

Title: A Question about Sin Answered  
Text: Psalm 51  
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I received an anonymous question that I want to deal with. Here is the question, “What is worse, doing something wrong when you know it's wrong, or not doing it, but for the wrong reasons? I know that in the heart you're committing it either way so it's equal. But is it worse to do the actual action or to be deceptive and act like you wouldn't do it even though if there weren't something holding you back, you would?”

You have to consider a few things when you get a question like this.

- 1) Is this a hypothetical where the person really is confused and sincerely wants an honest answer?
- 2) Is this person vainly attempting to justify themselves in their sin against God? The person may be thinking, “if I am guilty either way, then why not gratify the lust of my flesh.”
- 3) Is this an attempt to entangle me in my words? That was the reason for the majority of questions that men asked the Lord.

These are all considerations you have to ask yourself when dealing with questions.

### **I. FIRST, I WILL GIVE A GENERAL ANSWER TO THE QUESTION. YES, IT IS WORSE TO COMMIT THE ACT.**

Sin in the heart and sin in the act are indeed both sin. But it is worse to commit the sinful act. Listen to the progression James gives,

James 1: 14: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. [the heart] 15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: [the act] and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. [the end—death.]

“Which would be worse, to think about murder or to actually murder?” Sin in the heart only affects you; sin in the act affects another.

**Example:** David sinned with Bathsheba the moment he looked up her with lust in his heart.

Matthew 5: 27: Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. 29: And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30: And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

If David would have looked away, confessed his sin to God and asked forgiveness right then that would have been the end of it. His sin would have affected no one else but him. Instead he acted upon his lust.

He committed the act of adultery with Bathsheba impregnating her. Then he sinned more by trying to cover his sin. He got her husband, Uriah, drunk urging him to go into his wife so they would think the child was Uriah's. Uriah was too loyal to David to leave his doorstep. So then David sinned more by sending Uriah to

the forefront of battle so he would be killed which he was. And David's sin affected his entire house for years to come, beginning with the child born of Bathsheba

Now, listen to what God sent Nathan the prophet to tell David.

**2 Samuel 12: 7: And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel,...**

Remember "LORD God" always stresses that God is our covenant God. The believers sin is much more convicting because it is in the face of the great covenant mercies God has shown us in Christ.

**2 Samuel 12: 7: I anointed thee king over Israel,**

Believer, God has anointed you, made us kings and priests unto God in Christ our King and High Priest

**2 Samuel 12: 7...and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;**

Believer, God has graciously bound the strong man and delivered us: Satan, our wicked depraved sin nature, and conquered all our enemies for us

**2 Samuel 12: 8: And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah;**

Believer, God has given us our Master's house, Christ our Master. God has made us the bride of Christ. God has given us a host of brethren—in the house of his spiritual kingdom.

**2 Samuel 12: 8:...and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.**

Believer, the grace of God is as boundless and free and sovereign as our God

**2 Samuel 12: 9: Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.**

Believer, sin, all sin, sin in every form, sin in the heart and sin in action—is despising the commandment of our God and Father who has shown us all this free grace.

**2 Samuel 12: 10: Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. 11: Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. 12: For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. 13: And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.**

Christ took all this sin of David upon himself, like as Christ did for you, believer. Christ stood before God as guilty David, guilty Clay, guilty Melinda, guilty Eric. And Christ bore the agonies of divine judgment so that we would not, and doing so he cleared us from all our sin past, present and future. Because Christ stood as David's Surety, David's sin was forgiven. So is yours and mine--And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

**2 Samuel 12: 14: Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.**

Believer, sin gives the enemies of the LORD occasion to blaspheme. So God as a Faithful Father to his child, chastened David. David's sin caused much agony for years to come among his sons and throughout his house. God has forgiven his child our sin, but God chastens his child in loving correction.

Exodus 34:7: Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

So yes, both are sin—the heart and the act. But the act is worse, it is against the Father of mercy, a despising of his commandment, and it not only affects you, but many more. It can bring upon us much pain for years and years to come.

## **II. NOW LET ME ASK A FEW QUESTIONS**

The Lord Jesus usually answered questions with questions. He did so getting to the heart, to the real issue, behind the question. So I will answer with a few questions of my own. And try to pry into the heart a little bit.

### **Lesser of Two Evils?**

First, if you know both are sin why worry about the lesser of two evils?

