

The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of **Indwelling Sin in Believers**:
Together With The Ways Of Its Working, And Means Of Prevention, Opened,
Evinced, Applied, with a Resolution Of Sunday Cases Of Conscience Thereunto
Appertaining By John Owen, DD

Wow the title of the book encapsulates so much. A book filled with so much insight and can be used as a reference to an upcoming minister even in this age even though it was written in year 1830. However, Christians in any walk of life that wants to know more about this subject matter can benefit from this book.

As a Christian I found this book interesting, however it was quite a difficult read. My interest won over the difficulty in the end. It would be impossible to summarise this book in its entirety so in this essay I will attempt to give a summary of the content of Indwelling Sin in Believers and give my personal response to the book.

‘As the world, by its wisdom, never knew God aright, so the wise men of it were always utterly ignorant of this inbred evil in themselves and others’ (Owen 1830:pg v) I found this sentence fascinating. We are wise men that are not aware of the real evil inside of us.

‘And if the reader receive any advantage by these weak endeavours, let him know that it is his duty, as to give glory unto God, so to help them by his prayers, who, in many temptations and afflictions, are willing to labour in the vineyard of the Lord, unto which work they are called.’ (Owen 1830:pg vi). In my humble opinion this book is not a weak endeavour. Owen seems to quite humble in his writing abilities and his insight of the scriptures. I do believe however this book will help in my Christian walk and my relationship with God and understanding the subject of sin.

‘The will is the principle of our moral actions, and therefore unto the prevailing disposition thereof will the general course of our actions be suited. Good things

will proceed from the good treasures of the heart. Nor can this disposition be evidenced to be in any by its fruits. A will of doing good, without doing good, is but pretended' (Owen 1830:pg 6). I agree with this sentiment, my will determines my moral actions but my moral actions and doing good doesn't mean anything if I have no fruit to show. My actions speak louder than the words I say. As a Christian my actions need to be aligned with what I believe.

'Your enemy is not only upon you, as on Samson of old, but is in you also' (Owen 1830:pg 6). Such an interesting concept. I am a sinner in need of a saviour, and I need forgiveness daily. 'The pleasures of sin are the rewards of sin; a reward that most men lose their souls to obtain' (Owen 1830:pg 11). Such an apt analysis both then and now. God help me not to lose my soul. Help me to pursue you and not the pleasures of sin.

'The frame of the heart is ready to contradict itself every moment. Now you would think you had it all for such a frame, such a way; anon it is quite otherwise; so that none know This is so interesting. My heart is filled with contradictions, and I can't live by my feelings. I am not aware of evil my heart is, I agree to a point, but I am aware that God needs to guide my heart.

'It is with indwelling sin, as with a river; while the springs and fountains of it are open, and waters are continually supplied unto its streams, set a dam before it, and it causeth it to rise and swell, until it bear down all, or overthrow the banks about it' (Owen 1830:pg 49). This imagery is so poignant. It makes sense. Sin is so beautiful in the beginning, but it overtakes your life and destroys it.

According to Owen our sin is laid bare when we walk humbly before God and others. We are aware of our evil ways when we look at the holiness of God and when we hold each accountable. (Owen 1830:pg 64).

According to Owen deceit plays an intricate role in our hearts and in the process of sin. He is not sure how much wisdom and how watchful we need to be to

keep deceit at bay. We need God to help us to keep our hearts pure. (Owen 1830:pg 77).

According to Owen, mediating on Gods word and praying helps me as a Christian know how sinful I am and what I need to do so I don't allow sin to lead me down the road away from God. Although I believe that God allows me to see my sin. I also believe that God forgives me and that there is no condemnation when my sins are forgiven. (Owen 1830:pg 96).

As I read on, Owen is very hard on himself for being a sinful man. He calls his mind careless and his mind deceived. I tend to agree with him, my mind is careless and filled with deceit. I am so grateful though that Jesus forgave me and that I can ask hi for forgiveness. (Owen 1830:pg 107).

Owen, as the chapter go on, places great emphasis on deceit and how this affects us as Christians. I agree with him to a point because Satan uses deceitfulness to its fullness in ours lives. However, my heart is filled with deceit and I have to daily ask God to look at me heart and I am mindful of my motives.

