executed. It could mean to die as a penalty. Or it could refer to perish as a nation. It also means to be put to death prematurely.

IN THE DAY

It is clear to all of us that Adam and Eve experienced premature physical death as a result of their sin. The words, “the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” could be somewhat confusing though. Some suggest this means death occurred on the very day and the very moment they sinned and must refer to some type of “spiritual” death. Others suggest this verse simply means that “physical” death was put into motion and Adam began the process of dying on the very day he sinned. The scripture clearly teaches both viewpoints.

It is certainly clear that the penalty of his sin resulted in losing access to the “Tree of Life” which in turn culminated in the eventual physical death of his body.

“And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, **lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:** Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Genesis 3:22–24). “And all the **days** that Adam lived were **nine hundred and thirty years: and he died**” (Genesis 5:5).

In addition to his impending physical death there was also a change to Adam’s original and natural condition. His original nature, character, behavior, and living conditions all changed as a result of sin. His former natural condition ceased to exist—it died.

Consider the Biblical facts. After his disobedience he was ashamed of his nakedness, he was afraid to face God; he blamed God, his relationship with Eve changed for the worse, his work environment and work conditions changed. Sin destroyed, killed, executed, and brought death to Adam’s original relationship with God. Life would never be the same for Adam and to all of humankind as a result of his sin.

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DEATH PASSED UPON ALL MEN

The scripture clearly teaches that as a result of Adam's sin all who are born have incurred the natural condition of Adam's fallen sinful nature and subsequently have incurred the penalty of death. I have yet to hear of a human being who does not die physically. Death is in us. Although there are many nutritional products that promote health and promise a longer life, none perpetuate eternal physical life. You **will die** a physical death—with one exception.

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [*precede*] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: **Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air**: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17). Those who receive Christ will be caught up with Him in the air if the last trump sounds prior to his or her physical death.

Does humankind receive *only* physical death as a result of sin? The Bible speaks abundantly of physical death but it also refers to a “second” death.

CONDEMNATION: DEATH TO DEATH

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, **but after this the judgment**: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:27–28).

Through Adam, the sentence of death is passed upon all men. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

Are all unbelievers “presently” condemned as a result of sin?

This seems to be the question. Is the condemnation something that will occur in the future or is it already upon those who have rejected Jesus Christ?

“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not **is condemned already**, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:18–19).

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The word *condemned* [krino] means to separate, to put asunder, to pick out, select, or choose. Condemnation is not another word for dying a natural death, implying that all things will come to an end when we take our last breath of air. Rather, this word denotes eternal separation from God, a condemnation that will last for all eternity. Notice that the criterion for selecting or choosing whether a person is separated or put asunder is based on his belief or unbelief. “He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already [*now*], because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

The condemnation is *already* upon those who do not believe that Jesus Christ died for their sins, was buried, and rose again on the third day. (See 1 Corinthians 15:1–4.) The unbeliever is condemned already even though he has not physically died. The unbeliever lives in a very present reality of death.

SIN IMPUTED

The Bible also specifically identifies *who* will spend eternity separated from God in the lake of fire. First, we must recognize that *all* human beings will sin. That is why the book of Job asks, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one” (Job 14:4). And again, “What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous” (Job 15:14)? And, like David, we can all say, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). We do not need to teach our children how to do wrong—it comes to them naturally.

Evidence of humankind’s fallen condition is also highlighted in the following verses: “And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; **for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth**; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done” (Genesis 8:21). “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. **Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one**” (Psalm 53:2–3). “As it is written, There is **none righteous, no, not one**” (Romans 3:10). “For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Jesus was also born of a woman. However, there is an important and crucial difference between your conception and His. I know it’s difficult for our society to understand this but Mary was a virgin. Not a young maiden but a virgin. Man’s corrupted “seed” was not in her. Jesus was not “shapen in iniquity” nor “in sin did [His] mother conceive [Him]” (Psalm 51:5). Jesus blood line was perfect and pure because Christ was conceived by God the Holy Spirit. God was His Father. This is a crucial doctrinal truth.

This is the distinguishing mark of His humanity. He became man, yet He was all God and the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwelt in Him. (See Colossians 1:19; 2:9.) This is vital because the blood shed for the sins of the world *must be* pure in order to make atonement for sin and satisfy

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the just demands of God once for all. (See Luke 1:26–38.) Jesus’ birth was undefiled and His life here on earth was undefiled—from beginning to end.

“Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, **which can never take away sins**: But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice for sins for ever**, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by **one offering he hath perfected for ever** them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:9–14).

