

The Consequences of Sin

Every redeemed Christian knows that by grace through faith in the completed work of Jesus on the cross, that one has been forgiven of all sin and now has eternal life, and a home waiting for him or her in heaven. Everyone who has ever lived was an incorrigible sinner, hopelessly in debt in his sins, and by divine judgment destined for hell for lack of any ability to pay his debt. But for those who truly believe in the redemptive power of the cross, Jesus has fully paid the debt, leaving the believer judiciously sinless and therefore a bona fide member of the Body of Christ.

But what about the earthly consequences of those forgiven sins? They remain. They demand to be reckoned with. They did not disappear from the physical world, as did the sins themselves from the spiritual realm. As we look around the world in general, we can see almost everywhere the ever-worsening condition of humanity. What we are actually seeing is the accumulative compounded consequences of about 4500 years of the sins of all mankind since Noah. That is what we might call the ambient macro atmosphere in which we all live. Now, let's look more closely at each of your own micro atmospheres over which we have some, but limited control. That is where we live as individuals, in our town, family, job, church, etc. Here we can examine our individual lives and see the many consequences of our own unfortunate actions which we may choose to call indiscretions, transgressions, mistakes or what you will, but in fact, they are simply sins, and we live in the additionally polluted atmosphere of their consequences.

When you committed to Jesus and were redeemed, you know that all your sins were forgiven. You know because Scripture told you so. You know because of the Gospel's truth contained in God's Word. Perhaps you never thought about it, but the consequence of your past sins still remain in your life. Not only that, but so it will be with the consequence of the sins you have yet to commit. These sins are no less vile to God and

no less causes of undesired consequence simply because they are committed by a saved soul, than were those you committed before being saved. If, as a young Christian, you haven't yet grown sufficiently to bring out some meaningful amount of control over your sinful nature through your love for Jesus, and in gratitude for all He has done, perhaps this additional insight may add some incentive. Very likely those sins, which you yet have difficulty constraining, you can now see will also have hurting earthly consequences even though they can no longer condemn your soul.

If you haven't thought much about this perhaps, you are wondering how these consequences can seriously manifest in your personal life. Let's look at a lie. Everyone lies. Whether it is a full-fledged, deliberately articulated untruth, a half-truth, an omission of truth where a true statement was appropriate, a non-verbal deception, or a truth stated in such a way as to knowingly lead to a false conclusion, it is a lie in the context of sin. Most of us "get away" with these sins, or believe we do often enough to feel justified in continuing them, for what we rationalize at the moment to be for the "greater good." But as sins, they have earthly personal consequences. The obvious consequence is when one is caught, and is branded a liar, judged unreliable and untrustworthy, and all of the resulting ramifications, such as loss of stature, of esteem, and of opportunity. It is not being believed when telling the truth. It is not being believed when it is vital to you that you be believed. How many truths cancel the image of being a liar in the mind of the one having been lied too? Seventy, or seventy times seventy? Probably no amount of truth can ever erase the stigma from the minds of the victims, and we must therefore continue indefinitely bearing the consequences of those sins. Consider theft, or sexual "transgressions," or any other form of sin, and substitute it for "liar" in the above scenarios. You can be sure that there will be adverse consequences, which may plague you for the rest of your life.

I believe that the most tragic and painful consequences are not necessarily those, which merely effect our reputation and our dealings with others. These may in time fade away

or be lost through a changed location of one sort or another. The worst kind are those with ramifications that affect our loved ones, that warp their lives, and for which we and they never stop paying. Here, the consequences are compounded because they are levied on the innocent as well as on the guilty. Although certainly not limited to any one type of sin, the consequences of sexual sin, both in and out of marriage, are probably the most graphic in terms of how cause and effect are clearly evidenced, with effect being essentially synonymous with what we are here referring to as consequences. The pain and payment as a consequence is not confined to only the sinner, but also to parents and friends and especially to any children involved. Here, the consequence cannot only last the sinner's lifetime, but also the lifetime of the innocent offspring, and even beyond to subsequent generations. This is very evident when we examine the "macro atmosphere."

So what can be done? For the redeemed sinner, acknowledgment, prayer, conviction, confession, and repentance are always the most important first steps. Next, admission and a request for forgiveness from the victim, if possible, are appropriate, if not essential. While these may provide some relief of guilt for the sinner's conscience, it more than likely will not eliminate much if any of the earthly consequence. Payment will continue, perhaps softened, but not abated.

Perhaps the most valuable thing here is the lesson to be learned. If you are truly born-again, especially early in your redemption, you realize the incredible love and sacrifice our Lord provided in order that you may have eternal life in heaven. For this, you are exceedingly grateful, and out of that gratitude you want to be all that He wants you to be. Yet, you are still caught in sin, which you are yet unable to remove from your life. Surely this will happen over time, because once you are His son or daughter He will never cease His beneficial work in you. But in the meantime you are yet piling up sins, which you know you could avoid, if only you had sufficient strength to resist them. Maybe now that you know that there are earthly consequences to even forgiven sins, you may, in this, find additional motivation that will help you to amend your ways so as not

to pile on any more consequences. I pray so, and may God bless you in your increased efforts.

Please note, that although I haven't cited chapter and verse in making the above observation, Scripture is replete with confirming evidence that this is true. The recorded aspects of the lives of nearly every character in both the Old and New Testament well attest to this. On a personal note, what I've described as the consequence of sin, I find very poignantly expressed in my own walk, and which, it seems, that I've been appointed to contend with every day of my life, for the rest of my life.