

The Practicality of Redemption (1)

The Believer's Sinful Nature

Introduction

- A. It is imperative for the Christian to understand how profoundly and in what way the Fall, one's sinful past, and our sinful nature affects us. If we do not have a good grasp on these truths -- we will be severely limited in our ability to live the Christian life.
- B. Our sinful nature is the source of a good deal of our trouble. Every true believer understands Paul's frustrating experience.

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do ... 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. Romans 7:14-19 NIV

- C. In His redemptive work the Lord Jesus made a provision for us so our sinful nature may be "paralyzed." This is one reason why the gospel is "Good News" to the honest and struggling believer.

I. The Description of Our Sinful Nature and Its Terrible Products.

A. The sinful nature is a source of evil thoughts and actions.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, dissensions, fits of rage, selfish ambition, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. Galatians 5:19-21 NIV

Comment: Even though the believer has been born again, and therefore cannot live in -- or be characterized by known sin, he will have the potential for evil. The presence of the sinful nature does not make us sinful -- but we become sinful when we think and act in harmony with it.

B. The sinful nature may hinder, weaken, and enslave the believer.

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 ... 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 members. Romans 7-18-23 NIV

Comment: Paul's use of the word "prisoner" is a good description of every believer's experience == when we give over some area of life to the practice of error and sin.

C. The sinful nature is a contradictory and limiting power in the believer.

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. Galatians 5:17 NIV

Comment: All Christians recognize this "contrary" element within. We find the presence of thoughts, feelings, and desires that are out of harmony with spiritual goals. When we agree with and practice such error and sin we resist, grieve, and quench the Holy Spirit.

II. The Provision of God Regarding Our Sinful Nature.

For we know that our old self (all we were before salvation) as crucified with him so that the body of sin (how we express error and sin) might be rendered powerless (paralyzed), that we should no longer be slaves to sin. Romans 6:6 NIV

Comment: When the Lord Jesus died on the cross -- we died to error and sin in Him. We must recognize what He has done for us.

III. The Exhortations and Instructions Regarding Our Sinful Nature.

A. We must daily choose to life in harmony with Christ's redeeming work.

In the same way (as Christ died and was resurrected), court yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Romans 6:11 NIV

Comment: Here we are commanded to accept the standard -- the norm of life -- of the Crucifixion and Resurrection as our own. This involves choices, our attitude toward life, and a direction for our faith.

B. We must daily choose to say "No" to sin and temptation.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Romans 6:12 NIV

Comment: Sin will always "reign" over us when we give way to temptation. We must choose to life in harmony with our freedom in Christ. Such a life involves complete honest -- confession -- planning -- and sometimes serious measures regarding restitution, forgiving people, openness with one another, special times of prayer, and a willingness to be taught.

C. We must daily choose to obey God and depend upon Him for help.

Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life, and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. Romans 6:13 NIV

Comment: In this verse the daily choices become even more clear. We see how the "body of sin" of V6 refers to "parts of the body" and how important it is to surrender ourselves and "our parts" to God. He invites our trust and pledges to be our strength, wisdom and holiness.

Victor M. Matthews