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*Holiness Writers*

# **A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN**

By

*Richard S. Taylor*

*“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without  
which no man shall see the Lord” Heb 12:14*

**Spreading Scriptural Holiness to the World**

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# **A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN**

Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

By

**Richard S. Taylor**

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[In a telephone conversation today, May 6, 1997, the author, Dr. Richard S. Taylor, graciously granted HDM permission to digitally publish this work. Our thanks to him for this permission. It is indeed a privilege to be allowed to send forth this Holiness Classic in digital text -- a work which ably and clearly sets forth "The Right Conception of Sin". -- Duane V. Maxey, Holiness Data Ministry]

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**Front Jacket, Inside Fold Text**

"The power of the atonement does not, through faith, take us to heaven in our sinful condition. but changes our condition from sinfulness to holiness in order that we may be prepared for heaven.

"The atonement does not change the nature of sin, but proposes to change the nature at man. It does not take the deadliness out of sin, but takes sin out of man. Therefore we believe the following three facts essential to God's plan of redemption:

"1. Repentance which leads to saving faith is a condition of salvation, and the attitude of repentance -- renunciation and hatred of all sin -- must be retained if salvation is to be retained.

"2. If at any time practice of sin is resumed, or the means of grace carelessly and continually neglected, or faith in Christ as personal Saviour cease to be active, such sin, either of commission or omission, will again separate the soul from God, and if unrepented of, will ultimately cause the loss of all the benefits once known, and the eternal damnation of the soul.

"3. The pardon of all sin through faith and repentance, victory over outward sin, and purging of the nature of all sinfulness, in this life, are three privileges made possible by the blood, and constitute the absolute requirements for entrance into heaven."

This excerpt token from pages 127 and 128 [of the printed edition].

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**Back Jacket Text**

It is of extreme importance that all Christians have a correct conception of sin. Right living and right thinking will come only to the Christian who understands what the New Testament means by sin.

Let this become cloudy, or let it become a matter of indifference, and Christianity will have received a grievous hurt.

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**Back Jacket, Inside Fold Text -- About The Author**

Dr. Richard S. Taylor is associate professor of theology and missions in Nazarene Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri. He was president of the Nazarene Bible College, Sydney, Australia, from 1952 to 1960.

A graduate of Cascade College, Portland, Oregon, and Pasadena College, Pasadena, California, Mr. Taylor received his Th.D. degree from Boston University. For several years he fought in the fields of New Testament and theology of Cascade College.

Beside his broad experience in the academic field, he held very successful pastorates in Oregon and Washington, and his last pastorate was in Everett, Massachusetts.

He has contributed consistently to Nazarene publications, and as a writer has earned a reputation for clear thinking and concise expression.

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**INTRODUCTION**

As a young evangelist constantly meeting the vital problems of men and women seeking salvation in Christ, the author of this book came early to see the need for a brief but plain statement concerning some of the modern errors which have hindered the cause of evangelism. Chief among these, and that to which the author directs his attention principally, is the fallacy of antinomianism. As the name implies, this error has to do with the relation existing between law and grace. In seeking to do away with law as a ground for salvation, too often it has done away with law as a standard of conduct and consequently fallen into the error of a superficial intellectualism. This is an ancient error but with each succeeding age it assumes new forms. Nor is its blighting influence the less for its changed forms of expression. It was condemned by the ancient church. It was revived in Wesley's day and by him and his coadjutors again condemned. Fletcher's "Checks to Antinomianism" will ever be the monumental work on this subject. Its influence was again felt in the modern holiness movement and against it the scholarly and saintly Dr. Daniel Steele took up his pen and gave to the church his well-known book, "Antinomianism Revived." Were these misconceptions of Christian doctrine merely matters of speculative interest, they might well be overlooked in the interest of unity and harmony. But they are not. They strike at the root of all true faith. They are blighting to all true and deep Christian experience. They never issue in spiritual regeneration or the entire sanctification of the heart and its affections.

Rev. Richard S. Taylor, the author of this book, has gleaned from these classic works the truths which he now restates in popular form. But the work is his own. He has felt the need of combating this subtle heresy and writes as he would preach. His approach is practical as well as philosophical. He purposes putting into the hands of his readers a refutation of the subtle arguments of antinomianism, whether theoretical or practical. He aims at a defense of the true scriptural positions and a preservation of vital Christian experience. We commend this work to all who are concerned for the preservation of deep piety, and pray that it may well fulfill the mission for which it is intended by its author.

**H. Orton Wiley**

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**FOREWORD**

Back of this little volume is my belief that there are many religious people in whose minds and hearts the issues discussed herein are terribly alive and personal. Such are seeking not mental relaxation or entertainment, but truth, and they are willing to exercise their minds in the acquirement of it. They must know and understand. It is for these that I have written, and I prayerfully commend this volume to their earnest consideration, hoping fervently that it may illuminate rather than darken the truth, and clarify rather than confuse their thinking on the most vital question of sin.

There is another class who, though not troubled over these issues themselves, will nevertheless be interested in a polemical and strictly biblical discussion of the great crucial problems of human redemption, even though such discussion be in plain, unornamented language. To this group, composed perhaps of preachers, teachers, and young people's leaders, I venture the rather bold assertion that if they will read the book through, every chapter, carefully and prayerfully, they will find both ammunition with which to combat error and a staff with which to assist others in becoming established in Bible truth.

No attempt has been made to make this little volume in any sense exhaustive. It would be impossible, in such a brief work, to deal with and correctly interpret every shade of thought in the various branches of the Calvinistic system, or to answer all the questions and solve all the problems in the minds of my Arminian readers. And let me assure the Calvinist who may read these lines that the arrows and indictments which he may discover are not directed against persons but against doctrines, and that he is reading the words not of an enemy but of a Christian brother, who writes with a heart full of love, and with a prayer that his words may be both enlightening and saving.

**Richard S. Taylor**

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**CONTENTS**

1	SIN AND THEOLOGY
2	SIN AND CALVINISM
3	A BASIC FALLACY
4	THE ATONEMENT AND THE NATURE OF MAN
5	THE ATONEMENT AND THE NATURE OF MAN (Continued)
6	THE ATONEMENT AND A SINNING RELIGION
7	WHAT IS AN ACT OF SIN?
8	THE EFFECT OF SIN AFTER REGENERATION
9	THE ATONEMENT AND THE NEW COVENANT
10	THE ATONEMENT AND ORIGINAL SIN
11	SOME CONCLUSIONS

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# A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

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## Chapter 1 SIN AND THEOLOGY

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil ... (I John 3:10).

Sin, as one doctrine of the Christian system, is the common denominator of the other doctrines. This statement was made to a young woman recently, and after a moment's hesitation she asked, "What do you mean by common denominator?" The writer explained to her that since the question of sin is so basically related to the nature of God and the plan of redemption, it is the one doctrine by which all others can be reduced to their simplest significance. Furthermore, it forms the surest and most logical measuring stick by which the accuracy of those doctrines can be detected.

The doctrines relating to sin form the center around which we build our entire theological system. This is true not only in Christendom but wherever men think of God. Is it not evident that the fact of evil, with its resultant misery, pain, and death, engages the primary attention of all religion? Although some may seek a solution by denying sin's existence, still it can be safely asserted that every religion in the world is an attempt to harmonize man with God and the world about him by solving the problem of evil. And as Christians, if our conception of sin is faulty, our whole superstructure will be one error built on another, each one more absurd than the last, yet each one necessary if it is to fit in consistently with the whole erroneous scheme. If we are to end right we must begin right, and to begin right we must grapple with the question of sin in its doctrinal significance until we have grasped the scriptural facts relating to sin in all of its phases. We need to know exactly what sin is, of what kinds, how it acts, its effects, its relation to man, how it must be dealt with, and God's provision for it. When we arrive at a solemn appreciation of all this, from the standpoint of Scripture, we may proceed to build our system of theology with confidence, knowing that our conclusions will be based on correct premises.

Many, perhaps most, of the errors which have protruded themselves into Christian theology can be finally traced to a faulty conception of sin. Because someone's notions of sin were a bit off-color, his entire trend of reasoning was misdirected. The pilot of the night air transport, winging his ways over the rugged mountains, knows that the slightest drift from his course would be dangerous, for the slight drift would very quickly become a wide one. Perhaps it would prove disastrous. And a theologian's ideas of sin may have only slight error, seemingly innocent, but that is sufficient to cause a distinct deviation in the line of his thinking and as his system develops he is carried out on the wings of human fancy, farther and farther from the truth. This can be more readily understood when we remember that for a religious system to gain any degree of acceptance among thinking men it at least must be consistent with itself. Thus one error leads to another, and so on, ad infinitum. To reason from a false premise is to start an endless chain of false conclusions. Therefore we say that one who does not have correct views of sin is not apt to have correct views of any other fundamental

question. This will especially be manifest in regard to his theory of the atonement and God's method of redeeming man.

Suppose we imagine, for a moment, the building of a false doctrinal system. A theologian conceives an idea, a tenet. He clings to it tenaciously and loves it almost better than truth, because it is the child of his own brain. Soon he discovers that his "brain child" is not in harmony with the accepted, established doctrines of orthodoxy. Now, instead of carefully scrutinizing his own theory with a suspicious eye, endeavoring to ascertain the trouble with it, he proceeds to reconstruct other connecting doctrines in order that they may be made consistent with his. He knows that all the doctrines of the Christian faith have a direct bearing on each other, and are so closely interlocked that they form a unified system, a complete cycle of truth. He knows that to tamper with one is to cripple the whole structure. Therefore, in order to justify and maintain his own view he finds it necessary to reorganize and change the whole system. He may begin at the center, with an erroneous idea of sin, and work outward until every doctrine has been warped by his deadly falsehood. On the other hand he may begin at the circumference and work inward until sooner or later he is compelled to adopt new ideas of sin that will fit in with the rest of his heresy. Whether, however, he begins with sin and proceeds from there or commences from the outer circle, the doctrines relating to sin are central. They hold the others together. As expressed by H. V. Miller in "The Sin Problem," "The sin question is the pivotal question. Anything taught or preached which obscures the cruciality of sin becomes an enemy of the Cross of Christ." And to insist on correct views of sin is to make it impossible to stray very far from essential truth.

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## Chapter 2 SIN AND CALVINISM

Controversy, though not desirable in itself, yet, properly managed, has a hundred times rescued truth, groaning under the lash of triumphant error. -- John Fletcher

It is the writer's intention to examine carefully a well known system of doctrine which has a very vital bearing on this most important question of sin. This system is generally spoken of by the term Calvinism. In its examination there is no desire to be unduly contentious or to cast any personal reflections on any who may sincerely embrace its doctrines. The writer earnestly believes, however, that a conscientious analysis of Calvinism in the light of the Scripture teaching on sin will mean some startling revelations both to the sincere Calvinist and uninformed Arminian. We will start with the Calvinistic theory of predestination, and from there trace briefly four successive and essential steps of the system. The doctrine of predestination, stated simply, holds that the exact number who will be saved and lost is irrevocably fixed and predetermined by God, solely on the basis of his own desire and decree. There are no higher authorities as to what Calvinists themselves teach than such statements of belief as the Westminster Confession. We quote from it (Ch. 3, Sections 3 and 4): "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life and others foreordained unto everlasting death. These angels and men, thus predestined and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished." To sustain the theory the theologian argues chiefly from the sovereignty and prescience of God. But where will this view take us? We shall follow it and see. We cannot explore all the effects of this doctrine, for it reaches out in every direction and touches every phase of truth (especially does it affect the doctrine of the Atonement); but we will follow it by the shortest route to the center, and see what it does with the sin question.

To begin with, in order to make a place for this tenet, the theologian finds that he must reconstruct his ideas of moral agency or the freedom of the human will. The outcome of this reconstruction is that he has freed the individual from all personal responsibility for his ultimate salvation, and placed the whole responsibility on God. To quote again from Westminster Confession, God arbitrarily saves the individual "without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto: and all to the praise of his glorious grace." This plan of unconditional salvation the theologian labels "grace," and proclaims that we are saved by grace alone, without any effort or conditions on our part whatsoever. We have no ability to counteract it by a personal, independent choice of our own. Mackintosh, in "Christianity and Sin," says that the doctrine of predestination "implies absolute grace, against which nothing stands."

This naturally, inevitably, forces him to take the next step and say that when once a man is regenerated he can never afterward forfeit salvation and be lost. For, if we are saved by grace alone, and what we do is not a determining factor at all, then of course nothing we do after we have been saved can possibly change our status. And again, if we are predestined by a divine, unchangeable, unconditional decree, to be saved, it would be unthinkable that God should change his mind in the midst of our career and allow us to slip from the ranks of the redeemed into the ranks of the lost.

Now the theologian finds himself in serious difficulties. How can he reconcile his "once in grace, always in grace" theory with the Bible standards of holiness and righteousness? He knows that many people who are converted afterward fall into gross sin. How can he logically keep them in the kingdom in spite of their sin? How can he arrange it so that sin will not separate the Christian from God, and at the same time avoid the stigma attached to raw Antinomianism (lawlessness)? He solves the problem by deriving from his "satisfaction theory" of the atonement the doctrine of "Imputed Righteousness." This means that Christ so represented us that his righteousness is accounted as ours, as though we ourselves had been perfectly obedient and righteous. By inference, this means that such accounting, or "transfer of credit," foregoes the necessity of our being actually and personally righteous. Christ's righteousness was sufficient for both himself and us. Our sin or righteousness, personally, has nothing to do with the matter, as long as we accept Christ's work on the cross and through faith hide behind his righteousness. In our actual heart condition we may be unclean, but God doesn't look at us; he looks at Christ and imputes unto us his righteousness. If a believer sins he is not liable to eternal punishment, for his guilt is transferred to Christ, and Christ's righteousness is transferred to him. As one lady very sincerely expressed it, "We are to 'reckon' ourselves dead indeed unto sin. Of course the sin is still there, we can never get rid of that, but we are to reckon ourselves dead to it because of Christ's completed work for us."

Thus we have the Calvinistic rectangle. And can we not see how one corner of this system requires another? First, (1) we have the doctrine of predestination; (2) then comes this peculiar interpretation of sovereign grace, denying man a free will in order to sustain predestination; (3) then as the natural outgrowth of the first two tenets, results the theory that a person once saved can never be lost; (4) and now to make these three consistent, it is most necessary to add the fourth, imputed righteousness. For without it how could we take the "saved sinner" to heaven? That some people once saved afterward fall into awful open sin and never repent cannot be successfully denied. But take them to heaven we must, in order to sustain the doctrine of "once in grace, always." And -- to review a bit -- this latter doctrine of unconditional, predetermined perseverance is necessary if we are to justify the Calvinist's interpretation of grace and his doctrine of predestination. Thus we see that one of these four doctrines requires all the rest. Not one can stand alone. Destroy one and the other three will collapse.

Quite frequently, however, we find Calvinists who seemingly have repudiated some of their doctrines while clinging to others. For instance, they pride themselves that they have gotten away from the hyper-Calvinism of a limited atonement and the predetermined damnation of the non-elect. "We now know," they say, "that the gospel is for 'whosoever will'." Going a step farther, they preach as though the responsibility rested with man as well as God by telling sinners to repent, to act. Thus in one stroke they cut away the foundation of Calvinism, and apparently believe in two good Arminian doctrines: the free will of man and the unlimited provision of the atonement. Now,

however, they turn around and tell the babe in Christ that he is eternally secure and under no conditions can ever be lost. Thus, having removed the foundation, they rush beneath the superstructure of "imputed righteousness" and "eternal security" and hold it aloft by force of sheer theological courage. Logic could never so uphold it, for logic shows that all the implications of "imputed righteousness" and "eternal security" have their structural girders firmly and inseparably fastened in the foundation of hyper-Calvinism. A little careful thinking will reveal that "eternal security" implies monergism, or the absolute sovereignty and irresistible grace of God, while "imputed righteousness" implies the "satisfaction" or "penal theory" of the atonement. Both of these views demand the doctrines of a limited atonement and predestination, with their unconditional election and unconditional reprobation. It would be impossible for one to believe rationally that salvation is truly, sincerely provided for all men, without relinquishing the "satisfaction theory" of the atonement, and that would mean the total destruction of any basis whatsoever for all other Calvinistic doctrines, including the most cherished one, eternal security. And any attempt to construct these doctrines without this foundation is like trying to build only the five top stories of a ten-story building. It becomes evident, therefore, that the old hyper-Calvinism is after all more consistent with itself than is this milder, more modern type.

Notice how confusing and self-contradictory it is to tell the sinner to repent, to act, as though he were partially responsible for his own salvation, then tell him that, once saved, he is eternally secure. It implies that man has responsibility before conversion but none after. It means that a person has ability to get into the kingdom but none to get out. It gives sinners a free moral agency, but denies it to Christians. A strange dilemma! Surely if a sinner is morally responsible to become saved he is just as morally responsible to remain saved. It is absurd to infer that conversion destroys freedom of the will, or marks the end of probation. Therefore in order to be logical we must affirm that if a sinner has a personal part to play in obtaining entrance into the kingdom, he also has ability to get out again, and if he has no ability to get out of the kingdom, then he has no personal ability whereby he may get in. In such case, why the need of warning, of exhorting sinners? of preaching at all? If it is entirely a matter of unconditional grace and divine sovereignty any of the time, then it is a matter of grace and sovereignty all the time; and if in any sense the individual is responsible for his salvation, then that responsibility is retained throughout the entire period of his probation. We see, therefore, that to be consistent we must accept the whole Calvinistic rectangle or reject it all.

Far more logical was Calvinism's answer to Carey when that fervent youth dared to challenge his ministerial brethren with their responsibility for the salvation of the heathen. "Young man, sit down, sit down!" cried the leader. "You're an enthusiast [fanatic]. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He'll do it without consulting you and me." That is undisguised Calvinism. Though it does not represent the modern attitude of Calvinism toward evangelism and missions, it is more thoroughly consistent with the basic doctrines of their system.

But how does this theological system affect the doctrines relating to sin? It vitally shifts the very foundations of those doctrines. As we sift out each proposition, we find that in the last analysis the Calvinistic system means:

1. That the atonement of Christ saves us in this life from the results of sin but not from the sin itself;

2. That the atonement does not so much change the nature of the Christian in relation to sin as it changes the nature of sin in relation to the Christian.

The difference indicated in this last statement is tremendous. The real truth of the matter is, the Calvinist whose life is consistent with his doctrines should not say that he reckons himself dead indeed unto sin, for that does not correctly state his position as indicated by those doctrines. Rather he should say that he reckons sin dead unto him. Sin is shorn of its power, and no longer damns or separates from God. When he says that he is saved from the dominion of sin he means that sin, though still present and active, has lost its dominion. As far as any power to bring one under eternal condemnation is concerned, it is dead. Is not that what it amounts to when we say that sin damns the unconverted sinner but cannot send the Christian to hell? The Calvinist may reply that the sinner is lost not because of his sins but because of his unbelief, and the Christian is saved not because of righteousness but because of faith in Christ. Even if true, the situation remains the same; that is, when an individual looks away to Calvary and accepts Christ, that moment sin loses its deadly sting. The Christian remains sinful, later may again be an open sinner, all of which is pitiable and should be avoided of course, but it is no longer fatal. The Christian is not delivered from sin, his nature is not fundamentally changed by a complete cleansing, but the nature of sin is changed so that it is no longer deadly.

In other words, the sinner sins and is damned forever, but the Christian, who has been converted, may thereafter commit the same sins, but is merely -- taken home to heaven! The writer has actually known an eminent Bible expositor to say that if a Christian persisted in his sin, God would be forced to take him to heaven. Such teachers are compelled to take this stand as a means of getting around passages like John 15:2, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away," and at the same time remain consistent with their theories. If we follow this idea logically it means that a poor Christian who gets homesick for heaven and anxious to go before his normal time need only plunge into deep sin, thus making it impossible for God to use him here any longer. A preposterous notion!

True, the above absurd notion is extreme and would not be countenanced by the more spiritual Calvinists. Nevertheless, their system of doctrine does mean that the sinning Christian is still a true child of God. A young minister stood in the pulpit of a friend of the writer and testified to the congregation that he had at one time backslidden into deep sin, had in fact gone so deep that he visited Tia Juana, Mexico, and partook of almost every vice in that vile cesspool of iniquity. Then after such a confession he said to the people, "But thank God, I was His child all the time." Another young man was music director of a large church in a southern city. Because of a supposed personal injury by the pastor he angrily resigned and went into deep sin. When asked afterward if he would have been saved had he died in that condition he replied, "Oh, yes, there was never a moment that I did not feel the blessed witness of the Spirit that I was a child of God." Revolting, you say. Yes, and we add, blasphemous, a reflection on the intelligence and sincerity of God! But this is a practical application of Calvinism. Here we have theories carried into experience. If Calvinism is true, then regardless of how revolting it may seem, those ministers were right in their claims.

In plain language, the Calvinistic system of predestination, grace, perseverance, and imputed righteousness, means that as a condition of getting to heaven complete deliverance from sin is unnecessary.

Who would say that this does not vitally affect the very foundation of the sin question, and all doctrines relating directly to redemption? Is this a right or wrong conception of sin? If wrong, then the entire Calvinistic system is unscriptural.

Although we gladly recognize that many who call themselves Calvinists have obtained an experience which is contrary to their doctrines and even their own terminology -- an experience in which they joyously and triumphantly live victoriously over sin -- we nevertheless believe that in the lives of the vast majority of Calvinists the general influence of the doctrines themselves has tended more to carelessness than to holiness. We believe that this conception of sin on which Calvinism rests is decidedly false, and has been the root of all manner of tragic errors. We believe, further, that the true biblical position is exactly the opposite, thus reversing completely God's method of redeeming fallen man; that is, he saves man by changing his nature sufficiently to deliver him from all sin.

