


... to Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins  by His blood. Rev. 1:5

"... and Thou will cast their sins into the depths of the sea." Micah 7:19

Call sin, sin (by its worst name)

"If we confess (agree with God) our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9



"And their sins and iniquities I remember no more." Hebrews 10:17

"... and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them as gold is tested. Zechariah 13:9

Refiner's Pot

Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction (Is. 48:10, NASB).

And I will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested (Zech. 13:9, NASB).

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man (Mark 7:21-23, NASB).

The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds (Jer. 17:9, 10, NASB).

Examine me, O Lord, and prove me, test my heart and my mind (Ps. 26:2, KJV).

If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me (Ps. 66:18, KJV).

But where sin increased, grace increased all the more (Rom. 5:20b, NIV).

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness and by whose stripes ye were healed (1 Pet. 2:24, KJV).

...and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19, NASB).

And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more (Heb. 10:17, KJV).

Take away the dross from the silver, and then comes out a vessel for the smith (Prov. 25:4, NASB).

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18, NIV).

GRACE for the Rest of Your Life

REFINER'S POT

CLEANSING GRACE: Purpose of Trials; Calling Sin, Sin; Trap of Habitual Sin; Conformity to Christ

Purpose of Trials

The refining process is referred to in the Scriptures in several passages. Zechariah 13:9 states, *"I will refine them as silver is refined and will test them as gold is tested."* Isaiah refers to the same primitive metaphor, *"Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver, I have tested you in the furnace of affliction"* (Isa. 48:10).

The refining process is more sophisticated nowadays. Metallurgists have an entirely different processing system, but the basic principles are still the same. Intense heat is used to separate the dross (impurities) from the ore. As the dross rises to the surface of the heated caldron and is removed, the ore is freed from its impurities.

The black caldron represents our hearts. The refining process that God puts us through is to *"purify for Himself a people all His own..."* (Tit. 2:14). This is His goal for us. Many times we resist this process. If we understood the process maybe we would RESIST less and REST more.

To begin this refining process, first of all there is fire (representing our trials). The purpose of the fire is to separate the dross (impurities) from the ore. *"Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you"* (1 Pet. 4:12). *"...That the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ"* (1 Pet. 1:6-7).

"Quality of character is largely forged through difficulty, disappointment, pain and sorrow—in the furnace of affliction. But the hand of the Refiner is at work in every experience of life."
(Back to the Bible)

"The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD tests hearts" (Prov. 17:3).

"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately wicked. Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind..." (Jer.17:9-10).

The trials/circumstances in our lives, by God's design, are allowed so as to surface the dross (impurities) of our hearts. This is not pleasant for us. When we see the dross, we say, *"Oh, where did that come from; that is not like me."* Or, *"If he or she did not do that, then I would not have done what I did"* (the blame game). But it is like us, because from within come all of these things. *"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts and fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man"* (Mk. 7:21-23).

It is the outside pressure and heat that causes the dross to rise to the surface. We should not be surprised at the dross—the impurities—in our lives. **It is not out of the blue—it is from you!** Our tendency is to deny the dross. We push it all back down instead of letting God take the dross away. It is the Lord *"who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and*

disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God" (I Cor. 4:5). Will we allow Him to refine us?

Hudson Taylor was talking to a young missionary who was about to start work in China. "Look at this," Taylor said and then proceeded to pound his fist on the table. The teacups jumped, and the tea was spilled. While the startled young man was wondering what was going on, Taylor said, "When you begin your work, you will be buffeted in numerous ways. The trials will be like blows. Remember, these blows will bring out only what is in you." (Our tendency is to blame the culture, the climate, the people or the circumstances.)

Let's invite the Lord to:

Search: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way" (Ps. 139:23-24).*

Examine: *"Examine me, O LORD, and try me; test my mind and my heart" (Ps. 26:2).*

Create: *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10).*

Calling Sin, Sin—'Homologeō'—Agree with God

Note the phrase on the top left of the visual: Call Sin, Sin (by its worst name).

The verse in the middle says, *"If we confess."* Let's stop here. The Greek word for 'confess' is 'homologeō', which means, "to say the same thing as", or "to agree with God." Let's go on: *"If we confess (agree with God) our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 Jn. 1:9).

So if we agree with God about our sins—that is what He is asking us to do on our part, then He comes in with His part—*"He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us."* So our part is agreeing; His part is forgiving and cleansing. Often, we spend much of our time asking for forgiveness and asking for cleansing, but we never confess, never agree with Him about our sin. It is a subtle shift, and many times we say, "Oh, please forgive me again for the same sin." We pray over and over again. We get tired; we do not even think of calling sin, sin. But in order to agree with God, we have to call sin, sin. When we try to lighten up what sin is, the Lord brings it down to its bottom line—its worst name.

