

THIS WAY AND THAT

In the New Testament the followers of Jesus Christ are referred to as "followers of this Way" (Acts 22:4; cf. 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:22). They had placed their trust in Jesus, having obeyed him who alone is "the way" (John 14:6).

They are referred to by various terms: "believers" (I Timothy 4:12), having believed in Jesus as sin bearer; "disciples" (Acts 9:1,26), that is learners, under Christ; "brothers" (Hebrews 2:11), having become a family in Christ; "saints" (Romans 1:7), being set apart from the world by their holy way of life; and they become known as "Christians" (Acts 11:26; 26:28), and were encouraged to be willing to suffer under that name (I Peter 4:16).

As ones who had come to a common faith in Christ, they collectively became "the body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12:27) and are referred to as "the church" (Ephesians 1:22), "the church of God" (I Corinthians 1:2), "churches of God ...which are in Christ Jesus" (I Thessalonians 2:14), or "the churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16). These terms, of course were not separate party names but were mere descriptive terms showing to whom this most unusual assembly of people belonged. Having begun by believing and obeying Christ they now "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). They were complete in Christ, finding in him "all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him" (II Peter 1:3).

When a party spirit and accompanying party names began to emerge they were promptly reminded, "Is Christ divided?" (I Corinthians 1:13).

Today we have a multitude of denominations, each with its own party name. That name may stem from a great leader (such as Martin Luther, Menno Simmons), or from a teaching (such as Pentecost, Baptist, Holiness, Methodist), or from a scriptural term which becomes elevated as a party title (such as Brethren, Disciples of Christ, Church of God, Church of Christ). Regardless of the rationale used for justifying a party name, one thing is certain: the early church adopted no party name. Geographical designations only were used (Revelation 1:11).

Have you considered that you also can be unified with the early believers by laying aside your denominational traditions and name and returning to the authority of Christ and his apostles? (Ephesians 2:20). Responding to Christ as a repentant and immersed believer, you too can be a Christian only - one of the "followers of this Way."

PAUL D. YODER
Boyertown, PA

The Stranger

A few months before I was born, my Dad met a stranger who was new to our small Tennessee town. From the beginning, Dad was fascinated with this enchanting newcomer and soon invited him to live with our family. The stranger was quickly accepted and was around to welcome me into the world a few months later.

As I grew up, I never questioned his place in my family. In my young mind, he had a special niche. My parents were complementary instructors: Mom taught me the word of God, and Dad taught me to obey it. But the stranger, he was our storyteller. He would keep us spellbound for hours on end with adventures, mysteries and comedies. If I wanted to know anything about politics, history or science, he always knew the answers about the past, understood the present and even seemed able to predict the future! He took my family to the first major league ball game. He made me laugh, and he made me cry. The stranger never stopped talking, but Dad didn't seem to mind.

Sometimes Mom would get up quietly while the rest of us were shushing each other to listen to what he had to say, and she would go to her room and read her books. (I wonder now if she ever prayed for the stranger to leave.)

Dad ruled our household with certain moral convictions, but the stranger never felt obligated to honor them. Profanity, for example, was not allowed in our home... not from us, our friends or any visitors. Our long-time visitor, however, got away with four-letter words that burned my ears and made my dad squirm and my mother blush. My Dad was a teetotaler who didn't permit alcohol in the home, not even for cooking. But the stranger encouraged us to try it on a regular basis. He made cigarettes look cool, cigars manly and pipes distinguished. He talked freely (much too freely!) about sex. His comments were sometimes blatant, sometimes suggestive, and generally embarrassing. I now know that my early concepts about relationships were influenced strongly by the stranger. Time after time, he opposed the values of my parents. Yet he was seldom rebuked, and NEVER asked to leave.

More than fifty years have passed since the stranger moved in with our family. He has blended right in and is not nearly as fascinating as he was at first. Still, if you were to

walk into my parents' den today you would still find him sitting over in his corner, waiting for someone to listen to him talk and watch him draw his pictures.

What is his name? We just call him TV.

Author Unknown
Submitted by Mark Carpenter

Beginning this month, THE HARVESTER will include a new section called "Apologia" (Apologia is from the Greek word meaning "a spoken or written defense.") where Brother Sam Dick and others will answer Bible questions.

For several years Brother Dick has produced the publication, THE APOLOGIA. Unfortunately, Brother Dick is unable to continue this publication. THE HARVESTER is most blessed to have Brother Dick as a regular writer.

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Can you explain what is meant when the Bible says we are "dead to sin"? Does this mean that if you are a Christian you will never sin?

ANSWER: The questions stated above while related are two different issues. Many students of the Bible will read the passages that teach we are dead to sin and draw the conclusion that Christians never sin. What at first appears to be a logical conclusion does not bear up under a close examination of scripture. The Bible does teach that we are dead to sin and that as Christians we can and do sin.

The book of Romans is an excellent study on the problem of sin. Paul very clearly points out that all have sinned (Romans 3:23) and that our deliverance from sin is found in Christ. In the sixth chapter he begins a discourse on how we as Christians are dead to sin and consequently are to no longer live in it. But of course we ask what does this mean?

