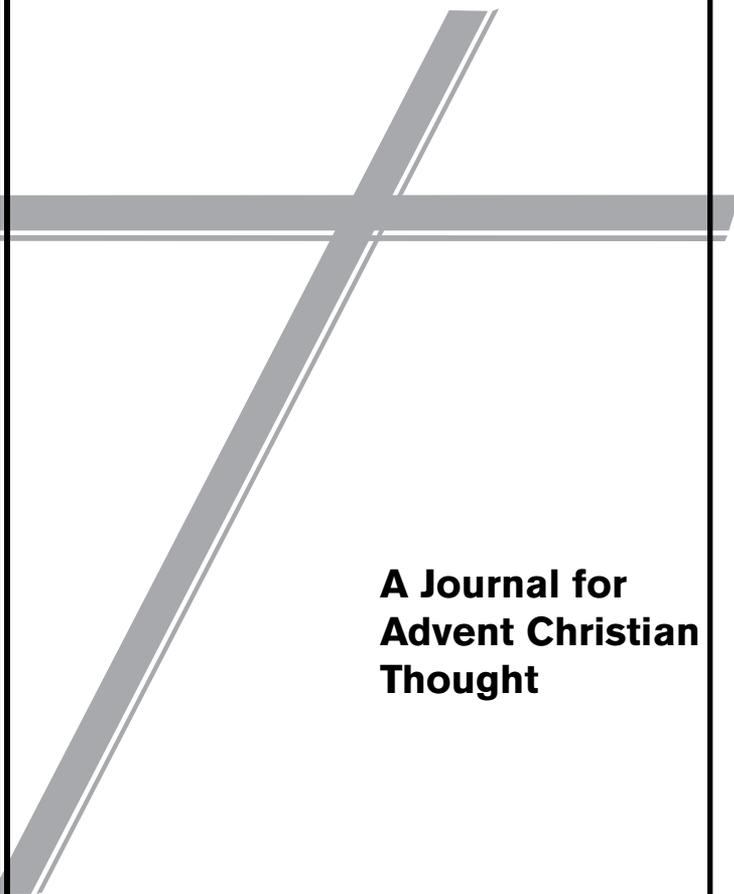


# HENCEFORTH ..♦♦



**A Journal for  
Advent Christian  
Thought**

Vol. XLI, No. 2  
Fall 2015

**HENCEFORTH ...**

**JOURNAL FOR ADVENT CHRISTIAN THOUGHT**

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## WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING?

By Miss Dawn Rutan

As I was reading through the Sermon on the Mount this week, I noted Matthew 6:33 in particular: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (ESV). While we often hear sermons about seeking the kingdom first, I don’t recall ever hearing anyone explain what it means to seek his righteousness.

The first Scripture that came to mind when I asked myself that question was Philippians 3:8b–9: “in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”

It’s probably natural that when we hear an instruction to “pursue righteousness,” our first thought is how to avoid sin and be a better person. I can attest to the fact that that can only take us so far. We might clean up a few obvious sins, but that doesn’t really change who we are. The apostle Paul points out that the righteousness that comes from obedience to the law doesn’t really save us. The righteousness that we need is Christ’s perfect righteousness, which is only received by faith. Paul reinforces Jesus’ statement that it is God’s righteousness we are to be seeking, not our own self-righteousness.

Looking at the context of both the Sermon on the Mount and Philippians 3, there are other notable parallels between Jesus’ words and Paul’s words. Jesus says:

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your

heart will be also. ... Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all” (Matthew 6:19–21, 31–32).

Paul then elaborates:

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith — that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share in his sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:8–11).

It seems that Paul took Jesus’ teachings quite literally. He not only gave up his possessions and status, but he counted them as rubbish. He didn’t spend time worrying about where his next meal was coming from (and indeed went hungry at times), but he willingly walked into dangerous situations in his pursuit of the kingdom. He suffered for Christ and died knowing that it was worth every minute of pain (see 1 Corinthians 11:24–28 and Philippians 1:21).

It’s tempting to take Matthew 6 out of context and say, “Okay, I’m going to try really hard not to be anxious but to seek God first in my life.” But that’s a pretty anemic response to the greater context of Scripture. Just a few verses later in Matthew 7 Jesus warns that many so-called Christians will be told in the end, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness” (7:23). Then in Matthew 10 Jesus says that persecution will come

and “whoever does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me” (10:38). Paul’s life is a pretty good example of the commitment that’s required. (The A.D. television series has at the very least been a good reminder of what opposition really looks like.) Christianity in 21st century America may seem far removed from the experience of the early church, but I think we’re beginning to get a sense of the danger that could be in store for us when governments are actively promoting non-Christian values, when terrorists seek out Christian targets, and nominal Christians are leaving the church in droves. Those who remain faithful to the end will learn what it means to “seek first His kingdom” and “share in His sufferings.” Some day in the not-so-distant future, it won’t be about choosing not to worry about the fashion trends or saving for retirement, but about choosing to follow Jesus against every logical argument for taking the easy way out. It’s happened before and it will happen again.

*“Choose this day whom you will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).*

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## **CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE UNDER ATTACK**

A White Paper Presented at Georgia AC Conference  
Holton Chapel Advent Christian Church  
July 24 – 26, 2015

By Rev. Dr. Bob Hughes

As Jesus promised, opposition and even persecution would plague his followers until his return, and so much the more as

that day approaches. These oppositions and persecutions would come from many sources, but they would be contrived of Satan and his followers, and would intensify even to the killing of believers. The current attack on marriage as being between one man and one woman is a case in point. Though no persons have been killed defending the Christian idea of marriage to date, character assassination and the smearing of disciples who hold to this concept have, and are, happening daily in the culture at-large. There is currently being produced a revision of the King James Version of the Bible that changes passages condemning homosexual/lesbian activity. This revision is being called by some gay groups as the “Queen James Version.” What is the Church to say or do about these things, and in this particular instance, about the most widely held view of marriage among Christians that is under attack?

Holy matrimony was the first covenant between God and human-kind in the Garden of Eden when God gave Adam and Eve to each other and the two, male and female, were to become “one flesh.” In the New Testament, marriage is further revealed as a type, a foreshadowing, of the relationship between God and his Church, which is called the “Bride of Christ.”

Therefore, marriage is considered a sacred thing and something not to be taken lightly. Jesus even performed his first recorded public miracle by turning water into wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. He wanted the wedding feast of this couple to lack nothing and have the high importance and recognition of completeness it deserved according to the custom of those days.

To take something instituted by God, and blessed by Christ, and change it into something desired and coveted by blatant humanism is pure profanity. The classic definition of profanity applies when anything that should be respected as high and holy is debased and brought low. For instance, when someone says the word “God” and adds the word “damn” right after it, that is profanity, but NOT because of the word “damn.” The profanity is in the breaking of the Third Commandment concerning the use of God’s name in vain. The name of God is to be used in holy exercises like prayer and praise, or to talk about his goodness when

witnessing to others. That name should never be loosely tossed about in such exclamations as, “My God, look at that!” Or, in response to some event, when someone might say, “Jesus Christ, I thought he would never stop talking.” These are classic examples of everyday, and perhaps almost universal, profanity.

If marriage between a man and a woman is a God-given covenant, it should be treated as such, certainly among Christians. If such a marriage is to be highly regarded and respected, then anything that attempts to debase it or lower its standing, is a profane vision of it. What can Christians do in the current political climate to protect the sanctity of the marriage ceremony as between one man and one woman? What can our churches do to be ready in the event this issue comes to home territory within the Advent Christian community? Christians must be prepared to face such issues because opposition forces do not rest. Three things listed below may help in opening serious consideration of this matter, though these three are certainly not intended as an exhaustive or perfect list. Legal opinion should also be sought for proper wording, etc., but this is a starting place. These brief ideas have been gleaned from several sources including Christian writers, attorneys, pastors, and other politically astute persons who see the battle coming.

First, marriage must be seen as the sacred, religious act that it truly is. It is a form of Christian worship and is considered an absolute sacrament by many Christian bodies. God’s blessing is prayed for at each Christian wedding. The aforementioned marriage Jesus attended in Cana is often cited as a case of divine approval. Much of the homily delivered during the ceremony is an invitation for this particular couple to go forth and create a Christian home for the nurturing of themselves and their offspring, should they have any. A Christian marriage is a religious ceremony and at least up until now, religious ceremonies are not regulated, as freedom of religious expression still exists under the Constitution. It should be made clear that Christian marriage is a religious worship service. There is a great deal of difference between a Christian wedding conducted by a pastor and

the “civil ceremony” performed by a Justice of the Peace, a ship’s captain at sea or a Clerk of Court. Plain and simple, a Christian marriage occasion is a true worship service invoking God’s blessings through prayer and praise.

