

Stand Therefore

Discipling Young Men for Biblical Manhood

Issue 14



**Sin and
Temptation**

Physician of my sin-sick soul,
To thee I bring my case;
My raging malady control,
And heal me by thy grace.

Pity the anguish I endure,
See how I mourn and pine;
For never can I hope a cure
From any hand but thine.

I would disclose my whole complaint,
But where shall I begin?
No words of mine can fully paint
That worst distemper, sin.

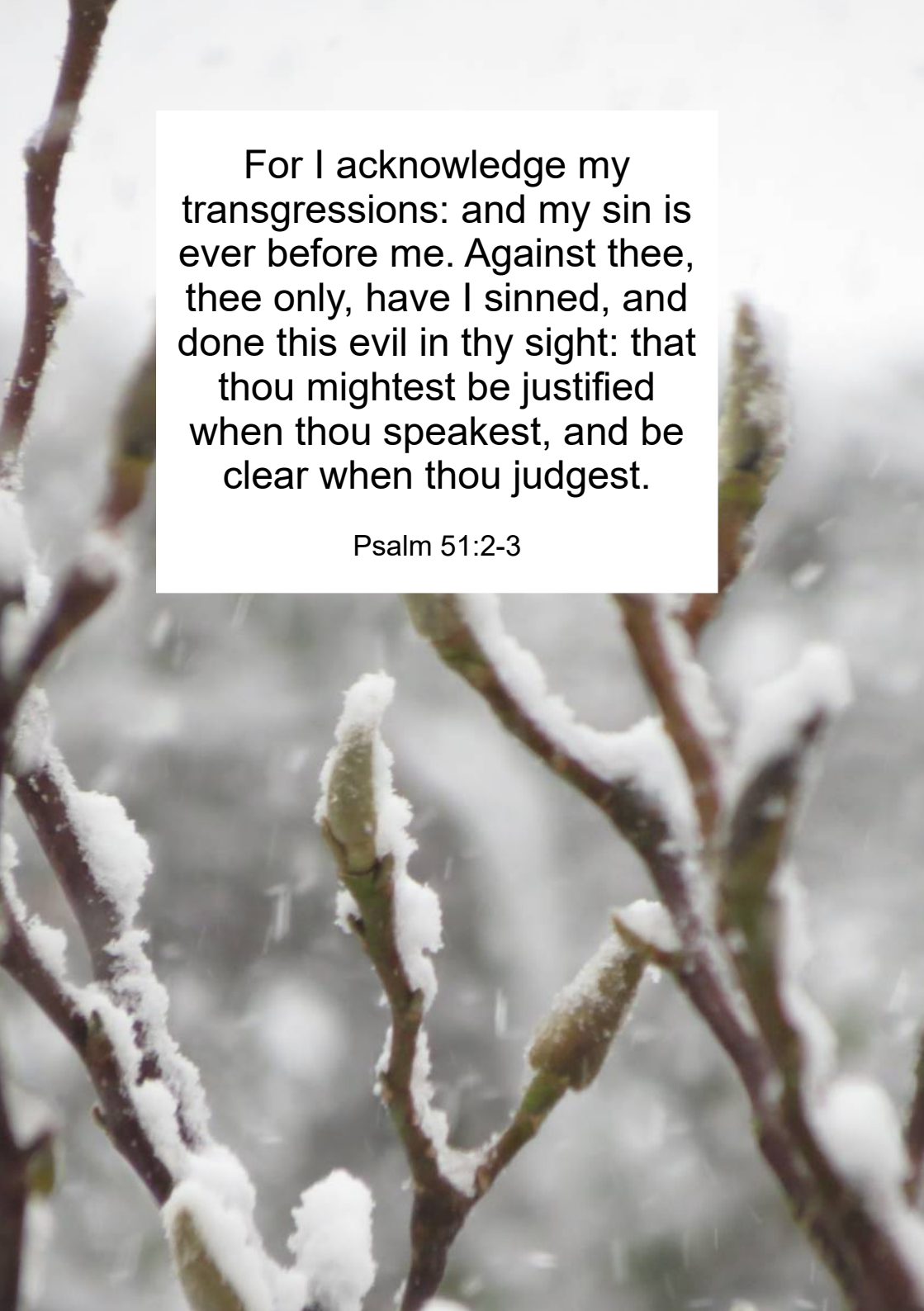
It lies not in a single part,
But through my frame is spread;
A burning fever in my heart,
A palsy in my head.

