

Powerful Christian Living

Chapter Seven

Sin and Salvation, Part 1

In the gospel of John, the Word of God declares,

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
(John 3:16)

Not everyone has everlasting life. Human beings do not possess a separate immortal soul. Your soul is simply you, a living being and Ezekiel 18:4 states, "The soul who sins shall die." Since everyone sins death has a firm grip on all of us.

It is the presence of sin in our lives that keeps us from being truly happy. All of the sorrow, all the bitterness, all the violence, all the selfishness, tragedies, heartaches, and all sickness, all find their root sunk deep into that little word "sin." And everyone who is born into this world is a sinner. The Word of God states,

For *there is* not a just man on earth who does good
And does not sin.
(Ecclesiastes 7:20)

But we are all like an unclean *thing*,
And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags;
We all fade as a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind,
Have taken us away.
(Isaiah 64:6)

As it is written:
*"There is none righteous, no, not one;
11 There is none who understands;
There is none who seeks after God.
12 They have all turned aside;
They have together become unprofitable;
There is none who does good, no, not one."*
(Romans 3:10-12)

Oh, by the way, one day God was looking down at the earth and saw all of the evil that was going on. He decided to send an angel to the earth to investigate. So He called one of His best angels and sent him to the earth. When the angel returned he told God, "Yes, it is bad on the earth. I'd say about 95% is bad and 5% is good. Well, God decided He better send a second angel just to make sure of the results. When the second angel returns he reported the same findings. "About 95% is bad and 5 % is good." God said, "This is not good." So He decided to send an e-mail to the 5% who were doing good to encourage them. Do you know what God wrote in the e-mail? Oh, so you didn't get one either!

The American writer, Mark Twain once wrote that "Man is the only animal that blushes or needs to." Sin isn't a popular word. Today it isn't very polite or sophisticated to use the word. We like to soft sell sin. We call it a mistake or poor judgment or a psychological maladjustment. But to label sin a mistake will not change what it is. You can label a bottle of poison as apple juice, but it is still poison. And that's exactly what sin is; it is a poison and it's killing us. Romans 6:23 states,

For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ
Jesus our Lord.

The subject of sin is vital to understand if we are ever going to live powerful Christian lives. If we do not understand sin we will never understand ourselves or other people, or the need for the good news of Jesus Christ. Except for the first two chapters of the Bible that sets the stage, the rest of the Bible concerns what God does about redeeming us from sin. Lose sight of this fact and you will lose your way in Scripture.

So what is sin? Sin is a moral corruption of our human nature. Sins (plural) are the wrong attitudes and behaviors that spring from our sinful corrupt nature. The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah wrote,

The heart is deceitful above all *things*,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?
(Jeremiah 17:9)

The "heart" refers to the essence of who you are, the sum total of your personality, will and intellect. Following are two other versions of Jeremiah 17:9.

The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure.
Who can understand it?
(New International version)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly perverse
and corrupt and severely, mortally sick! Who can know it [perceive,

understand, be acquainted with his own heart and mind]?
(The Amplified Bible)

There are religions and philosophies of life that say we are not a fault for the bad things that we do. These things are the result of living in a bad environment or our lack of education. But the Bible says that we are responsible for all the wrong that we do, because we are corrupted at the very core of our being. The Lord Jesus Christ said,

For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,
fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. 20 These are the
things which defile a man
(Matthew 15:19, 20)

Our hearts are corrupt because of sin and the wages of sin is death. How did this tragedy occur? In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.¹ Our world and all of life did not just happen by blind chance. Creation is not a cosmic accident. There is a divine design behind all that we see and hear and touch and taste². The same is true for man. God created mankind.

And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed
into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
(Genesis 2:7)

The Hebrew word translated “formed” is *yatsar*, which means to fashion or to make, to mold. Human life did not evolve from proteins in a pond struck by lightening. God gave humanity our shape and form and then He breathed life into us making man a “living being.” The words translated “living being” are in Hebrew *nephesh chaj*. In some versions of the Bible the word *nephish* is translated “soul.” And this has brought much confusion into what the Bible truly says about life and death.

As I mentioned before, many people think that the “soul” is some immaterial, immortal, spiritual part of humanity that goes on living after death. But that is all speculation based upon pagan philosophies.³ According to the Word of God the soul is not immortal. To be a living soul or a living being simply means that you are alive—you have life!⁴

¹ Genesis 1

² Notice the repetition of the phrase “according to its kind” in Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25. When God made and created things he maintained a precise distinction between all the variety of plants and animals. A tomato was first a tomato; it did not evolve from a pond of sludge. The same is true for human beings. They were created by God and did not evolve from some lower form of life.

³ In the western world the false idea of the immortal soul is based upon the work of the ancient Greek philosopher Plato.

⁴ The word “soul” in both Greek and Hebrew can also be used figuratively for your emotions and the attitude of your heart. For example Psalm 42:5 states, “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And *why* are you disquieted within me?” And Acts 4:32 says, “Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.”

When God breathed into Adam's nostrils he received "the breath of life"⁵ or literally, breath life. Plants have physical bodies and they are alive, but they do not breathe, they do not have breath life, they are therefore not living beings or nephish chai. But animals have physical bodies and they breathe. They have breath life. They are living nephish or beings. Consider the following verses of Scripture.

Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures [nephish], and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens." 21 So God created great sea creatures and every living thing [nephish] that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God *saw* that it was good.

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature [nephish] according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, *each* according to its kind"; and it was so.

Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life [nephish], *I have given* every green herb for food"; and it was so.
(Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, 30)

The translators of the Bible have done us a disservice translating the Hebrew word nephish as "soul" or "being" when referring to mankind but "creature" and "thing" when referring to animals. Both animals and man are living, breathing beings or nephish chai. It is breath life that animates us and when you take your last breath, that's it, you are dead. There is no immortal soul. Death ends life—period.

So, the first man Adam was formed of the dust of the ground and God breathed into him making Adam a living being. Then God made Eve from Adam. And everything was fine until the entrance of sin. And we will deal with this subject further in the next chapter.

⁵ The Hebrew word for "breath" is ruach. Many times ruach is translated as "spirit." Ruach can be used of the Spirit of God, but when it is used for either man or animals it does not signify anything that is immortal. See Genesis 7:14, 15, 18-22)