

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

VOLUME 111, NUMBER 12

REPENT OF YOUR SINS

Pat McIntosh

The concept of sin is based squarely upon the understanding of the holiness of God. This holy God based both promises and commands given to man on His divine attributes. As the Sovereign, God possesses all authority. Any violation of that will on the part of man results in separation from Him (Isa. 59:1-2). The same God, however, is also one of love, mercy, and grace. Through His mercy, He extends grace in the form of “repentance.”

The Greek word translated as “repent” or “repentance” is “metanoeo.” “Repentance” is a word that has often been misunderstood. Some simply see it as regret or sorrow. They are sorry that they have sinned but, at that point, have not yet done anything to deal with the sin and its resulting separation. It is a word that speaks of a change of the mind that results in a change of attitude and action. It is also a word that involves, and is initiated by, regret and sorrow. Thus, repentance is a decision on the part of sinful man, preceded by sorrow, and is manifested by a changed life. There are many biblical examples of those who have repented of their sins than space will allow. Let us examine just a few.

First, we see the Ninevites to whom Jonah proclaimed God’s message (Jon. 1-3; Matt. 12:41). As Gentiles, their sin was a violation of Patriarchal Law. Upon hearing God’s message proclaimed by Jonah, they believed God (Jon. 3:5) and took the steps needed to manifest repentance. That they repented is obvious as God relented from the penalty due the unrepentant. Their penitence was manifested by a change in attitude (sack cloth reflecting humility) and a sense of self-denial (fasting). They moved from idolatry to true worship (Jon. 3:8). Thus, only the results of penitence are seen, but the internal motivation and change is implied due to the outcome.

A second example is seen in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:10-24). He left home and “wasted his possessions with prodigal (wasteful) living.” The text indicates that he “came to himself” (awareness) and made the decision to return home in a subdued state rather than an exalted one (pride replaced

with humility). Again, we see recognition of sin, contrition, and turning back to the previous relationship. Though he did not earn or deserve it, he was blessed by a loving father upon his return.

A final example is seen in the powerful conversion recorded in Acts 2. Peter’s sermon served the purpose of convicting men of their sinful actions. Upon learning and recognizing that they had sinned, cut to the heart, the men asked the most important of questions, “Men and brethren, what shall we do (Acts 2:37)? The answer required their repentance and being baptized for the

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DECEMBER 2025

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FROM THE EDITOR:

CARNAL SINS

Ross Haffner

Do you worship God or idols? Most idolaters in our society do not bow before carved images, yet they practice idolatry all the same—by choosing the desires of the flesh over the will of God. Both Scripture and common sense teach that God’s prohibitions against the carnal sins listed in Galatians 5:19–21 are for our good and protect us from devastating consequences.

Adultery

Adultery is a specific form of sexual immorality (fornication). It is also used figuratively in Scripture to describe God’s people abandoning Him (e.g., the book of Hosea). Jesus took this sin so seriously that He expanded its definition: “I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). He also taught that divorcing a spouse and marrying another is adultery unless the divorce was for sexual immorality (Matt. 5:32; 19:9).

When the disciples heard this, they exclaimed, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry” (Matt. 19:10). Many today react the same way: some get angry, some blame God, and others simply ignore His commands to follow their own desires. We must instead recognize that God warned us long ago about the destructive power of adultery and accept our responsibility to obey Him.

Fornication (Sexual Immorality)

The Greek word *porneia* is broader than adultery. It includes every kind of sexual activity outside of marriage: premarital sex, homosexual acts, prostitution, bestiality, and adultery itself. Our bodies were not made for sexual immorality but for the Lord (1 Cor. 6:13–20). These sins are uncomfortable to discuss, but silence is not an option when they are so widespread. The good news of Scripture is that even deeply rooted desires can be brought into captivity to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

Uncleanness

Uncleanness refers primarily to impure motives in moral matters. Any action—even one that appears good—

becomes sin when performed with selfish or lustful intent (Rom. 1:24; 6:19). We can only walk in righteousness when we love what is right and hate what is evil. Wanting to do the right thing is not enough on its own, but it is a necessary start (Rom. 10:2).