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**Chapter 3**  
**A BASIC FALLACY**

Sin is deadly. It must, therefore, be destroyed, or it will destroy. Any remedy that does not take primal account of sin, and aim at its absolute abolition, is insufficient, if not spurious. -- Lowrey

Both Arminians and Calvinists agree (1) that man is very far gone from original righteousness; (2) that man is separated from God and subject to God's just wrath by reason of his sin; and (3) that the atonement made by Christ was provided to remedy this situation. The issue is, Was the atonement calculated to change the nature of sin, and thus save man in his sin, or change the nature of man and thus save him by separating him from his sin? It is desired that this issue should be clear. This is not an idle discussion, "vain jangling," or an indifferent problem. We are dealing with the momentous questions of sin and redemption, on which hinges the eternal destiny of man. On such weighty matters there can be no "innocent" fallacy; therefore we should give earnest attention, lest souls for whom our Lord died be deceived by an unsound conception of sin.

We do not wish to infer that Calvinists anywhere teach as a theory that the atonement of Christ changes the nature of sin. They teach, rather, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer. This says not that sin itself has been changed in nature or has become less repugnant, but that it has been charged to the account of Christ, and his righteousness credited to our account. The atonement, according to this theory, provided a continuous, automatic covering for the sins of the believers, so that God does not see the sins, but the covering, much as we would fail to see the dirty, filthy tramp but only the beautiful borrowed cloak which covers him. No, they do not teach that the atonement changes the nature of sin; in fact, they would perhaps deny such an assertion. What we believe, and are attempting to show, is that their system of theology means just that, in the last analysis. Whether they teach it as a theory or not, Calvinism actually involves the premise that God's method of redeeming the race is by changing the nature of sin rather than by removing it and delivering from it.

We do not wish to appear unfair or hasty in our analysis of Calvinism. In case there may be a lingering doubt in the mind of the reader that the above interpretation is true, a little argument from the laws of cause and effect will make it clear.

A real effect of any cause is something which necessarily results from that cause. That particular cause invariably produces that particular effect. The warm rays of the sun contact the earth's surface, and light is the essential, invariable result. The crashing, rolling thunder is the invariable effect of a sky-splitting bolt of lightning. It would be utterly impossible for the effect, thunder, to continue without the lightning; if it could so remain it of course would not be an effect at all but something independent and self-sufficient apart from the lightning. If thunder is a true effect of lightning, then thunder is dependent for its existence upon the existence of its cause. And as long as the nature of



this cause remains unchanged the effect of thunder will continue the same. For, we repeat, an effect is something which necessarily and intrinsically follows the cause. Therefore, the removal or alteration of the effect is positive proof that the cause has also been removed or altered. Now let us apply this simple philosophic principle to the problem of sin and redemption. Sin is the cause; death is the result. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). "But sin ... working death in me" (Romans 7:13). "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). "Who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). "And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15). Now Calvinism proposes to remove this effect, and give eternal life. (They are always careful to insist that the believer has eternal life.) But to remove the effect of sin, which is death, and give eternal life, one of two things must be done; either (1) the cause must be changed sufficiently to allow for the change in effect, or (2) it must be altogether removed. Now we quickly say that God's method of enabling the individual to escape death is by removing the cause from the heart and life of the individual. But the Calvinist disagrees. He does not believe in complete deliverance from all sin. In fact, in his doctrines he holds that one may have even awful sin in the life, but if he has at one time been genuinely regenerated, such sin will not produce the usual effect, eternal death. Therefore Calvinism must involve the premise that the atonement, applied in conversion, changes the nature of sin.

Now, when a cause ceases to produce a given result, and yet the cause is not wholly removed, as is presumably the case before us, we naturally want to know what integral parts of the cause were responsible for producing that particular effect. Suppose the nature of a given cause consisted in a combination of factors, or parts, numbering 1, 2, 3, 4. Were parts 1 and 2 responsible for the particular effect which has suddenly disappeared? If so, then we know that if the whole of the cause was not removed, at least those parts were; otherwise, the effect resulting from those parts would not have ceased. Now in the case before us, sin as a whole has not been removed, but the particular effect of death ceases. What was it in the nature of sin that necessitated death? When we know what that was, we will know what part of sin the atonement had to destroy in order to save the "sinning Christian" from eternal death. If we find that it consists of principles which cannot possibly be destroyed, then we will know that the Calvinistic conception of sin is erroneous.

To begin with, just what is sin, the cause? Defined briefly, sin is deviation from God's holiness and revealed will, either in Condition or in act. Now, just what is spiritual death, the result of sin? It involves (1) separation from God, (2) depravity of the moral and spiritual nature, and (3) just punishment. Depravity of nature, we may add, is simply "deviation from God's holiness ... in condition"; it is sin in the spirit.

Spiritual death, as defined above, is an essential effect of, and is always produced by, the following combination of facts:

1. The holiness and justice of God;
2. The choice of evil, or unholiness and injustice, on the part of God's subject;

3. The principle of intrinsic antagonism between good and evil, holiness and unholiness, justice and injustice. "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Hab. 1:13).

The holiness of God combined with the second and third facts produces separation, for how could God fellowship with evil without violating his holiness? The justice of God combined with facts two and three requires punishment, for how could God fail to attach a penalty without violating His justice? Choice of evil combined with the resultant separation begets depravity of nature. As Arminius said: "Man became depraved as a result of being deprived of God's presence" (Watson's Institutes). Thus the combination of these three facts always produces spiritual death -- separation, guilt and depravity -- and that instantly. And this never changes. God's holiness and justice never change. The principle of antagonism between good and evil never changes. Therefore the combination of these two facts with deliberate choice of evil will of necessity and at all times and in all individuals produce death. The atonement did not, could not, change this. Our Lord made it possible for God to extend mercy and forgive sin, and restore the forgiven soul to divine fellowship and favor, by taking upon himself the sentence of death; but by no stretch of the imagination, or juggling of words, or straining of metaphors, or clever theorizing, can we conceive how we could remove the antagonism between good and evil and enable God to have fellowship and union with willful sinners. "As it is the nature of the eye to preserve its purity by washing away all dust; so it is the nature of God to repel all sin," observes Lowrey in "Possibilities of Grace." He adds, "Every particle and shade of iniquity creates in the soul of God a revulsion."

Even our Calvinist friends admit that sin breaks one's fellowship with God, but they insist that fellowship and eternal life are independent, and that one may lose fellowship with God without forfeiting eternal life. But -- and we ask in all kindness -- is this either scriptural or sensible? "Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). Plainly, if we belong to God, we have the Spirit of Christ. But can God the Spirit remain in the same heart with willful sin, with his blessing and fellowship? If so, then a holy and just God can bless and fellowship with choice of evil, thus denying the truth of the third fact -- antagonism between good and evil. It is a blasphemous suggestion. And to say that God the Spirit will remain in a heart without fellowshiping with that heart is just as trifling; like two who will walk together but will not speak. To all practical purposes, lack of fellowship with God is a very real separation, and separation is one element of death. The depravity resulting from separation is another element. Such separation and choice of evil would certainly imply guilt and the displeasure of God; hence we have the third element of spiritual death, liability to just punishment. And if we have the sentence of death in its full meaning, do we yet have eternal life? If we do not have the Spirit, are we any of his? Surely it is plain that neither the atonement nor the experience of the new birth could possibly prevent the combination of the three facts from producing death. Indeed, sin, rather than being less fatal, is more dangerous and deadly since Calvary than before, according to the plain inference of Hebrews 10:28, 29 (American Revision): "A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

And yet, as we have previously noted, the combination of the three facts (see page 24) would have to be removed in order to change satisfactorily the nature of sin, for it is this combination that produces death!

To remove the first or third facts -- the fact of God's holiness and justice or the fact of antagonism between good and evil -- is an impossibility. And if we remove the second fact -- choice of evil -- which is possible through the power of the Spirit and the merits of the blood, we will have no commission of sin left! We have not only removed spiritual death when we take away the second fact, but have removed sin itself. And we have not changed its nature, but removed it altogether. To summarize: Choice of evil, or sin in act, always produces the combination of the three facts, and such combination always brings forth death. Therefore, to change the nature of sin sufficiently to prevent spiritual death, in fact, to change the nature of sin at all, is something that a holy and just God could not do. The only alternative, as a means of getting rid of death as the effect of sin, is to remove, altogether, that form of sin (sins, plural) which effects death. We conclude then that any conception of sin which implies that the genius of the atonement consists in changing the nature of sin, is absurd.

Now let us point out three further conclusions deduced from the above truth.

1. First, salvation is an individual matter; hence, to free the individual from death requires that he be freed individually from sin. Herein do we see the necessity of personal repentance even though Christ's work of atonement has been completed. To benefit by the death of Christ and obtain the eternal life provided, one must break the combination of causes which produce death by renouncing and forsaking sin.

2. Secondly, Calvinism is found to be built on an impossible foundation. As has already been demonstrated, the new birth has no power by which it can keep the combination of the three facts (see page 24) from bringing forth death. Regeneration changes God's attitude toward the individual, but does not change his attitude toward sin. Therefore the only way whereby the newborn Christian can retain his freedom from spiritual death is by preventing the first and third facts from uniting with the second; in other words, continuing to abhor and reject all known sin. For him again to choose evil, thus again uniting that deadly combination, will once more produce in his soul all the horrors of spiritual death: separation from God, depravity of nature, and liability to punishment. True, for him speedily to repent from the heart and plead the blood of Jesus will release him before the spiritual death is entirely realized. The Spirit departs slowly and reluctantly. But for him persistently to choose evil without repentance until his physical death is for him to die in a state of spiritual death and remain so throughout eternity.

We see, then, that one has a personal responsibility both in obtaining salvation and retaining it, and that a converted person may afterward forfeit divine favor and die under the sentence of death. His period of probation does not end at conversion. This does not minimize the purpose and power of the atonement, but clarifies in our thinking its real intention. Many who have been sidetracked into thinking that it accomplished something which was impossible of accomplishment need to see clearly how and what it did effect. It made possible the pardon of past sins and released a grace for

the repentant soul whereby he would be enabled to live free from sin, thus continuing to escape the sentence of death.

3. Thirdly, sin, we remember, is deviation from the holiness and revealed will of God either in willful choice or in condition. When, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, that kind of sin which is deviation in willful choice ceases -- in other words, actual sinning ceases -- then the sentence of death is immediately lifted. This includes (1) reinstatement into the presence and favor of God, (2) freedom from the sentence of punishment, and (3) cleansing from that depravity of nature which was the direct result of one's own personal choice of evil. By this third clause we mean freedom from the acquired depravity which was an integral part of one's own personal sentence of death. Just as a tiny ball of snow will accumulate more snow by rolling down the hillside, so the seed of sin in the heart of a babe will enlarge constantly as the result of continued yielding to it. The man of forty years is far more depraved than he was at twenty, and the man at twenty is many times more depraved than he was in infancy. But at either twenty or forty, the new birth delivers him from sin in act and this acquired sin in condition. But there is another, a more general sentence of death, passed on humanity as a race. This also includes a principle of depravity and is inherited by every individual. This precedes acquired depravity, is independent of that individual sentence of death which was the direct result of our personal choice of evil, and therefore remains in the heart after that personal sentence of death is lifted. And now we come to the supreme glory of the atonement. The shed blood of our Christ not only provides pardon, adoption, and regeneration, but also cleansing from this inherent principle of depravity. This we intend to show more clearly in a later chapter. (See Chapter 10.)

We have attempted to show that the Calvinistic conception of sin is philosophically unsound. In contrast to it we say that the purpose of the atonement was not only to make possible a covering for past sins, but to make possible a change in the nature of man himself whereby he is changed from sinfulness to holiness. This is the Arminian and Wesleyan view. It is definitely opposed to the plan of making possible man's eternal salvation from sin and death without the need of present, personal salvation from sin.

Thus far the discussion has been based on a careful and frank examination of some simple, philosophic principles involved. We turn, now, to the conclusive witness of Scripture. The Arminian view of the sin problem can be further proved by:

1. Those Scriptures which describe the power of the atonement as operating, by the Spirit, directly upon the nature of man himself. (Chapters 4 and 5.)

2. Those passages which clearly state the purpose of Christ's works as being to separate sin from man and man from sin. (Chapter 6.)

3. Those verses which imply man's responsibility by stating as a condition of salvation his personal obedience to God and right attitude toward sin. (Chapter 8.)

4. Those passages of exhortation and warning to Christians concerning the results of sin. (Chapter 8.)

5. Those passages which reveal the meaning of the New Testament, or Covenant. (Chapter 9.)

6. Those passages which indicate the provision in the atonement for perfect and present deliverance from inherent or inner sin. (Chapter 10.)

7. Those Scriptures which arbitrarily or indirectly make true holiness and righteousness essential qualifications for heaven. (Chapter 10.)

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A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN  
Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

By  
Richard S. Taylor

**Chapter 4**  
**THE ATONEMENT AND THE NATURE OF MAN**

Nor does the preaching of this internal slavery, this bondage of spiritual corruption, shock our hearers. No: this mixture of light and darkness passes for gospel in these days. -- John Fletcher

Those Scriptures which describe the power of God as operating directly upon the nature of man himself include at least seventy verses in the New Testament alone. We seek in vain for a single verse describing any change in the nature of sin, but everywhere we read that it is the nature of man which is affected. We are not referring now to the passages which merely indicate a change in his standing, but to those which clearly describe a definite change in his personal state.

a. Such passages as John 5:21 (A.S.V.), Eph. 2:1, 5 (A.S.V.), John 3:3, and Titus 3:5 speak of the impartation of spiritual life which is the essence of Regeneration. "And you did he make alive." Here we have very clear evidence of a change in state as well as standing. For a spiritually dead soul to be made alive, to be "quickened" as the Authorized Version expresses it, is surely a change of nature.

b. And when we examine such references as II Cor. 5:17, Gal. 6:15, Eph. 2:10, and Eph. 4:24, we learn that this change is so radical and so real as to make the believer actually a "new creature." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision" -- and we might scripturally add, "or theoretical imputation or sacramental confirmation" -- "but a new creature."

c. Jesus tells us that evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness proceed from within, out of the heart (nature) of men (Matt. 7:21-23). Yet Paul very emphatically asserts that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21). Therefore the heart of man, his "within" nature, must be changed before he can inherit the kingdom of God.

d. The following group of verses, also, are very significant: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). "Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). "He which hath begun a good work in you ... both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 1:6; 2:13). "The word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe" (I Thess. 2:13). "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Eph. 3:16-20). The key to these passages is the little

preposition "in." In them we have very definitely described a work done in man through the merits of the atonement as well as for man. Jesus did not pray that the love wherewith the Father had loved him might be toward man only, but in man. And how could the Word effectually work in man without a direct change being accomplished in his nature? Moreover some of these passages very clearly take us beyond the new life of initial regeneration, and describe a complete soul renovation in the believer, by which all impurities are eliminated. Thus, purity is not mentioned as a condition imputed, but a condition realized in man's heart.

The mighty transformation in the disciples which took place on the day of Pentecost must not be forgotten as a further evidence of the complete renovation which is to follow regeneration. If we contrast Peter's cowardice before the maid with his boldness before the multitude, and meditate on such supernatural manifestations of holiness as that recorded in Acts 7:60, we will begin to realize that, after all, the outstanding and most essential effect of the baptism with the Holy Ghost was this striking change in the believers themselves. As we meditate further we will recognize that the change was not mild or gradual, but radical and instantaneous. Before, they were a little group of harmless believers with the truest of intentions and desires, but with devotion that was crippled by selfishness, covetousness, bickering, blindness, cowardice, and retaliation. God could not trust his power to such men! The fruits of the Spirit could not mature in a heart-garden cluttered with such weeds! But one of the most apparent facts in the combined records of the Gospels and the Acts was that after Pentecost they were different. The cowardly became bold, the wayward became stable, the proud became humble. The motives were purified of self-seeking, dispositions were cleansed of malice, and devotion became an undivided and unquenchable flame. As Peter himself testified in Acts 15:8, the Baptism with the Holy Ghost purified their hearts. And on further examination we will realize that this change was not just for a day, but for life. Their carnal nature was not merely overcome by the effulgent glory of the Pentecostal power, but was cleansed out. The very impulses of their natures were deeply altered. And as long as they remained Spirit-filled men they remained changed men.

Surely we are compelled to recognize the effectiveness of the atonement in transforming the nature of man himself. Nor can we overemphasize the wonderful practical significance of this change, for a man's nature controls the general course of his actions, words, thoughts, and emotion. He is what he is because of his nature. If his acts are bad, it is because his nature is bad. Unconverted man is a sinner, is in rebellion against God, because it is his nature -- his "heart" condition -- to be so. The rose exhibits its beauty and sheds its fragrance in the rain as well as in the sunshine, or in the desert as well as the garden because such is its nature. The water lily keeps clean and white while surrounded by the slimy, filthy water of the pond because its nature demands just that. Nature is superior to circumstances. Now we have described here a change in man wherein his tendency to do wrong is supplanted by a tendency to do right. The bent of his will to say "no" to God becomes a bent to say "yes." The flow of his affections toward self becomes a flow toward God. Whereas before it was his nature to be controlled by his surroundings and to imbibe the pollutions of the world, it now becomes his nature to radiate the fruits of the Spirit in the rain as well as in the sunshine, in the desert as well as the garden, and to keep clean and white amidst the pollution of sin on every hand. If this describes a deeper work of grace than is realized by the believing reader, then let him seek such a deeper work with all boldness, for we are only presenting the normal New Testament plane of experience. Since we read "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for

they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6), we confidently and scripturally say to the hungry, "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29).

In contrast to this doctrine of complete soul renovation, what is the Calvinistic view? Many modern Calvinists, such as C. I. Scofield, take the position that in regeneration a new nature is given, but the old nature remains unchanged and "unchangeable." We agree that the inbred Adamic nature, though subdued, is unchanged at conversion. And if, by the term "unchangeable" they mean that this inner sinful tendency is "not subject to the law of God neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7), and therefore cannot be educated, reformed, or perfectly suppressed, we will agree with them at this point also. It is quite evident, however, that they mean more than this. They mean that the old nature is so identified with one's human and physical nature that apart from physical death it is indestructible; consequently it must remain side by side with one's new spiritual nature throughout our earthly life. But in "A Substitute for Holiness," Dr. Daniel Steele points out that the foundation of this position which was advocated in his day also is nothing but "the old error of Oriental philosophy and of gnosticism, that inherent and unconquerable evil lurks in matter." Thus only death, "the wonderful Saviour, Death," can set us free from "sinful flesh." But surely, this absurd doctrine of the presence of evil in matter, which has been exploded so many times, does not need to be exploded again. The only theory consistent with Scripture and true psychology is that man's real moral nature is the real man himself, not his material body. He has no sinful nature apart from his ego, his soul, his immaterial self. He has one indivisible human nature. This is undeniably depraved by sin. And thank God, it is just as undeniably quickened in regeneration and cleansed in sanctification. Not by the theoretical process of imputation is this done, but by a personal, thorough, inwrought renovation. Neither is it done by changing the "unchangeable" old nature of sin, but by its entire destruction. "Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me," prayed David. Let the reader review the Scriptures in the previous paragraphs and he will see that the believer's essential moral nature is not only regenerated, but may and must be purified, and that in this life. To borrow the figurative language of Lowrey (*Possibilities of Grace*, p. 269), we assert that being made "free from sin" (Rom. 6), is "not grafting a holy bud into a corrupt tree, and growing a mixture of good and evil fruit, but the extermination of the seed of sin, so that the entire yield is 'fruit unto holiness.' " This theology does more than cry, "Give us only Christ!" -- it actually deposes Death from the Saviour's throne, and gives to Christ the true glory and power of Calvary.

Many times we find that those who will not admit the possibility or necessity of personal holiness of nature are eager to advance the well known "standing and state" theory. They point out that our standing with God is changed in pardon and adoption, and that through the imputation of Christ's righteousness we stand complete in him, but our actual personal state remains sinful and is not perfected in holiness until the next life. In our relationship with God we are free from all guilt, all chance of future punishment, all condemnation, and all wrath. Our position in the kingdom, our standing before God, is as peaceful and ideal as though we had always been holy, obedient lambs in the fold, with never a stain of sin to mar our unsullied character. But our actual spiritual and moral condition, or state, may be -- all the while -- something far different.

That this difference between standing and state is widely taught today could be proven by quotations from many sources. In a recent publication put out by a large Calvinistic Bible Institute we read that as believers in Christ, "our standing before God, our position in Christ, is one of



holiness." But in the next paragraph the writer explains that our state is different. "When we get to heaven," he says, "we shall then be free from every trace of sin. But in this life we still have the old Adamic nature that would drag us down but for the grace of God and our new nature in Christ Jesus." We are holy in standing but not in state. Dr. C. I. Scofield, also, of Scofield Bible fame, is a leading advocate of the "standing and state" theory. On page 80 of his book, "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth" he says that perfect standing comes first, then the believer is exhorted to harmonize his life with the standing. To illustrate he adds, "The beggar is lifted up from the dunghill and set among princes, and then exhorted to be princely." But how can a beggar be princely without being given the heart of a prince? If he is still a beggar at heart, then all his princely actions will be "beggarly" sham and pretense. But such is the theory of "standing and state." If, however, he is given the heart of a prince, he is no longer a beggar at all; in such a case his state has been changed simultaneously and equally with his standing, and that would certainly be a sorry blow to Dr. Scofield's theory.

