

Man's Biggest Problem

Scripture: Matthew 5:29–30

Code: 2217

INTRODUCTION

A. The Confrontation of Sin

Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman told of a distinguished minister from Australia who preached very strongly one day on the subject of sin. After the service, one of the church officers came to counsel with him in his study and he said, "Dr. Howard, we don't want you to talk as openly as you do about man's corruption, because if our boys and girls hear you discussing the subject, they will more easily become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but don't speak so plainly about sin." The minister took down a small bottle from the cabinet and showed it to the visitor and said, "Do you see that label? It says strychnine, and underneath that in bold red letters is the word poison. Do you know, man, what you are asking me to do? You're suggesting that I change the label. Suppose I do and paste over it the words, essence of peppermint. Do you see what might happen? Someone would use it not knowing the danger involved and would die--and so it is too with the matter of sin. The milder you make the label, the more dangerous you make the poison." And so we cannot mitigate the danger of sin. We must speak of the issue.

B. The Consequences of Sin

Chrysostom, the early church father, said, "I fear nothing but sin." I understand that, because that's exactly how I feel. I don't fear anything in the world or in the church except sin. Sin can destroy us, rob us of our power, confuse us, cast us upon the mercy of Satan, and ultimately damn the unregenerate to an eternal hell. The greatest problem facing man, the one great blight on human life that curses us all, is sin. It pervades the whole world, and only when it is removed will Paradise be regained. That is why we find in Revelation 21:3-4 and in 2 Peter 3:13 that God has to do a work of purging the whole universe of evil if ever there is to be Paradise regained. Because of sin there are tears and pain. Because of sin there are war and fighting, anxiety and discord, fear and worry, sickness and death, famines and earthquakes, and other manifestations of disharmony in nature. Sin disturbs every relationship that exists in the human realm: that between man and God, man and nature, and man and man. You read Genesis 3 and you find that the curse came violating each of those relationships. First of all, man was separated from God when he became subject to spiritual death. Second, man was separated in a sense from nature, insofar as he had to toil by the sweat of his brow and fight against a cursed earth. Third, man was separated from man as the curse upon Adam and Eve brought conflict into their own marriage and between their sons. Sin waits lurking to attack every baby born into the world. David said, "...in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5b). Sin rules every heart as the monarch of man and the lord of the soul from whom nobody ever escapes. All who die--whether from heart disease, cancer, war, murder, accidents, or any other cause--die as victims of sin, regardless of age, for Roman 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death...." Every person on the globe has been infected with the virus of sin, and only one person ever entered this world and passed through it without the stain of sin...and that was Jesus Christ. Every other human being is captured under the fearful power of sin.

C. The Countenance of Sin

Sin is a destructive thing. This is vividly illustrated in a story told many years ago about Leonardo da Vinci. When Leonardo da Vinci was painting his great masterpiece known as The Last Supper, he

sought long for a model for Jesus Christ. At last he located a chorister in one of the churches of Rome who was lovely in life and features, a young man named Pietro Bandinelli. Years passed, and the painting was still unfinished. All the disciples had been portrayed except one--Judas Iscariot. After all of those years, da Vinci began the search for a face that had been hardened and distorted by sin...and at last he found a beggar on the streets of Rome with a face so villainous he shuddered when he looked at him. He hired the man to sit for him as he painted the face of Judas on his canvas. When he was about to dismiss the man, he said, "I have not yet found out your name." "I am Pietro Bandinelli," he replied. "I also sat for you as your model of Christ." The sinful years had disfigured the face, and that's the way of sin.

