

SUFFERING BECAUSE OF SIN

Lesson 1

ACTS OF SIN

I John 2:1-2 cf. Psalm 32:3-5

Sin is an ugly monster and often we do not like to face it honestly even as Christians. We soon learn after we trust Christ that we are still capable of sinning. The thought of our potential to sin bothers us, but when we actually sin it deeply disturbs us and we are faced with a dilemma. We ask ourselves three basic questions: (1) Why did I do this act of sin? (2) How can I right myself before God for this act of sin? (3) How will this sin affect my life in the future?

Sin always takes its toll on the Christian who commits it and can have some devastating effects on a person's life. Some Christians hate to hear messages on personal sin because they know deep in their hearts they are in rebellion to God in certain areas of their life and they would just as soon not talk about sin or their responsibility to God.

THE FACT OF SIN

It is God's desire that the Christian should not sin. ***"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin."*** (1 John 2:1a). God is never pleased when a believer sins against God and His moral law. Each Christian should desire not to sin and he should push on towards this goal in his Christian life.

However, God knows the sinful human heart and knows the Christian will commit acts of sin after he is saved. Therefore, God has made a provision for the believer's sin. ***"But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."*** (1 John 2:1b-2). This provision is the death of Christ which cleanses the past, present and future sins of all the world who trust in Jesus Christ. ***". . .and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies (keeps on purifying or cleansing) us from all sin."*** (1 John 1:7b).

Sin is a reality for every true believer. The person who claims to be a Christian and says he does not sin is either deceiving himself or is an unbeliever, for all men, even Christians sin. ***"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."*** (1 John 1:8). Christians need to claim the cleansing power of the Savior everyday, for sin is with us everyday.

The *Westminster Confession of Faith* says,

"In contrast to this, God's people may sin greatly. The temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevailing sin remaining in us, and the neglect of spiritual nurture, together constitute dangers which for a time may take hold of God's people. Incurring God's displeasure and bringing grief to the Holy Spirit, we deprive ourselves of a certain measure of the joy and comfort of God's grace. This results in attitudes hardening, moral senses damaged, people being hurt and embarrassed, even bringing the judgments of the state, society and nature upon ourselves." (17-3)

THE DEFINITION OF SIN

Biblical Definition. According to 1 John 3:4 all sin is lawlessness. ***"Every one who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness."*** (1 John 3:4). Sin is rebellion of the human heart to the law of God. It is the Christian's selfish will claiming its independence of God. Sin is an acknowledgment that men do not need to trust God in and for everything.

This was the original sin of Adam—rebellion and independence. Adam thought he could go it alone and had no need of God. This spirit of independence or self-life is manifested in all men because they inherited Adam's sinful nature.

Theological Definition. Sin is anything that fails to match up to the holy character of God. Christians are guilty of sins they commit as well as not doing the commands of God.

Sin is not only gross sin like murder, adultery, premarital sex, or homosexuality, but also subtle sin like lust, hate, pride, envy, gossip, laziness, greed, lying, etc. Sin is a reality in every true Christian's life. So often a Christian will sin and hide it from men and try to hide it from God; yet God sees every act we do.

Lewis Sperry Chafer, founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, use to tell his students, "*Secret sin an earth is open scandal in heaven.*"

THE EFFECTS OF SIN IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

The Holy Spirit is Grieved. "***An do not grieve the Holy spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.***" (Eph. 4:30). Our sin hurts, disappoints and grieves the Holy Spirit. We may see how sin hurts us or others, but primarily it hurts God. Sin hinders the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. It is not that the Spirit stops working in the Christian, but the nature of His work changes. He stops giving spiritual blessing and begins to convict of sin. The Holy Spirit can be grieved, but not grieved away!

Fellowship with Christ is Broken. "***Remain (abide) in me, and I will remain (abide) in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.***" (John 15:4). By acts of sin, the Christian is acknowledging that he does not have to abide in Christ; that is, he feels he can live without Jesus Christ.

Sin does not cause Christ to break fellowship with the Christian (He could never do that because the Christian's fellowship with Christ is eternal). However, sin causes the Christian to break fellowship with Christ. He acts independently of Christ because of rebellion.

Sin gives a Christian a distorted view of life and he begins to rationalize his sin and lose his divine viewpoint towards life.