If Dr. Scofield were advocating that the beggar be lifted up from the dunghill and given the heart of a prince, then exhorted to learn the manners and responsibilities of a prince, we could heartily agree with him. But that would not be a difference between standing and state, but a difference between standing and maturity of knowledge and skill.

But what is more to the point, the doctrine cannot be consistently supported by the Scriptures. A careful examination of the following chart will show, positively, that they do not separate standing and state but often speak of them as being changed simultaneously. Moreover, we will see that the change in state is to be just as truly realized now as the change in standing. The truth of the matter is, a sinner can no more obtain a change in standing without obtaining a corresponding change in state than can an alien obtain his citizenship papers without being naturalized.

[Instead of showing the 14 comparisons of "Standing" and "State" side by side in left and right columns, I have placed them in pairs with the "Standing" scripture above and the "State" scripture below -- this being perhaps the best way to show these comparison in ASCII text. I have also numbered the pairs of comparisons 1 through 14, and I have placed "a" and "b" designations after references from the same verse. These "a" and "b" designations indicate only the order in which these portions appear in the verse, and not necessarily that they are the first and second portions of the verse. -- DVM]

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1

STANDING -- "... and was lost, and is found." -- Luke 15:32b

STATE -- "For this my brother was dead, and is alive again ..." -- Luke 15:32a

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2

STANDING -- "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." -- Heb. 10:17

STATE -- "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;" -- Heb. 10:16

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3

STANDING -- "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." -- John 15:4

STATE -- "... and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." -- John 15:2-3

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4

STANDING -- "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities ..." -- Psalms 103:3a

STATE -- "who healeth all thy diseases." -- Psalms 103:3b

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5

STANDING -- "That they also may be one in us ..." -- John 17:21

STATE -- "... that they may be made perfect in one." -- John 17:23

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6

STANDING -- "That they may receive forgiveness of sins," -- Acts 26:18a

STATE -- "and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." -- Acts 26:18b

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STANDING -- "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God." -- Rom. 5:1

STATE -- "... because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." -- Rom. 5:5 See also Col. 3:15

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STANDING -- "Even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."-- Rom. 5:18

STATE -- "... so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." -- Rom. 5:19

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STANDING -- "Therefore if any man be in Christ," -- 2 Cor. 5:17a

STATE -- "he is a new creature." -- 2 Cor 5:17b

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STANDING -- "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," -- Eph. 1:4a

STATE -- "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." -- Eph 1:4b

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STANDING -- "According to his mercy he saved us," -- Titus 3:5a

STATE -- "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." -- Titus 3:5b

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STANDING -- "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another," -- 1 John 1:7a

STATE -- "and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." -- 1 John 1:7b

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STANDING -- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," -- 1 John 1:9a

STATE -- "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." -- 1 John 1:9b

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STANDING -- "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." -- Rom 8:15

STATE -- "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." -- Rom 8:29

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We would urge upon the reader the advice of John Wesley, "Let none ever presume to rest in any supposed testimony of the Spirit which is separate from the fruit of it." Dr. Daniel Steele, in "A Substitute for Holiness," translates this into the idiom of the "standing and state" theory thus: "Let none ever presume to rest in any supposed standing in Christ while his actual state of character is not radiant with all the excellencies of Christ." Again we quote: "Let no one who is in a state of willful sin, imagine that he has a standing in Christ pure and clear before the throne of God, for his standing in heaven is the same as his state on earth."

If we wish to have a catchy phrase that is truly scriptural, why not speak of "state and stature"? Or, since our standing and state are on a par, we could call it "standing and stature." Really, the writer has a strong suspicion that there are many Calvinists who are not seeking to avoid the necessity of personal holiness and righteousness and are enjoying a walk with God far higher than their doctrines require, who yet believe in the "standing and state" theory because they confuse "state" with "stature." Recognizing their own smallness of stature and immaturity of Christian character, and realizing that they have weaknesses upon which the devil plays with strong temptations, they have felt the need of such a theory to meet this human deficiency. But we would remind all such that one's "state" and "stature" are vastly different phases of Christian experience. Let us illustrate. While teaching an inexperienced helper how to thin apples the orchardist pointed

to one and said, "Now there is a perfect apple; leave that." And yet it was small and green! Its state was quite different from its stature. Again, just as a son may possess the nature of his father by natural generation, and still not have the mature manhood of his father, so we may possess the true nature of God by divine impartation (I Peter 1:4) and yet be spiritual babes. We may be obedient in life, perfect in love, and pure in heart, (that's state), and still not manifest in our lives the mature spiritual skill, understanding, and strength of Christian manhood. When God commanded, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," he did not intend for us to be equal to him in stature but like him in nature.

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A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN  
Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

By  
Richard S. Taylor

**Chapter 5**  
**THE ATONEMENT AND THE NATURE OF MAN**  
(Continued)

Dreamers of your salvation sure,  
Awaking unto righteousness,  
Your antinomian faith abjure,  
Your groundless hope, and hellish peace;  
Arise, and wash away your sins;  
And then -- the work of faith begins!

-- John Wesley --

The "standing and state" theory joins hand in hand with the doctrine of "imputed righteousness," which proves to be intentionally or unintentionally -- another evasion of the necessity of personal holiness and righteousness. In reality, one theory cannot exist without the other. There is, of course, a scriptural view of imputed righteousness, but we are thinking now of the Calvinistic interpretation, so common today, which says: "His [Christ's] holiness is ours by imputation. Standing in him we are in the sight of God, holy as Christ is holy, and pure as Christ is pure. God looks at our representative, and He sees us in Him. We are complete in Him who is our spotless and glorious Head." The reader will remember that this doctrine is one of the four basic tenets in the Calvinistic rectangle described in chapter two, and it is created by the logical requirements of the other leading premises. As long as Christians sometimes fall back into sin, just that long will it be impossible to sustain the doctrines of "eternal security," "free grace," and "predestination" without the face-saving explanation of "imputed righteousness." But against it are two crushing indictments. Only two are needed.

1. First, in spite of the denials of sincere Calvinists who decry loose living, it is inescapable, inevitable, that the theory of "imputed righteousness" mothers the rankest antinomianism. Wesley defines antinomianism as "the doctrine that makes void the law through faith." Like a blighting scourge it has devastated Christendom at recurrent intervals, each time smothered under by the unanswerable arguments of mighty minds, only to spring up again in a later generation. We are living today in one of those "later generations." The antinomianist sleeps on his doctrine of "finished salvation," which speaks of justification as a "sentence passed in the divine mind from eternity." Once started on this slippery path, there are no limits to the excesses which will steadily unfold. According to Dr. Daniel Steele the antinomianist says, "I was justified when Christ died, and my faith is simply a waking up to the fact that I have always been saved." John Fletcher in his "Second Check to Antinomianism" gives the following very vivid picture of this position in its practical application. We read:

"Upon their doctrinal systems they raise a tower of presumption, whence they bid defiance both to the law and gospel of Jesus. His law says, 'Love God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself, that you mayest live' in glory. 'If thou wilt enter into the life' (of glory), 'keep the commandments.' But this raises their pity, instead of commanding their respect, and exciting their diligence. 'Moses is buried,' say they: 'we have nothing to do with the law! We are not under the law to Christ, Jesus is not a lawgiver to control, but a Redeemer to save us.

"The gospel cries to them, 'Repent and believe!' and just as if God was to be the penitent, believing sinner, they carefully reply, 'The Lord must do all; repentance and faith are his works, and they will be done in the day of his power'; and so without resistance they decently follow the stream of worldly vanities and fleshly lusts. St. Paul cries, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.' 'We know better,' answer they, 'there are neither ifs nor conditions in all the gospel.' He adds, 'This one thing I do, leaving the things that are behind, I press toward the mark for the prize of my high calling in Christ Jesus' -- the crown of life. 'Be ye followers of me. Run also the race that is set before you.' 'What!' say they, 'would you have us run and work for life? Will you always harp upon that legal string, Do! Do! instead of telling us that we have nothing to do, but to believe that all is done?' ... St. Peter bids them 'give all diligence to make their election sure, by adding to their faith virtue,' etc. 'Legal stuff!' say they, 'The covenant is well ordered in all things and sure: neither will our virtue save us, nor our sins damn us.' St. John comes next, and declares, 'He that sinneth is of the devil.' 'What!' say they, 'do you think to make us converts to Arminianism, by thus insinuating that a man can be a child of God today, and a child of the devil tomorrow?' St. Jude advances last, and charges them to 'keep themselves in the love of God'; and they supinely reply, 'We can do nothing.' Besides, 'We are as safe without a frame as with one.'

"With the seven-fold shield of the antinomian faith they would fight the twelve apostles round, and come off, in their own imagination, more than conquerors. Nay, were Christ himself to come to them incognito, as he did to the disciples that went to Emmaus, and say, 'Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect': it would be well if, while they measured him from head to foot with looks of pity or surprise, some were not bold enough to say with a sneer, 'You are a perfectionist, it seems, a follower of poor John Wesley! are you? For our part, we are for Christ and free grace, but John Wesley and you are for perfection and free will'."

Perhaps the reader exclaims, "That sounds very similar to some modern teachings which I have heard." And so it does! That is exactly what we are endeavoring to show. In fact, there are many who talk this way who would never dream of living literally as they talk. But after all, where in all the above is there any real inconsistency with the primary Calvinistic doctrines of eternal decrees and unconditional predestination? But to show still more conclusively that antinomianism and the theory of "imputed righteousness" are affinities, and to show the extreme positions and absurdities which they imply, we will quote from Fletcher's version of the antinomianist's prayer:

"'Cut out the immaculate garment of 'thy righteousness' into robes that may fit us all, and put them upon us by imputation: so shall our nakedness be gloriously covered Thy imputed righteousness, Lord, can alone answer all the demands of thy law and gospel. We did not dare to fast; we should have been called legal and Papists if we had; but thy forty days' fasting in the wilderness, and thy continual abstinence, imputed to us, will be self-denial enough to justify us ten times over.

We did not "take up our cross"; but impute to us thy "carrying THINE"; and even fainting under the oppressive load. We did not "mortify the deeds of the flesh, that we might live"; this would have been evidently working for life; but impute to us the crucifixion of thy body, instead of our "crucifying our flesh, with its affections and lusts." We hated private prayer; but impute to us thy love of that duty, and the prayer thou didst offer upon a mountain all night. We have been rather hard to forgive; but that defect will be abundantly made up if you impute to us thy forgiving of the dying thief: and, if that will not do, add, we beseech thee, the merit of that good saying of thine, "Forgive, and you shall be forgiven." We have cheated the king of his customs; but no matter; only impute to us thy exact paying of the tribute money, together with thy good advice, "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's."

"It is true, we have brought up our children in vanity, and thou never hadst any to bring up. May not thy mercy find out an expedient, and impute to us, instead of it, thy obedience to thy parents? And if we have received the sacrament unworthily, and thou canst not cover that sin with thy worthy receiving, indulge us with the imputation of thy worthy institution of it, and that will do yet better.

"In short, Lord, own us freely as thy children. Impute to us thy perfect righteousness. Cast it as a cloak upon us to cover our filthy souls and polluted bodies. We will have no righteousness but thine. Make no mention, we beseech thee, of our righteousness and personal holiness; they are but "filthy rags," which thy purity forbids thee to take into heaven; therefore accept us without, and we shall shout, Free grace! Imputed righteousness! and finished salvation! to eternity'."

Shall we stop here? Are there no further extremes to which "imputed righteousness" will take us? Yes; there are always those who, to the embarrassment and deep chagrin of godly Calvinists, are more logical than moderate. Thus one of them, a Dr. Crisp who in his day had a huge following, takes a step farther in the inferences of Calvinism: "A believer may be assured of pardon as soon as he commits any sin, even adultery and murder. There is not one fit of sadness in a believer, but he is out of the way of Christ. God does no longer stand displeased though a believer do sin often. There is no sin ever that believers commit that can possibly do them any hurt. Therefore, as their sins cannot hurt them, so there is no cause of fear in their sins committed. Sins are but scarecrows and bugbears to frighten ignorant children, but men of understanding see they are counterfeit things. Sin is dead, and there is no more terror in it than in a dead lion. If we tell believers, except they walk thus and thus holily, and do these and those good works, God will be angry with them, we abuse the Scriptures, undo what Christ has done, injure believers, and tell God lies to his face."

Now let the reader imagine the moral lechery and chaos which would exist if every professing Christian practiced what this blasphemous doctrine permitted.

This is what John Fletcher chose to call "barefaced Calvinism." It is Calvinism with the mask off. Can the reader not see that, pushed to its logical end, Calvinism is inseparable from the grossest antinomianism? Those fifty-three Calvinist divines who refuted such rank teaching in Dr. Crisp's day, and the many Calvinists who inwardly revolt at such pernicious excesses today, are quite forgetting that such is simply the logical extension and practical application of their own doctrines.



Even the noted Dr. C. I. Scofield warns against antinomianism, which he defines in "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth," p.53, as being the affirmation that because of God's freed grace Christians "are not required to live holy lives." On p.58 he calls this falsehood "monstrous." This sounds as if Dr. Scofield believes that Christians are, required to live holy lives. To say they are not required to is antinomianism, he says; but strangely enough, to say they are actually required to live holy lives is contrary to beliefs expressed elsewhere in his book. On p.59 he devotes a section to the question, "What Is the Believer's Rule of Life?" and he quotes a full page and a half of New Testament Scriptures which exhort and command believers to a holy, obedient, consistent life. Now the question comes, suppose a believer fails to live holy, suppose he is really saved then later ceases to keep the "Rule of Life," as many do; does he thereby lose eternal life? Since Dr. Scofield very plainly believes in the doctrine of eternal security he would be compelled to say a pronounced "no." Then can he say that holy life is required? For if it is required, literally, it then becomes a condition of salvation; and if it is a condition, salvation is forfeited when this condition ceases to be met. Therefore the Calvinist who does not believe in such a conditional salvation, may say that a holy life is urged upon the believer, but he cannot logically say it is required. Thus Dr. Scofield is found rejecting the antinomianist who says a holy life is not required, and at the same time rejecting the Arminian who says it is required! Surely the reader perceives that "imputed righteousness," "standing and state," and all such schemes are but attempts to justify the doctrines of "eternal security" and "eternal election" by managing, some way, to get around the undeniable fact of sin in the lives of some who have once been converted. The reader will also see the impossibility of completely evading the evils of antinomianism without relinquishing the whole train of Calvinistic doctrines which foster it. And for good men to desperately attempt to harmonize the inconsistencies and avoid the dangers without giving up the cause, is, in the words of Lowrey, an evidence that "a theological bias is as hard to remove as Canada thistles."

The case is precisely stated by Fletcher in his letter to Richard and Rowland Hill (Checks, V.1, p.283): "Do you hate that foul monster, Antinomianism? I know you cordially hate practical, and would cheerfully oppose doctrinal Antinomianism, if it were not inseparably connected with the favorite doctrines you have embraced."

2. Although perhaps not as sensational, the second indictment against the theory of imputed righteousness is even more annihilating: The doctrine is not supported by the Scriptures. John Wesley says, "It is nowhere stated in Scripture that Christ's personal righteousness is imputed to us. Not a text can be found which contains any enunciation of the doctrine." Mr. Field, in his "Hand Book of Christian Theology," p.199, observes very pointedly that even the fourth chapter of Romans, "where it has been supposed to exist in all its proofs, gives no countenance to the theory. It is repeatedly said, 'faith is imputed for righteousness'; but in no place here, that Christ's obedience to the moral law is imputed to any man."

A little careful thought and study will reveal that just as it is unscriptural to separate change in "standing" from change in "state" by a long span of time, so is it Unscriptural to separate the imputation from the impartation of holiness. The word "impute" means to attribute, ascribe, a certain quality to a person. One may impute (ascribe) generosity to a friend. The word "impart" is a much stronger and more positive term, signifying to give in part to another. An imputed quality may or may not be actual in the character of the individual. To impart to him that quality, however, is to

make it true, whether it was before or not. To impute generosity to a friend would leave some room for question as to the correctness of such imputation; but if one could take of his own generosity and incorporate it into the very fiber of the other's nature, there would no longer be a question as to the reality of the quality. The imputation would be substantiated by an impartation. Thus, for God to impute unto us righteousness does not deny the possibility of actually possessing the quality ascribed; but since actual righteousness in man's nature could not possibly be original, it must be derived from another; it must be imparted. God must of necessity take of his own righteousness and graft it into man's nature, making it a fundamental part of man's very being. Only by so doing can he make his imputation justifiable. Indeed, imputed righteousness makes imparted righteousness a necessity. The God who searcheth the reins and hearts of men cannot sincerely think man to be righteous when he is not so. And man can never be righteous unless he is made righteous. Imparted righteousness, therefore, is the only legitimate basis of imputed righteousness; and if there be no imparted righteousness, then the doctrine of imputed righteousness is but idle presumption. A careful examination of the Scriptures will bear this out, as they lay far greater stress on imparted righteousness (or holiness, when referring more specifically to the inner state), than imputed. It will suffice to call attention to two or three passages.

In Romans 5:12-21 we have a discussion of Adam the first versus Adam the Second. (See also I Cor. 15:22, 45.) Paul presents to us the fact that there is a similarity of pattern between the curse of the first Adam and the healing ministry of the second. The great work of Christ was redemptive, to restore fallen man to his lost estate. But for redemption to be perfect, the second Adam must match every defeat with a victory and every curse with a blessing and every pollution with purity. And he must match Adam the First not only in kind but in time; that is, just as the disease affected this life, so must the remedy. Although many physical effects and "by-products" of the fall will not be remedied now, yet as far as the actual disease of sin is concerned, Christ must prove himself as powerful to restore man in this world as was the first Adam in blighting man in this world. He must replace death with eternal life, condemnation with justification, and sinfulness with righteousness.

But now to apply this passage to the problem before us: We died through Adam's sin; we live through Christ's righteousness. But to be dead through one man's offense does not mean that he was the only one actually sinful, that we remain righteous, and that his sinfulness was merely imputed unto us. No, through Adam's transgression and its resultant depravity we too become transgressors, individually and actually, and we are condemned because of our own sin. Surely these are truths none will dispute. But why advocate a different relationship to the second Adam? Just as the sin of the first Adam reaches out and pollutes the nature of every individual, so does Christ's atoning blood reach out and purify that nature. It would be absurd to say that Adam polluted us only by imputation, and it is just as absurd to say that Christ purifies us only by imputation. Does not Adam the Second have as much power to affect the real nature -- in this life -- as Adam the First? Indeed so. Thank God, every believer has access to an imparted as well as imputed righteousness, which makes our righteousness a personal, actual condition. It is not only a standing, but a state.

We say, therefore, that to live through Christ's righteousness does not mean that his was sufficient for both him and us, that we remain sinful, and that his righteousness is merely imputed to us. As was pointed out before, this is nowhere stated in the Scriptures. We should rather say that Christ by his righteousness broke the long reign of unrighteousness, and then by his death made it possible for

us to also have victory over sin, and be individually cleansed. This is by no means an independent righteousness. It can be maintained only by constant abiding in him and constant dependence upon the blood. But we do insist that although the righteousness of the branch is derived from the vine, it is more than an imputation; it is an actuality in the very fiber and leaf of the branch.

Sinners are children of Adam in that they are like him -- personally sinful. The saved are children of the Second Adam in that they are like him -- personally righteous. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made [not imputed] sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made [not imputed] righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

We will call attention briefly to some other passages: In Hebrews 12:10 we are told that the purpose of chastening is that we might be partakers of his holiness. Such partaking" is evidently essential to salvation, for we are told in the 14th verse that without such holiness, "no man shall see the Lord." Again, in James 1:21 we read, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness (overflowing of malice, A.S.V.), receive with meekness the engrafted (implanted, inborn, A.S.V.) word, which is able to save your souls." The word "engrafted" is sufficiently clear as to expel all question as to its meaning. The Word is incorporated or transplanted into the very nature of man. And we are told that this very real impartation is God's method of saving the soul.

Again, in II Peter 1:4 we read that exceeding great and precious promises are given to us whereby we might be "partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Such an array of marvelous promises could only apply to something of great importance. That this impartation of the divine nature, so profoundly necessary, is to be accomplished in this life is clearly evidenced by the following exhortation to add various qualities to our experience. It is obvious that this addition is to be done now; but we may infer by the opening phrase that such addition must be preceded by the impartation of the divine nature, and the cleansing from the corruption that is in the world through lust.

It is inescapable, then, that God's method of redeeming man in this life is not so much through imputation of righteousness as through impartation.

The deep underlying fallacy in the theories of "standing and state" and "imputed righteousness" is that they make the change of the believer's nature a matter of gradual process, rather than an instantaneous, miraculous work. Accordingly, the believer's position in divine relationship is changed in an instant, from an unbeliever to a believer, from condemnation to justification, from a child of Satan to a child of God; but, according to these theories, it is only by the slow, drawn-out growth of a lifetime that the inward state is subdued, trained, corrected, and finally, inch by inch, brought around to a condition similar to one's position in Christ. Even then, the process is so slow that though a man be a believer one hundred years, his state would not be truly conformed in holiness to his standing. This denies God either the ability or disposition to transform the soul of man in an instant; to transform in a moment of time a sinner into a saint. It teaches a change acquired by the slow, painful process of self-effort, rather than a change appropriated now by faith. That there are many gradual improvements in Christian character and experience cannot be questioned. For instance, the manner in which a religious experience develops a mind and personality of natural mediocrity is always a cause of reverent wonder. There is also an increase in general culture, as well

as an enriched harvest of spiritual fruitage, under the continued, molding ministration of the indwelling Spirit. But as we pointed out in the paragraph on "state and stature," (see Ch. W) all these growths in light, knowledge and strength are not changes in kind, as a brier into a myrtle tree, but changes in degree, or development. They are the natural growth of a nature that has already been Christianized. Surely there can be no difficulty here. The most convincing evidence of the supernatural origin and power of Christianity is the miracle by which a weak profligate or ungodly worldling is instantly transformed into a sober, devoted saint, whose holy living now is as pronounced and natural as was his ungodliness before. It is this change of nature, effected by the Spirit in the crises of regeneration and entire sanctification, for which we are contending, lest it be buried beneath the debris of theological errors and lost to the Church.

