

**Whatever Happened To Sin?**  
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**THESIS:** To show that we must be truthful about our sinfulness.

**INTRODUCTION**

- \* The courtroom question: “How do you plead?” Is heard many times each day in courtrooms across our country. The answer “guilty” is seldom heard. It seems that no one feels responsible for his actions. Many try to shift the blame to others -- parents, society, etc.
- \* Over twenty years ago Dr. Karl Menniger in his book asked the question: “Whatever became of sin?” He wrote: “It was a word once on everyone’s mind, but now rarely if ever heard . . . . It is only that someone may be stupid or sick or criminal . . . . Anxiety and depression we all acknowledge, and even vague guilt feelings; but has no one committed any sins? Where, indeed, did sin go? What became of it?”

**I. CONTEMPORARY & ANCIENT THOUGHTS ON SIN & GUILT**

- A. Indeed we live in a society plagued by “victimism” in which no one has to plead guilty for his actions. Psychology many times attempts to explain away our failures so that we are not responsible for them. Sin has been cast aside for the “explanation”: political repression, poverty, dysfunctional families, bad genes. “I am sick” is much more preferred to “I am a sinner.”
- B. Modern illustrations:
  - 1. Rioting gang members in L.A. Beat truck driver Reginald Denny almost to death before live television. The jury acquitted them of all but minor charges, deciding that since they were caught up in the mayhem of the moment, they could not be held responsible for their actions.
  - 2. Dan White, a San Francisco city supervisor, claimed he murdered a fellow supervisor and Mayor George Moscone in 1978 because too much junk food -- especially Hostess Twinkies -- made him act irrationally. A lenient jury bought the line and reduced the charge.
- C. An ancient problem (**1 John 1:5 - 2:6**)
  - 1. The apostle John responds to a similar mind-set. There were false teachers in the church asserting that they had no sin.
  - 2. There are three points from this text that we need to emphasize to see clearer the reality of sin and guilt.

**II. THREE-PRONGED ARGUMENT**

- A. ***This claim vs. God’s Truth (1 Jn. 1: 8, 10)***
  - 1. “If we say” was an introductory formula used by John to set forth the claims of the false teachers. These men, who were walking in darkness/sin (1:6), were claiming to both have fellowship with God and also be sinless.
  - 2. John responds with four assertions:
    - a. If we claim to be sinless, we are self-deceived (1:8)
    - b. If we claim to be sinless, the truth is not in us (1:8).

- c. If we claim to be sinless, we are saying God is a liar (1:10).
  - d. If we claim to be sinless, His word is not in us (1:10).
- B. *When we plead guilty, we are pardoned (1 Jn. 1:9; 2:1-2)***
- 1. The proper Christian attitude toward sin is never to deny it.
  - 2. As we “keep on” confessing our sins, we receive the forgiveness which God has made possible through Jesus’ sacrifice.
  - 3. “Confess” is to say together with God that I have sinned.
  - 4. God is faithful and will do two things with our sin (1:9):
    - a. God promises to forgive our sin -- actually the debt of our sin.
    - b. God promises to cleanse us from all unrighteousness -- the actual stain of sin.
  - 5. God will do this because of Christ (2:1-2).
    - a. Christ is our “go between” or advocate (Gk. *parakletos*). Christ does what we cannot do because of our sin -- plead our case before God.
    - b. Christ is our “atoning sacrifice” or propitiation.
  - 6. As our advocate, Christ does not plead that we have no sin. Instead, He acknowledged our guilt and offers His own sacrificial death as our basis for acquittal.
- C. *When we have been forgiven, we must walk in the light (1 Jn. 1:5-7; 2:1, 3-6)***
- 1. John was in no way minimizing sin by urging us to be frank about our sinful condition. John clearly states that his whole objective in addressing the issue was in order that we “might not sin” (2:1).
  - 2. God is light (1:5-7).
    - a. God is opposed to darkness and can enjoy no fellowship with those who continually walk in sin.
    - b. Behind John’s teaching is Christ who identified Himself and His disciples (Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 5:8) as light.
  - 3. Obedience serves as the test of the relationship (2:3-6).
    - a. For John, a correct understanding of sin will always affect our walk. We can determine if we truly know God by examining our daily life. Are we obedient?
    - b. The bottom line: are we keeping His commandments? (1 Jn. 2:9-11).

## **CONCLUSION:**

- A. When it comes to the word of God, we can hear it, we can read it, we can respect it, we can admire it, we can stand in awe of it, we can enjoy it -- but if we do not act in obedience to it, we have failed.
- 1. We cannot deny our sins. To do so is to contradict God’s word.
  - 2. We must confess our sins, repent of our sins, and seek God’s forgiveness.
  - 3. We must continue to walk in the light by obeying God’s word.