If I were to take someone's glasses and try to wear them, I would get a distorted image. Tall people would be short; thin people fat, and most everything I looked at would be blurred. Now the eternal world has not changed but my perspective towards the world has changed. So sin causes a Christian to get a distorted view of the real world in which he lives.

The Joy of Salvation is Lost. "***Restore to me the joy of your salvation***" (Psa. 51:12a). Sin brings a loss of inner Christian joy that results from redemption. The Christian does not lose his salvation but he loses the joy of his salvation.

Those Christians who persist in sin over a long period of time will actually lose assurance that salvation is real.

There is Conviction of Sin by the Holy Spirit. The Christian who knowingly and willfully does acts of sin will have the conviction of the Holy Spirit that he has done wrong. "***When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For a day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity, I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.***" (Psa. 32:3-5).

The Spirit continues to convict the Christian until he gets his life right before God. The convicting work of the Spirit does not guarantee that a Christian will confess his sins. **The most miserable person in the world is a Christian in sin who is not in fellowship with his Lord.**

There is Lack of Confidence in Prayer. "***If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.***" (Psa. 66:18). The Christian in sin may pray but he will feel as though Christ is a million miles away and that his prayers are getting only as high as the ceiling.

There is a Sense of Shame. ***“And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.”*** (1 John 2:28). The Christian in sin feels as though he can’t face his Lord or his Christian friends. He is ashamed of his acts even though he may try to rationalize around them.

When Christians are in sin they avoid other Christians and might even be critical of them.

The Christian is in Line for God’s Discipline. ***“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as son: ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.’”*** (Heb. 12:5-6). The Christian who willfully sins must expect God’s discipline. God disciplines all of His people because He loves them and desires that they should be a holy people.

EVIDENCES OF A REBELLIOUS LIFE

When a Christian is out of it spiritually, the sin nature will begin to manifest itself in a very obvious manner. The self-life will become obvious to almost everyone but the person guilty of the sin.

Sin is so subtle and it manifest itself in attitudes that are wrong. A person not walking in the Spirit will have a critical and complaining spirit about life. A griper is disobedient to God’s command to have a thankful heart. ***“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*** (1 Thess. 5:18).

A rebellious Christian has a negative and sarcastic spirit. This person sees everything wrong with a person or a situation and sees nothing right. Negative people are very difficult to be around. They often feel shunned by other people but rarely see the reason people shun them is because they are so negative and critical about everything. A negative person is not obedient to God’s command to be positive. ***“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”*** (Phil. 4:8).

This critical, negative and complaining spirit is manifested mainly through the tongue, for these same people begin to speak evilly about others. The tragedy is that these folks rationalize their sin of evil speaking to such a degree that they really feel they are not speaking evilly when they are. These same people do not see they have a spiritual problem that must be dealt with or they will never experience the full blessing of God. This person is disobedient to God’s command to control the tongue. ***“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be”*** (James 3:9-10).

David Wilkerson in an article called, “Speaking Out About Gossip” said,

“Gossip is fast becoming the biggest weapon Satan has against God’s chosen people. Rumors are flying around, everywhere. Filthy gossip is ruining the reputations, ministries and marriages of many of God’s choicest servants.

If I believed all the gossip I overhear daily, I would lose all faith in mankind. And the gossip does not originate in a bar room. It is not passed on by reprobates and prostitutes. Most of the gossip circulated today pours out of the hearts and lips of Christians who sit in a church pew every Sunday morning singing about the love of Jesus.

Ministers often complain about how certain members of their congregation ‘talk about them behind their backs.’ It’s a well known fact that some parishioners go home every Sunday afternoon and ‘chew up the pastor.’ They gossip about his new car—his hair—his wife’s shoes—his sermon—his ‘dictatorial methods’. And shamefully, many Christian members seem to gloat over a minister who gets caught with another woman—or who gets into some kind of moral, financial or spiritual trouble.

Satan is out to destroy every man and woman of God—and he will stop at nothing to discredit an effective ministry. Tragically, some ministers are must a guilty or nasty gossip as the members they accuse. The sit around at conventions and in little 'after meeting' sessions trading stories of pastors and evangelists who have 'messed up.' Most of the gossip is vicious—but seldom true."