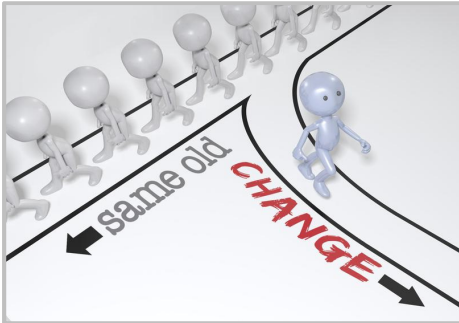


Can Our Sins Ever Produce Blessings?

1 John 2:1: (NASB) *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*



As Christians, we are clearly taught to live our lives in harmony with God's will and His ways by following in the footsteps of Jesus. We all know this challenge is one we can never fulfill with perfection. We all have experienced failure along these lines. Because we are imperfect, God expects us to fail, and yet, He blesses us. Does this mean He accepts us as we are? Does this mean that our sinful thoughts and actions can actually be sources of blessing? How many times have we made mistakes in judgment or action and through the experience seen God's blessing and providence come through? How

do we properly interpret our experiences to reflect what God is blessing us for and what He is leading us through?

Can our sins ever produce blessings? It sounds like maybe bad things can be something God can work with, kind of like a loophole. Is that true?

No. God's creation is built upon a foundation of harmony - harmony with God and His will. The Bible calls this harmony "obedience." As we will see, sin by its very definition is "thought or action outside of obedience to God." We can never be blessed of God if we dwell in sin. Never. Are we saying, if we sin we can never be blessed by God? NO. We will show how sin presents an opportunity to make a decision to seek harmony with God. The opportunity of sin is harsh and horrible, but it is an opportunity.



Let's say a soldier loses his legs because of a roadside bomb planted by terrorists as an act of war. Afterwards, through much pain and effort, he sees the true meaning of life and becomes a selfless follower of Christ. Do we say what a blessing war, terrorism and roadside bombs are? Of course not. We say what

a horrible experience, and how wonderful it is that this man has learned to use his experiences to help him grow. The blessing came from what that man did with the experience and not the experience itself. Now we all can benefit from it.

To receiving a blessing from God, there needs to be an atoning action.

Merriam-Webster:

atone: verb
to make amends.

If we have learned and grown stronger from past sinful mistakes, did or didn't our past sins bless us?

PAST SINS DID NOT BLESS US. BECOMING MORE RIGHTEOUS AND MAKING PROGRESS IS WHAT BLESSES US. SIN NEVER PRODUCES BLESSING!

What is “sin” and what is “blessing”?

The two Old Testament words most often translated as *sin*:

Sin: Strongs #2403 *chatta'ah*; or *chatta'th*; from 2398; an offence (sometimes habitual sinfulness), and its penalty, an offender

Sin: Strongs #2398 *chata'*; properly, to miss; hence (figuratively and generally) to sin; (causatively) lead astray, condemn

New Testament:

Sin: Strongs #264 - to miss the mark

Sins: Strongs #265 - sin, evil deed



Sinning means **missing the mark**. If we are aiming for the target and miss the bullseye, we have sinned. Even if we are off by a small margin, we have still failed. Anything that is less than perfection is missing the mark.

What does *blessing* mean in Scripture?

Blessing: Strongs #1293 *berakah*; from 1288; benediction; by implication prosperity

Blessing: Strongs #1288 *barak*; to kneel; by implication to bless God (as an act of adoration), and (vice-versa) man (as a benefit)

Proverbs 10:22: (NASB) *It is the **blessing <1293>** of the LORD that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it.*

Notice wealth comes from God’s blessing, adoration or appreciation, and not from lands or possessions:

Zechariah 8:13: (NASB) *It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a **blessing <1293>**. Do not fear; let your hands be strong.*

God’s people can be a blessing for others. God’s people can be a source of deep appreciation.

New Testament words for *blessing*:

Blessing: Strongs #3107 *makarios*; supremely blest; by extension, fortunate, well-off

Jesus plainly defines where Christian “fortune” comes from:

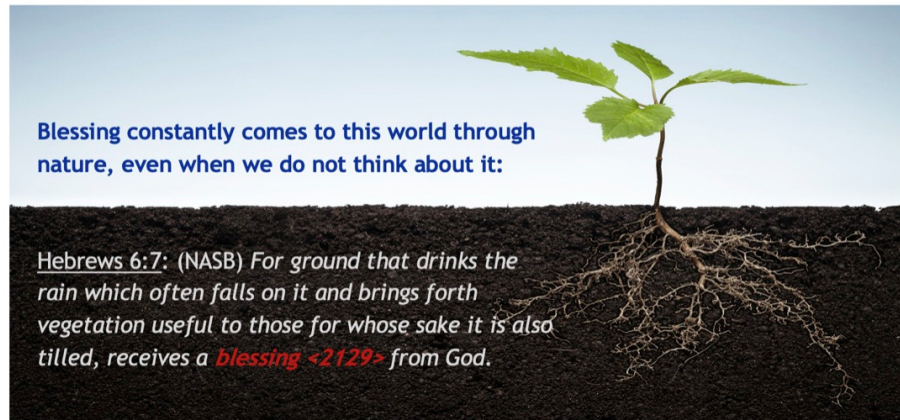
Matthew 5:3: (NASB) ***Blessed <3107>** (fortunate) are the poor in spirit (humbled), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Blessing: Strongs #2129 *eulogia*; fine speaking, i.e. elegance of language; commendation (“eulogy”), i.e. (reverentially) adoration; religiously, benediction; by implication, consecration; by extension benefit or largess

When giving a eulogy, we seriously **appreciate** the deceased person.