Our Dross At the Cross

"Take away the dross from the silver, and there comes out a vessel for the smith" (Prov. 25:4). When we do agree with God, His heavenly scoop of **GRACE** comes to remove the dross. *"Where sin abounded, **GRACE** abounded all the more" (Rom. 5:20). "And there is forgiveness with Thee" (Ps. 130:4).* There will never be more sin than **GRACE** can handle.

We cannot cleanse ourselves. God in His grace sent His Son as a substitute for our sins. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24).

"Christ Jesus gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify for Himself a people all His own..." (Tit. 2:14 Berk).

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us" (Eph. 1:7).

"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).

Cleansing Grace

Sheep are very dependent creatures by God's design. God says, "*We are His people, the sheep of His pasture*" (Ps. 100:3). Sheep cannot cleanse themselves. They cannot rid themselves of their own wool. They need to be sheared once a year. If they are not sheared, their wool continues to grow, get heavier and become very matted with debris and manure. The sheep's burden becomes greater. They are helpless. They need the shepherd to rid them of their encumbrances. In the same way, the Lord may be saying to us, "You are my sheep. You are helpless. Call on me. I will cleanse you and rid you of all your encumbrances. I am your Shepherd."

Let's call sin, sin, as soon as possible because that is where we get release. If we call it by any other name we are stuck with it because there is no other place for it than at the Cross. Our dross—our sin—is what Christ died for. If we do not call it sin, it will keep churning around inside of us. But there is a place for sin at the Cross, and therefore, there is hope for sin.

Review: "By Its Worst Name"

Why do alcoholics have such a hard time, for instance? They call it a disease! Let's see how our culture has deceived us in the language we use.

"The sociologist who uses the 'non-monogamous' term says she does so because it carries no connotation of good or evil. Other examples of euphemistic smoke screens abound: What used to be 'living in sin' is now a 'meaningful relationship.' What used to be 'chastity' is now 'neurotic inhibitions.' What used to be 'self-indulgence' is now 'self-fulfillment.'

"Such pre-sweetened phrases represent the foundation of the image-over-substance philosophy. Don't change your ways. Don't change your heart. And, above all, don't feel guilty. Instead, simply change the image of your action." (*Focus on the Family*)

Man calls it a liberty; God calls it lawlessness.

Man calls it a trifle; God calls it a tragedy.

Man calls it a mistake; God calls it a madness.

Man calls it a weakness; God calls it willfulness.

(Walter B. Knight)

One cartoon by Dick LaPine pictured "A politically correct Jonathan Edwards." It showed a caricature of Edwards, with Bible in hand, preaching on: "Spiritually Impaired in the Hands of a Distraught Supreme Higher Power!"

Another cartoon depicts a petition which reads, "And this petition requests changing the term 'sinner' to 'person who is morally challenged.'"

What ever happened to sin? Euphemisms abound in today’s culture. A euphemism is a nicer sounding word to replace a harsh reality.



Joni Eareckson Tada notes, “Gradually, though no one remembers exactly how it happened, the unthinkable becomes tolerable, then acceptable, and then legal, and then applaudable.”

These terms—“irritated,” “annoyed,” and “frustrated”—are synonyms for anger. Other terms for anger are “being hurt,” “aggravated,” and “grieved.” It is interesting how many people, especially Christians, have trouble admitting they are angry. In fact, some even have problems realizing that the emotion they are feeling is anger.

God brings everything down to its worst name because that is what He died for. We need to see that it is that bad. He did not die for our “Upsets,” but for our “Sins.” “Our Lord Jesus did not die for imaginary sins, but His heart’s blood was spilt to wash out deep crimson stains, which nothing else can remove.” (C.H. Spurgeon) See Isaiah 1:18.

To create God had to speak; to redeem He had to bleed—“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the **precious blood of Christ**, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

We need to let God remove the dross because it is “Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood” (Rev. 1:5).

To further the analogy, God says that He will cast our sins into the sea. Note the black dross falling off of the scoop on the right side of the visual. “I will cast their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:17), and “He will remove our transgressions as far as the east is from the west” (Ps. 103:12).

Have you heard this phrase?

“God forgives and forgets; I can forgive, but I can’t forget; I’m not God!”

It may have originated from the verse, *“Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more”* (Heb. 10:17). Does the verse really say He forgets? It says, *“He remembers no more.”* To remember no more means “never reckon,” “never impute,” “never charge to our account.” The Lord says that He will never bring those up again. Forgetfulness is more like a memory problem, whereas “remembering no more” is a strength—not a weakness. *“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more”* (Heb. 8:12).

