



The Good News

January 12th, 2020

Volume 20, Issue 2

What do I do when I sin?

By Michael McCleary

What do you do when you discover you have sinned? Do you drop everything and ask God's forgiveness? Do you wait until the end of the day and ask forgiveness for all the sins of the day all at once? Do you not even bother praying since God knows you've sinned, so what's the point of telling Him something He already knows?

What should we do when we sin? No matter how long we have been Christians, when we sin, we should ask ourselves this question. The Bible tells us the things that we are to do when we sin, but it starts with our attitude toward sin.

Our attitude: It isn't godly or righteous to say to ourselves, "Well, I can sin now, and then I can pray for forgiveness afterward and everything will be fine." Heb. 10:26 tells us that if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins". If I choose to commit sin with the concept that God will just forgive me afterward, will God really forgive me? No, because I obviously didn't fight the temptation, and I apparently did not have godly sorrow afterward. We learn in Rom. 12:9 that we are to abhor that which is evil, which means that we will be fighting against sin. In Gal. 5:13 we learn that we are not to use liberty as an occasion to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Just because we now have the ability to pray to God for forgiveness does not mean that we can just do what we want and then ask forgiveness for it.

Sorrow and Repentance: In II Cor. 7:9-10, Paul had made the Corinthians ashamed of the things they had committed, and they sorrowed over it and repented of their sins. Notice it wasn't just that they were sorry and continued in their sins. Their sorrow brought about the determination to change the things they were doing so that they would no longer commit sin. I can tell God that I am sorry I did something, but if I do

not have the determination to not commit the sin again, for what am I sorry? Am I sorry that I committed sin and thus separated myself from God, or am I sorry that God doesn't approve of something that I have every intention of doing again? Godly sorrow works in us repentance. Repentance means to change. This change isn't something that is subjective, as in "Well, I tried a little harder", but rather is absolute in that I show by my actions that I have repented. John challenges the "brood of vipers" to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" in Luke 3:7-8. If I am truly sorry for something, I will no longer do it, and I will do the things that truly show my sorrow and change of heart and mind.

Be baptized (Acts 22:16, Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, I Pet. 3:21) or Ask forgiveness: One of the actions that is required of one who has become a Christian is that, when they sin, they must ask God's forgiveness. If we believed that the grace of God continually cleanses us from all sin, then there would be no need to ask God's forgiveness, nor would there be a commandment for it. Yet in I John 1:9 we learn if we confess our sins, God will forgive us, if we ask in sorrow and with repentance. We learn then that, while God does know we sin, we are required to confess it to God.

We must always ask what we must do in order to be well-pleasing to God. Doing these things when we sin will help us to achieve that goal...but better yet, let's strive not to sin at all. (I John 2:1)