When someone offers a benediction, it is a prayer of **adoration** for God.

When God **blesses** us, He deeply **appreciates** us. When we **bless** God, we show Him **adoration**.



Blessing

God's purposes are designed to bring blessing, even if it takes a long time:

Hebrews 6:13-14: (NASB) ¹³For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴saying, I will surely **ble****ss <2127>** you and I will surely multiply you.

God appreciated Abraham's faithfulness and that was the reward.

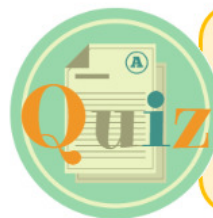
Jesus presents his followers with "blessings" that are not of this world:

Ephesians 1:3: (NASB) **Blessed <2128>** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual **blessing <2129>** in the heavenly places in Christ.

For Christians, blessing means a deep appreciation shown from one individual or group to another and little to do with "stuff."

Throughout the podcast we are going to present a little quiz. In every segment, we will name a person from the Bible who committed serious sins. Think about what each person has to do with blessings. What do they all have in common? The first clue is Tamar. There are two women named Tamar in the Bible. One is King David's daughter. Our clue is the other Tamar.

What did this person have to do with blessings?



TAMAR

Her story is found in Genesis 38. She dressed up as a prostitute to trick her father-in-law, Judah, into sleeping with her. They had twins named Perez and Zerah.

"Can our sins ever produce blessing?" can now be framed this way:

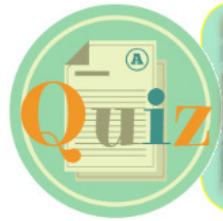
Can my completely inadequate results ever produce a deep appreciation from God?

No! God does NOT bless us through our sins. This leaves us with a large mountain to climb.

This is totally depressing! Why would God be so rigid and not accept the results of our efforts?

What we will begin to see unfold puts this depressing defeat into a much larger perspective. We need to understand the biblical principle of our responsibility towards God. When we look at the Old Testament, we see God only required effort and obedience from His people, not perfection.

What did this person have to do with blessings?



RAHAB

Her story is found in Joshua chapters 2 through 6. She was a young Canaanite prostitute whose great act of faith was telling a lie.

Israel was different than all other nations because God was their ruler. They were given a system of judges to rule and manage their society. After a time, the people became restless and wanted to be like everyone else, and Samuel would be the last of those judges. How did this happen?

A brief history before they ask for a king: We drop in on Israel in a state of idolatry. For many years they were unfocused, irresponsible and pagan.

Samuel led them higher:

1 Samuel 7:2-4: (NASB) ²From the day that the ark remained at Kiriath-jearim, the time was long, for it was twenty years; and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD. ³Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, If you return to the LORD with all your heart, remove the foreign gods and the Ashtaroth from among you and direct your hearts to the LORD and serve Him alone; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines. ⁴So the sons of Israel removed the Baals and the Ashtaroth and served the LORD alone.

Were they going to be perfect? No. They were being responsible and showing sincere effort.

God would accept their effort and bless them accordingly:

1 Samuel 7:13: (NASB) So the Philistines were subdued and they did not come anymore within the border of Israel. And the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel.

Earlier we said our completely inadequate RESULTS could never produce deep appreciation from God. But, our completely inadequate EFFORTS can produce blessings.

Israel's efforts were inadequate in terms of perfection, but God blessed them because of their efforts. A period of national sin had ended. They put the idolatry away and attempted to follow God. God DID NOT BLESS THEIR SIN, but He did bless them when they changed direction.





There is probably a time frame of 15-20 years between this change of heart and action and the events in the following texts:

1 Samuel 8:1,3-9: (NASB) ¹And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. ³His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice. ⁴Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; ⁵and they said to him, Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations. (This is a different generation and they lacked experience with ramifications for going against God. We often hear, "History repeats itself.") ⁶But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel...And Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷The LORD said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. ⁸Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day—in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also (They were rejecting God, not Samuel. God was their king). ⁹Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them.

Why this change of heart after all those years of protection? The transition from one generation to another caused their memory to fade. The fear of the Philistines was forgotten; they only heard about it.



