

WE NEED TO SEE MORE SIN IN THE CHURCH

The title of this article sounds strange but hear me out. In the church today we have a strange situation. We have incorporated a language and mind set foreign to historic Christianity. We have fallen victim to a pseudo-Christianity that substitutes psychology for the Gospel, feel-good-ism for salvation, and sickness and psychosis for sin. We are told that we must get in touch with our inner self, our co-dependencies, our childhood, our little quirks, etc. There is one word that we never say about our "shortcomings" and that word is **SIN**. That is a shame, because we have a remedy for sin. (1 John 1:8-10) ***If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleans us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*** When we call sin by some other name to make it sound less harsh, we deny that sin and refuse to own it as sin and the Word of God says that if we do that, His word is not in us. We end up calling Him a liar. Since we do not recognize sin as sin, we give up our remedy and go chasing other pseudo-remedies such as psychology, regression therapy, etc. But there is no help in such plans for the Christian.

What is sin? One definition is, "disobedience to God or His word". In James 4:17 we read, ***"Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin."*** In his book; "Finney on revival", Charles Finney describes the need for us to examine our hearts for twenty six sins that we need to repent of in order to have a close walk with God. I will list these sins and I want you to think if you would consider these to be sins. 1) "Ingratitude", 2) "Want of love to God", 3) "Neglect of the Bible", 4) "Unbelief", 5) "Neglect of prayer", 6) "Neglect of the means of grace", (Hear he means attendance at church), 7) "The manner in which you have performed your spiritual duties", 8) "Want of love for your fellow men", 9) "Want of care for the heathen", 10) "Neglect of family duties", 11) "Neglect of social duties", 12) "Neglect of watchfulness

over your own life", 13) Neglect to watch over your brethren", 14) Neglect of self-denial, 15) Worldly mindedness, 16) Pride, 17) Envy, 18) Censoriousness, (Instances in which you have had a bitter spirit, and spoken of Christians in a manner devoid of charity and love.) 19) Slander, (This need not be a lie, the intent to injure is all that is needed.) 20) Levity, (A low respect for the presence of God.) 21) Lying, (Any intent to mislead.) 22) Cheating, (Dealing with others in a way that you would not want to be dealt with.) 23) Hypocrisy, (Asking for forgiveness with every intent to repeat that sin again.) 24) Robbing God, (This includes both time and money) 25) Bad temper, 26) Hindering others from being useful, (This can be done by wasting their time or weakening their influence through your talk about them.)

Today, we tend to treat sin lightly. **God does not!!** Every sin starts with a wrong attitude. That is why we should be as concerned about our attitudes as God is. In the fifth chapter of Acts we have the account of Ananias and Sapphira. The problem was not that they kept some of the money from the sale of their property; It was that they lied about it. Why would they lie about it? It could have been because of pride. They may have wanted to be thought well of and so they exaggerated what they had done. It cost them their lives!! This should tell us how seriously God takes such things. We need to see sin as God sees it. We need to recoil in horror at the prospect of our sins and at the awful price that was exacted on our Savior to atone for them. There is little danger that we will take sin too seriously. The danger is that we will not consider sin to be a problem at all. There is not a divorce that was not caused by sin. There is not a broken relationship that was not caused by sin. There is not a hurt feeling that sin is not at its root. Lets consider some cases.

Suppose that there is some one in your church that has a wagging tongue. Some may make fun of it but how many see it as the vicious thing that it is. A person with a wagging tongue is on a mission for Satan. But that person has many accomplices in the church. They are the ones who listen to the gossip without rebuking that person. The sin of these people is no less damning. The gossip is not the only sin involved here. The question has to be asked; "Why does this person gossip"? It could be out of envy; another sin. It could be out of hatred, another sin. It could be for jealousy, another sin. It could be to

spread discord, another sin. It could be for vengeance, still another sin. But it doesn't stop there. Why was the person , envious or hate filled, or jealous, or vengeful? Is there not another sin that lies at the root of each of these as well? When we come to deal with sin we need to dig deep so as to get at the root. If we repent of the gossip and do not deal with the jealousy or envy, we are only treating the symptoms. We are not talking about character traits, or weaknesses, or sicknesses, or mistakes. WE are talking about **sin**. Because we are talking about sin, we know how to access the remedy for it. ***" My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world."*** (I John 2: 1-2) ***" If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleans us from all unrighteousness."*** (I John 1:9)

