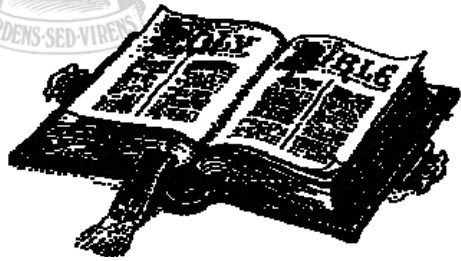




The Burning Bush—Online article archive



No. 2. The believer's required response

Sin is of such a nature that it cannot be concealed, at least not for very long. Nature helps us understand this truth when we consider the manifesting of sickness through the symptoms associated with it.

Sin in the believer is even more readily recognised for it so contrasts with the life previously lived. It is as a black spot on a white garment. I wish to consider what the Bible says should be our response to sin. Sadly, the believer's response to sin is very often not what it should be. We will consider that topic in our next message.

I. THE BELIEVER CANNOT BE INDIFFERENT TO SIN

His nature being what it is, there will be a reaction to sin. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would," Galatians 5:17. The person in whom the Holy Ghost has wrought regeneration cannot live at peace with sin or be indifferent to it.

Here are God's own words on the relationship between His people and sin and the devil.

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," Genesis 3:15. A state of war exists between the believer and sin. "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," Romans 8:13. Life for the believer consists in fighting sin and seeking its death. They are adversaries. One seeks the death of the other.

There cannot be indifference toward sin in the heart of the true believer.

1. He is not indifferent to the sins of the world. Not even a Lot could ignore the sin of Sodom. ". . . just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked," 2 Peter 2:7. Lot was a backslider when he came to Sodom. He was overcome by a desire for this world's goods and prosperity. Yet even he was vexed by Sodom's sin.

David likewise complained, "Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!" Psalm 120:5. He was anything but happy amongst the tents of the ungodly descendants of Ishmael.

What grief filled the heart of the psalmist as he considered the wicked ways of men.

"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," Psalm 119:136.

2. He is not indifferent to the sins in the church. "Not my business" does not quiet the conscience of the believer. What distress Jeremiah experiences as recorded in Jeremiah 9:1-5. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they *be* all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues *like* their bow *for* lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD. Take ye heed every



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies, *and* weary themselves to commit iniquity."

Likewise, Ezra manifested great distress as he observed the sin of God's people. "And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens," Ezra 9:3-6.

3. Above all he is not indifferent to his own sin. The Christian's sins cause him to abhor himself. Here is his chief distress.

Isaiah was vexed by his sin. "Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts," Isaiah 6:5.

This too was Job's reaction. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes," Job 42:5-6.

The sight of our sin prompts self-loathing.

II. SIN RAISES IN A BELIEVER A GREAT CONCERN FOR THE HONOUR OF CHRIST

1. Elijah was jealous for the Lord. This is the emotion that rose up in the heart of the great prophet as he witnessed the sin in the land of Israel. He was moved with a jealousy for the honour and glory of the Lord. "And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away," 1 Kings 19:10, 14.

2. Paul was jealous for the Lord's honour. As he cared for the churches, he was moved by a jealousy for the honour of the Lord. This is made clear for us in 2 Cor 11:2. "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ." He jealously watched over the Bride of Christ, seeking to preserve her from all dishonour and defilement.

3. The Lord is jealous for His own glory. This is the fountain-head of our jealousy. "'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me;" Exodus 20:4-5. (See also Exodus 34:14; Deut 4:24; Joshua 24:19.)

As Christians, we are " . . . partakers of the divine nature," 2 Peter 1:4. We will therefore manifest a similar attitude toward that which threatens the honour and glory of God as that manifested by God Himself. We will reflect His jealousy.

Our blessed Saviour was jealous for His Father's honour. "And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables; and said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise. And his



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disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," John 2: 13-17. The word "zeal" is the same Greek word that is translated "jealous" in 2 Cor 11:2 to which we have already referred.

Jealousy will motivate the Lord to return to defend His honour in the face of the attacks upon His name and people by Antichrist. "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name," Ezekiel 39: 25. "Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people," Joel 2: 18. Was it not jealousy for the Lord's honour that caused David to go out to face Goliath? "Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied (reproached). This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle *is* the LORD'S, and he will give you into our hands," 1 Samuel 17: 45-47. In a greater manifestation of that spirit shall the Lord come forth to meet the Goliath of the Gentiles at the close of this age.

III. BROTHERLY LOVE WILL MOVE THE BELIEVER TO ANXIETY OVER SIN IN THE CHURCH

1. We have the example of the Saviour's concern to motivate and guide us. He was distressed at the sight of the professing people of God in sin. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd," Matthew 9: 36. In the Old Testament, the Lord's complaint against the false shepherds was their lack of concern for the sheep. "Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD," Jeremiah 23: 1. "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them," Ezekiel 34: 6. This the spirit of the hireling, so abhorred by Christ. "But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep," John 10: 12. A love for our heavenly Father's children should make us anxious about sin in the church.

2. The prophets risked their lives to voice their anxiety. Micaiah is an example of this. He spoke his concern for the sheep when silence might have appeared more prudent. "And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace," 1 Kings 22: 17. He was imprisoned for his words.

3. Paul was anxious for the flock of God even after his departure. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears," Acts 20:28-31. What a concern this was!

IV. CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE ANXIOUS REGARDING THE IMPACT OF SUCH SIN UPON SINNERS

1. A backslidden church will lose its power to win souls. David lamented over the impact of his backsliding upon his ability to witness effectively to sinners. He cried for a restoration of his effectiveness through a cleansing from his backsliding. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit. *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee," Psalms 51:7-13.

What is true for the individual believer is true for the church.

2. A backslidden church will become a reproach amongst sinners. David caused blasphemy. His sin aroused mockery of God amongst the ungodly. "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme," 2 Samuel 12:14. Samson likewise became a mockery after he sinned and lost his power. "Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their god, and to rejoice: for they said, Our god hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand," Judges 16:23. This is the consequence amongst the ungodly of the believer's sin.

3. A backslidden church is silent. "O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise," Psalm 51:15. David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, had his lips shut with a sense of his sin and backsliding. The silence of the church today in the face of the increasing wickedness of the world around us, can be traced, I believe, to our backsliding!

4. A backslidden church becomes guilty of the blood of sinners. David certainly felt the weight of blood upon him as a result of his sin. "Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness," Psalm 51:14.

I am sure that this is not just a reference to the blood of Uriah whom he had killed. I believe he was thinking also of the sinners who were encouraged in their rejection of the Lord by the reports of his sins.

"When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand," Ezekiel 3:18.

These solemn words still have a message for us today.

This is the second message in a short series. [Click here](#) to listen to/download a recording of each of the messages in the series.