**Biblical Foundations – The Doctrine of Sin (Pt.6)**

**What Happens When A Christian Sins?**

**Our Legal Standing Before God Is Unchanged**- When a Christian sins, his legal standing before God is unchanged- he/she is still forgiven. (Romans 8:1) Salvations is not based on our merits but is a free gift of God (Romans 6:23), and Christ’s death certainly paid for all our sins- *past, present, and future.* Moreover, we are still children of God and we still retain our membership in God’s family. John reminds us that we all sin (1 John 1:8), yet in the same epistle he also impresses upon us that we are ***STILL*** God’s children. (1 John 3:2) In theological terms, we still keep our “justification.”

**Our Fellowship With God Is Disrupted and Our Christian Life Is Damaged**- When we sin, even though God does not cease to love us, ***he is displeased with us.*** Paul tells us that it is possible for Christians to “grieve the Holy Spirit of God.” (Ephesians 4:30) When we sin, we cause him sorrow, and he is displeased with us. The author of Hebrews reminds us that discipline is an indicator of God’s love. (Hebrews 12:6) When we sin, God the Father is grieved, much as an earthly father is grieved with his children’s disobedience, and he disciplines us. A similar theme is found in in Revelation where the risen Christ speaks from heaven to the church of Laodicea. (Revelation 3:19) Here again, love and reproof of sin are connected in the same statement.

The Westminster Confession of Faith wisely says, concerning Christians, “Although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God’s fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance.”

When we sin as Christians, not only is our personal relationship with God disrupted, but our Christian life and fruitfulness in ministry are also damaged. (John 15:4) When we stray from fellowship with Christ because of sin in our lives, we diminish the degree to which we are abiding in Christ.

The New Testament writers frequently speak of the destructive consequences of sin in the lives of believers. In fact, many sections of the Epistles are taken up with rebuking and discouraging Christians from sin that they are committing. (1 Peter 2:11) Paul says that if Christians yield themselves to sin they increasingly become “slaves” of sin. (Romans 6:16) Moreover, when we sin as Christians we suffer a loss of heavenly reward. (1 Corinthians 3:12-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10)

**The Danger Of Unconverted Church Goers**- While a genuine Christian who sins does not lose his or her justification or adoption before God, there needs to be a clear warning that mere association with a Christian evangelical church and outward conformity to accepted ***“Christian”*** patterns of behavior does not guarantee salvation. Particularly in societies and cultures where it is expected for people to profess to be Christians, ***there is a real possibility that some will associate with the church who are not genuinely born again***. If such people then become increasingly disobedient to Christ in their pattern of life, they should not be lulled into complacency by assurances that they still have justification or adoption in God’s family. ***A consistent pattern of disobedience to Christ coupled with a lack of the elements of the fruit of the Holy Spirit*** (love, joy, peace) is a warning signal that the person is probably not a true Christian inwardly, that there probably has been no ***GENUINE*** heart faith from the beginning and no regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus warns against such persons. (Matthew 7:21-23) John suggests that a long-term pattern of increasing disobedience to Christ should be taken as evidence that the person in question may not really be a Christian at all. (1 John 2:3-4)

**The Punishment Of Sin**- Although God’s punishment of sin does serve as a deterrent against further sinning and as a warning to those who observe it, this is not the primary reason God punishes sin. The primary reason God punishes sin is that his righteousness demands it, so that he might be glorified in the universe that he created. Paul speaks of Jesus Christ is the propitiation for sin (that is a sacrifice that bears the wrath of God against sin and thereby turns God’s wrath into favor) then Paul explains why God gave Jesus as the propitiation for sin. (Romans 3:25-26)