Trap of Habitual Sin

Some may say, “I know my particular sin is forgiven, but then why do I keep remembering it? It comes back to my memory a lot.” Well, it is surely not from God, because He says, *“I will remember those sins no more.”* Well then where does it come from? Look in the center of the card at the pitchfork that represents Satan’s lies.

Others question, “Has God really forgiven my past?” Or, “I cannot forgive myself!” What would God say to you? “Mind your own business. Jesus made your sins His business. When He died for you, He took them and dropped them into the depths of the sea and put up a “No Fishing” sign.” (Geo. Woodall)

Our business is to agree with God and believe that *“I, even I, am the One who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins!”* (Isa. 43:25).

Peter reminds us of the fact of **cleansing grace**, *“Have you forgotten that you were cleansed from your past sins?”* (2 Pet. 1:9). Then Paul says to the Corinthians (their background was one of the most pagan cities in the world at that time), *“And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God”* (1 Cor. 6:11).

While God puts up a **“No Fishing”** sign, Satan puts up his **“Open Season for Fishing, Enjoy”** sign. When a memory of our past sin is dredged up, we know who is behind it—Satan the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10).

Satan wants to steal our time and wants attention from us; he is a time-robber. Satan is into **condemning**; God is into **convicting**. Let’s look at the difference: Condemnation or accusations attack you as a person. Let’s say you lied. Satan would say, **“You’re a liar**, you’re a dirty rotten liar, you’re no good.” We tend to follow his line of reasoning and find ourselves in a deep pit of discouragement and unbelief sitting with our fishing pole waiting for more. It is also like sitting back, putting our video in the VCR and playing it over and over—remembering it again and again. Satan does accuse us day and night (Rev. 12:10)!

However, God would say, **“You lied**, agree with me about that, I died for it, accept my forgiveness and move on.” We do not need to beg for His forgiveness, nor beg for His cleansing—that is His part; He will take care of that.

“We are not forgiven our sins because we ask to be forgiven. It is when we confess our sins that we are forgiven. It will not do to substitute prayer for confession, though prayer may be the means of expressing a true sorrow for sin. Multitudes are praying for forgiveness who have made no confession of their sin. There is no Scripture for the child of God under grace which justifies such a substitution.... The child of God is forgiven when he makes a full confession.” (Lewis Sperry Chafer)

Conformity to Christ

How does the refiner know when the dross is gone and the gold is finally purified? When he leans over the caldron, looks on the surface of the gold and he sees his own reflection. The pure gold acts as a mirror. *“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit”* (2 Cor. 3:18). *“For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son”* (Rom. 8:29). God’s desire is to refine us until we shine forth as a reflection of Himself. And He will not give up on us in this process, for *“He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Phil. 1:6).

“When the dross has been removed from the gold, the refiner will remove the fire.” (F.J. Huegel)
“But He knows the way I take; when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (Job 23:10).

When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie;

My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply:

The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design

Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

(Hymn: “How Firm a Foundation”)

The Kansas Senate Prayer—Year 2000

When minister Joe Wright was asked to open the new session of the Kansas Senate, what they heard was a stirring prayer, passionately calling our country to repentance and righteousness: “Heavenly Father, we come before you today...to seek your direction and guidance. We know Your Word says, ‘Woe on those who call evil good,’ but that’s exactly what we have done. We have lost our spiritual equilibrium and reversed our values. We confess that: We have ridiculed the absolute truth of Your Word and called it pluralism. We have worshipped other gods and called it multi-culturalism. We have endorsed perversion and called it an alternative lifestyle. We have exploited the poor and called it the lottery. We have neglected the needy and called it self-preservation. We have rewarded laziness and called it welfare. We have killed our unborn children and called it a choice. We have shot abortionists and called it justifiable. We have neglected to discipline our children and called it building self-esteem. We have abused power and called it political savvy. We have coveted our neighbor’s possessions and called it ambition. We have polluted the air with profanity and pornography and called it freedom of expression. We have ridiculed the time-honored values of our forefathers and called it enlightenment. Search us, O God, and know our hearts today; cleanse us from every sin and set us free. Guide and bless these men and women who have been sent to direct us to the center of Your will. I ask it in the name of Your Son, the living Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.”

Review and reinforce this lesson by incorporating the following notes and quotes pages and by reading the Scriptures.

“FRUSTRATION” IS SIN?

