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No. 1 Its undeniable presence.

“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you,” 1 Corinthians 1:11.

“It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, ” 1 Corinthians 5:1.

It is necessary for us to establish first of all just what sin is.

There are almost as many opinions on this matter as there are people on this planet! One man’s sin is another man’s pleasure!

We turn to the Word of God for a definition as it alone is our authority on this matter.

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law,” 1 John 3:4.

Of this doctrine, the Shorter Catechism says:

“Question 14: What is sin?”

Answer: Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”

That is what sin is!

1. How serious a matter sin is!

It makes us a transgressor before God. It make us outlaws and rebels, those that despise the commands of God.

Furthermore, it brings upon our heads the penalty of a broken law. “But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off,” Psalm 37:38.

2. It was to redeem sinners from such a state that Jesus came.

The blood He shed for His people was in payment for their transgressions. He made atonement for their sins and made reconciliation for them, appeasing God’s wrath. “Therefore will I divide him (Christ) *a portion* with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors,” Isaiah 53:12.

While the regenerated child of God still commits sin he will escape the eternal judgment due to his sin, because Christ paid the penalty of all his sins — past, present and future! However, that does not mean that conversion is a licence to sin.

No, since the children of God have not only had their sins forgiven but have been regener-



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ated or made new creatures with the implanting of a new nature within their being and the inclination of that new nature is to seek holiness and eschew evil. "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it," 1 Peter 3:10-11. Once the Christian was as the sow or the dog — delighting in uncleanness but now they are new creatures delighting in holiness. "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day," Psalm 119:97. "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," Psalm 119:63. Holiness is a delight while sin is a vexation.

3. Christians do sin.

The consequences for them when they do are temporary rather than eternal. They will not be punished eternally for their sins since Christ's blood made atonement for them, but they will be chastened by the Lord even to the point of death. The case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 is an example of this. So also is Judah's son, Er. "And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him," Genesis 38:7. In Corinth, amidst the disorder that had arisen, there could be seen evidence of God's visitation of judgment upon some of His people. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of *that* bread, and drink of *that* cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world," 1 Corinthians 11:28-32.

John Gill had this to say of the phrase "and many sleep". ". . .that is, die a corporeal death, which is often in Scripture signified by sleep, and frequently used of the saints, and their death, and may intend and include some of them here; for though the Lord might resent so far their unworthy conduct and behaviour at his table, as to remove them out of this world by death, yet their souls may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

4. God's chastisement is intended for the correction and restoration of the believer.

"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty," Job 5:17.

"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the



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present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled," Hebrews 12:5-15.

5. It is also meant as a visible deterrent to others that they might not sin.

Following the death of Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, at the hands of God for their lying to the Holy Ghost, a reverence of God fell upon believers and unbelievers who heard of these things. "And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things," Acts 5:11.

Peter tells us of one of the elements of God's purpose in destroying Sodom and Gomorrha as He did. "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly," 2 Peter 2:6. The solemn words of Christ in Luke 17:32 should never be forgotten:

"Remember Lot's wife."

The whole of Scripture is designed to serve as a reproof against sin. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," 2 Timothy 3:16.

6. Furthermore, it is a vindication of God's justice and holiness.

God will not allow his wayward children to bring shame and reproach upon His name and kingdom. When judgment fell upon David for his backsliding it was explained to him by the Lord why it would happen. "And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *that is* born unto thee shall surely die," 2 Samuel 12:13-14. In his prayer of repentance, David clearly shows he understood the reason why he was so dealt with. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest," Psalm 51:4.

God's kingdom is a holy kingdom. He will not allow His truth and laws to be flouted with impunity. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's," 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

The purpose underlying redemption is the creation of a holy people. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Titus 2:14. The Lord will not tolerate that which impugns and



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stains His cause.

The heaven to which He is taking His people is a holy place and the path we take to that glorious place must be marked by holiness. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

At the end of this age, "the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," Matthew 13:41.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Galatians 5:19-21.

"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God," Ephesians 5:5.

7. God acts against sinning believers in order to defend His cause.

Sin amongst God's people is a most serious threat to the cause of Christ. It is evidence of Satan gaining a foothold.

The incident in which Peter rebukes the Saviour when He spoke of going to Jerusalem there to "suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day", illustrates just what is taking place when a believer yields to sin and begins to live according to its dictates. "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men," Matthew 16:23. Satan was speaking and at work through Peter on this occasion. That is the true nature of backsliding and why the Lord will act against it, especially when it involves those who hold influential positions in Christ's kingdom.

In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, the same evil power was at work and the Lord struck a blow against that assault upon His kingdom. "But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?" Acts 5:3.

Let us beware of backsliding and bringing sin into the church "lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices," 2 Corinthians 2:11.

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