Asceticism is not the solution to sin

Asceticism is abstinence from various comforts and pleasures.

Abstinence is refraining from, or keeping away from those pleasures.

Abstinence from sin is required of course, but we are thinking rather of abstinence from things which are not sin in themselves.

We are thinking of things where the sin would not be in the use, but in abuse—where something good in itself is perverted by the user.

Paul is persuaded that "there is nothing unclean of itself" (Rom 14:14).

He does not, for example, approve of fornication. But there is nothing unclean about sexual intercourse in itself.

To engage in sexual intercourse in wedlock may be a better solution to sin than abstaining from it in celibacy.

Vegetarianism is another example. Paul describes the vegetarian as "weak in faith" (Rom 14:1-2).

It is good, of course, to refrain from things which cause the weak to stumble (Rom 14:21).

We do not argue against abstinence from things which people commonly abuse. We commend it.

But we should not mistake abstinence as the solution to sin.

**Good works are not the solution to sin**

Don't misunderstand this!

Paul was thankful for people's obedience (Rom 6:17). He said it was our reasonable service to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1).

He exhorted Christians not to be lagging in diligence (Rom 12:11).

Good works are a good and essential thing. But in themselves they are not a solution, for all have sinned and fall short (Rom 3:23).

No amount of good works can cover that up.

That is no reason to neglect good works, but it is a reason to look beyond them for the solution to sin.

We will not be forgiven of our sins on the basis that we piled up enough good works to cancel out our sins.

We will be forgiven because Christ died for us (Rom 3:24). And this is our final point.

**The Lord Jesus is the solution to sin**

God set Jesus forth to be an atonement by his blood (Rom 3:24).

There is "no condemnation" to those who are "in Christ" (Rom 8:1). We are saved from wrath through him and his shed blood (Rom 5:8).

There's your solution to sin.

**How do you apply the solution?**

The solution to sin is faith (belief) in Jesus Christ and obedience to his gospel.

Listen to Jesus tell you, in his own words, what you should do. Have you done all these things?

1. Hear Christ's word (Matthew 7:24).
2. Believe — have faith (John 3:16)
4. Confess Christ (Matthew 10:32)
5. Be baptized (Mark 16:15-16)

Only by looking to Jesus can we lay aside the sin that so easily entangles us (Hebrews 12:1-2).