

# Dealing with Sin Biblically

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## I. Introduction

Sin is one of the most important topics in counseling.

The Bible has solutions for man's problems with sin:

For the unbeliever, forgiveness and new life are available through the Gospel.

For the Christian, the Bible promises that ability to overcome sin (Psalm 119.9-11).

## II. The Unserved Counselee

Salvation of a human soul is God's work.

Ephesians 2.4-10 says,  
"God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love...  
...even when we were dead in our transgressions,  
*made us alive* together with Christ...  
...by grace you have been saved through faith;  
and that not of yourselves, *it is a gift of God*...  
...we are *His* workmanship."

### A. The Gospel

What is the Gospel?

Wayne Grudem, in his *Systematic Theology*, writes the essential components of the Gospel.

1. "Explanation of the Facts Concerning Salvation

Anyone who comes to Christ for salvation must have at least a basic understanding of who Christ is and how he meets our needs for salvation. Therefore an explanation of the facts concerning salvation must include at least the following:

1. All people have sinned (Rom. 3:23)
2. The penalty for sin is death (Rom. 6:23)
3. Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins (Rom. 5:8)

## 2. Invitation to Respond to Christ Personally in Repentance and Faith

It is sufficient to note here that if we come to Christ and trust him to save us from our sin, we cannot any longer cling to sin but must willingly renounce it in genuine repentance (Acts 20:21).

...any genuine gospel proclamation must include an invitation to make a conscious decision to forsake one's sins and come to Christ in faith, asking Christ for forgiveness of sins. If either the need to repent of sins or the need to trust in Christ for forgiveness is neglected, there is not a full and true proclamation of the gospel."

In our time, many people who have not repented of sin believe that they are Christians.

Ask Gospel related questions such as,

"What did you believe when you came to Christ for salvation?"

"If you died and God asked you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' What would you say?" (from Discipleship Evangelism),

or "How did your life change after you became a Christian?"

The answers to these questions often reveal whether or not the complete Gospel message is being trusted for eternal salvation.

What about professing believers who have not turned from sin to a life direction of honoring Christ as Lord?

Read through Romans 6.4-14 and ask,

"Have you ever come to Christ in the way described here?"

Read Romans 8.6-13 with these friends and then ask,

"Which one are you?"

referring to the passage's clear descriptions of those who live in the flesh and those who live by the Spirit.

Professing believers with perhaps no fruit:

As counseling progresses, one of three options will often become apparent.

1. The counselee is a sinning believer at the low point of his spiritual life,
2. The counselee is a professing believer who refuses to repent from serious sins
3. The counselee has been around the church but has never responded to the Gospel.

## B. The Cross of Jesus Christ

The cross of Christ is the focal point of our salvation. Human sin required the just penalty of death; only the sinless Son of God could pay that price for others (Romans 6.23 and Hebrews 2.9-15).

## C. Repentance

Repentance is not a source of salvation apart from the Gospel. Rather, it is part of the response of faith by one receiving the Gospel, a manifestation of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Repentance is essential in salvation.

## D. Regeneration

Regeneration is the beginning of new spiritual life that will go on for eternity. Scripture declares that a man must be regenerated by God before he can see God. Jesus made this clear to Nicodemus in John 3.3-21.

## E. Justification

Justification is a legal term that is equivalent to declaring one “not guilty” in a courtroom.

Justification is explained in Romans 5:1-2:

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.

### III. Guilt

#### A. Christ has Taken Away the Guilt of Christians in Regard to Judgment

2 Corinthians 5.21 describes the great exchange the God has caused between every Christian and Jesus Christ:

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

We have no guilt in God’s court because Jesus Christ paid the debt for our sin.

In the judicial relationship we have with God, we have no guilt now, Nor will we ever have any guilt before Him.

#### B. In Regard to Discipline, Christians Have Guilt for Sin

1 John 1.8 teaches:

“If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

In the parental relationship we have with God, we have guilt for these sins.

Severe or long term sin invites God’s discipline, according to 1 Corinthians 5.9-13 and Hebrews 12.5-11.

#### C. Unbiblical Solutions to Guilt

Unbiblical anthropology: “Every child is pure.”

Misleading terminology: “He suffers from the disease of alcoholism.”

Not taking responsibility for sin: “She made me soooo mad!!”

Blame shifting: “He sins because he is a victim of sins against him during a difficult childhood.”

Chemical solutions to sin

#### D. What does the Bible Say about Guilt?

We are *responsible* for the sins we commit.

James 1.14-15:

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

Then when lust has conceived it gives birth to sin...”

We are also guilty for good things we *do not* do:

James 4.17

“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

## IV. What Must a Christian Do to Deal with His Own Sin Biblically?

### A. Confess

1 John 1:9                    If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalms 32:3-5 describes the second aspect of “confessing” sin to God, using the term to denote admitting guilt:

When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away  
Through my groaning all day long.  
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was drained away *as* with the fever heat of summer.  
*Selah.*

I acknowledged my sin to You,  
And my iniquity I did not hide;  
I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”;  
And You forgave the guilt of my sin.  
*Selah.*

### B. Repent

Revelation 3:19            Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline;  
therefore be zealous.....And repent.

First, turn away from sin.

Proverbs 28:13 says:

He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper,  
But he who confesses *and forsakes them* will find compassion.

Second, real repentance includes genuine regret over sin.