Here's an example: The three of us lived through 9/11 and the fear and sorrow that it caused. I lost co-workers in the Towers and was trying to get on a conference call with them as the first plane hit, not understanding why I couldn't get through on the phone. My 18-year-old niece had to learn about it in school from a textbook. While she has a general appreciation for what happened, there is no substitute for living and growing through it. When I visited the Pearl Harbor museum in Hawaii, I was sad but not affected. Generations create a natural watering down of the lesson. This is what happened with Israel.

This current generation is experiencing COVID-19. We would not have truly understood a pandemic except by reading about it in history books. God's permission of evil will be an everlasting remembrance to everyone in God's kingdom. This generation will not forget what life was like living in a sin-sick world and out of harmony with God.

Another period of national sin was about to begin for Israel. God would fully disclose the consequences:

1 Samuel 8:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king. ¹¹He said, This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place them for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots.

Samuel listed the detailed tyranny of a human monarch to no avail:

1 Samuel 8:19-20: (NASB) ¹⁹Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, No, but there shall be a king over us, ²⁰that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles.

God did indeed let them have a king - He let them have many kings. Some were evil, and some were good. Did God bless them because they sinned and because they had kings? No.



1 Samuel 8:19-20 gives three reasons why they wanted a king:

- 👑 So they could be like all nations.
- 👑 So the king could judge them since Samuel's sons were corrupt and not able to act as good judges.
- 👑 So the king could fight their battles.

They already had a king - GOD. This made them different from the other nations with wealthy kings who lived in great palaces, sat on golden thrones, and who were prominently visible to the people in parades and feasts and going to war with enemy nations. The people wanted to share in the glory of a king with national pride like the other nations did. It is hard to be different from everyone around you, particularly when others seem to have it better than you do.

Regarding fighting battles, in the book of Judges we read how Israel had first-hand experience, multiple times, with the armies of other nations attacking and defeating Israel. Israel wanted a more effective national defense - fight fire with fire - our king and our army against yours. **Obedience to God's laws would have given Israel the best possible national defense.** Instead of relying on God to be their invisible protector, they wanted to rely on their own might by having a highly visible king and his army to go before them into battle.



These are good lessons for us. It is hard to be different when everyone around us has something we do not.

God does NOT bless them because of the kings. He DOES bless them because of His promise:

Genesis 22:17-18: (NASB) *¹⁷indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.*

When the nation of Israel would go off-track in their obedience and service to God they were punished. God would bring a prophet on the scene to help their efforts turn back to God, and only then His blessing would return.

The blessing comes through effort, willingness and sacrifice, not through sin.

HOW GOD BLESSES:



National and generational sins against God are seriously detrimental. God would use the unfolding history of Israel's sporadic generational faithfulness to bless them nationally in spite of these massive sins.

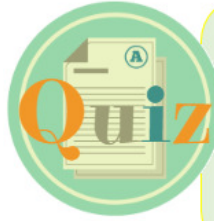
There were long periods of time when Israel was out of favor with God. A lot of mistakes, but still blessed. This sounds okay until you realize the nation of Israel lost the eventual call to heaven.

What examples do we have of an individual's sinful decision that seemingly brought blessings?

What sin of King David's caused great pain to many people? We immediately think of the story of Bathsheba in which David caused her husband, Uriah, to be killed in battle to satisfy David's own lust for Uriah's wife. Did you know there is another great sin of David's resulting in a tragic consequence?

First, let's go to our quiz.

What did this person have to do with blessings?



KING SOLOMON

A son of David.

Going against God's laws, he married foreign wives who influenced him into building shrines to false gods.

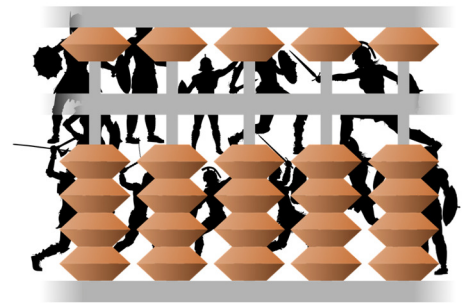
1 Kings 11:1-13

1 Kings 11:1-10: (New Living Translation) ¹Now King Solomon loved many foreign women. Besides Pharaoh's daughter, he married women from Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and from among the Hittites. ²The LORD had clearly instructed the people of Israel, You must not marry them, because they will turn your hearts to their gods. Yet Solomon insisted on loving them anyway. ³He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines. And in fact, they did turn his heart away from the LORD. ⁴In Solomon's old age, they turned his heart to worship other gods instead of being completely faithful to the LORD his God, as his father, David, had been. ⁵Solomon worshiped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁶In this way, Solomon did what was evil in the LORD's sight; he refused to follow the LORD completely, as his father, David, had done. ⁷On the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, he even built a pagan shrine for Chemosh, the detestable god of Moab, and another for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. ⁸Solomon built such shrines for all his foreign wives to use for burning incense and sacrificing to their gods. ⁹The LORD was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. ¹⁰He had warned Solomon specifically about worshiping other gods, but Solomon did not listen to the LORD's command.