It makes me deaf, and dumb, and blind,
And impotent and lame;
And overclouds, and fills my mind,
With folly, fear, and shame.

A thousand evil thoughts intrude
Tumultuous in my breast;
Which indispose me for my food,
And rob me of my rest.

Lord, I am sick, regard my cry,
And set my spirit free;
Say, canst thou let a sinner die,
Who longs to live to thee?

John Newton



For I acknowledge my
transgressions: and my sin is
ever before me. Against thee,
thee only, have I sinned, and
done this evil in thy sight: that
thou mightest be justified
when thou speakest, and be
clear when thou judgest.

Psalm 51:2-3

Introductory Note

The Editor

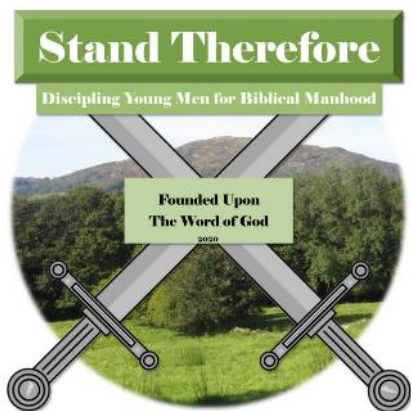
In this issue, we are but scratching the surface of a subject which causes much opposition to the true gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. That is, the matter of sin. Do you like it when someone tells you that you are full of sin? This is what the Scripture says. Indeed, if there is no sin, then there can be no gospel; for if there is no problem, then there is no need for a remedy. Every man is a wicked, hell-deserving sinner. And I am not being extreme or radical in saying this, though it may seem so to some. I have the backing of the Word of God. Every imagination of the heart of man is evil, only evil continually. The Bible does not provide mankind with a flattering description. We like it when people always say nice things about us, how good we are, how wonderful are all the things we are doing; but this is not good for us.

Even when we are converted, we are not perfect. For it is only at that point that we begin to fight against sin. And this battle lasts for our entire lives. Here is a challenge for you. How much do you think you have sinned in the last week? What about the last day? The last hour? What do you say to this? There are people who will say that they have gone a week or so without sinning. Read the commandments. Consider the implications. And then take a long, hard look at your life. Those who say that they do not sin much; that they are good at bottom; that they are not really that bad; that this thing can be excused by this or that circumstance; these people have very little or no understanding of true Christianity.

The Christian does not fail to sin, as some will suppose; but rather the Christian acknowledges that he has sin, unlike the man of the world. The very fact that you see your sin, if you see more of the height of it, you will be the more afflicted with the 'smaller' sins. You will become aware of more and more sin in your life, because you will be constantly walking close with the Lord, that is, seeing everything in the light of the Scriptures.

Though sin may be more and more a distress to you, this is a sign of true conversion. If you see much good in everything, including yourself, then I may say that you are most probably not saved. There must be recognition of sin in order to have salvation. If your testimony does not mention sin, then there must be concern. Read the Word earnestly, and pray that you would be shown your great wickedness. If you think that you may earn salvation by your good works, then I fear for your soul. You are lost, eternally lost, if you persist in this! God is holy and perfect. Are your motives for anything perfect? Anything short at any time of your life is sufficient to condemn you. Our righteousness, our works, are as filthy rags to God. This is what the Scripture says. We can never contribute one jot to our salvation except for our sin and wickedness. This is not a light manner, and I pray you not to pass over this without great thought and heart-searching.

There is hope; if you think that you are good, then study your Bible. Examine it. As you read, can you any longer say that you are now righteous before Almighty God? See that you are full of sin. Wesley writes: 'False and full of sin I am, thou art full of truth and grace.' Though your sins rise up to the heavens in number, there may still be salvation. Plead with Christ, give up your hope in yourself, and trust in Christ. Give up your whole life to him, and seek to live in his ways, which are completely different from the ways of the world. Strive to be holy, even as he is holy. We can never be perfect, but let us be found striving against sin.



Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Ephesians 6:13

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Question 13

What is sin?

Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

Teaching about sin is in most short supply in churches today. It may be that sin is something that will offend people, and cause them to go to another church. But it is fundamental. For all have sinned, and fallen short of the glory of God. This is unavoidable. There can be no true conversion without the recognition of sin, and of the wickedness of mankind, specifically of the individual. If you do not confess that you are a wicked man, deserving of condemnation and eternity in hell, then there can be no salvation, as there is nothing from which to be saved. The question and answer here present sin under two neat heads, as we shall now consider them.

