

Is a Christian Also a Sinner?

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When I ask the question, *“Is a Christian also a Sinner,”* in this issue, it should be understood that I am not comparing Christians to Jews, or to Muslims, or any other religion in the world. Paul said to the church in Corinth, *“It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife (1 Corinthians 5:1).”* The Gentiles were living cleaner lives than some of the *“Christians”* in the Corinth church, yet the *“Gentiles”* were not saved. The question is, were these *“sinning Christians”* saved? The comparison in this message is between the *“Christian”* that is truly *“born of the Spirit of God,”* and the secularized *“Christianity”* that is so prevalent in the churches today.

I recently received a very nice letter from a lady who questioned me concerning my stand on sin. I will reprint that portion of the letter and seek to answer her questions for the thousands of others across the land that must have the same questions.

“I have read repeatedly in your publications that Christians who are still struggling with sin are not really saved. At least that’s my understanding of it. When I converted to Christ I had a radical change of life style. I gave up drugs, alcohol, boys, etc. and instead spent my time reading the word, memorizing, and fellowshiping and telling others about my new found Savior that found me. But there are the more subtle sins of pride, fear, anger, selfish desires, the unruly tongue, etc. If I said that I didn’t strive with these sins in my own life I would be a liar. I have also met many Christians who love our Lord dearly, and they all will admit they struggle against these kinds of sins. Can you tell me honestly that you don’t?”

“I believe in God’s eyes a sin is a sin, whether it’s theft or murder, or whether we give in to anger and pride and lash out at our spouse, or act out of fear in ignoring God’s commandment to speak to someone about Jesus. It’s all spelled S-I-N. And yes, I have committed some of those, and some repeatedly. I do know though that if I ask forgiveness in true repentance He is faithful and just to forgive me of my sins.”

“I fight the good fight against the devil who tries to get me to sin, and sometimes he succeeds when I’m not alert in the Spirit. I’m not always victorious, but what I can’t do for myself, the Lord has done for me. He is the Victor over sin and Satan, and in Him is forgiveness of sins.”

“I will not excuse my sins with what I just said, nor will I say that it is O.K. to sin every once in a while, but I am weak at times, aren’t you? Maybe you can explain to me in the light of what I expressed to you what you mean by saying, we are not sinners anymore and, we do not struggle against sin. I am awaiting your response.”

*With brotherly greetings
and in His Love;*

My Response

John 8:31-36: *"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."*

I was saved March 9, 1958, and was baptized in the Holy Ghost on the same day. From the time I got up from the altar it was like heaven on earth to me. I was in a good church where the presence of God was. I had really good fellowship with my newly found Christian family. We were at prayer meeting at five A.M. each morning and in service many nights. My zeal for the Lord had no bounds, for I witnessed to everyone about Jesus and His wonderful salvation. My heart and spirit were clean and pure and I knew it. It was so wonderful to be forgiven, and even more wonderful to be clean and pure. Probably a month or six weeks after I was saved I was visiting with another young man in the church. We were both young married couples. He had been saved longer than me, and had been praying with me when I was saved and filled with the Spirit. I invited him and his wife to go play "putt-putt" with us some night. He appeared shocked as he declined. "We don't do those things," he told me. He explained that since I was saved, sin would be trying to deceive me at every turn. I would have to struggle and fight against it every day that I lived for the rest of my life. The brother that told me these things was a dedicated Christian, and is today a man of God and a pastor of a great church. My reaction to what he told me, however, brought me into a struggle with sin, both real and imagined, that lasted for many years. Even though I was not a sinner, I kept finding sins to overcome. Within ten years time I was in fellowship with a group that believed it was a sin for a man to wear a necktie, or for a woman to cut even a single hair of her head. You may find this incredible, or even impossible to believe, but we fasted a minimum of three days out of every week, gave fifty percent of our income to the church, and "tried" to pray three hours a day. I said "tried," because this was the one thing I could not consistently do. After several years I pulled away from that ministry and sought to lead a more "normal" lifestyle. Within five years I found myself in a "backslidden" condition. Being "restored" by God in 1980, I began to preach against sin harder than I had ever preached in my life. I hated sin. It is worse than "death" when it revives in a child of God. In fact it was death to me. I didn't want anyone to ever suffer the things I had suffered in sin. In the latter years of the eighties I cried aloud against sin on the radio through our "Awake to Righteousness" broadcast. I preached about the religious "scandals" of the eighties even before they happened, but every time another preacher fell to sin I wept, because I identified with them. I still carried the horrible guilt of backsliding, even though I knew that God had forgiven me. It was in 1989 that I came to such a place of despair that I prayed to God; "Lord, if you can't give me the answer for the sin problem that rages in the heart of man, I will close my Bible and never preach again." I meant it, and God took me at my word. It seemed that overnight all doors of ministry closed to me, but in my private prayer and study, the Spirit of the Lord took me to the blood of Jesus and the cross. There I began to see what it was that Jesus died to do. It was over a year later that I was wonderfully made free from the inward struggle with sin. I was studying the ninth chapter of Hebrews. I came to the thirteenth and fourteenth verses; "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: **How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**" I found that the "conscience" spoken of here, meant "moral consciousness," or "the innermost thoughts, feelings, and imaginations of man." This was where my struggle was. The scripture exploded within me. The light of it flooded my soul. "How much more would the blood of Jesus