Solomon did not apply his wisdom to his own desires. With great power comes great responsibility.

The account of David's sin of numbering the people is found in two places: 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21.

2 Samuel 24:1-3: (NASB) ¹Now again the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and it incited David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. ²The king said to Joab the commander of the army who was with him, Go about now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, and register the people, that I may know the number of the people. ³But Joab said to the king, Now may the LORD your God add to the people a hundred times as many as they are, while the eyes of my lord the king still see; but why does my lord the king delight in this thing?



David wanted to take a census. The 1 Chronicles version has Joab asking, Why does my Lord seek this thing? Why should he be a cause of guilt to Israel?



Perhaps David was either using the number as a source of pride because of his own kingship and military might or he wanted the security of knowing he had enough fighting men to counter invaders. Either way, he was not relying on the Lord's promise to *increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens* (1 Chronicles 27:23).

There was no acceptable purpose for the count, nor was there a specific command from God, so we can conclude David's motivation was sinful. This was a costly individual sin by a man in an extremely influential position. However, something good would come from this experience.

Will God bless the sin of David?

1 Chronicles 21:4-6: (NLT) *4But the king insisted that they take the census, so Joab traveled throughout all Israel to count the people. Then he returned to Jerusalem 5and reported the number of people to David. There were 1,100,000 warriors in all Israel who could handle a sword, and 470,000 in Judah. 6But Joab did not include the tribes of Levi and Benjamin in the census because he was so distressed at what the king had made him do.*

Those around David knew it was wrong. Joab was his nephew and the captain of David's army. Joab's example to us in this instance is beneficial.



We need to ((**SPEAK UP**)) when those around us are clearly heading down the wrong path, even if they do not listen to our scriptural advice. We should all be like Joab, challenging those around us to **depend on God instead of giving in to fear or pride.**

A full ten months later, (and after David got the majority of numbers he was looking for) David is finally repentant:

1 Chronicles 21:8: (NASB) *David said to God, I have sinned greatly, in that I have done this thing. But now, please take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly.*

God allowed David to choose his own punishment from three options with three different time frames, as delivered by the prophet Gad:

1. Three years of famine (*Note: The Chronicles account says three years, but the Samuel version says seven. The Hebrew characters for "7" and "3" resemble each other and one must be in error. The Septuagint translation says "three."*)
2. Three months of fleeing from his enemies
3. Three days of pestilence from the Lord, meaning the angel of Jehovah destroying throughout all the borders of Israel



We see David's true heart condition as he chose the third option, stating he would rather fall into the merciful hands of God than of man, who would have triumphed in the misfortunes of Israel.

It is obvious that sin brings consequences. We have seen national sin, kingly sin and personal sin. The end results are the same: **SIN BRINGS PUNISHMENT.**



Notice David chose the one option that being in a position of king could not afford any protection:

2 Samuel 24:15-16: (ASV) ¹⁵So Jehovah sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed; and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men. ¹⁶And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, Jehovah repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough; now stay thy hand. And the angel of Jehovah was by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

At first glance, it seems unsettling the nation had to suffer because of one man. This reminds us of Adam's sin and the suffering of the rest of mankind. Remember, God had earlier warned the people of the undesirable effects of being ruled by a king. It appears God stopped the destroying angel before the full three days of pestilence were complete. God does not want sin to go on one second longer than it needs to.

God did not judge other nations as He did Israel. Israel's favor and judgment were very specific. No other nation has had that favor or that level of punishment from God.

The prophet Gad instructs David to set up an altar on the threshing floor where the angel of death had been stopped. God accepts the sacrifice, and this very spot becomes the site of the Temple of Solomon, David's son. Years later, Jesus would preach here. It was previously the site where Abraham was told to offer Isaac in sacrifice. Today that same site in Jerusalem is where the Dome of the Rock sits.



Was this a blessing from sin? No! God honored the repentance. Atonement for sin does not avoid the consequence of sin. Our sins do NOT produce blessings, but the repentance and effort to honor God is what gives us God's appreciation, adoration and blessing.



Observation: Sin always has greater, unintended consequences - a ripple effect. David's decision to number the people resulted in the death and sorrow of countless families and possibly an end to some genealogies.

With such a massive consequence to Israel, it makes sense atonement and forgiveness would take place at the very spot where the first human picture of the ransom took place with Abraham and Isaac.

