

Forgiveness of sin has a snare – Better is God’s deliverance from sin

Psalms 32:1-2 What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record. TLB

A B Simpson founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Group of Churches in his classic book “The Fourfold Gospel” on the subject of sin quotes Proverbs 24:9 KJV: “The thought of foolishness is sin...” Then Simpson comments: “Sin begins in a thought...The true self is the unseen man who stands behind the mask of his countenance and his thoughts, feelings, desires and purposes are all photographing and recording themselves every moment on the tablets of eternity and the books of judgment.”

Ps 32:3-5 There was a time when I wouldn't admit what a sinner I was. But my dishonesty made me miserable and filled my days with frustration. All day and all night Your hand was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water on a sunny day until I finally admitted all my sins to You and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, "I will confess them to the Lord." And You forgave me! All my guilt is gone. TLB

A B Simpson comments: “The statement “I finally admitted all my sins to You (God) and stopped trying to hide them” doesn’t mean that I felt very badly about it, that I made a great show of tears or that I promised I would be good – No, (it means) I stopped excusing myself and making it seem right and giving some reason why I had been drawn into it (and subtly laying a foundation for why I might do it again). (It means) I called it as black as God called it, I said I was a sinner and stood out in the light of conscience and the Holy Spirit and said “God be merciful to me a sinner”.

Ps 32:6 Now I say that each believer should confess his sins to God when he is aware of them, while there is time to be forgiven. Judgment will not touch him if he does. TLB

What is the only basis on which God forgives our sin?

Is it His benevolence and kindly disposition towards us? No, He has put the truth concerning the just recompense for sin out there “The soul that sins it shall die...” Eze. 18:20 and God, because He is not only just but righteous, cannot and will not change that truth, He says “..I will not...alter the word that has gone out of My lips” Psa. 89:34. The judgment on sin is death – permanent separation from the God of life – the only way I can be forgiven then is for another to suffer my judgment in my place – Jesus Christ was my sin substitute – “Who Himself bore (My) sins in His own body on the (Cross)...” 1 Pet. 2:24

Every sin you and I commit Jesus had to be judged for that sin – in order that the righteous claims of justice could be met – and we could be forgiven. The reality of Jesus having to suffer for each sin I commit might make me a little less casual about sin.

God's mercy is available if I acknowledge, repent of and forsake my sin – but I can lose it

Prov 28:13 **He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.**

2 Cor 7:10 **For godly sorrow produces repentance...**(meaning I have had my attitude radically changed about the sin for which I desire God's mercy and forgiveness)

2 Ti 2:25 **....If God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth** (the gift of repentance from sin involves my accepting and believing in my heart the truth of God's word about it).

But if I'm flippant or even cavalier about my sin and there is no godly sorrow and the truth of God's word has not changed the attitude of my heart towards that sin, then I have probably forsaken my own mercy:

Jonah 2:8 **They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.** KJV

I may forsake God's mercy if I abuse His forgiveness and treat it as a license to sin

This is the danger that a fleshly casualness towards sin leads to. As young and spiritually immature Christians, if we were properly disciplined, we were introduced to the availability of and the necessity of God's continuing forgiveness when we stumble and fall into sin. We believed scriptures such as 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". And for baby Christians this truth becomes a lifeline to God. But as with all truth it can be abused and be seen as a virtual license to tolerate the prospect of future sin, which it is not. No, we are to grow spiritually beyond constantly needing the refuge of 1st John Chapter 1 and mature in our relationship with God to 1st John Chapter 3 which says:

1 John 3:5-6 **...In Him (Jesus Christ) there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him** (at the time they are sinning).

Not only should I myself as a growing Christian be living in Christ and not sinning but I should be teaching the truth of God's deliverance from the power of sin to others:

Heb 5:12 **For though by this time you ought to be teachers , you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food.**

Let's consider the marvelous provision God has made for Christians to die to sin's power

Rom 5:20 **...But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more...**

Rom 6:1-2 **What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?**

Rom 6:10-11 **For the death that He (Jesus) died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Likewise you also, reckon (believe) yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

Here is God's solution to my sin problem – Christ died to my sin and all its power; when I am abiding in Christ I share in His death to the power of my sin, so that I now too am dead to my sin nature and all its power – God simply asks me, based on this truth, to believe it and to reckon it to be so – and it will be!

Rom 6:7 **For he who has died (in Christ to sin's power) has been freed from sin.**

Rom 6:14-16 **For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? God forbid! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?**

As usual God here is a straight talker – He wants me to know the genuine risk of dabbling in sin is that, before I realize it, I have now become a slave to that sin and I no longer have the freedom to say no to it – we know, don't we, how real a risk this is. Potentially we can venture quite close to quicksand and still escape but each time we draw near we risk being swallowed up by the quicksand, from which there may now be no escape. So it is with sin. Now we need the mercy of God that previously we treated so glibly, now we need the gift from God of a godly sorrow and of repentance, now we need to acknowledge in our hearts the truth of God's words about that sin and finally now we may need the help of others to restore us to freedom from that accursed sin.

2 Tim 2:26 **And that they may recover themselves (through the help of a servant of the Lord – verse 24) out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.**

When God has freed us from a particular sin, for the sake of Christ who suffered the judgment for it on our behalf, and forgiven us for that sin, shouldn't we guard that freedom and cherish that forgiveness very dearly and never again treat them lightly?

Rom 6:22-23 **But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

In Summary: Heb 12:1 **Therefore...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, Looking away from all that will distract, to Jesus, Who (by Word and by Spirit) is the source and increaser of our faith...**