

Three Tenses of Sin

Dr. Ronnie Wolfe – September 1, 2018

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”

In this brief but powerful verse of Scripture we find three tenses of sin: (1) Sin in the Past; (2) Sin in the Present; and (3) Sin in its Consequences.

I. SIN IN THE PAST

This verse says “. . . all have sinned . . .” That is sin in the past. We are of Adam and have been tainted with the corruption of sin in our nature. We sin because we are sinners. Therefore, when a person is born, he is a sinner, and his natural tendency is to sin. That is the reason that David said in Psalm 58:3 “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.” No matter your age, you can know that your past is filled with sin. You and I have been corrupted and are condemned because of our past sins. God looks upon us with disdain, because in our hearts we are wicked. Moses said in Deuteronomy 15:9 “Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart,” At this point we have nothing to look forward to except condemnation and judgment from God.

II. SIN IN THE PRESENT

The verse says “. . . come short . . .” We must notice that instead of being in past tense as used in “all have sinned,” this is in the present tense. It means “we are coming short.” All of our life in the flesh we are continually coming short of God’s glory. John says in 1 John 1:8 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” The lost sinner continues to sin, and the saved sinner continues to sin. We have sinned, and we do sin (or come short of the glory of God). The lost sinner has a real problem. Even if he could stop all of his past sins, he could not be saved; because he is continuing to sin in the present. 2 Peter 2:14 says, “Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; . . .”

III. SIN IN THE FUTURE (CONSEQUENCES)

For the lost sinner, this can be very bad news, for the future of his sins is condemnation; because Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is eternal death. Judgment awaits everyone who dies in his sins. God (and Christ) will be the judge. In John 5:30, his judgment is “just.” In John 8:16, his judgment is “true.” In Revelation 14:7, his judgment “is come.” Hebrews 9:27 says, “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: . . .”

But to the sinner who is touched by grace and who comes to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, there is no condemnation (judgment) from God for sins: Romans 8:1 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” While lost sinners stand before God the Father at the Great White Throne Judgment,

saved sinners stand before Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ without spot and blameless: see 2 Peter 3:14 and Jude 1:24 “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,”

So, how will you stand before God? Your past sins can be forgiven and taken away in Christ by his death, burial, and resurrection. Your present sins can be erased because of the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26), and your future sins can be counted with those that have been cast as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12), for all of our sins were future when Jesus Christ died for them and paid the penalty for them and justified us through his resurrection.

The summation of these thoughts is found in 2 Corinthians 1:10 “Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.” It is only by God’s grace that this can be accomplished. I pray that you will come, lay down your sins before him on the cross, in his blood, and depend upon his work by faith alone to save your soul past, present, and future. In our text verse, the future is “the glory of God.”