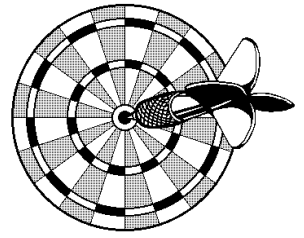


SIN

Before we can truly understand the meaning and working of the first foundation stone (repentance from dead works), we must understand our need of repentance.

REPENTANCE
FROM
DEAD
WORKS



1. WHAT IS SIN?

The Bible defines sin as the "transgression (willful breaking) of the Law" (**I John 3:4 KJV**). A careful study of the various New Testament Greek words which pertain to sin, that sin is:

1. "transgression" - an overstepping of the line which God has between good and evil, or right and wrong.
2. "error" - a departure from the path of that which is right
3. "trespass" - an intrusion of self-will into the sphere of God's authority.
4. "lawlessness" - moral and spiritual rebellion against the established laws of God.

Sin may be correctly defined as "ANY VIOLATION OF, OR LACK OF CONFORMITY TO, THE WILL OF GOD".

2. WHAT IS INIQUITY?

Iniquity (also called lawlessness) is that sin which we inherit when we are born into the world. The Bible also refers to it as the "law of sin" (**Romans 7:23, Romans 8:2**). Because of this inherited sin or iniquity, we come into this world being "BY NATURE the children of wrath" (**Ephesians 2:3**) and in desperate need of being born again. The basic element of iniquity is selfishness--the love of self as opposed to love for God.

Contrary to what is often thought, a man is not a sinner because he does sinful things. The problem with this reasoning is that it then appears that one who seems to have no evident sin is not a sinner. The Bible teaches that we are all born into sin and that there is "none righteous, no not one" (**Romans 3:10**); and "all have sinned and fall short of the grace of God" (**Romans 3:23**).

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."
(**Psalms 51:5**)

"Strip yourselves of your former nature -- put off and discard your old unrenewed self -- which characterized your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion."

(**Ephesians 4:22 Amp.**)

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit

that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too ALL formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were BY NATURE CHILDREN OF WRATH, even as the rest."
(Ephesians 2:1-3)

3. WHAT ARE DEAD WORKS?

Dead works are both the things we do and the attitudes we have which are unacceptable to God and contrary to His Law. These "dead works", which may be anything from attempting to establish our own righteousness to committing gross sin, results from the inherited iniquity within us, which causes us to want our own way and to live apart from the direct government of God.

"All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to HIS OWN WAY; But the Lord has caused the INIQUITY of us all to fall on Him." **(Isaiah 53:6)**

"For OUT OF THE HEART come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders."
(Matthew 15:19)

"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed BY HIS OWN LUST." **(James 1:14)**

The most insidious manifestation of iniquity, and the one most difficult to detect, is the inborn hostility we each have to the things of God. It continues to work in us, in some measure. It causes us to resist the call of God to salvation through out our Christian lives. This explains why it is so difficult at times to respond correctly to the recreating and perfecting work of the Holy Spirit within us. Read **Genesis 6:5, 8:21; Romans 5:10, 7:18, 8:7; I Corinthians 2:14.**

4. HOW CAN WE KNOW THAT INIQUITY IS INHERITED???????

The Bible tells us that God created man in His own image and likeness. Basically, this means two things:

- A. Man alone of all that was created is a reflection of the personality and character of God. He is a rational, intelligent being and capable of love, compassion, etc., In his original state, man was innocent (i.e. not only sinless, but also completely unaware of even the possibility of sin).
- B. Secondly, man is composed of body, soul and SPIRIT **(I Thess. 5:23; Rom. 8:10; I Cor. 2:11; Heb. 4:12)**. It is primarily in this way that man is a reflection of the nature of God, and not merely an extension of animal life.

After the creation had been completed, God told Adam that he could partake of all that was in the garden of Eden with the exception of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and warned him that if he disobeyed,

he would die (**Gen. 2:16-17**). Adam disobeyed God's command, thereby sinning and losing his innocence and eventually dying. We know that sin is inherited: because every man sins (**Romans 3:23**) and every man dies (**Romans 5:12-14, 17-19**).

5. BY WHOM WAS SIN BROUGHT INTO THIS WORLD?

God is NOT responsible for sin. Sin was brought into the world by the devil, who once was a holy angel but sinned against God and lost his heavenly estate (**Ezk. 28:12-17; Isa. 14:12-14**), and by man, who, of his OWN FREE WILL, yielded to the temptation of the devil.

"For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was NOT ADAM WHO WAS DECEIVED (in other words, he fell because of a willful and knowing decision) but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression."

(I Timothy 2:13,14)

"Therefore, just as through ONE MAN (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned," (**Romans 5:12**)

6. IS THERE A MEANS OF DELIVERANCE FROM THE CURSE OF INIQUITY?

Even before we have begun to understand the origin and nature of iniquity, we long to be free from its evil influence upon our lives and to know that it has been vanquished once and for all. Is this possible? Yes!

Concerning the nature of this deliverance from iniquity, Paul said:

"I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will SET ME FREE from the body of this death?" (**Romans 7:23,24**)

"There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life IN CHRIST JESUS has SET YOU FREE from the law of sin and death." (**Romans 8:1,2**)

John the Baptist testified:

"Behold the Lamb of God who TAKES AWAY THE SIN OF THE WORLD." (**John 1:29**)

Isaiah wrote:

"Surely our grief He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried;... But he was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, and by His

scourging we are healed... He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth... But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a GUILT OFFERING... As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My servant, WILL JUSTIFY THE MANY, AS HE WILL BEAR THEIR INIQUITIES." (Isaiah 53:4,5,7,10,11)

Jesus Himself said:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE." (John 3:16)

Paul, in writing to the Corinthian Church, says:

"For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He DIED FOR ALL that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf... Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come. Now all these things are from God, WHO RECONCILED US TO HIMSELF THROUGH CHRIST, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM."

