



freedom, he decides who controls his life. As long as he invites the Spirit of God to control him, his life is characterized by obedience and fellowship with God. When he chooses to allow self to gain control of his life, he exposes himself once again to the enticements of Satan; therefore, the Christian continues to struggle with the problem of sin. But he should never forget that he has access to a way of life that is victorious over sin.

### The Misery Caused by Sin

Man is tempted to sin through gratification of the pleasures of the flesh. The person whose life is controlled by his physical desires to the extent that he disobeys God's laws is described as living in the flesh. While such activities do satisfy and bring momentary pleasures, they are short-lived. When these pleasures pass, the eternal nature of man emerges, but without joy because of guilt. Sin robs man of joy. Man has to live with his internal nature or spirit which makes itself known through his conscience. Man cannot escape from a guilty conscience. His alternative actions are to confess himself as sinful or attempt to submerge the inner man by indulgence in passions which satisfy physical sensations. The latter approach may suffice for a period of time, but the day will come when his loss of joy, internal misery, and anxieties can no longer be denied. The loss of joy which results from sin is biblically set forth in Psalm 51 and 1 John 1.

#### Psalm 51

Scholars believe this Psalm was written by David after Nathan rebuked him for the sin committed with Bathsheba. David had indulged in sin to find pleasure in life, but he discovered that sin brings inward unhappiness and turmoil and outward complexity. To hide his sin of adultery, David turned to deceit and finally to the murder of his faithful servant Uriah. During his confession, David cried to God to "restore unto me the joy of thy salvation" (v. 12). David's sin had made him miserable in his inner life. Sin robbed him of the joy of worship (v. 16). The formalities and rituals of worship are meaningless and painful to Christians who harbour sin in their lives. Before meaning can be restored to worship and joy to the Christian life, the life must be cleansed of sin, and fellowship with God must be restored. David experienced forgiveness and reconciliation with God. The joy of his heart broke forth in the beautiful Psalm 32.

#### 1 John 1:1-10

John wrote the First Epistle to Christians "that your joy may be full" (v. 4). The implication is that Christians in John's day were not experiencing the daily joy of fellowship with God. They were not receiving the full blessing of their heritage in Jesus Christ. He wrote to instruct them how to live in fellowship with one another and with God the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (v. 3).

John immediately identifies the reason Christians are not enjoying their Christianity. Walking in darkness has hindered their fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ. Since Christianity is in essence man's relationship to his loving heavenly Father, the joy of his spiritual life is made ineffective when that fellowship is blocked by sin.

Some Christians claim to live above sin. John indicated that a person who makes such a claim is sinning at the moment he makes the claim: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (v. 8). Perhaps John was referring to man's sinful nature rather than his numerous acts of sin in the statement "we have sin." Man's sinful actions are referred to in verse 10: "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." The Christian who

True or False.

Sin may bring temporary pleasures in the realm of the flesh. \_\_\_\_\_

(True)

Sin always robs man of lasting joy. \_\_\_\_\_

(True)

Read Psalm 51.

1. David first tried to \_\_\_\_\_ his sin.
2. Verse 12 is David's plea for restoration of the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. David's inner life was miserable and \_\_\_\_\_ was meaningless.

(1-hide; 2-joy, salvation; 3-worship)

One cannot experience the fullness of the Christian life if his fellowship with God is blocked by \_\_\_\_\_

(sin)

In 1 John 1:8, "we have no sin" probably refers to man's sinful \_\_\_\_\_.

Verse 10 refers to man's sinful \_\_\_\_\_.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

claims sinless perfection deceives himself, but he does not deceive God or his fellow-man. Even the Christian commits acts of sin because of his sinful nature. The number of his sinful acts are in proportion to the amount of control his sinful nature has over his life. It is possible, however, for a Christian to walk in righteousness or in the light (v. 7). The righteous walk is not achieved by man's purging himself of a sinful nature by persecuting his body or performing good works in his own strength. The righteous walk is achieved by permitting Christ to replace self in controlling one's life and by depending on the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all sin (v. 7). The Christian needs to confess his sin; that is, he must agree with God that he is sinful in nature and his sinful nature leads to wrong actions (v. 9). A merciful and loving Father is willing to "forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (v. 9).