Living on an island in the South China Sea had its many inconveniences! Traveling 25 miles to town in an outrigger boat was just one of them. However, when we arrived in town, we were anxious to shop for our groceries and get back to the island as quickly as possible. The people there needed us. But it was not that simple! Even finding a gas pump to buy gasoline for our return trip home was a frustration. The gasoline supply ship from the main island was detained. We went to another store. The vendor had no more bottled gas to sell—that was frustrating. There was no meat in the market; the vegetables were very scarce—that was frustrating!

That evening we were able to stay overnight at a Filipino pastor’s home. In our conversation, I told him that I was very interested in knowing the Tagalog word for “frustration.” He thought a while. While he was thinking, I gave him a few more “frustrations” that I faced in town that day. Then he replied, “kasalanan.” I knew that was the word for “sin.” Perhaps he did not understand what I meant by “frustration.” I gave a few more examples. But he again repeated the word “kasalanan.” It took me a while to “get it.” “Kasalanan” means “sin.” There is no Tagalog word for “frustration.”

As I processed the information, I did realize that I was not accepting my circumstances, and was irritated that things did not come together for me. That was sin and I learned to call it by that name. I was not entrusting everything to God in the midst of my frustrations. Soon the supply ship arrived and we were on our way.

THE PAPAYA TREE

In our plans to build a ‘bamboo’ house in the Philippines, we were careful to build so as to leave the papaya tree standing. It had large beautiful leaves and would be a source of fruit for the family. One day, our carpenter was working on the finishing touches of our house, and I was called into the village for a medical crisis. When I came back, he had cleared some of the brush off the grounds. Then I looked over to where the papaya tree was. Yes, I said WAS! “The papaya tree!” I gasped. “What happened to the papaya tree?”

His wife interjected, “A-té (Big sister) is ‘nagalit’ (angry!)” I said, “No, I’m not really angry, I’m just upset, because we planned this whole building project around this tree, and now the tree is gone!” The carpenter countered, “Well, it was a male tree; it wouldn’t reproduce anyway, so why keep it around?”

“What in the world is a male tree?” I asked. “I have never heard of such a thing!” “And even if it were a male tree, it was still green and beautiful, and now it’s gone!” Again I heard his wife’s comment, “A-té is ‘nagalit.’” Again, I answered that I wasn’t angry, but just upset.

By then I was surprised at how angry I was over the stupid tree. I felt a little bit like Jonah. So then I confessed, “Yes, you’re right. I am angry. I am sorry.”

It was a pivotal lesson to show me that when I was confronted with a sin, my automatic response was to euphemize it—making a nicer sounding name for a harsher reality. But God knows how to bring all our sins down to the worst name—in this case—ANGER. As we learn to acknowledge and agree with God about our sin, we can begin to enjoy the forgiving and **cleansing grace** that He supplies!

By missionary Dottie Connor Bingham

Call it Sin!

I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me (Psalm 51:3).

A pro baseball player who was suspended because of cocaine addiction explained his position to the press. He told reporters that he suffered from a disease called chemical dependency. He said it had taken him a long time to conclude that his drug abuse was not a moral issue, but rather a disease.

This approach is understandable – even if it is inaccurate. We all know that it is easier to face a problem if we don't have to accept the blame for it. It's easier to say "I'm sick" than it is to say "I'm wrong." And the bad choices we make will usually lead to a bondage that seems more physical and chemical than either moral or spiritual.

That's the trouble. What may appear at first to be the easiest way out will eventually leave us in a worse condition. Unless we acknowledge that a problem may have a moral base, we will never enjoy the healing we can receive by being forgiven. On the other hand, if we are willing to admit that we did wrong – that we sinned – then we can be forgiven by God and by our fellowman. By admitting that we have failed morally and spiritually, we qualify for spiritual deliverance that only God can give. No matter what we call our problem it will not be alleviated unless it is erased from the record by Him.

Let's not delay the healing process by seeing only the physical side. We must also see the spiritual side. Let's not be too easy on ourselves. If we don't call sin "sin", we will eventually learn about it the hard way.

Martin R. DeHaan II

If you make an excuse for sin, your sin will never be excused.

**Jesus died to pay sin's debt,
Forgiveness to bestow;
But if we try to make excuse,
His grace we'll never know.**

Dennis J. DeHaan



The language we use: The sociologist who uses the "non-monogamous" term says she does so because it carries no connotation of good or evil. Other examples of euphemistic smoke-screens abound: What used to be "living in sin" is now a "meaningful relationship." What used to be "chastity" is now "neurotic inhibitions." What used to be "self-indulgence" is now "self-fulfillment." What used to be "killing an unborn baby" is now "choice." Such pre-sweetened phrases represent the foundation of the image-over-substance philosophy. Don't change your ways. Don't change your heart. And, above all, don't feel guilty. Instead, simply change the image of your action.

