

Lesson Eleven: Sin and Grace

How does God deal with our sins after we have become Christians?

We have already studied how to become a Christian. After we have become Christians we still commit sins. What is our status with God when we commit sins? Does He expect perfect obedience or is He able to accept us in spite of our sins? If God is not expecting perfection from us, what is He expecting?

The Answers

The New Testament answers these questions in several different ways.

1. Father-Child: The simplest answer is found in the new relationship we have with God through Jesus Christ. He becomes our Father and we become His children (**I John 3:1**) God deals with His children as any good father would deal with his own children. He has high hopes and expectations for all of His children, but He accepts them where they are as they are (whether they are an immature, new-born babe or an older son or daughter) and begins to discipline and teach and help them grow from where they are to greater maturity. (**Hebrews 12:4-11**) Nothing breaks this relationship except an out and out rebellion against and rejection of the Father by the child. (See the case of the Prodigal Son in **Luke 15:11-24**). But even when the son rejected the Father, the Father received him back when he returned.

2. A Sin that Leads to Death and a Sin that Doesn't Lead to Death. In **I John 5:16-17** John says to Christians that there are 2 kinds of sin: A sin that leads to death and a sin that doesn't lead to death. Death means separation. There is a sin that separates Christians from God and there is a sin that doesn't separate Christians from God. What is the difference? The answer is in the area of motive.

What is the definition of sin? The most common word for "sin" in the OT and the NT literally means "to miss the mark". Imagine the bullseye on the target as being the will of God done perfectly. When we miss the bullseye we have sinned.

Why do Christians sin, "miss the mark"?

1. Ignorance
2. Weakness of the Moment
3. Shortfall Romans 3:23
4. Apathy or Rebellion Hebrews 10:26

There is a fundamental difference in motive between Sins 1-3 and Sin 4. There is no rebellion or apathy in Sins 1-3. The sin that leads to death, the sin that God cannot tolerate even in his children is Apathy or Rebellion.

3. Continual Cleansing for Christians who "Walk in the Light." I John 1:5-10 is written to Christians. John describes what it means to "walk in the light."

Walking in the light is not a walk of perfect obedience. Read I John 1:7 closely. Those who walk in the light have sin and they need cleansing by the blood of Christ. What kind of sin would someone who walks in the light be guilty of? Look above at Sins 1-3.

The Cleansing is Continual. The tense of the word “cleanse” is present tense. The present tense in Greek is often used to describe action which is continual and ongoing. The cleansing is not just a dab here or a dab there when we need it. It’s like being in a shower all the time, being washed all the time.

What is a Christian supposed to do about his or her sins?

I John 1:8-10 Do not pretend that you are “sinless.” Rather confess them to the Father day by day.

How does a Christian confess sins?

1. **Specific Sins.** When we become aware of specific sins we have committed, by all means we should confess it to the Father, and if it involves another person, we should confess it to them.
2. **Characteristic Sins.** However, John is not referring so much to specific acts of sin which have happened, as he is to our characteristic sins. Before tomorrow gets here we already know what sins we are likely to commit based upon all of our past. These are our characteristic sins. God expects us day by day to confess those weaknesses and sins and to ask him for strength to avoid them and overcome them through the day.

THE BIG POINT: When Christians handle their sins like this, they never stand outside the grace of God. They are continually being cleansed and can live with the assurance that they belong to God at all times.

Other Scriptures Which Relate to the Issue of Sin and Grace in the Life of a Christian

- Romans 7 I know what’s right and I want to do what is right, but I don’t always do it.
Why? Sin dwells in my body and is always pulling me down.
Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God who gives us
the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Romans 8:1-16 There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. The mind set on the
Spirit is life and peace but the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God.
- Colossians 3:1-4 Set your mind on things above
- James 5:19-20 Christians can sin in such a way as to be lost.