**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**Sensitiveness Toward Sin**

It is one thing to do something wrong; it is something else again to be proud, or at least unashamed of having done it. That an individual is ashamed of having done something wrong means that he still has a sensitive conscience. It means he is capable of repenting and turning to God. It means he can be forgiven. One who is not ashamed of wrong doing is one who will not repent and who cannot be forgiven. The Psalmist said, *“The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.”* (Ps. 34:17-18). 2 Cor. 7:10 says, *“For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”* Without godly sorrow for sin there is no salvation from sin.

It is a serious matter when we lose our sensitiveness toward sin. To test our hearts as to their sensitiveness toward sin, let us give honest answers to the following questions: Do I feel at odds with society at large with its low moral values, OR am I comfortable living by the same standards as our society? Do I blush or otherwise show embarrassment when someone around me uses the name of God in vain or uses His name in a profane manner, OR am I unaffected by it? And what about my own sins? Do I feel shame and remorse when I do wrong, OR do I tell myself, it’s not that bad, everybody else does a lot worse? Just what does it take to stir my conscience?

Jeremiah was a prophet of God and he prophesied to the people of Judah at a time when they were threatened with captivity. What were the causes for this threatened calamity? The basic cause was they had forsaken God and His will, and turned to idols. Jeremiah 2:13 says, *“For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water.”* The broken cisterns were the false gods to which they had turned. As a result of departing from God and turning to idols, the morals of the people of Judah had dropped to a very low state. Look at Jeremiah 5:7-9, *“‘How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken Me And sworn by those that are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, Then they committed adultery And assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were like well-fed lusty stallions; Every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not punish them for these things?’ says the LORD. ‘And shall I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this?’”* Jeremiah called for repentance, but they did not repent. The people of Judah were too far gone for Jeremiah’s preaching to reach them and produce repentance. The people had fallen to a state where they felt no shame for their sins. They had lost their ability to blush. Look at Jeremiah 6:13-15, *“Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is given to covetousness; And from the prophet even to the priest, Everyone deals falsely. They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD.”* Their hearts were hard and insensitive to sin, and it was time for judgment.

I want to ask the question, “are we in this country, even those in the Lord’s church moving in the same direction of losing our sensitiveness toward sin? When one can watch a movie video with dancing that involves sexually explicit movements without embarrassment, he is moving in that direction. When one can appear in public in clothing that covers only what one’s underwear covers and be in the presence of others of the opposite sex who are wearing such clothing without feeling any sense of embarrassment, he is moving in that direction. When one can watch a movie which contains vulgar language, near or total nudity, and other scenes of immodesty and indecency, and continue to sit through it without embarrassment, he is moving in that direction.

In Ephesians 4:17-19, Paul says, *“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”* These Gentiles were “past feeling.” When a person becomes “past feeling” he becomes insensitive and callous. He no longer cares about what is right or wrong. There is no shame in sin. He can observe, talk about and practice sin without feeling any twinge of conscience. The text says they “have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” The word “lewdness” is translated from the Greek word *aselgeia*. William Barclay in his book Flesh and Spirit observes that the word, “indicates a love of sin so reckless and so audacious that a man has ceased to care what God or man thinks of his actions….” He goes on to say, “As Lightfoot sees it, the essence of *aselgeia* is that it has come to such a stage of sinning that it makes no attempt whatever to hide or cloak its sin; it is sin lost to shame.”

How does a person get to this point in life where he is past feeling? The passage says that these Gentiles were “alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.” The English Standard Version translates, “alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.” They were past feeling because of their ignorance. And they were ignorant because of the hardness of their hearts. They had closed their eyes to the truth. They had opportunities to know the truth, but they didn’t want it. They hardened their hearts to what was right. No doubt, there was a time when they would do wrong with feelings of guilt. But over time as they continue to thrust the light of the truth from them, they reached a point where they gave themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. They became “past feeling.”

In Romans chapter one, we read of the Gentiles refusing to acknowledge God. God made Himself known to them, but they didn’t want the truth about God. Verses 19-21 says, *“because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”* Notice, they had the truth about God, but they didn’t want the truth. They thrust the light of the truth from them and their foolish hearts were darkened. As a result of their hardness of heart Paul says that God gave them up. Look at verses 24-26, *“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.”*  Verses 28 -29, *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness…”* and he goes on to list other sins. Why did they become morally corrupt? Because they refused to acknowledge the truth about God and His will.

Can this happen to us? Sure it can. If we refuse the truth that God has given us; if we treat His word with contempt, if we listen to the world rather than to God, we eventually become desensitized to sin, and morally corrupt.

What can we do?

First of all we need to stay close to the word of God. The Psalmist said in Psalm 119:11, *“Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!”* God’s word in the heart is a preventative to sinning. The closer we stay to the Bible and the more we allow our thinking to be molded by it, the more we will come to hate sin, be repulsed by sin, and be embarrassed by sin.

Secondly, pay attention to your conscience. The conscience is that part of man that feels good when he does what he knows is right, and feels bad when he does what he knows is wrong. Do not ignore those bad feelings of conscience. Now the conscience is not an infallible guide because the conscience acts on the basis of how one has been taught. If one is taught improperly, his conscience will not properly direct him. If one is taught in the word of God, and he stays close to the word, his conscience must not be ignored. When one begins to override his conscience, he is on the road to becoming “past feeling.” Paul says in 1 Timothy 4:1-2, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.” When a hot iron, like a branding iron is applied to the hide of cattle, their flesh is seared; the nerves are deadened and become callous. In the same way when one’s conscience is seared with a hot iron, his conscience becomes callous; it has no feeling. Stay close to the word, and don’t override your conscience.

Thirdly, develop a hatred for sin. God hates sin. Proverbs 6:16,17 says, *“These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,”* and so on. God hates sin and so should we. When you come to realize what sin is and what sin does, you will hate it. Sin is against God (Gen. 39:9). Send is what sends us to hell (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 21:8). Sin is the instrument that killed Jesus (Gal. 1:4). It was my sins and your sins that sent Him to the cross. What would you think of a father who would polish and cherish the gun, the very instrument that killed his son? Why then would we cherish the very instrument that killed Jesus, sin? We need to learn the nature of sin and its sad consequences. In so doing we will come to hate it as God does. If we love God we will hate sin. The Psalmist said to God, *“Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.”* (Ps 119:104)

Fourthly, when sin is committed, immediately repent of the sin, and seek God’s forgiveness; seek it in the way He has commanded. Don’t continue in sin.

Next Sunday will be the last Bible Talk broadcast. We want to thank those of you who have faithfully tuned each week. We hope and trust that the lessons have been beneficial to you. You may listen to previous programs and also download transcripts of these programs by going to sjchurchofchrist.com. That’s sjchurchofchrist.com. We will eventually take that website down, so, if you want copies of these programs, go to that website soon, that’s sjchurchofchrist.com.

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