

Are You a Sinner or a Saint?

If you are a Christian, you've probably heard many Christians speak of themselves as sinners. They often speak very lowly of themselves but are thankful for God's grace which covers their sins. They usually claim that they sin daily, and struggle with sin only to fall into its grips. If you ask them when they sinned the last time, they can't really remember but typically believe it was some time that day.

It almost seems that this is a sign of humility to admit that you are just a filthy, worthless sinner. Is this the way the scriptures speak of God's people? Yes, certainly at times it does. David is a prime example. In Psalms 51 after he recognized his sin with Bathsheba he said, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving kindness; according to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." David was sincerely repentant of the sin he had committed.

Paul also spoke of sin in this way. "We have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God." (Rom.3:9-11) Paul, who quoted David from Psalms 14, clearly states we are all sinners. Paul also said in Romans 3, "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The apostle John spoke about sin this way, "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8)

Undoubtedly, we have all sinned, but does that mean we are still sinners? John continues his discourse saying, "my little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin." His instruction was to confess our sins and we would then be forgiven and cleansed of all unrighteousness. So even though we are all sinners because we have all sinned, it seems the path we are supposed to be on is one without sin. If we sin, John tells us we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, but does that mean sinning regularly is our lifestyle?

Paul also proclaimed that even though we have all sinned, we are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. (Rom.3:24) So there is forgiveness of our sins! Paul continues explaining to the Romans that we are not to continue in sin because we have grace. (Rom.6:1-2) There is the great struggle between the flesh and the spirit as Paul describes in Romans 7. But he further explains that we are not to be debtors to the flesh, but led by the spirit, if we truly are sons of God. (Rom. 8:12-14)

One must conclude from these passages that we have all sinned, but if we have repented, we are justified (righteous before God), forgiven of our sins, and are now to live a life led by the Spirit without sin.

So, should we still refer to ourselves as sinners? Let's see how some of the faithful in the Bible spoke of themselves.

Job is a man who was described by God as blameless, upright, feared God and shunned evil. Job said of himself when he pleaded with God, "Although you know that I am not wicked..." (Job 10:7) Does this seem like a presumptuous and arrogant way to talk? We know by reading the whole story that Job came to see God more clearly, but he was never accused by God of being a sinner.

David said to God, "You have tested my heart...you have tried me and found nothing evil. I have purposed that my mouth will not transgress." (Psa.17:3) He also said, "Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity within me." (Psa. 7:8) Was David living a righteous life at this time, or what he just arrogant and self-righteous?

Paul spoke about himself this way, "You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe." (1 Thess. 2:10) First of all, could any of us honestly say this about ourselves, and secondly, if you did, what would others think of you? Would they be shocked that you spoke of yourself so highly?

Phil. 3:9-15 says, "not that I have already received (the resurrection from the dead), or already been perfected, but I press on, to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brothers, I do not count myself to have laid hold of it yet, but only this: forgetting what is behind and reaching out for what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. As many, then, as are perfect, should have this mind."

Paul refers to the brethren as saints in Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2, Eph. 1:1, Col. 1:2, Phil. 1:1. There are close to one hundred other scriptures in the Bible that refer to God's people as saints. Shouldn't we honestly evaluate our daily lives? If we truly are "sinners," we should take our sin seriously, repent and walk blameless before our God. Paul says, "As you know how we exhorted and comforted, and implored every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." (1 Thess.2:11-12)

A sinner is one who "misses the mark," like on a bulls eye. Our target is to be holy as God is holy. (1 Peter 1:16). A saint is one who is pure, blameless, and holy.

Our appreciation for God's grace should be evident in our daily lives. Are we pressing toward the goal as Paul stated? Are we walking worthy of our calling as we've been exhorted? We are "called to be saints." (1 Cor. 1:2) Are you a sinner or a saint?