HOW GOD BLESSES:



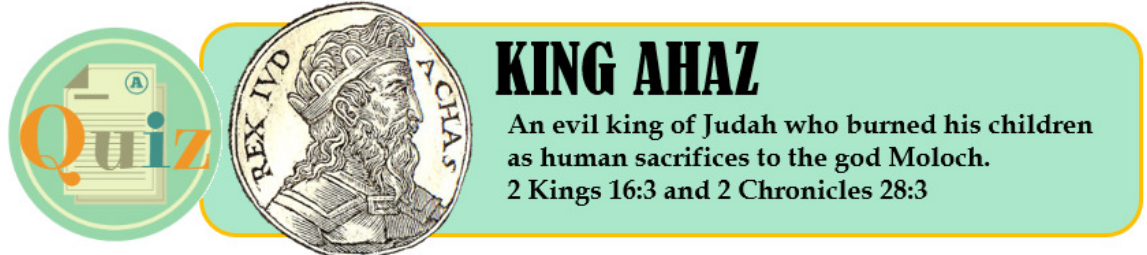
When we are influencers, some of our individual sins can have far-reaching effects on many around us. As we repent, learn and grow from these, God can use and even indelibly mark the path that we are on to still bless us and others.

Ego is such a godless waste of time. Too much power and too much "me" equals a massive need to repent.

What about when our sins are a result of weakness or lack of discipline? Can God bless us in this case?

Imperfect humans naturally seek out less strenuous ways to be acceptable to God. The resounding and unalterable answer to this is that God does not bless us because we are sinful; rather, He blesses our efforts to rise above sin. The disciple John Mark is a good example of how this works.

What did this person have to do with blessings?



John Mark was a young follower of Jesus. His family played a significant role in the early church:

Acts 12:11-12: (NASB) ¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting. ¹²And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

Peter is let out of prison and immediately goes to the house of John Mark's mother. He knows the fellow followers would be there. This is a testimony to the faithfulness of this family.

His zeal must have been noticeable as Barnabas and Saul (later called Paul) saw exceptional value in him:

Acts 12:24-25: (NASB) ²⁴But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied. ²⁵And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.

These were difficult, demanding and focused missions.

In Acts 13:1-5, they were in Antioch and then were guided to Cyprus. Verse 5 specifically names John Mark as their helper.

At some point we are told that John Mark quits:

Acts 13:13: (NASB) Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

Was this sinful? Yes! Why? John Mark did not fulfill his commitment and left in the middle of the journey. What was the consequence?

After that first missionary journey:

Acts 15:36-40: (NASB) ³⁶After some days Paul said to Barnabas, Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are. ³⁷Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also. ³⁸But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. ⁴⁰But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

The disagreement was so sharp that Paul and Barnabas ended up going separate ways. This was a costly individual sin committed by a young man, most likely out of weakness. This sin had a harsh effect on those around him as it created a division between two dedicated gospel ministers.



How is it a sin that John Mark changed his mind? How do we know John Mark just did not get sick or have some emergency back home he needed to get to?

Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them - the Apostle says he deserted (withdrew). It does not say John Mark was called away or circumstances came up that he was needed elsewhere. It says he deserted his commitment; a conscious decision. Further, the fact that Paul was so opposed to John's further contributions indicates desertion and a lack of self-discipline. This was serious. He committed and did not follow through. John Mark left the group vulnerable because they relied on him for support. We believe it was out of weakness and not purposely malicious.



For those who are living a life of consecration, trying to do the Lord's will, how do we explain how the act of Jesus dying on the cross allows them to stay in a relationship with God, even while they are sinners? We are not referring to willful sins; these are daily sins we might not even realize are wrong. John Mark did not live up to his commitment. Maybe we do (or do not do) something without realizing we have put someone else in a bind. We "missed the mark" which did not result in "adoration for God." How does Jesus' death and ransom fit into the life of a consecrated, dedicated follower of Christ?

It does not "fit in"; it is the overriding principle of our entire lives. We commit sins without even realizing it because we miss the mark all the time. When we go to God through Christ in prayer and ask for forgiveness, we know Jesus' ransom paid for us, in full. We are covered with the righteousness of Jesus. We want to pray, "God, forgive me for the sins I have committed and those I do not even know about." God accepts the effort, the desire and the will to be in line with Him, as through the filter of the perfection of Jesus' sacrifice. It is as if our "dirty water" of a life filters through the robe of Christ's righteousness and comes out clean on the other side, every single time.



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Help teach your children about the ransom with our CQ Kids video: **Why Did Jesus Have to Die?**



We need that robe, covering of the righteousness of Jesus. With it we can stand up in full confidence that *we are forgiven and can try again tomorrow*. When we fall down again - and we will - we go through the same process again and grow through it. Jesus is our covering. Without it, we are dead to God.

INTERVENING ATONEMENT IS NECESSARY

Old Testament Israel: Atonement Sacrifices

New Testament Christians: Jesus' Sacrifice

SIN

Blessing

Atonement for sin does not avoid the consequence of sin, but it DOES allow accessibility to God.



A CQ App listener says: A person who betrayed me is seemingly living a wonderful life in a beautiful house. Isn't this an example of sins bringing blessings?

We have to think spiritually. As we discussed, the definition of *blessing* is "adoration and appreciation from God." Is the betrayer blessed by God or do they have a lot of nice stuff? There is a world of difference between people who have stuff and those who are blessed, adored and appreciated by God. Which would you rather have? Bad people get good things in life, but just because people have stuff does not mean they are happy.