“How much more shall the **blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14) Jesus is the final atonement for all sin. If you have received Jesus Christ, His blood continually cleanses you from all sin. “...and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**” (1 John 1:7). The word *cleanseth* [katharizo] means to make clean and is in the “present tense” denoting continual action.

He also shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins. “In whom we have redemption **through his blood, the forgiveness of sins**, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7). *Forgiveness* (aphesis) means pardon of sins and letting them go as if they had never been committed. It’s difficult to believe, isn’t it? But we are gloriously and thoroughly washed in the blood of Jesus and our sins are dissolved forever by the blood of Christ.

We did not come into this world the “exact” way that Adam came into the world—did we? Remember, Adam was “created” with an original and natural condition that was perfect but with his free will he elected to disobey God and thus scarred his original nature. He became a sinner.

This brings us to a question: What was the difference between Adam and his first born son, Cain? Aspects of God’s original design were certainly in Cain. He too was born in the image of God. Cain was born as a rational, volitional agent. In other words, he could reason and choose. This is a reflection of God’s intellect and freedom. Cain’s conscience or “moral compass” was also a vestige of his original state. Finally, he too was born with a natural condition for fellowship. This reflects God’s triune nature and His love.

But there is one major and significant distinction between Adam and Cain that we must seriously consider. Do you know what it is? Cain’s earthly father and mother were sinners! “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one” (Job 14:4). And again, “What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous” (Job 15:14)? And, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). With this in mind we must ask: What is the nature or natural condition of *our* children?

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THE INNATE NATURE TO SIN

When I gazed into the bright eyes and upon the glowing countenance of my infant children I saw purity and perfection. Then suddenly, it occurred to me who their father was! “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one” (Job 14:4). I also know their mother. “What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous” (Job 15:14)?

As I gazed upon their delicate beauty and pure little faces it struck me that they were each born of a corruptible seed and were imperfect beings. And as a result of their innate nature they would sin—there was no stopping it. By strict definition they were certainly not what we would call “sinners” as infant children—a sinner being someone who commits sin. They cried when hungry, cold, hot, wet, or sleepy. Those natural human needs are certainly not sinful. I am not addressing their natural human tendencies but I am referring to the nature or natural condition they received from both of their parents.

The reality of who they were by natural birth began to clearly manifest itself at about two to three years of age. I witnessed with my own eyes and ears their innate nature to sin. The propensity to do wrong was in them. Although these traits were very subtle and very mild I observed anger, temper, greed, stubbornness, selfishness, and stinginess as distinguishable characteristics that flowed from their lives naturally.

It is difficult to say it but they were also liars! Paula and I can recall asking our child if they had a dirty diaper. As they looked us in the eye they would say with a sweet little voice, “No.” But the odor and evidence proved they were not only lying but deceiving as well. You may come to their defense by saying they did not understand or know about their actions—they are just little babies. The fact that they were totally unaware of their behavior and lacked understanding is not relevant at this point. The fact that their actions and words were not righteous, holy, perfect, and pure tells us about their “natural” condition. As parents, we certainly did not teach our children to behave in this manner. It came naturally—it was in them.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22). We know in context this verse teaches that all human beings have a present sentence of physical death as a result of Adam’s sin. But we also know that the moment we understand and perceive we have sinned and come short of the glory of God, we are accountable to Him. Condemnation then becomes a present reality for **all unbelievers**—not a future one. The phrase, “in Adam all die,” is in the present tense, not future.

Does God make provision for those who have sinned but do not understand?

What happens to an infant child who dies, or a mentally impaired person who dies? Do they enter into heaven or are they cast into the lake of fire? Sure they go to Heaven. The answer to this question is actually found in the Book of John.

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“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:18–19).

Jesus Christ’s teaching makes it clear. Not believing is what condemns a person to eternal death and separation from God. Those who lack understanding and the ability to exercise belief are not condemned. The word *believeth* [pisteuo] means to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, or to place confidence in. It is used in the New Testament of the conviction and trust to which a man is impelled by a certain inner and higher prerogative and law of soul.

Does God make provision for those who have sinned but do not understand? “And he is the propitiation for our sins: **and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world**” (1 John 2:2). Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. This does not mean all people are automatically saved. We have already seen that those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are condemned already and the wrath of God is upon them. However, for those who do not possess understanding and the ability to exercise belief in Christ, propitiation for their sins has also been made. “And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” God does not tell us we are saved by believing in Christ and then condemn those who cannot believe because they lack understanding as an infant or because they are mentally impaired.

What is the “age of accountability”?