D. The Character of Sin

Sin attacks everyone at birth and before it's done it degrades, debases, and destroys in an eternal hell. Every broken marriage, every disrupted home, every shattered friendship, every argument, every disagreement, every pain, and every tear can be attributed to sin. Referred to in Joshua 7:13 as "the accursed thing," sin is compared to the venom of snakes and the stench of death. Anything that is sinister and powerful must be faced and dealt with...and sin is such. We cannot ignore it, gloss it over, or change the label--we must face the reality of sin, and that is exactly what Jesus is saying. Dr. Guthrie wrote, "Who is the hoary sexton that digs man a grave? Who is the painted temptress that steals his virtue? Who is the murderess that destroys his life? Who is this sorceress that first deceives, and then damns his soul?--Sin. Who with icy breath, blights the fair blossoms of youth? Who breaks the hearts of parents? Who brings old men's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave?--Sin. Who, by a more hideous metamorphosis than Ovid even fancied, changes gentle children into vipers, tender mothers into monsters, and their fathers into worse than Herods, the murderers of their own innocents?--Sin. Who casts the apple of discord on household hearts? Who lights the torch of war, and bears it blazing over trembling lands? Who by divisions in the church, rends Christ's seamless robe?--Sin. Who is this Delilah that sings the Nazarite asleep, and delivers up the strength of God into the hands of the uncircumcised? Who, winning smiles on her face, honeyed flattery on her tongue, stands in the door to offer the sacred rites of hospitality, and when suspicion sleeps, treacherously pierces our temples with a nail? What fair Siren is this, who, seated on a rock by the deadly pool, smiles to deceive, sings to lure, kisses to betray, and flings her arm around our neck, to leap with us into perdition?--Sin. Who turns the soft and gentlest heart to stone? Who hurls reason from her lofty throne, and impels sinners, mad as Gadarene swine, down the precipice, into a lake of fire?--Sin."

Since all of this is true, we must understand sin. To help us do this, I would like to answer five questions, the first of which is...

I. WHAT IS SIN?

Anything as severe as sin needs a definition so that we can understand it and thereby avoid it.

A. Lawlessness

The definition is simple: First John 3:4 says that "sin is the transgression of the law." Literally, the Greek says that everyone doing sin is doing lawlessness (anomia). Sin is disobeying or ignoring God's law. In fact, the grammatical construction of this verse makes sin and lawlessness identical. We might say that sin is living as if there were no God and no law. It is not being bound by the standards of God, it is living on your own terms.

Now, the Bible gives other definitions of sin as well, which include...

B. Unrighteousness

First John 5:17 says, "All unrighteousness is sin...."

C. Failure to Do Good

James 4:17 says, "...to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

D. Lack of Faith

In Romans 14:23, we have yet another definition of sin: The Apostle Paul says, "...for whatever is not of faith is sin."

A lack of faith, an unrighteous act, not doing what you know you ought to do, can all be identified as sin, but it all can be summed up in this: Sin is lawlessness--not responding to the law of God, but going beyond the bounds that He has set. Man is like a horse in a lush pasture who jumps the hedge and lands in a quagmire. Man lives within the place of God's green, rich pasture and finds that he wants to get out and leaps the wall, as it were, of God's law and lands in the muck of sin. God has given His law and has written it in the heart of man (Rom. 2:15), and He's revealed it in the Scripture. And because it is "holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12b), there is nothing impure, unfair, or evil in it. There is no sane reason to break it, because obedience to it is the path of blessing. But man breaks it, because man seeks to live apart from God's law.

II. WHAT IS SIN LIKE?

Here we go past the definition of sin and look at its nature. We can best see what it's like by examining its characteristics of...

A. Defilement

Not only is sin a defection or a disobedience from God's law, but it is a pollution of that law. It is to the soul what scars are to a lovely face, what stain is to a white silk cloth, or what smog is to an azure blue sky. It makes the soul red with guilt and black with sin--it defiles. In fact, its defiling character is conveyed in the Old Testament in such graphic terms that we can never forget them:

1. Isaiah 30:22 -- "Ye shall defile also the covering of thy carved images of silver, and the ornament of thy melted images of gold; thou shalt cast them away like an unclean cloth...." Isaiah describes sin as an "unclean cloth," which has reference in the Hebrew to the bloody cloth from a woman's menstrual period. That is how God sees the defilement of sin.
2. 1 Kings 8:38 -- The writer compares the sin of man's heart with sores that come on the body from a deadly plague.
3. Zechariah 3:3 -- The prophet sees sin as filthy garments on the high priest, Joshua. Over and over again we find in Scripture that sin is seen as something vile, defiling, wretched, and filthy, which pollutes that which is pure.
4. Zechariah 11:8 -- "...My soul loathed them...." It is amazing that God should so despise the defilement of sin that He loathes what it does to the sinner.
5. Ezekiel 20:43 -- Furthermore, Ezekiel says that when the repentant sinner sees his sin, he loathes himself. It is so defiling God hates it, and so does the sinner.
6. 2 Corinthians 7:1 -- The Apostle Paul calls it "...filthiness of the flesh and spirit...."

