## Be Sure Your Sins Will Find You Out

by Harry Osborne

One is more likely to engage in wrongdoing if he thinks he can get by with it. Catching one who thinks he has committed the "perfect crime" not only provides for just punishment, but also serves to deter future offenses. In the early years, parenting is made much easier if you convince a child that you have eyes in the back of your head. A child caught in the act of sneaky misconduct will think twice before misbehaving again. In our society, crime is rampant because criminals believe they can get by with breaking the law. It is a sad fact that many criminals are never caught. When they are caught and sentences are slow to be imposed or greatly shortened, criminals get the message that crime ***pays***, not that it ***costs***.

In the spiritual realm, God declares the absolute rule that wrongdoing will be discovered and punished. God gives time for the evil doer to seek forgiveness through repentance, but those refusing to do so will suffer the consequences. The nature of God assures us of this fact "for the Lord is a God of justice" (Isa. 30:18).

#### Lesson from Israel

When God commanded Israel about the actions they were to take in entering the Promised Land, He told them that compliance would bring great blessings for them. However, he also warned of the certainty that failure to obey would be discovered. Note the warning:

But if you do not do so, then take note, you have sinned against the Lord; and be sure your sin will find you out (Num. 32:23).

When the Israelites disregarded that warning and thought that their sins would not be seen, they were wrong. God spoke of the people's sins to Jeremiah saying, "For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes" (Jer. 16:17). In fact, God not only knew their evil deeds, He knew the thoughts behind those deeds. This is made clear as He says, "I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 17:10). In another place, He declares, "I know the things that come into your mind" (Ezek. 11:5).

#### Application to Us

Let there be no mistake about it - God knows ALL of the facts about our actions. Any sin we have committed, He knows about. If we did it away from the eyes of any human and have kept it secret from everyone on earth, God still knows. When we remember this fact, the words of Solomon should cause us to reflect more deeply upon the coming judgment:

For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether it is good or whether it is evil (Eccl. 12:14).

The thoughts we may have disguised to others are also fully known by God. Whether it be the motive for action already taken or the planning of future action, God knows our every thought (cf. Acts 5:1-4). The Hebrew writer affirms this fact by noting that the word of God declares the insight of God by addressing the "thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). He further states the general truth by saying, "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Heb. 4:13).

But what will be the result of God knowing about our sin? Will He just turn His back upon it and let us get by unpunished. No, remember His warning, "Be sure your sin will find you out." That warning is made more pointed when we are told that God will bring "tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil" (Rom. 2:9). Lest we think our sin might be tolerated without consequence, God states this solemn fact:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption (Gal. 6:7-8).

No one will get by with sin! Anyone who thinks he can so mock the Lord and His promise of punishing sin is only fooling himself. Evil actions in life will inevitably bring the fruits of such corruption into the life of the sinner.

#### Sin Has Consequences

It is true that many sins have a consequence in this life. The users of alcohol and other drugs suffer the physical problems associated with such. Illicit sexual activity often brings disease or unwanted pregnancy. Lying causes one to be rejected by those around him. Hatred and jealousy bring misery. The list could go on and on of the temporal effects of sin.

However, the consequences of this life are not the ultimate punishment for sin. Ultimately, sin has the eternal consequence of hell which will eclipse every temporal problem caused by sin. It is the eternal punishment that should serve as our greatest warning about the effects of sin. We are told,

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

Jesus says it will be "everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46). While teaching of the place in more detail, Jesus termed it "hell" and said it is a place "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mk. 9:44). Such language not only clearly portrays the eternal nature of that place of punishment, but also graphically symbolizes the continual state of death that characterizes hell. On this earth, death is a passing state. In hell, it is an eternal existence.

#### Examples Of Old

In the Bible, we read of repeated cases where men of faith recognized these facts and lived accordingly. Joseph did not see a situation’s privacy as hiding the sin that Potiphar's wife urged. Joseph's answer to the evil enticement remains a sobering question with which to face sin: *"How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"* (Gen. 39:7-10). Moses also recalled the abiding presence of "Him who is invisible" and made his decisions accordingly (Heb. 11:24-27). Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were young men far away from friends and family, but they did not see it as a license to sin. Though no family members may have ever known of their sin, God would have. That was enough for these young men of faith to live according to God's law at all times.

When I was a teenager, I remember brother J. M. Gillpatrick preaching a sermon in which he asked if we would do the same thing in private if we knew a movie would be shown of our actions at Sunday morning service. He then noted that God records every moment, public or private. I have never forgotten the point! Let us have the same determination to live righteously, recognizing that we will give answer to God (2 Cor. 5:10). Sin cannot be covered, but must be forsaken (Prov. 28:13). Be sure your sins will find you out.