

The Influences of Sin

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Since we are living in a time when the reality of sin is being denied, it might be well for Christians to give more thought to its impact on past generations, and be reminded that the prevailing attitude toward sin today is the result of the influences of sin itself. Total disregard for God's revelation to man has led many to say that nothing is wrong except as a person's own thinking makes it wrong. They tell us there is no such thing as absolute truth, and no definite standard of morals. The idea is that every man is his own god, and what is right or wrong is determined in his own mind. This is anarchy in its boldest posture.

Peter was constrained to write "to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them." Since sin is so subtle Christians should ever be reminded of its deceitfulness. We need to contemplate the lessons of the past lest we let them slip away from us. The impact of sin in man's history is seen in the Bible accounts of Adam's posterity, and "these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition."

Cain called God's way in question, and his presumption led him finally to murder his brother. As the sons and daughters of Adam multiplied on earth, man became so engrossed in the re-enactment of Eden's tragedy that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, and it repented Jehovah that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Repentance on the part of God doesn't mean that there was any vacillation or variation in his nature. It is merely an expression of pain felt in the great heart of the Creator because of the sin of his creature, and emphasizes the infinite love that God has for man. But

justice must be upheld, so man paid the penalty for his perversity, and was destroyed from the earth, excepting the small remnant of Noah's family. God's wrath revealed in the flood was legal wrath rather than emotional. Had it been emotional, it would have been executed without mercy, and that would have been the end of human history. God's mercy is demonstrated in the fact that he gave the antediluvians ample opportunity to escape the consequences of their sin through the preaching of Noah, but they would not repent.

The preservation of the race after the flood was made possible through the small remnant of righteous souls found in Noah's family. But the posterity of Noah was also subject to sin, and in his sons are found again the human proclivities to doubt and question the ways of the Lord. Ham, not completely purged from the vices of the old world, forgets the honor due to a father, and in sinning against his father he sins against God and brings a curse upon himself. He was the progenitor of those who later became the adversaries of God's people, and the sinful influences of Ham are seen in the deeds of his posterity.

It was the influence of sin that led those men to undertake the building of a tower whose top would reach unto heaven. The real motive behind this act was a desire for renown – the pride of life. Their object was to stay together, and thus they would fail to carry out God's purpose to replenish the earth according to his commandment to "bring forth abundantly in the earth and multiply therein" (Gen. 9:7). Their fear of dispersion could well have been that the inward bond of unity and fellowship had already been broken by sin, and they were thus seeking to maintain a false sort of unity by this outward means. How presumptuous they were! God sent a confusion of tongues and scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth.

As men are multiplied, sin abounds. The great cities of Sodom and Gomorrah became so violently wicked that the Lord could no longer bear with them, and because not ten righteous souls

could be found In Sodom they were destroyed. This does not mean ten souls who were sinlessly perfect, but ten who through fear of God kept themselves from the prevailing wickedness of the city. So God rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from heaven, executing his legal wrath against transgression of his law. This catastrophe is a permanent memorial of the punitive righteousness of God, and serves to keep the fate of the ungodly before the minds of all subsequent generations.

The fate of Lot's wife also becomes a warning to all ages against the evil of disobeying God, and the danger of "looking back" after having charted a course that leads away from death and destruction. Jesus exhorted the people of his day to "remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). Peter makes reference to Sodom and Gomorrah and says that God "made them an example unto those that should live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6).

Time would fail to tell of the multitude of individuals whose sins are recorded in divine history, and of the tremendous effects their conduct had on the lives and destinies of men. We could speak of Esau, who despised his birthright and sold it for a morsel of food; of Nadab and Abihu, who presumptuously offered strange fire in the place of that commanded; of the son of Shelomith who blasphemed the God of heaven; of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who rebelled against the authority God had vested in Moses and Aaron; and of all the cases in subsequent History which so graphically inscribe upon our minds the stupendous impact of sin upon the human family.

The whole story of sin may be summed up in the failure of man to get rid of the lusts within himself. We cannot quite get away from selfishness. To gratify selfish desires we yield to covetousness and sacrifice our souls upon idol altars! Idolatry in our day consists largely in the form of worshipping self. We need to learn the lessons that all these examples in Israel's history teach us. We need to learn that sin on our part begins with the lusts in our own hearts. It is

true that the devil is the originator of sin, and ushered sin into the world through the first couple on earth, but we are not compelled to serve Satan, and we do so only because we are drawn away by our "own lusts, and enticed" (James 1:14). That is why Peter said, "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11). That is why God gave us all these examples to warn us against the subtlety of sin.

No intelligent person can contemplate the influences of sin upon the human race from the beginning until now, and then with any degree of honesty deny the reality of sin. The idea that sin is only the figment of an imaginative mind, or that any impurity can be washed clean by one's own thinking, is just another one of the crafty contrivances of Satan to lead souls captive.

Let us therefore exhort one another daily, "lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3 :13).

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