So we find that sin is defiling. Second, sin is...

B. Rebellion

1. Leviticus 26:27 -- God describes those who rebel as people who walk contrary to Him. Sin is defying God. It is walking in opposition or antagonism to Him.
2. Hebrews 10:29 -- The rebellion of sin can also be described as the sinner trampling on God's law, affronting and spiting God by slapping Him in the face, as it were, and spitting on Jesus Christ. Hebrews says that the ones who receive the truth and reject it, are those "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, with which he was sanctified, an unholy thing." Sin is a flat-out, open, flagrant rebellion.
3. Jeremiah 44:17 -- One Hebrew word for sin, *pesha*, signifies the rebellion that is in the heart of every man and woman. Such rebellion is epitomized by the Jews' rejection of Jeremiah's divine message to them: "But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth...." In other words, "We'll do exactly what we want!"

If sin had its way, it would murder God as it did Jesus Christ. Sin would not only dethrone God, but annul the deity of God. If the sinner had his way, God would cease to be God and Christ would

cease to be Christ.

Third, sin is...

C. Ingratitude

1. Acts 17:28 -- "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being...." Do you know that the very fact that you live and exist, you owe to God? Do you know that everybody who's existing in the world today is a creature made by God for a divine purpose and a divine end? God has created you to show forth His praise and to grant glory to Himself. God has a purpose for you that is beyond anything you could imagine. And yet, there are people who live in absolute ingratitude, who spite the very face of Jesus Christ, who mock God, turning their backs on God. But God has created man for His glory, to dwell in an eternal Kingdom of bliss with Him, and man not only doesn't want it, but spites the very One who offers it.

2. Matthew 5:45 -- "...for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." If there's any joy in this life, it's because God gave it to you. If there's any sunshine in life, it's because God put it there. If there's any rain to make your life fresh, it's because God let it fall on you. Everything you are and have is because of God's gracious and marvelous love that is poured out on all men. God isn't responsible for the evil--that's man's rebellion. God is responsible for the good. It is God who has provided all the food the sinner eats. God has made a world of color and brightness, and love and music and all of the things that make life worth living. It is God who has given the senses so that you can enjoy His creation. He has granted beauty for your eye to behold. And it is God who gives intellect and emotions so that you can think, feel, work, play, and rest and that your life might be useful. God has given to every individual a special skill and ability to excel in some area. He has created the love and laughter that enables men to care for each other and enjoy one another's fellowship. It is God who providentially preserves us from getting every disease and dying every death. Though God literally surrounds the sinner with mercy, the sinner says no, and in flagrant, open rebellion to the laws of God, defiles himself and acts in an attitude of ingratitude.

3. 2 Samuel 16:15-17:4 -- Such ingratitude is illustrated by Absalom, who, after his father David had kissed and embraced him, went out and plotted treason against his own father. And so does the sinner indulge himself in God's grace, taking the best that life and love can bring to him and then turns his back on God and walks into the fold of the enemy, Satan. We might ask the same question that is asked in 2 Samuel 16:17, "...Is this thy kindness to thy friend?..." Essentially, this is the same question that was posed to Judas: "...Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Lk. 22:48b).

God may ask the sinner, "Did I give you life to sin? Did I give you mercy to serve the devil?" Sin is such gross ingratitude, it seeks to dethrone and destroy the source of all that it has received. Even the things the sinners pervert--money, comforts, sexual pleasures, and all other things given by God--they use to bring dishonor to Him.

Fourth, sin is humanly...

D. Incurable

1. Jeremiah 13:23 -- "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." If a leopard can change his spots or an Ethiopian change his skin, then you can make good out of bad. But it can't be done. Sin is an incurable disease. Man does not have the resource to deal with it.

2. Isaiah 1:4-6 -- "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. They have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." In other words, man has a horrible, incurable,

pervasive disease that cannot be mitigated by human means.

3. Titus 1:15 -- Paul says that unbelieving man's "conscience is defiled." Man is rotten on the inside. The conscience is given to man to control his behavior and if that is defiled, then the resulting actions will be defiled as well.