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A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN  
Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

By  
Richard S. Taylor

**Chapter 6**  
**THE ATONEMENT AND A SINNING RELIGION**

How few of our celebrated pulpits are there, where more has not been said at times for sin than against it? -- John Fletcher

In their attitude on sin in the life of the regenerate, Calvinists divide into a number of groups; therefore we should approach the subject of this chapter cautiously. It would be unfair to assume that all believe in a low standard of Christian living. Some Calvinistic preachers are sound and strict in their faithful presentation of repentance. Some teach that it is the Christian's privilege to be an overcomer rather than a shortcomer, and are very far from any attempt to excuse looseness or continual defeat. But beneath this high standard range many shades of teaching not nearly so commendable. There are altogether too many who are very silent on Bible repentance and cry, Believe! Believe! The vast majority still insist that a Christian cannot live without sin, and though they use more modern phraseology perhaps, nevertheless make it quite clear that a Christian sins in thought, word, and deed" every day. And since even the group having the highest standard believe in the doctrine of eternal security, they are compelled to consider the backslider as still a Christian, even though a disgraceful one. They are forced to shut their eyes, swallow hard, and speak of the erring ones as 'sinning saints." (Since the Greek word translated "saint" means a "holy person," one wonders how they survive the palpable contradiction of calling a man an "unholy holy one.")

And to make matters still more confusing, many modern Calvinists quite logically accept the doctrine of "finished salvation," which destroys the necessity of repentance. As we noted in the previous chapter, the Calvinistic doctrine of "finished salvation" (which is the natural complement of "unconditional election" and the "satisfaction theory" of the atonement) says that Calvary procured not only the possibility of pardon but the actual bestowment of pardon, and that for all sins of the elect, past, present, and future. But obviously, if the sins of the future are already pardoned, why should one repent of them when they are committed, or even attempt to avoid committing them? It becomes quite apparent that the doctrine of "finished salvation" makes repentance an entirely unnecessary and foolish waste of time. Then why do many preachers who believe the doctrine yet preach on repentance? Because their inner spiritual sense (which often rises above one's doctrines) demands it, because they see it clearly in the Word, and because they see the necessity of it in practical human experience. But futile are the attempts to harmonize theologically the doctrine of repentance with the doctrine of "finished salvation."

Therefore, what must we conclude? This: that although the most spiritual Calvinists deplore a sinning religion and would never admit it to be the normal, even they are compelled by the doctrines of imputed righteousness and eternal security to admit that sinning Christians do exist. For this reason we are justified in asserting that Calvinism both allows and implies a "sinning religion."

In opposition to such a system we will seek to show the true scriptural position. There are abundant passages which state clearly that the purpose of Christ's work was to separate sin from man and man from sin. Repentance is more than an expedient; it is a necessity.

1. Mark 2:17, Luke 5:32, Acts 5:31, Acts 17:30-32, all express the same thought as Matt. 9:13, "For I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Defining repentance as a complete confessing and forsaking of sin (I John 1:9, Isa. 55:7), we have here the separation of sinners from their sinning stated as the purpose of Christ's coming and call. And anything that could scripturally be called the purpose of so great an advent of so great a person must certainly be considered very fundamental and essential.

2. "And thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:18). "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities" (Acts 3:26). "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. 6:22). Also included in the list are Gal. 1:4, Heb. 9:14, and I Peter 4:1, 2. Other verses which express the same thought, although they do not use the word "from" are: John 1:29, Eph. 1:4, Eph. 5:15-17, Titus 2:22, Heb. 9:14, Heb. 9:28, I Peter 1:15, I Peter 2:20-24, I John 3:4-10. Thus the purpose of Christ's coming and work was to save man from sin. The objective, then, of his call was for man to separate himself from sin and the purpose of his work was to carry sin away from man, or to make man's separation possible and acceptable. Also, we see in his call and work the mutual responsibility resting upon Christ and the individual for the actual consummation of salvation. The first set of verses describe man's part and the second describe God's part.

In the second group of verses we can very properly emphasize the word "from," which implies a very real separation. Since some of the verses refer to actual sins, others to the inner sin tendency, and another to the evil in the world, we see that this personal separation is from all forms of sin. Now note some observations:

1. There is no suggestion in these verses that man is to be saved in his sins, (even Christians) or in spite of his sins, but from them.

2. These passages do not state that man's sins or sinfulness are to be separated from the notice and condemnation of God by the intervening righteousness of God's Son, as a curtain hung in front of a bad picture, or a blanket of snow hiding a dump pile; rather, man's sins are to be separated from man himself. This makes Christ not a curtain but a purifier; not a blanket of snow but a flaming fire (Mal. 3:3, 4).

3. There is no hint here that the effectiveness of the atonement lay in changing the nature of sin, but rather in delivering from sin. Nor are any of the results of sin mentioned as the objects of salvation. This contradicts the theory of those who would have us believe that we are saved from the penalty of sin without deliverance from either the commission or being of sin.

Perhaps the Scripture which, as much as any other, actually deals the death blow to all the various doctrinal refuges of a "sinning religion" theology is Gal. 2:17, 18: "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor." This is a direct thrust at the effort to allow a little sin in the Christian's life, to separate standing and state, and the Calvinistic interpretation of imputed righteousness. Such teachings, which imply the justification of our life and our adoption without the necessity of personal freedom from sin, amount to nothing less than an attempt to make Christ the minister of sin; that is, a mediator who through misuse of his own office, purchases justification for willful sin and secures the benefits of righteousness to those who are unrighteous. For Christ to be our advocate, our mediator, our intercessor, our high priest, does not mean that through the power of his office and the merits of his righteousness he can obtain eternal life for us while we remain sinful in nature and even, perchance, sinners in practice. To all this Paul cries, God forbid!

To "seek to be justified by Christ" involves, (1) recognition of need, (2) faith in the sufficiency of Christ's atonement, and (3) acceptance of Christ as Saviour. Now the world is full of those who would tell us that these three attitudes constitute the sole conditions of salvation. Accordingly, when one recognizes his need, believes in Christ, and accepts Christ (formally), he is saved. Confirmation, public confession of Christ, and such practices of many churches involve these three attitudes, as far as the intellect of the candidate is concerned, and millions are trusting such forms, even though continuing to live in sin. But this verse makes plain the insufficiency, yes, even the impossibility if sincere, of these attitudes alone. If we ourselves are found sinners, then our recognition of our need, mental faith in the blood, and theoretical acceptance of Christ as Saviour, is all in vain. Thus we see that deeply underlying these three attitudes is the necessity of repentance. If we do not completely forsake all known sin, then we can seek to be justified by Christ ever so earnestly, but all to no avail. The writer has seen many seek even with strong crying and tears -- all of which may be merely surface emotion; but they did not find peace, because, as they afterward confessed, they were unwilling to give up some cherished idol or sin.

Far wiser than his instructor was a Scotchman in Glasgow on this very point. Desiring earnestly to help, the personal worker asked the following questions:

"Do you believe the Bible is God's word?"

"Certainly. Every good Scotchman believes that."

"Do you believe that Christ, the Son of God, died for you, and that only through His blood you can be saved?"

"Indeed I do."

"And do you believe the promise, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved'?"

Again the answer was emphatically in the affirmative.

"But do you believe that included you?"

"I do."

"Then," said the advisor with an impressive tone of finality, "you are saved."

"Oh, no I am not," the other retorted. "The same Bible that contains all that you have mentioned also says, 'Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts,' and it happens that there are some sins I am not yet ready to forsake."

That man was wise enough to know that "no man is justified by faith whose faith does not make him just."

And not only initial repentance, but continued renunciation of and freedom from sin is a condition of continued salvation. For the passage says, "If I build again the things which I destroyed I make myself a transgressor." And when we again become a willing transgressor (a sinner) then we are no longer justified by Christ, for He WILL NOT BE THE MINISTER OF SIN. Repentance is to our salvation what the alphabet is to our education. We start our education by learning the alphabet, and after that every advance in every field of learning is built upon it. We never discard it. Without it we could not read one page or write one line. Not that we learn the alphabet over again each day; neither do we mean that we sin and repent each day. But just as the alphabet is a cornerstone of our educational structure, so hatred and renunciation of sin is a cornerstone of our spiritual house, and its removal will precipitate collapse and eternal ruin.

It may be advisable to digress long enough to remark that in reality we cannot separate true faith from repentance. Faith and obedience are so interrelated that one cannot exist without the other. "Faith without works is dead" (James 2:20). In the above paragraphs the writer has used the term "faith" as referring to that mental assent to the truth which is so common today. All so-called faith which simply "accepts" without a godly sorrow for and forsaking of sin is of this variety. True saving faith, however, which springs from the heart in glad appropriation of a living experience in Christ, can grow only in the rich soil of deep and thorough repentance. The wise words of S. A. Keen in "Faith Papers" are well worth noting: "There are states of heart which render faith impossible. An impenitent heart, a willful heart, or an unconsecrated heart, is incapable of believing unto salvation. To say to a soul in the heyday of sin, or to an unawakened heart, or to a child of God who refuses to give himself wholly to the Lord, 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved,' is to expect him to do what he cannot do." This is not only scripturally, but psychologically true. Godly sorrow and strong desire for deliverance, hesitating not at the cost, is the only emotional state which can enable the whole being to lay hold on Christ and make Him gloriously, efficaciously real. True saving faith is born of desperation, not of contemplation. Let us remember that Jesus promised comfort only to those who mourn (Matt. 5:4), and experience teaches that the sweetness of the comfort will be in direct proportion to the genuineness of the mourning. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" (Luke 7:47). There will never be that joyous, personal sense of salvation until there has been the gripping sense of lostness; never the exultant sense of release without a keen consciousness of bondage. Though the surface emotions may not always be greatly affected, the inner man, the real man, must be profoundly and radically moved (II Cor. 7:10).



To be superficial in our conception of faith will lead to much superficiality in practical Christian work. Indeed, there is a direct connection between the loose theology we have been discussing and many modern methods of evangelism. Those methods of getting converts which we condemn as inexcusably shallow are but the natural consequences of those insufficient ideas of God's method of dealing with sin in the individual heart. Because many preachers do not realize the importance of the great, supernatural work wrought by God within and upon the nature they of course do not emphasize a thorough repentance, earnest seeking, or make any mention of the witness of the Spirit as being a universal privilege and necessity. Thus their regeneration is an anemic variety, consisting only of that change within the person which makes him willing to become religious; and their conception of conversion becomes a mere matter of acceptance. The chief change which takes place is one's standing before God. The cry is, "Believe! Believe! Your sins were forgiven away back there on the cross; the work is all done, all you need to do is accept it." This is a practical application of the doctrine of "finished salvation," mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.

In the light of such a theology their methods of getting people "saved" become at once understandable and consistent. Signing a card, being confirmed, answering some questions before the minister, being publicly baptized, or whatever methods they use for "taking their stand for Christ," are sufficient conditions of becoming a Christian. The candidate has publicly accepted Christ, the Father accepts him and in Christ his standing is now complete; could anything more be necessary? The writer saw a fond father bring his two daughters to the altar one night. He wanted them to "take their stand." But that stand was not to create a scene by tearfully confessing their sins to God, although it was plain they wanted to. He desired that they be asked a few questions, whereas the minister longed to urge them to pray. That night had been planned by that family as the night of "decision" and would be considered the rest of their lives as the time the girls were saved. Had not their father been converted that way?

Here we have a quotation which represents another group, with somewhat different ideas, but in the same general school of thought: "If you wait for some miracle to be performed in you, you will wait forever, and will go to hell. But if you will be baptized and join the church, you will be all right." In such manner do they overlook the radical change of nature, inwrought by the Holy Ghost, which is God's method of dealing with the sin problem.

But all this is not New Testament regeneration; nor will it produce anything but a spurious and helpless church. For in the first place, as we have already noted, the faith it presents as the sole condition of salvation is not true saving faith. Secondly, woven through its very foundation is the false notion of "finished salvation." It assumes that the work of redemption was completed at Calvary in the sense that nothing more or new needs to be done for each individual. This is a confusion of atonement and pardon. The fact is, the atonement did not actually accomplish the forgiveness of sins of a single individual, but simply made possible and justifiable such forgiveness. We were provisionally saved at Calvary, but not actually and personally. The death of Christ was "an expiation for all men, but an acquittal for none" (Field). When each applicant comes for salvation, something must be done which has never been done before: God, by a free act of His mercy and grace, on the merits of the blood, must pardon that person, accomplish his adoption, to which the Holy Spirit bears witness, and effect by the Spirit the instantaneous change of nature (heart) known as regeneration. And regardless of any amount of intellectual acceptance, the person is not saved

until this is done. Now we see the necessity of coming directly to God in prayer, instead of merely to the minister or baptismal font. We see that conversion is not merely a matter of "acceptance" but often may be a matter of earnest seeking. It is not only "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," but also "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." It is a "broken and contrite heart" that will not be despised. With this understanding of things it is easy to see the importance of thorough repentance, for we are seeking the favor of the God who said, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts," and who promised, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins ..." and who said also, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy." It also becomes clear why we must emphasize the witness of the Spirit as the privilege of every seeker, for without it how will he know with joyful assurance that God has heard his cry and granted him the desire of his heart? It is true we are saved by believing the Word of God, but a proper claiming of His promises will always bring the witness. No one, therefore, should ever rest content until his repentance is so complete, his seeking so definite and earnest, and his faith so deep from the heart that it brings to him the witness of the Spirit that his sins are forgiven and he has been made a new creature in Christ Jesus.

If it be argued that this type of experience is too subjective, that it detracts the attention away from Christ and centers it upon one's own feelings, we answer that the objection shows a very imperfect understanding of the real nature of regeneration. Exactly the opposite is true. The attention is released from self, and like a spring with heavy pressure removed, leaps to its normal position, focused upon Christ. Pure and natural affection to the Lord is not a question of mental concentration but of heart condition. One may have an intellectual knowledge without a saving knowledge of Christ. It cannot be attained by any amount of contemplation of him, either of his deity, his atonement for us, or any of the other doctrines concerning him. Rather, the longer the natural man thinks of Christ the more miserable he becomes, because such contemplation will only reveal to him his own sinfulness and guilt. Before he can emerge from this "slough of despond" he must indeed turn his attention inward. He must repent and pray until the guilt is gone and the chains are severed. Then his heart beats in unison with his Lord's and he thrills with a love he never could have known before. The gratitude felt for Christ's work for humanity becomes boundless joy for what Christ has done for him. He is not just the world's Redeemer in a vague, impersonal way; he is his Saviour. The genius of regeneration is that it makes one's life and affection Christ-conscious and Christ-centered. There fills one's soul an overwhelming desire to pray to this Christ, to read about him, to sing of him, to praise him, to tell of him, and bring others to saving knowledge of his love. These are the natural, joyous impulses in the heart of the truly regenerate. Such marvelous fruits you will not find on a dead tree.

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# A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

By  
Richard S. Taylor

## Chapter 7 WHAT IS AN ACT OF SIN?

To some he is so rigid in his requirements, so unbending in his justice, and so unsympathetic in his nature, that to be like him they cease to be human beings. -- T. M. Anderson

By the term "sin" do we include every mistake in judgment, unknown offense, or other manifestation of human frailty and limitation? Obviously not. There may be some reading these lines who have subscribed to a "sinning religion" belief because they have been too broad in their definition of sin. They included too much, hence they have sincerely believed that none could live above sinning in this life. This fallacy is so far reaching and has resulted in so much confusion that it will be time well spent to pause for a practical, scriptural definition of an act of sin.

Let us remember, first, that God's quarrel is not with our humanity, but with our disposition to set our will against his. That is the thing which he is trying to get rid of, and that is the only thing which will bring final condemnation. God would rather live with a bungling, stupid, illiterate peasant who loved him with a complete love, and obeyed him implicitly, than with a perfect Adam who never made a mistake until the day he chose his own will in opposition to that of his Creator. God could chasten the peasant, and polish him, and take away his illiteracy and stupidity and much of his bungling, but he could do nothing with a perfect man whose only fault was his determination to have his own way. True, such things as misinterpretation of God's will and mistakes of ignorance need to be guarded against and need the atoning blood of Christ, but only because they are results of the fall and not because they are in themselves acts of sin.

God does not require that kind of legal righteousness which would necessitate a perfect head as well as a perfect heart. An absolute understanding, in all the everyday contingencies and complexities of human life, of every technicality in the interpretation and ethical application of the Ten Commandments, would require angelic perfection, indeed, almost infinite perfection. But nowhere in the Scripture is this designated as the fulfillment God asks of a human being. He does ask that every principle found in those commandments be the deeply imbedded, controlling impulse of our moral and spiritual natures (Micah 6:8). He asks for a perfect fulfillment in heart -- in motive, intention, choice, and affection. Here is God's requirement for man falling from the lips of our Lord Himself: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40). Paul, under divine inspiration, restates the same truth in Rom. 13:10: "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." Again, we read in Gal. 5:14: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Such is God's conception of what it means to fulfill perfectly the law. He could require no more; he can accept no

less. And yet, this is the New Testament standard of Christian experience; this is the new covenant, and it consists of fulfilling the law.

Now, it is on this gospel standard of righteousness that we must base our definition of sin. The writer is convinced that much of the disagreement over the possibility of being saved from sin and sinning turns upon this very point. There are some Calvinists who, by the "happiest inconsistency in the world," walk according to the law while claiming to be free from it, would rather die than grieve their Lord yet talk about a sinning religion, and live holy lives while deeply prejudiced against the doctrine of a holy heart, simply because they have failed to define sin according to this New Testament standard of righteousness.

The root meaning of the verb "to sin" is "to miss the mark." But what is the mark we are to hit? If Adamic or angelic perfection is the standard God requires, then truly we have no choice but to "miss the mark" all our lives. Then indeed we must seek refuge in the doctrine of imputed righteousness as a means of covering our deficiency, even with all its dangerous implications and its tendency toward carelessness and looseness. But where is the scripture that makes angelic or Adamic perfection the "mark"? Rather, the "mark" is found in those three passages quoted in the above paragraph -- in the possession and expression of perfect love. To sin is to miss the standard of love. Again, "Sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). But what law? Referring again to the scriptures quoted above, we answer, "the law of love." Failure to mentally comprehend all that is implied in the written law, and failure to understand perfectly the best manner of interpreting the law in every emergency, is not sin in God's sight, but to act in a spirit and with motives contrary to love most certainly is. John Wesley said that much love does not mean much light. Nor does much light imply much love. Wesley further observed that perfect love in the human heart is entirely compatible with a thousand infirmities in judgment and mistakes in practice; and we could draw a multitude of illustrations from the relationship between an innocent, adoring child and a parent to prove this truth. How perfect the love may be in attempting to please, yet how faulty the performance! And which is necessary to please the parent -- a perfect performance or a perfect heart of obedience and love?

In order that this wonderful truth may be perfectly clear, let us approach John's inspired definition of sin in a slightly different manner. "Sin is the transgression of the law." But when and where is a law transgressed? When the shot is fired? the word is spoken? the lie is told? the money is stolen? when the act is committed? We would not deny that there is sin in performing the act, but primarily the law is broken when the thing is decided upon in the heart. It is when an unrighteous motive, intention, or passion enters the secret chambers of the soul -- when one is actuated by a spirit inwardly contrary to love. That is the time and place of sin's conception, even though the act intended is never done. It may be committed in the imagination without even the intention of committing the act. On the other hand, the law may have been unwittingly transgressed without, but if it has been honestly kept within, no sin is ascribed. God looks at the heart, not at the outward appearance. Therefore we re-emphasize that if God sees within the heart motives of pure love toward him and man, and honesty of judgment, then the act could be seriously erroneous and harmful in its results, but God does not consider that the person has transgressed his law. Sin is the transgression of the law, but it can be committed only in the heart; the outward act is but the expression of that sin. This helps also to make clearer some of John's other statements. When he says, "Whosoever is born of

God doth not commit sin," he is simply expressing the self-evident maxim that he who truly loves God from the heart will not at the same time disobey God from the heart.

It has been said, "Sin is a clenched fist and a blow in the face of God." Will one who loves that God with all his heart give the blow?

Sin is the spear that spilled the water and the blood. Will one who is in love with his Lord cherish that spear?

Now the question arises, Is it possible to keep the law of love? If so, then it is possible to live without sin. Is it necessary to love God with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength, and the neighbor as oneself? Then it is necessary to live without sin.