Owen believes that God sends afflictions to both believers and non-believers so that they can become of their sin and turn form their wicked ways. I agree to a point but here I think Owen is becoming judgemental and painting a picture of God that takes away His grace and mercy (Owen 1830:pg 174).

Owen's portrayal of men in the bible like David and Hezekiah seems to suggest that God uses punishment of sin to bring His children closer to Him and it allows His children to come back to Him when they strayed too far from Him. Although Owen mentions God's grace, his portrayal of God as a vengeful God does not sit well with me, maybe because His mercies are new every morning. The image of God using the consequence of sin as a weapon does not fit into the narrative of a loving and merciful God. I am aware of my sinful nature. This aspect of the book scared me maybe that was Owens intention.

I agree with Owen that if we don't give our sin to God, it manifests in our bodies and it makes one sick. Some sin, if not careful can make us sick and I seen how ingrained sin can make great men fall. Owen's portrayal of David is so relevant today as I know of many men of God that got sick because their sin was not confessed. (Owen 1830:pg 209). However there is hope.

'Sin in the soul is like a secret hectical distemper in the body, its being unknown and unperceived, is one great means of its prevalency'. (Owen 1830:pg 225). According to Owen sometimes we are not aware how sinful we really are and how the sin affects our lives.

According to Owen the law of man is not strong enough against sin. Laws are not a deterrent to sin. (Owen 1830:pg 229). I agree with him because when I look around the world today. Our society is riddled with crime and people kill each other over stuff that don't matter. The laws of our country do not prevent crime and does deter people from sinning. Clearly Owen had the same kind of issues in his day.

'Lastly, The strength, efficacy, power of this law of sin, may be farther evidenced from its life and inbeing in the soul, notwithstanding the wound that is given unto it in the first conversion of the soul to God: and the continual opposition that is made unto by grace' (Owen 1830:pg 237). I agree with Owen that sin can be dealt with when our soul is covered by God's grace. Sin when it's confronted with God's grace in, in any form, has no hold on a person. Only God can help us with our sin we can't help ourselves. Owen could have written more about this point of Grace and brought some balance to the book.

Many of the Christian books today concentrate on God's grace and mercy and not on sin. If Owens book can be edited and include God's grace and mercy as a chapter or two, then the book would have a more balanced feel.

When Jesus died on the cross, He gave me the right to come to God so that my sin can be forgiven. Sin is an important subject but the Cross needs to be discussed in a book like this so that the reader has hope that Jesus can deal with any kind of sin.

In this book Owen predominately paints God as the judge and juror and punisher of sin. I agree with him to a point because God has the right to judge because He is God. However, I serve a God that is merciful, and He forgives me daily. I daily ask God to forgive me, and I believe He does forgive me.

The book is very difficult to read but I read it because I found it interesting. Owen's book is very well written and it's a good reference for both Christians and people who want to become ministers. The similarities between Owen's time and the present day are quite striking. Sin has not changed but neither has Jesus.

I believe that we are born with a sinful nature and according to Owen sin has devastating consequences on a believer's heart, mind, and soul. Owen's examples in his book are quite frightening and I truly believe that sin has consequences.

Owen ends his book with these words: 'To the only wise God or Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion, and power now and ever. Amen.' (Owen 1830:pg 238). I agree with his sentiments but throughout the book Owen talks about sin and how sin affects a believer's life, so this declaration does not fit into what he has written in his book.

I wholeheartedly believe that God is a wise God and is majestic and his dominion is not in question. However, Owen concentrates, in my opinion too much on what sin is and its implications and not sufficiently on how God can forgive us and God's solution to sin. What is the solution to sin? In my humble opinion, giving our lives to Christ. He forgives us daily and then we live in his mercy and grace.

In conclusion I would like to state that although Owen is correct in his analysis of sin and its consequences, it does not give the believer hope that sin can be conquered, and that the believer can be set free. The Bible has solutions to sin and this book needs to read alongside the Bible to give context and hope. My concern with this book, if a believer reads it or even a non-believer, they will conclude that their sin is too great to be forgiven or that they will feel to condemned to ask God to forgive them of their sin.

Owen could have included more stories of hope in the book. I hope in the future that a chapter can be included, as a last chapter, in the book that explains how sin can be dealt with and explores the redemptive work of the Cross and ways to stay away from sin. We all in the process of sanctification so we need Jesus daily.