Firstly, what we might describe as sins of omission. That is, any want of conformity to the law of God. So this is if we fail to do as the law requires of us. Take, for instance, the priests in the Old Testament. They were given many specific instructions as to the carrying out of the various offerings, all of which were pictures of the great offering of the Son of God. If they should fail to do one particular part which was commanded, then they had committed a sin of omission. How may we seek out an application for this in our day? Suppose that you have a particular responsibility to do something. It may be some daily chore, or your daily work, something which you should do. If you fail to do that thing, which you should have done, you have fallen in this manner. You have committed sin by omitting this thing from your daily tasks. With regard to the worship of God, we are to exercise ourselves in four particulars: prayer, reading the Scriptures, singing, and the expounding of the Scriptures. Omitting one of these from a service of worship to the Lord may be considered as a sin of omission, and is our equivalent of the service of the priests in the Old Testament. We must always strive to make sure that all that is our responsibility is performed as well as we possibly can.

Doing things in a sloppy or careless fashion may also be considered to be sin of omission, as all that we do should be as unto the Lord, that is, the best that we may physically do.

Second, we shall consider sins of commission. These are the sins which are transgressions of the law of God. This may be seen as when we directly contradict the law, and instead of forgetting to do something, doing something which is forbidden. You can, I hope, now see the difference betwixt the two. The one requires a lack of action, the other requires action, but in the wrong direction. We may take as examples of this pride or unreasonable anger. If you are upset with someone without a cause, or if you think that you are self-sufficient, which is pride, then these are such sins. If you take something which is another's, without their consent, likewise.

You see that the law features heavily with regard to sin. Paul says that he had not known sin, except that the law made it manifest. Make sure that you know and understand the law of God, not just in raw state as given literally in Exodus 20, but also when endorsed with the intended meanings, as demonstrated by Jesus in Matthew 5.



Sins of the Sight

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Acts 5:1-2

Sins may not be so easily split up thus into neat categories; often one sin will lead to another, and especially in this case, we shall see that sins committed by what one looks upon may lead to greater and worse sins committed. Most particularly here we shall consider those sins of lusting and coveting, which may easily be a snare for the Christian. For Ananias and Sapphira, as in the account in Acts 5, they saw the amount of money, and they coveted it, thus giving in to their temptation. This lusting of the eyes caused them to lie and be deceitful with the apostles, but Peter, by divine inspiration we may suppose, identifies this lie, and they both die for that sin. Thus we see how dangerous looking upon things with the eyes may be. I shall now proceed to propose three counsels to aid in the prevention of sin by this means.

Guard what you see. This matter is very important, although if followed perfectly it would still not prevent all sin. To a certain extent, you can avoid tempting yourself. Abstain from every appearance of evil, we are told. Do not even suffer yourself to look upon it. Technology may, in a few respects, be of use; but there are many ways in which it may be used for evil purposes. It will almost certainly be prudent to have protection on your computer to prevent images of violence and other sickly unpleasant things appearing on your screen. It is difficult to forget what you have seen, so it is best not to see it in the first place. But likewise, one may indulge in watching people play-fighting. Well, you may object, they are not really fighting. But you are watching evil being pretended at! Consider, you should not be watching violence in films, computer games, and the like, nor indulging in reading of it. May this be a challenge to each one.

Take particular care in the face of a perceived need. You may particularly be tempted to covet something when you are in need. I do not say that Ananias and Sapphira were in need of money. But if they had sold all in Christ's name, they may have had concern that they would shortly be in need. If you are short of money, you may be tempted to withhold a part of the tenth which is due to the Lord. But also, if you consider that you want something urgently, and that you will not cope if you cannot have it, consider first whether you really need it. Often we lust, and desire, for things which we do not need, things which will just sit on the shelf unused for years.

Take particular care in every circumstance. Whatever it may be, there may be temptation everywhere. You may have a particular weakness, in which case it is prudent for you to be especially watchful in matters pertaining to it. This is why we have such a battle on our hands against sin and Satan. The world presents its sparkling jewellery before us, in the form of things that we really need to buy (or so we are told), and indeed promises us safety from all manner of things if we do this, or that. Indeed, what we see may cause us to fall into sin in response to something; let us be most careful to guard our eyes, and defend our hearts. Let us also be constant in prayer to the only one who can help us in this great battle.