Second, a clear policy concerning the biblical definition of marriage can be attached to a church covenant. Reference to Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 (as under Old Testament law) and to Romans 1:26–27 (as under New Testament grace) and other such biblical instances can be cited. This policy must explicitly state that this particular Christian church, as a matter of religious principle, recognizes “one man-one woman marriage” only, and practices no other form. The church of Jesus Christ cannot be in the business of condoning or supporting non-biblical behavior. Printed copies of the covenant containing this clear policy should be available for distribution.

Third, if church property is sometimes used by outside groups that have no connection with the church as members, and thus are not subscribers to the church covenant mentioned above, a very definitive and separate policy on any remuneration for, or donated use of, church property by or to outside persons or groups must be in print and available for distribution to those asking for property use. Again, it should be stressed that the purpose of all activities must be in conformity with the church covenant and the religious purposes as therein defined. If a fee is charged in connection with property use, it must not be deemed income, but rather as property maintenance funds. This use makes it clear that the church is not a commercial enterprise for hire, but a religious entity whose purpose is to provide and maintain adequate physical facilities in which spiritual growth and development are encouraged and can happen.

Other safeguards (legal, moral and otherwise) may be available, but one thing is certain, just as Jesus promised, there will be no let-up in satanic efforts. Ms. Bertha Cassidy, a long-time Advent Christian missionary, was once complimented on her ability to find something nice to say about everyone she met, no matter how trying or difficult a given person might be. One

young pastoral student said to her one day, “Ms. Cassidy, I believe you could even find something good to say about the devil himself.” She thought just a moment and said, “Well, yes, I can. He is ALWAYS on the job!” Since her statement of fact has not, and will not change, the issue of same-sex “unions” is not going away. Christians need to be prepared to face that fact, not shrink from it. Through it all, it must be remembered that Christians are to love, not hate, even those who violently disagree with biblical principles. Love is the greatest of all unifiers for God is love, as the Bible clearly teaches. Let love, even toward those who oppose us, be a constant in our efforts to defend the traditional, time-honored definition of marriage based on biblical principles.

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## **NONSENSE ON STILTS: NON-DISCRIMINATION RIGHTS**

By Dr. Matt Flannigan

When the Human Rights Act was passed in 1993 I supported the writing of non-discrimination rights into law. At that time, I, like many New Zealanders, believed that people had a right to not be discriminated against and that the government should protect that right. Since then, reflecting on the issue has led me to change my mind. I am now inclined to think that non-discrimination rights do not exist — they are “nonsense on stilts.” Laws that purport to recognize and protect them are recognizing and protecting something that does not exist.

My position now is that discrimination is not wrong, it is morally neutral. It is justified and reasonable to discriminate on certain grounds in certain contexts, and it is unjustified to do so

in other contexts. When it is unjustified, what makes it so are factors that have nothing to do with discrimination; these factors would be problematic if applied equally.

Before elaborating my reasons for being skeptical about such rights, let us be clear as to what denying non-discrimination rights does not mean. It does not mean that it is permissible for people to refuse to serve ethnic minorities because one holds to false stereotypes and has unwarranted hatred toward those minorities. Nor does it mean I support depriving women or African Americans of the vote. Likewise, I do not support racist lynchings or gay bashings.

A sceptic about anti-discrimination rights can oppose all these things and still not be committed to supporting the existence of anti-discrimination rights. All that is entailed by my skepticism is that these things are not wrong because they violate a right to not discriminate, and it's clear to me that they are wrong for other reasons.

Discriminating against minorities in the manner suggested above is wrong because we have duties to not stereotype and treat people with contempt. If we treated everyone equally in this way it would still be wrong. Similarly, racist lynchings are wrong because they involve kidnapping, assault and homicide. If people were equal-opportunity lynchers who indiscriminately lynched people of all races, sexes, lifestyles and degrees of ability, it would still be wrong for them to do so. Depriving people of the vote is wrong because people have a right to vote; the right is not attached to sex or race, and so on. The point is that the wrongness of these sorts of practices can be adequately explained, and I think is more plausibly explained without recourse to an alleged right to not be discriminated against. An appeal to "discrimination" misdiagnoses the moral problems with the action complained of.

## **Why Discrimination is Not Wrong**

It is not wrong to discriminate. To discriminate against one person in favor of another is to treat the former less favorably

than the latter. The problem is that, so defined, discrimination is clearly not wrong. In fact, discrimination is essential to any moral thinking at all. To make a moral judgement condemning a particular action involves adopting a less favorable stance toward those who perform that action. We condemn particular actions, and if a person doing those actions lacks an adequate excuse we blame and censure that person for what he or she did. We expect the person to feel guilty and to make appropriate apology and reparations. On the other hand, to judge an action is right is to treat the person who performs the action favorably. We do not censure or blame or condemn the person who does the favorable action; we condone that person's actions and offer praise. Ian Hinkfuss notes, "The whole idea is to provide a rationale for discrimination in favour of certain sorts of acts, people and things are against other sorts of acts, people and things." This is particularly obvious when we are dealing with issues of justice. In administering justice we discriminate against the guilty in favor of the innocent. To treat the innocent the same as the guilty or the guilty the same as the innocent would *prima facie* be to engage in injustice. Once these points are realized, the idea that it is wrong to discriminate or that justice requires we not discriminate prove to be incoherent.

Making judgements about what is just and right involves discrimination, qualifying the duty to not discriminate. So, contrary to popular slogans, discrimination cannot be wrong, at least not without significant qualification. A person may object that I am attacking a straw man here as no one says discrimination *per se* is wrong or unjust; what is alleged is that it is wrong to discriminate on certain grounds. New Zealand Law, for example, singles out discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, age, disability, marital status, ethical belief, employment status, family status, color, ethnic origin and religion as being unlawful. Discrimination is permitted on all other grounds.

The first thing to note about this is that by limiting the wrongness of discrimination to these grounds the proponent of discrimination rights seems to concede that a person can discrimi-

nate on any other ground. So a photographer, for example, can lawfully refuse to be a wedding photographer if the couple have a bad haircut or they are 6 feet tall, but is in breach of the law if the basis for the refusal is disagreement with same-sex marriage and a desire to not want to associate or assist with such ceremonies. Similarly, a shop keeper can refuse to serve a person because they dislike a person's eye color, but they cannot discriminate on the basis of the person's skin color. That seems arbitrary and ad hoc. Surely we need a basis for thinking these particular grounds violate a person's rights and the others do not.

A more pressing problem is that there are counter-examples suggesting that discrimination, even on these grounds, is not wrong. Consider the following two cases:

- A. The film-makers of "Once Were Warriors" are hiring someone to play the character Jake the Muss. Because Jake the Muss is, according to the script, a muscled Maori male, they offer the role to Temura Morrison. They do not offer the part to a talented slim-built Chinese actor.
- B. A film-maker refuses to hire a Chinese female actor for a role as a Chinese woman because he considers Chinese to be an inferior race and all Chinese to be criminals.

It is clear to me that the actions of the film-maker in B are reprehensible, while the actions of the film-maker in A are unobjectionable. Yet both cases involve discrimination on the grounds of race. This suggests that what is crucial is not the discrimination itself but the reasons for the discrimination.

Some argue that cases like that elaborated in A suggest the issue, at least with regards to employment discrimination, is relevance for the job. Employment discrimination on the basis of a characteristic is permissible when that characteristic is relevant to the job in question but is wrong when it is not. This seems false. People are often turned down for a job on the basis of how they spoke at the job interview, the way they dressed, the vibe

they created or their choice of shoes, yet in many situations none of these things could plausibly have anything to do with relevance to their ability to do the job. Conversely, a person can be turned down for criteria that is relevant to the job, and the discrimination could still be grossly unjust. Suppose, for example, a school committed to the promotion of white supremacist ideology sought to hire a professor to teach students this ideology. Clearly, being a white supremacist would be relevant to performing this job. Yet, surely, the discrimination here is not morally permissible. Employment relevance, therefore, does not seem to be the distinguishing factor.

The use of counter examples like this has led some to propose a value-loaded definition of discrimination. What is wrong is not discrimination per se but wrongful discrimination or unjust discrimination. When someone says discrimination is wrong they mean to refer to wrongful discrimination. This gets the right result in cases A and B above and in the white supremacist case as well. However, it does so by making the claim that “it is wrong to discriminate” into an empty tautology.

It is true, wrongful discrimination is wrong, but that is because it has the property of being wrongful. Anything that has the property of being wrongful is wrong whether it is discrimination or not. Nothing that lacks this property is wrong, even if it's discrimination. What this response shows is that, in reality, the issue is not discrimination, it is whether the practice is wrong on other grounds. It is the presence or absence of other grounds that determines the moral status of the action, not the fact the action is discriminatory.

I think this is the most sensible thing to say about A and B above. Consider the Chinese actor in B; she is treated appallingly not because she was discriminated against — in this respect he does not differ from Temura Morrision in A. The reason the Chinese actor is wronged is because the filmmaker judges her race to be inferior. The film-maker also judges her to be a criminal without any evidence. We have a duty to not treat human beings in a contemptible way and a duty to not accuse people of crimes

without evidence. This is the basis for prohibitions on slander and defamation. It is these factors that make the actions of the film company in B objectionable, not racial discrimination.