As transgressors we are prompted to place trust in Jesus Christ as a result of the Holy Spirit convicting us through God’s word and teaching that we’ve all sinned and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:10, 23.) The word of truth teaches us that we have all sinned and do not, and cannot, measure up to the just, righteous, and holy standard of God, regardless of how hard we try. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in **one point**, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24).

When a child reaches an age of understanding and perception and comprehends that they have violated the divine standard of God’s written word we must explain to them that their sin has separated them from God and that Jesus Christ has made a way of escape. Teach them the gospel message. “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that **Christ died for our sins** according to the scriptures; And that **he was buried**, and that **he rose again the third day** according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). Invite them to, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31).

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“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but **the wrath of God abideth on him**” (John 3:36).

The wrath of God abides on the unbeliever. The word *abideth* is in the “present tense” which again represents a simple statement of fact or reality viewed as occurring in actual time.

In Adam all die [*present tense denoting a current condition*] because all have sinned. The unbeliever is dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1), right now! All who have sinned must believe in and receive Jesus Christ in order to pass from death unto life. All who do not believe in Jesus Christ are *condemned already* and the wrath of God currently abides on them.

Life in Christ

Sin and death were abolished by the Lord Jesus Christ. There is absolutely no appeasement or self-sacrifice that will ever satisfy the just and righteous demands of God toward sin apart from receiving Jesus Christ. We can never behave “good” enough to merit the divine favor of God. This is true prior to receiving Jesus Christ and it is equally true in our daily life as a Christian. Praise God though that my righteousness is in Christ and He never changes. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). Life is in Christ.

SIN REMAINS UNDER THE “OLD” COVENANT

The old covenant for the nation of Israel did not permanently deal with sin. It is said that when Israel came together for the “Day of Atonement,” the priests would sacrifice as many as 300,000 lambs in one week! Each year the people of Israel would make the trip to Jerusalem so that their sins could be covered for another year. In obedience to God, millions of sacrifices were made, hundreds of gallons of blood were shed, and thousands upon thousands of prayers were made on behalf of the people. But the people were obligated to make the same annual trip for the same annual sacrifices. The assembly line of offerings never took away sin nor provided permanent appeasement for transgressions.

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should **take away sins**” (Hebrews 10:4). In this verse the words *take away* [aphaireo] mean to take from, take away, remove, carry off, or to cut off.

“And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which **can never take away sins**” (Hebrews 10:11). In this verse the words *take away* [periaireo] mean to take away that which surrounds or envelopes a thing. Metaphorically it means to take away altogether or entirely. It addresses the guilt of sin and expiates (*to put an end to and to extinguish the guilt incurred by sin*) perfectly.

The God-ordained sacrifices under the Old Covenant were never meant to take away sin once for all; they foreshadowed something better—a new covenant through the perfect Lamb of God.

SIN IS TAKEN AWAY UNDER THE “NEW” COVENANT

“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which **taketh away** the sin of the world” (John 1:29). In this verse the words *taketh away* [airo] mean to remove or to carry off. It also means to take upon ones self and carry what has been raised up, to bear.

Life in Christ

We have a much better and superior covenant of grace. Jesus Christ has taken away the sin of the world. He was nailed to a cross and lifted up; placed upon Him were the sins of the world! He died for our sins. When He was buried, He rose again the third day.

“For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall **take away their sins**” (Romans 11:27). Here the words *take away* [aphaireo] mean to take from, take away, remove, carry off, or to cut off.

“And ye know that he was manifested to **take away our sins**; and in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). And here again the words *take away* [airo] mean to remove, and to carry off. It means to take upon ones self and carry what has been raised up, to bear.

Praise God—our sins are forgiven! As Corrie Ten Boone once said, “My sins are in the sea of His forgetfulness and God has posted a “NO FISHING” sign for all to see and observe.” Sin is atoned for. We are free from its eternal bondage.

These verses teach us that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sin. He completely satisfied the just and holy demands of God toward sin. By shedding His own precious blood He has cleansed us from all sin! “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; **But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot**” (1 Peter 1:18–19).

THE “NEW POSITION” OF THE BELIEVER

Are you washed in the blood?

If you have trusted Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of sin, you are as clean and as sanctified as you’ll ever be. No additional sacrifice can be made. “By the which will **we are sanctified** through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**” (Hebrews 10:10).

Sanctified [hagiazo] means to separate from profane things and to dedicate to God. To consecrate things to God. To be purified internally by the renewing of the soul.

Sanctified is in the perfect tense. The perfect tense in Greek corresponds to the perfect tense in English, describing an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated.

Jesus’ last cry from the cross, “It is finished!” is a good example of the perfect tense used in this sense, namely “It [the atonement] has been accomplished, completely, once and for all time.”

