

November Questions and Answers

Franklin Church of Christ
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November 14, 2004
PM Worship

Introduction:

Tonight is devoted to answering pre-submitted questions. If you would like to have your questions answered, feel free to submit them in writing in the appropriate box in the foyer outside of my office or via e-mail. I do not have all the answers, however, God's word does. If I say anything that is not supported by God's word or if you believe I am misrepresenting the scriptures in any way, let me know. I would love to study God's word with you at any time. Our questions tonight, though submitted by different people all deal with temptation and sin.

Discussion:

- I. Does each and every person sin daily?
 - A. This is actually a difficult question. Because there is no biblical answer for it. The scripture never explains how often the average person sins. Further, since each person is different, the Bible certainly does not tell us how often each and every person sins. What the Bible does clearly tell us is that each and every person has sinned (**Romans 3:23**).
 - B. Certainly, since Christianity is a growth process of submitting ourselves to God as slaves of righteousness and increasing our virtue and self-control (**Romans 6:5-18; II Peter 1:5-8**), we ought to be sinning less today than we did when we became Christians. Further, since God provides a way of escape from every sin (**I Corinthians 10:13**), one would think a maturing Christian ought to be able to make it through at least one day taking God's ways of escape.
 - C. At the same time **I John 1:8** demonstrates that any of us who might try to claim we do not sin are liars. Of course, that passage does not give any time constraints. It does not say anyone who claims they did not sin within the last minute, last hour, last day or last week is a liar.
 - D. Here is what we know about every person. We all have sinned. We all sin. However, I do not have any idea how often any of us sin. I know that each of us is supposed to grow in our ability to overcome the tempter and therefore sin less. Thus, none of us is allowed to say, "Oh well, we all sin every day, my sin today did not matter" (**Romans 6:23**). At the same time, if we can really and truthfully look at a period of time in which we did not sin, we have not done anything amazing, we have only done what we should have been doing all along (**Luke 17:10**).
- II. What is the limit of Satan's knowledge and ability to tempt us? Does he know what is in our minds and use it against us?
 - A. Once again, this question is a difficult one to answer, because God has chosen not to reveal to us the extent of Satan's knowledge about us individually. While Satan is a fully spiritual being (**Ephesians 6:11-12**), we can take comfort that Satan is not a divine one. Whatever Satan was created to be, evidently he thought too much of himself and fell into sin (**I Timothy 3:6**). What we learn from this is Satan is limited. However, at the same time, I need to keep in mind that he is not a man and does not have the exact same limitations as men do. Therefore I cannot necessarily apply **I Corinthians 2:11** to Satan.
 - B. Here is what we know about Satan's power. Satan certainly does know how to tempt us. He certainly does know how to tempt each of us effectively (**Romans 3:23**). Further, Satan is aggressive with his temptation. He is like a roaring lion, who hopes to devour us (**I Peter 5:8**).
 - C. However, he can only do what God will allow as demonstrated by his attack on Job in **Job 1:12; 2:6**. Gratefully, we know God will not allow him to tempt us beyond what we are able to withstand (**I Corinthians 10:13**). This is about all I can say to answer this question.
- III. How do we get forgiveness for sins of which we are unaware or have forgotten?
 - A. The first key we must understand is that Christians are saved by the blood of Christ, not by perfect confession of sins (**I Peter 3:18; Ephesians 2:5, 8-9**). We will not stand before God on Judgment Day and find out that we are not going to "make the cut" because there was a sin somewhere that we forgot to specifically mention in prayer. I believe we can take some comfort from the example of the tax collector in **Luke 18:13-14**. He prayed, "God, be merciful to me the sinner." Jesus said he went away justified, even without specifically listing all of his sins.

- B. As we consider the two kinds of sins in this question, we must ask how we can commit sins of which we are unaware. We do so through ignorance. How will we be forgiven for these sins? According to **II Peter 1:5-8**, we must grow in faith, knowledge and virtue. As we grow in Christ, we will learn more and more about what is sinful and what is not. As we learn, we repent. As we repent, we are forgiven. Considering this, we can take great comfort that God does not want us to go to hell. **II Peter 3:9** says God is patient giving us all time to come to repentance. God is not up in heaven waiting for us to slip into some sin of ignorance so He can blast us into oblivion. He is patient, guiding us by His word that we may learn how to overcome sin.
- C. Regarding the issue of a forgotten sin, consider this. If somewhere along the line you committed a particular sin that you have forgotten, you are clearly not continuing in some habit of that sin. That being the case, while you may not have consciously addressed every particular sin you committed, your general knowledge of sin and repentance caused you to change and turn from the sin. For instance, as a Christian you have learned that foul language is a sin (**Ephesians 4:29**). You may not remember every case of foul language you have ever used. In fact, if you had a bad habit of it at some time, you may not have even noticed every case in which you used foul language. However, as a Christian you have changed your language. You have repented of the sin and turned from it. God does not require a perfect accounting of every time you ever spoke improperly. What He requires is an understanding that we are sinners and then changing to come in line with His word. You have done that, even if you forgot a particular situation and never mentioned it specifically.

IV. To what extent, if any, is restitution a part of repentance?

- A. Clearly, under the Old Law, restitution was a part of repentance. Consider one example in **Numbers 5:6-7**. The sinner was not only to offer his sacrifice, but he was to make restitution. Not only was he to make restitution, he was to give back 20% more. David indicated that restitution was the natural way to deal with sin in **II Samuel 12:6**. Additionally, note **Proverbs 6:30-31**. A thief was expected to make restitution when he was discovered. However, **Proverbs 6:32-35** demonstrated that there are some sins for which restitution is impossible.
- B. When we move into the New Testament, the great example of Zacchaeus stands out. In **Luke 19:8-9**, Zacchaeus repented of his dishonesty in collecting taxes. As part of his repentance, he made restitution, but not just any restitution, he gave back fourfold.
- C. However, have you noticed that restitution was always an issue of man dealing with men regarding our sins against one another? If we have committed some sin against someone which we can set aright, repentance obligates us to restore the situation to its rightful place to the extent that we can. Yet, it is not exactly an obligation. If we have really rethought what we did and realized how wrong it is, we will naturally want to set it aright. Really this is just common sense. If I stole your car and then repented, I would not continue driving your car, but give it back to you. However, regarding sin and our relationship with God, there is no way for us to make restitution. That is the reason Jesus died. Our sins separated us from God (**Isaiah 59:1-2**) and placed us under the sentence of death (**Ezekiel 18:20**). The only way to restore that situation is through our punishment by death. Of course, that is what we want to avoid. Gratefully, God provided the restitution for our sins through Jesus' death (**I John 2:2**).
- D. While we cannot make repayment and restitution, we must understand that repentance does mean making a change. For instance, **Ephesians 4:28** says that the one who stole must steal no more. However, it is not enough to stop stealing, he must also become a laborer who gives to others to help them in their needs.

Conclusion:

I hope these answers were helpful. Again, if you believe in any way I have misrepresented God's word regarding any of these answers, feel free to talk to me about it. Let's study God's word together. If you have a question you would like answered, fill out the question sheet and place it in the proper box outside my office.