

The Nature of Sin

by Winkie Pratney

Sin is not natural, unavoidable, or physical, but rather a choice made by the will, after consulting reason, conscience, and intuition.

Scripture: Genesis 1:26

Topics: "The Nature of Sin", "Redemption and Forgiveness"

Description

Winkie Pratney explores the nature of sin, tracing its origins back to Adam and Eve's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. He emphasizes that sin is not a natural part of humanity but a moral failure that leads to both physical and spiritual death. Pratney explains that while physical depravity is inherited, sin itself is a choice made by individuals, and he stresses the importance of personal responsibility in the face of temptation. He concludes by highlighting God's justice and mercy, revealing that through Jesus Christ, there is hope for redemption and forgiveness for all who repent and turn to Him.

Transcript

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Adam and Eve awoke in a world of loveliness. Made as a tiny replica of their Heavenly Father, having in finite miniature the abilities and qualities of God, they were given His law of love to live by. The first man and his lovely wife walked and talked with God in the garden paradise that was Eden. There was no sickness, pain or death. There was no sin or rebellion in the world. Man was supremely happy, healthy and content. God saw everything that He had made was "very good" (Genesis 1:26-31).

Only one thing remained to be done. Before Adam was granted the gift of eternal life, he had to prove to God that he could be trusted. A test of his loyalty was given him. A forbidden tree grew in the garden. Its fruit could extend his light beyond that which he had yet proved himself worthy to be given. Adam and Eve were forbidden to eat of it, lest they fall into the same selfish quest for power that had turned Lucifer, prince of the angels into Satan (Isaiah 14:12-15). God was very clear in His warning. He made sure that they understood how important their test was. It was the only way they could be tested for the glorious future God had in store for them. He guarded this most solemn law of the Universe by the greatest possible penalty. It was called - DEATH; it was an awful but absolute necessity if a moral being should ever do something insane as to break this protecting law. It would simply and finally cut him off from interfering with anyone else's happiness.

Incredibly enough, that tragedy happened! Eve, tempted by Satan in the form of a serpent, took the forbidden fruit. In a perfect environment, surrounded by everything he could wish for, Adam also ate the fruit, joining his wife in deliberate sin. It opened his eyes to evil. Right there man became both morally and physically ruined! Sin entered the world, and with it death, as Adam and Eve gave in to selfishness against the clear warning of God. The first pangs of guilt struck terror into our first parents' hearts as they heard, through the still air of evening, God's voice calling for them in the garden. In unspeakable sadness, God was forced to clamp down His Divinely-appointed penalties. Man was turned out of the Garden lest he take also of the fruit of the tree of life and become immortal in sin - a second Satan! The ground was cursed, so that man would have to labor in future to live; he would have less time for self-pleasing and resultant sin. Death began its deadly work, setting alight a time-fuse to detonate in every man's final exit from this life (Genesis 3:1-24).

ME OR ADAM?

It is vitally important to notice here HOW Adam fell, and the consequences of his fall. To understand present human depravity, we must first define the word "depravity". From the Latin "de" very, and "pravus" crooked, depravity means the failure to meet an existing standard, a fall from a place of original perfection. Adam became depraved in TWO ways; his SOUL first failed to obey God, then his BODY began to fail. The first depravity was thus MORAL, and was followed by the second, which was PHYSICAL, caused by Adam's selfish choice in spite of the clear warning of the penalty of God. These two depravities caused TWO kinds of DEATH; physical and spiritual. Although these are linked, they are not the same thing. Both deaths are states of SEPARATION; spiritual death being a state of separation from God (essentially, to live sinfully is to be spiritually dead 1 Timothy 5:6); and physical death being finally a separation from the material world of Earth.

PHYSICAL DEPRAVITY is the inherited result of Adam's sin. It has brought great tragedy to earth. Our bodies are all subject to these problems from it:

1. DULLNESS of mental faculties. None of our human "temples" function as well as they could. Our minds are not as clear, our feelings not as capable of intense perception, our strength not as vibrant as our first parents. Our whole systems have "cooled" in their original vivid relationships and responses.
2. DETERIORATION of HEALTH. This is painfully evident across the world. There is no "perfect" health. All of us inherit bodies that are greatly subject to disease and sickness. Sickness is ultimately a result of Adam's sin, and we can reinforce our physical ill-health by our own selfish choices. The delicate way God balanced our physical and psychological systems make it easy for our moral lives to influence our physical beings.
3. DEFORMATION of innocent children. The moral disease of sin has invaded the delicate controls that influence the formation of new little bodies; sin has given us misshapen and tragic little forms that could have been beautiful babies.
4. DISEASE and sickness world wide are another limiting factor that tend to cut down the amount of moral damage selfishness can do. Consider the countries that turn from the Living God to serve idols. Devaluation of individual human life leads to poor living conditions, uncleanliness and disease. Sickness abounds, reducing the age of the population to a very low value. As the Gospel has come in to such places, moral purity has been followed by social changes, leading to expanded life expectancy. This is another automatic law tending to curb selfishness.

This physical depravity is the power that makes our bodies decay and die. The first man had a perfect body. It was made to operate in flawless harmony and was constantly repaired and replaced cell by cell in wear. There is no medical reason for age death. We have a highly efficient set of repair organs that gradually re-make every organ and bone. Every seven years the ENTIRE BODY has been fully re-made. Science cannot yet explain why these "repairers" stop and the person gets old, feeble and dies. Physical depravity is a failure of the way you are built, of the material you are made of. It is an "out of balance" set of once finely-tuned interdependent body functions. It is a physical breakdown of the laws of health, a fallen state in which healthy life is not kept going. This is not something of the SOUL; it concerns only the material of which the body is made that influences the soul. It is not sin, but the fruit of sin, our's and Adam's.

The Bible testifies to our PHYSICAL depravity by birth and circumstances, that make it easier for the will to choose self-gratification, but this is not the cause of our wrong action. It is obvious that man is in a weakened and unbalanced condition: Psalm 103:15-16; Matthew 26:41; Romans 6:19; Romans 8:3,23; 2 Corinthians 4:11; 5:2-4; 12:7; Galatians 4:13-14; Philippians 3:21; James 4: 14. This simply gives him the bias towards selfish action, and is only an influence for sin.

Adam's terrible choice opened the lock to a tide of temptation, sin and death for his race (Romans 5:12; Hebrews 9:27). As man's sin increased, God slowly shortened his physical life span to help curb the resulting spread of destruction and unhappiness (Genesis 5:27,32; Genesis 6:3; Psalm 90:10). Mankind is a fallen race, not growing better, but progressively worse.

We are all victims of physical depravity and death, circumstances and environments that provide powerful temptations to sin, and all men follow the wrong choice of our first parents. Our own family lines, and ultimately Adam himself, are responsible for our PHYSICAL depravity. But this is, in itself, not sin.

It is not the direct CAUSE of sin, so that we sin from some sort of physical necessity, but simply the weakened constitution and strong desires that give sin power and make men open to the tug of temptation.

