

Sin & Repentance



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Preface

It suffices to say that sin kills you. Physically, it kills you slowly. Spiritually, it kills you immediately. Eternally, it guarantees you will live in torment, forever separated from God. Shouldn't you be interested to know how you can beat this lethal enemy?

A legacy that Adam and Eve left for us, sin is a disease we all carry in our blood. There's no cure for it—we'll never be able to remove it from our human existence. As a young Christian, I remember praying naively: 'Lord, please take this desire to sin away from me.' I didn't know that God could not answer that prayer. Later I learned that even though He cannot cure us of sin, He has provided a remedy: Repentance.

Repentance is the path God has made available to those who want to escape the deadly consequences of sin. But often mistaken with remorse, many people do not understand what they really need to do in order to repent. In this succinct but clear booklet, Bishop Macedo helps you understand why you need to rule over sin and teaches you how you can break free from it. Any aspiring Christian seeking to be 'free indeed' needs these tools. Our Lord Jesus said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.' Are you ready to be free?

Bishop Renato Cardoso

CHAPTER 1

*Sin and its
Consequences*

Although sin is defined as breaking the Law, as it's written, 'Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness' (1 John 3.4), to understand the true meaning of sin we must delve deeper into the subject. Sin is disobedience—voluntary or involuntary—to the Word of God. We see a clear example of sin in the Garden of Eden, when Adam refused to obey the Word of God and chose to obey the word of the devil instead.

We become servants of him whose voice we obey. As a consequence, when we obey God we submit to Him, but when we disobey the Lord we automatically obey the devil, submitting to him and falling into sin.

When a person rejects the Word of God, he becomes easy prey for the devil and consciously or unconsciously begins to obey him. In other words, a sinner is like a son whose father struggled to bring him up, and upon reaching adulthood refused to honour his father and chose rather to honour and obey his father's worst enemy. Would that be fair?

How does sin come about?

Sinning is simple and easy, and sinners usually justify their behaviour by saying it was unintentional, that they were not being careful or that they were caught at a bad moment. But excuses like these are lies and make a person's situation even worse because they reveal a truly unrepentant attitude.

As a matter of fact, there is no involuntary sin. Every human act involves a person's will and intention, without which responsibility cannot exist.

When a person commits a sin, he does so out of his own free will, as it's written, *'No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it'* (1 Corinthians 10.13).

This means that no one is tempted beyond his ability to resist. What really happens is that, like a seed sown in the heart, sin gradually develops until it bears its 'fruits'.

The devil continually tempts people in very subtle ways. He offers them things that are pleasing to the eye, as he did to Eve, who, after hearing his words, began to study the forbidden fruit in detail. The Bible says, *'So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate'* (Genesis 3.6).

Sin can be sown through a simple word or piece of advice from a family member or friend. At times these people even have good intentions and are trying to help, but end up leading us to make serious mistakes before God.

For example, when the Lord Jesus began to tell His disciples that He had to go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, be killed and raised on the third day, well-intentioned Peter took Him aside and rebuked Him, saying, *'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall never happen to You!'* (Matthew 16.22).

Those words certainly did not come from Peter, but from Satan. In the same way, many people fall into sin after

giving ear to innocent, harmless sounding words. For this reason, we must follow the example of the Lord Jesus Himself and immediately rebuke such evil ideas, rather than chewing them over for a time.

There are people who sin because of curiosity. Their minds are bombarded—first with doubts and then with desires—in a demonic action that culminates in the birth of sin.

Eve saw that the tree was good for food, and because of this the Holy Spirit warns us against the lust of the eyes, that is, covetousness and greed which never tire of seeing more and more.

That's why the Lord Jesus said the eyes are the lamp of the body; in other words, the body is affected by the light of our eyes. If our eyes are good and not covetous, greedy, adulterous or immoral, our body will be full of light and blessed; but if our eyes are covetous, they will attract all kinds of sins and our whole body will be full of darkness.

Every sin starts in the mind, through evil words or images. If we rebuke sin before it reaches our minds, it's easier to overcome; however, if we allow it into our minds, it is much more difficult to uproot—though not impossible. In this case, we must confess it to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to remove it from our minds.

A origin of sin

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by

his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1.12-15

Sin is like a rapidly growing embryo that spins out of control, transforming itself into a monster whose sole obsession is to destroy the one who conceived it.

For the wages of sin is death. Romans 6.23

*If you do well, will you not be accepted?
And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door.
And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it.”*
Genesis 4.7

CHAPTER 2

Repentance

Repentance is regret over something bad or wrong that a person has done; wholehearted regret over sin. Although this definition is absolutely correct, repentance is extremely significant and complex in practice, and causes a complete change in a person's behaviour.