wash my innermost thoughts, feelings, and imaginations?" In an instant the uncleanness of my dreams and imaginations ceased. The horrible guilt I had carried for so long was gone. I was free, gloriously free, and I would preach it to all that would hear it. Everywhere I looked in the epistles I saw the same glorious truth that my eyes had been blinded to for so many years. In the past ten years I have seen hundreds of people made free from sin through the knowledge of the truth, and it is only beginning. Tens of thousands are reading about it every month in the *"Behold the Lamb"* and *"The Shepherd's Voice"* publications. Dozens of young ministers are seeing and proclaiming this truth across the nation. It is going into numerous prisons in Texas, Oklahoma, and elsewhere. It is not a *"truth"* about me, or what I am, or what I experience; it is the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The very knowledge of it makes believers free from sin and its struggle.

What is Sin?

First, SIN is a nature. Adam was not created with a sin nature. Sin entered when he ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This was his *"transgression"* through *"disobedience."* Every descendant of Adam was born with the sin nature. Paul said in Romans 5:19, *"for as by one man's (Adam's) disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (Jesus' obedience to the death of the cross) shall many be made righteous."* The way *"many are made righteous"* through the obedience of Jesus is found in Romans 6:6-7; *"knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him (Christ), that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."* At the cross of Christ, the sin nature (body of sin) is destroyed. We are no longer *"slaves"* to sin, because our *"old man"* is dead, crucified with Christ. It is not *"we"* that died, but the sin that was in us died. We are *"born again"* by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, quickened together with Him in newness of life. Now, it is not *"we"* that lives, but Christ that lives in us. The child of God is both *"dead to sin, but alive to God"* at the same time.

You have probably been taught that after you were born again you had two natures. This was given as the reason for the inward struggles, the *"good"* wrestling with the *"evil."* This is not true. No one has two natures. The teaching of two natures is the doctrine that Jesus said He hated in Revelation 2:15. Some will tell you that your spirit is holy and pure since you have been born again, but you struggle with a mortal body that is sinful and unclean. This is also a deception. Your body has never been a sinner. The sinner lived in the body. The body does nothing of itself. James told us *"the body without the spirit is dead."* The body does nothing but what the one dwelling in it does. In fact, Paul tells us that our body is the *"temple of the Holy Ghost (I Corinthians 6:19),"* and again, *"...the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are (I Corinthians 3:17)."* By this we know that the body of every child of God is just as holy as his spirit is. As long as any person believes they have two natures dwelling in them, they will struggle with sin. We must reckon ourselves *"dead indeed"* (*"indeed"* means it's a fact) *unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Secondly, sin is every act, whether good or evil, that comes out of the SIN nature. A sinner may do *"good,"* but he can never do *"righteousness."* We should remember that the *"tree"* that caused the fall of Adam was the *"tree of knowledge of good and evil."* Both good and evil are the fruit of that tree, and God rejects both. The man in the seventh chapter of Romans said, *"...when I would do good, evil is present with me (Romans 7:21)."* This man is not a child of God, but a *"product"* of the knowledge of good and evil. Both are on the same tree, and he can never escape the evil regardless of how hard he tries. He says *"for the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me (Romans 7:19-20)."* He cannot separate the good and the evil for they are the fruit from the same tree.