(II Corinthians 5:14,15,17-21)

And finally,

"For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON, much more, having been reconciled, WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE." (Romans 5:10)

7. HOW CAN WE CLAIM THIS DELIVERANCE FROM INIQUITY FOR OURSELVES?

We can claim this deliverance for ourselves, and personally enter into the benefits of the atonement, by obeying God's Word. The Bible instructs us to confess our sinfulness to Christ in faith, believing that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Our "born again" experience is then

made complete as we obediently enter the waters of baptism and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

(I John 1:9)

"Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'." **(John 3:5, Acts 2:37-38)**

"Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away." **(Acts 3:19)**

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." **(Ephesians 2:8-9)**

8. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHRISTIAN SINS?

A sinning Christian does not lose his "new birth" and become a sinner again because of his wrong deeds. The parable of the prodigal son is an excellent illustration of this. All the young man needed to do in order to be reinstated in the good graces of his father (not reinstated in the family, he had never lost that place which had been his by birth), was to wake up to his awful condition, repent of his actions and return to his home. This, too, is all that a sinning Christian must do.

"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 cleanse us from all unrighteousness." **(I John 1:8-9)**

"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 (satisfaction) for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world." **(I John 2:1-2)**

9. WHAT DOES SIN DO TO US?

- A. The most important result of sin is that it breaks our fellowship with God.
- B. It affects our own inner workings. When we say that the wages of sin are death, this does not simply speak of the final accounting at the end of life. Sin produces results now. The death process is set in motion the moment we sin and cut off the flow of God's life. This is why immediate

repentance is so important. Sin must be washed out of us before it destroys us from within.

- B. Sin makes us less of a person. Each time we sin, we become less the person we were intended to be. Something dies within us. When we know something about ourselves that makes us think less of ourselves, it is hard for us to expect others to respect us. We lose confidence both before other people and especially before God.

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God." **(I John 3:21)**

- C. Sin creates guilt. God has built into us an inner alarm system to tell us the difference between right and wrong. We call it "conscience". It is possible to alter this conscience until it is no longer accurate. Its purpose is to give us basic moral guidance. When the alarm is sounding, telling us something is wrong, we call it "guilt". This feeling of inner conviction demands attention. God's answer to guilt is the way of repentance: Confess, ask for forgiveness, receive His cleansing, and walk away from the sin. **(I John 1:9)**

- D. Sin begets more sin. Each time we do a sinful act, it is easier for us to do it again. Habits are created through repetition and reinforcement. We must allow God to interrupt our sinful patterns through conviction, repentance and renunciation of sin. When we renounce something, we determine to be done with it.

"But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the Word of God; but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."
(II Cor. 4:2)

10. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS AN UNFORGIVABLE SIN?

Yes, the scriptures refer to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit as an unforgivable or unpardonable sin **(Matthew 12:31; Mark 3:29; I John 5:16)**. In the Gospels blasphemy (from the Greek blasphemis, meaning "to speak evil of God"), appears to have consisted of attributing to the power of Satan those miracles which Jesus wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit. There are two general forms of blasphemy:

1. Attributing some evil to God, or denying Him some good which we should attribute to Him **(Lev. 23:11; Romans 2:24)**.
2. Giving the attributes of God to a creature. The Jews charged Jesus with this **(Luke 5:21; Matthew 26:25; John 10:36)**.

"For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice

for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries. Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay'. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people'. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:26-31)

It should be noted, however, that there is another kind of blasphemy which can be forgiven, provided it is repented of, and that is blasphemy which is committed out of ignorance. Paul himself was guilty of this sin before his conversion.

(I Timothy 1:13)

*** NOTES ***

1. When Adam sinned, it was not merely a matter of disobeying God's commandment. His sinful act brought about a BASIC CHANGE IN HIS NATURE which resulted in a marring of the Godly image in which he had been created. The Bible makes an interesting comment concerning this in **Gen. 5:1-3**: "In the day God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.... He (Adam) became the father of a Son IN HIS OWN LIKENESS ACCORDING TO HIS IMAGE." In other words, Seth was more a reflection of the changed nature of his father than he was of the image of God. As we have already seen, this basic change in nature (iniquity) has been passed down to all mankind. The New Testament provides an equally interesting sequel to this passage of scripture in **I Cor. 15:49** "And just as we have borne the IMAGE OF THE EARTHLY, we shall also bear the IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY." God has provided for the restoration of mankind to Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ.
2. God told Adam "... from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for IN THE DAY that you eat from it you shall surely die." We know that Adam did not actually die a physical death for many years. How do we explain this? Death, according to its scientific definition, is "the cessation of communication with the environment". Man is a tripartite being composed of body, soul and spirit. The spirit of man is that part of his being through which he has God-consciousness. It is through our spirit that the Spirit of God influences and acts upon us, as well as being the portal of man's perception of God. In other words, the Spirit of God is the environment of the spirit of man. When Adam sinned, his spirit ceased to communicate in a life-giving way with God. This death of the spirit eventually spread to the soul and the body.

It is thus that the spirit of unregenerated man is spiritually dead to God. (**Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:13**). He may be religious, moral, learned, capable,

strong and wise, but he is nonetheless dead to God. This does not mean that the spirit has ceased to exist. The spirit of man may be as active or even more so than either the soul or the body (the extreme examples of this are "spiritualists" and "mediums"), but is nonetheless incapable of life-giving communication with God.