The definition may be somewhat abstract, but its end results are real. And it is precisely in the end results of 'repentance' that we identify the difference between repentance and a very similar feeling—remorse.

Many people are tricked into feelings of remorse instead of an attitude of repentance. When a person truly repents of his sin, he never commits that sin again; however, when a person is remorseful for his sin he will normally continue to commit that same sin again and again, only stopping when he finally repents.

That was the case of Judas Iscariot, who was remorseful at having betrayed the Lord Jesus.

It says,

Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. Matthew 27.3

Since remorse is nothing more than a feeling of guilt, it causes discomfort for a short period of time and is soon forgotten—nothing else.

Repentance, on the other hand, demands that a person make changes in his behaviour, to correct what is wrong.

Characteristics of Repentance

1. Acknowledge sin—In order for a person to repent, he must first acknowledge sin's existence and take responsibility for it, and then find out why he did what he did and when it began.

Many people try to maintain a clean conscience by simply ignoring their wrongs. But little do these people know that their actions are being 'helped along' by the devil himself, because he knows that if people do not confess their sins they'll be prone to repeat them over and over again.

One of the most difficult exercises is to admit your own sins and mistakes. When a person admits his sin it is because the Holy Spirit is working in him, convicting him of his wrong, for the Bible says, *'And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin'* (John 16.8).

2. Confess sin—After acknowledging the existence of sin, a person must immediately confess it so that it can be cancelled out. The Bible says: *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 1 John 1.9

If we acknowledge a sin but do not confess it, it remains hidden in our hearts and will end up attracting other sins. It is like a demon which, after entering a person's life, calls other demons worse than himself to join him in that life.

3. Hate sin—If a person commits a sin, then admits its existence and confesses it, but does not take the further step to hate it, that sin is guaranteed to knock on the door

of his heart again, in an attempt to worm its way back into his life.

The biggest problem with sin is that it often tastes sweet in the beginning, turning bitter only after it has taken root, and that its consequences are so destructive that it would be better for a person never to have gotten involved in the first place.

A person is truly repentant when he hates and abandons his sin, for *'sin shall not have dominion over you'* (Romans 6.14). For this reason we must never allow sin to seduce and deceive us.

It is God who leads us to repentance, as it is written:

Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? Romans 2.14

Repentance is a gift from God and the way to be reconciled to Him. If we despise it, we are despising God's goodness and resisting the Holy Spirit who leads us to repentance.

The Dangers

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears

thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. Hebrews 6.4-8

These verses clearly show that repentance has its limits. The expression 'to renew them again to repentance' means that there were times these people had 'repented', but now, it is no longer possible for them to be renewed again.

CHAPTER 3

*The Fear of
the Lord*

When we hear the word 'fear', we usually think of something dangerous, painful or threatening. However, the meaning of fear in relation to God is different, for a relationship between God and man can never involve danger, pain and threats.

God is a Father (Creator) who desires longlasting communion with His creatures and, in particular, with those who seek Him in spirit and in truth. This relationship develops in a family-like environment, where love—the very expression of God's character—reigns.

The fear of the Lord is simply a strong and sincere sense of reverence and respect, capable of narrowing the gap between man and God. As a consequence, fear is indispensable in a person's communion with God.

The following Bible verses clearly express the meaning of the fear of the Lord:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1.7

He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD, but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him. Proverbs 14.2

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him. Psalm 103.11

What does it mean to fear the Lord?

To fear the Lord is to live a life of sacrifice, keeping God's will for the world in mind and being moved by the love He has always shown for us.

This is ingrained in anyone who fears the Lord for his character has been moulded into the character of the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry. He himself showed fear when He said, *'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done'* (Luke 22.42).

If we want the Lord Jesus to manifest Himself through us, we must manifest His character in attitudes and behaviour similar to His. We must have the mind of Christ, who said, *'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work'* (John 4.34).

Are we making the will of God our food by declaring openly to the world that we are servants of the Lord? Are we really doing His Work?

If we say yes, it is because there is fear of the Lord in our hearts.

Unfortunately, we see many so-called Christians who think, *'My food is to do my own will... I want to buy this car and that house...*

I want to hold this position and have power to do whatever I want...'

This is why the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ today is a shadow of the Primitive Church, where men and women, moved by fear of the Lord, denied their own will and kept

themselves clean from selfish ambitions; their sole purpose being the will of Him who had sent them.

This world would be a much better place if the spirit of the fear of the Lord dwelt in every Christian heart—especially in the hearts of those who desire to preach the Gospel to every creature. The blind man whom Jesus healed said to the Jews, *‘Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears him’* (John 9.31).