The words, “we are sanctified” are present tense denoting continual action. Our sanctification, separation, consecration, dedication, and renewal never stop. In Christ we are always and continually being sanctified.

Life in Christ

Furthermore, the word *once* [ephapax] literally means all at once. Jesus Christ sanctified every believer all at once with one offering. And He keeps sanctifying every believer.

“For by **one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified**” (Hebrews 10:14).

Perfected [teleioo] literally means to make perfect and complete. There is nothing left for us to do. We are complete in Christ, beloved. “And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power” (Colossians 2:10).

How long are we perfected?

Forever! We are as holy, unblameable, and unproveable as we’ll ever be. “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight” (Colossians 1:21–22). Nothing will stain the born again believer because the blood of Jesus keeps cleansing.

“**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

As we examine this remarkable truth we understand there is absolutely no condemnation to those who are **in** Christ Jesus.

In this verse *condemnation* (katakrima) literally means there is no damnatory sentence. As previously mentioned we must understand that apart from Christ a person is already condemned to eternal damnation.

It is specifically the sin of unbelief and the rejection of Jesus Christ that condemns a person. But the penalty of sin and all its condemnation is vanquished by the redemptive work of Christ. “**He that believeth on him is not condemned**: but he that believeth not is condemned already, **because he hath not believed** in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18). He has made a way of escape once—for all who believe.

Praise God! Christ has made us free from sin. Our newly acquired freedom is not based on what we do or how we behave, but rather, who we are *in Christ*. Jesus Christ has taken care of *all* condemnation through His perfect and sinless sacrifice.

Victory in Christ

We can rest fully in the final sacrifice of Christ. His atonement has abolished the penalty of sin forever in the life of the believer. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. **But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**” (1 Corinthians 15:55–57).

If victory is ours in Christ then why do we still commit sins?

If God has given us a new heart and mind and equipped us with the power to live the Christian life, why do we still sin? That’s a legitimate and disturbing concern for each of us who desire to follow Christ. It’s simply because our corruptible and mortal flesh continues to fight against the Spirit. There is a very real and present experience of spiritual warfare in our lives. I do not need to convince you of this stark reality—if you are honest, you know that you live with it each day.

There is certainly nothing we can do in the flesh that will ever please God. “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Romans 7:18). So what hope is there for mortal man?

The *flesh* (*sarx*) could refer to the flesh covering our sinew and bones but here it denotes mere human nature. Paul is not suggesting the ear that hears the preaching of God’s word, or the mouth that utters His word of truth, or the eyes that read His inerrant word are all bad and no good thing dwells in them. The flesh is the earthly nature of man that is opposed to the divine influences of God and therefore prone to sin. The flesh nature is opposed to God in every way. The only real *good* in man is his new spiritual nature, the new man, which is firmly rooted in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Understand: our new life in Christ is *positionally perfect*. As a believer you cannot be washed in the blood more than you already are. The blood of Jesus Christ is continually cleansing you and presenting you acceptable to God. You are justified based solely on the completed work of Jesus Christ. Jesus came “in the body of his flesh through death, to present you **holy and unblameable and unproveable** in his sight” (Colossians 1:22).

If you are like me you’re probably more interested in the “operational” or “experiential” aspect of living the daily Christian life. If I am presented “holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight,” why do I still commit sins? Why don’t I live a holy, unblameable, and unproveable lifestyle? We must understand that we have not yet received our ultimate and final condition of sanctification—the final and literal transformation into a glorified condition when the presence of sin will be gone forever.

Victory in Christ

“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:52–53). This is why we are admonished in scripture to actively lay aside, mortify, put off, abstain, yield, flee, walk, trust, believe, reckon, awake out of sleep, cast off the works of darkness, put on the armor of light, and be holy in our present mortal state. As believers we appropriate these spiritual realities through the instrument of faith. We cease from our own labor when we enter into the Lord’s *rest* by faith in the completed and finished work of Jesus Christ.

THE OLD MAN

We must also understand that there is a battle or conflict because the “*former conversation the old man*” is still present in our mortal life. That is why we are specifically reminded by the Apostle Paul that in Christ we have been taught, “that ye put off concerning the former conversation [*manner of life, conduct, behavior*] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Ephesians 4:22). This chapter goes on to say: be renewed, put on, put away, sin not, let not, let no, grieve not, and let all. Let me stress that all we do in the Christian life is a result of God working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Let me also make clear that the old man [*the man without Christ*] is indeed crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6) and that you can know this fact as a present “spiritual” reality by faith. It is done. What I mean by “spiritual reality” is that you have not been literally or physically nailed to a cross and your flesh has not literally died and been buried in the grave. It’s a spiritual reality.