Back to John Mark. He sinned and it had a bad effect on the Apostle Paul. But in the end, two groups of missionaries were sent out - twice as many missionaries were spreading the gospel. Is this blessing a result of John Mark's sin? No, it was because both Paul and Barnabas were determined to finish the work. Their determination to do the will of God is what brought the blessing.

Many years later Paul is in chains:

Colossians 4:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰*Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, sends you his greetings; and also Barnabas's cousin Mark about whom you received instructions; if he comes to you, welcome him; ¹¹and also Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me.*

John Mark *proved to be an encouragement to me*. What a powerful testimony to the growth of John Mark, to the realization of his mistake and ability to be an eventual blessing to the Apostle Paul. The blessing of John Mark did not come because of his sin; it came because of what he did as a result of his bad decision. He grew and matured.

Still later, Paul is now at the end of his earthly road:

2 Timothy 4:11: (NASB) *Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service.*



There is a parallel: Paul forgave Mark, just as Jesus forgave Peter. It should give us confidence that God's people are merciful and forgive us when we make mistakes. Both Mark and Peter were blessed from their growth, maturity and effort, not from their sin.

HOW GOD
BLESSES:



Personal sins and immaturity can have harsh effects on those around us even causing divisions, yet God can work with these broken pieces. It is only when we apply ourselves to growing past those sins that we can have the opportunity to heal some of the hurt we have caused.

Our weakness can cost others their ability to continue in unity.

Sin does not bring blessing. How do we protect ourselves from the traps of our own human thinking?

We are our own worst enemies. Our fleshly desires are strong. They easily and often toy with our minds, prompting rationalized thinking to support them. The Bible is full of examples of this dilemma, and fortunately it is also full of remedies for such challenges. We simply need to get serious.

What did this person have to do with blessings?



KING MANASSEH

The son of good King Hezekiah. This evil king "did what was evil in the Lord's sight," including idol worship, sorcery and the murder of God's prophets. His people were corrupted. 2 Kings 21:2-6

2 Kings 21:2-6: (New Living Translation) ²*He did what was evil in the LORD's sight, following the detestable practices of the pagan nations that the LORD had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.* ³*He rebuilt the pagan shrines his father, Hezekiah, had destroyed. He constructed altars for Baal and set up an Asherah pole, just as King Ahab of Israel had done...* ⁴*He built pagan altars in the Temple of the LORD...* ⁶*Manasseh also sacrificed his own son in the fire. He practiced sorcery and divination, and he consulted with mediums and psychics. He did much that was evil in the LORD's sight, arousing his anger.*

It goes on to say Manasseh led the people to do even more evil than the pagan nations the Lord had destroyed when the Israelites had first entered the land.

2 Kings 21:16: (New Living Translation) *Manasseh also murdered many innocent people until Jerusalem was filled from one end to the other with innocent blood. This was in addition to the sin that he caused the people of Judah to commit, leading them to do evil in the LORD's sight.*

When the Lord's prophets condemned him, he simply had them killed according to **Jeremiah 2:30**. Manasseh eventually repents, but the consequences of his sins remained in that his people were corrupted and continued to worship false gods.



TAMAR - RAHAB - DAVID - SOLOMON - AHAZ - MANASSEH - What do they all have in common? What did their sinful lives have to do with blessings? **They are all listed as the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, in Matthew 1:1-16. (This is Joseph’s lineage. Mary’s lineage is described in Luke 3:23-38.)**

The Savior’s line, a reading from Moments with the Savior, Ken Gire



- *And when we’ve gone through the entire line, we’re left scratching our head, wondering, “What are we to make of this tree through whose branches came the Savior of the world? What are we to make of all the sin, all the imperfection, all the failure?” God’s purposes are not thwarted by our humanity, however weak and wayward it may be. That he works in us and through us and more often than not, in spite of us. That he works with us, as a gardener works with his garden. Lifting, Pruning, Watering, Weeding. Whatever it takes to bring it to fruition. Or however long it takes. This is our hope. That season after season he walks the uncultivated fields of each generation. His providential hands at work in the dark, cloddy soil. His careful eyes at watch over the growth. Watching over the budding faith of the young and over the branching influence of the old. So that something beautiful may blossom from our frail and nubby reach for the sky.*

God works in spite of us. We sin, but with repentance, obedience and Jesus’ sacrifice, it can turn into blessing. This lineage is marred with flawed humans, as well as just awful people. Yet it produced our greatest blessing, the Savior of the world!

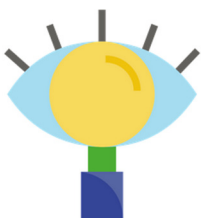
In spite of their depths of degradation these people fell into, God’s plan came to fruition with Jesus’ birth, life and death. And, in spite of our sins, our falling short, our missing the mark; as we show effort towards God, He appreciates and adores us by blessing our efforts.