Sins of Hearing

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Exodus 20:7

There are many dangers which we might consider under this very general head. We shall evidently cover certain sins which proceed from hearing things. These are reason why we should be careful to guard our ears from things which are of the world, which are not edifying for us, and which set a positively bad example for us.

The first is concerning the blasphemy of God's name, and also the use of meaningless words by many people in these days. If we mix in any way with the world, then we will hear these things being said around us. It is too common to hear people swearing and blaspheming in these days, and nobody even seems to think anything of it. If this is how we respond to our Saviour's name being thus blasphemed, then do we not care about him and the glory of his name? This is a question we must ask ourselves. Should we not challenge such people? We might lose acquaintances (I trust we do not make close friends with such), but what is that? We are told to be ready to lose all for Christ. We are naturally slow to cause trouble, or upset people, and this is most wrong. The gospel is upsetting with its message of sin.

But also, we must take great care of our own mouths. If we are hearing people saying these, we may easily slip into saying them ourselves. Thus guarding our ears will assist us in guarding our mouths. But we may easily slip into a way of speaking carelessly, and saying odd words perhaps when we are surprised. Perhaps everyone uses them, we hear them spoken by everyone. If someone is surprised by something, or something unexpected happens, you expect someone to make some exclamation. Is it useful? No. Can we then say that they are good, and that we should continue using them then? No. If we can challenge those who do these things, we will protect our ears, thus our mouths.

But our considerations will not stop at this. Strange to say, it is possible for us to lose our sobriety by what we hear. What do I mean by this? Sobriety may be explained as soundness of mind. Most worldly types of music may put us into a trance. This can be accomplished by music which is very repetitive. Many so-called Christian choruses and song also fall into this category, where the same few words are just repeated time and time again. I must say that they are wicked, and evil. Let us take great care in these things.

But finally, we shall see that the things we hear may serve to encourage us to do evil. There is a manner in which our friends may speak to us and encourage us to do evil; we must be careful about those that we choose to be our friends. But also in music again. Modern music which does not even claim to be Christian is full of wickedness. The singers sing about all the pollutions of the world; these include feelings such as love, created pure by God, but desecrated in these cases, and for the most part by the world. Love in the world can be almost certainly guaranteed to be wrong love; because God is love, and outside of him there is no true love. So many other wicked things are sung about; do not listen to such things, friends. They will do your soul no good, and may well cause you to go astray, to do those things which are so openly promoted. So keep a close guard over your ears. Take care that as far as is in your power, you only hear those things that are good, and edifying for the soul.



Sins of the Thoughts

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Matthew 5:21-22

I hope that all readers know the ten commandments. Indeed, I hope that you will memorize them if you have never done so, but do we know the true meaning of the law? When we realise the breadth of the law, then will the most outwardly righteous among us be found to exclaim that he has broken it, broken it through and through. Then only will we begin to understand our need for a Redeemer, and for such a Redeemer.

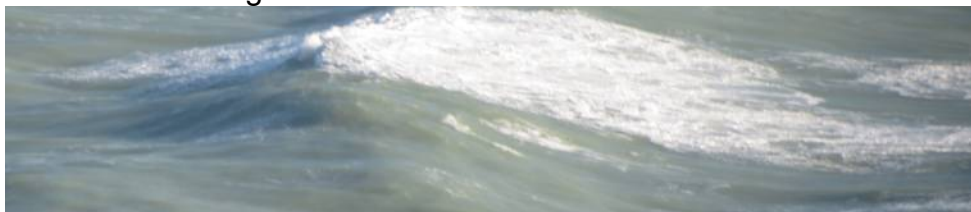
A large part of this understanding is to realise what Christ taught in his sermon on the mount: that to break the law in our minds and hearts is in God's sight altogether as though we had broken it by physical action. Thus we are taught by Christ himself, the Son of God, lest any should quarrel with the words and say that they are merely some strict, puritanical exposition of the law, that if we are angry without a cause with our brother, we have broken that commandment which says 'Thou shalt not kill'. Now I am sure that every one of us has been guilty of this sin, a great sin in the Lord's eyes. Nay, we may go further and say that whoso loveth not his brother, yea his enemy as himself, hath broken this commandment. As our catechism question says, it is not only errors of commission, but also of omission that are sins in God's sight, and as Christ speaks in the 44th verse of this 5th chapter of Matthew's gospel, that we are to love our enemies.

