

Sin?

There are websites called sinful. There are desserts called sinful. If you are called sinful it is to pull your chain a bit. It is certainly not a serious insult. No one believes that sin is serious. Sin is seen to be naughty, risqué, and perhaps a little exciting.

Our time has done away with sin. Instead, the focus is on what your actions do to other people. In our day people think you can do anything as long as you do not directly harm others. That is why the only two sins left are child molesting and rape - because they are a direct attack on others.

While sin has disappeared, evil still remains. How do you account for evil?

In the mid eighteenth century thinkers in the Western World came to the conclusion that we had finally thrown off our "gross animal natures" and were now on the path of constant improvement. The idea and reality of sin and the corruption of the human spirit was now a thing of the past.

This delusion continued until the beginning of the First World War. It died with our soldiers in the trenches, with the gas and with the massive slaughter that characterized the war. Our elite thinkers still held to the idea of perfectible human beings who only needed education, sanitation and socialization to reach their full potential and become loving and giving human beings. Many saw the First World War as the last hiccup of man's beastly past.

Then came the Second World War and the most educated and advanced nation in the world produced Belsen and Dachau and all the other extermination camps. Our blind thinkers became entranced by the ideas of socialism and, in its more crimson shade, communism. Stalin killed between twenty-five and fifty million of his own people and ruthlessly oppressed the states that the West had given him. Mao murdered from fifty to eighty million of his own people. Our advanced thinkers believed this was simply social adjustment to a new reality. Today, communism has lost most of its credibility - at least in most formally communist countries. Yet still the list of atrocities goes on. The Hutu slaughtered over five hundred thousand of their neighbors because they were not of the same tribe.

The nations of the world stood by tut tuting and did nothing but pass sanctions in the UN.

Now we have Darfur where Arab Muslims are butchering, raping and pillaging the Black Muslims because they want their land. We have terrorists who will use any means, from poison gas to car bombs, in order to slaughter civilians in any country they choose. We have whole sections of major North American cities where police will only go in force to avoid casualties.

Evil did not disappear. Man is not perfectible. At his core man is terribly flawed. Sin has not disappeared. Evil flows from the heart of sin in man. Sin is not individual acts but an attitude that lives in every human heart. It is the stubborn spirit that resents, distrusts, and rebels against God. It is that contrariness of attitude that resents authority in any form; especially in the family, the state and what could broadly be called religion. It

is rebellion against God and any authority that He has established and any authority that puts limits on what self-willed people want to do.

The delusion that social progress will finally wipe out evil is seen most clearly in the attempts of religion in the West to make people nice, inoffensive and useless. The attitude has become (for those of you who remember the comic strip Li'l Abner by Al Capp) the same as Mammy's. In one sequence she told Li'l Abner that "good is better than evil because its nicer." On the contrary. Good is better than evil because it is radically different than evil. Evil is what the human heart delights in. Evil will not go away because it is rooted firmly in the core of our being.

If you are going to change behavior you must change the motivation at the centre of a person's life - sometimes called the heart. Jesus Christ came to do that. He came to do away with the alienation of God from man because of man's rebellion. Through His sacrifice on the cross, he gave life and the power to deal with the basic rebellious nature of humankind. He sent out the Holy Spirit to give new life and the power to deal with indwelling sin.

If you know that power, then live it in a demonstration of goodness which will witness to the world around you of the reality of Christ's work. If you do not know this power you will become ever more twisted and alienated from God and everyone around you. Christ's call is still the same: Follow Me.