David knew the secret to living in victory. He was called a man after God's own heart. Does that mean that he did more things right than you do? No! He simply knew how to live in God's forgiveness. (Psalms 32:5) ***" I acknowledged my sin to Thee, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ' I will confess my transgressions to the Lord' ; And Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. "*** We don't live without sinning but we can live without sin. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins and we can live in victory over our sins if we live a life where we are conscious of our sins and confess and forsake our sins. The problem comes when we deny our sins by calling them a disease, a short coming, an indiscretion, a problem, a character trait, or something like that. Sin is sin no matter what you choose to call it. Another way we try to escape our accountability for our sins is by convincing ourselves that someone else is to blame for our actions. We want to blame our parents for the way that we were raised. That will never work. Your parents are responsible for their sins, but you are responsible for yours.

Sin also arises because we fail to discern our proper relationship to the body of Christ. Both in the twelfth chapter of Romans and the twelfth chapter of I Corinthians we see that Paul compares the church to a body and the fact that each member is important to the other. Romans 12, "4 ***For just as we have many members in one***

body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 and since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophesy, according to the proportion of his faith; 7 if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; 8 or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy; with cheerfulness. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation." It is clear that God puts people in the Church in general, and the local church in particular, with different gifts in order for the church to function as He wants it to. It is the responsibility of each one to determine what God would have him do in the local church in which God has placed him and then do it. It is not his right to leave that church unless there is a good reason. At this writing, I have been a Christian for about 41 years. In that time I have left 3 churches. Two churches were left because I moved and it was no longer practical to stay in that church. The other time there was false doctrine that crept into the church and I tried to correct it by going to the head of the group of churches and told the leadership about it. They chose not to deal with the problem and so we left the church. When people leave churches on a whim or because they get their feelings hurt, they sin. God places people where He wants them and they are to stay there until God says to go. Who will do the work that God sent you to that church to do? I will tell you that we will give an answer for these things. There is also a more immediate consequence of such church tramping. I have observed people who have gone from church to church over the years and have seen the harvest that they have reaped. More often than not, their children do not live for the Lord when they grow up. Sin by any name pays wages. Romans 6:23, ***"For the wages of sin is death..."*** That death can be either physical or spiritual or both.

It is Satan's purpose to disrupt the local church so that it will become ineffective. One tool that he uses very effectively is discord

among the members. It is therefore the duty of each one to be sure that Satan can not use him to get a foothold in this area. We must never engage in gossip, either in the spreading of it or in the hearing of it. We must never allow unforgiveness to reside in our hearts toward anyone. These things are sins and must be repented of at once! The Bible is plain about what God expects of us in regard to forgiveness. God forgives us because it is His nature to do so. When we become His children, and His spirit dwells in us, it should become our nature as well. (I John 2:9-11) ***"The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in darkness and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes."*** God made a way for us to receive forgiveness through the blood of His own Son. No greater price has ever been paid for anyone in all of history. We can not be unforgiving and claim to be His child. There are too many scriptures tying our forgiveness by God to our forgiveness of others to be ignored. Consider the two verses that follow the Lords prayer. We read in Matthew 6:14+15, ***"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."*** Some people call this the law of reciprocity. It is at the heart of the Golden rule. We see it in Matthew 7:2, ***"For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."*** And in (James 5:9 we read: ***"Do not complain, brethren, against one another, that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door."*** Notice how Jesus answered Peter's question about this subject. ***"Then Peter came and said to Him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. for this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along***

*with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.' And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what he owed. So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. Should you not also have mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?' And the lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. So shall my heavenly father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from his heart." (Matthew 18:21-35) Jesus also links forgiveness with prayer in Mark (11:25+26;) ***"And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."*** You may ask, "What does this mean for our salvation?" It says in (I John 3:15) ***"Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."*** This is by no means an exhaustive listing of the scriptures about the need for Christians to forgive others. We should begin to see however that it is very serious for us to have an unforgiving heart and still maintain that we are Christians. (I John 2:4-6) ***"The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in him:"****

There is the notion in the American church, that we can choose

to take these things seriously or we can ignore them. Our relationship with Christ is a covenant relationship. As such, there are conditions that are binding on both parties to the covenant. Some conditions are binding on Christ and others are binding on us. We ignore these conditions at our own peril.

