

## When feeling bad is good

Rev. John Belden

For the last several articles, I've been writing about the seriousness of human sin. I realize that most of us are not comfortable thinking of ourselves as bad people. But feeling bad about your sin is something you should thank God for, not avoid. A deep sense of sin and unworthiness is the best condition to lead us to Christ.

Feeling bad about yourself may be evidence that God is working in you. After all, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit who would "convict the world of sin" (John 16:8). And when the prophet Ezekiel foretold days of renewal, God spoke through him saying, "Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and **you will loathe yourselves in your own sight**, for your iniquities and your abominations" (36:31).

If anything, we don't take sin seriously enough. We know everyone sins. "No one is perfect," we admit. But we seldom think of being sinners personally.

Consider the act of lying. What do we call people who lie? Isn't a person who lies called a liar? Have you ever lied? Doesn't that make YOU a liar? Did you know that God hates "a lying tongue"? (Prov. 6:17). He's a God of truth. He sees every lie as an attack upon His truth.

How about taking God's name in vain? Have you ever been upset and blurted out God's name? Or how many times have you said the name "Jesus Christ" or "Lord" in an irreverent way? Is this just a "little sin"? How do you think a holy God likes His name being equated with common cuss words? Listen to how seriously He takes this sin: "the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Ex 20:7).

What about heart sins? Have you ever coveted what others have? The Bible says a man who covets is an idolater (Eph. 5:5). Have you ever been angry with someone when you shouldn't have? According to Jesus, you are a murderer (Matt. 5:21-22). Have you ever lusted after a woman? Jesus says you are guilty of adultery (Matt. 5:28).

Or what about root sins like pride? Do you know that God hates "a proud look"? (Prov. 6:17). Satan was cast out of heaven for pride: "I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). And he appealed to Eve's pride when he tempted her to eat the fruit: "you will be like God" (Gen. 3:5). Have you ever been too proud to take criticism from others?

No matter how good you may feel about yourself, liars, idolaters, proud people, murderers and adulterers will not fair well at the judgment. Without Christ, they will all "have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8).

In God's eyes, there are no little sins. His law is like a chain that we all hang from. You don't need to break every link to fall. You just have to break one: "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and stumble in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10).

Consider one more proof of the seriousness of sin. Why did God deliver up His only beloved and innocent Son? There's only one reasonable answer. Our sin was infinitely offensive to an infinitely holy God. Therefore, it required the infinitely valuable Son of God as payment. A price this high surely indicates the seriousness of your sin in the same way a severe punishment reveals the heinous nature of a crime.

I know it hurts to think of yourself this way. But this can be a good thing if it moves you to Christ. It's better to feel the pain of sin now and be truly saved than to feel the pain of God's judgment for eternity.

So don't feel too bad about feeling bad. Only people who know they are bad can experience God's goodness in Christ. Make it a good thing by letting it lead you to Christ for cleansing. Remember, "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Psalm 34:18).

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