"AT THE LAST FRONTIER THERE WILL BE NOTHING TO DECLARE -- ONLY A PASSPORT EXAMINATION"

WHAT SIN IS NOT

1. Sin is not NATURAL - A common answer of man when faced with sin has been - "Yes, we all sin - nobody is perfect - we're only human!" Nothing could be further from the truth. Only by comparing ourselves with the perfect example of TRUE humanity - the Lord Jesus - can we see just how un-natural sin is. When God became man, He took on Himself a perfectly human body. Jesus was not God disguised as man, but God who BECAME man. Although He was conceived supernaturally, He was born of a perfectly normal human girl (Luke 1:31). He grew, learned, was hungry and thirsty (Luke 2:52; 2:40; Matthew 4:2; Luke 4:2). His body was as human as any man that ever walked the earth; it was in NO way more special than any other human body (Hebrews 10:5; John 2:21; Luke 24:3,23; 1 John 4:3). He ate, drank, felt weary and rested (Mark 2:16), and declared His body to be flesh and bones (John 20:20,27). He had a soul as human as any other man's soul (Isaiah 53:11, 12; Psalm 16:10; John 12:27; Acts 2:27; Matthew 26:38). John, Peter, Paul and Isaiah all called Him a man (John 1:30; Acts 2:22; 1 Timothy 2:5; Isaiah 53:3) and He called Himself a man (John 8:40). His favorite name for Himself when He walked this earth was - "The Son of man" used seventy-one times in Scripture.

Christ was, of course, always God. He knew that He had come from the Father, and after that His earthly mission He would go back to the Father. His essential relationship with the Spirit and the Father was never removed. But while He walked this planet, to show us that it WAS possible to resist temptation and defeat the Devil with only the power of the Holy Spirit, the guidance of His Father, and the Word of God, the Lord Jesus used NONE of His Godhead powers. To be fully "tempted in ALL points such as we are" and yet be "without sin" the Lord Jesus had to become fully human. To make Him more than this during His brief stay on Earth is to MISS completely the whole purpose of His life; not only to offer His body as a perfect substitute for our sin, but to show us the way a child of God was to live in this world! (Hebrews 2:14-15; 5:5-9). He laid aside His rights and powers as God to tread this world; (Philippians 2:5-8; Luke 2:52; Hebrews 5:7-9) although, His essential nature as God remained unchanged. Understand - the Lord Jesus had NOTHING available to Him on Earth that ANY child of God does not have available; His Father even arranged for Him to have some disadvantages! (Luke 2:7; John 1:46; 8:41). The Lord Jesus was our pattern of TRUE human nature, yet He was "without sin" (Hebrews 4:15); and He "did no sin" (1 Peter 2:22). GOD made human nature; God did NOT make sin!

Sin is NEVER natural. It is horribly UN-natural. Sin is NEVER "human." It is horribly IN-human. Sin creates remorse, guilt and shame; every time a man feels these three witnesses in his soul, they tell him sin is NOT natural. Even the simple lie-detector can tell us this. The whole body reacts adversely when a man sins. Sin is in fact, a kind of insanity (Ecclesiastes 9:3).

No one ever sins because they love sin. Even the worst sinner does not like to be called a sinner; he resents the fact of his selfishness, even when he is selfish! And even the worst of sinners cannot help but admire right in another, whenever that other person is sufficiently far away from him not to convict him of his selfishness (Isaiah 58:1-2; Ezekiel 33:32; Romans 7:22). Nobody sins merely for the sake of doing wrong.

Sinning men and women hate themselves when they do wrong. A man sins only when he wants something for himself more strongly than he wants to do right. God never planned sin for man. It is the most un-natural thing in the moral Universe. To equate humanity with sinfulness is to make God the Author of His own worst enemy; to make God responsible for the thing that has brought Him unhappiness. Do not DARE say sin is "natural"! God hates sin with perfect hatred; He loves humanity.

ARE WE REALLY UNABLE TO OBEY?

2. Sin is not UNAVOIDABLE - One of the favorite heresies of the past, that is rapidly now becoming the favorite heresy of the present, is the lie of Antinomianism - that men cannot do what God expressly REQUIRES them to do; and therefore they may live how they like and still enter the Kingdom of God. In the midst of the greatest moral landslide the world has ever seen, in the midst of the most flagrant disrespect for law and order and government of any century, it is unblushingly proclaimed AS GOSPEL truth from pulpits across the nation that man cannot keep the law of God! In our wariness of the dangers of legalism, we have forgotten the perils of antinomianism; we have forgotten that the LAW is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24) and that "by the LAW is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). Gone is the preaching of moral responsibility that streamed from men like William Booth, George Fox, John Wesley and Charles Finney that made men weep with conviction; gone is the heartbreak of the Psalmist for the honor of God when he cried "Horror has taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake Thy law!" (Psalm 119:53; 119:37).

Many sincere men are saying, "God gave us good laws to keep," and in the next breath saying, "we are actually unable to keep them!" If this is true, then God's laws ARE NOT GOOD! No law is good that asks the impossible of its subjects. If God demands obedience to impossible laws then God is not just, for even men do not require obedience to impossible laws. If God demands such obedience under penalty of DEATH, then God is not only unfair, but monstrous. What kind of Being would pass laws upon his subjects they are unable to keep, then condemn them to death for their failure to obey. This is a blasphemy on God's character.

The Bible expressly declares that God has given good laws. All the laws of God are based on the one great Law of love, that governs the actions of all moral beings in God's Universe - that every moral creature should unselfishly choose the highest good of God and His Universe according to their real, relative values; God's being greatest, first of all; then all others in the order of their true value under God. The Ten Commandments are just the letter expression of that law, given when men began to ignore the love law written on their hearts. They define man's obligations God ward in the first three commandments, then those of his obligations to his fellow-men in the last seven. The Lord Jesus summed these in His two commandments (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-33; Luke 10:25-28) covering what Moses had already been given (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). Paul summed up the law into the one basic word "love" (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; 1 Timothy 1:5; James 2:8-10). This law, expressed in different ways, is given as the unchangeable condition of happiness and holiness; it defines man's obligations and can never be changed or suspended in our present relationships (Galatians 3:19; Psalm 19:7; Matthew 5:17; Romans 7:12; 1 Timothy 1:8).

Which of God's laws are we actually UNABLE to keep - if we love the Lawgiver! Do we have to relegate God to some other position than King of our lives and put something else in His place? Do we have to take His Name in vain? Must we steal? What man has ever been born that could not help BUT murder? Do we have no choice but to commit adultery, to lie, to covet, to dishonor parents and refuse to honor God on a special day of rest? God says "His commandments are NOT grievous". Do WE say they are not only grievous but impossible? The Lord Jesus said - "My yoke is easy and My burden is light".

Do WE say His yoke is not only HEAVY, but completely unbearable for any human being?

