

## November 2006

### What am I going to do about my sins?

*Always read the question through carefully first.* How many times we have all been given that advice when approaching an examination! Good advice it is, too. So be sure to follow it regarding the question at the head of this pastoral letter. It does *not* ask, 'What must I do about my sin?' That is a very valid question, but not the one posed here. Had it been, the biblical answer is clear. The Lord Jesus Christ supplies it himself: 'repent ye, and believe the gospel' (Mark 1:15). That is the call of divine grace to the unconverted. It is absolutely urgent. Yet it is not our question just now. We have an extra 's' in the question: 'sins', not 'sin'. And that makes a considerable difference.

This question is for the Christian. It belongs to the realm of daily Christian experience. The apostle Paul, as a believer, knew all about it. He expressed himself famously: 'For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do'. And again: 'For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind ...' (Romans 7:19, 22-23). It is the agony of indwelling sin to which he testifies. It is true, surely, to every believer's experience. It rings bells.

So: *what am I going to do about my sins?* The complete answer has many facets, but one of the most important of them is what we call 'the mortification of sin'. It used to be taken much more seriously than it is these days. To mortify means to put to death. No one sets forth this truth with greater force than the Lord Jesus Christ himself in his imagery of cutting off our offending hand or foot, or plucking out our offending eye. Of course, the counsel here is not to literal self-mutilation. It is not *mutilation* but *mortification*!

But how do we go about it? Here are a few directions to get us thinking (and acting).

*Know yourself.* There will be no profitable mortification without self-examination.

*Seek aid.* The aid must be heavenly, from the Holy Spirit, for in this, as in everything, we can do nothing in our own strength.

*Be specific.* We must not be satisfied with some general sense that we still sin. What is required is specific conviction regarding particular sins or areas of weakness.

*Mean business.* Half-heartedness will get us nowhere. The work of mortification is unrelenting and lifelong. We must kill sin, for it is seeking to kill us.

*Keep focussed.* On what? Rather, on who? It's all about Christ being formed in us, being purified even as Christ is pure, being fitted for heaven. It may be the hardest work that we face as Christians, but the purposes of God for us are sure and the future is breathtaking!