In 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, Paul commends Christians who have repented from sin:

“I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful,  
but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance;  
for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God...  
For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces *a repentance without regret*,  
leading to salvation,  
but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Third, repentance includes turning *to* righteousness.

Romans 6:11-12,19 tells us how to think and how to act as believers:

Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.  
Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts  
...so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

Wayne Mack describes biblical counseling cases where sin is the primary issue:  
everything before repentance points to it,  
and everything after it points back to it.  
I think this is true.

### C. Make Restitution

We make restitution for loss incurred by those against whom we sinned.

Matthew 5:23-24      Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar,  
and there remember that your brother has something against you,  
leave your offering there before the altar and go;  
first be reconciled to your brother,  
and then come to present your offering.

### D. Obey the Law

Romans 13:1-4 establishes the laws of this nation as established by God  
for the blessing of the one who does right  
and as an “avenger who brings wrath  
upon the one who practices evil.”

## V.      What is the Counsel of the Bible for a Christian             Who has been Sinned Against?

### A. Forgive

1 Corinthians 13:5      ...Love does not take into account a wrong suffered.  
We love not only our friends but our enemies (Matthew 5:46).

Ephesians 4:32 teaches the same principle:

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

How can a Christian forgive? Jesus answered that question in Matthew 18.21-35.

Here's my practical counsel to those who struggle to forgive:

*...When I find it difficult to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven me,  
I meditate of Jesus Christ dying on the cross for my own sins.*

*I use a graphic passage like Psalm 22.14-19, or*

Isaiah 53:3-5

He was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
And like one from whom men hide their face  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.  
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.

*Then, from that vantage point, I choose to regard my sins, forgiven through the blood of Christ, as an unpayable debt, and the worst sin against me as only three months' wages, which I gladly forgive.*

## B. Deal Biblically with the Shame of Sin Against You

Some sins against us carry with them the complication of shame.

Christians are "justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," Romans 3.24.

Jesus Christ suffered both punishment for sin and humiliating *public shame* on the cross, Hebrews 12.2.

Jesus Christ bore the shame of sin, including the shame of being sinned against.

## VI. Conclusion

## A Christian's Guide to Dealing with Sin

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### When I have sinned

- 1 John 1:9      If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- Psalms 32:3-5      When I kept silent *about my sin*, my body wasted away  
Through my groaning all day long.  
For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was drained away *as* with the fever heat of summer.  
*Selah.*
- I acknowledged my sin to You,  
And my iniquity I did not hide;  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD";  
And You forgave the guilt of my sin.  
*Selah.*
- ...I confessed my sin to God (I agree with Him, I hate my sin also).*
- 2 Corinthians 7:9-10      I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God... For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.
- ...I genuinely regret my sins, not because of their consequences, but because I sinned against the Lord.*
- Proverbs 28:13      He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper,  
But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion.
- Revelation 3:19      Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous  
And repent.
- Psalms 51:16-17      For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it;  
You are not pleased with burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.



*...I prayed and meditated on these Scriptures until I repented of sin. I told God that I intend to not sin in this way again.*

Romans 6:11-12,19 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts...so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.

*...As I turned away from sin, I turned toward righteousness as the purposed direction of my life.*

Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come to present your offering.

*...I confessed my sin to the person(s) aware that I sinned against them and asked for their forgiveness.*

When I have been sinned against

1 Corinthians 13:5 ...Love does not take into account a wrong suffered.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just As God in Christ also has forgiven you.

*...I forgave as God, in Christ, forgives me. I chose to remember no more the sins against me in terms of holding those sins against those who committed them..*

*Therefore, I no longer think about or speak about those sins to hurt or stand opposed to that person, but only for the purposes of loving and helping that person grow in sanctification.*

Matthew 18:21-35 Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said\* to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished

to settle accounts with his slaves. “When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. “But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. “So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.’ “And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. “But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began to choke him*, saying, ‘Pay back what you owe.’ “So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began to plead* with him, saying, ‘Have patience with me and I will repay you.’ “But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. “So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. “Then summoning him, his lord said\* to him, ‘You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ‘Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?’ “And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. “My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.”

Isaiah 53:3-5

He was despised and forsaken of men,  
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;  
And like one from whom men hide their face  
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.  
Surely our griefs He Himself bore,  
And our sorrows He carried;  
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,  
Smitten of God, and afflicted.  
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,  
He was crushed for our iniquities;  
The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him,  
And by His scourging we are healed.

*...When I find it difficult to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven me, I meditate of Jesus Christ dying on the cross for my own sins. Then, from that vantage point, I choose to regard my sins, forgiven through the blood of Christ, as an unpayable debt, and the worst sin against me as only three months' wages, which I gladly forgive.*

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

*...I actively replace the thoughts of thinking unbiblically about the sins against me and those who committed them with the thoughts described in Philippians 4.8*

*The conclusion:*

Psalms 51:1-12

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;  
According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity

And cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions,

And my sin is ever before me.

Against You, You only, I have sinned

And done what is evil in Your sight,

So that You are justified when You speak

And blameless when You judge.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,

And in sin my mother conceived me.

Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being,

And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean;

Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me to hear joy and gladness,

Let the bones which You have broken rejoice.

Hide Your face from my sins

And blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from Your presence

And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation

And sustain me with a willing spirit.