Lasciviousness

This is unbridled lust—behavior that deliberately arouses or indulges sexual desire outside God-ordained boundaries. It includes pornography, deliberate lustful thoughts, immodest dress or conduct, and most forms of modern dancing that is designed to incite sexual passion. Jesus’ standard is uncompromising: lust in the heart is adultery, and God calls women (and by implication men) to dress and behave with modesty and self-control (Matt. 5:28; 1 Tim. 2:9–10). Sexual desire itself is not sinful; God created a lawful place for it. “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

These “smaller” compromises, left unchecked, lead to greater sins. If we find ourselves on this path, God invites us to come to Him with a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17). Public confession and repentance may sometimes be necessary—never let shame or embarrassment keep you from the forgiveness Christ offers. Those who continue practicing such things without repentance will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19–21). Yet everyone who turns to the Lord by obeying the gospel will be cleansed, forgiven, and allowed to walk in newness of life (1 Cor. 6:9–11). There is no sin too deep for His grace to reach.

CW



WHO DO YOU WORSHIP?

Scout Betz

Paul's warning in Galatians 5:19-21 lists *idolatry* and *sorcery* among "the works of the flesh," placing them beside sins such as sexual immorality, hatred, and drunkenness. Yet many Christians assume these sins belong solely to the ancient world—of golden calves and pagan temples – overlooking their relevance in our lives today. As we work to understand what Scripture means by *idolatry* and *sorcery*, and how they appear in our modern world, it will bring us to a deeper question: **Who do you worship?**

In Scripture, *idolatry* is more than bowing down to carved images. The Greek term Paul uses, *eidōlōlatría*, refers literally to "worship of a material representation of a deity" but biblically it expands to include giving ultimate devotion, trust, or affection to anything other than the true and living God.

The Old Testament is full of warnings against this sin. The first two commandments forbid having "other gods" or "making carved images to serve" (Ex. 20:3-4). Israel's great downfall was repeatedly this very sin—from the golden calf (Ex. 32) to Baal worship in the time of Elijah (1 Kgs. 18). Idolatry was not just a religious mistake; it was spiritual adultery. God describes it with the language of unfaithfulness: "for I the LORD your God am a jealous God" (Ex. 20:5). In Judges we read "yet they would not listen to their judges but played the harlot with other gods and bowed down to them." (Jdgs. 2:17)

This jealousy is not insecurity from the Lord, it is the righteous zeal of a covenant-keeping God who has every right to expect the loyalty of His redeemed people. When God is jealous, He is protecting a relationship that belongs to Him by His own holy nature. So we ask the question, "What is idol worship today?" Even if we never bow to a statue, the human heart still manufactures idols. Ezekiel spoke of those who "set up idols in their hearts" (Ezek. 14:3).

Modern idolatry takes many forms: Career or success become an idol when our identity and security depend on achievement rather than God. Money and possessions become gods when we trust them to provide what only God can give. Relationships can become idols when we expect another human to satisfy our deepest needs. Self becomes the most popular modern idol—our desires, feelings, and preferences. An idol is anything you sacrifice for, submit to, and seek joy in above God. When we examine our schedules, spending, and thoughts idols often reveal themselves. God's jealousy confronts us here: He will not share His people with false gods because those rivals destroy us. They do not love

us nor could they because of their nature.

Building on this misplaced devotion, Paul also warns against sorcery, a practice deeply intertwined with idolatry. Sorcery from the Greek is *pharmakeia* which often involved mixing substances to create potions or poisons. Sorcery was a problem in Galatia and Asia minor. We see in Acts 19:19 that those who once practiced magic burned their books in the sight of all. Scripture consistently condemns attempts to access spiritual power apart from God. Deuteronomy 18:10-12 forbids divination, omens, mediums, and necromancy, calling these things "abominations." At its core, *sorcery* is an affront to God's authority by seeking spiritual power from sources other than Him, making it a direct extension of the idolatry we have explored.

In essence, idolatry and sorcery compete with God. God's jealousy is not like a wounded ego, but zeal of a loving Father determined to protect His people from destruction. He alone created us, redeemed us, and sustains us. Everything else we worship enslaves us and when we give our hearts to idols, we commit spiritual infidelity. When we dabble in counterfeit spiritual practices, we deny the sufficiency of God's wisdom and power. In all of this, God's jealousy calls us back to faithfulness—back to the God who refuses to abandon His people even when they wander.