If a Christian is not experiencing a full and joyful life in Christ, what has he to offer to the man of the world? People are searching for happiness and meaning in life. The average person lives most of his life thinking that joy comes through possessions and wealth, but all who follow such a view are deluded and end up in despair. Some seek a meaningful life through achievements in education, business, or politics, or engagements in various pleasures and travel. Contemporary protests, rebellions, and unrest among youth groups who seek fulfilment in extreme social movements indicate the lack of joy, peace, and satisfaction with life. The Christian may repeat the old cliché that "Christ is the answer" to the disenchanting groups, but his affirmation is insincere and hypocritical unless his own hunger has been satisfied through total surrender to Christ who gives the abundant and victorious life. Unless the Christian is walking in the joy and abundance of his Lord, he will have little motivation to share his life in Christ with the lost.

### Why Christians Sin

#### Three kinds of persons (1 Cor. 2:14-3:5)

*The natural man (2:14).*—According to Paul, the natural man is the non-spiritual man. He does not understand the higher values of life; therefore, he cannot walk in the truth. His life is based on substitute values, and he can never find the true meaning and purpose of life. He is the man who does not have the Spirit of God to guide him into the true way of life. His own judgements are in error, and they direct his life in the path of sin. He is the man of the world who is living the self-directed life and is earning the wages of leaving God out of his life: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a). No man can find fullness of life who ignores his Creator and the purpose for which he was created.

*The spiritual man (2:15).*—The spiritual man is one who has received Christ into his life by invitation and by submission to His control as Lord. Christ lives in the heart of the Christian in the person of the Holy Spirit (see John 14:16-18). The spiritual man knows the way of truth (how the meaningful life should be lived) because the Spirit of God (the indwelling Christ) abides within to guide him in the way and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 2:12). The spiritual man walks in the Spirit; that is, his life is Spirit-directed or Christ-directed because he has surrendered the control of his life to Jesus Christ who dwells within.

*The carnal Christian (3:1-5).*—Paul speaks of a third group that he labels as "carnal." Is the carnal man a Christian or non-Christian? Inasmuch as Paul called them "brethren," he must have considered them to be in Christ, but he could not speak to them "as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal (unspiritual men)." The carnal group had been born again, but they remained infants in the Lord.

Who is the only person deceived by a Christian who claims sinless perfection? \_\_\_\_\_

(himself)

After you have read the text about three kinds of persons and 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:5, write your definitions of—

1. The natural man \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. The spiritual man \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. The carnal Christian \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your definitions with those in the text.)

Who is the carnal Christian? Is he the wayward church member who never comes to church, who ridicules the church, who never assumes his part in carrying on the responsibilities of the church? To the surprise of many, Paul indicates that the carnal Christian is active in church. His life, however, is under the control of himself, his natural or ordinary impulses. His carnality is revealed by his unchristian attitudes of envy and jealousy. Instead of rejoicing with those who experience good fortune, he is envious of those who are blessed of God. He is the church member who is jealous of his fellow-man because of the selection of the latter by the church to fill a responsible office. He may be even a pastor who is jealous of other pastors of larger churches or of those who report greater success in evangelism. The carnal Christian takes sides in issues which divide the church. He shows favouritism towards the preaching of certain men and refuses to participate in worship when his favorite preacher does not fill the pulpit. The impression is given that his loyalty is to a man rather than to Christ. The carnal man permits his own desires to control him instead of being controlled by the leadership of the Holy Spirit. His life is self-controlled instead of Christ-controlled.