This all comes down to learning to discern between good and evil, righteousness and rationalization:

Psalm 51:6: (NASB) *Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.*

The need for discernment is nothing new. Humanity’s history overflows with the wreckage of rationalization:

Isaiah 5:20-21: (NASB) ²⁰*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!* ²¹*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!*



DISCERNMENT PRINCIPLE:

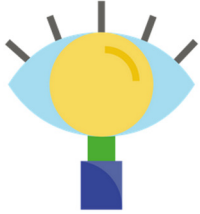
Mature spiritual discernment is indicated by your spiritual diet:

Hebrews 5:13-14: (NASB) ¹³*For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.*



It takes *practice...to discern good and evil*. It is not enough to go to church and sit and listen; we must be able to absorb the deeper things of God so we can “grow up” and discern what is good in God’s sight. To do this, we must, *through constant practice, have our spiritual faculties carefully trained to distinguish good from evil*. (Weymouth translation)

What are we eating spiritually?



DISCERNMENT PRINCIPLE:

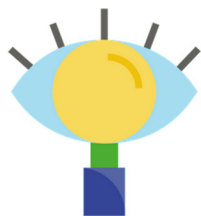
Do not sin just because you have forgiveness available: Romans 6:15: (NASB) *What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!*

If we tell people about the resurrection and a future chance to learn righteousness in God’s kingdom, the reaction is often, “Then why should we be good now?” However, we cannot base our behavior on a “get out of jail free” card. The bad habits people develop in this life will have a direct effect on the “stripes” they have to endure in the next. Walking up the *highway of holiness* (Isaiah 35:1-10) will be very difficult for those overcoming this world’s depravity.

Footstep followers of Jesus, those who were given God’s holy spirit in this age, cannot keep willfully sinning. That would be like taking off Christ’s robe of righteousness. Not only will they not receive a blessing, but they are putting themselves in danger of having no life in the kingdom of God. If we, as a child of God, commit a sin, we need to ask forgiveness and live in a repentant way. By doing this, we are blessing God; we are deeply appreciating Him. We recognize the forgiveness of Jesus and make it a part of our life because we want to adore our Creator.

We will receive blessings when we reach up towards God, whether we are striving as footstep followers of Jesus now, or will be striving towards righteousness in His future kingdom.

God’s plan is built on harmony and obedience to His will. We have to grow to that point. Do not sin just because we have forgiveness available.

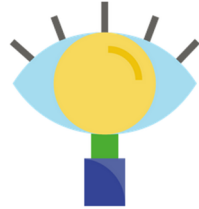


DISCERNMENT PRINCIPLE:

Realize the ease with which the gospel is corrupted:

2 Peter 2:1-3: (NASB) *But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.*

It is easy to corrupt the gospel. If we walk away from the original gospel towards traditions of men, we end up walking down a path that is not blessed by God.

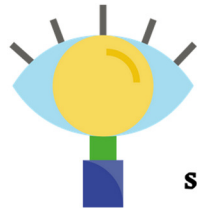


DISCERNMENT PRINCIPLE:

When we find a “new” way to understand the Word and it just happens to fit what we humanly desire, we need to be profoundly aware so we do not twist the Scriptures to fit our desires:

²Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; ³and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

2 Peter 2:1-3 tells us the gospel would be corrupted through those who want to satisfy their own desires. It may look like they can do whatever they want - until the judgment of God is upon them - but sin will never produce blessing. Our will, unless it is perfectly in alignment with God’s will, will not produce blessing, His adoration.



DISCERNMENT PRINCIPLE:

The written Word DOES supersede all of our personal experiences.

Peter testifies of his personal experience of hearing the voice from heaven proclaiming Jesus as God’s beloved son. This was an incredible eyewitness experience.

Yet, here is how he categorizes that personal testimony:

2 Peter 1:18-21: (WEY) ¹⁸And we ourselves heard these words come from heaven, when we were with him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹And in the written word of prophecy we have something more permanent; to which you do well to pay attention - as to a lamp shining in a dimly lighted place - until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰But, above all, remember that no prophecy in Scripture will be found to have come from the prophet’s own prompting; ²¹for never did any prophecy come by human will, but men sent by God spoke as they were impelled by the holy spirit.

The Apostle Peter had the magnificent personal experience of being with Jesus for years. He watched the miracles; he watched Lazarus being called from the grave. He was there! Yet, he himself says we have the more permanent record of prophecy - the history of God’s word through ages and generations, telling us of His plans and purposes. He warns us that we need to focus not on personal experiences but on what God said.

In order to be blessed of God, to have His appreciation and adoration, we need to be seeking Him through all of our mistakes.

HOW GOD BLESSES:



Today, more than ever, it is far too easy to find ways to make the Scriptures fit into our thinking and what we want them to say rather than sacrificing our thinking and desires in order to follow scriptural teaching. BE CAREFUL! God does NOT bless lax scriptural interpretations!



We all sin - every day! What do we do with that sin? If we seek to rise above it and ask forgiveness and take steps forward, God profoundly appreciates our effort. It is not the sin that brings the blessing. It is the effort to overcome it and God's will to bless that effort. By rising above the sin, we can bless God and through God, bless others.