Paul's warning in Galatians is not theoretical. He concludes with clarity: "those who practice such things will **not inherit the kingdom of God.**" These sins are not trivial; they reveal the orientation of one's heart. To worship God alone is to give Him the devotion, obedience, and trust that He alone deserves. It is to reject the heart-idols and spiritual counterfeits that compete for our souls and God's rightful position.

In a world overflowing with substitutes for God, Paul's ancient warning remains a modern question: Who do you worship? May our answer be clear—it is the Lord alone.

CW

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

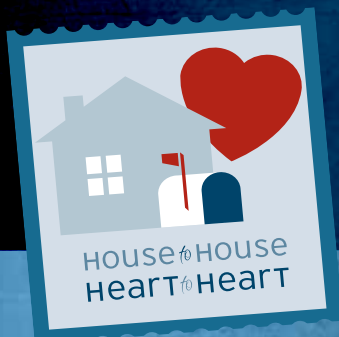
Ryan Brewer

It started with something small—a teasing remark at a Sunday potluck that struck the wrong chord. Within a week, two friends who once laughed together were avoiding each other. What began as a lighthearted moment turned into bitterness and silence. Moments like this show how quickly small offenses can

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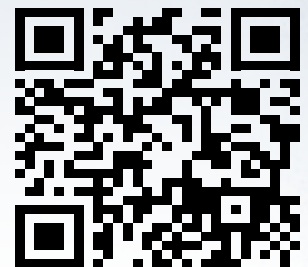
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snowball when left unchecked. Paul warned against the “works of the flesh”—“hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, [and] envy” (Gal. 5:20–21). These are more than attitudes; they are heart diseases that choke out our ability to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal. 5:14).

Hatred (*ekthra*) is inner hostility—the opposite of love. John writes, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer” (1 Jn. 3:15). Titus 3:3 reminds us that before Christ, we were “hateful and hating one another.” Hatred often begins quietly: a grudge, a hurt replayed in our mind. It grows when we refuse to forgive. We see it when someone cuts off a friendship or avoids a brother at church. Left alone, it turns into gossip that poisons unity. When bitterness rises, stop and pray for the person. It’s nearly impossible to hate someone you’re praying for. Jesus said, “Love your enemies... and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Matt. 5:44). Prayer softens what pride hardens.

Contentions (*eris*) means a quarrelsome spirit. Paul warned, “Avoid foolish disputes... contentions... for they are unprofitable and useless” (Tit. 3:9). Proverbs compares strife to a broken dam—once it starts, it’s hard to contain (Prov. 17:14). Today, contention shows up in text threads, online debates, or church disagreements. Pride says, “I have to win,” but love says, “I want peace.” Many rifts begin not with doctrine but with egos unwilling to yield. Before speaking, ask, “Am I trying to help or to win?” Scripture says, “Pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another” (Rom 14:19). When peace becomes the goal, pride loses its grip.

Jealousy (*zelos*) is resentment over another’s blessings. It is selfish zeal. Saul felt it when the people sang, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7). That jealousy drove him to hatred and madness. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for the same spirit: “Where there are envy, strife, and divisions... are you not carnal?” (1 Cor. 3:3). Jealousy still plagues believers when someone else gets attention, success, or joy—and we can’t celebrate with them. When jealousy whispers, “Why not me?” answer, “Because God knows what’s best for me.” Gratitude destroys jealousy. Thank God daily for your blessings, and sincerely “rejoice with those who rejoice” (Rom. 12:15).

Outbursts of wrath (*thumos*) describes explosive anger—the kind that flares up fast and fades slow. Proverbs warns, “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back” (Prov. 29:11). James adds, “Be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (Jas. 1:19–20). Life gives plenty of chances to lose our temper—traffic, disrespect, frustration. But anger rarely stands alone; it invites regret, hurtful words, and broken trust. When you feel anger rising, pause and pray. Count slowly. Step away. “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty”

(Pro. 16:32). Restraint isn’t weakness—it’s wisdom. It may save both your peace and your witness.