No saint in Scripture thought they were "unable" to keep God's laws. Moses didn't (Exodus 24:3; Deuteronomy 5:1; 6:24-25; 10:12-13; 11:22; 26:16-19; 28:47; 28:58-59; 30:8; 30:11-14). Neither did Joshua (22:5), Ezra (7:23-26), David (Psalm 19:7; 40:8), his psalmist friend (Psalm 119:165-168) or Daniel (9:9-11) or others! (2 Kings 17:13,7-18, etc.). The Lord Jesus Himself told men to obey His Father's laws, and that this was the test of being a true disciple (Matthew 5:17-20; 19:17; John 14:15,21; 14:23-24; 15:10). The Apostle John stresses this obedience (1 John 2:3-6; 3:18-22). Obeying God's love law simply means living for Him with no selfish interest; to live up to all the light you have with all the effort of will, mind and feeling necessary for the task in hand. For the Christian, obeying God and keeping His commandments are a natural part of his new life. Only the sinner finds it hard to walk in God's ways because he is trying to use the law as a means to his own end. the ultimate satisfaction of his own selfishness. He must fall.

3. Sin is not PHYSICAL -- Many think they have explained the fact of sin in the human race by using a phrase we shall call "Doggie Logic." It goes essentially like this: "A dog is not a dog because he barks; he barks because he is a dog. Thus, man is not a sinner because he sins; he sins because he is a sinner." The assumption is, of course, that all sin flows from a pre-determined sinful nature, and it is this nature

that creates sinful acts of the sinner. Just as the bark of a dog comes undeniably from the fact that he is a dog, so man's sin will flow inescapably from the fact that he is a sinner, and was born so. It sounds nice; is it true?

There are, unfortunately, two things wrong with this logic. They are serious flaws because, once they are assumed, they actually destroy the basis of the very thing they seek to prove - that all men are guilty of, and responsible to God for, their sin.

These logic flaws are:

(a) A Man is not a dog. A dog's actions are right if he barks because God created dogs to express themselves naturally by barking. But God did not create men to sin! A dog's bark is natural; sin is NOT. The Bible everywhere represents sin as an alien invasion to a moral nature made in the image of God. Assuming that man sins because it is his nature to sin, also assumes that sin is natural. A dog barks because he is a dog. A man can also bark if he chooses to. Does this prove that he is a dog? No, it proves that he has chosen to do a thing he was never created to do naturally. If a man sins, it merely proves that he has so chosen to sin; and his sin will certainly be treated as unnatural in the eyes of God.

(b) Do we need a sinful nature to sin? Is it necessary to have an "implanted sinfulness" to enable man to do wrong? If one sinner can be found in Scripture who sinned WITHOUT first having a sinful nature, the answer is no; and the case is closed. And of course, there are at least three moral beings who committed sin without sinful natures. Satan was the first. The first man Adam was the second, and his wife, Eve. The angels who were cast out of heaven were apparently before perfect. No moral being needs a sinful nature to sin; if he is given one that makes it impossible for him NOT to live right, he is not GUILTY but IS SIN A SOMETHING?

Is sin a "thing"? Are feelings or desires, for instance, good or bad IN THEMSELVES? The following diagram lists some common desires. Mark the column where you think each desire could be classed - as "right," "wrong" or "either."

DESIRE FOR: RIGHT WRONG EITHER (Moral) (Immoral) (Amoral)

MONEY SEXUAL LOVE POWER FRIENDS FOOD REST

Did you think CAREFULLY?

You will find you can frame a situation for EACH where the desire in the question could be right OR wrong or an "EITHER"! This is because desires have no will of their own. They are built into all men in greater or lesser degree. There is no desire that cannot be used for God's glory, and no desire that misused could not make you like the Devil himself. It is the PURPOSE behind the choice to indulge a desire that makes it right or wrong. That choice is carried out by the WILL, after consulting reason, conscience and intuition as to the rightness or wrongness of the action. DESIRES are NEVER wrong IN THEMSELVES. They are neither IMMORAL (bad, wrong) or MORAL (good, right) but AMORAL (having no morality or deliberate rule of right and wrong in themselves). Desires are God-given; used rightly, to ENJOY life; used wrongly, to DESTROY ourselves. The tug of desire is not sin in itself; but a natural feeling produced by stimulation and without direct control by the person.

THOSE BRAINWAVES

Are THOUGHTS right or wrong in themselves? They, too, are AMORAL. The Lord Jesus Himself was given "wrong thoughts" during His dark wilderness temptation But He NEVER SINNED (Hebrews 4:15). A thought may be a temptation to do wrong, but it is NOT SIN until the will gives assent to the thought. It is not the feelings OR the thoughts that make men sin. Reason tells men right or wrong (using memory and conscience), but reason does not carry out decisions. Feelings tug, the mind advises, but neither DECIDE. Reason may tell choice the right, but has in itself no power to CHOOSE that way. Moral decision is under the exclusive control of the WILL, the key center of the whole personality. The will's choice makes a man sinner or saint in God's eyes.

TEMPTATION

Don't mistake TEMPTATION for sin. Temptation is a suggestion to gratify a desire in an illegal way or amount. Temptation is NOT sin. Jesus was tempted (Hebrews 4: 15). All men are tempted whether sinner or saint. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed" (James 1:14). The feelings ("Lust" - over-strong desire) tug at the will. The mind refers to memory and moral law for knowledge of right and wrong. The will is informed and is faced with a decision. If the reason tells the will that carrying out that desire would be RIGHT as well as pleasant and the will acts on this, happiness and harmony result. But if the mind gives a verdict of wrong, the choice can be caught in a struggle between the right, and the pleasant, but WRONG. There is always "pleasure" in sin of a very temporary kind (Hebrews 11:25; 1 Timothy 5:6). The mind knows right is best. If it should not know the choice made is bad, it is NOT SIN to the individual! It is for this reason that we are told not to "judge" another person. We cannot know how much light they have. Two people may be doing exactly the same thing; to one it is wrong, but to the other (as far as HE is concerned) it is not. This must not be confused with deliberate deceit. Not always are the actions of outward conduct the proof of a right heart (1 Samuel 16:7; John 7:24).

There is therefore no such thing as "unconscious" sin. God holds us responsible for all the light we have and are able to get - no more, no less. There is no sin that we know nothing at all about that God will judge us for. Men can sometimes do things that may be legally wrong, but in ignorance, without knowing they WERE wrong. A child's first defence against discovered wrong by its parents is invariably - "But I didn't KNOW it was wrong!" If that can be proved, he knows the case is closed. It is "to him that KNOWETH to do good, and DOETH IT NOT, to him it is SIN" (James 4:17). Should we sin in the eyes of the law through ignorance, it is only when we discover our mistake that we can ask pardon and forgiveness (Leviticus 4:2-3; Numbers 15:27-31).

For the Christian, DOUBTFUL ACTIONS are sinful. Doubt is nearly always a sign of some duty not done or some illegal choice about to be made.

A man may have equal doubts on some things whether to do them or not. In such cases, he must act according to the best light he can get. But if he should go and deliberately do something of which he doubts the lawfulness, he is condemned. It shows a spirit of self-pleasing without careful regard to the Lord's glory. "Whatsoever is not of faith is SIN" (Romans 14:23). Any action that might cause another younger Christian to stumble falls into the same category. There are some things a Christian could do from a pure heart and right intent that outwardly could be misunderstood. Even of the Lord Jesus Himself it was said "He has a demon" (Matthew 12:18). Abstain from the very appearance of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Romans 14; Acts 24:16; 1 Corinthians 10:32).

