WHATEVER HAPPENED TO SIN?
—by Peter Hammond

The word ‘sin’ is rarely used in any serious context today. Modern vocabulary and post-modern ethics have changed its meaning dramatically.

The doctrines of sin, redemption and repentance are out of fashion. Instead, the cult of “self” is in.

In 1973, psychiatrist Carl Menninger wrote a landmark book, ‘Whatever Became of Sin?’ noting that even the word sin seems to have disappeared from common vernacular, possibly because many people don’t even believe in the concept of sin.

God hates sin
The Bible makes clear that God hates sin. The Greek word for sin, ἁμαρτία (hamartia), means to fall short of the mark. It is a universal concept, applicable to all people.

Redefining sin
The word ‘sin’ is rarely used in any serious context today, it is often just a topic of jest. Modern vocabulary and post-modern ethics today are more likely to call ‘sin’ an alternative lifestyle. Sins against God are now seen as ‘moral failures’, or ‘mistakes’ that keep us from realizing our own individual potential and expectations.

The goodness of man popularised
The historic Christian doctrines of original sin and actual sin which look at our nature, who we are, and our actions, what we do, have been replaced with the concept of the innate goodness of man and the fact that we are victims of circumstances.

Violating God’s commandments
What is sin? The Bible defines sin as “lawlessness” 1 John 3:4. Every one of God’s Ten Commandments are under relentless and systematic attack in the secular, humanist media. Much of Hollywood, most universities and almost all the news media attack our Creator God, exalt idolatry, promote political idols, musicians and film stars. Blasphemy is
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“For the time will come when they will not endure sound道理, but according to their own desires, because they way have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and will turn their ears away from the truth...” 2 Tim 4:3-4

promoted as entertainment. Honouring the Sabbath is overrun by rampant consumerism. The sanctity of life is undermined by the promotion of abortion and euthanasia. A culture of death.

Marketing selfishness
Many pastors feel that they are competing in a buyers market and that they cannot afford to alienate potential parishioners. At church conferences, pastors are warned that people do not want to hear that they should cultivate humility, self-discipline and virtue. Or that they need to listen to their conscience and repent of their sins. As a result, a religious culture is promoted that defines God in purely selfish terms.

Churches are encouraged to accept people who are exactly as they are, without making any moral demands on them. Churches must console, but not judge. The plea of worship has been replaced with the worship of pleasure. The Apostle Paul warned that such a time would come: “For our Holy God, has no higher standards than we have, and does not call us to repent, to renew our minds, and to be transformed in our attitudes and actions.

People who claim that God spoke to them and told them they don’t need to change are, guilty of having created a false god, an idol. It is blasphemous to claim that God has spoken to us when we are plainly listening either to our own feelings, or to a world in rebellion to God.

“It’s all about me!”
Many churches seem to have become therapeutic, pragmatic and utilitarian, even narcissistic. They preach an ‘all about me’ gospel. In the early 1980s there was a prominent news report in the Sunday Times concerning the Miss South Africa of that time. She said that she was a born-again Christian who liked her ducks because they “don’t teach any doctrine” and they did not condemn her for living with her boyfriend.

“Whoever savours his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” Prov 28:13. The Bible emphasises the depravity of man. We are sinful and personally responsible for our actions and attitudes. However, modern, antinomian and egalitarian society emphasises the goodness of men. The entertainment industry has so popularised and justified lust, pride and greed in attractive heroes and heroines that many have come to accept what they would have previously condemned.

Compounding the problem, most religious messages pass over the uncomfortable realities of sin and focus on ‘feel good’ themes. As a result, conviction of sin is rare. Religious leaders who excuse sin, deny its existence and tickle the ears of their hearers by telling them what they want to hear, instead of what the Bible proclaims, are actually doing their people a grave disservice.

Contemporary culture celebrates what was once condemned. Pride, lust, and selfishness are popular, acceptable traits of movie heroes.

Jesus came to earth the first time as the Lamb of God to save us from our sins. He will come again as the Lion of Judah to judge.

Booth, of the Salvation Army, warned that a time may come when churches will preach a Saviour without a Cross, salvation without repentance, Heaven without hell and Christianity without holiness. Clearly we see that time has come.

Judgement awaits us all
God will judge each one of us. An eternal hell awaits the unrepentant. A glorious Heaven is promised to all who trust Christ alone for salvation and live in obedience to the Word of God in obedience.

The heart of the Gospel is a changed life in Christ. But each one of us must make a choice of sins of the world. All who turn in repentance away from sin and trust in Christ, following Him in obedience are saved. But our Lord Jesus Christ will come again this time as a Judge. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Either you surrender to Christ as your Saviour now, or you will face Him as your judge.

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