



## THE INSTITUTE OF MINISTRY

Equipping The Generations Through The Mind Of Christ

### **Sin Makes You Stupid**

*By Dr. Stephen Phinney*

Last month I was led to confess my most vulnerable confession. To my amazement, we received confessions from all over the world. Although, as expected, we also received unsubscribes and notes from some who re-preached what was already preached. Some of the most impactful comments I would like to share with you:

- *One brother's confession is another brother's conviction.*
- *I don't know why we think that rejection would come from confession. It just shows to me that the Holy Spirit is working in your life as well. If I thought you were perfect, I couldn't relate to you but it's good to know your struggle with sin is real and you have to fight it like everyone else. I have the greatest respect for you in your openly sharing your struggle. I, your fellow sister, will pray that you conquer this battle in Christ, your source of strength*
- *Your honesty overwhelms me not only with a deep love but a greater respect for you which I am basking in this morning.*
- *He is kind. Mostly because he doesn't wait for us to clean up to love us deeply. It's my favorite trait about Him.*
- *True humility is an honest and correct assessment of who I am, in Christ, and how I am living now.*
- *I dare not, neither desire to cast stones. You are being obedient at the risk of potential great loss!*
- *I am so overwhelmed with an amazing love and respect for you, and I am so drawn to Christ.*
- *This is a great reminder that sin makes us stupid.*

It was the last person's comment that gave me the title for my follow-up article, "Sin Makes You Stupid." I originally heard this statement come out of the mouth of a fellow preacher. It's remained in my mind as one of the most relevant phrases I have heard to date.

#### **DEFINITIONS OF TERMS**

**Sin:** From the pictorial Hebrew it means, *The fire of the name (destroys the name) or the fire of chaos (destroys all it touches) or fire and water.* Other words that describe “sin” in the Hebrew are, *guilt, guilt sacrifice, fire and name.* From the Greek it means, *to fall short or to offend.*

**Stupid:** In Hebrew it means, *to be impure in a religious sense - be defiled, be reputed, vile.* The Greek is, *to know the truth but refusing to act because of it.*

**Flesh:** From the Hebrew it means, *external, skin, body, or self.* In the Greek it means, *what is external, moral weakness, passions, carnality (a mind set on itself).*

The literal meaning of our title would read like this:

*The fire that destroys the name (reputation), which causes chaos. This chaos causes a man to be defiled with a vile reputation, resulting in a refusal to act upon Truth. This man ultimately becomes imprisoned by his own moral weakness, passions and self-focused thinking.*

**Sin truly does make an indwelt believer act stupid! (Or anyone else for that matter.)**

*Since stupid is as stupid does,* a carnal functioning mind is faced with the decision to either choose Christ, or self. This choice produces more stupidity or more manifestations of the indwelling. Each decision bears the fruit of life or death, depending how it is made (Deut. 30:19-20). Many make decisions based on their own fleshly thoughts, giving no opportunity for Christ to influence their thinking. As a result, they experience “living death.”

**A carnal mind also reveals** the cause and process, of death - brought about by the controlling self-life of the indwelt believer. This individual’s self-focus produces a downward spiral, a pathway leading away from the will of Christ within (the believer). It reveals the natural conclusion for believers who make deathly decisions. The self-life has roots in self-commendation, producing an occupation with self-life. Self-occupation is a lifestyle of self-pleasing ultimately leading to self-condemnation, from the guilt of the believer’s selfishness. When confronted, this individual generally becomes defensive and filled with self-pity. Eventually they self-destruct. God uses this process to bring experiential death to the self-life.

**In contrast, a believer who is focused on** releasing the mind of Christ within, reveals how it’s possible for His Life to be manifested in us, as believers. Once the downward spiral leads us to self-denial of self (coming to the end), and daily brokenness, we can then watch the release of the Spirit from within - WHO does the living. This process can’t happen until there’s repentance, which takes place in those “dark” places. Repentance grants us the freedom to look inward to the Life of Christ, for daily cross-bearing. This puts our focus and expectations on God – not self. Consequently, ministry is certain to be birthed from within. Outreach is simply a result of this brokenness process, and not something we practice.

This Truth helps us understand the means of determining if our motives are from the Spirit of Life within, or from walking after the flesh - stupidity. Motives are crucial in our walk. It’s not so much what we do, but who’s doing it – Christ or the flesh. It’s possible to do a good thing without Christ conducting the doing through us. People look at our actions, whereas God looks at “the who” in regards to the doing.

**“Carnal-coated” disciples** need to allow their brokenness to lead them into areas in which they have chosen sin. If this is overlooked or disregarded, more stupidity will ensue. When disciples of Jesus are confused about living a victorious life, understanding the power of the Cross becomes foundational in their discovery of victory. God has asked us to consider our ways and turn our feet toward His testimonies. (Psalm 119:59)

**If I am speaking to an unsaved (unbelieving) reader**, the reality is your spirit is dead and dominated by sin. Stupid is as stupid does. This, condition causes the mind, will, emotions, and the body to be enslaved to sin. This is the natural state into which we are all born. We are ALL born into stupidity. The natural man cannot understand spiritual things and must walk *in* and *after* his flesh. The natural man is not only IN the flesh because he is in Adam, but his identity IS sin. He is therefore, obligated to function in “stupidity.” This puts the natural man in a desperate need for life that only Christ can give through Salvation. No matter how well-adjusted or nice you might be – death & stupidity still reign because there is no real life or relationship without Christ.