The other tree in the midst of the garden that Adam could have eaten of was the *"tree of life."* Its fruit was not the *"knowledge of good and evil,"* but the very *"life"* of God Himself that would be given to the eater. All

religion, from the beginning until this present time, gives the knowledge of good and evil to all that come to it. Our salvation, however, is "life" from the tree of life. It is these two trees, and the eaters of them, that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 7:18, where He says, "a good tree (life) cannot bring forth evil fruit (sin), neither can a corrupt tree (knowledge of good and evil) bring forth good fruit (life)." Certainly this is the message of John in I John 3:9 where he says, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Now, read above where he said in I John 3:5-6, "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin. **Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen Him, neither known Him.**"

Two Kinds of Sin?

I John 5:16-18: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

In this text John defines two kinds of sin. You may believe, as was written in the letter to me that "...in God's eyes a sin is a sin, whether it's theft or murder, or whether we give in to anger and pride and lash out at our spouse, or act out of fear in ignoring God's commandment to speak to someone about Jesus. It's all spelled S-I-N." This is an error that keeps millions in condemnation as sinners. Let me explain.

John first identifies a sin "which is not unto death." Then he identifies a "sin" that is "unto death." In order to understand these, we will go back to the two trees Jesus spoke of in His "Sermon on the mount."

Matthew 7:16-20: "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

Notice that there are two trees spoken of here, a "good tree" and a "corrupt tree." These trees represent "life" and "knowledge of good and evil," the two trees that were in the Garden of Eden. They also represent those who have eternal life through Jesus Christ and those who abide in death, even though they may be very religious through the knowledge of good and evil. Just as there is a "fruit" that the good tree cannot bring forth, there is sin that anyone born of God cannot commit. Likewise, as there is a "fruit" that the corrupt tree cannot bring forth, there is "righteousness" that a sinner cannot do. When Eve looked upon the "tree of knowledge of good and evil," she saw what appeared to her to be good fruit. It was "pleasant to the eyes," it was "good for food," and it was "a tree to be desired to make one wise." She ate of what she thought was "good," but it brought "evil," for "good and evil" are inseparable on that tree. No wonder the man in Romans seven says "I would do good, but evil is present with me (Romans 7:21)." He is not a child of God; he is a "corrupt tree."

The "good tree" Jesus speaks of is "life," and all who have life through Jesus. The fruit of this tree is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," and all the "peaceable fruit of righteousness." Paul speaks to the child of God in Romans 7:4; "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law (knowledge of good and evil) by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should **bring forth fruit unto God** (life)."

The "corrupt tree" Jesus speaks of is a mixture of good and evil and is personified in everyone from the most devout of every religion including "Christianity without Christ," to the "Adolph Hitlers" and the "Osama Ben Ladens" of this world. The fruit of this tree is "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry,

witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.” Paul continues to tell us *“they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”* These are the fruit Paul spoke of in Romans 7:5; *“For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death.”*

The “good tree” cannot bring forth fruit unto death, and the “corrupt tree” cannot bring forth fruit unto life. These are absolutes. There is no crossover of fruit between these trees; there is no “cross pollination,” and no “hybrid fruit.” The person that struggles with “two natures” is actually struggling with the “good and evil” that only a sin nature can produce.

The idea that all sin is the same, whether it’s theft or murder, or whether it’s failing to witness to someone about Jesus, is a common but foolish thought. Many of those who preach such things do it ignorantly, thinking to urge the people on towards holiness and perfection. “Surely,” they think, “if failure to witness is sin just like theft or murder, surely the people will be more diligent to be a witness.” In reality, however, the result is exactly the opposite. I spoke earlier of a group I once knew that believed it was a sin for a woman to cut even a single hair of her head. They presented this as though to cut the hair was the same before God as if she had committed adultery. Surely the woman would never cut her hair if this were the case, but again, in reality the opposite effect is most often the case. If everything is a sin, then sin becomes more acceptable in the eyes of the people.