The condition of our PHYSICAL depravity gives great Power to temptation. Consider two men, Dick and Jack. Dick, a non-Christian, always seems assured, well-balanced and at ease. Jack, who is a Christian, seems however to be run down, highly strung and somewhat touchy. How can we account for this? Digging a little deeper, we find that Dick's parents are clean-living Christians who are reasonably well-off and physically in very good health. On the other hand, Jack's parents are unsaved, alcoholics, and his home is little more than a hovel. We can see it would not be too fair to condemn Jack for what he is outwardly, until we find out what he WANTS to be. We must also ask ourselves, not what Dick is like compared to JACK, but what Dick is like compared to Christ; or what better of man Dick could be if he WAS a Christian. Give both Dick and Jack ten years or a set of tough circumstances and you will soon see there is all the difference in the world.

In Romans 7:7-24, the Apostle Paul personifies sin to show its power over the enlightened, but unconverted mind. The excited love of conscious freedom, wanting to have its own way, clashes with the judgment of conscience and the moral law; a conflict begins between the "law" (rule of action) of sin, and the law of God. Without the drawing power of Christ, the convicted sinner cannot free himself, until the Gospel comes to deliver him (Romans 7:25; 8:1). But although Paul places the tug of this "law of sin" in his bodily members (from where the excited desires sparked into unnatural strength by the habit of selfish gratification reside), he does not really make a case for any "physical" sin, as if this was his helpless inheritance. If sin WAS physical, in what form would it exist? Would it be solid, liquid or gas? If sin is material, it can be isolated in a test-tube. May we then see the phenomenon of a vial of sin concentrate. This is, of course, absurd. All efforts to trace actual sin to some organic connection with parents have failed of any evidence, medically or physiologically; at the most, ALL inherited traits from parents simply contribute INFLUENCES for later selfish choices.

Neither does sin reside, as some sincere men have stated, in the blood. No place in the Scriptures give the blood morality. It is a symbol of life, and as the electrochemical and circulatory system of the body, is the "life of the flesh" and the "circuitry" of the soul. As a symbol of a man's life, it is certainly a precious symbol of Christ's atoning sacrifice for our lives (Isaiah 53:10-12; Hebrews 9:22-23; Matthew 26:28; Acts 20:28; Romans 3:24-26; 5:9-11; Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 10:10-14; 10:19-20; 1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 John 1:7). If it was true that moral characteristics are transmitted through the blood, then a blood transfusion from a saint, will make a man more holy, and one from a sinner will make a saint less sanctified. It will follow then, that a prenatal blood transfusion on a "blue" baby will give it a totally different nature!

THE FINAL CONCLUSION

WHAT SIN REALLY MUST BE

1. Sin is UNIVERSAL - Nothing is clearer in Scripture or in daily life. World history is a chronicle of wickedness. Every man prior to conversion is a slave to his own selfishness. Every unsaved man knows that he is selfish. The Bible shows the unsaved to possess one common wicked heart or character: Genesis 6:5; 1 Kings 11:9-11; 15:3; 2 Chronicles 12:14; Psalm 28:3; 66:18; 78:37; 95:10; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Ezekiel 14:2-3; 18:30-32; Ecclesiastes 9:3; Matthew 5:27-30; 9:4; 13:15; Mark 3:5; 7:18-23; 8:17; Luke 21:34; Acts 8:21 (18-24); Romans 2:4-6; 8:7; Hebrews 3:7-15. All men without God are totally selfish at heart; it is exceedingly humbling to admit that ALL a man's pre-conversion actions are not in the least virtuous when examined in Eternity's light. Man has nothing to commend him to God, when he comes asking for forgiveness.

The Bible further reveals that from the beginning of man's moral accountability,(seeing his spiritual responsibility to God and his fellow-men) man has made a choice to live supremely for himself, with no exceptions of true goodness, no pauses for really virtuous behavior, no alternative weeks of true unselfishness before God. Many factors influence the forms of this selfishness; there are many "good" clean-living, outwardly moral sinners, as well as those who are humanly despicable and degraded. Man chooses the particular form of selfishness that brings him the greatest pleasure; and this includes deeds and actions usually considered "good" by society, including prayer, religious activity, Bible study and preaching! But all sinners from those who have done "many wonderful works" to those God has had to "give up to vile affections" have one uniform morality - "there is NONE that doeth good, no, not one. " This universal persistency in sin is also shown in: Genesis 8:21; Psalm 10:4; 14:13 (53:1,3); 28:3; 94:11; Ecclesiastes 1:14; Isaiah 55:7-9; 64:6 Jeremiah 13:23; 17:9-10; Matthew 7:21-23; 12:34-35; Romans 1:21; 3:10-12; 3:23; 6:16-17; 6:20; Ephesians 2:1, 3; 5:8; Titus 1:15; 3:3; 1 Peter 2:25.

YOU AND YOUR ORIGINAL SIN

2. Sin is ORIGINAL -- There is nothing clearer in the Bible that man is VERY original in his sin! Sin is not a transmitted thing, it is created by each being with the elements of true morality - (emotions, reason, free will, moral light and spiritual perception of this).

Throughout the Bible, man's moral nature is shown to spring from his HEART. This "heart" is not your PHYSICAL heart that busily pumps life-giving blood to all the members of your body. It is an illustration of the SUPREME PREFERENCE, or ULTIMATE CHOICE of your will, just as the physical heart is the center and source of all physical life. The RULING CHOICE of your will is the center and source of all your actions, and is the one thing most entirely under your control. If God had made salvation dependent, say, on moving your body, or solving a problem, or even feeling a certain emotion, you may not have been able to do it. If you were paralyzed, your muscles might not be able to act. If you had little education, even on pain of death you could not solve a problem beyond your own reason. Even with a threat of everlasting torment, you would not be able to keep any emotion for long. But if God only asks for the choice of your will, all is brought within your reach. You can always give this "heart" to God. You can always CHOOSE so long as you have a rational mind and a moral nature. Every man born is faced with God's request to the awakening Adam - "My son, give Me your HEART" (Proverbs 23:6; 4: 23; 3:5).

When men choose wrong, following Adam's example, they become guilty of the second kind of depravity MORAL depravity. All sin is moral depravity - "missing the mark" in the ultimate choice of life. The Bible pointedly testifies of man's free choice in his life of sin, using a variety of words that show explicitly man's guilt and total moral depravity. No definition of man 's moral depravity that tends to remove personal and individual blame or responsibility from each sinner is a definition inspired by the Holy Spirit of God.

ALL the Bible words used for sin show that man is a REBEL, not a subject of pity who has lost his ability of will to do right.

