

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
Hamartiology: Personal Sins

Introduction

While understanding and accepting the concepts of both inherited and imputed sin is necessary, one must not neglect or deny the reality and consequences of personal sin. Sin is not a one-time vicarious act of rebellion, sin a daily reality in the life of each person, even redeemed Christians. With the reality of personal sin comes the burden of personal guilt and a need for personal confession, salvation, and sanctification.

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that all people are guilty of committing sin and stand condemned before God. There are no excuses that can be presented before God which He will accept as valid and pardoning.

The Transmission of Personal Sins

Unlike Adam's sin, personal sins are not transmitted from one person or generation to the next. The consequence certainly affects others (and could impact many generations) but the guilt of the sin always lies with the individual who committed the sin and no family member (in the current or in subsequent generation(s)) is doomed to follow in the sinner's footsteps. In Jeremiah we read about the consequences of sin which impact the current generation and impact subsequent generations (32:18). However, this does not mean that the practice of the sins of one generation are automatically transmitted to the next generation. Every individual in each generation can choose to sin or not to sin. The idea that a person is destined to commit the same sins as members of the previous generations is unbiblical. While the experience and impact of negative and sinful family situations cannot be denied, when a person places their faith in Jesus they are new creatures with a new nature (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17) and are no longer under the bondage of sin (cf. Romans 8:8-18).

Some Characteristics of Personal Sins

Sins Are Universal — Everyone willfully sins (James 3:2; Romans 3:23); none are exempt from the propensity to sin but as for the guilt of sin some see an exception for very young children who do not yet understand or make volitional choices as they will later in life. However, at what age a child fully understands and becomes responsible for his or her actions is debated. This exception is often applied to adults with mental challenges. For additional information refer to books such as *Safe in the Arms of God* (John MacArthur) and *Is There An Age of Accountability* (Ligonier Ministries) — the views held in these two works differ in some ways but show the various ideas about the death of young children.

Sins Are Overt and Covert — Every person sins and every sin is practiced in either an overt or covert manner. There are those who are not ashamed of the sins they commit (Isaiah 3:9; Jeremiah 8:12) and others who experience shame and attempt to sin in private (Some sins take place and remain in the mind (Matthew 5:27-28). Though these sins do not manifest themselves in an external visible or noticeable way, they are sins nonetheless as they are an indication of the corruption of the mind or heart. Some sins are passive (James 4:17), meaning that if and when a Christian willingly does not do something they know should be done, they are sinning by omission. Regardless of the nature of the personal sin (overt or covert) they are considered idolatrous (Colossians 3:5-6) and result in disciplinary consequences (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Sins Differ in Degree — While it is true that all sin is sin, it is also true that some sins carry a greater measure of guilt than others because of the situation and who is involved and how they are involved. Numbers 15:30-31 speaks of one who acts in defiance (the consequence of that action being cut off from the people) and Leviticus 4:2 speaks of unintentional sins (a sin offering made by the priest). Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 presents a list of sins which differ in degree and in the impact they have on the lives of others. Yet, all these sins are considered "bad enough" to keep a person from entering the kingdom of God. Even though some sins carry a greater degree of guilt and consequence, all sin is enough to condemn a person to an eternity of punishment all sin can be pardoned if a person is repentant.

God does not accept excuses for sin...

Not heritage (Matthew 3:9; Romans 3:9)

Not ignorance (Romans 1:18-20)

Not religious affiliation or participation (Matthew 5:20)

Romans 3:9-18 speaks of the many ways people personally sin against God. In fact, Paul makes clear that, because of the Law of God, every person has no basis to argue innocence before God but instead is held accountable to God for their personal acts of rebellion against His perfect standards.

The Results of Personal Sins

Although not every Christian believes in eternal security (the view that salvation cannot be lost or forfeited), the Bible gives clear evidence for this assurance (John 10:25-30; Romans 8:35-39; Ephesians 1:13-14). While salvation cannot be lost, fellowship can be hindered. The Holy Spirit can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30) and quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19) but never lost or revoked. Personal sins will rob the believer of his joy and will slow the spiritual growth process but it will never result in a loss of salvation. Just because a sinning Christian is not in jeopardy of losing his salvation, that is not a reason to play fast and loose with sin (Romans 6:1-4).

Personal sin can also affect the believer in many physical and emotional ways. When considering King David's condition when he was harboring his sin against Bathsheba and against Uriah her husband, it becomes clear that sin and not dealing with sin can bring about not only spiritual but emotional and physical consequences (Psalm 32, 38).

Personal sins can and often do effect others (as seen with David, Bathsheba, and Uriah). Another extreme example of the sin of one effecting another is found in the account of Achan in Joshua seven where his entire family paid the price for his sin.

“A little thorn may cause much suffering. A little cloud may hide the sun. Little foxes spoil the vines; and little sins do mischief to the tender heart. These little sins burrow in the soul, and make it so full of that which is hateful to Christ, that he will hold no comfortable fellowship and communion with us. A great sin cannot destroy a Christian, but a little sin can make him miserable.” — Charles Spurgeon

The Remedy for Personal Sins

The only remedy for the imputed sin of man is the imputed righteousness of Christ. At the moment of belief in the finished work of Jesus Christ, a sinner is covered in the perfection of Jesus Christ. Positionally, this person is perfectly righteous before the Father and has been pardoned of his sins, and for all who receive the righteousness of Christ — “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

A Comparison of the Several Aspects of Sin (Based on Ryrie's Theology)

Aspect	Scripture	Transmission	Principal Consequence	Remedy
Inherited Sin	Ephesians 2:3	Generation to generation	Spiritual and physical death	Redemption and the gift of the Holy Spirit
Imputed Sin	Romans 5:12	Direct from Adam to each person	Spiritual and physical death	Imputed righteousness
Personal Sins	Romans 3:23 1 John 1:9	None	Loss of fellowship / negatively impact others	Forgiveness through Jesus Christ and by others through confession of sins

Review and Thought Questions

- We learned about three things cannot excuse a person of their personal sin guilt. What are some other things that people might claim make them exempt from the guilt of sin?
- What are three characteristics of personal sins?
- While there are many consequences of personal sins, what is one thing that cannot happen?
- When reading Psalms 32 and 38 what consequences did King David experience as a result of his unconfessed personal sins?
- What is the only remedy for personal sins?