Back in 1988, Ted Koppel had a panel of nationally know preachers on his “Nightline” broadcast. The subject of discussion was the sex scandals that were in the news concerning two of the largest ministries in the world at that time. All but one of these famous preachers were on the defensive, saying for the entire world to hear, *“we are all sinners, we sin everyday.”* Strangely, it was Ted Koppel that rebuked his guests, saying, *“maybe we are all sinners, but shouldn’t there be a difference between the sins of the church and the sins of the world?”* Of all the guests on the panel, only James Kennedy, a Presbyterian, believed that not all sin was the same. He quoted Ephesians 5:3, *“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints.”* The Apostle Paul continued in that same text as follows; *“Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience (Ephesians 5:4-6).”*

Sins “unto death”

Matthew 3:10: *“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”*

When a sinner “surrenders” to Jesus Christ, his “old man” is crucified with Christ, and his “body of sin” (sin nature) is destroyed (Romans 6:6. The axe is laid at the root of the corrupt tree (sin nature). A new man is quickened with Christ with a new heart and a new spirit. A good tree comes forth in place of the corrupt tree that was cut down at the root. Isaiah prophesied of this in Isaiah 61:3: *“...that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”* This new man is not a sinner. He is born of God, and I John 3:9 says he “cannot sin.” In order to “commit sin,” or, what John called a “sin unto death,” there must be a sin nature. Sin only grows on the corrupt tree, and it is cut down at the cross of Christ. If you must have a “list” of those sins that no one who is “born of God” could commit, the New Testament gives us one in the following scriptures.

I Corinthians 6:9-11: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither **fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners,** shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”*

Galatians 5:19-21: *“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; **Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings,** and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

Ephesians 5:3-6: *“But **fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness,** let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; Neither **filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting,** which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no **whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater,** hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.”*

Sins ‘Not Unto Death’

I John 5:16: *“If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death...”*

This is the only scripture I find in the Epistles that speaks of the possibility of a true “brother” sinning, and it is called a “sin which is not unto death.” Our forefathers taught of “sins of commission,” and “sins of omission.” This is another terminology for what our text in I John calls “sin unto death,” and “sin which is not unto death.” Again, to understand this, we must look at the two trees Jesus spoke to us about. The “sin of commission” can only be on the corrupt tree, for sin is the fruit of that tree. Notice, John said, “Whosoever is born of God doth not **commit** sin...” The Greek word translated “commit” in the King James Version of the Bible is “*poieo*” and speaks of a “single act.” The modern versions have erroneously used the Greek word “*prasso*,” which translates “practice.” The Child of God does not commit even “a single act” of sin, for he has no nature to do so.

“A sin of omission,” or, “a sin not unto death,” is not “something we do,” but “something we neglect to do.” This is caused by a lack of fullness of the good fruit on the good tree. Remember, the fruit of the “good tree” is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, etc.” Have I always manifested the “fullness” of love since I was made free from sin? No, and I have repented several times because of it. Have I always manifested sufficient longsuffering or gentleness? Again, the answer is no. These “sins” are due to a lack of fullness of fruit. Does every child of God always manifest a fullness of the good fruit? The answer, of course, is no. Peter said “*grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.*” Grace, peace, and all the fruit of the Spirit will increase through the knowledge of the truth. Peter ends his second epistle with these words, “*but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*” A child of God does grow in grace, truth, and every fruit of the Spirit. No one, however, grows out of sin into righteousness. All growth on the corrupt tree is an increase in sin. Growth on the “good tree” is in the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

If a person hates, he is a corrupt tree. Hatred can in no way be construed to be simply a “lack of love.” If you occasionally “lose it,” and curse someone, you are a corrupt tree. Your problem is not simply a “lack of longsuffering,” it is a corrupt fruit. A “good tree” may not always have the fullness of good fruit on it, but it can never bear the corrupt fruit of the corrupt tree. Lack of the good fruit is the main reason we sometimes

fail to witness, or show compassion to those around us. God said if we would pray for one another in these areas, He would give life for those that sin *“not unto death.”*

Did Jesus Sin?