Who can study the penetrating pictures of sin in the Scriptures and make sin something small! From the very least expression (to "err, stray from the mark or path planned for man") to the strongest term ("utter evil, wickedness of the mind and heart") all sin is WRONG CHOICE (Numbers 15:27; Ezekiel 3:18; 2 Kings 8:20,22; 1 Kings 8:47-50; 1 Chronicles 5:25; 1 Samuel 12:13-15; Joshua 22:16; Isaiah 66:3; Jeremiah 7:24; Romans 6:14-15; Hebrews 6:6; Galatians 6:1; Matthew 15:2; Acts 1:25; 1 Timothy 1:9; Romans 6:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; 2 Timothy 2:19; 1 Peter 4: 18; Titus 2:12; Matthew 7:17,18;

Hebrews 3:12).

From this study of Bible words describing sin, we look in vain for evidence that sin is anything else than a wrong choice. There is always the idea of movement, voluntary action, never a static or inactive something behind the will, received by heredity, that CAUSES the will to act in sin. The Word of God protects itself from theological speculation like this; sin is a CHOICE.

Without God, man does have a sinful nature, but this nature is NOT physical. He inherits no causation from his parents or anyone else. Man is responsible for his own actions. His sinful nature consists in the habit patterns of a life lived for self instead of God. They flow from a wrong HEART, or ultimate choice in life. They need not be all pre-meditated to be sin. A man who has unyielded rights and resentment in his heart that has been allowed to build for some time does not have to coldly calculate to fly into a rage. If a man says an unkind thing, then tries to cover it by saying, "Oh, I didn't mean that," the Scriptures flatly contradict him by stating "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." He may not have meant it to be revealed in all its ugliness. But it WAS in his heart, and the unconscious action followed. Nature does not mean natural, as compared to ordinary, but that which is common, that which man does AS A RULE. If we say man has a sinful nature, we are not talking about some solid "thing" causing sin; but that AS A RULE OF LIFE, the sinner always behaves sinfully. His own heart is set on pleasing himself; out of this choice flows all his thoughts, actions and choices.

Scripture reveals that NO sinner seeks God. His selfishness has made him run from the call of God just like Adam did long ago: Genesis 6:5; 2 Chronicles 12:14; Psalm 10:4; 53:2 119:115; Ecclesiastes 8:11; Isaiah 9:13; 31:1; 59:4; 64:7; 65:1; Matthew 23:37; John 5:40; 6:26; Romans 2:4; 3:11. For this reason, he cannot be saved unless God invests great efforts in him to turn him back to righteousness.

WHY DO CHILDREN SIN?

How, then does a child sin! One does not have to teach a child to do wrong. The explanation becomes clear if we carefully consider the development of a man. A baby enters the world as the object of its parent's fondness, unceasing care, and concession by those who guard it. In these circumstances, the natural, inherited appetites are Just developed; and the child's natural love of conscious freedom begins to express itself. The feelings develop long before the reason, and both are deeply entrenched before the spirit begins to awaken to the claims of God. Much depends at this point on the parents. If they are faithful in their duty to God, they must train their child to yield up its own way when that self-willed way will interfere with the happiness of others. The child will learn at first obedience to its parents only in a love/discipline relationship; it is here that the habit of response to authority must be ingrained in the child's soul, so that later, when God opens up the spiritual understanding, the child will surrender to Him (1 Samuel 15:22; Proverbs 6:20-23; 10: 17; 13:18; 15:5;31-32; Ephesians 6: 1; Colossians 3:20).

Since the feelings develop before the reason and conscience, the will begins to form the habit of obeying desire, which deepens every day. The obvious consequence is that self-indulgence becomes the master principle in the soul of the child long before it can understand that this self-indulgence will interfere with the right or happiness of others.

This repeated bias grows, stronger each day before a knowledge of right or duty could possibly have entered the mind. Finally, the moment of true moral responsibility arrives. The child is now old enough to understand wrong. (This will probably be earlier in a Christian home than in a non-Christian one.) Does the child approach this test in a perfectly neutral state? If Adam, in the maturity of his reason, with full

consciousness of the morality of his actions could give in to such temptation, is there any doubt that a child will not? The moment that child chooses selfishly, it sins. From this point on (and NOT before) God holds the child responsible for its own actions and destiny. It is significant that all words of the Lord to sinners begin FROM THEIR YOUTH, and NOT from birth, as some have supposed.

It may be objected - does not the Bible teach that man is born sinful. The answer is an unqualified no. A small number of verses have at times been urged to support this idea, but they will not stand up to careful scholarship, and have only been used because no better explanation of the universal sinfulness of man has been forwarded. God is very plain; He does NOT hold the child in any kind of responsibility for its parent's sins. "What do you mean, you who use this proverb: the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? As I live . . . you shall not have occasion to use this proverb in Israel. All souls are MINE; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that SINNETH, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:1-3, 20-see also the whole chapter; Jeremiah 31:30; Deuteronomy 24:16; 2 Chronicles 25:4; Psalm 94:23).

In speaking of the coming judgment, we are told in the Bible that God shall judge every moral being for his own sins, no mention being made of the imputation of Adam's guilt: Psalm 9:7-8; 96:13; Ecclesiastes 11:9; 12:14; Isaiah 3:10-11; Jeremiah 31:30; 32:17-19; Matthew 12:36-37; 16:27; Luke 12:47-48; 20:46-47; John 5:27-29; 12:48; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:2-11, 12, 16; 14:10-12; Galatians 6:7-8; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Timothy 5:24-25; Hebrews 9:27; 1 Peter 1:17; Jude 14-15; Revelation 2:23. God has specifically stated He would not judge man for another's sin. Yet, all sin in Scripture is under the judgment of God. Man cannot, therefore, inherit sin from his parents or Adam.

Some Scriptures used to try to support this "inherited sin" idea have been pressed right out of context. In examining these. it will be important to adhere to some universally-accepted principles of Biblical interpretation. They are (1) interpret each verse or passage in the light of ALL OTHER revealed Scripture; (2) Examine each verse in the CONTEXT where it is placed, taking into account the design, purpose, authority and author of each passage; (3) Texts that can be used to prove either of two theories prove NEITHER; (4) Passages must be interpreted in a way (if they can be) by which they will not contradict each other. It is with these principles in mind that we shall examine the so-called Scriptural objections.

(1) Psalm 51:5, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." David speaks; he speaks from personal experience, and not for the whole world; and who is the subject of this sentence? NOT David, but his MOTHER, pressed literally, this verse says that during his time of gestation and conception, his mother was a sinner; David is the object. There is a world of difference between being shapen in iniquity and iniquity shapen in him, just as there is a great difference between being born in England and England being born in me! What then, does this passage teach! Three different interpretations have been given, none of which teach the dogma of transmitted sin:

(a) That David was illegitimate as the Jews have always believed (David's mother's name is not mentioned; David was not with the sons of Jesse when Samuel came to anoint them; David's brothers seemed embarrassed by his presence); (b) That David came from a lineage in which there had been immorality, and remembered his "lineage" mother in comparison to his own sexual sin; That David was simply deeply cut to the heart by his sin. and broke out in the extravagant language of poetry (cf. v. 3, 3, 7 and 8); in thinking back along his life, he broke out affirming that from the earliest moments of light he had been a sinner, and had come from parents who were sinners, without in any way implying that this sin had been TRANSMITTED down to him by his mother. In no way does this passage teach "inherited" sin, no

matter which way it is interpreted literally or figuratively.

