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"Sins" and "Self"

The Sins Question

The first question which arises in the conscience of one in whom God the Holy Spirit begins to work is usually the question of "sins," The entrance of God's Word has given light, and the life is known to have been blotted by innumerable sins. Smudges and smears are seen across the pages of life's history. The memory being awakened recalls many thoughts and desires, many words and deeds, of past years, and previously slumbering conscience now condemns very much that which had before seemed right enough.

It is good that this question has been raised during one's lifetime. Sooner or later it must be raised in every sinner, and raised in "time" it may be settled and the sinner be blessed, but raised in "eternity" it will only be settled by the sinner being banished from God's holy presence for ever.

How, then may this question be settled now? What can meet the righteous claims of God and the just demands of my own conscience?

There is but one answer to these important questions, and that answer is —

The Finished Work of Christ

The death of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only ground on which God can rightly clear a sinner, and the only ground on which a sinner can rightly stand before God.

It is certain that if another way of salvation could be found, God would have found it. But when no other means of blessing man was possible, God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." (Rom. 8:32) Or, as another Scripture says, He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." (John 3:16)

Surely in the light of that gift and in the light of the sufferings of the Son of God—when, as we who believe can say, he was "delivered for our offences." (Rom. 4:25) He "bare our sins in His own body on the tree." (1 Pet. 2:24) He "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." (1 Pet. 3:18)—surely in that light we can never think our sins except with abhorrence. God hates sin, and teaches us to hate it too by the very work which puts our sins away.

Thus at the cross of Christ the love of God to us was shown in that He dealt in unsparing judgment with His Holy Son, when He had given Himself up to bear the judgment due to us.

So our Lord Jesus Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. 4:1)

Now that one offering, offered once for all, settles the question of our sins for God's throne. And God has said, "Their sins and inequities will I

Remember No More

(Heb. 10:17)

He has raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and seated Him at His own right hand upon the throne.

Christ was on the cross to do the work of redemption. Christ is on the throne because the work of redemption is done.

Look back to Him on the cross, see Him there suffering and dying for sins in atonement [making propitiation], and hear His cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46)

Then look up and see Him risen from the dead and glorified, for, "if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; and ye are yet in your sins." (! Cor. 15:17) But Christ is risen—blessed proof that our faith is not vain, and that we are not in our sins. More than this, "when He had by Himself purged our sins," He "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb. 1:3) His resurrection and His glory both witnesses to believers that their sins are gone forever, having been blotted out by the death of the Son of God. Believing in Him and resting on His finished work, they have "no more conscience of sins." (Heb. 10:2) The work which perfectly met the claims of God's throne perfectly meets the claims of our consciences. So that we need have no more any fear that God will deal with us in judgment on account of our sins, seeing he has already dealt in judgment with His own Son when, in our stead and on account of our sins, He suffered upon Calvary's cross.

The "Self" Question

When the "sins" question has been settled and the conscience is purged by the blood of Christ (Heb. 9:14), the believer has rest, and perhaps in the joy of being cleared from all charge thinks that he will never be troubled again.

Possibly he says to himself, "It will be all plain sailing now right home to the heavenly harbour. I know my sins are forgiven. I know that my Saviour lives for me and soon will come to call me away to be with Himself for ever, and I mean to serve Him faithfully until His return."

But little by little the bitter truth forces home upon him that he is not what he ought to be, or what he would like to be either. He begins to learn what he is. Before this he was occupied with what he had done, but when that was settled he thought all was settled; and it is painful indeed to discover how much evil is within him and that though he loves the Lord Jesus as his Savior he does not serve him fully.

It may be that when failure after failure, breakdown after breakdown has taken place, the queries force themselves upon, "am I

Only a Hypocrite

after all? "How can I be a Christian and have these awful thoughts and feelings? AM I a child of God, or is it all a huge delusion? I am worse than ever I was." The soul-agony is deeper and more acute than that about the questions of his SINS had been, and in secret he groans over the evil of self, which, to his surprise, has at last become so clear. Of course he is not worse than he was; he has got more into the light now, and so he sees it better, and God is allowing him to learn what his natural condition really is in order that he may distrust himself altogether.

A friend of mine illustrates the matter like this. Let us suppose a room is shut up for twenty years. The

windows have been boarded over and the door locked and no one enters during all that time. At length the owner comes and, turning the key in the creaking lock, opens the door. The place smells fusty and musty, and it is all dark. He cannot see its condition at all. But he strikes a match, and by its feeble light he sees some dust and cobwebs. He then lights a candle and he sees more creeping insects and more dust and cobwebs.

The place is not worse because the light is greater, but he sees its condition more clearly. Then he says, "I must take down this boarding and let the light of the noonday sunshine in and see what the state of the room really is." Yes, the more light the more truth is known.

So it is with "self." The more we are in the light of God the more its hideous character is found out. God knows all about us. He is not making discoveries of what we are. He knows us through and through. But He would have us know too, and know by bitter experience as well because He has said so, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" What a comfort it is to hear Him say, "I the Lord search the heart" (Jer. 17:9,10) He has searched and known us completely, and provided for us all that He has found as well. We may make discoveries of what we are, but He knew us before He sent His Son to die not only for our sins, but on account of what we are in ourselves.