We cannot deny that this definition of sin presents a real problem to some earnest people. Many ask, "What right do you have to call one kind of transgression a mistake and another kind sin? We admit your philosophy of the problem sounds reasonable, but does the Bible distinguish between infirmities and sins, and between sins of ignorance and sins of choice? or are you Wesleyans taking to yourself this liberty that you may justify your doctrine of freedom from all sin? You admit that those whom you call 'sanctified wholly' have many shortcomings, that they are sometimes even rebuked and checked by the Spirit, and unwittingly do things which they afterward regret; but you dare not call these true sins, for you would then have to relinquish your teaching that a sanctified Christian lives without sinning. It seems to us that any failure to fulfill absolute righteousness, whether intentional or unintentional, is called 'sin' in the Bible and should be called sin by us.

But is it called "sin" in the Bible? That depends on which dispensation we are living under. It makes all the difference in the world to remember that in the problem of defining sin we are not under law but under grace. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law but under grace" (Rom. 6:11). Every good Calvinist will say "Amen" to that verse. Now the law is impersonal, absolute, and unmerciful; grace is personal and understanding. The law treats us as machines, and by absolute standards judges only the act itself; it does not take into account the motives. In Old Testament times, for instance, it made no difference to the law whether a man killed another by accident or anger; in either case the law had been broken, it pronounced the man a lawbreaker, a sinner, and he must flee to the city of refuge or pay with his life. Grace, however, takes into full consideration the circumstances and emotions and motives involved. If it was an unintentional, unforeseen, and inescapable commission or omission, grace pronounces the man innocent; that is, grace says he is not a sinner. Let us use a more modern illustration. Suppose that while traveling in a strange state we are suddenly halted by an officer and informed that we have violated a traffic ordinance -- perhaps we have been violating that ordinance ever since entering the state. In great surprise, we stammer our sincere regret and plead our ignorance. According to the absolute, inflexible standards of the law, our ignorance is just our misfortune, and we are accounted law-breakers. But suppose the policeman is a reasonable man, and says, "I see by your license plates that you are out-of-state, and you look like honest, law-abiding citizens. I'll not give you a ticket." We are then no longer under law, but under the policeman's grace. But notice carefully: the policeman was not simply being lenient to some persons whom he considered as lawless. He would have had no right to do that. In the light of our intentions, he did not consider us law-breakers at all.

And is not God just as reasonable a being, and does He not judge our conduct by our motives and spirit, our light and opportunities, just as understandingly? The answer is yes, if we are truly under grace. Is this not clearly stated in I Sam. 16:7, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart"? God appraises outward conduct by looking first at the heart condition, and he does not call a failure a "sin" unless this heart condition warrants it. The policeman who stopped us on the road realized that due to our mental limitations we could not be expected to know all the traffic laws in every state. Realizing this, he did not confuse infirmity with sin, nor did he call the mistake resulting from our infirmity an act of sin. Neither does God, "for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15).

What then must we conclude? Simply that those who insist on rolling mistakes, "sins of ignorance," and human shortcomings into the same basket as a stubborn spirit and evil affections and conscious choice of evil, and labeling every act that falls below absolute standards of righteousness a true act of sin, are putting themselves back under the law. Not only so, but they are themselves the real legalists of modern Christendom; for who is a legalist if not he who defines sin according to the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law? Yet strange to say, this is the very group which talk so emphatically about being free from the law, and call others legalists. If they wish to be truly scriptural and consistent in their claims, let them forsake absolute law and get under grace in their definition of sin.

This cardinal New Testament truth profoundly affects many other questions. Let us point out a few implications:

1. The proper Christian attitude toward sin is one of abhorrence. If a Christian insists on calling everything sin, he will either lose this proper attitude toward sin, or live in a state of condemnation and darkness. Neither alternative is scriptural. To retain the proper abhorrence of sin and yet feel that he is sinning every day, is to keep the Christian in a constant turmoil of grief and sorrow and repentance, thus making impossible the enjoyment of the continuous victory and peace which are everywhere promised in the Word of God. Any attempt to simulate this freedom and joy will necessitate a change in his attitude toward his own sinning. Apathetic submission and carelessness will inevitably replace an active antagonism. It would be impossible for him to take his so-called sinning as seriously as a Christian should take real sin and at the same time have joy and freedom in the Holy Ghost. Moreover, if he actually makes no distinction between sins of ignorance and sins of choice, will he not be apt to manifest the same deadly carelessness toward one as the other? Will this not lead to antinomianism? Thus do we see that in the very nature of the case an unreasonably broad definition creates a tendency toward a loose attitude.

2. The Christian also becomes involved in a contradiction of the Word of God. He insists on a definition of sin which gives the lie to every verse that commands and promises a righteous life. If we can properly call the shortcomings resulting from human infirmity true sins, it becomes evident that true righteousness in this life is but a dream. We cannot be sinning and living a holy life at once. Thus, when we read that we may serve God "in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74, 75), this definition of sin cries, "Impossible!" Or when John says, "These things I write unto you that you sin not" (I John 2:1), it smiles at his optimism and comments, "Then John, since it is too much to expect the Christian to 'sin not,' the purpose of your epistle is that people

might avoid the unavoidable and achieve the impossible" -- all of which is, of course, a reflection on the intelligence, the sincerity, and the authority of John. By violating the plain meaning of the apostle, this definition of sin bases the Christian's spiritual norm on the following "if" in the verse rather than this positive "sin not." Our friends may think it serious for us to limit our definition of sin; is it not more serious to hold a definition that makes unmeaning and contradictory many of the promises and commands of God? It is better to change our definition than be guilty of sacrilege and unbelief.

3. The scriptural view of unintentional shortcomings and unknown transgressions which we are presenting explains the possibility of being wholly sanctified in heart purity and still needing to grow. "If you are holy," the question is often asked, "where would be the need of growing in grace?" Obviously, if absolute righteousness and holiness were intended, growth would be unnecessary and impossible. Both Scripture and common-sense, however, maintain that the Holy Spirit can make a believer's heart pure in an instant, but that since he is surrounded by a wicked world, knows comparatively little of the wiles of a personal devil, and possesses many infirmities of mind and body, the Holy Spirit must check, chasten, polish, and instruct him in order to keep him holy in heart and make him increasingly Christlike in personality; and that furthermore, all this learning is not sinning, but may be experienced without once losing fellowship with God, without diminishing the devotion of a perfect consecration, or once feeling in the heart a shadow of bitterness or rebellion.

4. Also, a correct understanding of the illustration of the policeman and the violated traffic law will guard against a common antinomian error. To be under the policeman's grace did not for one moment mean that we were at liberty to manifest a haughty spirit or to continue violating the traffic ordinance. Little of his grace would we have enjoyed if, when he sought to give us new "light," we had been proud and self-willed! Or to have outwardly "repented," then have continued to be unmindful of the law would have served us no better, for the next time the officer caught us we would have discovered that the day of grace was past: we were now under inflexible law. "What then? shall we sin, because we are not under law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:15, 16). When a Christian fails to receive new light eagerly and obediently, but continues in the thing he now knows to be wrong, he is forfeiting grace and is yielding himself a servant to obey "sin unto death." We might add, also, that the definition of sin presented in this chapter offers no encouragement for the Christian to make allowance for mistakes in practice on the ground of his infirmity. Such a disposition would be sure evidence of spiritual paucity. The one whose love has truly been made perfect is constantly striving to perfect the outward expression of it, and any discovered failure is grief of spirit to him.

Although this definition of sin moves the attention away from the outward letter of the law to the inner spirit and motive, it does not lower the standard of righteous conduct demanded. In a sense it raises it by bringing to light the seriousness of sins of omission. Many feel they are not sinning because they are not actually doing anything that injures another. Their emphasis is all on the outward, positive transgression of the law. But when we see that divine love is the standard we become convicted of the sin of lovelessness. We see that a burdenless, prayerless, careless, indifferent life is a sinful life, even though it may be meticulously righteous legally. "All these have I kept from my youth up," said the rich young ruler. But he lacked the love for God and men that was

stronger than love of gold. It was not what he had done that drove him away in sorrow, but what he lacked, and was willing to continue lacking. His was the sin not so much of transgression as of omission. He sinned not at the point of the law but at the point of love. And it is at the point of love that we must watch under the gospel dispensation. At that point lies our gospel definition of sin. "Herein is our love made perfect that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is so are we in this world." The secret of boldness then is love now. God does not demand perfect conduct without perfect love; he demands perfect love only, knowing that the love will induce as high a degree of perfect conduct as is allowed by the mental limitations of the individual, and that such conduct will steadily improve as his spiritual intelligence and capacities enlarge.

In summary we can logically conclude that a true act of sin must be accompanied by two facts:

First, a knowledge of the evil. If we walk in all the light we have, and are continually receptive to new light and eagerly reaching out after it, we will not be held responsible for the light that has not arrived. According to I John 1:7, walking in present light is the one condition of enjoying present fellowship with God and present cleansing from all sin. But when light on a certain matter arrives that matter instantly changes in its relationship to sin and innocence. It may have been committed innocently yesterday, but has become an act of sin today. Therefore we say that knowledge of the sin is necessary before sin is imputed.

Secondly, a consent to the evil is necessary. Desire must unite with the will before sin is conceived (James 1:14, 15). Suggestions of evil in our thought life do not become ours until we toy with them and harbor them. But to banish them immediately, unhesitatingly, with a decisive act of the will saves us from guilt. If we refuse to give our consent to evil thought we will never give it to evil acts.

The passage quoted above, Rom. 6:15, 16, will bear us out in this position. According to it, the "sin unto death" results from yielding ourselves to obey sin as servants. We cannot yield ourselves to sin without the consent of our will, and we cannot yield ourselves to obey as servants without at least some degree of intelligent comprehension of what we are doing; in other words, without knowledge.

This is no cloak for the religious professor who is so spiritually dull -- if not altogether dead -- that he fails to see even glaring inconsistencies in his life, and excuses his sins on the grounds that he has no light on them. Obviously, the truths of this chapter are applicable only to them who are spiritually alert, and conscientiously seeking day by day to be increasingly Christlike in conduct and personality.

If we view the problem scripturally, sin is inexcusable. If it is unavoidable, however, it is excusable. Therefore to say sin is inexcusable is to declare sin to be avoidable. Any person with a will entirely surrendered to God, who has had a change of nature, and who has the all-sufficient grace of God to assist him, can say no to wrong-doing. This is doubly so when the inward inherent tendency to do evil is removed, and the heart has been filled with perfect love in the act of entire sanctification. Victory without and victory within is the blessed privilege of every child of God. As



Mrs. Iva Durham Vennard has said, sinlessness does not mean that we are not able to sin, but that, thank God, we are able not to sin.

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A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN  
Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

By  
Richard S. Taylor

**Chapter 8**  
**THE EFFECT OF SIN AFTER REGENERATION**

The man that discards the word "if" from his theology has no longer a Bible. -- George Bower of Bombay.

If God bestows salvation irrespective of personal responsibility; if it is impossible for a saved person to commit sin that will eternally separate him from God, if we are saved through imputed righteousness alone, if, in short, the deadliness is taken out of sin the moment we are saved, then why are there so many passages in the Scriptures which arbitrarily and unmistakably make our personal obedience to God and renunciation of sin a condition of salvation? That there are many such Scriptures can be easily demonstrated. In analyzing some fifty-eight passages of this nature we find the following clear-cut teachings:

First, our initial salvation is conditioned on a faith that is rooted in repentance. At the risk of being tediously repetitious, we restate this great truth in this chapter. A careful reader cannot fail to note the great emphasis laid upon repentance as one of the prime necessities, especially in the synoptic Gospels and The Acts. There are many today who teach that repentance was the initial message of John the Baptist and Jesus to the Jews, but that it is not the message of the Church to the Gentiles. It is difficult to see how any honest student of the Word can hold such a view seriously when Paul in preaching to the Gentiles at Athens (Acts 17:30) said that God "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent," and when we read in the same book (Acts 11:18): "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." According to Hebrews 6:1 also, repentance belongs in the very "foundation" of Christian teaching and experience, "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God." Then how dare we treat the doctrine of repentance as a matter of trifling consequence, since here it is considered just as much a part of our "foundation" as "faith toward God." Indeed, it comes first, thus coinciding with the assumption found everywhere in the Scripture, that man cannot turn to God without first turning from sin. Here, as always, the burden seems to be in harmony with the words of Jesus, "Except ye repent." And is there any doubt in the minds of serious men that godly repentance includes a complete forsaking of sin? Then let them remember that Jesus expresses the thought in stronger terms than that: "He that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:33). Would our Lord require that we forsake the good, and not the bad? Surely, the bad first. And is it sensible to say that we would be required to forsake evil to obtain salvation, and not be required to forsake evil to keep it?

Furthermore: repentance is man's work. Every man has the ability to repent. God will not repent for man. This is seen in the wording of Acts 17:30, "God now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." God would not command all men to do something that all men could not do. Thus, in the necessity of repentance, do we see personal responsibility. Ability brings accountability.

But typical modern Calvinists, as was pointed out in Chapter 6, do not give to repentance the place it must have in any truly evangelical scheme of things. The writer has before him a letter from one of their largest institutions in which is the statement that "while repentance may in some cases lead to salvation, it is not a requisite step." It is clear that some, in the opinion of the writer of this letter, may be saved without repentance. Can any man be saved who is not reconciled to God? True, "salvation is only in a person, Christ," as the letter states; but Paul understood that we would be saved in Christ only if through Christ we became reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:20). Can a man be reconciled to God while still clinging inwardly to sin? No more than can a rebel be truly reconciled to his government while secretly persisting in rebellion. The two ideas are mutually contradictory. Yet a man who does not repent is a man who persists in rebellion. To say a man may be saved without repentance is to say he may be saved without being reconciled to God.

It may be granted that a painful process of outward repentance, involving restitution and detailed confession, is not always necessary, partly because it is not always possible, (as with the thief on the cross), and partly because such a process constitutes the outward expression of repentance, not the inward essence. The inward essence is a heart attitude of turning from sin, of renunciation, of yielding to the claims of Christ's righteousness, of a hunger after God that is willing to pay any price. The outward expression of repentance may be carried on not only for some time before conversion, but, as with those who have much restitution to make and lingering habits to break, even after conversion; but without the inward attitude of repentance true conversion is impossible, and any professed faith is spurious.

Moreover, we are not proposing to test the genuineness of the inward essence of repentance by the presence or absence of certain emotions, nor are we saying that the accompanying sorrow for sin will be felt by all to the same degree of intensity, or even to the same degree of intelligent awareness. In the soul's desperation after Christ and the salvation he may not sharply analyze his own feelings and inquire if he feels this or that as he ought. He is too passionately in earnest for dispassionate inquiry. Sorrow for sin may not be in the forefront of his consciousness at all. But the decision to turn from sin to Christ with all his heart is. And any inward reserve, any secret clinging to evil, any remaining unwillingness to conform to the demands of righteousness, any troublesome rebellion lurking on the edge of his consciousness, any accusing sense of playing unfair with God, will stifle his faith and stymie conversion.

As far as the time element is concerned, a man may turn to Christ in true faith and be born again in a split second; but neither in a second nor in an hour nor in a year can he be born again with an impenitent heart and unyielded will. In such a state he is incapable of believing unto salvation. We must insist that our initial salvation is conditioned on a faith that is rooted in repentance.

Secondly, Continued salvation is conditioned on obedience. We cannot escape this position when we read such statements as the following: "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord ... but he that doeth the will of my Father" (Matt. 7:21); "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he ... shall be loved of my Father" (John 14:21); "if a man abide not in me he is cast forth" (John 15:6); "Continue ye in my love ... If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (John 15:9, 10); "ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14); "the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32); "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves

servants to obey, his servants ye are ... whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom. 6:16); "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. 8:14); "And being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:9); "But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22); "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth ..." (I Peter 1:22); "He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4; also I John 1:6, 2:15, 2:9, 3:10, 3:15, 3:24, 5:18; II John 1:9; III John 11). In the face of such a conclusive array of Scriptures, how can anyone take the position that the initial experience of a genuine New Birth is the sole condition of eternal salvation? We may well conclude with John Fletcher that if at any point whatsoever in our religious career our faith "does not produce the proper fruits it is no better than the devil's faith" (James 2:19, 20).

Here are a few questions, based on the above texts:

1. Referring to John 14:21, if a man, once saved hath Jesus' commandments and ceases to keep them, will he continue to be loved of the Father in the sense intended by Jesus in this verse? Let us read it again, and it will become clear that only those who keep them are given that promise.

2. Would the warning of John 15:6 have been sounded if it were impossible for one who was in Christ to "abide not" and to be "cast forth"? And it says "abide not in me," referring not to one's relation to doctrine or church organization, but to Christ. If we are cut off from Him, are we saved?

3. Coming now to Rom. 6:16, if a Christian yields to sin, and once more becomes its servant, is it not unto death? And how can death and eternal life reign in the same soul? In truth, considering to whom the passage is addressed, does not it even imply the possibility of a saved man so yielding himself "to sin unto death"? Is not the passage a direct warning against that very thing?

4. Again, we look about us and see those who once had a bright experience, but today they are living in such a manner that any right-minded person knows they are in no sense being led by the pure Spirit of God. And if not being led by the Spirit of God, how can they have the audacity to claim to still be the sons of God? Rom. 8:14 designates, in a precise manner, those who are the sons of God: "They who are led of the Spirit." Then the conclusion is inescapable that those who are not led of the Spirit are not the sons of God, regardless of past experience. This, like all the others, is a "present tense" Scripture.

The question so often heard, "Can a child be unborn?" reveals very superficial thinking. It is a flimsy defense. We quite agree that no one can be unborn, but he can die, and be separated, and if the child is unholy and the father holy, he will never see the father again. Similarly, a child of God can die spiritually ("the soul that sinneth, it shall die" Ezek. 18:4), be separated, and never see the Father's face again. However, there is another angle to this question. Our natural relationship to an earthly parent is on a basis quite different from our relationship to God. We are born into a human family by natural generation; we are born into the family of God by adoption. We were the children of Satan before becoming the children of God (I John 3:8). It is just as logical to say a child of Satan cannot be "unborn" and be saved as to say a child of God cannot be "unborn" and be lost. Thus we

see there is no perfect analogy between the human and divine in family relationships, and any supposed analogy furnishes very poor material out of which to build an argument for eternal security.

But let us continue our questions.

6. In Heb. 5:9, do we read that Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them who obey him for but a season, after which they may disobey with immunity?

7. And finally, what about the man who "keepeth not his commandments"? (I John 2:4), yet claims to know God, because of a past experience, and because he has been taught that if a Christian lies down in sin he will lose his fellowship but not his relationship to God? Is not the latter part of the verse a rather strong and merciless indictment against him? And, we may ask further, Can we claim to be a son of God, if we do not know God?

But are we to conclude, asks one, that a single sin will instantly forfeit grace and take one out from under the atonement? That depends upon the degree of intelligent deliberation back of it, and upon the believer's attitude toward it. To begin with, we must be sure that what the questioner has in mind is real sin, and not temptation. But having determined its character we must hasten to add that one single sin is sufficiently serious to bring immediate condemnation and ultimate total apostasy if unrepented of and unforgiven. However, one single sin does not mean that the guilty party instantly becomes a total backslider. It may be so, but it need not be so. The Holy Spirit may be grieved, yet not grieved away. For there is a difference between "being overtaken in a fault" and "overtaking an opportunity" to sin. There is also a difference between a soul that is ashamed and broken-hearted, and flees to the blood, and a soul that is hard and careless, proceeding to cover up the offense, or what is worse, to repeat it. The sincere Christian who has been defeated at some point has a right to claim the promise, "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ..." (I John 2:1). If he takes advantage of this verse, however, as sort of a backstop to his sinning, and covertly makes allowance for sin thinking that he can always plead his Advocate as an easy escape from ... sin's consequences, he is wickedly presuming on the mercy of God, and at the Judgment he will be sadly disillusioned. Such a person does not possess the true Christian attitude toward sin at all. On the other hand, if in true penitence he clings to the God he has disobeyed and in true faith hides in the blood, his peace of soul will be restored without his relationship as a child of God having been completely broken. But this fact in no way invalidates our fundamental proposition that continued salvation is conditioned upon obedience.

Thirdly, final salvation is conditioned upon perseverance in obedience. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matt. 10:22 and 24:13). What sense or meaning would there be in such a statement if it did not imply that some would not endure unto the end? In Acts 14:22 we read that Paul and Barnabas while visiting the Christians in Asia Minor were "exhorting them to continue in the faith." If Christians could not help continuing, why the need of this exhortation? And if Christians have no responsibility in the matter, (which is implied when we say that God will not allow them to fall away,) why did he exhort them to continue, as though it was something they could do or not do? If it is the "perseverance of the Saviour rather than the perseverance of the saints," why did not the apostle exhort the Saviour to continue, seeing the whole matter was in his hands anyway? On the contrary, the Saviour himself said in Matt. 12:36, 37, that in the day of Judgment "by thy

words shalt thou be justified." He did not say, "By my words imputed to thee thou shalt be justified." In this connection read also Rom. 2:313; I Tim. 4:16; I Tim. 2:15; I Cor. 15:1, 2; Rev. 2:5, 7, 10, 11, 17, 23, 25, 26, and Rev. 21:7, 8.

The following Scriptures also show unmistakably that final destiny will be determined by personal soul condition, whether righteous or unrighteous: John 5:29; Acts 10:35; Rom. 2:3-11; Matt. 5:8; Heb. 12:14; Gal. 6:8; I John 1:6, and III John 11.