May the Holy Spirit pour down upon us not only His gifts, but a sincere feeling of reverence and respect towards Him, which is the foundation of blameless conduct before God, so that we can fulfil His purposes.

Men who feared God

The fear of the Lord will never become a reality in our lives as long as we are selfish and have self-gratifying personal ambitions. Rather we must deny ourselves completely. By the way, this is a daily battle—the old battle between the flesh and the Spirit, as the apostle Paul said:

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.
Galatians 5.16,17

This battle ceases to exist when there is the fear of the Lord, which is a remarkable characteristic of men like David and Job.

1. David—The Bible says that *‘The LORD has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has*

commanded him to be commander over His people' (1 Samuel 13.14).

Through this passage we see that the Lord is looking for men and women who can fulfil His purposes, His will; people who are fearful and whom He can entrust with responsibilities in this world.

David was one of these men and proved it when he was being persecuted by King Saul for no proper reason.

Despite the fact that Saul was demon possessed, David refused to kill him on the two occasions that God gave him, simply because he saw in the king a person that God had anointed.

In other words, David refused to kill his number one enemy because he feared the One who had anointed him king over Israel.

What else could he have done? David's attitude revealed his character to God, and that's why the Lord said of him, *'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will'* (Acts 13.22).

May each one of us have his heart set on the Lord Jesus and may He do His holy will in our lives.

I am sure that God still looks for people like David in order to do greater things than He did through him. If David managed to stand out in the age of the inflexible Law, imagine what he would have done in the age of the Spirit's grace and the authority and power of the name of the Lord Jesus!

We certainly have all it takes to do much more than David did. We can disarm and triumph over the devil—and this we

have been doing for the glory of God.

We don't depend on anyone. We have the calling, the name of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. What else do we need? Absolutely nothing. All we need is to have the fear of the Lord in our hearts.

2. Job—The book of Job begins as follows:

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil. Job 1.1

There is no need to comment on Job's character. His life was simply glorious in God's eyes. For example, his sons used to take turns holding feasts, or parties, in their homes, and whenever a period of feasting had run its course, Job—moved by spiritual and fatherly concern—would send and have them purified.

So it was, when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Job 1.5

Through this we see the extent of his fear of God, and because of his attitude God glorified him before Satan.

When reading the book of Job people usually focus on what he lost—his children, his health, etc—and what he received—a double portion. But a spiritual person is struck, above all, by his character before God.

It is vital to note Job's behaviour in moments of affliction. Some friends abandoned him, while others expressed their opinion of events and advised him to abandon God.

However, Job remained patient because he trusted his Creator, to whom he was faithful at all times.

May our lives mirror Job's character so that we too can be glorified by our God!

*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord
shall not impute sin.*

Romans 4.8

CHAPTER 4

*A Clean
Conscience*

Our conscience is the deepest expression of our soul. It enables us to distinguish between good and evil, and approves or disapproves of our attitudes, creating a sense of responsibility within us.

A Christian conscience is the fruit of a life in the presence of God; this is what builds Christian character. Job said, *'My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live'* (Job 27.6).

That's why the Lord honoured him, saying:

Then the LORD said to Satan, *'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?'* Job 1.8

Our conscience is like a thermometer that measures our level of spirituality. Job's life was clean because his conscience was clean.

What makes our conscience unclean and what are the consequences?

Sin is the only source of an unclean conscience. Every time we do something that is against the will of God, which offends the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, our conscience immediately accuses us.

When our conscience is unclean, we feel God's hand weighing down on us. That's exactly how David felt when he said, *'For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer'* (Psalm 32.4).

When our conscience is heavy, when it's accusing us, it's because there is impurity in our hearts, which produces doubt. When a Christian commits a sin, his conscience immediately accuses him, and every time he tries to use his faith that sin will pop up in his mind bringing doubt and causing his faith to falter.

At this point, it's useless to pray or quote Scriptures or to demand answers from God, for our prayer of faith is stained by an unclean conscience.

How can we clean our conscience and keep it clean?

King David said:

When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD.' And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found; surely in a flood of great waters they shall not come near him. Psalm 32.3-6

The key to a clean conscience is to confess your sins. However, confessing to God alone is not enough. It is very

easy for a person to sin and confess those sins to God knowing that He will always forgive him. Confessing your sins to God alone makes it easy to repeat those same sins all over again, and may lead to the practice of other sins as well.

Although God forgives sin when it is confessed, there may be people who were hurt by that sin—or sins—who also need to hear the sinner confess his sin. If this is not done, the person who sinned will be forgiven by God but not by the person who was a victim of his sin. In this way the sinner will continue to be indebted to the devil—who will do everything in his power to put him to shame.