John Flavel said, "All the tears of a penitent sinner, should he shed as many as there have fallen drops of rain since the creation, cannot wash away sin! The everlasting burnings in hell cannot purify the flaming conscience from the least sin." In other words, he is saying sin is incurable. There is no human cure: not human will, reformation, education, legislation, consultation, counseling, nor self-righteousness. Sin is a disease that is so deep, it can only be cured by the blood of the divine Physician, without which there is no forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22).

What is sin like? We have seen that it is defilement, rebellion, ingratitude, and an incurable disease. That brings us to a fifth aspect of sin: it is...

E. Hated by God

Sin is the very antithesis of what God is. It is the only thing God hates. God doesn't resist a man because he's poor--He especially loves the poor. God doesn't resist a man because he's ignorant--He cares for him, too. God does not resist a person because he's crippled--He has made the blind, the deaf, and the lame. God does not resist a man because he's ill, nor because a person is despised by the world. God is antagonistic only to sin.

1. Habakkuk 1:13 -- "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity...."

2. Jeremiah 44:4 -- God called out through His prophets with tears and a breaking heart, "...Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate." God hates sin because sin separates man from God, breaking the very thing for which God made man-- fellowship.

Sixth, sin is...

F. Hard Work

All it causes is pain, and yet, it amazes me how busy people are doing it. Though it may bring a temporary enjoyment, it ultimately brings grief, death, and hell...but people still work at it.

1. Jeremiah 9:5 -- Sadly did Jeremiah admit that his people "weary themselves to commit iniquity."

2. Psalm 7:14 -- "Behold, he travaileth with iniquity...." The word "travaileth" is used for birth pains, the most severe kind of human pain known to them in that day. So, the idea is that the wicked willingly would go through birth pains without an anesthetic to accomplish their evil. In the historical context, this verse probably has reference to an enemy of David, who was chasing him relentlessly.

3. Proverbs 4:16 -- "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall." The wicked don't even go to bed unless they've gotten their evil done. They stay awake figuring out ways to accomplish it (cf. Isa. 5:18).

4. Ezekiel 24:12 -- "She hath wearied herself with lies...."

It's amazing, but people go to hell sweating...they really do. They work hard at being sinners. That's why the Bible says that when you come to Jesus Christ, there is rest: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28). Rest from what? For one thing, from the work that sin is. What a wretched thing! The evil of sin is so wretched that millions of people are damned by its power, and so wretched that it took the very death of Christ Himself to remove it from the life of man.

A third question that we need to answer is...

III. HOW MANY PEOPLE DOES SIN AFFECT?

A. Its Extent

The answer to this is found all through the Bible, but let me just give you a few representative verses:

1. Romans 5:12 -- "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned."

2. Romans 3:23 -- "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

3. Romans 3:19 -- "...that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

B. Its Transmission

1. Described

So, we find that sin entered the world through one man. Gentiles don't understand that too well, but the Jewish mind understands it, because Jewish people see themselves not as individuals, but always as a part of a nation, apart from which they have no individual existence. For example, in...
a. Joshua 7 -- When Achan sinned, his whole family died and the whole nation of Israel failed in their next battle. He was acting, in a sense, for a family and even for a nation.
b. Hebrews 7:9-10 -- Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek in the loins of Abraham, who lived long before Levi was even born. The Jews have always seen themselves bound up in their ancestry. And so it is, as Paul writes in Romans 5, that when Adam sinned, everybody bound in the loins of Adam that ever issued out of human life became sinful. So Adam's sin is our sin by propagation.
c. Job 14:4 -- "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." If you start out with an evil father and mother, you're going to get an evil kid.
d. Psalm 58:3 -- "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."
e. Psalm 51:5 -- "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." And so, not only is the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to us, but the depravity and the corruption of his nature is transmitted to us. The poison goes from the spring to the well to the people that drink. That's what theologians call original sin. You don't come into this world any other way than as a sinner.

2. Debated

Now there once was a big argument about how Adam's sin affected mankind. One theologian, Pelagius, said that when you come into the world, you have a neutral relation to sin and you can choose to be a sinner or not. But another theologian, Augustine, had an answer to that: "Find me one who didn't choose sin, and I might believe it." Needless to say, one could never be found.