It is also clear to me that the wrongness of these actions does not depend on the victims being discriminated against. Suppose, for example, the film company treated every person who applied for a job this way, they treated everyone they came across as inferior and considered every candidate a criminal without any evidence regardless of their race. Would we say that what they did was now somehow better because they did not discriminate? Has the moral problem been fixed because they now treat everyone in this way? It seems not. In fact, arguably their actions are now worse because in B they treated some people objectionably, but now they treat more people this way.

Returning to the examples I mentioned in the opening of this post — racist lynchings and racial segregation. Suppose a society instead implemented random lynchings of anyone regardless of race, or banned everyone from using certain buses. Would we withdraw our condemnation now that discrimination had been eliminated? Or suppose the kind of assault used in gay bashings was perpetuated on both homosexuals and heterosexuals. Would that eliminate discrimination? Would it be more just? Suppose society banned everyone from voting. Would society now be more just because everyone is now being treated in a non-discriminatory manner? The answer to me seems obvious — no.

The issue, then, is the way we treat people, not the fact that we treat them differently. What matters is not discrimination, it is not that some person from a group A was treated less favorably than a member of another group B. The issue is whether we are fulfilling our other duties toward these people and respecting their other rights. This means we do not need to appeal to non-discrimination rights at all; we need merely to exhort people to follow the real duties they do have that do exist and to treat people with appropriate respect. Appeals to non-discrimination rights are, it seems to me, often incoherent, confused and vacu-

ous. They distort moral discourse by hiding the real moral issues in various practices behind a false veneer of equality.

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## HAMARTIOLOGY: “SIN” IS NOT A FOUR-LETTER WORD

by Rev. Jefferson Vann

The gospel cannot be proclaimed in truth without mentioning the reality of sin. Crucial to the good news of God’s answer to our problem, is the fact that we have a problem. The Bible has lots to say about sin, and says it without apology. We live in a generation that wants to deny sin. But that is not working. Being faithful to the truth of Scripture demands a church that faces the reality of sin, and can lead the lost to its cure.

### *Sin Defined*

As he tried to explain why believers should avoid making a practice of personal sin, the apostle John defined sin by relating it to another word that rhymes with it — in Greek. He said that “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning (*hamartian*) also practices lawlessness (*anomial*); sin (*hamartia*) is lawlessness (*anomia*) (1 John 3:4). John’s definition was probably very appropriate for his readers, who were likely appreciative of their new relationship with God through Christ, and did not want to jeopardize that relationship by transgressing God’s law.

Some people in the world today do not take the concept of divine law seriously. Defining sin as breaking the law may not

have the same effect in them. For example, Corfe responds to the definition of sin as a transgression against God's law:

Divine law is a fine sounding phrase — or at least it is threatening — but what does it mean? Sociologically it is nothing more than the imposition of a code of conduct which is so ancient that its origins are lost in the mists of time. And because there is no evidence of its man-made nature, it is asserted and conveniently reinforced as having been ordained by God. But today, with all our anthropological knowledge, we know that this is but one out of a multitude of moral codes imposed by man on himself.<sup>1</sup>

One does not need to agree with Corfe's view to see that simply defining sin as a transgression of God's law will not have the desired effect with him. Fortunately, the Bible defines sin in various ways. While some of the definitions may not seem relevant, others might hit the target dead center.

Sin is a complicated issue, because it manifests itself in so many ways. The terms that describe sin do not always refer to the same reality. There are actually three realities the Bible calls sin: 1) the inherited sinful inclination caused by the fall, 2) the judgment that we live with as a result of the fall, which has led to a corrupted world, mortality and eventual death, and 3) our personal acts of transgression, mistakes, failures and rebellion. Believers cannot afford to overlook any of these realities.

### ***Inherited Sinful Inclination***

The term most used in the Scriptures for this reality is *flesh*.<sup>2</sup> Usually the term simply refers to the material aspect of a human, or any creature, without any moral implications. Sometimes,

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Corfe, *Deism and Social Ethics* (Bury St. Edmunds: Arena books, 2007), 133.

<sup>2</sup> Hebrew *basar* (בשר), Aramaic *besar* (בשר), Greek *sarx* (σαρξ).

however, the term refers to a sinful tendency within humans, an inclination toward selfishness, rebellion and evil.

In Genesis 6:3, Moses records God saying, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh.” That this is not merely a reference to humanity’s material aspect is made clear two verses later. Moses records, “The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, and the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.”<sup>3</sup> God’s heart was grieved by the results of humanity’s heart.

God was not the cause of this inclination toward disobedience. Humanity has inherited a sin nature, but we have inherited it from our original parents, whose rebellion in Eden has isolated us from God’s holiness. As a result, all creation was affected. The most profound effect, however, is upon humans themselves.

Genesis dramatically reveals the domino effect that inherited sin had on the original humans. A family begins, only to be torn apart by jealousy and murder. A society begins, only to be unraveled by such selfishness and violence that God is forced to destroy the earth with a flood. The one family rescued by God’s grace from the flood soon shows itself in bondage to drunkenness and dysfunctionality. A city begins to come together only to be punished for its pride and sent off in division and segregation. A nation “under God” begins, only to find itself in the bondage of slavery in pagan Egypt within four generations.

These examples from Genesis reveal a major result of the sinful nature. It tends to cause digression and degradation rather than progression in the human race. It is like a spiritual version of the second law of thermodynamics, in which all processes tend toward entropy. In this case, the entropy is physical, spiritual and moral.

This ever-increasing weakness is often contrasted with God’s eternal strength. David proclaims, “In God I trust; I shall not be

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 6:5–6.

afraid. What can flesh do to me?”<sup>4</sup> Asaph declares that God “... remembered that (his people) were but flesh, a wind that passes and comes not again.”<sup>5</sup> Job asks God, “Have you eyes of flesh? Do you see as man sees?”<sup>6</sup> He was so distressed that God had not healed him that he asks God if he was limited like humans are. But the consensus of Scripture declares that there is always a difference between God’s strength and the “arm of flesh.”<sup>7</sup>

The New Testament reveals that the flesh is man’s mind pitted against and opposed to God’s Holy Spirit. Paul says, “To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”<sup>8</sup> The Holy Spirit wants to produce his fruit in the lives of believers, but living according to the flesh can prevent it.<sup>9</sup>

So, believers have a choice that unbelievers do not have. We can choose either to sow to our own flesh or sow to the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup> Although we “walk in the flesh” (in the sense of having physical bodies) we do not have to “walk according to the flesh” (that is, live by the strength of our flesh, or do warfare by its rules).<sup>11</sup> The sinful inclination will never leave the believer this side of the resurrection, but God’s Spirit gives us power to override its influence. That power is not an automatic thing. Christians are not automatically immune to the flesh’s influence simply by virtue of accepting Christ or being baptized. That explains

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 56:4.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 78:39.

<sup>6</sup> Job 10:4.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Chron. 32:8; Jer. 17:5.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:6–8.

<sup>9</sup> Gal. 5:16–26.

<sup>10</sup> Gal. 6:6–8. The metaphor suggests that the more we concentrate on the things of God’s Holy Spirit (like producing his fruit) the less problems we will have with the flesh. The more we let the flesh rule (by giving in the works of the flesh), the less spiritual we will be.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Cor. 10:2–6.

why Christians can have the same moral failures and social problems as non-Christians do.

But Christians do have access to the means by which the Holy Spirit can override the flesh's influence. So Paul tells believers, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."<sup>12</sup> We are all born with a sinful inclination, but it does not have to determine our destiny.

When Christ returns, he will glorify those who believe in him. One of the results of this glorification is that he "will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body."<sup>13</sup> Such transformation appears to include an eradication of the sinful inclination. The believer will be free from a bent toward sin and selfishness. This is God's solution to the problem of the flesh.

### ***God's Judgment as a Result of the Fall: A Sinful World***

Humans and the world around us have also suffered from the results of God's just judgment since the rebellion in Eden. That judgment adds to the downward spiral of degradation this world has experienced. It has resulted not only in mortality and eventual death for all living things, but also in a general state of decay and less-than-usefulness in inorganic matter. Things just do not work out the way we plan. Rather than feeling depressed about that fact, believers can actually see it as a positive thing. It is as we should expect in a world where God is sovereign and his will has been rejected by his creatures. Since sin is a reality, we should not expect things to run smoothly.

In a sermon recorded in the book of Acts, Peter spoke of two times. A time of *refreshing* that is available now for all those who repent and come to Christ, and a time of *restoring* that will

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<sup>12</sup> Romans 8:13–14.

<sup>13</sup> Philippians 3:21.

happen when Christ returns to set up his kingdom, which the prophets predicted.<sup>14</sup> It appears that God plans to deal with the problem of sin's consequences on the world in phases. Believers can expect the power of God to assist them in overcoming sin's effects on their lives now, during the times of refreshing. This help is available by God's grace, and is limited. Believers will still struggle with the consequences of sin, including the ultimate consequence of death. But by God's grace believers can overcome some of these consequences as we live according to the Holy Spirit.