**The life controlled by personal desires (Gal. 5:17, 19-21)**

Paul describes two principles striving within man to control his life: the flesh (self-controlled life based on personal desires) and the Spirit (Christ-controlled life based on the will of God). The description includes both attitudes (sins of the spirit) and actions. The sinful attitudes of pride and selfishness underlie other wrong attitudes and direct one's life to wrong actions. The self-controlled life is characterized by:

1. Sins of the spirit:

*anger*—a touchy, sensitive spirit, a feeling of ill-will which is inclined to resent contradiction and likely to retaliate;

*deceit*—a dishonest, evading or truth-twisting inclination to hide one's own faults by shifting the blame to others and by pretending humility and piety;

*divisiveness*—the nature to play one person against another or to manoeuvre others for the benefit of self;

*impulsiveness*—the tendency to rush ahead to accomplish things in one's own strength with the desire to receive credit for them, an inclination to worry, revealing lack of confidence in God to bring about His will, and excessive anxiety whether problems will be solved correctly;

*jealousy*—an envy of attention given to others, an inward, unpleasant sensation created by the success of others, a critical spirit towards the faults or failures of those more talented than self;

*pride*—an exalted feeling over success or position, an impulsiveness to tell others of one's own accomplishments, an evaluation of self as more capable than others;

*self-control*—an unteachable, argumentative, critical, unyielding and stubborn attitude which is determined to follow one's own thoughts and desires;

*self-reliance*—a dependence on one's own performance and ability and thinking success is the result of one's abilities and wisdom;

The two principles or powers which strive within man to control him are the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_

(flesh, Spirit)

After reading Galatians 5:17-21 and the text concerning the life controlled by self, place the sins listed in the category to which they pertain.

thievery, pride, deceit, idolatry, self-seeking, immorality, jealousy, anger, witchcraft, gluttony, self-reliance.

Sins of the Spirit: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sins involving the body: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sins of sacrilege: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your list with the text.)

*self-seeking*—a love of the praise of others, a fretful and peevish attitude when one is unnoticed, an unawareness of the needs of others, an exaggerated interest in money, an unconcern for the lost, and a desire to be coaxed and humoured.

2. Sins involving the body:

*drunkenness and gluttony*—a search for pleasure in excessive eating and consumption of alcoholic beverages;

*immorality*—involvement in adultery, fornication, and homosexuality;

*thievery*—taking possessions which belong to others, receiving wages which one has not honestly earned, and charging exorbitant prices for goods or services.

3. Sins of sacrilege:

*idolatry*—making work, pleasure, or success the ultimate concern of life or attributing to self, another person, or an idol credit for that which God has done;

*witchcraft*—the reliance on superstitions or a dependence on evil powers to afflict enemies.

**Man's inability to conquer the carnal nature (Rom. 7:14-25)**

Few people are proud of their sinful attitudes and actions. Much time and energy are expended in hiding their real natures and sinful actions. Genuineness of character is usually submerged under attempts to project an acceptable and impressive public image. Some lewd persons boast of their licentious actions and impious attitudes as means of gaining attention, but even they, in more serious moments, desire a wholesome life.

Paul expressed the dilemma of every sincere person in the admission that God's law or standard of righteousness is good and right, but the problem lies within man who cannot, because of his sinful nature, keep the law of God even though he knows he should. Paul recognized that the selfish nature in man corrupts man's motives and actions to the extent that he confessed he was "rotten through and through so far as my old sinful nature is concerned" (v. 18, LNT). Paul wanted to do right and live his life in service for others, but his selfish nature sought his own interests at the expense of others. He dreaded being labelled a self-centred person, but he recognized the accuracy of the label.

How many Christians fail in loyalty to Christ because of their selfish desires! The life that is controlled by immediate desires brings heartache and tragedy. A husband and wife cannot find harmony when each is determined to have his or her own way. Tension and quarrels arise between church members as a result of self-interest. Immoral relations result from yielding to the desires of the moment without any thought or concern for the future consequences to the parties involved, or to any children whose lives may be affected by such action. To follow one's own desires destroys relationships and brings misery to the lives of people.

A person has the alternative of admitting his failure or of justifying his actions. Man's pride works against his admission of failure. He often justifies his actions, either by boasting of his goodness and hiding his wrong deeds while suppressing his true attitudes, or he removes the divine demands of righteousness by denying the existence of God. The former process is theologically defined as being blinded by sin and the latter as atheism. To deny the existence of God enables man to substitute his own human standard of conduct. This approach was followed by the psychiatrist Freud. It may reduce one's anxieties, caused by guilt,

Man fails to keep God's commandments because of his \_\_\_\_\_.