**If I am speaking to an obedient, indwelt believer**, you have accepted Jesus Christ and you are walking after the Spirit. Please note that the “old self” or “old man” have been removed and placed on the Cross with Christ Jesus (Gal. 2:20). It’s no longer you living life, but Christ living life through you. Satan can only influence you through external temptation, whereas, in the first illustration – he rules from within, and without. The Spiritual Man (born-again) and your dead spirit has been made alive by receiving the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:11). This gives you a new identity – one that will clean the conscious mind and ultimately renew the trash (fruits of stupidity) the old man left behind. What blocks Satan from influencing the mind is a direct act, choice, of the will to submit to God and resist the devil (James 4:7). Temptation can still come from the devil, from the world, and from your flesh. However, sin’s power is broken. You are no longer a slave to sin (Romans 6:14). Your body is now the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). The Holy Spirit, who lives in you, is freely controlling every part of your: mind, your will, your emotions, and your body (Gal. 5: 16-17).

Clearly an indwelt believer knows they still have “stupid flesh” but, they are focused on releasing the mind of Christ from within. They know stupidity doesn’t darken His indwelling existence or influence.

**If I am speaking to an indwelt believer who suffers** with a carnal-covered mind, your stupidity clearly reveals how the spiritual man can make sinful choices and function as if he were still unsaved. These are actions of a spiritual man functioning carnally (fleshly). Who allows the external influences of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Christ is still in you – wanting to influence. You choose to allow temptation to fill your conscious mind with sins and the “stinky thinking” of the flesh. Even though the identity of Christ is readily available, you refocus on your old identity – that of “sin makes me stupid.” These sins continue to fill your mind, both consciously and subconsciously. For you to enjoy internal fellowship with Christ again – repentance is in order. Repentance helps you move from functioning carnally to functioning spiritually. It realigns your thinking with the Truth. Keep in mind that nothing has changed in your position in Christ; but conditionally, sin begins to draw you in once again.

**As I stated in my own confession**, “Up In Smoke,” carnal-covered believers need to make a 180 degree turn. Repentance and the Spirit causing a U-turn in the believer becomes top priority.

Repentance starts with a person considering their own way, which requires an honest appraisal. Repentance is not just feeling sorry (2 Cor. 7:8-10). It is a complete alteration of the basic motivation and direction for the believer's life. True brokenness leads to an Honest Appraisal, which starts the renewal of mind (Luke 15:17). Once the mind is renewed by the mind of Christ from within, the WILL makes the choice to believe Christ's renewal (Luke 15:18). As with all choices, the feelings will automatically follow and support the choice of the will (Luke 15:19). Conduct (or change of behavior) will follow the mind, will, and emotions, as they line up with the Spirit's conviction (Luke 15:20). Confession and restitution are the results of the exchange of the believer's own way with that of God's way (Luke 15:21).

**Here are the remarkable benefits of true repentance.** If there is anything for which indwelt believers should praise God, it should be our new-found identity in Christ. Repentance proceeds embracing who God says you are. Appropriation of Truth is in the release of Truth, which is nothing less than Jesus Christ living through you. Many believers wander around in Christianity and get lost between Grace and guilt - like the children of God in the wilderness. They don't experience the fruit of the Holy Spirit in and through them. When we walk after the flesh, it becomes our most critical moment of understanding who we are in Him. Most of the time, it's a simple case of the believer just not knowing the Truth - the real Jesus.

**Our old life is gone** but our condition of stupidity doesn't always line up with this truth. We occasionally stumble into the trash left behind by the "old nature," resulting in fruit unto death. Meaning and purpose in life flow from identity. By faith in Jesus Christ, God has transferred us into Christ's very life - eternal life. Our purpose is to demonstrate, or live out, the very life of Christ by having an intimate, obedient, dependent, love relationship with Him.

I want to leave you with the "Top 10 Realities of His Indwelling" that have shaped my entire life and ministry:

1. **Christ chooses us**, but we respond to His touch.
2. **Christ's Life** and heritage is the believer's by spiritual re-birth (1 Cor. 15:22).
3. **Jesus did not come to make bad people good**, but to make dead people alive.
4. **Christ's Life is eternal** and never changes - past, present, and future (Heb. 13:8).
5. **The chosen believer** is removed from being "in Adam" and placed "into Christ" for eternity - the key word is "transferred."
6. **In the Greek, the word "transferred"** emphasizes removal - permanently taken out. God removed us from Adam and grafted us into Christ's very life.
7. **Once transferred from Adam** into Christ, "Everything is new about the believer."
8. **The only thing that carries over** with our bodies is the sin, or trash - the Adamic heritage left behind. That, too, will be renewed upon our physical death.
9. **The flesh** (trash left behind) resides in our mortal bodies, but God has use for it. By choosing righteousness from within, against the desires of the flesh, the believer experiences the power of the Cross (Phil. 2:12).
10. **The believer's eternal life began** when he was grafted into Christ's Life. Being born-again IN Christ means receiving the Holy Spirit (His Life), being sanctified by His Life, and functioning in, and through, the identity of Jesus.

Now you know my spiritual secrets to a restful life. In future articles, I will be sharing many personal struggles that cemented these "top ten" truths into the fiber of my existence.

Until Next Time,

**Stephen Phinney**

P.S. | Send Your Feedback or Confession: [drphinney@iomamerica.org](mailto:drphinney@iomamerica.org)

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