The second *time* Peter mentions is the time of restoring. It appears that Peter refers to Christ's kingdom, in which we humans will have the opportunity to reverse the damage that Satan's kingdom has produced in the last few thousand years. The picture that the Bible gives of this kingdom certainly does suggest that the consequences of sin on this planet will be significantly curtailed.

“The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples — of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.”<sup>15</sup>

“No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days,

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<sup>14</sup> Acts 3:20–21.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 11:6–10.

for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the LORD, and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,' says the LORD."<sup>16</sup>

Isaiah's words suggest a time when many of the consequences of sin in this world will no longer be as extreme. Yet sin will still be here, and death still a reality. The third and final time period (also mentioned by Peter) will be the new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness dwells,<sup>17</sup> but sin and death do not.

### *Personal Sins*

Lastly, the rebellion in Eden combined with the judgment upon the world caused by the Fall results in personal acts of transgression, mistakes, failures and rebellion. These personal sins are what we must confess.<sup>18</sup> These personal sins are what sent Christ to Calvary to die for.<sup>19</sup> These personal sins are what Christ will call humans to account for on the Judgment Day.<sup>20</sup> A Major Greek lexicon lists 214 different terms in the New Testa-

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<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 65:20–25.

<sup>17</sup> Isaiah 65:17, 22; 2 Pet. 3:13.

<sup>18</sup> James 5:16; 1 John 1:9.

<sup>19</sup> Col. 1:14; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18; 2 Pet. 1:9; 1 John 2:2, 12; 3:5; 4:10; Rev. 1:5.

<sup>20</sup> Rom. 2:12; Rev. 20:13.

ment that describe personal sins and immoral attitudes and behaviors. God takes sins seriously, and so should we.

The Roman Catholic Church placed sins in two categories: A sin could be either venial (thus forgivable without confession) or mortal (thus will lead to punishment in hell if not dealt with by confession and penance). Based on Proverbs 6:16–19, they said that the mortal sins are lust, greed, gluttony, sloth, wrath, envy and pride. But the Bible insists that any sin incurs the death penalty.<sup>21</sup> Therefore “any attempt to categorize sin into varying degrees of gravity is an exercise in futility.”<sup>22</sup> James says that “whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.”<sup>23</sup> That one point may be seen as the weakest point, but it does not matter. To God, any sin is as serious as all sin.

There appear to be three biblical categories of personal sin. A personal sin can be a *transgression* — that is, anything that anyone does that is wrong.<sup>24</sup> A personal sin can be a *sin against conscience* — that is an act the sinner thinks may be wrong and he does it anyway.<sup>25</sup> A personal sin can also be a *sin of omission* — that is an act that the sinner knows he should do and does not do it.<sup>26</sup> Those three biblical categories are broad enough to describe all of the previously mentioned 214 terms in the New Testament.

The good news is that there is not one sin in either category that is not covered by the atoning blood of Jesus at Calvary. God does not overlook personal sins. He takes them very seriously. Even sins that we might feel are minor are an affront to God’s holiness and would effectively bar the sinner from eternal life. God’s forgiveness for every sin is available at the cost that Christ paid on the cross.

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<sup>21</sup> Rom. 5:12; 6:16, 23; 7:13; 1 Cor. 15:56; James 1:15.

<sup>22</sup> Ergun Caner, in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 453.

<sup>23</sup> James 2:10.

<sup>24</sup> 1 John 5:17.

<sup>25</sup> Rom. 14:23.

<sup>26</sup> James 4:17.

Personal sins bring bondage to human beings. The more one knows about personal sins, the more she will be capable to overcome that bondage, and live free of the sins. The proceeding chapters will focus on revealing the causes of sin and the nature of that bondage.

### *Sin Analyzed*

Sin is a very complex thing, and so are its causes. In fact, Paul complained that the law of God itself caused him to sin. By pointing out the possibility of sinning in a certain area, the law became an unwilling partner with the sin nature that existed inside Paul, so he “was alive once, apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life.”<sup>27</sup> Based on this experience, Paul argued in Romans that the law is not the solution to the sin problem, faith in Christ is.

Christians need to be aware of the causes of sin in their lives. This knowledge can be like knowing where the snares and traps and wild beasts are in the jungle. It can keep us out of the danger zones. After all, snares and traps are not things that just happen. Someone has set the traps with the specific intention of catching something. Wild beasts are there to eat their prey. To ignore the causes of sin in one’s life is like going into the jungle blindly, hoping not to be caught or devoured.

One of the obvious causes of sin is that inherited sinful inclination mentioned in chapter 25. The important truth to grasp is that often the traps are within us. Most of our sins cannot be blamed on our society, or our parents. Sin is (as it was for Paul) within us. But the sin within us takes advantage of things that happen to us and things that are around us, and then “springs to life.” Knowing when and why that happens can help believers overcome when tempted.

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<sup>27</sup> Rom. 7:9 (LEB).

## ***Internal Factors***

In a sense, all causes of personal sins are both internal and external. The choice to sin is a personal choice. Yet every sin involves some external factors. Therefore, the categories of internal and external factors causing sin are approximations.

## ***Rebellion***

Rebellion begins as a lack of appreciation for the boundaries God has placed on the sinner's life. The choice that our ancestors made to rebel against God's prohibition in Eden is a useful example. It did not seem like a major act of rebellion. Logic concluded that a desirable fruit that also had the potential to make one wise was a fruit worth eating. Sinners make choices like that every day. We weigh the options and calculate the risks, concluding that the potential benefits outweigh the possible disadvantages.

In rebellion, the mind is functioning as God intended it to. There is usually no psycho-somatic aberration that causes people to transgress God's limits. The human mind is intended to make value judgments, and does so — without sinning — constantly. The problem with instances of rebellion is that the sinner makes value judgments where God has already established which is the right choice and which is the wrong one. Usually, the sinner knows that God has promised to bring negative consequences upon her if she chooses to transgress.

Regardless of the specific nature of the boundaries, then, rebellion is at heart caused by an internal thing: defiance of God. There usually are numerous consequences to rebellion, affecting the lives of the sinner and all those around her. But the primary consequence is the damage done to her relationship with God.

## ***Tradition-Idolatry or Change-Idolatry***

The prospect of some kind of change that could happen in the sinner's life is often a catalyst for choices that could involve

sin — particularly the sin of idolatry. One example of this is conflict that can ensue when an organization is considering a change. The reason is that “if people are so attached to the old way (or the new way) that they are willing to fight for their position, they have idolized their desire.”<sup>28</sup> Usually both sides of the conflict have good arguments for their positions. The problem is that both sides are committed to an either-or solution and are willing to sacrifice their relationships with each other for their position.

This happens because human “hearts are idol factories and sometimes our desires escalate into sinful demands, or idols.”<sup>29</sup> When the heart of the sinner is against the threatened change, he sets up a tradition-idol. When the heart of the sinner is for the proposed change, he sets up a change-idol. There may not be a clear winner in the battle that results from these choices. The organization usually is the clear loser. It sometimes dissolves, and often loses members whose demands were not met by the organization as a whole.

## ***Greed***

The Bible exposes greed as a particularly dangerous cause for personal sin. Jesus denounced the scribes and Pharisees because they made efforts to look pure and clean on the outside, but inside were filthy with greed and self-indulgence.<sup>30</sup> Paul warned the Corinthian believers not to associate — or even have a meal with a person known for his greed.<sup>31</sup> Both he and Peter had encountered those whose “ministries” are merely a pretext for fulfilling their greed.<sup>32</sup> It had become a means of

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<sup>28</sup> Peacemaker Ministries, *The Leadership Opportunity: Living Out the Gospel Where Conflict and Leadership Intersect*. (Billings, MT:Peacemaker Ministries, 2009), 56.

<sup>29</sup> Peacemaker Ministries, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew 23:25; Luke 11:39.

<sup>31</sup> 1 Cor. 5:11.

<sup>32</sup> 1 Thess. 2:5; 2 Pet. 2:3, 14.

evaluating whether or not a first-century preacher was or was not a false prophet.

### *Lust*

Both apostles had also warned believers to stay away from lustful passions. Paul instructs the Thessalonians “that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.”<sup>33</sup> Peter speaks of “those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion” as being kept by God “under punishment until the day of judgment.”<sup>34</sup> Neither of these men of God sought to prohibit legitimate sexual relationships, but both were profoundly troubled by the damage that is done when people transgress those legitimate boundaries.

Lust has always been a problem for human beings, but free and easy private access to sexually explicit materials has turned that problem into an epidemic. Such materials (now made even more accessible through the Internet) trap men into bondage through images and stories that promise the pleasure of sex without the intimacy of relationship. Similarly, women are lured away from their spouses through chat rooms and social networks where they are convinced that their current partner does not understand or deserve them. Pornographers usually hide behind the “freedom of speech” excuse. The irony is that the motivation for such websites and other media has nothing to do with free speech or sex or pleasure. The sex industry is built on greed. Porn is a multi-billion dollar “industry” that creates only addiction and destruction.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> 1 Thess. 4:4–5.