3. Decided

When you come into this world, you are a sinner. We've all sinned in Adam, coming short of the glory of God. We have all been born in corruption because we are all Adam's progeny, and as the progeny of Adam, we bear the corruption that he bore. That's why Paul says in...

a. Romans 7:25 -- "...with the flesh, [I serve] the law of sin." Sin is in our nature, woven into the warp and the woof of our lives. Adam's sin clings to every man just like Naaman's leprosy clung to Gehazi (2 Kgs. 5:27). The leprosy of Adam clings to all those who have followed Adam. Nobody is left out. And because the roots of sin are this deep, even when one becomes a Christian the roots of sin are still there. Consequently, we still struggle like Paul, who said in Romans, "For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.... But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:19, 23).
b. Hebrews 12:1 -- "...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Why is it so easy for sin to beset us? It's so deep in our nature. We are sinners--no one escapes.

IV. WHAT IS THE RESULT OF SIN?

A. Sin Causes Evil to Overpower Us

1. Evil Dominates the Mind

a. Jeremiah 17:9 -- "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked...."
b. Ephesians 4:17-19 -- "...Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness...." In other words, the minds of unbelievers are dominated by evil.
c. 1 Corinthians 2:14 -- "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know

them, because they are spiritually discerned." The natural man who is separated from God is spiritually dead.

2. Evil Dominates the Will

Jeremiah 44:16-17 records the Egyptian Jews' willful rejection of God's messenger: "...we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth...." Sin dominates not only how we think, but it dominates that which determines what we do.

3. Evil Dominates the Affections

a. 1 John 2:15 -- "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world...." It's so easy for us to be dominated by sin so that we love the wrong things or love things the wrong way. b. John 3:19 -- "...light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

So, sin dominates the affections, the will, and the mind, and ultimately, because man's entire being is dominated by evil, his behavior will be evil. That's the result of original sin, the residual effects of which even the Christian must face. Upon the believer, its effect is like the tree in Daniel 4:23: Though the branches and main trunk were cut down, the stump and the roots remained. Similarly, though when a person becomes a Christian a lot of sin is whacked off, the stump is still there until Jesus comes (1 Jn. 3:2). According to John 15, the Father is busy pruning off sin's shoots that keep coming up in our lives as Christians. The Christian must realize as well as the non-Christian that sin is so deep in our nature it's like a sleeping lion and the least thing will awaken its rage. Our sin nature smolders like a flaming fire ready to be ignited and the slightest wind of temptation fans it into flame. Therefore, if you are an unbeliever, you need to run to Jesus Christ to have it covered, and if you're a Christian you need to be sure you don't do anything to induce it to wake from its sleep. So, though sin overpowers us it is a power that can be broken by Christ.

B. Sin Brings Us Under The Control Of Satan

Who would ever choose to be dominated by that evil being? And yet the Bible says that those who don't know Jesus Christ have done that very thing.

1. Ephesians 2:2 -- "In which in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience." If you don't know Jesus Christ, Satan is at work in your life.

2. John 8:44 -- Jesus said to the hypocritical Pharisees, "Ye are of your father the devil...."

3. 1 John 5:19 -- "...the whole world lieth in wickedness [lit. 'the wicked one']."

4. Romans 6:16 -- Paul says that apart from God man is a servant of sin and, by implication, ultimately Satan.

And so, what is the effect of sin in our lives? First of all, it overpowers us, so that our thinking, feelings, will, and behavior are dominated by it. Second, it brings us under the dominion of the evil adversary Satan, where there is no freedom...only slavery.

How to Be Free from the Power of Satan

Satan can make a man think he is free when he really isn't. But when somebody comes to trust in Jesus Christ, he finds true freedom. Jesus said in John 8:36, "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Why did He say that? Because Satan sells a phony freedom.

How many movements can you think of today that are called "liberation movements"? Is man really free? Not on your life! He is in bondage to sin. It is only the Lord Jesus Christ who can free him.

That's why Paul described his divinely given mission of preaching the gospel of Christ as one designed "to open their [the Gentiles'] eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance..." (Ac. 26:18a).

C. Sin Makes Us the Objects of God's Wrath

1. Ephesians 2:3 -- Paul identifies those controlled by their sin nature as "children of wrath," a bull's-

eye for God's judgment.

2. Psalm 90:11 -- Moses said, "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? Even according to Thy fear, so is Thy wrath." Who can measure God's almighty wrath? By the way, God's wrath is not just a passion. God's wrath is an act of His pure and holy will against sin which defiles His universe. You have to ask yourself when you read the Bible and you read about God's wrath, how sinners can go blindly on in their sin.