(2) Psalm 58:3 has been pressed into service along the same lines; note that it is the wicked who 'go ASTRAY', if the text is to be literally interpreted, it means that infants TALK as well as lie from birth! Job 14:4 and 15:4 have been stretched to fit into this dogma, but both these two verses simply imply the universality of human sin and bodily frailty, without any reference to the MEANS by which man sins; both may be used to support the idea that man is physically depraved, and by these influences will certainly (not necessarily fixed) sin. John 3:3 can only at the limit state that which is born of fleshly desire will tend to sin (when the will yields to its control), while that which results from the Holy Spirit's agency (in the sense that the will yields to Him), is holy. Nothing here about inherited sinfulness.

(3) Ephesians 2:3 "By nature, the children of wrath" must be compared with Ephesians 2:1 which states man is dead THROUGH HIS OWN trespasses and sins; man's wicked nature has come as the result of his wicked walk in the way of this world, and as previously stated, the word "nature" does not mean the way we were born. God shows that a sinner goes against his nature in his sin (Romans 1:31; 2 Timothy 3:3; James 3:6) his "nature of wrath" is the result of his sinful actions, which have formed in his life a character that makes God angry with him.

Romans 5:19 is an exact parallelism. If the word "were made" means "constituted", as some have said, then all men will be saved, BECAUSE of what Christ did, which is outright Universalism! However, this phrase occurs 21 times in the New Testament and in ALL other places where Paul uses it, it means "to ordain, appoint, put in place of": It is used for the ordination of elders, bishops, priests or judges, and properly means "to put, place, lay down" or put in a position': With this qualification, the passage is clear; Adam's sin put all men in the place of sinners (dependent on their qualifying choices, as we shall see shortly) the Lord Jesus Christ's death put all men in the place of being righteous IF they will make the right choices! As Adam's sin was the occasion (NOT cause) of his race's sin, so Christ's obedience was the occasion, not cause of our redemption by grace through faith.

Every word in this passage (with the possible exception of v.17) where "death" is mentioned is manifestly temporal, or physical, and not spiritual death. This passage has nothing to do with proving that sin "descended from Adam." This interpretation was not found in the early church fathers; it was never given to the passage until the fourth century; was never adopted by the Greek church at all; and is wholly at variance with the design and scope of Paul's whole argument and presentation. Romans 5:12-14 shows that "death" was the penalty of disobeying God's law; but men died from Adam to Moses when there was no law; thus, the death that all men die is not spiritual, but physical. Because Adam sinned, all men DIE; they inherit not sin, but DEATH. In verse 17, Paul catches on points of correspondence between Adam and Christ, (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:45-49); the work of Christ equals, and even surpasses Adam's own failure, so that while Adam brought temporal death to his race, the Lord Jesus brought to man the gift of ETERNAL life.

Nothing is said, as would be expected in verse 20, about Adam's fall extending to his race. Paul knew the word for "impute" (logazomai) meaning to count, reckon, and used it for righteousness (Romans 4:22); but a different word is used in Romans 5:13 (ellogeo - to bring into account). Verse 20 shows instead that the law came in as the occasion of universal sinfulness, implying that men sin now just as Adam did then; by intelligent transgression of the known law of God.

Man IS able to repent when faced with the love of God and the enormity of his sin, and must do so as a first condition of God's restoration to His family. This is directly asserted in both the Old and New Testaments (Isaiah 1:16-18; 55:6-7; Hosea 10:12; Matthew 3:2; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30-31). Because repentance involves a facing of, and turning from, sin, sin is ultimately a MORAL act.

"FALLING SHORT OF THE MARK DOESN'T PROVE IT OUT OF RANGE; THE AIM MAY NOT HAVE BEEN HIGH ENOUGH"

PROBLEMS SINCE THE FALL

Sin has deeply affected every area of life. The same God given endowments that were to take us to the stars of joy and satisfaction have turned against us in sin. Our beings and our world form a unity that has been terribly degraded. Consider:

1. Our BODIES - Afflicted with INTEMPERANCE and SICKNESS

Physical depravity gives great power to temptation. We cannot help our physical nature, and God does not condemn us for being born in such a condition without choice. Parents genetically transmit their blends of physical likeness; if they have lived clean lives for God's glory, the child's body will be similar barring hereditary mishaps or accidents before birth. To a large extent, a likeness of DESIRES and feelings will also be born in baby. Were his parents too fond of food? The child can be born with an over-strong eating appetite. The parents: greed may be sin; the child's appetite the unfortunate result. Thus the parent's sin is "visited" on the children, lasting three to four generations even if the child does not follow its parent's or grandparent's example (Exodus 20:5; Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9). Apart from God's transformation, the world's sin will multiply in each generation. Our ENVIRONMENT has often been filled with smog, polluted rivers, grass buried under concrete, each removing a testimony of God's goodness; our ECOLOGY has rebelled, turning on man's selfishness in an ever-closing circle of destruction, as floods, famines, tornadoes and plagues sweep the world (Matthew 24:7; Romans 8:19-23).

2. Our SOULS - Filled with PRIDE and UNBELIEF

Moral depravity deepens every day in the lost. By sinning much, man has learned to sin more. The natural LOVE of CONSCIOUS FREEDOM God gave us has had no control or discipline; selfishness has flared through our world out of control. Two hundred years ago, the great statesman Edmund Burke warned: "Men qualify for freedom in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains on their own appetites. Society cannot exist un-less a controlling power is put somewhere on will and appetite, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things that men of intemperant minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters. " As moral control collapses, the natural drives governing nourishment, reproduction and defence take terrible power, resulting in the deadly sins of gluttony, (1 Timothy 3:3,8) immorality and immodesty. Once, before sin, nakedness did not induce lust; since the fall, God has commanded covering to reduce temptation and violence in this area (James 4:1-3). The chain of destruction involved in these misuses is described in Romans 1:21-32.

3. Our SPIRITS - Open to spiritual DARKNESS and DEMONIC WORK

Our spirits have been affected by sin. Men have an ignorance of God, an insensitivity to His drawing love, a spiritual night that hinders Divine direction. He is now an alien to God (Ephesians 4: 18; John 12:40; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 2:11; Matthew 6:23; John 3:19; Romans 1:21; 1:18; 1:25; 1 Timothy 6:5). His

CONSCIENCE has become defiled and seared in sin (Isaiah 64:6; Titus 1:15; 2 Peter 2:20; Revelation 22:11) losing its sensitivity to His Spirit. He is open to demonic and Satanic deception and delusion (John 8:44; Ephesians 2:3; Titus 3:3).