Envy (*phthonos*) doesn’t just want what others have—it resents them for having it. Proverbs says, “A sound heart is life to the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones” (Prov. 14:30). It was “because of envy” that the chief priests delivered Jesus to Pilate (Mk. 15:10). Envy thrives on comparison—scrolling through photos, hearing praise, or seeing success. It whispers, “You deserve that more.” But Paul reminds us, “Love does not envy” (1 Cor. 13:4). Replace envy with encouragement. If you admire someone’s success, tell them. A sincere compliment breaks envy’s grip. Envy divides; encouragement unites.

These sins feed each other. Hatred breeds contention; contention provokes wrath; wrath ignites envy. That’s why Paul cautions, “Do not give place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27). Sin starts small—a thought, a feeling—but it gains speed downhill. “When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (Jas. 1:15). The only way to stop the snowball is to “walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:16). The Spirit replaces hate with love, pride with peace, and envy with joy. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22–23). Love, when practiced daily, melts what sin freezes. As Peter wrote, “Above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8).

CW

CAN’T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

Daren Schroeder

Can’t we all just get along? Well, that certainly is how it ought to be, especially in God’s family. Long ago the Psalmist said, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!” If Jesus brought peace to this earth (Lk. 2:14) and Jesus instructs His followers to be peacemakers (Mt. 5:8), why do Christians sometimes struggle getting along? This article will explore a practical understanding of this matter especially through considering three words in Galatians 5:20.

Our focus is on rivalries, dissensions, and divisions. The KJV uses the words: strife, seditions, and heresies. The ASV uses: factions, divisions, and parties. These three translations make use of eight different terms. The only common word among them is the word “divisions,” and ironically, that is from two different Greek words (as can be observed in the word order of the ESV compared with the ASV). Our study will not allow deep investigation into definitions, but will seek to provide practical

understanding related to this important topic.

The word “rivalries” reflects selfish attitudes, even seeking to gain advantage over another. This is similar to what a sports team seeks to do to their opponent. Such a spirit, in “real life,” and the life of the church, produces discord (the result of not being a team). Take for example what Paul says about some false brethren in Philippians 1:17: “The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.” (Jas 4:13-16.) Selfishness caused these teachers to see Paul as a rival, and they acted in accord with their selfish thinking. Much can be learned in this text about Paul’s extremely mature handling of the situation.

Secondly, the word “dissensions” carries the idea of partisan quarrels. It is only used here and in Romans 16:17 where Paul says, “I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.” The word that is translated as “dissensions” in Galatians 5:20 is here translated “cause divisions.” Such divisions often involve both wrong attitudes and teachings. Both can naturally lead to division in the body of Christ.

Thirdly, the word “divisions” in our text is related to a verb meaning “to choose or prefer.” We get our English word “heresy” from this word. The church at Corinth provides an example of what this can look like in the life of the church. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:9, “for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.” This word strikes not only at the result, but the heart, or the seed that gives birth to the outward division. Selfish preferences and ambitions often result in divisions in the church. By divisions, we don’t necessarily mean an actual split, but more times than that, a festering wound that goes unhealed. Many members of the church at Corinth had serious preferences (or favorites), such as favorite teachers and favorite spiritual gifts. This led to divisions and factions within the church.

After proper admonishment (Mt.18:15-18), if divisive individuals are not willing to repent of their divisiveness, the Scriptures teach they should be withdrawn from (2 Thes. 3:6; Tit. 3:10). This is done with the objective of winning them back to the Lord (see 1 Cor. 5:4-5) as well as keeping the church pure. Paul says, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Gal. 5:9).

To guard against these and other works of the flesh and their consequences, all Christians must commit to possessing the “mind of Christ” (Phil. 2:5) who humbly and selflessly walked with humanity. This humility was manifested perfectly through His intense desire to do the will of His Father (Jn. 6:38) rather than pursuing selfish, fleshly desires. If Christ could be patient with the twelve (and others) how much more can we be?

Paul says it better than I can in the context of our passage: “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another” (Gal. 5:24-26). Filling our hearts

with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 will leave no room for such wickedness. A lost and dying world is counting on our unity! (See Jn. 17:20-23.)

CW

CAN CHRISTIANS DRINK ALCOHOL?

James Cammock

In Galatians 5:19-21, the apostle Paul lists the various works of the flesh. Of the seventeen sinful works, the final two listed by the apostle are drunkenness and revelries (carousing, NASB) (v. 21). What is drunkenness, or more importantly, how does *the Bible* define the term? What does God’s word say about social drinking? God’s expectation of His people is very clear – Christians are to be sober. This article will examine Paul’s and Peter’s instructions to the church regarding alcohol.