The Pharisees had a *“sin test”* that Jesus couldn't pass. Be careful of the sin tests that man will give you. Those who seek to prove that every one sins and is a sinner will use the Pharisees sin test. A famous television preacher says he has a sin test of one hundred, thirty-five sins that will prove everyone to be a sinner. He said he has gotten his sins down to about twenty-five, and the big one is a *“profane tongue.”* This is such as Paul warned Timothy about in II Timothy 2:16-17; *“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is...”* If they can convince you that everyone is a sinner, they feel justified in their sins. One of the major *“Christian”* television networks has been plagued with sin problems. Within the past decade one of their top singers was in drug rehab, one of their top evangelists was in alcohol rehab, and one of the top women hostesses had an affair with another musician. These are *“sins unto death.”* Paul spoke of such in I Corinthians 5:9-11 when he reproved the Corinthians; *“I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.”* Any of these could be saved through repentance and Godly sorrow, but, strangely enough, they don't believe their sin to be any worse than yours, if you failed to witness. After all, they *“witness”* everyday on their broadcasts. *“Surely,”* they think, *“God will never judge us for sin.”* Don't be deceived, He will.

Jesus, on the other hand, was judged to be guilty of *“breaking the Sabbath.”* Hear the accusations of the Pharisees against him:

John 9:16: *“Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day.”*

John 9:2: “Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.”

Jesus' *“sin”* was healing the sick on the Sabbath day. He was *“guilty,”* but no, Jesus did not sin. He could not, because He was *“born of God.”*

Can a Child of God Backslide?

Romans 7:9: *“For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”*

There wasn't but one way out of Paradise, and Adam and Eve found it. While I preach continuously the scriptures that tell us a child of God is free from sin, and does not sin, it would be an error for me to tell you that it would be *“impossible”* for a child of God to ever sin again and even be lost. There is a way out of this wonderful salvation. Notice carefully the words of this text; *“I was alive...once, but...sin revived, and I died.”* I purposely left out the part of this verse that tells how it happened to this man in Romans seven. The important thing to know right now is that he was once alive, but something happened, and sin revived, and he died. In this case it was deception, just as it was with Eve in the garden. Sin deceived this man through something that was *“good”* and by the *“good,”* sin slew him (Romans 7:9-13).

James 1:13-15: *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”*

James tells of a “process” that will actually birth sin once more in the heart and nature of man. I said a “process” because that is what it takes to bring a child of God back under the power of sin. Those who “abide in Christ” do not sin (1 John 3:5-6). In fact, they are not even drawn to sin. There is nothing in them, as long as they “abide in Christ,” that either needs or desires any sinful thing. They must first be “drawn away” from Christ by something that appears “innocent,” or even “good” in their sight. An entire generation of the “church” has been “drawn away” by the desire for earthly prosperity. It is sad that this desire for riches was created in the people by the preachers they trusted in. Certainly there can be nothing “wrong” in the possession of wealth, but many have been deceived into thinking that “gain is godliness (1 Timothy 6:5).” Paul does not end his letter to Timothy without giving this dire warning.

1 Timothy 6:9-11: *“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.”*

The desire for riches is a snare that brings its victims into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown them in perdition. Jesus speaks to this issue in Mark 4:19; *“And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”* Jesus speaks of three things that “choke” the word: *“the cares of this (present) world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts for other things (rather than things ‘above’, Colossians 3:1-3).”* In Luke 8:14 Jesus adds a fourth, the *“pleasures of this life,”* to the list of things that draw people away from Christ. Excesses of a thousand different and seemingly innocent things: hunting, fishing, sports, work, overtime, fun, entertainment, television, books, world news, etc. There is no way anyone could make a complete list. None of these things in moderation is sin, but excesses of any of them will draw your affection away from Christ, and thus be a snare to you. The person being “drawn away” and becoming “unfruitful” is in danger of being “taken away.” Again, hear the words of Jesus on this issue; *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away...”* (John 15:2). Jesus speaks even clearer in the sixth verse; *“If a man abide not in me (if he is drawn away), he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”*

Returning to our text in James, he said a man is drawn away by his own lust (desire) and “enticed.” The Greek word for “enticed” actually means, “entrapped.” Every person that is drawn away from Christ by their own *unsinful* desires is snared in a place where they can be “tempted with evil,” or, “drawn **to** sin.” They must be drawn **away** from Christ before they can be drawn **to** sin. James tells us when lust “conceives,” it “brings forth” sin. This speaks of a “conception” and a “birth.” The soul of man that was once dead unto sin and alive unto God becomes “impregnated” by the natural desires of man, and the “new-born child” is sin. James continues, *“...and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”*

Is It Christ?

