



COSMIC TREASON

The first sermon I ever preached was on sin. I guess that puts me in good company because the first sermon that both John the Baptist and Jesus the Christ preached was, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matt 3:2, 4:17). My text was taken from Joshua 7:11, 12: “Israel has sinned ... Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies...” Whoever swims in sin shall sink in sorrow.

A recent survey by Ellison Research shows that Americans tend to view sin not as God views it, but how they view it. John G. Lake said, “Men tell us in these days that sin is what you think it is. Well, it is not. Sin is what God thinks it is. You may think according to your own conscience. God thinks according to His.” More than 600 sins are mentioned in the Bible. God views sin as lawlessness (1 John 3:4), wrongdoing (1 John 5:17), the omission of known duty (Jas 4:17), and everything that does not come from faith (Rom 14:23). One of the Greek words for sin is *hamartia*, “to miss the mark.” Jack Cottrell, professor of theology at Cincinnati Christian University, says, “This is not an innocent mistake, and accidental failure to hit the mark, as is usually the case in target shooting; it is rather a deliberate decision and willful failure for which one must bear the blame.”

Too many today take a light view of sin. Popular televangelist Joel Osteen does not mention sin in his sermons or in his best seller *Your Best Life Now*. “That’s the drift of American preaching today,” says Michael Horton, professor of theology at Westminster Seminary. “People don’t believe in it anymore. God is no longer the reference point.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer called this “cheap grace.” “Cheap grace means the justification of the sin without the justification of the sinner. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance.”

What is sin? Here are five definitions that will make clear the meaning of sin.

- “Sin is cosmic treason. Sin is treason against a perfectly pure Sovereign. It is an act of supreme ingratitude toward the One we owe everything, to the One who has given us life itself.” (R. C. Sproul)
- “Sin is the dare of God’s justice, the rape of His mercy, the jeer of His patience, the slight of His power, and the contempt of His love.” (John Bunyan)
- “Sin is not weakness, it is not a disease; it is red-handed rebellion against God and the magnitude of that rebellion is expressed at Calvary.” (Oswald Chambers)
- “Sin is a deliberate treason against the majesty of God, an assault upon His crown, an insult offered to His throne.” (Charles Spurgeon)
- “Sin is believing the lie that you are self-created, self-dependent and self-sustained.” (Augustine)

Martin Luther rightly said that the recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation.

Now how do you feel about sin? When was the last time you heard sin described in words like these? Billy Sunday said, “One reason sin flourishes is because it is treated like a cream puff instead of a rattlesnake.” I showed the snake no mercy. When I was camping in the Sand Hills of Nebraska years ago, I took a shot at a rattlesnake. King Saul showed mercy to the Amalekites and he paid for it with his life for it was an Amalekite who finished him off. “Only when the axe is put to the tree does the fruit of sin wither” (Erwin W. Lutzer). That’s where John the Baptist put the axe. Let’s be Axemen for God.

So why the deafening silence on sin? John Muncie said, “You’ll never be able to speak against sin if you’re entertained by it.” Demas deserted Paul “having loved this present world.” Love for “all that is in the world” has silenced many in the church. Ignatius said, “It is impossible for a man to be freed from the habit of sin before he hates it, just as it is impossible to receive forgiveness before confessing his trespasses.” We should hate sin because of what sin (our sin) did to Christ. Charles Spurgeon said, “Sin murdered Christ; will you be a friend to it? Sin pierced the heart of the Incarnate God; can you love it?”

Sin is the most expensive thing in the world. It cost Adam and Eve the Garden of Eden, it cost God His only Son, and it cost Jesus His very life. It will cost you your very soul unless you repent of sin. C. S. Lewis said, “Every uncorrected error and unrepented sin is, in its own right, a fountain of fresh error and fresh sin flowing on to the end of time.”

We are devoting this issue of *One Body* to the subject of sin. We need to be reminded of the awfulness, pervasiveness and eternal consequences of sin. Fools make a mockery of sin, but we will not. My father used to say, “Sin has its laughter, but not hereafter!” The next issue of *One Body* will be our Centennial issue. The theme will be God’s wonderful plan of salvation. So we are setting up that issue with this one for a person cannot appreciate his salvation until he understands the enormity of his sin.

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