

THE REALITY OF SIN

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Sermon Study Guide

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Matthew 26:39 NIV; Matthew 26:37-38 NIV; Matthew 27:46 NIV; 1 Corinthians 15:3; Mark 5:39; John 11:11 NIV

We must deal with sin. Here is the reality of sin – it will destroy you. It will separate you from God. Sin must be dealt with immediately.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

The first king of Israel, King Saul, was told by God to utterly slay Amalek and his descendants. In blatant disobedience Saul allowed Agag, the king of the Amalekites and the best of the cattle to remain alive. The following day, Saul tried to remedy his disobedience by attempting to sacrifice the best of the cattle to the Lord.

But the prophet Samuel informed Saul that because of his disobedience, his family would no longer reign over Israel, and he told Saul, “to obey is better than sacrifice.” If offering the “best of the cattle” for sacrifice was a poor excuse for disobedience, its negative consequences must have paled in comparison with sparing the Amalekite King – whose infamous descendant Haman, an agagite (Esther 3:1) later rose to power seeking to destroy the entire Jewish population of Persia.

If Saul had dealt with Agag as God instructed him, he would have spared his people, centuries later, from the agonizing contest with a vicious enemy who would destroy them. So it is with sin. Allow it to live and be sure it will return to slay you with more power. Don’t compromise. “Small” sins lead to bigger ones, and soon enough the early footholds that are ignored will turn into strongholds which cannot be!

You have to have a “Take no prisoners” attitude when dealing with sin — seek to be rid of the little sins, so that later you will avoid the strongholds that may threaten to compromise or destroy your walk, your calling, your life, and the precious relationship that the Lord has purchased for you!

John 8:51 NKJV; John 5:24 NKJV; John 11:26 NKJV; 2 Corinthians 5:21 NKJV; Romans 6:23 NKJV; Romans 5:6 NKJV; Romans 6:6 NLT

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you suppose there is any possibility after God dealt with sin so radically through His Son, that once He brings us into union with Christ, there will be any particular sin in our lives that He isn’t really concerned about?
2. Are there sins He will choose to simply ‘wink at’ or ignore?

I found an illustration that perfectly explains undealt with sin. June 12, is independence day for the Philippines. In 1991 the day was forever marked by one of the strongest volcano eruptions in history. Mount Pinatubo, dormant for over 500 years, began to erupt, and three days later exploded with twice the power of the 1980 Mount St. Helen's eruption. The release of power blasted a cubic mile off the mountaintop and the earth shook for eight hours. The eruption produced an ash cloud that rose over 50,000 feet into the atmosphere. If that wasn't enough, Typhoon Yunga then struck the island nation with fierce winds and torrential rains which mixed with the ash creating what the locals called "Black Saturday!"

The United States was forced to abandon and eventually close Clark Air Force base, located just a few miles from Mount Pinatubo, due to the devastating blanket of fallen ash. When a volcanologist was asked to account for the widespread damage which sent thousands of American soldiers and Filipinos fleeing, he replied, "When a volcano is silent for many years, people forget it's a volcano and begin to treat it like a mountain."

Now here's a lesson from nature. We should always be aware of how our sinful nature has the potential to erupt. It would be a big mistake to ignore this possibility simply because it has lain dormant for a season...even a seemingly long one.

Solomon writes a profound statement in his book of Proverbs, which, when paraphrased goes something like this; "Can someone play with fire in his lap without incinerating his clothes?"

The enemy of our souls would love for us to believe that we can somehow play with sin, without it negatively affecting our spirit and our walk with the Lord. Satan is a real deceiver.

You have to combat sin with scripture. In fact, D.L. Moody once said about dealing with sin, "When you're thinking sin, think scripture!" Sin is a dormant volcano which can erupt at ANY moment and set our house on fire. How do we prepare? First, by being aware of the possibility then hiding God's word in our hearts. [Psalm 119:11]

QUESTIONS:

1. What sins have you not dealt with?
2. What sins (volcanoes) have you been treating lightly (like mountains)?
3. How has sinned burned you?