If a person repents from an act of adultery and wants to clean his conscience, he should confess his sin to God and to the people directly or indirectly involved in the situation—his partner, for example—so the devil has nothing to accuse him of.

If the person who committed adultery is a pastor, he should confess his sin first to God, then to the woman he committed adultery with, to his wife and, finally, to his spiritual leader, the one that represents the Church.

If he is a spiritual leader, he must confess his sin to God, to the woman he committed adultery with, to his wife and to the entire Church through the pastors. Only then will his conscience be absolutely clean.

The way back to a clean conscience is rough and extremely difficult; that is why only a few people reach that state. The majority try to find alternative routes, but this doesn't work because the devil knows they are not sincere and anxiously awaits their downfall.

If confessing our sins to God solved the problem, what would become of those who were victims of our sin? A clean conscience is characterised by the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it's written,

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts. Colossians 3.15

If we want to keep our consciences clean, we must always be at peace with God and with others, especially those who share in the same faith. We should never allow sins to accumulate, but rather immediately confess them because when we do, we remove all dirt and impurity from our hearts. When a person is unable to confess his sins, his heart remains dirty, and will only get worse.

The Holy Spirit affirms:

For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? Hebrews 10.26-29

How can a pastor in sin appear blessed on the altar?

It may seem that a pastor in sin continues to be blessed on the altar. At times this happens simply because the Lord honours His Word and His Holy Name, allowing miracles to happen during the meetings of that pastor.

However, this does not stop that pastor from growing cold in his faith from day to day. Having rejected a good conscience, he will end up wrecking his ministry and, above all, his faith.

A pastor who thinks that his work in the church justifies his sinful behaviour is deceiving not only the Church but himself—and worst of all, he is mocking God.

Sooner or later his sin will be revealed, and his shame will be even greater. Obviously the Church suffers because of the character of a bad pastor, yet it will remain standing and will soon recover; unfortunately, the same cannot be said of the pastor...

Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith. 1 Timothy 1.5

Let us get rid of hidden sins by confessing them to the parties involved so that we can serve the Holy Spirit with a clean conscience. In so doing we will avoid quenching the Spirit that dwells in us, and will fill the heart of our Lord and King Jesus with joy and happiness, stepping on Satan's head with all our strength through our testimony of faith. May God bless us all and keep us from having a conscience stained by sin. Amen.

*I acknowledged my sin to You, and my
iniquity I have not hidden. I said,
“I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,”
And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.*

Psalm 32.5

CHAPTER 5

Perseverance

Perseverance keeps a person steadfast and unmoved in his purposes and goals until the day he achieves them. Perseverance gives Christians firmness of character, and keeps them loyal to a pure faith even in the most adverse circumstances, until the end.

Every true Christian knows that he has to go through trials to develop perseverance, as it's written:

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1.2-4

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Romans 5.3,4

If we look carefully at the lives of the greatest men in history and how they became famous and successful, we will see that they all had something in common: they were all steadfast, unmoved and determined. In the face of many failures, they did not lose sight of their goals. They stumbled and fell many times, but always picked themselves up and pushed on towards their ultimate victory.

If these people achieved their goals, despite the fact that many did not even believe in God, how much more should we reach our targets when we have the seal of God on our hearts and His Word to guide and motivate us?

Everything in life depends on perseverance. The Lord Jesus Himself made it very clear when He said, *'By your patience*

possess your souls' (Luke 21.19).

If we persevere in faith not only will we save our souls, but also anything else we desire. The realisation of our projects will not happen by chance, it depends on us. It will take determination and perseverance, and an indomitable and unyielding spirit. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews said,

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. Hebrews 10.36

More than anything else I believe that failure and defeat come from a lack of perseverance; when we believe in what we are doing and are determined, there must be positive results. It's how life works; it is a law of God that controls all things in life, that is, *'whatever a man sows, that he shall also reap'* (Galatians 6.7).

There's a proverb that says, 'Soft water constantly striking a hard stone wears it out in the end'. Shouldn't Christians have this attitude when it comes to achieving the things we want? Why did Joshua have to march around Jericho thirteen times before it could be conquered? Why did Naaman have to dip himself in the Jordan seven times in order to be healed of leprosy? Couldn't God have made the walls of Jericho fall down on the first day Joshua marched around the city? Wouldn't one single dip have been enough for Naaman to be healed? Yes, of course! So why did these people have to repeat the same action over and over again?

What made the walls of Jericho fall, the thirteen marches around the city, the people of Israel, or the Lord of Hosts? Who healed Naaman, the water of the Jordan, the seven

dips in the river, or the Lord of Lords who gave him the order?