

## ***Sin: facing the truth about ourselves*** (Psalm 51; etc.)

'Racism' and racial unrest, part 2

To speak truthfully about 'racism' and to delight God, we must face the truth about ourselves. We will not see God's solutions for the evils of this world until we accept God's truth about ourselves and all other people. You may address symptoms, but ultimately you need to address the root cause. In mankind's case it is sin and everyone's inherent sinfulness which produces the prejudice, injustice, oppression, etc. which we see in the world. Grasping this will help us understand how God deals with it and how sin and Satan works against God.

### 1. ***The source of today's "evil"***

- a. Evil comes from within, from a person's heart, and is that which defiles (Mark 7:21–23). For that reason everyone needs inner cleansing (cf Psalm 51:7, 10).
- b. The sinful nature of every person, the "flesh", is that which works evil (Galatians 5:19–21). It is the very nature with which we were conceived (Psalm 51:5).
- c. The unregenerate person's thinking is futile, the heart is darkened, the mind is depraved. Such people are filled with evil things and even affirm others who similarly sin (Romans 1:21, 28–32).

The source of prejudice, injustice, oppression, or any such evil lies within each individual. We are by nature in rebellion against God.

### 2. ***The extent of today's "evil" or "sinfulness"***

- a. Sinfulness extends to every human being (except only Jesus). None, not one, is righteous, understands, seeks God, or does good. All have sinned. Cf. Romans 3:9b–18, 23. It has no regard for race, status, or age.
- b. Sinfulness so extends throughout each person that God declares them "dead in the trespasses and sin" in which each lived (Ephesians 2:1).

All are born by nature in rebellion against God, separated from God and unable of themselves to respond to God.

### 3. ***The character of "sin" and "evil"***

- a. The three primary words for sin in both the Old and New Testaments describe the inherent character of sin (cf. Psalm 51:1–2). "Transgressions", i.e., rebellion; "iniquity", i.e., crookedness or distorting your way from the straight path God has defined; and "sin", i.e., missing the mark or the way, departing from God's standard of uprightness. "Sin" is failing to fit God's moral character or do what He desires. For example, God is just and therefore defines what is just. If actions do not fit His justice, they are unjust.
- b. The relational character of sin is threefold. First and foremost sin is against God (Psalm 51:4). Only because there is a God who establishes right and wrong can we talk about sin against another person (cf. Matthew 18:15), or even sin against oneself, i.e., sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:16).

Prejudice, injustice, slander, oppression, pride, etc. are failures to conform to God's character and desires and are therefore sin against Him and, as a result, sin against others.

### 4. ***The effects of sin***

- a. Sin brought penalties in the physical world and the spiritual, into the present and for eternity: death (Genesis 2:17; Romans 6:23), disruption in marriage (Genesis 3:16b), pain in childbirth (Genesis 3:16b), and pain and toil in work (Genesis 3:17b–19a).
- b. Sin became present as a "natural" consequence in Adam and his descendants: death spread to all (Romans 5:12), shame (Genesis 3:7–8), and blame shifting, that is, an unwillingness to admit fault (Genesis 3:12).
- c. Sin became powerful within mankind. What is implied in God's warning to Cain (Genesis 4:7) is stated explicitly in Romans that sin has dominion over the unregenerate (6:14), that the sinful mind cannot submit to God's law (8:7), and that even the regenerate must battle with sin (Romans 7:15–19).

In Psalm 51 King David recognized his need for cleansing and for a Savior to do that. He was fully dependent upon God's mercy. He knew that what God wanted from him was a broken spirit and a contrite heart (v. 17). More than the damage done to us or that caused to others, we should grieve at sin because it is against God. Jesus has conquered sin and death. By His death and resurrection He offers life and a changed heart to all who believe. This is good news to hear when we face the truth about ourselves.

#### ***Questions for further thought and discussion:***

- What tempts you to excuse sinful thoughts or actions as something other than sin?
- If people are "dead" in their sin, what must we rely upon to see heart changes?
- What basis for morality does an atheist have? Where must this inevitably lead?
- How should we handle the tendency to shift blame in ourselves? ...in others? ... in our children?