Isaiah 33:14: *“The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?”*

If the sinless Son of God were to return to earth in a body of flesh to live and walk among men, would He be received by the world? Or, even by the “church?” I say that many sinners in the world would receive Him, but not the “sinners” in the church. The modern church, with its philosophy, “*we’re all sinners, we sin every day,*” would condemn Jesus as the worst of sinners; cold, bitter, uncompassionate, etc. Are you shocked to hear me say this? The scribes and Pharisees in that day were shocked. The moneychangers were certainly shocked. The prophet Malachi prophesied the coming of Christ to Israel and it happened just as he said. Hear the prophet in Malachi 3:1-2; “*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.*”

The scribes and Pharisees most certainly taught about the coming of their Messiah. They sought His coming; they “*delighted*” in Him until He came. Then, they hated Him. They plotted His death. They condemned Him as a sinner, and eventually found Him guilty of blasphemy because He said He was the Son of God. Everything He was was a contradiction to what they were. Everything He said condemned them. Jesus said if He had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now, since He came, they had no covering for their sin (John 15:22). The tradition and religious law of their day could not convict them, but His very presence condemned them. He openly rebuked the scribes and the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. In one message He called them “*hypocrites*” seven times (See Matthew 23). In the same message He called them “*fools*” two times, and “*blind*” five times. Finally, he called them “*serpents*” and a “*generation of vipers.*” All these things He said in a message to the multitude, warning them of the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. This message was one of His last before going to the cross, but in His first recorded message at the beginning of His ministry He began by telling the people “*Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 5:20).” Two different times Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the Temple, once at the beginning of His ministry, and once at the end of His earthly ministry. One of those times He actually used a whip to drive them out. In Matthew 17:17, Jesus reproved His disciples for their lack of faith to cast out an unclean spirit, saying, “*O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?*” Even after His resurrection He again “*upbraided*” the disciples because of their unbelief and hardness of heart (Mark 16:14). Is it at all possible that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, and also our Lord and Savior, was sometimes “*aggravated,*” and yet without sin?

I do not point these things out to excuse anyone for mimicking these very things that Jesus did. Certainly no one should preach with the directness and even the “*harshness*” as Jesus did to the scribes and Pharisees unless it is the Holy Spirit speaking through them. Neither would it be “*in order*” for anyone to take a whip and “*purge*” the churches with it, but Jesus did, and He was in order. What do you think the “*moneychangers*” in the modern church would think of Jesus if He came “*in the flesh*” today and spoke and did as is recorded in the Bible? What about most pastors, or their deacon boards, or even the person on the pew, would they “*abide His coming?*” Would they receive His words? Many sinners in the world would repent and be gloriously saved, but the “*sinner*” that calls himself a “*brother*” would not. He would be afraid, just as Isaiah prophesied. Fearfulness would grip the hypocrites. Once again, they would seek to destroy Him.

Christ is come in the flesh! He is come in the flesh of His righteous and holy people. Paul said “*...it is not I, but Christ that liveth in me: the life I now live in the flesh...*” (Galatians 2:20). John said, “*we...shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us* (I John 1:2).” Again, Paul said in II Corinthians 4:2, “*(We) have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s*

conscience in the sight of God.” Jesus’ very presence was a reproach to the leaders of the synagogues of that day. Even so it was with the presence of Paul, Peter, and John, and so it is today with every righteous and holy child of God. If Christ is come in your flesh, you have been made a reproach to many in the modern church. If you are not *“still a sinner,”* but if you have been made *“free from sin”* by the Son of God, everything you say and everything you do is a reproach to the leaders of the modern church. Don’t be intimidated by them. Speak the truth with every man. Bear witness of it. Testify of it. You will be a *“manifestation of the truth,”* if so be that Christ is come in your flesh. If you have repented and believed the gospel, if you are truly saved, then you are not a sinner. You do not commit sin. You are free from sin. Don’t let them make a sinner out of you!