3. Galatians 3:10-11 -- "...Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith." If you don't come to God through faith, you will be cursed.

4. 1 Corinthians 16:22 -- "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema [accursed]."

God is very serious about how sin overpowers us, controls us, and makes us objects of His wrath. I don't know how a sinner can eat, drink, and be merry if he knows that's a fact. Such a response is illustrated by the story of Damocles, who sat eating at a banquet while a sword hung over his head by a small thread, and yet he still had the stomach to eat. In like manner, the sword of God's wrath hangs over the head of the sinner and yet he goes on eating, drinking, and making merry. Only Christ can save us from "the wrath to come," as 1 Thessalonians 1:10 tells us. Aren't you glad that if you're a Christian, you've been delivered from the wrath to come?!

D. Sin Subjects Us to the Miseries of Life

When you follow the path of sin, you go from one misery to another, as the following verses show.

1. Job 5:7 -- "Yet man is born unto trouble...."

2. Romans 8:20 -- Paul says that "the creation was made subject to vanity...." In other words, creation has been temporarily subjected to a degree of uselessness or emptiness.

3. Ecclesiastes 1:2 -- Solomon recognized that something was missing in life that could not satisfy the heart: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Solomon looked at everything and concluded that it all meant nothing. He tried it all, and all it produced was emptiness, bitterness, sorrow, meaninglessness, and uselessness.

4. Genesis 49:4 -- Sin degrades man of his honor. Because of incest, Reuben lost his dignity.

5. Isaiah 48:22 -- "There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked." Sin has robbed man of peace. He has become like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters churn up mire and dirt.

Judas was so vile and evil that he followed the path of trouble until finally, in absolute horror and desperation with a conscience that was shouting so loud he couldn't stand to hear it, he took a rope, tied it around his neck, and hanged himself. His rope broke and his body was crushed on the rocks below in his attempt to escape his conscience. All he really did was to wind up in hell where his conscience will be louder in eternity than he ever heard it before.

A fifth result of sin is that...

E. Sin Damns the Soul to Hell

People think they can sin and get away with it, but they can't. This assumption was amply illustrated in a newspaper article about a man who died after arriving at Los Angeles International Airport. An autopsy revealed that he had half a million dollars worth of cocaine packed in eleven rubber containers in his stomach. The coroner said that one or more of the containers appeared to have leaked, causing the individual to die of an overdose of the drug. Sin is that way...you may think you can contain a lot of it in your life, but it will eventually leak out and kill you.

To see that sin damns the soul to hell, all you have to do is read Revelation 20 about the Great White Throne Judgment and how people are cast into the lake of fire. And did you realize that over 50 million people die every year, which makes 136,986 that die every day, 5,707 every hour, and 95 every minute? Furthermore, there are 4.25 billion people in the world who will all die sooner or later, and are being replaced at two and one-half times the death rate. So not only are people all dying, but

more of them are being born to die all the time. Hell is waiting for its victims.

Henry Van Dyke said, "Remember that what you possess in this world will be found at the day of your death and belong to someone else; what you are will be yours forever." Sin will damn a soul. I don't especially like to talk about hell, but Jesus talked more about it than anybody in the whole Bible. Spurgeon said, "Many of you are hanging over the mouth of hell by a solitary plank and that plank is rotten." And so we see the deadly evil of sin.

We've answered some questions about sin: What is it? What is it like? How many does it affect? And what are its results? But there is a fifth and final question, which is most helpful:

V. WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT SIN?

A. The Principles

1. Romans 6:23 -- "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord." That's the key, isn't it? When Jesus died on the cross He paid the penalty for your sin and He offers you forgiveness.

2. Romans 4:7-8 -- "...Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." In other words, happy is the man who knows that God has forgiven all his sin and covered it with righteousness. Happy is the man who knows that God will never charge sin to his account. Happy is the man who knows the debt is canceled and the price is paid. Happy is the man who comes to Jesus Christ and takes the free gift. That's true happiness.

B. The Practice

As a Christian, if there is the slightest taint of indifference toward sin and the victory Christ offers over it, then you have lost some of the sense of gratitude that you ought to have in your heart for what God has done for you. I hope by seeing sin again you are grateful for your forgiveness.