In I Cor. 6:9 and Gal. 5:19-21 Paul gives us a list of all manner of sins, and in both passages emphatically states that they which do such things shall not "inherit the Kingdom of God." Suppose one who has unquestionably been born again should at some later time in his life become guilty of any or all of these dark sins. Would we say that these passages applied to all but him? If so, then such a position would mean that the sins which damn a sinner will not damn a Christian and that God is a respecter of persons, contrary to the biblical statement that he is not. It would mean that the deadliness is taken out of sin the moment of conversion, which in turn means that the atonement of Christ, applied in regeneration, effects a change in the nature of sin. Thus do we get back to our fundamental issue. But would it not be just as righteous (and just as likely) for the United States government to post placards which read: "All Guilty of Murder Shall Be Put to Death," then, added in small letters, "This applies to all except government employees"? The whole thing is seen to be contrary both to good sense and the plain declaration of God's Word.

But the normal consequences of sin do not hold for the Christian, according to the consistent Calvinist. Final salvation is not conditioned upon perseverance in obedience. The effect of sin after regeneration is absolutely nil in so far as its bearing on eternal life is concerned. A friend of the writer heard a modern "eternal security" speaker, addressing a large youth conference on the Pacific Coast not long ago, say to the young people: "Girls, be sure you are born again! Be sure you are born again! Then if afterward you go into sin, and die in disgrace, I'll meet you in heaven." Then addressing himself to the boys he continued, "Boys, be sure you are born again! Be sure you are born again! Then if afterward you go into deep sin, and die in a drunken brawl, I'll meet you in heaven." After the service some of the pastors went into a huddle and in genuine dismay exclaimed, "Did you hear what he said? Why, he licensed our young people to sin!" Yet those pastors didn't seem to realize that he was merely stating what would be a fact if their own doctrines were true.

We cannot, however, close this chapter without dealing with the modern version of "perseverance." This interpretation (not new, but recently revived) is so plausible and subtle that one could hold to it and still agree with all the facts presented thus far in this chapter. A certain group admits all the scriptural facts we have presented about sin, agrees that anyone living in sin is abiding in death, and anyone dying in sin will be eternally lost. But after retreating to this extent, they have taken their stand behind the forte that one who is really born again will not lie down in sin, or that at least he will be sure to come back before he dies. They maintain that if a professor of religion returns to his old ways of sin it is proof sufficient that he was never actually regenerated. I quote from Dr. R. A. Torrey, in "Questions and Answers": "This does not mean that if a man is once born again and then lies down in sin he will not be lost forever. It means that Jesus Christ will see to it that one who is born again will not lie down in sin. He may fall into sin, he may fall into gross sin, but Jesus Christ has undertaken his recovery. He will go after the lost sheep until he find it (Luke

15:4). There is no warrant here for one to continue in sin saying: 'I am a child of God and therefore cannot be lost' ... If one lies down in sin and continues in sin it is a proof that he is not a child of God, is not saved, never was regenerated."

The issue is plain. He admits that all who die in sin are lost. He admits, inferentially, that even if a person once saved should die in sin, he too, would be lost. But he is confident that a saved person will not die in sin. The Saviour will see to that. As far as Mr. Torrey is concerned, the whole system of Calvinism, especially as it relates to unconditional perseverance, will stand or fall on the one issue: whether or not, in actual human experience, people genuinely saved ever return to sin and permanently continue therein. That is the point. Now, if the writer is convinced that in all biblical and secular history not one person who had been genuinely saved later returned to awful sin and died in that condition, he will burn these papers. He will ever afterward be an avowed believer in the practical fact of eternal security even if he cannot reconcile the theory of the doctrine.

But before going farther, we would call the reader's attention to the fact that, fundamentally, this mild position is not different from original, unadulterated Calvinism. It just as successfully places the entire responsibility for man's salvation on God. Man has no ability of his own to backslide and stay backslidden; the lost lamb has no ability to resist the efforts of the seeking shepherd; the prodigal son has no ability to harden his heart against the impulse to go home; and the Christian has no ability to pluck himself out of the Father's hand, even though nothing else can. In the last analysis, does not this position mean that the Christian has no will in the matter, no real responsibility? And we have shown earlier in this book that if we accept this pillar of Calvinism, which destroys any real free agency, we must accept the second, and third, and fourth, thus entangling ourselves again in all the errors concerning sin which even the godly Mr. Torrey is trying to escape. (See Ch. 2.)

But are there none who die in sin after having been gloriously saved? This is the issue. In answer let us listen to the pointed questionings of John B. Gough in "Platform Echoes": "Are there no men ruined who ever had the grace of God in their hearts? Will you dare to say that every deposed minister never had the grace of God in his heart? Will you tell me that the wife or a minister, who spent eight years in China teaching Chinese women Christianity as a devoted Christian, and then came home and delivered lectures to ladies on the wants of women of China, for the purpose of raising money, not for herself, but for them, will you tell me she had no grace in her heart? And yet she died drunk in a hotel in Boston, an empty brandy bottle by her side. This lady I personally knew." Such cases could be multiplied many fold. It will not help matters any for our friends to sweep blandly away such cases with the remark. "But they were only deceived at the time of their seeming conversion; they were not really regenerated." To that we observe that the evidences which attest the genuineness of anyone's conversion witnessed to the reality of theirs. Are there no laws by which one may know of a certainty that he is saved? If we are to brush those criterions aside in individual cases just to satisfy our notions, then how can we be certain of any man's salvation? Would God allow seeking souls to be so easily deceived? If so, then each one of us can well ask the question, How do I know but what I am deceived? Obviously, the only way is to wait and see if I hold out: if I die in sin, then I was deceived in my conversion; if I remain true, then I was truly regenerate! Perhaps after all there is a little truth as well as caricature in Sam Jones' version of the "hardshell's" theology: "If I seek religion I can't find it, and if I've found it I haven't got it, and if I've got it I can't lose it, and if I lose it I haven't had it."

Seriously, we believe that the following can be laid down as the only safe, scriptural principle: If a person has the marks of a Bible Christian, such as definite conversion accompanied by the witness of the Spirit, subsequent holy and pious life, a manifest delight in the Word of God and means of grace, love of a brethren, a joyful testimony, and inward peace and joy in God, we may be sure that he is truly grafted in the living vine, and that his name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And it would be a responsibility too great for a thinking man to shoulder to brand such regeneration as either hypocrisy or deception because the Christian later died in apostasy.

Take, for instance, the case of Saul. Dr. R. A. Torrey says: "We have no reason for believing that he was a true believer, a regenerate man." No reason? Then we have no sufficient reason to believe in the regeneracy of any man, for the evidences of his conversion are the same as those which we hold to be satisfactory today. In I Sam. 10 we are told: (1) that God gave him a change of heart, verse 9; (2) that the Spirit of God came mightily upon him, verse 10; (3) that his change was witnessed to by the people, verses 11, 12; and (4) that God's blessing was upon him, verse 24. Who, of this day, has stronger evidence of real old-fashioned religion than that? Suppose a man, in Dr. Torrey's meetings for instance, had received a change of heart; not just by making new resolutions, or by getting some new viewpoint, but supernaturally effected in him by God himself; suppose the Spirit of the Lord had come upon him mightily, so much so that he immediately took his place among the saints of God in glowing testimony; and this change was so marked that even the neighbors noticed it and remarked that something had happened to him; and suppose it had been written of him by the pen of inspiration that God had chosen him for an important work. Would not Dr. Torrey himself have considered this to be a most remarkable and clear case of Holy Ghost conversion? Indeed! If a man could have all those evidences and still not be saved, then we may well wonder what it takes! Certainly no man could hope to get into the kingdom merely by signing a card, answering a few questions, or joining the church! That Saul was a regenerate man is evident, but that he surely died in awful and complete and eternal apostasy is also evident. Even Dr. Torrey would not deny this; therefore according to his own position, Saul must have been lost.

There is, however, a more direct way to prove that sin will cause one to lose eternal life than by showing that some once saved afterward die in sin. We have in mind I John 3:15: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." It would seem, St. John, that some do not know it. The point which the Calvinists emphasize so firmly is that a believer may lose his Crown and the "full reward," and be "ashamed" at Christ's coming, and miss the "abundant entrance," and have his "works burnt up, and be disapproved as a servant of God; but that in spite of all this he cannot lose eternal life, which is the vital essence of salvation. They assert that the believer hath eternal life, now and eternally. John Wesley aptly observed that present possession of eternal life is conditioned upon present believing; and that believing now does not seal to one eternal life for the future any more than unbelief now seals the unsaved to eternal damnation. Just as one may cease his unbelief and lose his damnation, so may he cease believing and lose his salvation. But that is a slight digression. We are calling attention, now, to a verse which uses the term "eternal life." Note the word "abiding," for it is significant. The verse does not say that the murdered never had eternal life, but that he does not have it abiding, thus indicating that he had it at some previous time. If none who are saved ever lose their eternal life, then it falls upon those who support the theory to prove that none saved ever afterward become murderers. This they cannot do. David was a saved man before his sin, for in his great confessional prayer he did not say "give me"



but "restore unto me the joy of salvation." But after once knowing that joy, and after having had it said of him that he was a man after God's own heart, David became both a murderer and an adulterer. While in the throes of that guilt, did he possess eternal life? Not if I John 3:15 is correct. What is more, if we carefully read the fifty-first Psalm we are certainly not given the impression that David considered himself a saved sinner"; rather is it the cry of a lost soul. There is no keener, more vivid portrayal in the Scriptures of the certain fatality of sin.

Take a case of recent times. The writer was personally acquainted with one who ten years ago was a man of God. The depth of his piety and the genuineness of his salvation could be vouched for by a number of witnesses. It was not a case of either hypocrisy or deception. He was an earnest Christian man. But today his heart is poisoned by vile hatred of all that is good, of his previous friends, the Church, and God. And if he hateth his brother, is he not a murderer? "And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him" -- although he did have eternal life, it is not abiding.

In the Garden of Eden Satan succeeded in persuading our first parents that sin could not destroy their eternal life. He asked them the same question that is being asked today, "Can eternal life die?" But just as they learned to their sorrow, so will many today learn, that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die," and it matters not what dispensation that soul may be living under. That is as eternal as the holiness and justice of God. The very fact of God's unchangeableness argues that it is so. Certainly, eternal life cannot die, for it flows from the eternal nature of God; but it can depart. We die, not eternal life. Perhaps someone may say, "But Adam and Eve were not living under grace, as are we. The atonement of Christ provided an eternal life that cannot depart." Beware! for such a statement is admission that our analysis of the Calvinistic position is correct; that the atonement, to all practical purposes, changed the nature of sin, so that it no longer had the power to affect eternal life. If the nature of sin has not been changed, then sin would of necessity affect us in the same way it affected Adam and Eve. (See Chapters 2 and 3.)

Let us realign this chapter with the central issues of these papers. If initial salvation is conditioned upon repentance, continued salvation is conditioned upon obedience, and final salvation is conditioned upon perseverance in obedience, then we conclude that God does not save man by taking the deadliness out of sin at conversion, thus effecting a change in the nature of sin. We conclude that man has a personal responsibility for his salvation. If he again chooses evil after once repenting he will forfeit eternal life and be lost. God saves man, not by changing the nature of sin, so that he may be allowed to return to it later, or even die in it, without loss of eternal life, but rather he saves by changing the nature of man, taking man out of sin and sin out of man, and giving him an experience whereby he may live "holily and justly in this present world," and serve God "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life."

This experience is the only basis of true security. Those possessing it are enjoying perfect peace and a sweet, restful assurance that all is well. They are living without fear. (I John 4:18.) They know full well that there can be no perfect assurance without perfect love, but they have found the perfect love, and therefore are enjoying the assurance. There can be nothing but a false peace for those who have an accusing or stifled conscience and who are living in disobedience. The doctrine of "once in grace always in grace" provides, after all, a miserable comfort; so let none cling to it for the unhappy purpose of drowning his fears.

More and more do we see the necessity of a right conception of sin, if we are not to get tangled in dangerous heresies. Sin is always killing, damning, separating. A simple statement, that, but one which will not dwell with the Calvinistic system. If we believe it, thoroughly, we will find it to be a mallet which will slowly, surely, mercilessly, crumble every pillar upon which those doctrines stand. And it will do the same with all other false doctrines.

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A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN  
Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

By  
Richard S. Taylor

**Chapter 9**  
**THE ATONEMENT AND THE NEW COVENANT**

The New Testament is enfolded in the Old, and the Old is unfolded in the New. -- Augustine

As grace begins in God's love to us, so it ends in our love to Him. -- Unknown

Among those whose teachings require, when carefully examined, a change in the nature of sin as an effect of the atonement, there is often to be found much strange confusion regarding law and grace, the old covenant and the new covenant. We cannot help noticing the prominent place these matters hold in their writings and conversation, and we are given the unmistakable impression that the old and new covenants, and law and grace, are in awful and complete antagonism to each other. Some with whom we have conversed have even gone so far as to excuse a little sin in the Christian's life with the remark, "Oh, but we are not under the law but under grace!" -- and they spoke with a tone of finality and satisfaction which seemed to mean, "There! that removes all difficulty." But kindly, prayerfully, with a true desire to help, we wish to point out some scriptural difficulties for them which will not be so easily removed.

In what sense are we free from the law? What is grace, and in what way are we saved by it? What is the fundamental meaning and dynamic of the new covenant? In what sense does it cancel the old, and in what manner does it not? These are questions that we will carefully discuss in this chapter.

First, it will be proper for us to review the scriptural teaching relative to the old covenant. It consisted of a primary and secondary division. The primary covenant was moral and religious, was in the form of ten commandments, and was written on tables of stone. "And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone" (Deut. 4:13). The secondary covenant consisted of the minute and complex ceremonial law, which was sealed with blood. "And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words" (Exod. 24:8). It, with its sacrifices and sin offerings, provided a temporary mode of atoning for transgressions of the primary covenant (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 9:7); also, with its many laws relating to the tabernacle, priesthood, Sabbaths and feasts, and those many minute laws for the personal life, it served (1) as a type of Christ (Col. 2:16, 17), and (2) to teach the necessity of holiness and (3) the shedding of blood as a means of remission for sin (Heb. 9:1-15). Now when any reference is made in the New Testament concerning the old covenant we will be wise if we note which is meant, the primary or the secondary covenants. Also, the term law does not always mean the same in the New Testament. There are "laws of operation" besides the Mosaic law, and even it was divided into three parts: moral, ceremonial, and civil. Therefore, when we come to any New Testament discussion of law, it will behoove us to inquire which kind of type of law is meant.

Now let us present a few elemental truths:

1. First, the new covenant consists of a personal experience of literal righteousness and holiness, according to Luke 1:72-75: "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." There is no suggestion of liberty to sin here, and yet this is the heart of the new covenant -- or rather we should say, this is the new covenant. Unless one has righteousness and holiness he may talk about the new covenant, but is not enjoying its privileges.

2. Secondly, to be freed from the law and to be saved by grace does not mean that there is the slightest liberty to commit a single sin, according to Rom. 5:21-6:1, 2 and 14-16, part of which we quote: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" This passage settles that question forever. Let none seek to excuse sin in the life of the Christian with the complacent remark, "Oh, but we are not under the law but under grace." People have leaped to the conclusion that because they were free from the law they were free to do wrong, and that to be saved by grace meant something akin to the lavish generosity of a soft-hearted, easygoing father toward his willful son. Whatever else is meant, Paul certainly makes it clear that we have no excuse for known sin.

3. Thirdly, the law which is discarded is not the primary covenant of the Ten Commandments. In Jesus' remarks concerning the two great commandments he indicated that true Christian love completely fulfills all moral and religious laws. One who enjoys the perfect love described in this passage (Mark 12:29-31) will certainly not break one of the Ten Commandments, yet this is the love which characterizes the true New Testament Christian. Some persons quote only the first half of I John 3:23, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ." That, say they, is the "gospel law" -- "the whole duty of man" under the new dispensation. But we could remind all such that there is a second half of the verse which reads, "and love one another, even as he gave us commandment." Hence the gospel demands a "faith which worketh by love" -- a love that will not knowingly transgress against either God or man. Paul presents the same thought emphatically and clearly in Rom. 13:8-10. Indeed, rather than discarding the Ten Commandments, Jesus puts new teeth into them in his Sermon on the Mount. This can be seen in such remarks as the following: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, that every one that is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matt. 5:21, 22, A.S.V.). Again, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." The Ten Commandments, then, are not temporary measures given by God to a certain people for a restricted period, but are the great fundamental laws of divine government, in force throughout all probation and by which all will be judged. They did not begin with Moses nor end with his dispensation. Neither the atonement of Christ nor the grace of God make void a single commandment of the ten; rather, the purpose and work of both is to establish them (Rom. 3:31; Matt. 5:17).

This profound truth is admirably and unanswerably stated in "The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation," by James B. Walker. We quote: "The moral law is the same forever in its application to all intelligent beings in the universe. It is plain to reason that whatever means may be adapted to bring men to rectitude of conduct, or to pardon them for offenses, the rule of right itself, founded upon the justice and holiness and sustained by the conscience of the Eternal, must be as immutable and eternal as its author; and the means, manifestations, and influences under the different dispensations are expedients of mercy, designed and adapted to bring men to act in conformity with its requirements."

4. Fourthly, those living in unrighteousness or guilty of willful sin are still very much under the law. (See page 98.) They are not yet under grace, actually and personally, except in a dispensational sense. Paul says that the law still applies to the disobedient and the sinner, and that all manner of sin is "contrary to sound doctrine" (I Tim. 1:8-11). We fear that in the light of this passage Paul would not consider a "sinning religion" to be sound doctrine. Again, when Paul states in Gal. 5:18, "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law," does he not plainly infer that those who are not led of the Spirit -- those who commit sin -- are under the law? Then those who call themselves Christians yet make allowance for sin need not talk about being free from the law, for they are not. There is plenty of law left for the offender.

5. Fifthly, the new covenant does not replace the primary old, but transplants it. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb. 8:10). Here we have the very essence of the new covenant, its real meaning. The old covenant consisted of the Ten Commandments written on tables of stone; the new covenant consists of those same commandments written on the human heart. It is merely a change in location. In this way the law is not made void, but established.

We should not think of this new inward law, however, as being conformed solely to the letter of the commandments; it is more than that: it involves inward obedience to the whole will of God. It is not a legal righteousness, dependent upon the exact observance of certain rules, but a righteousness fashioned by the "spirit of holiness" in the heart. This is a natural, joyous, free righteousness, rather than strained, effortful, and burdensome. "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:7).

And here do we have the real meaning of being freed from the law. When a law of God is made a part of man's nature, then it no longer needs to be on the statute books. When the Ten Commandments, and all affiliated commandments that are fundamental to moral government, are written in our heart they no longer need to be written on tables of stone. The old covenant is spoken of as the law because it was written; man was conformed to righteousness by compulsory rules outside of himself, rather than by his disposition. It was a tyrant over him, a whip. In fact, the old covenant was weak because it was only a matter of law rather than of human nature. Instead of being able to enlist a man's disposition on its side, it had to contend with a man's disposition. When he had a disposition to steal, he found he was very much under the law. Because his disposition crossed with the law, it failed to conform him to true righteousness. Rather, through this situation was revealed to man his utter sinfulness of nature (Rom. 7). But under the new covenant all this is changed. His

disposition or nature becomes conformed to all that is right, so that the written law is no longer needed as a whip over him. He so loves God that he does not need to be told to have no other gods before him. He so loves his neighbor that he does not need to be forbidden to kill him, or harm him in any way. The standards of right and wrong are not changed to fit man's nature, but man's nature is changed to fit those standards. In this sense, he is freed from the law. "But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (Gal. 5:18). That is, if we are led of the Spirit we will practice by joyous, divine impulse the principles of righteousness indicated in the law; in that case, we no longer need the written law held over us as a whip.

It is much like a bee trying to get out of a wide-mouthed bottle. As long as the bee has a "disposition" to go wrong he bumps into the glass, and as long as a man has a disposition to break the law he finds that he is still very much under the law. But if the bee goes straight upward, he can soar out into freedom without ever touching the glass. He is freed from it. And the Christian also, whose body, soul, and spirit have been sanctified wholly (I Thess. 5:23) until his inner tendency is toward holiness and righteousness, finds that in his pathway toward heaven he has no quarrel with the law. So far as he is concerned, all the municipal and county and state and national governments in the world could discard their moral laws (most of which are based on the Ten Commandments) and it would make no difference in his disposition or manner of living. He is not under the law! Filled with the Spirit, he lives lovingly, joyfully, peacefully, patiently, gently, faithfully, meekly, and temperately. Who ever heard of a responsible law which made the slightest objection to that kind of a life? (Gal. 5:23).

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance [requirements] of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:24, A.S.V.).

It becomes quite clear, then, in what sense we are freed from the primary old covenant. But what is the basis of our freedom from the sacerdotal, or secondary old covenant? It is this that we generally have in mind, by the way, when we use the terms Mosaic Law, Old Covenant, or Dispensation of the Law. Discussion of this phase of our subject will bring into view an entirely different group of Scripture references. Making some general comparisons, we find that whereas the primary covenant was the permanent basis of righteousness, the secondary was a temporary program. The primary covenant was a standard; the secondary was a method and a pattern. The New Testament frees us from the primary old covenant by changing its location from tables of stone to the tables of our hearts; it frees us from the secondary old covenant by replacing it entirely with "a more excellent ministry" and a "better covenant.... established upon better promises" (Heb. 8:6). The "example and shadow of heavenly things" (Heb. 8:5) was replaced by the more enduring and efficacious substance.

1. Thinking broadly, therefore, let us consider the Mosaic law as that general plan whereby man's life was conformed to the standards of devotion and righteousness by means of outward rules and ceremonies. This was the method used under the old Testament. Its purposes were three-fold: (1) to make man God-conscious (Exod. 34); (2) to make man sin-conscious (Rom. 3:20; Rom. 5:20; Rom.