4. Our SOCIETY - Degenerate through WORLDLINESS and LUST

The very relationships designed to make man happy have become tools of sin. Man has lost all true perspective of life under God with his fellow-men. He is shown to be a self-satisfied (Revelation 3:17) slave of sin (John 8: 34; Romans 6:16-17, 20; Titus 3:3) who is hypocritical (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16; 23:13, 28) hateful and envious (Titus 3:3) and an enemy of God (James 4:4). The WORLD of sin is not the earth God made, but the whole sinful system selfish men have put together for their own pleasure that is opposed to God and righteousness (Galatians 1:4; John 7:7; James 1:27; John 14: 30; Ephesians 2:2; John 16:8. Man is pleasure-loving or worldly in sin (2 Thessalonians 2:12; 1 Timothy 5:6; 2 Timothy 3:4) that leads to fleshly lusts being developed. The FLESH in Scripture, when referring to self-centered man, is a combination of this bodily self and sin, and refers to man's concentration on emotional gratification through the five senses. Man's worldliness is not a thing, a particular form of dress or behavior, but a wrong heart-attitude.

A RACE OF REBELS

Should a man continue to please himself in deliberate rebellion against the moral or written law of God, his "heart" (supreme choice of purpose) begins to harden (Proverbs 4:23). By giving into desire he becomes a willing slave to it. The mind, building memories and thought habits for living, is torn between God's inbuilt moral law and the growing slavery to sin (Romans 7:21-24). Man is forced to excuse his actions, trying to justify his wrong choices and ignore the twisting knife of conscience. Torment, unrest and unhappiness all result. All unsaved men have in common evil hearts, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9; Ephesians 2:3). Because all choices are made from hope or fear with respect only to self-pleasing, NOTHING man does can be "good" out of Christ. The broken law of God can only condemn him. Conscience rises up and points an accusing finger. Desire becomes a terrible dictator, turning body members into servants of sin (Romans 7:23; 6:12-19). The SAME God-given endowments which were designed for man's service now become his master. If we obey SIN, we become its slaves. All men, without exception, are in one of two choices; service to please God or slavery to pleasing self (1 John 5:12; Matthew 6:22-24). If we fix a pattern of self pleasing too long, we can harden our hearts beyond hope (Mark 16:14; Proverbs 28:14; 29:1; 27:1; Psalm 95:8; Hebrews 3:15).

WHAT then, IS sin? Sin is not primarily the THINGS you DO. It is a state of will. It is a CHOICE of a strong ultimate end in life. It is intent of purpose wrongly and selfishly directed. It is denying God's right to be God in your life. His Holy anger flames out against sin because it destroys all that is beautiful and good in life. Man living in slavery to sin is a hollow mockery of the holy being once made in God's likeness and image. Yet we see Man from his first selfish choice forge an unbroken chain of deceit, pride, lust and rottenness.

Without God in His rightful place as Center and Director of the heart, nothing a man can do will spare him from the righteous wrath of the King of Kings. All his actions, deeds and works are made for selfishness. Aware of his defiance of God's right, but choosing to be ruled by desire, a sinner lives supremely to please only and ultimately himself. Every heartbeat of the life he borrows from God, he flaunts his rebellion in the face of ever-increasing guilt and coming judgment.

A deep sense of sin is sobering. But the Bible never presents sin in such a way as seeing it in ourselves will lead us to hopeless despair. Jesus never condemned a sinner aware of his guilt, but wanting to change (John 8:11). In fact, it was only for those who had SEEN their sin that He offered hope! (Matthew 9:12-13; Romans 3:9-10; Luke 18:9-14; Matthew 21:31-32).

With all the race of Adam deliberate rebels against God's just and holy government, we could expect Him to have just vengeance in His heart. He sees His beautiful world broken and bleeding. Horrors of poverty, immorality and disease rage in men's lives. War, hatred and murder fill the earth with the stench of man against man. Monsters of suicide, insanity and fear stalk the corridors of men's minds. Who would blame God for wiping out this corrupted world and starting all over again? All know right, but choose to sin instead. All know what is best, but insanely do wrong. Filled with lust to have, to do and to be, sinful Man strives to be as selfish as he can. Uncaring of the happiness of others or his Creator, he madly fights to please HIS God - himself.

God cannot forgive man by waiving the demands of universal justice. In His position as Director of the Universe, God must mete out exact justice to all, regardless of their relationship to Him. To do less would disqualify Him to be Judge of the Universe. God's laws are GOOD. There is nothing wrong with THEM. God had to set a penalty for breaking them to bar men from rebellion against the law. Without a penalty, law is only ADVICE. The Ten Commandments are a written expression of a law God Himself keeps; willing the highest good of His Universe and its creatures according to their relative values. They are rules of life to show man the right way of holiness and happiness. If broken, their rights must be upheld by punishing the law-breaker. A penalty shows the seriousness of disobedience and tends to prevent the law from being broken again. The penalty of sin is DEATH, separation from the privileges of fellowship with God, the Source and Substance of all life. God must be true to His own holiness. To set aside the penalty of a broken law would be to throw out the law itself. Justice, the letter of a broken law, can only CONDEMN the law-breaker. We cannot turn to the law for pardon. It excludes pardon and forgiveness and has no power to reform the guilty (James 2:10; Romans 6:23; 7:7-12; Matthew 5:17-20; 1 Timothy 1:8).

Since the Fall, MERCY, not only JUSTICE is God's rule of action for man. The Bible pictures God as pleading with man, waiting to suspend judgment at the slightest sign of repentance. God longs to forgive and relax all claims against our race of rebels.

Yet - a problem! For God to freely forgive would weaken the strength of justice and encourage future rebellion and disobedience. Others could say, "If those law-breakers could get away with it, so can we." God has no way to forgive a sinner without transforming him. How could God resolve these two great opposites of mercy and justice.

God has given us a Book. With amazement, we discover in its Pages what is without doubt the most amazing truth in the Universe! The BIBLE, God's wonderful revelation to man shows us that despite the ruin of His world and the great grief man's rebellion has caused the Godhead - God is LOVE! God's problem in forgiving man is NOT personal, but governmental. He has conquered all vindictive feelings of bitterness and vengeance towards His wayward creation.

His heart longs for man to be reconciled; restored to the warm fellowship He once had in Eden. God is not only willing to FORGIVE, but having found a way to be just and pardon too, is willing to FORGET! (Psalm 86:5; Nehemiah 9:17; Lamentations 3:22; Nahum 1:3; Titus 3:4; 1 John 4:8)!

God needed a substitute for the penalty of the law that would uphold the law and yet have as much effect on the law and the law-breaker as the penalty itself would have had. Faced with terrible difficulty, the Godhead's infinite wisdom found the only possible way to satisfy both the demands of justice and their loving choice to show mercy and pardon.

"THE VERY NAILS REJECTION DRIVES, KEEPS God'S HANDS OUTSTRETCHED."

MERCY AND JUSTICE FUSED

The Lord Jesus, Himself part of the lawgiving Godhead, humbled Himself and became man (Philippians 2:5-7; John 1:14; Luke 1:26-35). He lived a spotless life in perfect obedience to His Father's will (John 8:29; Hebrews 5:8). He went about "doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). He healed the broken-hearted, preached deliverance to the captives, brought sight to the blind and set at liberty them that were bruised (Luke 4: 18). For just over three years, the Prince of Peace walked the sin scarred streets of this world as a living demonstration of God's tender concern for man. He gave man a glimpse into the Father-heart of God (Matthew 6:26-30; John 6:39; 14:9; 16:26-27). He gave the ultimate demonstration of God's love for His sinning world, when before a sobbing Universe He bore in His own body on the cross of Calvary, God's just punishment for sin. The earth shook, the sky screamed as the Son of God bled and gasped out His life. The Father hid His face as His Son showed how much sin really cost God. He, the Holy One Who knew no sin, became sin for us (1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

On the lonely Hill of the Skull, a windswept cross draws an unforgettable picture. Once seen with the eyes of faith, it magnetically draws man to God in tearful love and broken repentance.

