

The Good News About Sin
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

It is of the very essence of Christianity that it has in it the power to make bad men good.” — Theologian James Denney

It's hard to imagine anything good about sin. My view was changed through a message to students by John Alexander: “Sin is the best news there is, because with sin there is a way out. Sin is not a biological inheritance or a genetic deformity. You can't repent of psychological flaws inflicted by your ancestry. You're stuck with them. But you can repent of sin. Sin and repentance are the only grounds for hope and reconciled, joyful relationships.”

First, I had to accept responsibility for my own sinful behaviours and acknowledge my need of forgiveness. Then I found new hope in knowing that I could repent and by the grace of God do something to put it right. I know the past can't be changed, but it can be forgiven, and the future can be different by the grace of God.

When I majored in philosophy at Acadia University, I discovered writings by philosopher Cyril E.M. Joad from the University of London. He was close friends with Bertrand Russell, H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw. They often worked together in seeking to undermine religion and the Christian faith.

But in 1948, Joad (affectionately known as “Brains Truster”) became an ardent believer in Christ and his last book was entitled, The Recovery of Belief.

His reason? “All my life I have ridiculed the idea of man's sin. I always believed that man is good and given time we would have heaven on Earth. However, two world wars and the eminence of another have demonstrated conclusively that man is not good. Now, because the religious view of the universe in its Christian version seems to me to cover more of the facts than any other, I have been gradually led to embrace it ... The one whom I denied all my life I must now embrace.”

As Dr. Joad read the New Testament with an open mind and heart, it became clear that within the biblical diagnosis about sin God had provided the cure. He found God's plan of salvation to be perfectly logical. There at the cross we see a beautiful blending of the justice and the love of God. The one who forgives is the one who suffers and He offers us pardon at the price of His own pain.

No religion paints mankind in darker terms than Christianity. But the good news about sin is that God offers us a cure beyond our highest dreams-- forgiveness of sin, peace with God and the assurance of eternal life. Oh, the prospect of a new beginning and a fresh start. The glorious gospel of Jesus Christ offers that

experience to every person living on planet Earth by changing individuals from the inside out.

“Yet, though sin is shown to be wide and deep, thank God His grace is wider and deeper still,” (Rom. 5: 20b J. B. Phillips).