Romans 6:14 NKJV; 1 Corinthians 11:24-29 NKJV

TERMS TO DESCRIBE SIN

The Bible references sin, transgression and iniquity separately in Exodus 34:7 when the Lord made the second tablets of the Ten Commandments and descended from the cloud and passed before Moses:

“And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”

This indicates that sin, transgression and iniquity are different in some way. In fact, they represent increasing levels of falling “*short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). The words “sin”, “iniquities”, and “transgression” are separate words.

Sin

an *offense* [i.e. a single event]

Sin is anything that comes short of the glory of God

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.” (Mark 7:21-22)

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21)

There are many things we do that fall short of God’s glory which we usually don’t classify as sin. For example:

- Fear – *“for God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (2Tim.1-7)
- Worry – *“do not worry”* commands the Lord in Matthew 6:25, 31,34
- Shame – *“But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth.”* (2 Cor. 4:2)
- Lusts of the flesh – *“For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”* (1 John 2:16)
- Improper thoughts – *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ 22But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.”* (Matthew 5:21-22) *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* (Matthew 5:27-28)
- Vengeance – *“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay”* (Romans 12:19)
- Pride – *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”* (Prov. 16:18)
- Gossip & Slander – *“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.”* (James 3:6)

1. REBELLION

1 Samuel 15:23 NKJV; 1 John 3:4 NKJV; John 5:30 NKJV; John 8:29 NKJV

Rebellion is knowingly rejecting and disobeying the commands or Word of God.

"For rebellion is as the sin of divination, And insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king." - 1 Samuel 15:23

"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. – John 5:30

2. TRANSGRESSION

(Transgression): a *revolt* (national, moral or religious); rebellion

· Repeated sin becomes outright rebellion "*which is as the sin of witchcraft*" (1Samuel 15:23)

___ "*An evil man seeks only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger will be sent against him.*" (Proverbs 17:11)

3. INIQUITY

(Iniquity): *perversity*, that is, (moral) *evil*: "*Perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually, he sows discord.*" (Prov. 6:14)

Thus sin, when repeated against the knowledge of God, becomes transgression which, if it continues long enough, eventually becomes iniquity which perverts the flesh. Things like alcoholism, sexual perversions, jealousy, and anger can be passed down from generation to generation.

I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me. (Exodus 20:8)

The progression from sin, to transgression, to iniquity is illustrated in James 1:15: "*Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*"

We live in a culture where the concept of sin has become entangled in legalistic arguments over right and wrong. When many of us consider "What is sin?" we think of violations of the Ten Commandments. Even then, we tend to think of murder and adultery as "major" sins compared with lying, cursing, or idolatry.

The truth is that sin, as defined in the original translations of the Bible, means "to miss the mark." The mark, in this case, is the standard of perfection established by God and evidenced by Jesus. Viewed in that light, it is clear that we are all sinners.

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 3:23: "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*"

In light of this, it does no good to compare ourselves to others. We cannot escape our failure to be righteous in our own strength. This is by God's design, because only when we understand our weakness will we consider relying on the atoning sacrifice of Jesus.

Sin is mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible, starting with the "original" sin when Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge. Often it seems as if sin

is simply the violation of any of God's laws, including the Ten Commandments. Paul, however, puts this in perspective in Romans 3:20, when he says, *"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."* God wanted us to recognize our sins. Even those who have not murdered or committed adultery will find themselves convicted of lying, or of worshipping false idols like wealth or power ahead of God. Tragically, sin in any amount will distance us from God.

"Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear," says Isaiah 59: 1-2. *"But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear."*

We must resist the temptation to act as if we are righteous, especially by leaning on our good works.

"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives" (1 John 1:8-10).

The good news in all of this is that, once we recognize ourselves as sinners, we need only to repent and embrace Jesus to be forgiven. Jesus can forgive us because he died and rose again three days later in victory over sin and death. The Apostle Paul refers to this process of recognizing sin and being responsible for it as "godly sorrow."

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death," Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 7:10-11. *"See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter."*

QUESTIONS:

1. What sin(s) do you need to confess?
2. Which do you love more, sin or salvation?
3. Which do you desire more, the forgiveness of God or the consequence of sin?