

Spelling Sin Backwards

Dear Co-Workers,

We live in a world where the word “sin” has almost disappeared from our vocabulary. Even as this has happened, the sense of guilt from sin remains in our hearts and minds, causing us to engage in self-destructive behavior.

Today we need courageous men and women of God who will call sin what it is – rebelliousness against God. Individuals are needed who will declare repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand. They are not afraid to cry out, “Time is short, hell is hot, Jesus is coming back whether you are ready or not.”

When Jesus returns he will declare, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death” (Rev. 21:6-8).

Sin by its very nature is a three letter word all of us would like to avoid. This is true particularly when it comes to taking responsibility for our own sins. Yet Jesus had a lot to say about sin. He knew that unless we came face to face with this cancer of sin, it would ultimately destroy us.

It is the “I” in the word sin that is the real problem. Facing the “I” means taking a close look at the sin in my own life. That can be not only depressing, but down right devastating. As Paul said in Romans 7:18, “I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” You know how frustrating it is to have the desire to do the right thing but then not have the ability to carry it out. Well, Paul’s intention is not to frustrate you, but to identify with the struggles you and I have on a daily basis and show us a solution. He goes on and says in verses 24, 25 of Romans 7, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

Saying that Jesus is the answer is not just a trite religious phrase. His death and resurrection overcome the curse of sin, providing a force-field that is more real and more eternal than any magnetic field that now exists. In order for that force-field to produce the power needed to overcome sin in our lives, it must be cut through by faith and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sin is a condition that is universal, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23) The force-field is the justification provided, “freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.”(Romans 3:24) Unless this sin fact is dealt with, death (eternal separation) from God is the end result. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”(Romans 6:23)

Intercepting, experiencing and cutting through this force-field of life involves letting the Spirit of Life do His work in us and through us. It means instead of desiring to continue to “play God” we are willing to exercise the faith to surrender and let God be God and Lord of our lives.

The battle of sin has been won through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now we experience in our personal lives this victory over sin by spelling the word sin backwards. The “n” is a declaration of the word now. The “I” is I and the s is “surrender”. As we face the impossible, as we face temptation and hopelessness, instead of giving into sin straight forward, we let the Holy Spirit spell the word sin backward in our hearts and minds until we can declare Now I Surrender to You my Living Lord! The word now is important because we no longer want to put off the surrender to Jesus that is necessary in our lives to overcome sin.

Now I Surrender my life and every thing in it to be used for His glory. I no longer want to serve sin and be a slave to it. “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. 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 6:11-13)

This is rather radical advice for a culture that has converted the seven deadly sins into the seven virtues for successful living! The end result has been the idolatry of possessions which has created a system which now molds and shapes our thinking. The sin of gluttony is called “super sizing” and unlimited food bars proliferate until obesity has become a national epidemic. Sexual activities that were once considered perversions and even illegal, now are considered normal by many who even refer to themselves as Christians. Pride is considered a virtue. Anger and aggression have become the way to get ahead and the stimulation of covetousness is the foundation of the advertising system.

Moralistic bullies are not the answer. They are not concerned with sin, only legality and vengeance. The practices they advocate to halt crime are often more criminal than the crime they seek to halt. Moralistic bullies work to lock up those who are least able to get adequate legal defense. Penitentiaries are no longer places where people go to do penance. Instead they have become training schools for bigger crimes once the person is released.

As Americans we have become quite good at incorporating our sins so there is no guilt attached. The homes of the poor and elderly are taken in the name of eminent domain and it's called "economic progress". The homeless are driven from the parks and their belongings confiscated in the process and no one seems to care. Laws and fines are given for public urination, but no public restrooms are provided for those who have no home of their own.

As Dr. Menninger stated in his book "Whatever Became of Sin", "The people of the United States have almost no sense of guilt for the enslavement of blacks, the mass murder of Indians, the dislodging of the Cherokees, the lynching of blacks, the exploitation of labor, or the theft of the Southwest from Mexico. 'Those were rough, impetuous days,' we explain. 'So romantic! Picturesque but rugged. Our individualistic ancestors had to win. Conquer the wilderness, break out the prairie and win the West.' And dare we mention Hiroshima?"

Today we can add to Dr. Menninger's list Iraq, Afghanistan and a host of other places around the world where the blood of innocent men, women and children is being spilled to advance American interests in the name of a war on terrorism. As the lives of innocent people are being destroyed, creation is being raped and devastated. The living earth and its gifts are referred to as natural resources to be used solely for men's comfort. Instead of being earth keepers protecting the creation God has made, we have become earth breakers.

One of the deceptive illusions about sin is the fact that even the worst sinners are often such "nice people." It's the nice people who try to shut down the soup kitchens and keep the shelters and half way houses out of the neighborhood. It's the nice people who remain silent as their churches heat tables and chairs in the winter time by leaving the heat on in the church basements to keep the pipes from freezing, with no regard for poor and homeless people who are freezing to death outside.

"Wherever I move in society," commented Ronald Simpson in his book The Psychology of Power, "be it among teachers, soldiers, churchmen, criminals, housewives, policemen, workmen, politicians, foreigners, doctors, I have never met anyone who struck me as essentially an evil man. Men who were weak and pompous, who dissembled and were evasive, who were self-important, vain and ambitious, who were self-contradictory, self-deceiving, unreliable, acquisitive—these I have met in plenty at every level of society; but nowhere was it my misfortune to find an unmistakably evil man."

Most people consider themselves relatively nice people who are never sinners in need of a Savior. Jesus cuts through this mask of nice-ness showing the evil that lurks in the hearts of the indifferent and apathetic for whom life revolves around self. “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus by their fruit you will recognize them. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matt. 7:19-23).

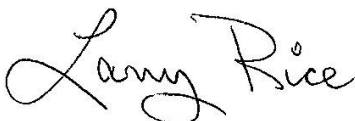
Sins are often thought of in terms of the bad things we commit rather than the good things we omit and do not do. “Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”(James 4:17) There is so much good we know we should be doing but there are just so many hours in the day. The homeless and hurting are crying out for help. Babies are being aborted. Seniors, neglected. The sick and imprisoned need to be visited and helped. We aren’t able to help everyone and the needs keep growing and growing. It’s easy for us to feel frustrated, get depressed and feel like hopeless sinners.

Wait! Jesus never intended for His followers to live and feel that way. Knowing that we can’t carry the load ourselves nor can we defeat the cancer of sin, He declared, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”(Matt.11:28) This coming involves letting Him turn the sin issue upside down and free us from guilt and sin itself.

Coming to Jesus involves our declaration in word and deed of “Now I Surrender my life to you Oh Lord. “Please Lord Jesus, show me what needs I must address and give me the grace I need to be effective in doing good in those areas. Now I surrender to you, Jesus, my habits, sins and driving desires of the flesh. Fill me with your Spirit. Anoint me for service and give me the grace, peace and Holy Boldness I need to be more than a conqueror through You, Christ Jesus, Help me to live according to the guidelines of your Word.”

Whatever became of sin? It has been wiped out, forgiven and defeated through the shed blood of Jesus. Christ is risen and, as a result, you and I can now live in the freedom He provides as we allow His grace to spell sin backwards in our lives by declaring “Now I Surrender to you Jesus and receive you as my Lord and Savior.”

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry Rice". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Larry Rice