

SOME MISTAKEN IDEAS ABOUT SIN

Gen. 4:1-16

Intro: In my message tonight I am thinking particularly about our young people, and yet I trust that the things I have to say will prove profitable to all of us. Older Christians sometimes need to be reminded of the truth as much as younger Christians need to be taught the truth.

I am concerned tonight that we learn some of the truth concerning sin.

For more than a generation now we have been teaching our young people that truth is both relative and subjective. In doing this we have done away with external authorities. We have come to the astounding place where reasonable men even take time to discuss whether or not God is dead. Man has become his own God. Each of us is supposed to decide for ourselves what is right and what is wrong. I have no right to impose my views on anyone else, but if I think something is right, then I can do it. If I think that something is wrong, I won't do it. I am my own authority.

A generation of such special teaching is now able to be tested by its results. Our own country is caught up in a teenage revolt the likes of which have never been seen in this country. Our law enforcement authorities are not only unable to cope with the problem, but recent rulings by the Supreme Court have made it practically impossible for them to deal with it. The average age of our criminals is dropping lower and lower into the teen years, and the divorce rate in our own state of Oregon is approaching that of one out of every two marriages.

We have done everything that we possibly can to eliminate sin from our vocabulary. We have been told for a long time that if you tell a person he is a sinner you only complicate his problems; you solve nothing.

The most tragic feature of this whole picture is that this is the environment in which we are raising our children. If conditions continue as they are, one shudders to think what things will be like when you young people are raising your families. The pressures are on the Christian to conform, to go along with the crowd. Many young people who have been raised in Christian homes have gotten into some of these very things which are becoming a growing concern to responsible leaders in our country.

Is it not time for us to begin to ask some questions? Have

we been read the right way, or the wrong way. WHAT IS THE TRUTH ABOUT SIN?

As a seminary student over 20 years ago now <sup>I heard</sup> one of my teachers make this statement about sin. He, like many of us here tonight, had been raised in a Christian home. This was his statement: "I have learned more about sin from my Bible than I ever did from sinning."

It always sounds very wise to ridicule a person because he was raised in a Christian home, or because he has not gotten himself involved in sin, but who is better off?

The record of human experience today will show that what the Bible teaches about sin is absolutely true. We must reject the idea that there is no sin. We must reject the idea that there is no final authority. We must reject the idea that we can live without God.

I want to show you tonight the way in which the Bible clears up some present-day mistaken ideas about sin!

What are some of them?

I. That sin satisfies.

Sin is a Bible word. It is still in the Bible today, even in our modern translations. But we are being told today that it is ridiculous to abstain from things that the Bible labels as sin because you will never enjoy life if you do. So we commit these sins, only we do not call them sin, and we are looking for that which satisfies.

Does sin satisfy?

You can get the answer from human experience by looking around you, but I want you to see the answer from the Word of God.

It is amazing to discover how old this idea is, and where it came from. Cf. Gen. 3:4-10.

Sin is disobedience to God. Did it satisfy Eve? Did it make the relationship between Adam and Eve better? Do you suppose that it made them happy to learn that one of their sons had killed the other? Did Cain's sins make him happy? If so, why did he say, "My iniquity is greater than I can bear." Cf. Gen. 4:13.

Surely sin brings pleasure. The Bible says so in Heb. 11:

24, 25, but they are only "the pleasures of sin for a season." "The way of the transgressor is hard" (Prov. 13:15). And the person who ignores the moral laws which God has established and declared in His Word is going to find out to his own sorrow that God meant just exactly what he says.

You can try to still the voice of your own conscience, but how many people who have sinned to their hearts content looking for satisfaction finally have taken their own lives, like Judas, because they could not live with a conscience stained by sin.

Sin does not satisfy. It never has, and it never will. Oh, that we might believe this!

II. A second mistaken idea is this: That I can sin, or not sin, as I choose.

So there is no need for me to worry if I do something which the Bible has labeled as sin!

Is this true in human experience?

Let us go to the words of the Lord Jesus for our answer: "Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34).

Is this true, or is the world right?

The answer to this mistaken idea goes right back to the beginning of the human family, to Gen. 4, where God told Cain what sin would do to him. Cf. v. 7.

It is not true that you are the master of sin; instead, sin will be your master. Even the Apostle Paul was forced to write, "For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law . . . bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:19-21a, 23b).

Do you remember the story of the sinner woman, the prostitute, who anointed and kissed the feet of the Lord Jesus while he was in the house of a certain Pharisee? Cf. Luke 7:36-50. Did you ever wonder why the Lord said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven"? Because she had become a bondservant to sin, and no one but Jesus

Christ had been able to set her free. No wonder she loved the Lord as she did.

And remember that sin makes men its slaves today. It will make you its slave if you just start in that direction. There are thousands of people in Portland today who are held in the grip of some sin, or sins, not because they want to be, but because they have to be. They fell for the idea that sin is something you can control.

This leads to a third mistaken idea.

III. That there is no connection between so-called little sins and the major sins.

If I cheat, or lie, I suppose that is a little sin. If I kill somebody, that is a major sin.

It is true that our laws deals with a murderer more severely than with a liar, but when you come to the New Testament they are placed in the same category.

Again, let us go back to the beginning of the OT. The Bible tells us that Cain was angry when his offering was rejected by God and Abel's was accepted. But are you ready to read what comes just 3 verses later: "Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him" (Gen. 4: 8).

Or take the example of Lot. Did Lot know that his lust for land like Egypt (which seemed perfectly harmless in itself) would ultimately lead him to Sodom with all of its filthy sin, and where the last thing we read about him in the Bible is that he is ~~intoxicated~~ intoxicated at his own daughters' hands so they could conceive children by him?

How many times I have heard people say, "I never thought I would do something like this." No, they didn't! Why? Because it started with little, insignificant things, and gradually grew into a monster that consumed them.

It is no wonder that the Psalmist prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart . . ." (Psa. 139:23, 24).

Paul in Col. 3:5-9 names a whole list of sins as being our "members," they belong to us, and therefore we are capable of committing every single one of them. Sin in any form is capable to causing an uncontrollable chain reaction.

Let me take up one more. (There are many others we could mention if time permitted.) The last one for tonight is this:

IV. That there is no relationship between my fellowship with God and my tendency toward sin.

Now I want to be clearly understood on this point. When I speak of your fellowship with God, I am not talking about the fact that you attend Central Bible Church.

Where you go to church may mean a great deal to you, or it may mean nothing!

Your fellowship with God is the result of your own personal heart relationship with Him. This is maintain ~~to~~ by personal Bible study and prayer. There is no other way. And what a simple thing it is to begin to neglect our fellowship with the Lord. The longer this goes on, the less we miss it. The more it continues, the less we want it. If it goes on and on, we may begin even to reject it.

Listen to these solemn words in Rom. 1. The emphasis may be for all men, but there is an application to the Christian in these verses. Cf. Rom. 1:28-32.

How did the Psalmist state it? "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa. 119:11).

Concl: This is enough for us to see that the Bible is still true, that there is such a thing as sin, and that sin never satisfies, but makes us slaves, leading us deeper and deeper into sin, and farther and farther from God and all that will satisfy our hearts.

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 "Oh, to grace how great a debtor,  
 Daily I'm constrained to be!  
 Let thy goodness, as a fetter,  
 Bind my ~~wand~~'ring heart to Thee;  
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it--  
 Prone to leave the God I love--  
 Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it,  
 Seal it for Thy courts above."