- “What is worse, doing something wrong when you know it's wrong,”—yes, it is sin.
- “or not doing it, but for the wrong reasons?”—that is sin, too.
- “I know that in the heart you're committing it either way so it's equal”—it's not equal, but both are sin.
- “But is it worse to do the actual action or to be deceptive and act like you wouldn't do it even though if there weren't something holding you back, you would?”—being deceptive and acting is an active sin, its hypocrisy.
- What is holding you back? The grace of God, the love of Christ, this is the right reason we are constrained. But anything else is a wrong reason and that too is sin.

Do you understand my point: the lesser of two evils is still evil! Why are would a person want to know what is a worse or less sin, when both are sin?

**Illustration:** That is like asking what is worse, to die in a plain crash or to die in your bed asleep at night. Who really cares? Both are death.

The act of sin as well as the act of covering up the sin are both worthy of eternal condemnation so why be concerned about the lesser of two evils?

### **Heart Problem?**

Secondly, instead, why not confront the real problem? The problem here is the heart—the heart is defiled. The first scripture that came to mind when I read this question is:

Jeremiah 17:9: The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The problem with sin is the heart.

Matthew 15: 18 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man:...

Proverbs 12:5: The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

This person speaks of acting and being deceptive about the sin of the heart. The believer has been given a pure heart and made honest by God's grace. We know the all-seeing God is not deceived. He knows our hearts. All the worst evil you see manifest in action in this world is in the heart of everyone here this morning.

A believer has been freed from that burdensome bondage of denying we are sin, of the charade of the self-righteous act of deceiving others about what we are capable of doing. We know by painful, heartbreaking experience that but for the restraining hand of God's grace a believer will do anything anyone else will do. So the real question this person needs to ask themselves is, "Why are you deceiving yourself?" Be honest that the real issue is the heart within you.

### **Repent and Flee to Christ?**

Third question I have is, instead of concerning yourself about which is less evil, why not repentant from it and confess your sins to Christ?

All a sinner is is sin. All a believer is in our old sin nature is sin. But God forgives our sin if we come to him with a broken and contrite heart, confessing our sin to him.

1 John 1: 8: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9: If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10: If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. 2: 1: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Let's hear David's pray to God.—

Psalms 51: 1: «To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.» Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies [we plead no contest, no good in us, only my sin] blot out MY transgressions. 2: Wash me thoroughly from MINE iniquity, and cleanse me from MY sin. 3: For I acknowledge MY transgressions: and MY sin *is* ever before me. 4: Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest. [As long as we keep making excuse for ourselves, trying to choose between the lesser of two evils, or commend ourselves because we have only done the lesser sin, we have not repented. Be as David, I acknowledge my—against thee and thee only] 5: Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. [David acknowledges sin is more than what he has done, it what he is in his original sin-nature] 6: Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom. 7: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8: Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. 9: Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. 10: Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. 11: Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. 12: Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free spirit. [Note this word restore: David was a believer, God calls

him the “man after his own heart.” None of his standing changed in Christ, but David brought himself under the chastening hand of God] 13: *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. 14: Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. 15: O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. 16: For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. 17: The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

### **III. EVERY BELIEVER SHOULD LIVE OUR LIVES TO GLORIFY GOD IN ALL THAT WE DO.**

Believers in their inmost souls delight to do the will of God. Our joy and happiness is not merely in receiving good from God, but in rendering active service to God. We desire to obey and serve our heavenly Father in all things and do his will at all times, not reluctantly, but cheerfully. God’s will is our joy and delight.

1 Corinthians 6: 18: Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 19:What?

Here is our motive

1 Corinthians 6: 18:...know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God,...

God the Holy Spirit dwells in the child of God. We are born of God created in righteousness and true holiness of Christ Jesus our Righteousness and Sanctification. We are made one with holy God in Christ.

1 Corinthians 6: 19: and ye are not your own? 20: For ye are bought with a price:

Believer, it cost God giving his only begotten Son. God had to pour out judgment upon him in place of his elect. It costs Christ being forsaken of the Father he loved, bearing that pain in his very soul. Oh, what a selfless, act of love and mercy!

1 Corinthians 6: 20:...therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.

Glorify God by declaring God just. Take sides with God always in condemnation of your own sins. Glorify God delighting in his mercy by resting in Christ who has fulfilled the law for every believer. Glorify God by seeking not merely to avoid God’s disapproval but actively living to please God in all that you think and do.

Amen!