7:7-13; Gal. 3:10); and (3) to make man need-conscious -- his need of a Saviour (Gal. 3:23, 24). But at the best, even in the fulfillment of these purposes, it was only a temporary expedient (Gal. 3:17-19), something to "fill in" until such time as the original covenant made to Abraham (Luke 1:72-75) might be established. It was utterly impotent as a means of redeeming man. It could not justify man (Acts 13:39; Gal. 3:11; Rom. 3:20), nor could it change his nature (Heb. 7:19; 9:9; 10:1, 2). Once again we encounter the two phases of redemption: redeemed standing, consisting of justification and adoption, and redeemed state, consisting of regeneration and entire sanctification.

Also it should be noted that those passages which speak of the law or the old covenant as being entirely discarded and replaced by the new refer only to the secondary old covenant, the "law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Gal. 3; Col. 2:13-17; Eph. 2:15, and Heb. 7-10). It is only as the primary old covenant is established in man by a change in his nature and standing (Heb. 10:16, 17) that God's original covenant could be fulfilled: "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." We see also that the heart of the new covenant, as defined in this verse, and also in Heb. 8:10, and Heb. 10:9-17 is more a matter of change in state than in standing. Pardon and adoption are essential and blessed accompaniments, for there could be no reconciliation without them, but they alone do not constitute the new covenant. Therefore our friends need not talk about enjoying the benefits of the new covenant as long as they insist on relegating personal sanctification, or perfection in love, to the future.

The Mosaic law, or the secondary old covenant, defined above as God's method of conforming man, is gone. We are free from its tiresome duties as a means of pleasing God. It is replaced by a new and better method, called grace. The law served its purpose, but since it was unable even in the fulfillment of that purpose to establish righteousness, it was discarded. And for us to seek to be justified or perfected by that law is to deny, in effect, the superiority and sufficiency of Christ (Gal. 2:21; 5:4).

2. Let us think of the dispensation of grace as being that general plan whereby God, in his free mercy, redeems man and conforms him unto himself, not by outward forms and ceremonies and laws, but by conforming the nature of man to the whole will and nature of God, by free pardon and sanctification, through simple faith in the blood of Christ and by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit. This embraces all the truth and methods of redemption: Christ as our Mediator, our High Priest, our Sacrifice, our curse, and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter, liberating us from the guilt, power, dominion, and state of sin, alienating our affections from the world and lifting them to perfect love to God and man. All of this should be included when we speak of the dispensation of grace. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Grace not only means (1) the free, unmerited favor of God toward man, manifested in giving His Son, freely pardoning and reinstating, and sending the Comforter, but also (2) an imparted ability freely given to the individual whereby he may measure up to the divine standards of holiness and righteousness. This phase of grace is manifested in the work of the Holy Spirit upon and within the individual in regeneration, sanctification, and indwelling.

The first meaning is presented in the following scriptures: Rom. 3:24, 5:15; Eph. 1:7; II Thess. 2:16; I Tim. 1:12-14; Titus 3:7; Heb. 2:9; John 14:16

That the second meaning is just as truly a part of God's grace is incontestably proven by the following passages: Acts 20:32; Rom. 5:2-5, 21; II Cor. 9:8; Eph. 3:16-20; Eph. 2:1-5; I Thess. 5:23; II Tim. 1:14; Titus 2:11-14; Heb. 4:16; Heb. 12:28; James 4:5, 6; I Peter 5:10.

Grace most certainly does not mean the free favor of God upon willful sinners, nor does it mean the sovereign administration of salvation irrespective of individual responsibility.

"For by grace are ye saved through faith" -- yes, by the Father's mercy and the Son's atonement, and the Spirit's administration; by faith in and obedience to the blood and the Word (Eph. 2:8, 9).

"Not of works, lest any man should boast." No man's good works or moral life will save him. None are more emphatic in this than true Arminians. But we must not confuse works with obedience. Many seem to think that the term "works" refers to doing right, for they very quickly (sometimes flippantly, we fear) quote this clause when we tell them the necessity of living free from sin. The world is full of people who have a horror of professing anything like holiness or sanctification, lest they should appear to be relying on their works. But if some way these sincere but misguided ones could unshackle their minds of theological prejudice and read all the Bible as conscientiously as they read this verse, they would have a greater horror of being without holiness. And they would know that although they cannot earn salvation through any amount of works, neither can they retain salvation without implicit and continued obedience. "The True doctrine," says John Thomas, "is not standing and state, but faith and obedience." So says also God's Word: II Cor. 10:5; Eph. 2:10; James 1:22-25, 2:21-23; I Peter 1:2, 13-16.

"And that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God." We joyously admit that none of the blessings provided by this boundless grace come through our own merits, but only through the mercy of God and the precious blood of Jesus. Praise him for his unspeakable gift! (Eph. 4:7; II Cor. 9:15).

"But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned" (I Tim. 1:5, A.S.R.).

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A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN  
Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

By  
Richard S. Taylor

**Chapter 10**  
**THE ATONEMENT AND INBRED SIN**

Holiness is the only natural, normal life one can live and be a human being as God designed one should be. -- T. M. Anderson

It is vitally important that we consider, carefully, those passages which indicate provision in the atonement for perfect and present cleansing from inbred sin, or the carnal nature. For, if heart purity is God's plan for every Christian, then most certainly freedom from actual sin would be required. Furthermore, a provision in the atonement so momentous and far-reaching as this would point distinctly to the belief that God's one method of redemption is by saving man, here and now, from all sin; it would certainly not lead one to believe that God proposed to save man in his sin on the merits of Christ. And if present deliverance from the Adamic nature can be shown to be in the atonement, it follows that such deliverance is a necessity as well as a privilege; that it is God's only way, not just a possible way. For nothing was included in the atonement except that which was essential to redemption. God did not send His Son to suffer and bleed and die to do nonessential work.

First may it be said that it is proper to speak of inbred sin as a state or condition rather than as an act, because it does not require the action of the will in order to exist. It is an inward propensity, an inner tendency toward evil which is present and felt even when the will is set against it. Constantly it is clamoring for the consent of the will, and when such consent is given, an act of sin is committed involving guilt. This we call actual or personal sin. But in the case of the Christian the will is definitely opposed to this body of sin; yet it remains just the same, its motions are felt and struggled against, a source of constant grief. It is sinful in character because it is contrary to the nature of God. It is a logical distinction then to recognize the difference between inbred sin as a tendency or state and personal sin as an act.

This carnal nature of which we speak is difficult to describe, but to prevent the reader from including more than is intended, an attempt will be made. As will be remembered, one of the three elements of spiritual death is depravity (see page 28). The result of Adam's sin and separation from the presence of God was a depraved or degenerate moral nature. Losing its health and perfection, his nature became diseased and warped and out of line. Inevitably, man's mind and body were greatly impaired because of this spiritual depravity and his continued sinning, so that he has become subject to countless mistakes of judgment, deficiency of knowledge, lapse of memory, faulty reasoning and perceptive faculties, physical deformities, abnormalities and peculiarities of temperament, disease, pain, and decay. But since none of these infirmities have a moral quality in them, they must not be considered a part of the Adamic depraved moral nature, or inbred sin. For instance, there are no moral implications in a lapse of memory; there need be nothing about it contrary to perfect love, or sinful in any way. On the contrary, an uncontrollable temper is decidedly a moral problem, as it

breeds hate, precipitates murder, and promotes all sorts of ugliness and misery. We do not say, then, that a pure man will always speak in just that tone of voice, or show just the exact facial expression, or act with just that degree of prudence and discernment which the occasion may warrant; but his delinquency will be due not to a lack of Christlikeness in spirit or motive but to a lack of Christlikeness in understanding and emotional balance. When due to the first lack, it is sinful; when due to the second, it is human. Only Jesus had perfect poise in all situations. Only Jesus never had to say, "I forgot," or, "Pardon me, I am at fault." We are trying to make clear that this body of sin does not consist of the frailties of an impaired body and mind, but is found in a diseased spirit with its deranged affections and desires.

There need be no sin, nothing contrary to love in an unintentional blunder of the judgment, even though it proves to be unfair to another; but the same innocence can certainly not be attributed to a feeling of jealousy or envy or malice that raises a barrier between two friends. Moreover, the fault itself is certainly not as indicative of a bad spirit as is the careless attitude which tosses the unfortunate matter off with a shrug saying, "Oh, well, I meant no harm." Or an ugly, angry spirit, that causes sharp, hot words, or a spirit which causes the blood to rush to the face in quick fury even though suppressed, is certainly different from an intense, excitable manner when contending for a truth or defending a conviction, or a jangled, upset condition of the nervous system which gives rise to a certain irritability or undue quickness of speech. True, the nerves lie very close to the moral nature, and must be watched or they will cause us to commit sin; still, there is a difference between nerves and carnality. Also, the impulse to act on the moment cannot be classed with the impulse, for instance, to retaliate. One is human, the other is carnal. Even after having been purified, therefore, one may still have temperamental impulses which are unfortunate and hence need to be disciplined, and physical impulses which are natural and need to be controlled, yet none of which are essentially sinful.

We point out these differences in order that the reader may know exactly what is meant when we speak of original sin. In practical everyday life it is not always easy to distinguish between carnality and infirmity, as the line between them is sometimes very fine to outward appearances. Because we have this treasure in earthen vessels, the perfect love in our heart may be imperfectly expressed, and for that reason critical, unsympathetic persons may find many flaws. They will fall on us as did the man who said knowingly, "The trouble with your holiness brethren is, they get angry too quickly." Upon inquiring the reason for such an astounding assertion, it was found that the "angry" man, a godly minister well known to the writer, was simply remonstrating against some flagrant disorder in the service! All of us, Calvinists and Arminians alike, need to learn that the real quality of a man's spirit is often difficult for us mortals to measure. God is the only one who can judge accurately. The main thing, then, is to see to it that we have a spirit which is blameless and transparently pure in his sight. And thank God, we may have such a spirit, and know that we have it.

Some people confuse the natural appetites with carnality. But the physical appetites are created by God and are in themselves holy. But as long as the spirit of a man is twisted and warped, the physical desires will be correspondingly more or less perverted. They will rule rather than be ruled. We once heard G. Arnold Hodgkin say, "Depravity is the natural desires gone wild." Deliverance from the carnal nature will take the wildness out of these desires and restore them to their normal place in life, under control of a sanctified spirit. Their strength is not shorn, but their imperious rule is

broken. They are no longer allowed to usurp authority. Also, such natural tempers as pride and the instinct of self-preservation are lawful in their proper place, but as they belong to the spirit they too have suffered severe derangement. Instead of adding to man's well being as they were intended, they are the cause of much inward turmoil and unhappiness. Self-preservation has become covetousness and self-will, and pride has become, not that self-respect which scorns stooping to the unclean and ignoble, but inordinate self-love and self-aggrandizement, the root of every other evil which defiles the human race.

We see, therefore, that the carnal nature is simply a bloated self. The natural instincts of human self-nature have become enlarged and distorted. There is an enlarged sense of one's own importance, a desire to have self honored, a hyper-sensitiveness to injuries, a tendency to magnify the faults of others, an inordinate, tenacious love of one's own will, ideas, and plans that causes him to be deeply depressed or violently rebellious or sullenly stubborn when they are repudiated. This carnal condition of the self-nature gives rise to a tormenting fear of man, covetousness, unholy anger, sullenness and moodiness, worldly ambition, material mindedness, lukewarmness, revengeful feelings, impulses to retaliate, instability, and rebelliousness and bitterness of spirit. All these, and many more too numerous to mention belong to the dark list of the manifestations of this body of sin. They all are expressions of wounded pride and injured self-love. They all are evil. They cause strife and envying and division in the Church, thus dishonoring and retarding the work of God (I Cor. 3:3). They all are immoral and unspiritual. They all are contrary to love. They stand condemned!

It cannot be overemphasized however that whatever ways carnality may manifest itself in our outward personality, the center of carnality, its very essence, is an unsanctified self: self-love, self-seeking, and self-will. Although inordinate domination by the appetites is an indication of carnality, yet carnality itself is not the natural appetites. Nor is carnality a biological taint in the physical blood, as some grossly materialistic interpreters would suppose. It is rather exactly what Oswald Chambers declares it to be: my disposition to claim my right to myself. If yielded to this disposition will run afoul of God's claim to myself every time. This is the seed of rebellion. This is carnality.

Many of the outward by-products of carnality in the temperament and personality will disappear with it at the moment of purging. Some may linger and must be subdued gradually, as were the Canaanites by the Israelites. But in either case, this heart of carnality, this central essence of rebellion, this citadel of selfishness, must go instantly and entirely. It is a unit, not an amalgamation of traits. Concerning it there can be no temporizing, no degrees, no partial eradication. If a man is not fully yielded to God, fully dead to self, then there is yet a rebellious element within him. He may not be yet aware of it. It may not be consciously active. But sooner or later an occasion will arise which will arouse into active assertion this tendency to rebel. He will then find himself to be yet carnal. He may not be wholly carnal in the sense of being abandoned to it, as is the sinner, but neither is he wholly sanctified, as is God's will for him.

Now the question comes, in all its momentous implications, Did the atonement of Christ make provision for complete purging from this body of sin in this life? If so, O blessed provision! It can be seen at once that this experience would be the boon of every Christian aspiring for heaven, for his most treacherous enemy in the Christian life is this inward nature. As an enemy within the gates,

it secretly co-operates with the enemy on the outside. If actual sin is so deadly, and victory over it is required, then the greatest possible need of the sincere Christian who hates sin and passionately desires to please his Lord is to get rid of this inward foe.

The presence of carnality makes constant victory more difficult, clouds the vision, retards growth, cripples one's usefulness, and mars one's peace and joy. Much of one's spiritual energies is spent in wrestling with this inward foe, thus unfitting the Christian for difficult spiritual labors in behalf of others. Because of it, the will, desires, and affections are inclined to be vacillating, sometimes steady, sometimes wavering, sometimes with a division of allegiance so subtle as to be almost imperceptible (James 1:8). Some find in their hearts a distinct response to the appeals of worldliness, and only God knows the constant menace of such a tendency. Within is an intangible, elusive, hide-and-go-seek something that is antagonistic. It is antagonistic to the will of God, to the spirit of Christ, and to the self-abnegation of a holy life. Sometimes, though the Christian cannot explain why, he finds within himself a violent antagonism to even the very terms "holiness" and "sanctification."

But when once the double-minded Christian has purified his heart (James 4:8), all this is changed. The will, desires, and affections are stabilized. To be free from original sin, then, is to be free from all that which is the inward ally of Satan. The whole being is united in just one love and one desire, to do the will of God. As Dr. H. O. Wiley has said, "It gives to the recipient a disposition to do the will of God in all circumstances." There is a wealth of meaning and breadth in this great truth, for such a disposition means the difference between a half-victorious and a wholly victorious life. Not only the will says "no" to wrong doing, but the whole self is in perfect agreement. Now that the spirit has been purified from the essence of sin, one's hatred of and sensitiveness to sin is greatly intensified, and this very hatred becomes a virile safeguard. Furthermore, although the conscience is not yet perfectly educated, there is a more ready detection of the suggestions of Satan and a quicker discernment of what is sin and what is not. The impulse of the spirit is to shrink from evil and reach only in the direction of God. The spirit becomes increasingly meek, humble, obedient, kind, pure. The ambitions, desires, faculties, motives, affections, all become centered on God. Even the impulses and desires of the body can be more easily and naturally controlled (I Thess. 4:3, 4).

Shall we pause a moment to consider just what this experience of perfect love, or heart purity, means to the Church of God on earth?

For one thing, it means power in the personal life. The freedom resulting from this inner release, the joyousness, the steadiness and peace, are in themselves power. Ask the person who comes under the influence of such a life! "How do you have the power to keep sweet when others do not?" they will inquire. Others will say, "There seems to be a vitality, a warmth, a power in that person's testimony which grips me. What is it?" Yes, purity means power. Not a power to be queer, but a power to be normal. Not a power to do supernatural things, but a power to do common things in a supernatural way. Not a power to lead a spectacular life, but a holy one -- a life which is divinely natural, not marred by the unnaturalness of sin and inner defeat. Power to endure, to love, and to believe. It may not be a limelight power, but it is sure to be a field, or shop, or laundry-room, or kitchen power, which glorifies God most by resting on the humblest and most unlikely layman. Nor is it a power to escape being tempted, but to escape when tempted. Nor is it, always, a power to carry out one's plans successfully, but a power to see them smashed into hopeless bits without despairing

or becoming resentful. Nor is it a power to gather possessions, but a power to lose them without losing joy, contentment, and faith. This is the kind of power we need; and though we search the religions of all lands, and examine all the cults, creeds, and religious fads in the world, we will never find it apart from the personal, instantaneous experience of heart cleansing provided by the blood of Jesus Christ and accomplished by the baptism with the Holy Ghost.

This experience means not only power in the personal life, but harmony in the body of believers. Perfect love is the only spiritual climate conducive to healthy relations between Christians, and in such a climate brotherly and harmonious relations can thrive between any temperaments, in any circumstances, anywhere in the world. Perfect love provides the instinctive impulses which make the fruits of the Spirit grow. Perfect love gives to its possessor that willingness to co-operate at the expense of self, that willingness to adapt oneself to others. Humanly speaking, we are all aware that there is a natural -- and legitimate -- regard for our own opinions and a dislike for personal rebuffs and indignities. There is, also, an instinctive assertion of will. It is our unwillingness to relinquish those personal preferences, accept those rebuffs, and submit that will, and do it all gracefully, that constitutes the carnal cause of friction. But perfect love solves the problem by subordinating self and magnifying others. It produces a finer thoughtfulness of the feelings, a higher regard for the opinions, a deeper tenderness for the faults, a more unselfish respect for the desires, a greater joy in the honor of others. And when expediency and the necessity of co-operation demand it, perfect love produces a graceful submission to the will of others. This miracle of grace lies in the fact that perfect love works both ways: at the same time it enlarges our vision of others, it also amazingly decreases our leniency toward the feelings, opinions, faults, and desires of self. Not that it destroys utterly the natural instincts of our human self-nature, but it lifts us above them and gives us a higher vision. We are now gladly willing to renounce them when they stand in the way of Christian spirit. We glory in being Christlike when conditions do not encourage Christlikeness. We would rather be co-operative and forbearing in our spirit than successful in our plans. Thus, perfect love gives a greater quietness and steadiness in the midst of trying circumstances; often, indeed, this grace is so marked that it is a never-ending marvel to the uninitiated. Yes, in spite of temperamental differences and personality clashes, in spite of intimacy of associations and strain of circumstances, all of which may be keenly felt by the sanctified, perfect love will find a way to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Tact and thoughtfulness are certainly not native virtues to many persons, it is true, but perfect love will give the disposition to cultivate them and the proper motives in using them. Without this grace, the problem of missionaries, preachers, and laymen "getting along" with one another will remain one of the major and almost insurmountable problems of the Church.

It is in this that we find the meaning of such phrases as "dying out to self" and "being dead to self." Self dies in entire sanctification, but it is not destroyed. It is the "old man," the undue selfishness of self, that is destroyed. Self rises to live the resurrection life. To change the figure, self is now circumcised. It now becomes willing to deny itself. Self becomes willing and able to relinquish all the natural desires and rights of itself in favor of holy relations with God and man. Self becomes joyously content with God's will, asking nothing more, seeking nothing different. Before, it was God and His kingdom first, now it is God and his kingdom only. Self is submitted to and increasingly subdued by another self -- the one who "shed abroad his love in our hearts." Exactly this was Paul's meaning when he testified, "I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Thus we have a picture of perfect love. And this is also Christian holiness. This is Christian perfection. This is the more abundant life (John 10:10, the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25), the rest of faith (Heb. 4:9-11). Glorious freedom it is, which makes a man free to love and obey and rejoice always! A gifted young woman handed to the writer a slip of paper on which she had briefly described her own experience since being cleansed of original sin. The most prominent thought was "soul rest," and she described it as follows: (1) rest from her own striving to live right;. (2) rest from carnal uprisings; (3) rest from the guilt and condemnation that always followed such uprisings; (4) rest from fear of not holding out; and (5) rest from fear of death and the grave (I John 4:17, 18).

If this be in the atonement, then it is a doctrine of paramount importance, and deserves to receive the earnest attention of all Christian people. For to be cleansed from the root of all sin, and conformed to the image of Christ -- would not that be the very heart of redemption? Its beauty and necessity and potential power should be preached from every pulpit, and at the center of every creed. No small wonder that Satan has through the centuries contrived in every possible way to defame this great truth and banish it from the Church! To the modern Church it is exactly what Pentecost was to the early disciples: an absolute necessity for life, light, and power. Dr. P. F. Bresee said, "There is one fact that stands out before and above every other in the Word of God: the blood of Jesus Christ is shed to make an end of sin, and to fulfill God's own will and answer Jesus' own prayer in the sanctification of the people."

The diligence with which great and good men insist on putting this perfect deliverance in the future, thus hindering the cause of Christ which they love and aiding the cause of Satan which they hate, is a never-ending marvel. If ever the saints of God need this experience it is now, when the battles are to be fought, and every available resource is needed to evangelize the world. This experience, it is admitted, is God's plan for all some time; but is he unable or unwilling to give it when we need it the most and when it would bring the most glory to himself? Does the promise, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" apply to material needs only? Is it inadequate for this greatest of all needs?

It is our desire to show by God's Word that for every believer to have the experience now, in this life, was indeed his only plan, and that for this purpose he gave his Son and sent his Spirit into the world.