<sup>34</sup> 2 Pet. 2:9–10.

<sup>35</sup> For more information, see Gary R. Brooks, *The Centerfold Syndrome*. (Jossey-Bass, 1995), Richard D. Land, “Porn profits reflect its potency versus even Hollywood, rock music,” Baptist Press (Nashville, May 4, 2001); <http://erlc.com/article/pornography/>; <http://www.internetevangelismday.com/dangers.php>; <http://www.helium.com/items/1242976-dangers-of-internet-pornography>.

*Etc.*

Numerous other forms of selfishness could be added to the list of things that cause human beings to sin. Some of these can be so subtle that it might take some time in counseling to convince the sinner that his motivation was wrong. The human heart is creative, and unfortunately that means that a sinner can be very creative in how he defends his own sinfulness. God calls sinners to repent even when they do not understand all the factors that have brought them under condemnation.

### ***External Factors***

Each sinner is individually responsible for every sin she commits. However, it is still possible to objectively identify a number of factors that contribute to her making that choice. Eden, for example, contained more than two people and a commandment. It also contained a tree and a snake.

The choices sinners make cannot be defended on the basis of external factors. Adam and Eve tried the blame game, and it did not get them very far. But knowing about the external factors can help people avoid putting themselves in an environment where they will be likely to sin. Also, knowing where an enemy is hiding is a good defense against his attacks.

### ***Temptation***

The devil is real and he can really tempt people to sin. It may seem simplistic to say that, but it is important, because an increasing number of people appear to be confused on the issue of Satan's existence. Not only is there an actual person called Satan, but he also has an enormous army of other persons — called demons — whose purpose in life is to tempt people to sin. Most temptations do not involve a physical manifestation of the tempter. That is as planned — because demons work best when they have convinced the one being tempted that they do not exist.

Temptation can involve taking a natural desire and convincing the victim that having the thing desired is more important than avoiding the consequences of getting it by means of sin. The more confused the victim is on the theology of sin, or on the existence of tempters, or on God's holiness — the more likely the temptation will work. Conversely, the more aware a person is in these areas the more likely he will be able to resist.

### *Societal Pressure*

The world around the victim also seems to conspire to lead her to sin. She knows people who have sinned in this way and have not suffered any immediate punishment. Thus, she is more likely to follow suit. Societal mores can be helpful in curtailing certain kinds of immoral behavior. Unfortunately, societies are made up of sinners, and every society has holes in its moral structure. A society can be quite determined to overcome environmental evils, for example, and yet turn a blind eye to human trafficking or abortion.

Societal mores also constantly change, and the difference between right and wrong does not. Right and wrong are based on God's definition, not that of the latest opinion poll. Both Peter and Paul warned believers not to be conformed to societal pressure, but encouraged them to strive for God's holiness.<sup>36</sup> Sometimes sinners are convinced to participate in sin because it appears to be the loyal and faithful thing to do. In this way, governments and societies can contribute to the sinfulness of their members.

### *Deception*

High on the list of things that cause sin is deception. In a sense, all sin is committed because of deception. Since every sin must be punished by a holy God, the victim must be convinced

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<sup>36</sup> Rom. 12:2; 1 Pet. 1:14.

that either that is not true, or that what he is being tempted to do is not sin: both are forms of deception. Eve argued that Satan (through the serpent) had deceived her. She was right, but that did not excuse her sin. Likewise, there will be billions of sins committed today, and the victims will have been convinced to commit those sins by means of lies whispered in their ear or taught in the streets.

The source of those lies may be subtle (like an invisible demon or like a science textbook that boldly claims that humans are nothing but evolved animals). The result may not be that the victim is convinced, but perhaps a seed of doubt is planted. The source may be covert, like a theologian who convinces his readers that God is love and could never send people to hell, or the teacher who convinces his followers that God wants them to commit some act of violence.

Ultimately, all these deceptions are orchestrated by demonic beings. In many cases, violence occurs when one human society attacks another based on its perception of truth — taught by demons. The other side responds with the same kind of violence, based on its view of truth — taught by demons. Both sides are being played by invisible hands.

### ***How sin Began***

The root cause of all personal sins is original sin. This term does not refer to the first time someone willfully sins. It refers to what happened the first time the human race sinned: the fall of our ancestors in the Garden of Eden. The choice to break the original prohibition has led to a change in human nature and destiny, which is universal in scope.

### ***The Black Hole***

The doctrine of original sin is tied to the historical event of Adam and Eve's rebellion in Eden. Since many today are convinced that the Genesis record is not factual, they are left with

no space in their universe for original sin. As a result, “if there is a black hole for church doctrines, original sin is in one.”<sup>37</sup> But to jettison this doctrine is to leave unanswered questions that continue to be asked by people who want to know what is happening to humanity, and what our destiny is.

### *The Change*

Paul tells the Romans that death is a result of that original sin. He argued that “when Adam sinned, sin entered the world.”<sup>38</sup> From that point on, there is no such thing as human innocence. All human beings have been changed. Part of that change is the inherited sinful inclination, and that leads inevitably to personal sins, for which we are accountable. But the difference made in Eden is even more fundamental than that. Since the wages of sin is death,<sup>39</sup> and all humanity has been mortal since that fateful day, the original sin has resulted in an inherited guilt — not just a changed nature. The status of humanity changed that day.

Paul expressed the change in these terms: “so death spread to all men because all sinned.”<sup>40</sup> He did not mean that we all will eventually sin, but that on that day, in the garden, all sinned. This is clear from the fact that Paul is comparing two events in Romans 5. He compares the fall in Eden with the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary. By the one act of rebellion, all humanity were made sinners, and thus deemed deserving of immediate condemnation. Paul explains this by comparing the sin in the Garden with Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. He says, “... as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man’s disobe-

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<sup>37</sup> Tatha Wiley, *Original Sin: Origins, Developments, Contemporary Meanings*. (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), 3.

<sup>38</sup> Rom. 5:12 NLT.

<sup>39</sup> Rom. 6:23.

<sup>40</sup> Rom. 5:12b.

dience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."<sup>41</sup>

God regards all human beings as sinners, even if they have not yet personally sinned. He sent his Son to die for us "while we were still sinners."<sup>42</sup> But Jesus died before you and I were even born. So, even before we were born, our status before God was *sinners in need of salvation*. Our status was not that of innocents. To understand why this is so will take another trip to the Garden.

### ***Eden and Original Righteousness***

God created human beings sinless, and with no condemnation. He "saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good."<sup>43</sup> As totally sinless creatures, our ancestors had the potential to become much more than we can imagine. But all this potential had to continue to be directed toward God's will for them. God had established one small prohibition. They were not to eat of the tree of knowing good and evil. This was the one bad apple that would spoil the barrel.

It was apparently not long before temptation resulted in that original sin. For "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."<sup>44</sup>

### ***Born in Sin***

Ever since that event, human beings have been born with the defilement of sin.<sup>45</sup> Humanity is not a *tabula rasa* — a blank slate

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<sup>41</sup> Rom. 5:18–19.

<sup>42</sup> Rom. 5:8.

<sup>43</sup> Gen. 1:31.

<sup>44</sup> Gen. 3:6.

<sup>45</sup> Psalm 51:5.

upon which moral impressions are made only after the moment of conscious life. We come into life with the condemnation of God already upon us. That condemnation that came upon Adam was visited upon all who were in *Adam* at the time. He made the choice for all of us. We are born into a sinful state and a sinful world as a result of that choice.

### ***Born Mortal***

This event also explains why all human beings are born mortal. God had warned Adam that if he ate of the forbidden tree it would result in mortality and eventual death.<sup>46</sup> This warning was to Adam, as head of the entire adamic species. Had he obeyed the commandment, it might have resulted in eventual immortality for the species. Since he disobeyed, it is not unfair for God to visit the consequences of that choice upon all of us.

The consequences of that choice are spelled out in detail. Mortality from the moment of the original transgression, and eventual death to the entire species. The cemeteries that have appeared all over the landscape of this planet are reminders of that choice, that event in history. Those graves are not there because of anyone's personal sins. The graves are there because the species has sinned in Adam.

### ***Limits of Original Sin***

Original sin explains the universal mortality and sinful state that every human is born into. The doctrine has absolutely nothing to do with hell or final punishment. When human beings are judged at the end of time, not one of them will be punished for even a moment because of Adam's transgression. This present mortality alone and the death we all face at the end of this life are payment in full for Adam's transgression.

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<sup>46</sup> Gen. 2:17.

If a child dies before she has a chance to make the choice to commit personal sin, that child will suffer only the consequences of her ancestor's sin — that is, the first death. Original sin does not put anyone into hell. Knowing how Christ is just and compassionate in his dealings with all people should answer our questions about those who die early, thus are never given a chance to know him personally.