There are those who say that you can never lose your salvation, once you are saved. We are saved by grace and we are kept by grace. There is an element of truth in that but we must qualify some things. While it is true that we can not save ourselves by our own works, it is also true that we are not saved by grace apart from an action on our part. Everyone lives in a sea of God's grace but all do not partake of it. Without action on our part, we can never be saved in spite of all of the grace of God. We must repent of our sins and ask Jesus to forgive us. So you see, we are saved by grace and our actions in combination. Listen to what James has to say in James 2 ***"14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself. 18 But someone may well say, " You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19 You believe that god is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? 24 You see that a man is justified by works, and not faith alone. 26 For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead."***

At salvation, Jesus not only becomes our savior, but our Lord as well. As our Lord He makes certain demands of us. **He has that right.** I Corinthians 6:19+20; ***" Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."*** Just as we access God's grace for salvation by our acknowledgment of our sin and repent, so in the same way we access His grace for our keeping through our acknowledgment of our sins and repentance in

obedience to Him. There can be no rebellion in Heaven and therefore there can be no rebels there either. When we refuse to forgive others, we are living in open rebellion against God. If you are unable to forgive, God will give you the grace to do it if you are willing, and ask Him to make it real in your heart. "But", you may say, "you don't know what that person did to me." That may be true; but is your grief over his actions greater than your grief over your disobedience to your savior? If so, then you have another sin problem, Self-centeredness.

Not only is unforgiveness a sin but the unforgiveness itself is caused by sin in our own hearts. If you have something against someone that you are unable to forgive, then you need to examine your own heart for the sin that is causing that unforgiveness. You may think that it is the other person that has the problem because they did something awful to you. That may be true, but that is their problem. Your unforgiveness is caused by your own sin. Let us say that the other person said something about you that wasn't true and caused you great pain. If you can't forgive him, maybe it is because of the sin of pride in your own heart. Remove the pride and you remove the barrier to your unforgiveness. Whenever there is unforgiveness there is an underlying sin that is causing it. Find the sin, confess it, repent of it and you will be able to forgive the other person. The trouble is that we are so busy concentrating on the other persons sin against us that we can't see our own sin. (Luke 6:41+42) ***"And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' When you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."*** When you are offended, it should be a red flag to you. Have you allowed bitterness, hatred, pride, revenge, or some other sin to gain a foothold in your heart? You are not responsible for the sins of others but you are responsible for your own sins. To concentrate on other peoples sins is futile. You can not do anything about them. You have everything to do with the way you allow their sins to affect you however. That is the thing that you need to concentrate on. It is true that you do have responsibility to reprove someone who sins against you. Jesus said, in Luke 17:3+4, ***"Be on***

your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent, 'forgive him.' Again, in Matthew 18:15-17 Jesus says, ***"And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.***

and if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a gentile and a tax gatherer." This is the correct way to deal with a fellow Christian when that person sins, but regardless of the way he responds to your actions, you must forgive him. Some people think that unilateral forgiveness is not required. If the offending party doesn't ask for forgiveness, you do not have to forgive him. I would disagree with that. In fact we see two great examples of that in the Bible. As Jesus hung dying on the cross, He said, ***"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."*** (Luke 23:34) We may say, "Yes, but that was Jesus." Then we come to Stephen, as he was stoned to death, The last words that he spoke were, ***"Lord, do not hold this sin against them!"*** One might point out that, in both of these cases, they asked God to forgive their attackers. That is true, but wouldn't that mean that they had already done so themselves?

Today, in the church in the U.S., there are those who claim to be Christians and still have affairs, neglect their children, get divorced, cheat in business, steal from their employers, live in unthankfulness, hold prejudiced views, treat the poor different than the rich, and live according to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. I John 3:15+16, ***" Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world."*** Passages like these are not easy to accept, but they are important and they are for us and for our good and we **must** take them seriously. There is liberty in Christ but there is also a law of liberty that goes along with it. (James 2:12+13)

" So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has

shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment," If you find no joy in your life, maybe it is because you are not extending mercy to others. As Christians, we do not have the right to do what we want but we do have the responsibility to do what is right. Freedom and liberty comes in obedience, not in doing what we want. If the Son has set you free, you are free indeed.

There is more than enough sin in the church, but the need is to recognize it as sin. We need to **SEE** more sin in the church. Then we need to treat it according to the Word of God.

By

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