**So, can our sins ever produce blessings?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!**



Bonus Material and Study Questions

There are two kinds of pride, both good and bad. 'Good pride' represents our dignity and self-respect. 'Bad pride' is the deadly sin of superiority that reeks of conceit and arrogance.
— John C. Maxwell

There are many examples of blessings that are conditional:

2 Timothy 2:20-26: (NASB) ²⁰Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. ²¹Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. ²²Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. ²³But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. ²⁴The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

James 1:5-8: (NASB) ⁵But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. ⁶But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, ⁸being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Deuteronomy 11:26-28: (NASB) ²⁶See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; ²⁸and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.



John 1:12-13: (NASB) ¹²But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Galatians 4:6-7: (NASB) ⁶Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father! ⁷Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

1 Peter 4:19: (NASB) Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.

(Source: <https://formerheathen.wordpress.com/2018/04/02/god-does-not-bless-sin/>)

Here's an example: If a bank robber steals a bunch of money from a bank, and uses that money to live a wonderful lifestyle, has God BLESSED the bank robber with that lifestyle? NO! This is a simple case of cause and effect; this person took money, and money provides the lifestyle... God had no hand in it.

In the same way, if your spouse cheats on you, with or without also leaving you, and has a happy life with their adulterous partner, has God BLESSED them with that happiness? NO! When two people who want to be together get together, happiness is the natural result...at least at first...and God had nothing to do with it.

In a similar vein, just because something goes wrong in your life does NOT mean that you are being "punished." If someone takes something from you, your spouse, the job you wanted, your best friend, whatever, that does NOT mean that God is punishing you, or blessing them; it means that the taker used their free will and took something from you. God had nothing to do with it.

(Source: <https://www.jesusfilm.org/blog-and-stories/is-failure-fatal.html>)

King David's sin: There's no question that David is one of the Bible's more important figures. It's easy to be inspired by his youthful willingness to fight Goliath, his tender friendship with Jonathan, his worshipful Psalms, and his enduring patience under wicked King Saul.

It's almost hard to fathom that this beloved character who's spoken so highly of in more than half of the Bible's books would also be guilty of breaking half of God's commandments. David coveted Uriah's wife, Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2-3), committed adultery with her (2 Samuel 11:4) effectively stealing her from Uriah (2 Sam. 12:9), lying to him (2 Samuel 11:12-13), and eventually having him murdered (2 Samuel 12:9).

When the prophet Nathan confronts David for his depravity, he immediately repents, confessing his sin. When the son that is born to David and Bathsheba gets sick, David fasts, prays, and mourns his sin in an effort to seek God to heal the boy. When the child dies, David simply receives this outcome as God's judgment.

Here's the principle so failure doesn't get the last word: When we have sinned, we must recognize it and repent. God's forgiveness doesn't save us from the consequences of our conduct, but if we've abandoned the behavior and are willing to accept the consequences, God will still use us.

Christian Questions Weekly
Newsletter

CQ Rewind Show Notes and
Study Questions

Text

CQREWIND

to **22828** to get started.



Study QUESTIONS

Ep. 1123: Can Our Sins Ever Produce Blessings?

<https://christianquestions.com/doctrine/can-our-sins-ever-produce-blessings/>

See:  CQ Rewind
SHOW NOTES

1. What do the words “sin” and “blessing” mean? How does the Bible use them?
(See Proverbs 10:22, Zechariah 8:13, Matthew 5:3, Hebrews 6:7,13-14, Ephesians 1:3)
2. What did Israel do during the time of the prophet Samuel that resulted in God’s blessings? What does this teach us about what produces blessings from God?
(See 1 Samuel 7:2-4,13)
3. What caused Israel’s change of heart and desire to have a king? What were the consequences of this decision? (See 1 Samuel 8:1-11,19-20)
4. Why did God bless Israel? What does this teach us about how God blesses?
(See Genesis 22:17-18)
5. What were the consequences of King David’s sin of numbering the people? What can we learn from this example? (See 2 Samuel 24:1-3,15-16, 1 Chronicles 21:4-8)
6. Were the many events that happened at the site David offered up a sacrifice of repentance a blessing from his sin? If not, what caused the blessings?
7. How did John Mark’s actions affect Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey? How did Paul feel about John Mark at that time? How did he feel about him at the end of his life? (See Acts 13:13, 15:36-40, Colossians 4:10-11, 2 Timothy 4:11)
8. What do Tamar, Rahab, David, Solomon, Ahaz, and Manasseh all have in common? Did blessings come from their sins or in spite of them? (See Matthew 1:1-16, Psalm 51:6)
9. What principles can we remember to help us correctly discern what is written in the Bible? (See Hebrews 5:13-14, Romans 6:15, 2 Peter 1:18-21, 2:1-3)
10. Does sin ever produce blessings? What actions will you take to receive blessings even when you sin?