In 1 Thessalonians 5, the apostle Paul reminds the church at Thessalonica that the Lord’s return will occur at an unexpected time (1 Thes. 5:1-3). In light of this, he proceeds to encourage the brethren to prepare for that great day by watching and being sober (1 Thes. 5:6).

The Greek word for “sober” is *nēphō*. Greek language authorities define the word as: “to abstain from wine; thus, to be sober” (Wigram and Green), “to be sober, drink no wine” (Lindell and Scott), and “to be free from the influence of intoxicants” (W. E. Vine). One cannot partake of alcohol to any degree and still abstain. One either abstains or partakes, regardless of the quantity consumed.

A similar parallel is found with the Greek word for “fasting.” Just as *nē-phō* means “to abstain from wine,” *nē-steuō* means “to abstain from food,” according to Wigram and Green. One either partakes of alcohol or he does not, just as a person either partakes of food or he does not. One cannot be “a little bit” sober any more than he can be “a little bit” fasting.

While the term “sober” is used figurately in some passages, this is not the case in all passages, including 1 Thessalonians 5:6. Notice the important contrast Paul makes between verses 6 and 7. The apostle contrasts the term “sober” in verse 6 with ordinary, literal drunkenness in verse 7. We know that the drunkenness of verse 7 is literal because it is said to occur at night, the time during which ordinary, literal drunkenness typically occurs. Similarly, the apostle uses the term “watch” (awake, NASB) in verse 6, contrasting it with literal sleep that ordinarily occurs at night in verse 7. Unless the apostle is contrasting a literal term with a figurative term, we have an immediate contextual case for understanding the term “sober” in verse 6 as physical sobriety.

Paul makes a series of contrasts throughout the passage, which help us define what *the Bible* means by “drunk.” The opposite of light is darkness. The opposite of day is night. The opposite of watch is sleep. If we continue the parallel, the opposite of sober is drunk. In other words, a person is either sober or drunk. To what degree a person is intoxicated is a separate, irrelevant question. *Therefore, all Bible passages that condemn drunkenness, including Galatians 5:21, condemn anything but sobriety. Drunkenness is a matter of degree; sobriety is not.*

While encouraging the church to submit to God and resist the devil, the apostle Peter also gives insight into alcohol consumption in 1 Peter 5:5-11. He gives a straightforward exhortation for Christians to be sober (*nēphō*) (v. 8).

Peter makes an interesting and visual play on words in verse 8. At the start of the verse, he instructs the brethren to “be sober.” At the end of the verse, he explains that the reason for being sober is because the devil is “...seeking whom he may devour.” The Greek word “devour” (*katapinō*), means “to drink down,” according to W. E. Vine. Peter’s visually brilliant point is that we are to be sober lest we be drunk down by the devil!

There also appears to be a connection between Peter’s exhortation to be sober in verse 8, and the need to cast all of our cares on God in verse 7. This connection only furthers the point that Peter has literal sobriety in mind. How often do men resort to drinking as a form of self-medication to deal with the troubles of life? This should not be so with Christians. Rather than turning to alcohol, we are to turn to our great God and cast all of life’s cares on Him because He cares for us both emotionally and providently.

God’s word is clear – Christians are to be sober, which means to abstain from alcohol. The moment a child of God partakes of alcohol, to any degree, he has ceased to abstain. Christians have no business drinking alcohol. Not only is it Scripturally indefensible, it is shameful to both the individual and the Lord’s church. May we stay away from drinking in all its forms, and live up to the higher standard of living to which our God has called us.