Focus on the Family, January 1988

Sin-onyms

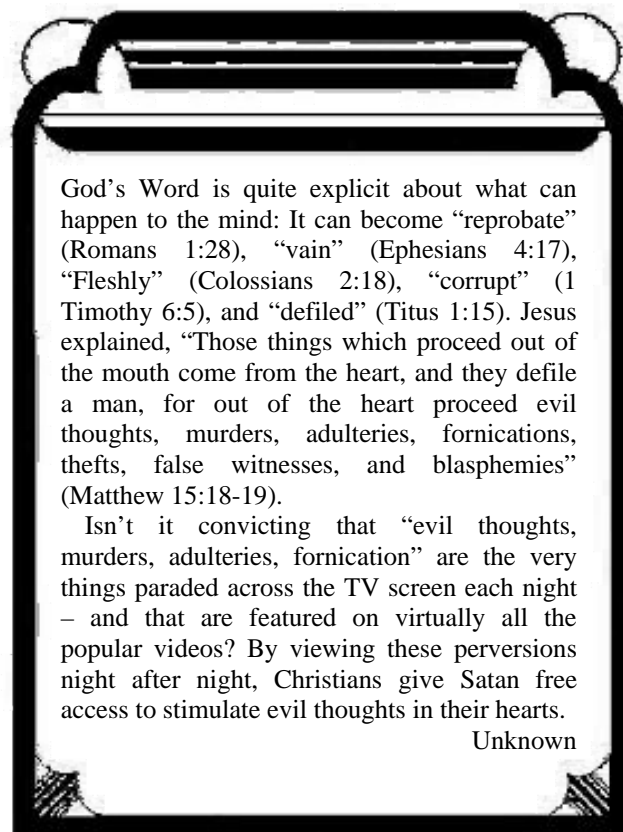
All unrighteousness is sin. (1 John 5:17)

Several years ago, a broadcasting company in Finland conducted a contest to find how many synonyms people could think of. (A synonym is a word having a similar meaning to another word in the same language.) First place went to a contestant who came up with 747 synonyms for drunkenness. A man in prison was awarded second place for sending in 678 words for the same thing. He also won a prize for thinking of 170 synonyms for stealing. Another man knew 203 words for lying. It was an interesting contest indeed.

Now, there is nothing wrong with using synonyms. Writers have books of synonyms and refer to them all the time. But we run into a problem when we begin to call sin by other, more polite words. People sometimes do that by labeling it as a mistake, a blunder, a weakness, the result of conditioning or environment, or even a disease. However, transgressing God's holy law is sin – no matter what we call it – and sin destroys our walk with God. Sin causes us to "walk in darkness" instead of walking "in the light" (1 John 1:6-7).

It is only when we acknowledge sin for exactly what it is – unrighteousness – that we can avail ourselves of God's provision of cleansing and forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9). As Christians, we need to stop using synonyms for sin and call it what God calls it. When we do, our fellowship with Him can be restored.

Paul Van Gorder



“No Fishing”

*You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.
Micah 7:19*

D. L. Moody once said, “There are two ways of covering our sins: Man’s way and God’s way. If you seek to hide them, they will have a resurrection sometime; but if you let the Lord cover them, neither the devil nor man will ever be able to find them again.”

George Woodall was a missionary to London’s inner city. One day a young woman he had led to the Lord came to him and said, “I keep getting worried. Has God really forgiven my past?”

Mr. Woodall replied, “If this is troubling you, I think I know what He would say to you. He would tell you to mind your business.” “What do you mean?” she inquired with a puzzled look. He told her that Jesus had made her sins His business. When He took them away, He put them behind His back, dropped them into the depths of the sea, and posted a notice that reads, “No Fishing!”

Although the Bible doesn’t put it in those terms, the principle is certainly accurate. When our sins are covered by the blood of Christ, they are blotted out completely and forever (Isaiah 43:25).

Troubled believer, don’t go fishing for past sins that God has forgiven. His promise is true: Our sins have been cast into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19) and He’ll remember them no more (Hebrews 8:12).

Henry G. Bosch

Man calls sin an infirmity, God calls it iniquity.

*A synonym for evil deeds
May soothe the guilt within,
But if we speak the truth to Christ,
His blood will purge the sin.
Dennis J. DeHaan*

***They are buried in the deep, deep sea;
They can never, never trouble me!
Cease, my unavailing tears for my sins of all the
years –
They lie buried in the deep, deep sea.
Chisholm***

*Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me and know my anxious thoughts;
And see if there be any hurtful way in me,
And lead me in the everlasting way.
Psalm 139:23-24*

From time to time we must allow the illumination of the light of God’s Word to flood the inner sanctuary of our souls. We must allow our private thought life to be carefully scrutinized by God’s holy, pure spirit. What He there reveals to us as offensive to Him, contrary to God’s will, and in conflict with the mind of Christ, must be swept away.