Now if so serious be our failings in this command not to kill, which one reading the commandments is sure to excuse himself from, what shall it be found to him in such commands as 'Thou

shalt not covet'? And if so serious be our failings in the second table of the law, summed up in what Christ calls the lesser of the two great commandments 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', what shall it be found to be in the first, and greatest commandment that we 'love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength'?

'Thou shalt not have any gods before me' (the Lord), nor 'make any graven image', nor fall down thereat, we read, and we praise ourselves like the Pharisees that we are no heathen, nor do we worship idols. But are we really innocent on this point? Do we not often, far too often, worship ourselves? For what is any form of pride or selfishness but a putting of ourselves before God, and falling down to and worshipping the 'graven image' of our own selves? Or how often do we mind worldly things, the things that pertain to this world's fleeting pleasures, its money, wealth, houses, cars, holidays, any form of worldly pleasure, luxury or want when we are to be satisfied with 'food and raiment'? Is not this worshipping the world? And what could be more dreadful to a holy God?

And how often do we read novels, watch films, play computer games, or whatever? 'Ah, now you are being really puritanical', you will say, 'I find no warrant against these in Scripture.' Not in the letter, but in the spirit of the law. For do not these things draw our affection, draw it away from God? Do we not find that, after satisfying our fleshly appetites for such things we no longer find such blessedness in the Lord, and in his Word? Do not these things become snares which steal our time and energy, and do we not find that we become satisfied with these rather than with God? Then these things are surely idolatry, and I urge you to remove yourself from them, with true repentance, to God, seeking his forgiveness, which he will not deny to those who seek for it through Christ and him alone. Amen.



The Wages of Sin

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:23

To obtain a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is excellent for us to view its wages, its penalty, its just reward, and to obtain a holy fear of sin. To obtain a view of sin itself in its hateful nature, rather than a fear of the deserts of sin, we can do no better than to view its wages as borne by Christ Jesus on Calvary. Let us view him there.

Behold him there, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, perfect God and Man without sin, toiling up that hill, bearing the sins of his people. See how the symbol of this load becomes too heavy for him, and even the cruel tormentors are forced to compel another to bear it. But how much heavier is the weight of sin that he bears! His external sufferings are nothing compared with that load. He climbs the lowering mount and stands on the brink of its awful precipice. Now it is the hour of the powers of darkness. Behold them gnashing their teeth, baying for his blood. Ah, they hate this Son of God, they are enemies of him, they long to destroy him. But they could not touch, nor come nigh him were he not now bearing the sins of his people. Those sins are now imputed to him, and in God's sight he is guilty. It is Justice who now comes forward and demands of Mercy the sacrifice promised before the foundation of the world. It is the Justice of the living God which demands the fulfilment of the covenant. It is Justice which now sees Christ on Calvary as one bearing his people's sins, their guilt imputed to him. And it is Justice that demands the payment of the debt, and who bids the hosts of darkness do their worst. 'Twas Justice that burst in a blaze of vengeance on Jesus our Head. And Christ accepts the covenant, and submits himself to the altar. Satan rages against him and the thunder of the wrath of Almighty God comes down on the mount. It is plunged into darkness. The earth itself quakes at the amazing event. But Satan's force is spent. He has found

his match in this victorious foe. His head is broken. The Justice of God is satisfied. The penalty has been paid even by the life-blood of the Son of God. The requirements of the covenant have been met. The fight is won. Christ cries 'It is finished!'. The law is satisfied, the signs done away with, Satan conquered, all in that victorious hour. He gives up the ghost, and after three days beyond the pale of this world, rises again from the dead, having conquered death and the grave, breaking their power. But O, how dreadful was the wrath he endured, the torture of mind and body that were his! And remember, had you or I been the only sinners upon earth, that dreadful death on Calvary would still have been the only possible price for our redemption. How exceedingly sinful is sin! Can you now make light of it, can you say 'it is but a little one'. Careless sinner, what shall become of thee? Yet glory be to our Lord Jesus Christ, the penalty is paid, and there is in him eternal life for all to whom repentance and faith are given. O be sure that you are one of that number!

*And was it for my sin
That Jesus suffered so?*

O ask this question to your soul, am I his? And if you are, ask in wonder, did he die for such a wretch as me? Glory be to his most precious name. Amen.





For ye are bought with a
price: therefore glorify
God in your body, and in
your spirit, which are
God's.

1 Corinthians 6:20