This does not mean, however, that the former conversation [*manner of life, conduct, or behavior*] is abolished from your daily experiences of life. The “former conversation” of the old man must be put off [*to put off or aside or away*] on a daily basis. “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Ephesians 4:22).

Again, we are admonished to be renewed, put on, put away, sin not, let not, let no, grieve not, and let all. We obey these admonitions by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—for the just shall live by faith.

LIVING VICTORIOUSLY

How do I achieve success in the daily Christian life?

Success in the daily Christian life does not occur by trying in the strength of the flesh or by appropriating certain disciplines of the mind but by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our trust is in Christ not in the weak and beggarly aspects of sinful flesh or human intellect. Practical or experiential victory [*putting off the former conversation*] occurs when we apply the revealed doctrine of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection by faith.

Victory in Christ

I do not mean to be repetitive but we must understand this. As Christians we have a new standing with God and are completely justified (deemed or declared righteous) on the basis of Christ's completed work. The penalty of sin, which is death, including eternal separation from God has been completely destroyed by Jesus Christ. We are completely forgiven and reconciled with God based on the sacrifice of Christ alone. We are in right standing with our Holy God based only on the solid rock of faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. We did not begin the Christian life based on the merits of our good behavior and we certainly do not maintain the Christian life based on the merits of good behavior. These are the glorious facts of our position in Christ.

In Christ Jesus we are dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God. "Likewise reckon [*an accounting term meaning to count or conclude*] ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:11). To reckon yourself dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God is realized only by divine revelation and then applied by faith. This is not learned behavior; it's revealed fact. True practical victory not only occurs when we reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin but when we reckon ourselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. He did not leave us in the grave but resurrected us to live in the newness of life.

I like what the late Watchman Nee once said about reckoning. He commented that you must *know* before you can *reckon* yourself dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Christ Jesus. In other words, counting or concluding yourself dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Christ Jesus is the result of first knowing you are dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Christ Jesus by faith in His written word of truth. We can say we are dead unto sin every day of our life but we'll fail miserably until we actually *know* we are dead unto sin by faith. We can say we are alive unto God through Christ every day of our life but we'll fail miserably until we actually *know* we are alive unto God through Christ by faith.

Knowing comes from divine truth which is revealed to us through the word of God by the Holy Spirit and then received by faith. I am not speaking of intellectually knowing the facts; rather, I am referring to our inner spiritual perception, discernment, and understanding. In other words, faith is not based on our intellectual understanding. Faith is a confident leap into the light of God's unwavering truth—even when you may not completely understand it.

By faith we can accept the fact that in Christ we are dead indeed unto sin but what happens if we sin? We can believe with our whole heart that we are crucified with Christ. We can reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ but what happens if we say, or do, or think something sinful? Does this mean we are not really saved after all? "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. **And if any man sin, we have an advocate** with the Father, **Jesus Christ the righteous**" (1 John 2:1).

We can do our very best but our very best is never righteous. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags..." (Isaiah 64:6). Thankfully our righteousness is not conditional to our good or sinless behavior; it is conditional to the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Victory in Christ

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

May we each cease from the fruitless effort of striving and laboring to live the genuine Christian life. Instead, let us rest in the complete and absolute sufficiency of Christ by faith. Let us each commit to abiding in Christ and yielding the fruit He desires to produce in our lives. This is the joy of living the Christ directed life!

Harriet Beecher Stowe conveys this truth accurately and eloquently.

How does the branch bear fruit? Not by incessant effort for sunshine and air; not by vain struggles for those vivifying influences which give beauty to the blossom, and verdure to the leaf: it simply abides in the vine, in silent undisturbed union, and blossoms and fruit will appear as of spontaneous growth.

How, then, shall a Christian bear fruit? By efforts and struggles to obtain that which is freely given; by meditations and watchfulness, on prayer, on action, on temptations, and on dangers? No. There must be full concentration of the thoughts and affections on Christ; a complete surrender of the whole being to Him; a constant looking to Him for grace.

Christians in whom these dispositions are once firmly fixed go on calmly as the infant borne in the arms of its mother. In spiritual as in temporal matters they take no thought for the morrow; for they know that Christ will be as accessible tomorrow as today. Their hope and trust rest solely on what He is willing and able to do for them; on nothing that they suppose themselves able and willing to do for Him. Such is the “exchanged life,” the abiding, fruitful life, the life that is Christ, which should be in possession of every believer.

Abide in Christ, beloved!