There must be an inner purging, definite purification. It is perfectly possible to have our thought and mind-set altered. God, by His Spirit, through His Word wants to do this for us. But we must want it as well. Nothing in our thinking habits will ever alter unless we wish a change.

W. Phillip Keller

Our Dross – At the Cross “Forgiveness”

The promise of forgiveness was first announced at the golden calf incident. “The Lord, The Lord, the compassionate and gracious God [is] slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (Exodus 34:6,7).

That promise was repeated frequently in the Old Testament (Numbers 14:18; Deuteronomy 5:9,10; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15; Joel 2:13; and Jonah 4:2). Sin was removed “as far as the east is from the west” (Psalm 103:12). There was no limit on the extent of God’s forgiveness.

The new covenant magnifies that gift of infinite grace. It provides a wonderful foretaste of the ministry and mystery of Christ’s death for us. For all who place their trust in Christ, God will remember their sins no more. Although He is all knowing, He deliberately decides not to remember them against us any longer. He chooses not to bring them up and let them block our communion with Him. “Hallelujah. What a Savior!”

Dr. Walt Kaiser
Moody Monthly, June 1991

David got immediate relief when he confessed his personal sins to God. In Psalm 32 he prayed, “I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ ... and you forgave the guilt of my sin” (Psalm 32:5).

The word “confess” here literally means to throw out or open the hand – to disclose – to openly acknowledge what I have. That calls for absolute honesty with God. And, my friend, full confession brings full relief! It’s hard at the moment to face yourself and face your sin, but the relief in your heart will be immediate.

Think about this: A godly person sins less and less, but he confesses more and more. A worldly person sins more and more, but he confesses less and less.

Character of Gold

Quality of character is largely forged through difficulty, disappointment, pain and sorrow – in the furnace of affliction. But the hand of the Refiner is at work in every experience of life.

In a recent chapel message, Mr. Wiersbe talked about going through the furnace. “The furnace is a place of examination and education,” he said. “God doesn’t put us into a furnace so He can learn something. He already knows us very well. It’s so we can learn something about ourselves. And in the process, we learn what is really important.”

The Refiner Is at Work

The positive side of this testing is that, in Mr. Wiersbe’s words, “The furnace is a place of expectation. Job 23:10 says, ‘When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold’”.

“The Goldsmith, I am told, watches the crucible and keeps taking off the dross. And when he can see his reflection in the molten metal, he knows that it is ready.

“He’s watching us, and we’re going to let Him accomplish what He wants to accomplish through this experience. I know that one of these days, He’s going to bring us for the like gold.”

That’s the way God works – in your life and in ours. That’s the way character is formed. That’s how we become more and more like Him.

The editor
Back to the Bible

*Man calls it an accident;
God calls it an abomination.
Man calls it a blunder;
God calls it blindness.
Man calls it a defect;
God calls it a disease.
Man calls it a chance;
God calls it a choice.
Man calls it an error;
God calls it an enmity.
Man calls it a fascination;
God calls it a fatality.
Man calls it an infirmity;
God calls it an iniquity.
Man calls it a luxury;
God calls it leprosy.
Man calls it a liberty;
God calls it lawlessness.
Man calls it a trifle;
God calls it a tragedy.
Man calls it a mistake;
God calls it madness.
Man calls it a weakness;
God calls it willfulness.
Walter B. Knight*

***Search me, O God! My actions try,
And let my life appear
As seen by Thine all-searching eye,
To mine my ways make clear.
Rev. F. Bottome***

Hudson Taylor was talking to a young missionary who was about to start work in China. “Look at this,” Taylor said and then proceeded to pound his fist on the table. The teacups jumped, and the tea was spilled. While the startled young man was wondering what was going on, Taylor said, “When you begin your work, you will be buffeted in numerous ways. The trials will be like blows. Remember, these blows will bring out only what is in you” (See Mark 7:21-23).

*“He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.”
(Malachi 3:3)*

Our Father, who seeks to perfect His saints in holiness, knows the value of the refiner's fire. It is with the most precious metals that the assayer takes the most pains, and subjects them to the hot fire, because such fires melt the metal, and only the molten mass releases its alloy or takes perfectly its new form in the mould. The old refiner never leaves his crucible, but sits down by it, lest there should be one excessive degree of heat to mar the metal. But as soon as he skims from the surface the last of the dross, and sees his own face reflected, he puts out the fire.