Likewise, Jesus' death on the cross does not automatically undo the damage done by original sin. We all continue to suffer the consequences of Adam's rebellion. There is, if you will, a tombstone with your name on it, regardless of whether you have accepted Christ as your Savior or not. Christ frees us "from our sins by his blood."<sup>47</sup> That is, Christ's death has paid the price we all owe due to our personal sins. We would otherwise have to pay for those personal sins ourselves by suffering in hell and eventually dying the second death.<sup>48</sup>

### ***The Complexity***

"The wages of sin is death" is a true principle and applies in both cases. It applies to personal sins in that hell's torments will eventually end in the second death. It applies in respect to original sin in that all humanity will face the first death. The complex nature of the *sin equals death* principle reminds the believer that God is just. Although some people may die as a result of mistakes or wrong choices, that they will eventually die is not their choice. It was the choice of their ancestors in Eden.

### ***The Choice***

Yet God by his grace has provided everyone with another chance: a choice that will affect their eternal destiny. That choice is Christ.

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<sup>47</sup> Rev. 1:5.

<sup>48</sup> Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8.

He is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”<sup>49</sup> By his death he can reverse and wipe out the consequences of personal sin on the species. God gave Adam the choice as to whether or not the species would suffer the first death. He made that choice, and original sin is the result. God gives you and me the choice as to whether we will personally suffer the second death. We cannot blame Adam if we make the wrong choice.

### *The Cross and Original Sin*

Original sin made the death of Christ necessary because it removed the possibility of any human being gaining salvation through his own merits. Christ through his death on the cross has also set in motion a chain of events that will eventually abolish the death-penalty associated with original sin.<sup>50</sup> This will happen in stages. First, Christ will reverse the consequences of original sin for believers at his second coming. The perishable will become imperishable.<sup>51</sup>

The consequences of original sin will be ultimately dealt with at the Day of Judgment when death and hades give up the dead who are in them.<sup>52</sup> After all whose names are not found in the Lamb’s book of life are destroyed in the second death, then death and hades (the consequences of original sin) themselves will be thrown into the lake of fire to be destroyed.<sup>53</sup> This is the ultimate solution to the problem we call original sin. Redeemed and glorified humanity will not carry that problem with us into eternity.

### *Struggling With Sin*

The phrase “spiritual warfare” is often used in evangelical circles to denote attempts to deliver those oppressed and possessed

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<sup>49</sup> John 1:29, 36.

<sup>50</sup> 2 Tim. 1:10.

<sup>51</sup> 1 Cor. 15:42, 50, 52, 53, 54.

<sup>52</sup> Rev. 20:13.

<sup>53</sup> Rev. 20:14.

by demons. The phrase actually has wider implications than that. It is a metaphor that describes every aspect of the Christian life.

Paul described his personal struggle with sin as a battle between the law of his mind and the law of his flesh. He said, “I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.”<sup>54</sup>

Like Paul, all humanity is involved in a war with a formidable adversary whose goal is to enslave the human race. He utilizes a variety of strategies that have proven over the millennia to be quite effective. Each attack that Satan and his kingdom workers perpetuate against humans is designed to cause an ever-increasing progression from sin to bondage to further sin and further bondage.

## *Warfare*

The Christian life is described as a war.<sup>55</sup> The means by which we live out our faith in the midst of the enemy is called doing warfare.<sup>56</sup> It is not an easy life, but a struggle, a conflict.<sup>57</sup> To succeed in this life is to fight the good fight.<sup>58</sup> By God’s grace we are more than conquerors.<sup>59</sup> He will ultimately destroy all of our enemies, and his. But the battles today are very real. If one chooses to ignore the conflict, she is liable to become a casualty of war.

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<sup>54</sup> Rom. 7:23–25.

<sup>55</sup> 2 Cor. 10:3; James 4:1; 1 Pet. 2:11.

<sup>56</sup> 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Tim. 1:18.

<sup>57</sup> Col. 1:29; 4:12; 1 Thess. 2:2; Heb. 10:32.

<sup>58</sup> 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7.

<sup>59</sup> Rom. 8:37.

## *What the Adversary Wants*

John 10:10 has been mentioned in chapter 1 of this book as an example of how the context of a statement in Scripture helps interpreters understand the statement. The thief in that text is not Satan, but a false shepherd, in contrast to Jesus, the good shepherd. While it is true that Satan *can* be described as a thief, it is not good theology to derive from John 10:10 that Satan's strategy is to steal, kill and destroy. The ultimate result of Satan's warfare upon humanity will be just that. All who are not rescued by Christ will eventually suffer the second death: permanent destruction in Gehenna hell.

What the adversary wants today, however, is not our destruction but our bondage. He wants to control the lives of every human being on this planet, and bring as many with him to the fires of Gehenna as possible. He has organized a battle plan — a set of methods<sup>60</sup> and designs<sup>61</sup> that he uses to enslave and keep enslaved. The more one knows about these strategic means that the devil uses, the more likely she may prevail in the battles that ensue throughout her life.

### *Selfishness*

God is sovereign over the universe he created, and he deserves to be honored and worshipped by that creation. Satan does not have to convince humans to rebel against God. He merely has to convince humans to make themselves the center of their own universe. The sins recorded early in Genesis bear this out. Taking of the tree did not seem like such a bad thing. The act was being judged on the basis of human desires, human assessment and human goals. Once Adam and Eve had taken of the tree they saw what the sin was from God's perspective. As Cain was bash-

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<sup>60</sup> Gk. μεθοδεια (Eph. 4:14; 6:11).

<sup>61</sup> Gk. νοήματα (2 Cor. 2:11).

ing his brother's head in — he was obviously not thinking about what this act would do to Able, or to Adam and Eve for that matter. Selfish pride, depression and anger blinded Cain to both the reality and the consequences of his sin.

Selfishness is the method that keeps people addicted to substances that slowly destroy them. It makes people stop and stare when they should be running like the wind. At its heart, selfishness is rebellion against God's sovereignty. It leads to sins that are enjoyable, and cause the sinner to seek more and more of the same. At the same time, it blinds the sinner to the consequences.

Acts of selfishness progress in a continuum from sin to sinful lifestyle to sinful obsession to sinful addiction. The further along in the continuum the harder it is to break the bondage. The Bible warns that "for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury."<sup>62</sup> The world says, "If it feels good, do it." But there will be consequences to living selfishly.

### ***Falsehood***

Another of the major strategies in the war against humanity is the pitting of falsehood against some other belief. It is not always a simple issue of truth against deception. Satan often pits lie against lie. In doing so, he need only convince his victim that one lie is not true, and the victim swallows the second lie. Notice how deceptive the serpent's words were in Eden:

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?"' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest

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<sup>62</sup> Rom. 2:8.

you die." But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"<sup>63</sup>

There are three lies in this passage, and each of them is hidden within a truth statement. First, Satan asked if God had prohibited all the trees in the garden. The answer is no, and the woman was correct in pointing out that it was only one particular tree that was prohibited. The deception, however, began at that point. Satan was beginning what would become Eve's preoccupation with the forbidden fruit.

The second lie is Satan's as well — but it comes out of the mouth of Eve. She stretched the truth a bit when she responded by saying that God had forbidden even the touching of the fruit. Perhaps the serpent then touched the fruit to show Eve that he suffered no ill effects.

The third lie was the clincher. It, too, was hidden in a truth statement. Taking of the forbidden fruit would endow the humans with god-like knowledge of (experience with) good and evil. Who would not want their eyes to be opened? Who would not want to be like God? Who would not want an experience that has never been experienced before? The falsehood was found in what Satan did not say. He did not tell of the banishment and painful consequences that humanity would have to endure. Satan is the liar and the father of lies.<sup>64</sup> Falsehood is another of the mighty weapons in his arsenal against human beings.

## *Depression*

Cain's sin of murder was at least partially motivated by his damaged self-image. God had accepted Abel's offering, but did not accept Cain's. The story is told in Genesis 4:

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<sup>63</sup> Genesis 3:1–5.

<sup>64</sup> John 8:44.

“In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his face fell. The LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.’ Cain spoke to Abel his brother. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him.”<sup>65</sup>

Cain’s anger was a manifestation of embarrassment depression. It so wounded his self-image that Cain disregarded the sanctity of his brother’s life. God had warned Cain that sin was crouching at his door. His depression put him in a dangerous position — like someone who has a vicious animal waiting to kill him. Cain did not pay attention to the warning.

### *Fear*

Another major strategy that Satan uses in his war against humanity is fear. Fear can cause a person to forget to do what needs to be done, or to do something she would never do otherwise. When someone is intimidated, she can lash out in an attempt to embolden herself. The result is often violent and harmful. The Bible says that “God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.”<sup>66</sup> It also says that “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”<sup>67</sup> Love is the emotion that we ought to exhibit, but often fear gets the best of us.

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<sup>65</sup> Genesis 4:3–8.

<sup>66</sup> 2 Tim. 1:7.