(sinful nature)

Pride often causes a person to justify his sinful attitudes and actions instead of \_\_\_\_\_.

(admitting his failure)

for having failed to live righteously, but it does not solve man's problems by removing the wrong from his life. Substitute approaches remain ineffective.

The Apostle Paul faced the humiliating experience of admitting that he was a failure. He cried out in desperation, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (v. 24). Only after Paul admitted his failure could he find an answer which would bring peace: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 25).

### Cleansing through Confession and Forgiveness

Dr. Bill Bright of Campus Crusade has pointed out that the majority of Christians identify themselves as carnal. They are not immoral or dishonest. They do not intentionally disappoint Christ and walk in spiritual defeat. They are aware of their sin, and they desire their lives to be different. Without spiritual power, victory, and joy, loyalty to Christ requires unsatisfying effort and burdensome responsibility. Their carnal natures prevent their growth as Christians. They are unable to retain a pure and healthy relationship to Christ because of sins.

#### The provision of cleansing (1 John 1:7)

Wholesome fellowship with Christ is maintained on the basis of what Christ has done and not on what man has accomplished. John tells us that man, in order to live in fellowship, must walk in the light. To walk in the light means to live in righteousness day by day, but this achievement is possible only through the blood of Jesus Christ. John states that "the blood of His Son keeps on cleansing us from all sins" (Greek continuous present tense).

Man's unhappiness and defeat in life are the result of separation from life with His Creator because of sin. The mission of Christ was to reconcile sinful man to the holy God. To reveal man's error of deciding to live in sin and to make provision for his emancipation from Satan, Jesus died on the cross (shed His blood). The death of Christ substitutes as the payment of penalty for man's sins; therefore, man becomes free from sin through Christ's death. The sins from which man is freed are not limited to those previous to his faith in Christ, but the shedding of the blood of the Son of God is sufficient to cover man's sins for his total lifetime.

#### The continuing need of cleansing (Rom. 6:1-7)

Upon hearing about God's grace to the sinner, the unregenerated man is inclined to conclude that the person in Christ is free to multiply his sins. He does not realize that the Christian comes to Christ by dying to sin. Repentance is the experience of turning from sin to Christ, from the self-controlled life to the Christ-controlled life. One who experiences repentance no longer desires to continue in sin; however, the subsequent verses reveal that the sin principle, or old sinful nature, continues within man, causing a great hindrance to his spiritual life. Although man has turned from the self-controlled, sinful nature to a Christ-controlled life, the old self is still present, attempting to regain control of his life.

Paul shows that man's defeat comes when he depends on himself to conquer the old man of sin. The previous discussion of Romans 7 pointed out that victory comes not through man's ability to conquer sin but through Christ's accomplishment.

#### The requirement of confession (1 John 1:8-9)

John informs us that for man to deny his sins leads to denial of the truth and to deeper involvement in sin. The Greek word for confession means "to agree publicly that our sins are wrong."

Do most Christians intentionally disappoint Christ and walk in spiritual defeat? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, what is their problem? \_\_\_\_\_

(No, their relationship to Christ is not pure and wholesome because of sins.)

John's phrase "to walk in the light" means to \_\_\_\_\_

According to 1 John 1:7 continuous help to live in righteousness daily is provided by \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Paul shows that man's dependence on himself to conquer his sinful nature results in \_\_\_\_\_

(defeat)

God has judged them to be wrong and has passed the penalty of death upon them. To deny that our sinful actions are wrong is to accuse God of being a liar and to bring ourselves under the penalty of death. To agree with God that our sins are wrong and worthy of death brings forgiveness (their removal from our record), because God in Christ has already paid the penalty of our sins. John wrote to his "little children" to assure them that all hope was not lost though they had sinned after receiving Christ as Saviour. He emphasized that they "must keep on confessing their sins" as their Saviour was faithful and righteous to keep on cleansing them by His blood.

