

HAMARTIOLOGY (33)

QUESTION #18 – Where does sin begin in the life of the believer?

There can be little doubt, from a variety of Biblical passages, that sin in the life of the believer begins in the mind.

- 1) **Proverbs 23:7** - As one thinks, so he ultimately is.
- 2) **Colossians 1:21** - Evil actions stem from hostile minds.
- 3) **Romans 12:2** - Character transformation is accomplished by the focus of the mind.
- 4) **II Corinthians 10:5** - Every thought is critical to one's spiritual life and development.

There is no doubt that sin first begins in the mind, long before it is acted out. In fact, it is possible to sin in one's mind before the sin is actually acted out (**i.e. Matthew 5:28**).

We may categorically declare that a believer who gets into sinful things is not feeding his or her mind on the things of God. In fact, what comes out in actions and speech is a reflection of what went into the mind and heart (**Mark 7:20-23**).

God is very much interested in the mind and heart. In fact, He searches the minds and hearts, for it is in the mind and heart where real spirituality is discovered (**Romans 8:27**).

It stands to reason that when dealing with sin matters, we must take precautions concerning our minds. Sin and temptation will always begin with an attack against one's mind. Here are some Biblical hints and helps to control the mind:

- 1) Forsake unrighteous thoughts. **Isaiah 55:7**
- 2) Focus on proper thoughts. **Philippians 4:8**
- 3) Feed on God's Word. **Psalms 119:11; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 6:17**
- 4) Flee from lustful thoughts. **II Timothy 2:22; I Peter 2:11**
- 5) Fellowship with faithful believers. **I Corinthians 15:33**
- 6) Faithfully attend church services. **Hebrews 4:12; 10:25**

Following these steps can and will help one develop a strong and sound mind. One who puts himself under this type of process will discover that sin will never dominate his life.

QUESTION #19 – What should a believer do when he does sin?

The first and foremost thing a **believer** must do when he sins is to confess it (**I John 1:9**). Confession is God's provision for His people to be able to maintain harmony and fellowship with Him even in the aftermath of sin. The key to this is confession, which is going to God and saying the same thing about the sin as God says. When a believer refuses to confess his sin, he is not in fellowship with God and not walking in light (**I John 1:7**).

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Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer has really captured the essence of this matter in his following statement:

“The responsibility resting upon the unregenerate man who would avail himself of the forgiveness of all trespasses and be saved is expressed in the one all-inclusive word - believe, while the responsibility resting upon the regenerate man who would be forgiven and restored to right relations with God is expressed in the one word - confess. These two words are each specifically adapted to the situation, relationships, and circumstances with which they are associated. Untold confusion follows when unregenerate men are told to confess as a condition for forgiveness and salvation, which confusion is equaled when a regenerate man is told to believe as a condition of securing a renewal of right relations to God. Hymnology is sometimes misleading at this point. By such hymns, words are put into the lips of the unsaved which encourage them to conceive of themselves as wanderers who are returning to God. As a matter of fact, the unregenerate man has never before been in any favorable relation to God. When, as part of his salvation, he is forgiven, it is unto a hitherto unexperienced union with God which abides forever; but when the Christian is forgiven, it is unto the restoration of communion with God which may be broken again all too soon. The saints of all the ages have returned to the blessings of their covenant relation to God by the confession of their sin. This, however, is far removed from those terms upon which they entered the covenant at the beginning. The loss of the blessing within the covenant is different, indeed, from the loss of the covenant relation itself. In the case of a believer related to God by the New Covenant made in His blood, restoration to communion, as always, is by confession of sin to God. We read I John 1:9, ‘If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ Similarly in I Corinthians 11:31-32 it is stated that, ‘If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.’ Since confession and self-judgment refer to the same action on the part of the believer, these passages emphasize the same important truth. Confession and self-judgment are the outward expression of heart-repentance; and repentance, which is a change of mind or purpose, brings the sin-burdened Christian back into agreement with God. While practicing sin, he was opposed to the will and character of God; by repentance, expressed to God in the confession of sin and self-judgment, he returns to agreement with God. ‘Two cannot walk together, except they be agreed,’ nor can the Christian have fellowship with God who is Light and at the same time be walking in darkness (I John 1:6). To walk in the light is not to become the light, which would mean attainment to infinite holiness. God alone is Light. Nor does walking in the light mean that one never does wrong. It is rather that when the searchlight, which God is, penetrates the heart and life and discloses that which is contrary to His will, the wrong thus disclosed is by a true heart repentance at once confessed and judged before God. Assurance is given to the believer that when thus adjusted to the light (which is ‘walking in the light’), the sin is forgiven and its pollution cleansed by the blood of Christ” (Vol. 2, pp. 336-337).

When the believer sins, he should immediately confess the sin to God.

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QUESTION #20 – Is restitution necessary if there has been confession?

Once confession is made to God, is it necessary to make restitution with someone else? Does God expect His people to make things right with those they have wronged even if they have confessed the sin to Him?

Restitution means to give back to one wronged the equivalent of what was wronged, lost, or damaged. It is an attempt to try and put things back in their original state or condition prior to the offense. Obviously this can't ever be perfectly or precisely accomplished because the original state did not include the specific wrong.

The concept of restitution comes from the O.T. There are two different Hebrew words used to develop the concept:

- 1) Temurah which means to return, to recompense, to reward, and to compensate (**Job 15:31; 20:18**).
- 2) Shalam which means to compensate or pay so the relationship is restored, friendly and peaceful (**Exodus 21:33-34**).

Combined, these two words give us a good perspective of what restitution is making - some type of compensation in order to restore the relationship to peaceful and friendly terms. The one who has done wrong, attempts to make things right with the person or persons wronged so that the offended party and the offending person may live in peaceful harmony.

Restitution is clearly an Old Testament form of legal punishment. It stems from the O.T. law of retaliation which exacted an “eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise” (**Exodus 21:24-25**). Levitical law stated: “And if a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man so it shall be inflicted on him. Thus the one who kills an animal shall make it good, but the one who kills a man shall be put to death. There shall be one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the LORD your God” (**Leviticus 24:19-22**).

When we examine the O.T., we discover that specific types of restitution were to be made relating to a variety of situations and wrongs - **Exodus 21:18-36; Deuteronomy 19:15-21; Exodus 22:1-17; Numbers 5:6-8; II Samuel 12:1-16**. From these passages we may conclude that restitution was consistent with the character and commands of God; and was, at times, to be judicially enforced by the judges, who were God's appointed leaders given the responsibility of determining the precise application in every given situation.

When we examine the N.T., we do have hints that restitution is still a Grace Age principle (**Matthew 5:23-25**). We also have the example of the prodigal (**Luke 15:18-19**). When Zaccheus had his encounter with Jesus Christ and was saved (**Luke 19:9**), Zaccheus was moved to make restitution for wrongs he had done (**Luke 19:8**).