Arthur T. Pierson

The Refiner

*“He sat by a fire of seven-fold heat,
As He watched by the precious ore,
And closer He bent with a searching gaze
As He heated it more and more,
He knew He had ore that could stand the test,
And He wanted the finest gold to mould as a crown for the King to wear,
So set with gems with a price untold.
So He laid our gold in the burning fire,
Tho’ we fain would have said Him “Nay”,
And He watched the dross that we had not seen,
And it melted and passed away.
And the gold grew brighter and yet more bright,
But our eyes were so dim with tears,
We saw but the fire – not the Master’s hand,
And questioned with anxious fears.
Yet our gold shone out with a richer glow,
As it mirrored a Form above,
That bent o’er the fire, tho’ unseen by us,
With a look of ineffable love.
Can we think that it pleases His loving hear to cause us a moment’s pain?
Ah, no! but He saw through the present cross
The bliss of eternal gain.
So He waited there with a watchful eye,
With a love that is strong and sure,
And His gold did not suffer a bit more heat,
Than was needed to make it pure.”*

H. L. Roush

How to Cope with Guilt and Failure

By Erwin Lutzer

When I was a boy in Canada, we played a snow game called Fox-and-Goose. We'd stamp huge wagon wheels in the snow, designating trails and "cities of refuge," and play tag among them. When that wheel got too messed up with the kicking and falling, we'd stamp out a new wheel in another part of the yard.

We didn't want those messy trails any more. We wanted a new beginning.

So many people today want a fresh beginning. That's probably why we have so many books on success. But I've read little that really helps people doomed by their failures, who feel dragged down by guilt and don't know the way out.

We all fail in one of two ways. First, we fail through human inability. I had that problem with French when I had to pass a competency exam for graduate work. In school I'd learned how to translate French, not to pronounce it. The only thing I could pronounce was "cut the grass" and in French that's *mow de lawn!*

My French was so bad that I had to take the exam four times before I passed it.

But the failure I'm concerned with comes from sinful choices. This failure leads to wasted lives, bad marriages, frustration, hurt, anxiety, and loss. Even the Bible's pages are strewn with the wreckage.

Satan enjoys failure because it lets him perpetuate two lies. First, he says, "One little sin doesn't really matter". Then he claims, "Now that you've sinned and really messed up, don't bother getting up. You're down for good".

But that's not what God says. An Old Testament prophet says, "Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me" (Micah 7:8). God wants to give us a brand new beginning for the messes and failures in our lives.

Satan doesn't want us to know that. So he sends guilt to make our failures seem all the worse. That guilt shows up several ways:

Depression One woman went to psychiatrists and psychologists for twenty years seeking relief from her depression. Finally, her pastor helped her realize she was trapped by guilt over the baby she'd borne as an unwed teenager and then killed. She could not have freedom from depression until she faced that guilt and accepted God's forgiveness.

Irritability I'm most apt to blow a fuse when I have unconfessed sin and guilt in my life. David said, "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture (vitality) is turned into the drought of summer" (Psalm 32:4).

Sickness I know someone who has actually become physically ill because she is convinced she must punish herself for past moral sins. She cannot accept God's forgiveness. Doctors say they could dismiss half their patients if they could say to them with authority, "Thou art forgiven".

Good works Some people are giving and selfless to others to atone for hurts they have caused. One boy shocked his mother by mowing the lawn unasked. She responded, "What have you been up to?" But all the good works in the world will never cover stains of guilt.

Lack of faith I've always wondered why some people find it difficult to believe God. But guilt can keep us from believing God's promise of forgiveness. I John 3:21 says, "If our heart condemn us not, then we have confidence toward God."

All of these mess up the trails of lives. But in 1 John 1:9 God has given us six principles for handling guilt and failure and for claiming a new beginning:

1. We need to identify the cause of guilt. Note the little word "sins". It assumes we know what our sins are and that we are ready to deal with them. If we don't, we may ask the Holy Spirit to point out the sins that cause feelings of failure and guilt.

But I have one word of caution. Maybe you've confessed your sins and still have lingering guilt. Remember that Satan accuses the brethren both night and day (Revelation 12:10)). He is anxious to produce those feelings of guilt because they shame you and they mock God.

Quote Romans 8:33-34 aloud at such times. Say, "Be gone Satan. For it is written, 'Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the One who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us'" (NASB).

2. We need to take full responsibility for our actions. "If we confess our sins." It does not say to confess your spouse's sins but your own.

The ability to avoid blame (we see this in children!) is frightening. It began in Eden when God asked Adam, "Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" Adam could have said, "Yes, Lord, I did." But instead he replied, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree." Then he lamely added, "and I ate" (Genesis 3:11-12).