<sup>67</sup> 1 John 4:18.

Fear was the motivation behind the Babel incident. That story is found in Genesis 11:

“Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.’ And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.’ And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said, ‘Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.’ So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.”<sup>68</sup>

The people at Babel were afraid of being dispersed over the face of the whole earth. That was what God wanted from them. Their fear gave them unity, and eventually caused their disunity. Satan was at work behind the scenes at Babel to get the people to give in to their fears and go against God’s will. Today, Satan uses fear to organize one nation to war against another. He uses fear to embolden us toward violence — or to paralyze us and prevent our acting in faith.

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<sup>68</sup> Genesis 11:1–9.

## *The sin Choice*

The sinful inclination — what the Bible calls the flesh — is present within everyone, believer and unbeliever alike. Although believers have the choice to follow the Holy Spirit, we do not always take advantage of that option. So each of us is in danger of the consequences of personal sins that we commit. For someone not led by the Spirit, sins are like dominoes. Once one has toppled, it starts another, and then another. Paul describes this kind of life as “foolish, disobedient, misled, enslaved to various passions and desires, spending our lives in evil and envy, hateful and hating one another.”<sup>69</sup>

## *Murphy’s Choice*

Most people are familiar with Murphy’s Law, “Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong.” It is a humorous bit of pessimism, but it can also be helpful advice, encouraging people to build evaluation into their production plans and look for glitches. One of the consequences in the human life as a result of sin is that Murphy’s Law rules. Sin causes people to do the wrong thing most of the time. Humans have lost an innate hesitancy that would cause us to stop and ask important questions before making the choices that we make. We put too much trust in our own ability to evaluate between options, and we fail to take God’s desire into consideration.

## *Unauthorized Personnel Only*

The sinful inclination also causes humans to mistrust or oppose those in authority more often than not. In most cases, personal experience has proven that those in authority cannot be trusted as a matter of course. Those in authority are natu-

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<sup>69</sup> Titus 3:3 NET.

rally suspected of having ulterior motives, or of being corrupt or inept. Paul taught the Roman Christians to let “every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”<sup>70</sup> These were the very same authorities who were persecuting Christians, some even to death. It was a dangerous thing for the Roman Christians to submit to these rulers. But doing so demonstrated to the authorities that Christians were not a subversive cult.

### ***Breathing out Lies***

The book of Proverbs speaks of some to whom deception is so habitual that they are said to breathe out lies.<sup>71</sup> Their words are taken to be reflections of their inner character, and assumed to be false. They are like the Cretans, whose own prophet said that they are always liars.<sup>72</sup> Such statements pose a dilemma for listeners. If a person who admits that his race is composed of habitual liars tells you that his people always lie, can you believe him?

But this problem is bigger than Crete. It affects us all, because we have all been influenced by the kingdom of Satan. He is “a liar and the father of lies.”<sup>73</sup> He has taken the creative powers given him by his creator and turned them to the task of deception on a cosmic scale. He deceived an untold number of angelic beings into rebelling against God’s authority. He deceived humanity into rebelling against God’s prohibition in Eden. He leads nation against nation in violent conflict with one another by deceiving both sides. He leads individuals to lie to one another, and does

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<sup>70</sup> Rom. 13:1.

<sup>71</sup> Prov. 6:19; 14:5, 25; 19:5, 9.

<sup>72</sup> Tit. 1:12.

<sup>73</sup> John 8:44.

not stop to explain to them that they are lying to God as well.<sup>74</sup> Lies are like traps that catch the person who sets them.

### ***Believing Lies***

Those traps catch us all at times. As much as believers try to live by the truth, we are also caught at times by the deception that permeates this world. We tend to believe things that we are told, and do not have enough “Murphy’s Law” wariness to check the facts before coming to a conclusion. We tend to reject the truth when it comes in conflict with our own selfish desires.<sup>75</sup>

### ***Slavery, Please!***

Humans are also quite accustomed to some forms of slavery, and tend to choose bondage over freedom when given the choice. Ironically, many of the freedoms that humans hold dear are the opportunities to enslave ourselves. Our addictions to substances and experiences, to sexual lust, to bombastic speech, to fame and fortune — are all choices that we tend to eagerly make. Those choices take away our freedoms and keep us in bondage to the very things we celebrated as freedoms.

In reality, freedom is extremely limited during this age. I am free to travel to the other side of the world, but I am limited by my bank account. I can do it, if I can afford it. I am also limited as to my means of travel. I can go where others go. I am also limited by my present responsibilities and commitments, because travel takes time, and my available time is limited. Paul taught that believers will one day “obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”<sup>76</sup> Our limits will be destroyed along with the sin that created them. We will know true, unhindered freedom

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<sup>74</sup> Acts 5:4.

<sup>75</sup> 2 Thess. 2:12.

<sup>76</sup> Rom. 8:21.

then, because we will have been set free from the sources of our present corruption and limitation.

### *Hiding from God*

After Adam and Eve rebelled in Eden, they immediately started playing hide and seek with God. Sin has disrupted the casual and deep relationship our first parents had with their creator. The one who knows all things went along with this game and asked them where they were.<sup>77</sup> He knew where they were. He wanted them to realize where they were as a result of what they had done.

As a result of sin, we tend to hide from God. We tend to adopt a secular mindset, and treat this world as if it is a hiding place where we can take a vacation from God's presence, and the relationship that God wants. We need that relationship. We were created to be in God's presence. He is everywhere, so we really cannot escape his presence, but we can pretend to. That is another thing that sin does to humanity.

### *Ashamed of Ourselves*

The clothing made of fig leaves in the garden also speaks to the consequences of sin. From that time on, humanity has felt personal shame due to a disruption of personal relationships. Clothing was a good idea, but it failed to solve the ultimate problem. The problem was not that Adam and Eve were naked. They had been naked and unashamed in God's presence before. The problem was that they were naked and ashamed. Their understanding of themselves was drastically altered. To this day, psychologists tell us that many human problems are caused by an improper self-image.

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<sup>77</sup> Gen. 3:9.

## **Misc.**

In many other ways, sin “diminishes and thwarts the great potencies with which God endowed human beings.”<sup>78</sup> We live with those consequences every day. They have become so natural that it is difficult to imagine a world where they do not exist.

But that day will come when sin and its consequences will no longer be part of God’s universe. Christ came into this world and endured the consequences of sin himself, including death on the cross. He did this so that he might destroy the devil.<sup>79</sup> God plans for this universe to be restored and glorified. We may not even be able to imagine the half of what that restoration entails. But we can certainly see the damage that sin is causing now. What we see today makes us long for and “haste the day when the faith shall be sight.”<sup>80</sup>

## **Sin’s Solutions**

The rebellion in Eden has changed humanity from what God originally intended. Because of that rebellion, humanity has inherited a sinful inclination that devastates all our attempts at being good and doing good things. We are tainted with evil, depraved to the core. Legally, we stand condemned before God, so that even our obedience is never enough to justify us. We all sin in so many ways and so many times throughout our lives that destruction in Gehenna hell is almost the only solution for a just God to apply to the problem of us.

## **Hell**

Every life so corrupted by the initial rebellion of Adam — so separated from God by its inherently selfish sinful inclination —

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<sup>78</sup> Joe R. Jones, *A Grammar of Christian Faith*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman& Littlefield, 2002), 362.

<sup>79</sup> Heb. 2:14.

<sup>80</sup> Horatio G. Spafford, Hymn: “It is Well With My Soul”

deserves the punishment that God warns us of in the Bible. Unfortunately, there has been so much unbiblical tradition added to what the Scripture says about that punishment that the term “hell” has ceased to be a helpful word to describe it. A better term — the one Jesus used — is *Gehenna*. Unlike the hell of tradition, this hell does not begin at death, but begins after judgment at the end of the age. Also, unlike the hell of tradition, this hell is not a place for the torment of disembodied spirits, but is the place for the punishment and destruction of the whole person — body and spirit.

Originally designating a valley near Jerusalem where garbage was burned, Gehenna for Jesus is a place where every sin — no matter how small it might seem — counts. It is an event and a place for the punishment of every act of violence. It is also a place for the punishment of every careless thought and word of violence. Jesus said, “Everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment ... and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”<sup>81</sup> The reality of hell should make us careful about how we express our emotions.

Gehenna will also punish all those who have followed false teachers and willfully passed on their deceptions. This idea makes modern humanity a little less comfortable, because it implies that humans are held accountable for the lies they are told as well as the lies they tell. But Jesus clearly taught that the religious leaders of his day were going to Gehenna, and taking with them all of their converts. He called the scribes and Pharisees hypocrites, because they “travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, (they) make him twice as much a child of hell as (them) selves.”<sup>82</sup> The reality of Gehenna should make us all wary of accepting any “new” doctrine.

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<sup>81</sup> Matt. 5:22.

<sup>82</sup> Matt. 23:15.