Anytime that we study the scripture we find that there are passages that are to be believed and passages that are to be obeyed. That is to say that some passages do not ask of us a response rather they simply set forth the way things are. Other passages require action of us. This is what we call obedience.

Romans chapter six is a prime example of this. In the first eleven verses Paul states what we are to believe. In the remainder of the chapter he tells us what we are to do.

Paul sets forth for us the relationship that we have to sin. He begins by letting us know that we are dead to sin and therefore should no longer continue in it. When we were baptized we were baptized into Christ's death. So having been buried with Him in baptism, we were raised to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-5). It is here that we were born again (John 3:5) and became new creatures (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our death to sin is not in repentance but in baptism. When we are baptized we are set free from sin's condemnation and sin's dominion. We were forgiven of our trespasses and sin's control over us was broken. Writing in the epistle to the Colossians Paul illustrates the loss of sin's dominion over us by stating, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). We no longer are under the rule of the power of darkness but by our obedience have been translated into God's kingdom where we have a new ruler, even Christ.

The meaning of being dead to sin encompasses all that we have mentioned above. We no longer are condemned before God due to sin but are justified and we are no longer held captive by sin's allurements but now are free to serve another. But note that being made free from sin does not necessarily imply that we will choose to be free. Rather we are now free from sin's control that we might grow in Christ-likeness.

The breaking of sin's dominion does not mean that we will never sin. As creatures of choice, we must now choose to follow Christ and give up the practice of sin. Paul tells us that we are slaves to whom we present ourselves slaves to obey! We can choose to obey sin which leads unto death, or we can choose to obey God which leads unto life. Now in Christ we have been delivered from sin that leads unto death that we may be servants of righteousness. Inherent in this statement is the truth that before coming to Christ we were unable to be righteous. Or to put it another way, if we could overcome sin's control in our own power why did we need to die to sin? (Roman 6:15-18). It is clear that coming to Christ is what sets us free from sin's rule.

But now we turn our attention to the second aspect of the question. Does a Christian still sin? The answer is yes. However let's be quick to point out that the sin we commit is not a situation where we live a sinful life given totally over to the

flesh but rather one where we mortify the flesh. This is the process of sanctification. Sanctification is the process where we are conformed to the image of Christ. Having been set free from sin we are now in a position to deal with the flesh and its desire and bring it into captivity to Christ. This process is not instantaneous and requires obedience on our part.

Paul in Romans 6:12-13 tells us that we are not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies by obeying its lust. Rather we are to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness unto God. Later in the epistle (Romans 12:1-2) Paul instructs us to present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God and to not be conformed to this world. Rather we are to renew our minds by the washing of water by the word (Ephesians 5:26). Time and time again in Paul's writings we find the admonition to put off certain behaviors and mindsets and replace them with proper ones. Space does not allow us to deal with these in detail but we refer our readers to Ephesians 4:17-32, and Colossians 3:1-17.

The wonderful truth is that since we are no longer ruled by sin we can actually accomplish the putting away of sin and clothing ourselves in righteousness. But as noted previously this is not something that happens immediately.

This raises then another question. If we are freed from sin's dominion but dealing with our flesh takes time, what do we do about our failures? If Christians still fall short won't we be lost?

The answer to this question is found in I John 1:8-10. John writes, *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."* John is writing to Christians, not people who are in the world. He tells us that we sin and as those who are God's children we are to acknowledge our sins and the blood of Christ will cleanse us. In I John 1:7, John instructs us, *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."*

The key here is walk. Walk in the scripture deals with one's progression. Physically when we are walking we are headed toward a specific destination. Our steps will lead us somewhere. So it is spiritually. Our walk, our steps are to be in the direction

of Christ-likeness. We must constantly deal with the sin in our life by confessing it and seeking to put it off and replacing it with the person God intends for us to be.

We are thankful that we are dead to sin. It no longer controls us. We can break sinful habits and evil mindsets. We must diligently present ourselves to God, as workmen who need not be ashamed but who correctly apply the word of God to our life (2 Timothy 2:15). As Christians we live daily with Christ with the confidence that the sin in our life is hid in Him as we progress toward the mark.

SAM DICK
Cave City, KY

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. According to Deuteronomy, what was the maximum number of stripes a wicked man could receive?
2. When God told Abram that his seed would be as the stars because you could not count them, did Abram believe God?
3. Since the end of all things is near, how does 1 Peter say to live?
4. According to the book of Job, what does not come from the dust?
5. What did Jonathan eat that caused him to break his father, Saul's, oath?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. With whom did David commit adultery? BATHSHEBA (2 Sam. 12:25)
2. According to Deuteronomy, how much interest was a man to charge his countryman in Israel? NONE (Deut. 23:19)
3. What did God tell Moses that he was going to do when he saw the Israelites sacrificing to an idol? DESTROY THEM (Exo. 32:10)

4. What position as tax collector did Zacchaeus hold? CHIEF
TAX COLLECTOR (Luke 19:2)

5. Who does the Psalmist say counts the stars and gives names to
all of them? THE LORD (Psalms 34:18)