Do you see the rationalization? "Lord, if You hadn't created this weak-willed woman or this tree – if, if, if – then I wouldn't have eaten it."

Adam blamed his wife even though there was not a chance in the world that he had married the wrong one. Ever since then, the human heart has avoided blame and responsibility.

Will Rogers said that America had two eras: the passing of the buffalo and the passing of the buck.

Modern psychiatry and behaviorism take this attitude when they say people commit crime because they are sick. They make crime like having the measles.

3. We must realize that Christ's sacrifice is complete. The verse says: "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Jesus Christ died on the cross to pay in full for all the sins of the whole world.

Some Christians claim they cannot face God because they can't conquer a sin habit. But in Jesus Christ that sin has been paid for. We must confess that sin in order to have fellowship with God the Father, but our legal standing is completely secure. Micah 7:19 says God casts our sins into the depths of the sea. Then He puts up a sign, "No fishing".

4. We should never confess the same offense twice. Of course if we commit the same sin, we must confess it again. But we don't have to reconfess sins we've dealt with just because those guilty thoughts return.

The verse says God is "faithful and just – righteous – to forgive us our sins". He is trustworthy. He will forgive.

And we should claim the cleansing of His forgiveness: "... and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Forgiveness restores our legal relationship with God; cleansing is the subjective experience of the cross of Jesus Christ applied right to our human spirits, so that we can actually sense the cleansing, purity, and forgiveness of God.

A woman who had an abortion told me in a counseling session, "I feel foul from the top of my head to the soles of my feet." Even though she confessed her sin, she still felt sinful.

Then I showed her that her inheritance as a child of God included forgiveness and right-standing plus cleansing and purity she could claim in Jesus' name. From that time she began to experience cleansing and her guilt went away.

5. We should realize that confession means full agreement. The Greek word for "confess" means that we agree with God that we have sinned and we give Him permission to deal with that sin.

A woman in a poor country came to the river to wash her bundle of clothes. But she was so embarrassed by how dirty her bundle was that she never opened it. She merely dipped it in the water and took it home, wet but not clean.

God says, "Don't keep your sins in a safe little bundle. I want to do a thorough cleansing in your life and that means showing Me, giving Me, all the dirty laundry of your life."

6. We must experience the healing of all personal relationships. John refers to this in the next chapter of his epistle: "The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him" (1 John 2:9,10 NASB).

Paul said our consciences commend us to every man in the sight of God (2 Corinthians 4:2). We can be cleansed and have fellowship with God; but, if we have wronged someone without making things right, we will still have a condemning heart.

Revival occurs when believers with grudges and misunderstandings make things right with others so that their consciences are clear and without condemnation.

At times in churches the Holy Spirit has moved so sweetly that people convicted of responsibility for their sins toward others go from one person to another until they get things fully right with God and man.

Remember that messy fox-and-geese trail in the snow? Some of you say of your lives, "I wish I could go back and straighten it out." But you can't. Not even God returns each flake of snow to its original place.

But He can allow a new snowfall to cover the old messes. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). God says, "I will give you a new beginning."

If anybody needed a new beginning, it was King David. At one point he messed up his life with two major sins. First with Bathsheba he committed adultery – a passion of the moment. Then he committed a deliberate, calculated sin by having Bathsheba's husband murdered.

That second sin occurred over a period of more than two weeks. It took four days for a messenger to go from Jerusalem to Rabbath-Ammon where Uriah was fighting to tell Uriah to come home. It took Uriah four days to leave the battle to return to Jerusalem. Uriah stayed in Jerusalem three days. That makes eleven days.

After David signed the death warrant, Uriah spent four more days on the way to the battle before he was cut down. That totals fifteen days of deliberate, calculated, plotted murder.

In both cases David committed sins where there could be no restitution. He could do nothing to bring back Bathsheba's purity. There was no way he could cause Uriah to rise from the dead and be reconciled to his wife. That messy trail of adultery and murder could never be straightened out.

Finally, after a year of suffering from great guilt, David confessed his sins. "For I acknowledge my transgressions," he said, "and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Psalm 51:3-4)). And on the basis of the death of Christ in our behalf, we too can be cleansed and forgiven (Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:8; Titus 3:5-6; 1 Peter 3:18).

After his confession and the knowledge of God's forgiveness, he could say, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Psalm 32:1).

In other words, blessed is the person who has experienced a new snowfall to cover the ugly messes of the past. David had pleaded, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). David's confession enabled him to stand once again on forgiven ground and to relate with confidence to the God he had failed.

If David could go from failure to forgiveness, from a messy trail to a new beginning – so can we.

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