#### The assurance of forgiveness (1 John 2:1-2)

John assured his "little children" that because of the role of Christ at the right hand of the Father their sins need not be their defeat. Christ is the Christian's representative (lawyer) before the Father to plead in his defence. Not only does Christ take the side of the Christian, but He has paid the penalty (the propitiation) for the sins committed by the Christian. The writer of Hebrews was convinced that Christ is able to save to the uttermost because of his continuing intercession for sinful man at the right hand of the Father (Heb. 7:25).

#### Conclusion

The majority of those who have received Christ are not living the victorious and cleansed life because they continue to depend on themselves or their churches to give them victory over sin. The Scripture promises that provision for cleansing man of sin has already been made. The Christian needs only to confess (agree with God that his sins are wrong) and to believe God's promise that he is forgiven when he confesses (1 John 1:9). Provision has already been made for forgiveness. Man needs only to accept that forgiveness through faith.

Confession needs to be specific rather than general. In the presence of the Holy Spirit, man should acknowledge his specific sins one by one. A successful technique used by Christians for many generations has been to write down specific sins during a period of meditation, acknowledge or agree with God that they are wrong, and accept Christ's forgiveness for them as He promised. The list may then be destroyed as a symbol of Christ's forgiveness. The Christian no longer has to carry the guilt of those sins which have been confessed. The joy of Christianity is not in the heart which is burdened with the guilt of sin, but joy resides in the heart of him who knows he is cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. . . . Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:6, 8; RSV). Man cannot experience the full joy of the Christian life nor appropriate God's power until he is cleansed.

Cleansing of sin comes when—

the Christian \_\_\_\_\_ with God that his sins are wrong and \_\_\_\_\_ God's promise that he is forgiven when he confesses.

(agrees, believes)

Match words and meanings.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Repentance
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Confession

1. To agree publicly that one's sins are wrong.
2. Turning from sin to Christ.

(a-2; b-1)

## Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide, answer the following questions.

1. What is sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Distinguish between sin and sins. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How does Satan tempt man? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why is unbelief or rejection of God man's greatest sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How does sin bring pleasure while robbing of joy? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Name three results of David's adultery. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Why were the Christians to whom John wrote not enjoying life? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. To what do 1 John 1:8 and 10 refer? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Why are defeated Christians ineffective witnesses? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. What is the difference between a spiritual and a carnal Christian? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. What two principles or powers strive within man to control him? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. What three categories of sins did Paul name in Galatians 5:17-21? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Why do Christians fail to keep God's commandments? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. Why is it difficult for a person to admit his sin and failure? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
15. What did Paul and John find to be the solution to the carnal and sinful nature?  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
16. Define repentance and confession. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
17. How is the Christian cleansed of sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Suggested supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3).** Do one of the following reading assignments, make a summary or brief outline of what you read, and be prepared to share the significant points with the seminar.

- Bright, *Revolution Now*, pp. 36-50, 98-114  
 Taylor, *The Key to Triumphant Living*, pp. 18-37  
 Huegel, *Forever Triumphant*, pp. 30-47  
 Culpepper, *The Shantung Revival*, pp. 18-27  
 Paxson, *Life on the Highest Plane*, vol. 2, pp. 185-216  
 vol. 3, pp. 22-29

### Seminar Discussion

1. What is the difference between sin and sins?
2. How is temptation related to man's natural endowments? Are the instincts good or bad?
3. Why are so many Christians inactive? Outline a practical approach pastors might follow in ministering to this need.
4. How can sin bring pleasure yet rob a person of joy?
5. Why do Christians sin?
6. Why can man not conquer the carnal nature?
7. What should Christians do about their sins?
8. In your view of man's nature, is man capable of solving world problems and improving society? Explain.
9. "Christian belief is not relevant to contemporary world problems. The problems are too great and complex for the Church to do anything about." These were the statements of a young man, a member of a church, in a discussion on the contribution the Church should make in solving world problems. Evaluate his statements. If you disagree with him, outline what the Church must do, and how it is to go about it.