In the cross of Christ the "self" question was settled for God. As we read: "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 Cor. 5:21) In the death of Christ all that I was as a sinner was brought to its end in judgment before God; that is, in the eye of God

justice, in the sight of God, I have died, as it is written: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him." (Rom. 6:6) and as the apostle Paul says of himself, as in faith he sees as God sees.

"I am crucified with Christ."

(Gal. 2:20)

And God would have what is true before Him true to every believer's faith as well.

The believer on the Lord Jesus Christ is seen now by God in all the acceptance of Christ risen from the dead. He is not regarded by God as in his former natural condition "in Adam," but as "in Christ," where there is "no condemnation." (Rom. 8:1)

God transfers the believer from the ruined Adam to the risen Christ. He has judged the flesh in the cross of Christ, and would have us judge it too. He would not have us try to improve it or mend ourselves. He would have us put our signature to what He has done in condemning sin in the flesh when Christ died on the cross. He no longer sees us in the flesh, but the flesh is in us, and it is left to us, as was said long ago, in order that we might learn to say Amen to what God has done with it at the cross.

Do not be disappointed, then, at what you find, in yourself, young believer; you will learn increasingly how far Adam's race, of which you are a part, has fallen, but God knows all. He loved us and He gave His Son to die not only on account of what we have done, but on account of what we are as well. And loving us, he has also given the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, so that the love

of God may be enjoyed by us, and so that we may live unto Him.

It is said of the Lord Jesus, "In that He dies, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." (Rom. 6:10) He has dealt with sin—our sin—He bore the judgment of God against that sin—when on the cross, and now lives unto God free of it forever; and believers are called in view of this "likewise" to reckon themselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 6:11) They are to count that they too, have done with sin, and henceforth are to live unto God for His pleasure and for His glory. So that though we are conscious that sin is within us yet in the power of the Holy Spirit we can say with the apostle Paul, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Gal. 2:20), and occupied with Christ in glory, He will control the life, and we will be preserved from fulfilling the "lusts of the flesh" and enabled to be well-pleasing to God.

"Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 24.)

Majestic Words

(Adapted from an article that appeared in "Scripture Truth", Jan.-Feb.,1960)

Some of the most majestic words which ever fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus are found in Revelation, Chapter One. It was in the will of God that John was found in the solitude and quietness of Patmos, and "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." (1:9,10) Circumstances had been controlled of God, that he might receive the communication for the welfare of His people, until the return of the Lord Jesus in His glory. All being ordered thus, the servant being prepared for the service, and the service being prepared for the servant, the Lord makes His presence known to the Apostle, who hears behind him a great voice, as of a trumpet, calling him to attention. The Lord of glory then speaks.

1. "I am the first and the last." (1:11) It has been pointed out that the "I" is emphatic. HE HIMSELF is before us. He is the FIRST, He is before all. HE is THE LAST. He sums up everything. The beginning and the ending of all are in the power of His Almighty hand.

2. "I am He that liveth." (1:18) He is the LIVING ONE, who ever was, and is, and will be. HE is "The Same." The Same "yesterday," in the past of eternity and of time; and "today" in the present in the midst of all that changes here; and "forever" in the future, whatever that may be (Heb. 13:8). HE LIVES eternally "the Same." Faith has ever delighted in His changelessness. Down the ages "The living God" has

been the refuge and rejoicing of His saints in their every difficulty and danger.

3. "And was dead," (1:18) He became that which

He had not been. Of His own will, He went into death. No man could take His life from Him. He laid it down of Himself and took it again. (John 10:17,18) For His Father's glory He became flesh, taking upon Himself holy, spotless humanity in the body prepared for Him. For His Father's glory He gave His immaculate life in sacrifice at the cross of Calvary.

4. "And, behold, I am alive for evermore."

(1:18) THE FATHER'S GLORY was before all else at the silent sepulchre in Joseph's garden. The Son was raised from the dead by the Gory of that Father. It could not be that the Holy One could see corruption. Christ lives in triumph over every foe. The Spirit of God delights to call our attention to Him as alive from out of death. So we read, "It is Christ that died, yea, RATHER that is risen again." (Rom. 8:34) Note well that adverb of divine preference. The Victim of the cross is now the Victor of the throne.

5. "Amen, and I have the keys of Hades and of

Death." (1:18) The "Amen" of solemn affirmation and confirmation is to be observed. His solemn words are to be pondered over and kept in mind. As we have seen, He lives for evermore, and as such He has "the keys of death and of hades." "Neither death nor life" separates the believer from His love. (Rom. 8:38) All power is His, in heaven and in earth, whether over the grave, or in the region of departed spirits. He opens or shuts at His will,

and soon He will exercise His authority in resurrection for all His own.

In view of that which he had seen of the personal, the official and the moral glories of the Son of Man, the Apostle was to write the book of "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." And so it should be with all His servants. With reverence and godly fear they should present the things which they have spiritually discerned, concerning the Son of Man and Son of God. He is the Center of the Gospel story, the Center of the thoughts and purposes of God.

Soon He will come forth "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev. 17:14), subjecting all to Himself.

Meanwhile we are called to His "kingdom and patience" (Rev. 1:9) and await His kingdom and glory at His return to claim His inheritance. May we be loyal and true to Him in the interim, with life and lip, witnessing of His majesty and mercy, and proclaiming His salvation far and wide.