



### *Where Have All the Sinners Gone?*

*But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"*  
*Luke 5:8*

*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*  
*1 John 1:10*

*If you've ever known someone enrolled in a substance abuse program such as Alcoholics Anonymous, no matter how long they've been clean and sober, they still consider themselves to be an alcoholic. "Hi, I'm Elbert and I'm an alcoholic. It's been 12 years since my last drink." They recognize that they have a problem which, if revisited, will plunge them right back into the worst of it. They continue to go to meetings and associate with people who keep them away from the people, places, and things which bring on the urge to drink. Well, we're **ALL** like this in some way when it comes to sin. There's something that has a particularly powerful hold over us our whole life which we need to admit to and avoid. It's not the same, exact thing for everyone, but it wouldn't be amiss if Christians introduced themselves, "Hi, I'm [insert name] and I'm a sinner. It's been 12 years since I last engaged in that sin."*

Yes, meeting people at church would be quite different under this concept. "Hi, I'm an adulterer." "Hi, I'm a pornography addict." "Hi, I'm a television junkie." But if we wore our sins on our sleeve like the

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AA people do, at least we'd be in an active fight against that sin, admitting both our weakness and need of help to stay away from its strongholds. Our pride would be broken so that we'd no longer try to hide it or live in denial that we are strong enough to overcome it on our own.

But the sad truth of why this idea is not coming to a fellowship near you any time soon is because of the diminishing time we spend talking about sin today. It's a subject that has all but disappeared from many pulpits, especially those trying to foster a "seeker sensitive" environment who don't want to "offend" or upset anyone. So we don't talk about sin, much less the Believers' struggles with it.

A side-effect of this strategy is that the church in America has come to allow sin to reside side-by-side with its so-called Christianity. Statistically it's been proved over and over again that there's no distinguishable difference between non-Christians and those claiming to be Believers on almost any behavioral issue from divorce to sex to whatever. We deal with sin the same way the world does – we don't. Do you think I'm overstating it?

Over the past 40 years we've had quite the list of spiritual movements, leaders, and organizations, some of which were grounded in the kingdom of God, the rest not so much. You tell me: Is there less crime today? Is there less divorce? Is there less pornography? Are television programs and movies getting more Christ-like? Pick any indicator you please, but give serious thought to why the trend continues its downward spiral. It's because the church has allowed sin to enter and reside in it unchallenged and therefore Christianity in this country is no longer the salt or light to the degree it once was.

In the Old Testament books of Kings and Chronicles we have repeated examples of spiritual revivals. They all began with an individual who returned to the Lord from his heart and took the next logical step: cleansing and re-establishing the temple. Judgment begins with God's

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house first before it moves out into the world. In the New Testament we're taught that WE are now the temple. And Paul strikes at the very issue that we as the temple have to be visibly different, especially when it comes to sin.

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,  
Ephesians 2:19*

In our former life before Christ we were outside of His temple – the body of Christ – cut off from His presence and living accordingly. Now that we are members of His household, we're to live according to new standards appropriate to being a citizen in a new kingdom with new rules and laws to live by.

*having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,  
Ephesians 2:20*

Those new standards are God's Word, the corner stone of which is the teaching of Christ to which the foundational teachings of His apostles and prophets are joined. It's not something to merely know or be aware of, but that upon which we're supposed to build upon going forward, shaping our very behavior.

*in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,  
Ephesians 2:21*

Everything comes together in Christ alone so that we are being transformed not just into His image, but becoming the representation of Him here on earth. When people see the "temple" (the body of Believers), they're supposed to see Christ.

*in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.  
Ephesians 2:22*

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No matter where we are, whether or not we're in a physical building together or in the course of our daily life, we're the place the Spirit dwells. No one any longer has to go to a temple or some kind of physical place because **WE** take Him with us, bringing His temple to *them*.

Paul gets specifically pointed in this regard to personal sin and its ensuing personal and corporate effect:

*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*  
*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

(Whatever **YOUR** personal and particular sin-weakness, it applies here.)

The final effect of allowing sin to dwell in the church is that it's the direct causal link to why deception is growing at such an alarming rate, why so many false movements, false teachers, and false prophets are gaining not just acceptance but larger and larger followings. When you can no longer make the distinction between what is and is not sin, you can no longer discern the difference between true and false doctrine. The likes of Benny Hinn, Ted Haggard, Paul Crouch, Kenneth Copeland, Joel Osteen, Rick Warren and a list far too long to dictate here can't be identified for how far from God's Word their teachings have strayed and thus appear to be a qualified Christian resource. When there's no distinction where sin is concerned, there's no distinction concerning doctrine. The deception of accepting sin and allowing it to live side-by-side with righteousness blooms into spiritual deception where teaching and doctrine are concerned.

What did Jesus tell the woman forgiven of adultery? *"Sin no more"*. (John 8:11) What did Jesus tell the man born blind from birth after healing him? *"Do not sin any more"*. (John 5:14) What does Paul say about Christians who don't leave their sins and its behaviors behind

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them? "How shall we who died to sin still live in it?" (Romans 6:2)  
We're supposed to leave sin behind, changed in our visible behavior  
going forward.

In fact, Paul instructs Timothy in what would be termed today as not  
merely politically incorrect, but as "hate speech" by some:

*Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so  
that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.  
1 Timothy 5:20*

There's good news and bad news for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century western civilized  
Christian. The good news is that there's forgiveness of sin in the blood  
of Christ; the bad news is that this sin must be rejected and left  
behind going forward. There is no biblical allowance for one to merely  
believe in Christ and continue living according to one's sinful desires  
and ways.

Revival is only going to come to America only if Christians sincerely  
repent of their sins so as to lead to the cleansing of God's House first.

In His Love,

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