

14 WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT SIN?

Ephesians 4:26 and Psalms 4:4 Be angry, and do not sin...

Galatians 6:1-2 Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

What do we do about sin, in ourselves or others? Our reaction towards sin reveals our spiritual state, which may be one of the following:

- Ignorance: We do not recognise sin for what it is at all. We are oblivious and unaffected by it because we have been hardened towards it.
- Indifference: We see and recognise it, but do nothing about it, continuing with a false sense of peaceful co-existence.
- Indignation: We get angry with sin because it has breached our sense of righteousness, which may be of self or of God.

The answer to our question is that we will do nothing about sin if we are either ignorant or indifferent; only righteous indignation will move us to do something. Indignation for sin arises only when there is a strong sense of righteousness or holiness. Self-righteousness, though, can only produce condemnation, not conversion. But holy indignation, which comes from being zealous and jealous for God, leads to righteous action which exhibits a hatred for sin and a hunger for holiness. Either way, it is indignation which is the spring of action against sin. How can we "*be angry, and do not sin*" (*Ephesians 4:26*)? One good way is to be angry with sin itself.

Two scenes of righteous indignation from the scriptures come to mind. An example from the Old Testament is Moses breaking the tablets of stone on which the Law was written, upon seeing the children of Israel revelling in sin and rebellion as he returned from the mount to the camp. In the New Testament, we see Jesus overturning the tables of the moneychangers and driving out those who turned the Temple into a marketplace. These were not impulsive personal outbursts of religious rage but the confrontation of man's sinfulness with God's holiness. While divine wrath could have meted out immediate punishment, God's "*more excellent way*" (*1 Corinthians 12:31*) joined mercy with truth, and righteousness with peace (*Psalms 85:10*) in order to deal with the sin and deliver the sinner. This He did through Christ taking upon Himself the judgment for sin, so that something was done about sin that went beyond condemnation to redemption.

Both forgiveness and forbearance are needed in bearing with the sins of others. Righteous indignation should make us care enough to confront rather than condone sin. The measure of longsuffering love is the burden and pain felt that makes us weep instead of gloat over sin. When Jesus healed a man with a withered hand in the synagogue, He "*looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts*" (*Mark 3:5*). Holiness begets anger over sin, while love begets grief over sin. Only a holy love can wean from sin and win the sinner.