Now, you say, "I've come to Jesus Christ. Now, how do I deal with sin in my life?" The answer is simple: First...

1. Recognize Your Sin Has Been Forgiven

John reminded his readers, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 Jn. 2:12).

Then...

2. Recognize You Have the Power to Say No

Paul exhorts us in Colossians 3:5 to "mortify" the deeds of the body. You say, "John, how do you say no to sin?" By saying yes to God. Sin will fight against that which you know is righteous. But, depending upon whether it is sin or the Spirit of God who dominates your life, you will say yes to one or the other.

What does a man or woman do about sin? They come to Jesus Christ so that it can be forgiven. Then, as believers, when we face temptations and sin, we can stand on the confidence that it's already been forgiven. We don't need to get into some emotional guilt trip. And then we move to the strength provided for us in the power of the Spirit of God, the Word of God. We must become so saturated with the Word that it dominates our thinking so that when the temptation comes, we react in accordance to the righteousness of the Word, rather than to sin.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why is it dangerous to tone down the seriousness of sin?
2. What must God do before Paradise is to be regained?
3. Name the three relationships that sin destroys.
4. Who has the virus of sin captured in its power? Who did it not capture?
5. What is the primary definition of sin, and on what verse is it based?
6. What is the path of blessing with regard to God's law?

7. Match the specific character of sin with those who emphasized that aspect.

A. Defilement	1. Rejecting Jeremiah (Jer. 44:17)
B. Rebellion	2. Treacherous Absalom (2 Sam. 16:15-17:4)
C. Ingratitude	3. Unable to sleep unless causing sin (Prov. 4:16)
D. Incurable	4. Filthy garments on the high priest (Zech. 3:3)
E. Hated by God	5. Ethiopian unable to change his skin (Jer. 13:23)
F. Hard Work	6. A holy God cannot look upon iniquity (Hab. 1:13)
8. Why was the conscience given to man? What will the results be if it becomes defiled?
9. What is the only thing that God hates?
10. What is the extent of sin's effect upon man? Cite one verse to support your answer.
11. Whose guilt and depravity is transmitted to all mankind? What do theologians call this?
12. What is the only status that a man has when he is born into the world?
13. Why is it so easy for sin to "beset us" (Heb. 12:1)?
14. Why does "the natural man" (1 Cor. 2:14) separated from God not understand spiritual things?
15. What does 1 John 2:15 identify as that which can easily dominate our affections?
16. As Paul talks to the Ephesian Christians in Ephesians 2:2, when does he say that they were under the control of Satan?
17. From what two things was Paul commissioned to turn man as he preached the gospel (Ac. 26:18)?
18. How can a man escape "the wrath to come," according to 1 Thessalonians 1:10?
19. What did Solomon conclude about life when it is lived for oneself apart from the plan of God?
20. Though people may think they can get away with sin, where does Revelation 20:11-15 say that sin will lead?
21. According to Romans 4:7-8 (Ps. 32:1-2), who is the one who is blessed or happy?

Pondering the Principles

1. Have you been guilty of ingratitude for any of the things God has done for you? When was the last time you thanked Him for forgiving your sins? Do you remember some times that He saved you from some devastating consequences of your sin? Sit down with your family or friends and take turns thanking God for all He has given you and all He has done for you. Read together Luke 17:11-19, discussing the following questions: How many of the lepers were healed physically? How many were healed spiritually? Which of the lepers exhibited true saving faith? Why do you think so? Who received the greater blessing? What will God's response be to those who honor Him? (1 Sam. 2:30)
2. Because sin causes evil to overpower all men, though not to the same degree, what advice would you give to a non-Christian who wanted to take the first step to combat the sin problem? to a Christian who found it easy to fall into sin? Of these two verses, Romans 6:22-23 or Romans 13:14, which would be most applicable to the Christian who is easily tempted?
3. We must become so saturated with the Word of God that it dominates our thinking so that when temptation comes, we react in accordance to the righteousness of the Word, rather than to sin. Note Luke 4:1-13 to see how Jesus faced temptation. When temptation arises, do you find yourself thinking of how to get away with sinning, or thinking about which Scripture most accurately instructs you how to respond to the situation? If your response is not the latter one, then maybe you should make a commitment to spending more time in the Word, reading, studying, and teaching it at your family, neighborhood, church, or co-workers' Bible study.

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