

A walk with Mr O (12)

Why am I still sinning so much?

Mr O, it's now a while since I became a Christian, so why am I still sinning so much?

What an encouraging question!

What do you mean? How can you be encouraged by hearing that a child of God is sinning – and sometimes sinning really badly?

Let me explain. At one stage in my life I lived in a tiny Welsh village that was composed of a farm, a handful of cottages and a solitary street lamp. The way to that village was along a narrow lane that was badly maintained. It was uneven and full of potholes.

I've got the picture, but I'm not at all sure where you are leading me!

I want you to imagine that you are walking to that village at night. It is really dark, far darker than a town or city dweller has ever known. Suddenly you trip and fall into a muddy puddle, but you get up and continue your journey. At what point will you begin to realise how dirty you are?

Okay, I understand. The answer, of course, is that I will start seeing what a state I'm in when I get near the lamp.

And what will happen when you get right under the lamp?

I will discover that I'm far dirtier than I thought at first and, presumably, I will start doing something about it.

Exactly! The reason that you are asking why you are still sinning so much is because you are nearer the Light – the Lord! – than you were at the beginning of your Christian life. The proof is that you are not proud of the state you are in; and you want to do something about it.

Mr O, you certainly seem to know how to encourage people! But I can't go on as I am. What can I do about all this sin in my life?

We will need another walk to talk about that. Right now, there is something else that you need to know. So let me give you a very brief quote from the great Reformer, Martin Luther. To believers who were conscious of their sin, and who hated it, he said, 'Sin boldly!'

But that's a terrible thing to say! My sin crucified the Saviour and I don't want to do it anymore. If Luther was such a great Reformer, how could he tell anyone to carry on sinning?

Hold your horses! Let's put it all in context and find out what Luther really meant. Yes, he was intending to shock people, because he wanted them to learn an important lesson. He certainly didn't want believers to sin. But nor did he want the discovery of their continuing sinfulness to rob them of their peace.

We all sin. We do it every day. So, face the fact! This is the reality you have to live with. But don't let sin in your life cause you to cower, to falter, to weaken and to give up. Don't let it rob you of anything! Sin boldly!

This is a bit harder to grasp than your picture of the village street light! But, please, go on.

On those days when you sin little you are no more acceptable to God than on those days when you sin a great deal. The only righteousness that has ever commended you to God is the righteousness of Christ which has been imputed to you – that is, has been put on your account.

Grasp the wonderful truth of double imputation! All your sins have been put on Christ's account. He died for them on the cross. His perfect righteousness has been put on your account.

You are as much a child of God when you fail as when you succeed. Don't let the devil tell you otherwise. Don't get engrossed with your sin, but with your Saviour. This is the open secret of the Christian life. Look up, not down!

When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within,
upward I look and see Him there who made an end of all my sin.
Because the sinless Saviour died, my sinful soul is counted free;
for God the Just is satisfied to look on Him, and pardon me.