

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

5 January 2014

Topics

A.M. Bible Class: The Work of the Holy Spirit (John 16:5ff)

A.M. Lesson: Forgetting what is Behind (Philippians 3:12-4:1)

P.M. Lesson: God Saves Those Who Turn Away from Sin (Isaiah 59)

Wednesday: Micaiah Prophecies Against Ahab (1 Kings 22)

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

Why Sin Is A Problem?

Neil Short

The usual answer to the question of why sin is a problem is to turn to Isaiah 59:1-2 and read:

See, the Lord's hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. Rather, your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear (NRSV).

The context of the above passage is a condition of social injustice and economic hardship. The people were praying for better times but God was not listening because they were unrepentant of their sins. The prophet even lists the real problem sins:

violence, lying, unjust courtroom activity and civil laws that are impossible for regular people to follow (Isaiah 59:3-8). The passage still applies generally to the problem of sin in the Christian age; but the connection may not be so obvious if we are aware of the context. I am thus motivated to examine the problem of sin in a New Testament context.

Spiritual death is the dreadful consequence of sin. Romans 6:23 says

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The death spoken of by Paul is not physical death but spiritual death. Common sense makes that point because some very righteous people die at very young ages while some vile sinners live to ripe old ages. Paul is talking about a kind of death that is the opposite of resurrection (that follows physical death, Romans 6:5). James says the result of sin is death:

... when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:15)

And Revelation 21:8 makes a clear connection that the death we most want to avoid is the one that results from sin:

But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, the murderers, the fornicators, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars, their place will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.

Sin will keep us out of heaven. The reason to obey the gospel is - man is in sin. He has a need! Obedience, while not meritorious of forgiveness of sin, is a condition.

1 Peter 1:22. Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart.

Hebrews 5:8-9 (emphasis mine). Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; 9 and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who *obey* him.

To complete this topic, I should mention that obedience begins with a few very simple to understand commandments.

The first act of obedience is belief. That is, to have *faith*. Faith is more than verbalizing the words, "I believe in Jesus." It is belief that results in action. I give you The Blind Beggar in Luke 18:35-43. He heard that Jesus was passing by and he called to Jesus for mercy. He called so vigorously that the people who were with Jesus became annoyed. Jesus healed the man, saying, "Your faith has saved you" (Luke 18:42). How did the blind man's faith save him? Did he do any great and difficult task? No. Did he do *anything*? Yes. He called, vigorously, to Jesus. Did his calling to Jesus merit his salvation? No. However, it was a condition for his salvation. If the man had believed in Jesus' ability to save him and yet he never called out, he would have remained blind. See? Faith that saves is faith that acts.

The Roman jailer asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I *do* to be saved?" They answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (Acts 16:28-31).

John 3:36 says, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever *disobeys* the Son will not see life, but must endure God's wrath."

If you believe Jesus can save you from the Second Death (Revelation 21:8) and you turn to him for that salvation and you are willing to obey in whatever way necessary to obtain that salvation, that's saving faith.

Another act of obedience is *repentance*. That means to turn away from one thing and towards something else. New Testament repentance means to turn away from a life of sin and towards a life of righteousness (Romans 6:12-13). Repentance is a condition of the Lord's salvation (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31). Repentance is a behavior that has a beginning but is also ongoing. That's the message of Romans 10:9-10.

[I]f you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

Thus, a *confession* of Christ's lordship is often requested of a person who wants to be baptized. We realize that confession is described here as a lifestyle that can be observed. It is a lifestyle that must begin at baptism.

Baptism is a condition of salvation. At the end of Peter's sermon in Acts 2, the people were "cut to the heart." They asked the apostles, "What are we to *do*, my brothers" (Acts 2:37, NABre).

Peter [said] to them, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38, NABre).

Many evangelicals are troubled with this verse because it lists two actions (repentance and baptism) that really come across as "works." They are works. They don't merit forgiveness of sins; but they are conditions. The Bible does not teach that salvation is unconditional. It is free (Romans 6:23), through faith (Galatians 2:16) and conditional (Acts 2:38).

While baptism is symbolic of repentance (Romans 6), it is also the point at which a person's sins are washed away for the first time (Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; and more). Whether or not it makes any sense that a baptism in water could have any role in forgiveness of sins. It is clearly required (as a condition) by the apostles. Am I going to argue or obey?

News

Esther, Nysha and Sara Atchley will be in Texas January 8-14.

Inez Clendenen requests prayers for her relatives Ralph and Betty Miller of Homer, Alaska.

Prayer List:

Healing: Ben Atchley's family, Jerry Robinson's mother Norma. Mike and Sandy Cavasos, Faye Atchley, Nicolas and Annie Self, Jonda Gardner, Dave Morse, Richard Tuey.

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