

V O L U M E 4

PRACTICAL HOLINESS A SECOND LOOK

*A study of the victorious Christian life:
pursuing holiness inwardly and outwardly,
avoiding legalism, protecting Christian
liberty, and applying scriptural principles
to everyday situations.*

DAVID K. BERNARD

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1

THE CHRISTIAN AND SIN

“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father; Jesus Christ the righteous” (I John 2:1).

The Bible calls followers of Christ to a life of holiness. In order to obey this biblical command, however, we must first understand the relationship between the human nature and sin. This chapter investigates sin’s power with respect to the human race and particularly with respect to the born-again Christian. This will form a basis for our subsequent discussion of the principles of holiness.

The Sinful Nature

The Bible emphatically declares that every human being has sinned. In chapters 1, 2, and 3 of Romans, Paul

demonstrated that all mankind is guilty before God. He concluded, "We have . . . proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. . . . For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:9-12, 23). The Apostle John stated, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (I John 1:10). Even the Old Testament affirms, "There is no man that sinneth not" (I Kings 8:46; II Chronicles 6:36).

Sinful acts arise from the nature of sin that all human beings inherit as a result of the sin of Adam, the first representative of the human race. This sinful nature is also known as the flesh or the carnal man. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

The penalty for sin is death, but just as we were led into sin and death by one man, Adam, so we can receive forgiveness and life through one man, Christ. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:22).

Even after the new birth, we still possess the sin principle or the sin nature. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit,

and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other” (Galatians 5:16-17). “Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” (James 4:5). “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (I John 1:8).

The sinful nature consists of a compulsion to commit sinful acts. It is more than a capacity to sin, such as Adam had in his state of innocence, for if we let the sinful nature lead us it will always cause us to sin (Galatians 5:17).

In Romans 7, Paul taught that neither the law of God nor the law of the mind brings power over the law of sin. That is, neither God’s moral law nor the good intentions of the human mind impart power to overcome the principle of sin that impels humans to sin. “We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

“So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my