1. First, the experience of a pure heart is presented in the Scriptures as a present possibility. Purity requires the elimination of impurity, therefore a pure heart must be free from the filthy carnal nature. In Malachi the promised Messiah is spoken of as a refiner and purifier of silver; and it is faithfully promised that he should "purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness" (Mal. 3:2, 3). And surely there can be no doubt that this refers to his earthly ministry, not his heavenly. And when this Messiah came, among the first recorded words he spoke were, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). He did not say, "Blessed are they that shall see God, for they shall then be made pure in heart," as one might suppose were such purity to be reserved as a future bestowment. The verse designates who shall see God; and the order is, purity first, then vision of him. Later, this same Saviour declared that the Father desired to purge every branch that bore fruit (John 15:2). In I Peter 1:22 we have the words, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned

love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." This verse settles the problem in question by unmistakably putting their purifying in the past tense, as an experience already accomplished and enjoyed up to the time of writing. "Create in me a clean heart," cried David in Psalms 51:10, "and renew a right spirit within me." If we read the entire psalm we are convinced that he meant now. Was it an idle prayer, one that God would not answer? Again we read, "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (I John 3:3). "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart" (Psalms 24:3, 4). Let us couple this verse with James 4:8, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." If it is asserted that these verses mean we are to grow into purity, we answer: It is just as absurd to talk about growing the impurities out of our heart as it would be to talk about growing the weeds out of the garden or growing the dirt off a child's face. We are rather commanded to meet the conditions of confession, consecration and faith which will enable the Holy Spirit to purify our hearts in an instant by his baptismal fire. Furthermore, we would remind the reader that it is impossible to grow into the fulfillment of any promise. A little careful thought will show this. We appropriate promises by faith. Proper appropriation of the promises for a clean heart will immediately bring us into their happy fulfillment. This means doing business with God consciously, earnestly, intelligently, and specifically. Thus it is not a process of growth, but a second, definite, crisis experience, and the act of God in cleansing the heart is a work of grace. "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

2. Secondly, there are many scriptures which state the divine plan for man in this life as being inward holiness and outward righteousness. Since holiness means spiritual wholeness and health, it of course necessitates freedom from the disease of the Adamic nature, just as truly as does the term, heart purity. It is contradictory, to say the least, to talk about holiness in a defiled heart. One of the most definite and comprehensive descriptions of the promised deliverance in the entire Scriptures is that in Luke 1:73-75, and holiness is the very center. Filled with the Holy Ghost, Zacharias sees in the portending events the long-awaited redemption. That long line of prophecies which "he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began," and which had been a cheering gleam of hope through the weary march of centuries, was at last to be fulfilled. The mercy promised to the fathers was about to be performed. His holy covenant was now to be remembered. The oath which he swore to our father Abraham, by strength of which he looked for a city whose builder and maker is God, is to be performed! Although "these all died in the faith, not having received the promises" and "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," we, after so long a time, are to receive the promises which they had seen only "afar off." What is this holy covenant? What is this thing which the Creator hath sworn to grant? Listen carefully, lest being busy about lesser matters, we should miss the most precious heritage ever purchased by the blood of Calvary: First is included a sweeping deliverance, "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear ..." And do we have a more devitalizing enemy than the "sin that dwelleth in" us? (Rom. 7:17,20). Or could we be delivered from tormenting fear without deliverance from this, the most prolific source of fear? Now, as a result of such deliverance we have the positive privilege of serving, "in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." There we have the central provision of the atonement, and the essential experience of the Gospel dispensation. And it is for "all the days of our life!" The following references, also, indicate a present

deliverance from the presence of sin: Acts 24:16; Rom. 6:22; II Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:22-24; Phil. 1:11; Col. 1:21, 22; I Thess. 3:13; I Peter 1:15, 16.

3. Again, the term perfection is very commonly applied in the Scriptures to present possibilities in Christian experience. Studying carefully the context of Jesus' command in Matt. 5:48, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect," we find that it is perfection in love of which he is speaking. Just as the Father is all love, so are we to be. Such perfection is utterly impossible as long as there is within the heart that which is "enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Therefore the terms perfection or perfect love denote an experience which is free from original sin. The very command of Jesus, noted above, infers, even asserts that this experience is a possibility; for there is no divine command that is not accompanied by full provisions for its fulfillment. In Eph. 1:4 we are told that to be thus holy and without blame in love in his sight, was his perfected plan even before the foundation of the world. And although Paul admitted that he was not perfect in the sense of being glorified, he clearly testifies in the same passage (Phil. 3:15) to the experience of Christian perfection of which we speak by the words "Let us then, as many as be perfect, be thus minded." St. John also testifies explicitly to the attainability of Christian perfection. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, for as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear ... He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (I John 4:17, 18). And who can doubt that this is an experience belonging to this life when we read, "for as he is, so are we in this world"? It seems that God in his wisdom took special pains to stipulate that deliverance from the presence of sin was not something to be put off until we are swallowed up in eternity. Other texts which are helpful here are: Matt. 22:37-38; II Cor. 13:9; Heb. 6:1; Eph. 3:16-21; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:28; James 4:4; II Peter 1:4; Jude 24.

So we might go on, calling up scripture after scripture on the subject, but why need we go farther? We might show that the baptism with the Holy Ghost is not only an enduement but a very real and perfect cleansing (Acts 15:8, 9), and that it is God's plan for every believer (Acts 2:38, 39). We might prove that entire sanctification is the same experience as perfection, perfect love, holiness, heart purity, and the baptism with the Holy Ghost. That believers should be wholly, actually, and personally sanctified in this life was (1) the burden of Jesus' prayer (John 17:17); (2) a stated purpose of Paul's ministry (Acts 26:18); (3) the object of Christ's gift of himself to the Church (Eph. 5:25); (4) the asserted will of God (I Thess. 4:3); (5) Paul's prayer and God's calling (I Thess. 5:23); (6) God's method of salvation (II Thess. 2:13 and Titus 3:5); and (7) the great purpose of the atonement (Heb. 10:10, 14 and Heb. 13:12).

We might examine carefully the following list of scriptures which do not use the terms we have been noting, but which strike right at the heart of our subject by stating explicitly that complete deliverance from inborn sin is a vital necessity in God's redemptive process. They designate it as "sin" (singular), "the body of sin," "flesh," "the sin that dwelleth in me," "filthiness of the flesh and spirit," "filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," and "corruption that is in the world through lust." What vivid, comprehensive, and exceedingly fitting names! Here is the list: Rom. 6:6; Rom. 6:22; Rom. 7:5, 6 and 20-25; James 1:21; II Peter 1:4; I John 1:7; I John 1:9.



We have gone far enough to convince the candid reader. The evidence is sufficient. It is wrong, gravely wrong, for eminent Bible teachers to say that we are in this life delivered from the guilt, power, bondage of sin but not from what they term the "presence" of sin. In truth, in practical experience we discover the sad fact that as long as there is the "presence" of sin there will also be a certain degree of inner "bondage" to sin. But we rejoice to know that by the mercy and grace of God, on the merits of the blood, by the effective power of the Spirit, by the Word, through faith, we may be gloriously cleansed of that "sentence of death" which remains in the heart after we have been born again. This is the purchased inheritance of every child of God. Truly, this is the "supreme glory" of the atonement.

We have a still further word. Having heard the testimony of the Scriptures that perfect and present deliverance from original sin was provided in the atonement, we now call attention to the fact that it is not just a privilege, but a necessity. There are many statements in God's Holy Word which either specifically or indirectly make actual personal holiness and righteousness an essential qualification for entrance into heaven. It is the "pure in heart" who shall see God. The grace of God reigns unto eternal life only through the channel of righteousness (Rom. 5:21). The promise "ye shall live" is spoken to those who "mortify the deeds of the body" through the Spirit (Rom. 8:13). The only ones who are acceptable with God are those who serve Christ in righteousness (Rom. 14:17, 18). The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9). No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man hath any "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." Since uncleanness and covetousness are conditions of the soul, and cannot be completely eradicated until the carnal nature is eradicated, we see the necessity of entire sanctification (Eph. 5:5). We are exhorted to follow holiness (the sanctification, A.S.V.) because "no man shall see the Lord" without it (Heb. 12:14).

St. Peter asks the pertinent question, "And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" It would be suitable to present that question to many so-called "sinning Christians" for their consideration. According to the same apostle the only means of gaining an "abundant entrance" into heaven is by escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust and being made partaker of the divine nature; then adding to one's Christian character virtue (excellence), knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love; then giving earnest diligence to make one's "calling and election sure." According to Calvinism our diligence has nothing to do with our calling and election, but according to Peter the sureness of our calling and election depends on our diligence! Speaking of the second coming of Christ, the same writer exhorts again to diligence, this time that we be "found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless." As long as man has a conscience that is not entirely stupefied by sin and false doctrine, there can be no "peace" without righteousness; "without spot" indicates inward purity; and "blameless" indicates perfection of love, or intention; and the inference is that if we are not found of him in "peace, without spot, and blameless" we will be hopelessly unprepared. Rev. 21:27 states: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Again, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. 22:14, 15).

So long as this principle of death, original sin, is in the Christian, the principle of eternal life does not, cannot, reign supreme. It has a rival; it is not established; and from this condition "there ariseth an irreconcilable war." And some time between the moment of conversion and the moment of death we must part company with either this seed of death or the seed of life. We cannot go to either heaven or hell with both in our heart. Nor do we dare place "the last enemy," Death, on the Saviour's throne and expect it to slay its own mother. The time for sin's extermination is now. I~ we knowingly allow sin to remain we will be compelled to go with it to hell, for that is its place. But, on the other hand, if we wish heaven to be our eternal dwelling-place, then we must not be content with obtaining only the first phase of salvation, but must realize the supreme glory." We must not cease until we have entered that "rest which remains" and have obtained our "inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in" Jesus (Acts 26:18). Dear reader, you may have it now!

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25-28).

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A RIGHT CONCEPTION OF SIN  
Its Relation to Right Thinking and Right Living

By  
Richard S. Taylor

**Chapter 11**  
**SOME CONCLUSIONS**

Men generally live below their creeds; few rise above them. -- Daniel Steele

It is indeed sad that many in the so-called Fundamentalist group, who seem to be so deeply religious, whose words are laden with avowed homage to Christ and the Word, are in reality dishonoring both Christ and that Word by denying the potency of the blood to cleanse from all sin and give perfect victory here and now. They promise through radio, pulpit, and press to lead their followers into the deep things of God, when all too often, we fear, they turn the sheep aside into dry pasture by denying the experience which actually gives them peace and rest, constant victory over sin, fullness of joy, and unbroken fellowship. They make much of Bible study and religious activities, but rob the Christian of that heartfelt, satisfying experience of perfect love which is his privilege and which Christ died to provide. To desire such a beautiful experience is legitimate and natural, they say, but no one can actually possess it. Is it not strange that they should talk about a close walk with God as the scriptural standard, then bitterly oppose and discredit the person who testifies to an experience that enables him to freely enjoy that close walk?

They talk about a victorious life but deny the privilege of being free from the nature which hinders victory. The power of the blood is able to save us from hell in eternity, but seemingly not able to save us from that carnal disposition which often makes a hell in the home. We are told to long for cleansing and for power to win the victory over sin, but we are at the same time assured that we cannot literally realize such victory. They tell us to hunger and thirst after righteousness, but cry "fanaticism" if someone claims to have been filled. It seems we must hunger and long and thirst all our lives, without any comfort from our spiritual leaders except constant reminding of our sinfulness.

They insist that sin is inexcusable, yet quite as vehemently insist that no Christian lives without sinning; thus they charge God with excusing the inexcusable and the Christian with deliberate dabbling in that which he could avoid. Let us show how this double-pronged dilemma actually results from their position. First, does the Christian dabble in the evil which he could avoid? We must accept the premise that he could avoid it, for nothing is inexcusable except that which could have been avoided. (According to this, no act is an act of sin unless it could have been avoided; thus we admit the definition of an act of sin given in Chapter 7 and agree that sin cannot be committed without knowledge and consent of the will. It is quite obvious that to say an act could have been avoided is to say that the will was free to choose either way and acted to choose one; also, it is to say that the actor had knowledge, for how could he intelligently avoid that of which he was ignorant?) Now, does a normal, New Testament Christian knowingly choose that evil which he can avoid? Is it not rather reckless to say there are no Christians who constantly choose to avoid that which is avoidable? Are there no Calvinists reading these lines who, upon careful heart searching, can testify

that they joyously and continuously choose to avoid even the very appearance of evil? Surely there are. Then let them no longer say there are no Christians who live without sinning.

And secondly, if a Christian does deliberately dabble in that which he could avoid, is not God excusing the inexcusable when He excuses that Christian from the instant spiritual death which is the normal result of sin? It is quite evident that we must either charge God with the ungodlike act of excusing the inexcusable or relinquish the doctrine of eternal security.

If, however, the Calvinist clings to his accustomed definition of sin, which includes mistakes of ignorance, and which means that man is really unable to completely avoid sinning, then sin is excusable. God could no more hold man justly accountable for that which he could not help than parents could hold their helpless baby accountable for getting sick.

But, if God cannot righteously hold man accountable for his sinning -- which is implied when we say he is unable to avoid it -- then we have no right to call it sin at all, for there can be no sin without moral responsibility. Since sin is moral evil, an unmoral (irresponsible) being cannot commit sin. A dog cannot sin for it has no moral consciousness. Therefore, if man does sin it is because he is a moral being. If he is a moral being, he is therefore morally accountable. If he is morally accountable, then sin is both inexcusable and avoidable. If sin is inexcusable, then God must either excuse the inexcusable or hold the guilty party accountable. Which does he do? To call out the doctrine of imputed righteousness and say that God charges his guilt to Christ will only support the first alternative, for, as was pointed out in the paragraph above, this doctrine means that God excuses the guilty Christian from the penalty of his own sin. We freely admit that God will forgive the guilty Christian, but that is quite another matter. True scriptural forgiveness is conditioned upon confessing and forsaking; the doctrine of imputed righteousness, however, supposes that righteousness is imputed whether the Christian repents each time he sins or not. This, then, is not forgiving the guilty Christian but excusing him. If, on the other hand, the Calvinist chooses the other alternative and maintains that God literally holds the guilty Christian accountable, he must say good-bye to his doctrine of eternal security. It is sheer folly to say that any man can be truly accountable for his sin without suffering the spiritual death which is the natural result of sin. The only way now remaining to the Calvinist of keeping the guilty Christian alive and sustaining his doctrine of eternal security is to say that the atonement so changed the nature of sin that death is no longer its natural result; but he dare not do so for that would admit the fundamental premise of this book against Calvinism. Thus do we see how the Calvinist drives himself into a tangle of embarrassing and conflicting contradictions when he insists in one breath that sin is inexcusable and in the next that no Christian lives without sinning.

But if we trace it down we find that, after all, his many difficulties are simply due to a faulty conception of sin. Whether he realizes it or not, he is hopelessly involved in the inference, never stated, but often assumed, that the atonement of Christ has the effect of changing the nature of sin. He would more than likely object to such a statement, as it would naturally be repugnant to his spiritual sensibilities, but as we have shown in the above paragraph and in Chapters 2 and 3, this is what his theology amounts to in the last analysis. He believes that a little sin, either actual or inbred, or both, must necessarily continue with the Christian through life, and yet that such sin does not prevent him from being a child of God or possessing eternal life. He believes that God alone is

responsible for one's eternal salvation, in the sense that nothing we may do after conversion can cause us to forfeit eternal life. And from this idea of sin have grown the dangerous teachings which jeopardize true fundamentalism.

What is the effect of this theology in the mental attitudes of those who hold to it? We can know a tree by its fruit, and when we examine the fruit of Calvinism we discover its worst indictment. While conceding that many teachers of this system may live in harmony with the purest ethical precepts of Christ, entirely independent of the doctrines they preach, Daniel Steele asks pointedly, "But what will be the legitimate fruit in those who give full credence to a theoretical error lying so near to conduct and character?" We can only surmise what this fruit will be by noting the following unmistakable trends of Calvinism:

1. It tends to emphasize faith to the utter neglect of repentance.
2. It tends to destroy a keen sense of the awfulness of sin in God's sight. We quote again from Daniel Steele: "It is an evil omen when Christian teachers make eloquent pleas for the flesh, and fallaciously construct ingenious scriptural arguments for indwelling sin. So long as the believer dwells in the body, such preaching, instead of inspiring unspeakable abhorrence for sin, deadens men's sensibilities to its dreadful nature and leads them to 'speak of the corruptions of their hearts in as unaffected and airy a manner, as if they talked of freckles upon their faces'."
3. It creates within its adherents a tendency to make allowance for a little sin in their own lives, as the earnest Calvinist who told the writer about his Christian service for the Master, then explained, as he pulled out a cigarette, "This is my only sin."
4. It inevitably tends to lull backsliders to sleep in a false security. The fact that some come to embrace the doctrines of Calvinism after they backslide is evidence that this encouragement exists.
5. It tends to produce a natural opposition to holiness as a perfect cleansing from all sin. For, if even actual sin will not keep us out of heaven, why the need of cleansing from inbred sin? Moreover, one who does not realize the awfulness of actual sin is not apt to have a deep hunger for a clean heart.

Indeed, the Calvinistic habits of thinking tend to decrease the likelihood of a victorious Christian life, rather than increase it. They cause the Christian to feel that since the inherent tendency to evil must remain until death, all hopes and struggles for complete deliverance are idle, if not fanatical. Then these same doctrines turn around and offer the strongest encouragement to his inner evil inclination by teaching him that if he should yield to it he will not be eternally lost anyway. We may be sure that in times of special strain and temptation Satan will be very careful to remind the depressed Christian of this comforting belief! Is it not reasonable to suppose that Satan is shrewd enough to take full advantage of all such opportune moments and press the advantages of such doctrines?

Wise was the girl who chose to believe in perfect heart cleansing as a second work of grace because, she said, it offered more encouragement to her yearning to live a holy life. Dear reader,

which offers you more: the doctrine that promises a holy heart or that which shuts you up to an unholy heart? Which brings more glory to our Redeemer?

The fate of the Calvinist is a practical illustration of the principle that to have a correct theological system we must have correct views of sin. If we can take the individual back to the religious kindergarten and instruct him in the ABC's of sin; if we can convince him that sin is double in nature, thus demanding a double cure; if we can teach him that sin is always deadly, whether it be in the life of the one who has never been saved or the one who has, that sin is irreconcilable with the Christian life, always separates from God, and cannot be condoned or indulged; if he can be convinced that inbred sin cannot be successfully suppressed, reformed, or regenerated; if to all these truths we can thoroughly arouse him, he is not apt to offer any more opposition to the doctrine of holiness.

How true and timely are the following words of Dr. A. M. Hills: "The great truth is, the necessity of repentance is one of the fundamental and essential doctrines, which leads right up to full salvation. In our Christian work the chief difficulty is not over the question of holiness. The great battle of our time is on the sin question. Given a good case of Holy Spirit conviction of sin and a thorough case of deep, godly repentance, man will be so sick and tired of sin that he will long for eternal deliverance from it. He will never feel like fighting and rejecting holiness, but will cry out, with David, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God' (Psalms 51:10)." This is why many church members are supinely indifferent to the question of holiness, or bitterly antagonistic to it; and why many who seemingly make such a nice start in the Christian life soon fall by the wayside: they have never really repented.

We have attempted to give the scriptural conception of sin, feeling that without it men would not be led to true repentance or afterward to seek holiness. Contrasting it with erroneous views, we have endeavored to present God's method of dealing with sin, and his method of saving man in relation to sin. In summary, the Calvinistic system of sovereign grace, election, predetermined perseverance, and imputed righteousness, means that complete deliverance from sin is unnecessary as a condition of getting to heaven. There you have the whole theology in a nutshell. We, on the other hand, insist that the scriptural position is exactly the opposite: complete deliverance from both sinning and sinfulness is the supreme purpose of the atonement, and without it no man shall see the Lord.

The power of the atonement does not, through faith, take us to heaven in our sinful condition, but changes our condition from sinfulness to holiness in order that we may be prepared for heaven.

The atonement does not change the nature of sin, but proposes to change the nature of man. It does not take the deadliness out of sin, but takes sin out of man. Therefore we believe the following to be three facts essential to God's plan of redemption:

1. First, that repentance which leads to saving faith is a condition of salvation, and the attitude of repentance -- renunciation and hatred of all sin -- must be retained if salvation is to be retained.
2. Secondly, if at any time practice of sin is resumed, or the means of grace carelessly and continually neglected, or faith in Christ as personal Saviour cease to be active, such sin, either of

commission or omission, will again separate the soul from God, and if unrepented of, will ultimately cause the loss of all the benefits once known, and the eternal damnation of the soul.

3. Thirdly, the pardon of all sin through faith and repentance, victory over outward sin, and purging of the nature of all sinfulness, in this life, are three privileges made possible by the blood, and constitute the absolute requirements for entrance into heaven.

We believe this to be true fundamentalism.

A minister who wrote a book professing to analyze correctly the contents of the Bible, said, "In the old dispensation it was the sin question; in the new dispensation it is grace." True, we are in the day of grace, but we have certainly not left the sin problem behind. Every dispensation has the sin question at the center of the stage. In fact, the whole great plan of redemption, from God's first promise in the Garden of Eden down through to the cross, and then past the millennium to the judgment day, all revolves around the sin question. This will cease to engage the primary attention of both God and man only when Satan is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone and the redeemed of the Lord are all safe in the New Jerusalem.