The Cross reconnects the smashed relationship of man and God. He can now forgive because His only begotten Son provided the great Substitute. The agony of the worst torture in history wrote God's grief and hatred for sin in letters of blood. To see the cross both upholds the law and forgives the repentant sinner (John 3:14-17, 12:32). "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken" (Isaiah 53:3-12).

When a man discovers the truth of the cross, he sees how bad his sin really is. His own guilt is penned in the torn flesh and broken heart of the Son of God. The cross defines the reality man is running from. The soul-shaking shock of understanding the seriousness of sin strips away deceit and pride. Words from the parched lips of the dying Son of man take on a terribly personal meaning . . . "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." We see it is not THIS Man Who deserves to die - but US! The cross does all that God's holy justice and tender love could not do apart from it. It makes a blood atonement for sin (Hebrews 9:22; Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7). It provides a substitute for the penalty of the law (Galatians 3:13; Romans 8:3-4). It throws up a roadblock of love in the life to possible future sin. You can go free if you will - the Man on the middle cross took your place !

CONDITIONS, OF COURSE

God has done all He can to save you from sin. There is nothing more left in heaven or earth God can use to set you free with, to live and to love Him forever. He has met all HIS conditions for mercy and justice.

Have you - WILL you meet YOURS!

If you have seen the Truth and you are NOT really God's child, conviction has gripped your heart. The Holy Spirit makes REAL your deceit and lays bare to you the awfulness of selfishness! Your heart is NAKED before your Maker, Whose all-seeing gaze penetrates every lie and every excuse. You will not just want to "accept Jesus" -- you will cry out from the bottom of your being for the Lord Jesus to accept YOU!

Your guilty, rebel heart has been an enemy of God too long. Nothing you could ever do could make up for the pain and sorrow your sin has caused God and His world; you and I are utterly unworthy even to ask forgiveness of the gracious King of the Universe. Yet, He loves you, despite your sin! And He offers you a FREE PARDON - if you will take it now! "What must I do to be saved?"

Give up your rebellion against reality. Admit your sin. Forsake the gaudy little God you have made of your selfishness. It is not enough to "feel sorry" or to merely admit these facts to be true (James 2:19). You must utterly and totally renounce all future claims on your life - time, talents, money, possessions, friends, career and future (Luke 13:3). Choose with your will to serve and love Jesus Christ and to take sides with Him against your past sin (Luke 13:3). Determine in your heart from this day onwards to love Him, obey Him and follow Him forever. Your heart will never be broken, your doubts will not clear up, you will never die to the world until you trust, surrender, BELIEVE Him from the HEART. Pledge to your Heavenly Beloved to "cleave only to Him, for richer or poorer, for better or worse, in sickness or in health" and you will never part at death (John 8:51).

NOW READY? THERE IS NO TIME LIKE NOW... God HAS DONE ALL HE CAN FOR YOU THE NEXT MOVE MUST BE YOURS!

"God, I've been selfish; I've been proud; I've been nothing but a Hell-deserving REBEL, and I'm sorry! I see NOW what sin has done to me. I'm sick of my old life, God; I really WANT the change You promised me."

"Please God - FORGIVE all my sin. I need you Lord! I surrender my will; I give You my heart. Send me Your Holy Spirit; make Jesus real to me now. From this day on I want to live to please You. Make me Your own child; be my Lord and Master. Amen."

To do this from your heart is to "believe to righteousness. " The moment you grasp the things of Christ, by receiving Him into your heart's throne as King, you will see in the light of eternity the emptiness of the world, of reputation, riches, honor and pleasure. Take hold by faith His forgiveness and His righteousness; surrender to Him all rights to your life. Make a step of committal to Him with the faith that works by love, purifies the heart and overcomes the world. All that you need you will find in the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30).

From this moment on, tell the world who you belong to. "For with the heart man believes to righteousness; and with the mouth, confession is made to salvation" (Romans 10:10-13). When Christ is enthroned in your heart, He will recreate in you His own life. It will no longer be a life lived for selfish "I"; but Christ Who "dwells in me" (Ephesians 3:17). As far as is in your power, make right that which is wrong (Luke 19:8).

Show the world your new ownership by a changed, transfigured life; that you are a man or woman for whom Christ died, IN whom He dwells and THROUGH whom He works (2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians

1:17; Philippians 2:13). Then, and only then will you know the joy and peace of forgiveness - the fellowship of the Godhead in eternal life (1 John 5:1-5; 5:10-13).

"God PAID THE WORLD'S HIGHEST PRICE FOR THE SCRAP OF BROKEN MEN ."

A WORD FOR THE FOOL

Either our God is the LORD or our God is OURSELVES. We can pretend a hypocritical sort of self-righteousness; but there will always be the nagging certainty that it is "appointed unto man once to die, but AFTER DEATH, the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Should you choose to stay selfish and reject the light God has given you, you multiply your guilt and deserve your final destiny (Romans 2:4). Your God is the person or thing you think most about, that to which your thoughts return when there is nothing else at hand, the center of your life. If it is the Lord Jesus Christ, you will one day share the unspeakable privileges of ruling and reigning with Him in the Kingdom of Heaven. If it is yourself and you will not obey the pleadings of the Holy Spirit to repent and believe, you have spurned your last chance for life. You can only come when He calls you. Without the drawing of the Holy Spirit, you will never WANT to obey God (John 6:44). Reject His tender call and you are in great danger of committing the one sin God CANNOT pardon - the final and ultimate rejection of His love.

We have only short years to decide before the curtain of death will draw life to a very permanent close. Life is so short - eternity is so long! If, like the rich young ruler, you must here turn away "sorrowful," the Lord Jesus too will be grieved - but He will LET YOU GO (Mark 10:17-22; Ephesians 4:30). If you will not give up your rebellion against the King, we must here sadly say goodbye to you but do you know where you are going? (2 Corinthians 4: 3-4; 6:2; Psalm 14:1; John 14:2; Mark 16:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2:10-12).

STICK TO IT, SAINT!

There is no hint in the Bible that God promises forgiveness of FUTURE sins. He hasn't planned any cycle of sin and repentance for His disciples! You are not infallible, but neither are you expected to go back into sin. God will keep you safe and protected, but KEEP GOING ON with Him! (Luke 9:62).

Should a man fail God, his heart will condemn him. The law will again bind him to its terrible penalty as long as he persists in his wilful rebellion. If the penalty no longer applied to a disobedient "disciple", it is no longer law, but advice. Such a man would have no rule of right or wrong any more, not being good OR bad. No such Christian exists in Scripture or life. The express teaching of the Bible is to live a life of victory over sin out of love to God (Matthew 5:13-48; 7:12-27;

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