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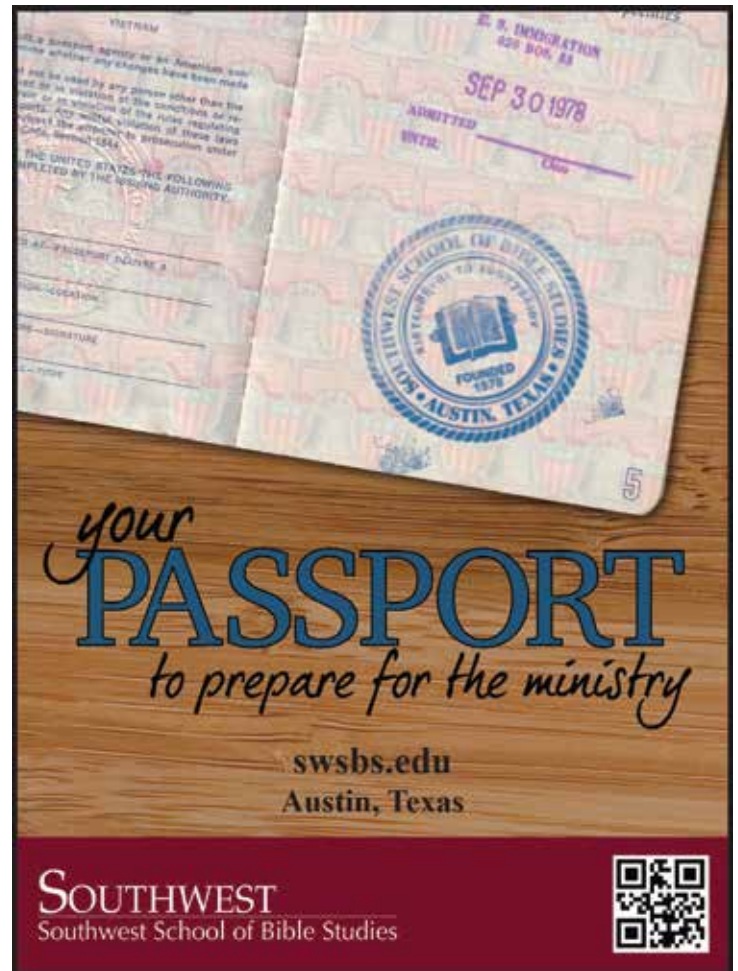
remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Note that we see the same process as in the previous two examples. They became aware of their sins, regretted that behavior (implied in their actions), and turned to God in obeying what they were instructed to do (Acts 2:41).

How do we know if we have repented of the sin which separates us from God? The simple answer is that we will know if we have completed the process determined by God as revealed in Scripture. Honestly, only the individual and God will fully know

when true repentance has occurred. People can make apparent changes in behavior, but we can’t read minds. We can tell people what they want to hear and show them what they want to see. However, unless the heart is truly changed, the rest is just “window dressing.” We will know ourselves when we follow God’s plan that involves and requires penitence.

One cannot truly imagine how life would be if God did not provide the opportunity for repentance. We look at sin as revealed in the Bible and tremble at what it would be like if we had no hope of recovery. In Galatians 5:19-23 we see a representative list of sins under the category of “works of the flesh.” All of these, and many more, will result in failure to inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:21). But, there is good news! Our benevolent God loved us enough to provide a way back when we depart from Him. That His love continues is seen in our opportunity of repentance. May we choose to avail ourselves of such love, mercy, and grace when we sin, as we all have and will do so again (Rom. 3:23). Our sorrow for doing so will begin the process of laying hold of what God has provided, and receive what He has promised — forgiveness of sin.

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From the Director's Desk

Why would you preach about sin?



Trent Kennedy
Director
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- God talks about sin (Isa. 1:18-19).
- Jesus talks about sin (Jn.8:21-24).
- God's messengers talk about sin (1 Kgs. 14:16).
- Sin corrupts (Tit. 1:15-16).
- Sin deceives (Heb. 3:13).
- Sin ruins (Isa. 57:20-21).
- Sin separates (Isa. 59:2)
- Sin leads to death (Jas. 1:15).
- Sin must be dealt with appropriately (Lk. 13:3).
- Sin must be recognized (Ps. 139:23-24).
- Sin must be avoided (1 Thess. 5:22).
- Sin is an assault on the moral perfection of God (Hab. 1:13).
- The good news is good because sin is so bad (Rom. 5:6-8).
- Jesus came to save mankind from sin (Matt. 1:21)!

When we claim to preach the whole counsel of God, it is necessary that we talk about the reality of, consequences to, and salvation from sin. There may be other topics that we prefer to discuss, but this one cannot be neglected.

If you are interested in learning the whole counsel of God ... as much as is possible in two years, we would love to talk to you about SWSBS.

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