The scribes and Pharisees were considered the super-spiritual of their day. If anyone envisioned what a holy man looked like, the appearance would be similar to that of a scribe (Scripture expert) or Pharisee (law expert). Yet Jesus detected an inner spiritual defilement in these religious leaders. He said they “outwardly appear righteous to others, but within (they) are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”<sup>83</sup> He warned them by saying, “You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?”<sup>84</sup> The reality of Gehenna should make us all yearn for genuineness in our relationship to God and obedience to his word.

The hell of tradition is a different matter. Rather than teaching that hell is a place where sin is dealt with ultimately by God, tradition teaches a hell that is a sort of repository where God puts all those pesky sinners that he could not cure. It is a place of punishment and confinement, but not destruction. Having bought into the Greek concept of the immortality of the human soul, tradition is not in a place where it can accept what Jesus literally says about Gehenna. For Jesus, the judgment will take place not during the intermediate state (between death and the resurrection), but “on the last day.”<sup>85</sup>

That “last day” will be truly the last day for all sinners, because they will be raised not for life but for condemnation,<sup>86</sup> punishment (including torment) appropriate for each of their personal sins,<sup>87</sup> and then destruction. Yes, destruction. God has not created anything that he cannot destroy. Jesus said that he “can destroy both soul and body in hell.”<sup>88</sup> Jesus compared the Day of Judgment to the day the world was destroyed by Noah’s flood,<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Matt. 23:28.

<sup>84</sup> Matt. 23:33.

<sup>85</sup> John 12:48.

<sup>86</sup> Matt. 12:37; Mark 12:40; 16:16; Luke 20:47; James 5:12; 2 Pet. 2:3.

<sup>87</sup> Rev. 20:13.

<sup>88</sup> Matt. 10:28.

<sup>89</sup> Luke 17:27.

and the day the people of Sodom were destroyed by fire.<sup>90</sup> In calling people to himself, he urged them to take the narrow gate that leads to life, not the broad gate that leads to destruction.<sup>91</sup>

Gehenna is a place for that destruction of both soul and body. That is why Jesus said, “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.”<sup>92</sup>

Gehenna is not a place known for life, but death. Those who suffer on judgment day will suffer for only as long as it takes to punish them for their sins, and then they will experience the same reality as anything else that is thrown into fire: they will die. The redeemed who are not condemned to Gehenna are said to “enter life.” But those condemned to Gehenna have entered death. That is why Jesus said, “If your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire.”<sup>93</sup>

Destruction in Gehenna hell is *almost* the only solution for a just God to apply to the problem of sinful us. Thankfully, there is another solution. In fact, since sin is so pervasive, and its consequences in our lives so comprehensive, God has provided in salvation a set of solutions that touch upon every problem that sin has caused for his creatures.

### ***Substitutionary Atonement***

The apostle Paul put forth an axiom that applies to every aspect of sin discussed. He said “the wages of sin is death.”<sup>94</sup> Car-

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<sup>90</sup> Luke 17:29.

<sup>91</sup> Matt. 7:13–14.

<sup>92</sup> Matt. 5:29–30.

<sup>93</sup> Matt. 18:9.

<sup>94</sup> Rom. 6:23.

ried to its logical conclusion, that axiom would place every human being who has ever lived in the fires of Gehenna for a just destruction. Fortunately, there is a “but” in Paul’s statement: “but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The gospel tells us that Christ’s death on the cross can serve as a substitute punishment for the personal sins of everyone who turns to him in faith.

This substitutionary atonement is God’s idea. It is a free gift from a loving God who is determined to destroy all sin, but does not want to depopulate his universe in doing so. It is a manifestation of God’s attribute of grace. It is also a manifestation of his attribute of justice, since the punishment and death due us for our sins has been meted out on the substitute. The lesson Abraham learned on Mt. Moriah was that God will provide.<sup>95</sup> In that case, he provided a ram, whose head was caught in thorns. That ram served as a substitute for Abraham’s son, Isaac. The event prefigured another substitute God provided, when he allowed his own Son to wear a crown of thorns, suffer punishment he did not deserve, and die. The wages of our sin was his death on the cross.

### ***Resurrection***

Since the wages of sin is death, the countryside of every country on this planet is littered with cemeteries. The sin imputed to all humanity as a result of Adam and Eve’s rebellion has resulted in just what God predicted: mortality and eventual — inevitable death. God offers a solution to this problem as well. He cannot simply reverse the curse and make it so that human beings will never die. He will not undo his just penalty. Instead, he offers a resurrection unto eternal life at Christ’s return.

This solution is once again a miraculous combination of God’s justice and his grace. His just punishment of mortality and eventual death still reigns. The cemeteries are still being filled.

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<sup>95</sup> Gen. 22.

But the free gift of God is eternal life. This life will begin with a resurrection unto eternal, immortal life. It is the believer's inheritance.<sup>96</sup> Peter says that God "has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."<sup>97</sup> Resurrection life is God's solution to the problem of imputed sin, which keeps us heading to the grave.

### ***Glorification***

The axiom "the wages of sin is death" is also true spiritually. Our inherited sin has resulted in spiritual death. We not only experience death because of God's justice, we also have died to his justice (and his grace, too). Paul described this dilemma well: "For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"<sup>98</sup> As much as we might want to do the right thing, spiritual death causes us to continue to sin.

God has provided a solution for this sin-reality as well. For every believer who trusts in Christ for his justification, God initiates through his Holy Spirit a process that will eventually lead to glorification — a complete restoration to a sinless state. This is a work of God from start to finish. Paul says, "Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."<sup>99</sup> He speaks

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<sup>96</sup> Gal. 3:18; Eph. 1:11, 14, 18; 5:5; Col. 1:12; 3:24; Heb. 9:15.

<sup>97</sup> 1 Pet. 1:3–5.

<sup>98</sup> Rom. 7:22–24.

<sup>99</sup> Rom. 8:30.

of glorification as a past tense event because he is emphasizing that it is a work of God.

In the present, however, most of us do not feel all that glorified yet. Our lives are a struggle where we keep getting in the way of the Holy Spirit as he seeks to sanctify us more and more. In fact, if anyone ever starts boasting that she has arrived and no longer sins, she is calling God a liar, and his word is not in her.<sup>100</sup> But we can look forward to more and more victories over sin as we yield to the Holy Spirit. He is the seal and guarantee of the glorified life that awaits us.<sup>101</sup>

In this life, believers do not have to experience the wages of spiritual death. This is true because “those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh (sinful inclination) with its passions and desires.”<sup>102</sup> We have been spiritually resurrected. Our baptism symbolizes this truth. Paul says, “We were buried ... with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”<sup>103</sup> Our death to sin allows Christ to live his resurrected life through us. This allows us to experience a glimpse of the glorified life now — in victory over sin.

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<sup>100</sup> 1 John 1:10.

<sup>101</sup> 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13-14.

<sup>102</sup> Gal. 5:24.

<sup>103</sup> Rom. 6:4.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The staff of “Henceforth Theological Journal” wants to thank this year’s contributors for their quality work and their willingness to share it with our readers.

- Dawn Rutan serves as Director of Finance for Advent Christian General Conference.
- Dr. Bob Hughes is pastor of Pembroke Advent Christian Church in Pembroke, Georgia.
- Dr. Glenn Andrew Peoples is a conditionalist theologian who currently lives in Wellington, New Zealand. Glenn is a regular contributor to the Rethinking Hell Facebook Group, which champions the Advent Christian view of final punishment.
- Dr. Matt Flannigan serves on the preaching staff of Takanini Community Church (TCC) in Auckland, New Zealand. TCC is affiliated with ACCONZ, the Advent Christian Conference of New Zealand.
- Jefferson Vann is a missionary with Advent Christian General Conference Department of World Outreach, and (along with his wife, Penny) serves as Asia Pacific Area Director and Global Training Coordinator for ACGC. Some of the articles he shared this year are excerpted from “An Advent Christian Systematic Theology,” which is available in Kindle format, and can be purchased online at amazon.com.
- Pastor Corey J. McLaughlin serves at Sheffield Chapel in Sheffield, Massachusetts.
- William S. Kilgore lives in La Porte, Texas, and is a teaching fellow at University of North Texas and a sociology instructor at University of Houston — Clear Lake. He has contributed a paper he wrote as part of his study at Fuller Theological Seminary toward an MA in Theology.

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## JESUS WHO?

Looking ahead to the next issue: LXII/1, spring 2016.

Jefferson Vann

- The theme for next spring's issue will be *Christology: the person and role of Jesus Christ*. We are looking for articles and papers that ask who Jesus is, and how he is relevant to us.
- If you find anything that an Advent Christian has written on Christology, feel free to review it, pro and/or con.
- Letters to the editor will be read, and will probably be printed, unless they simply say — in a lot of words — that you disagree with something someone else said. But, if you take the time to actually interact with something you have read here, I would love to print that!
- How does Jesus compare with other religious leaders or religion founders? Perhaps you would like to write an article about that.
- Reviews of Advent Christian or conditionalist writings are always welcomed.
- Any biblical or theological papers (regardless of topic) are encouraged.

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