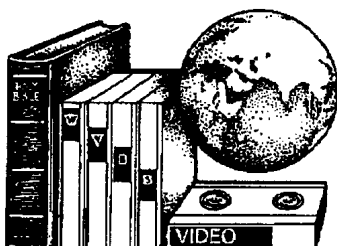


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PREFACE

Sin is not a popular topic. Our current culture vainly imagines that nearly all behavior, from the bizarre to the obscene, ought to be acceptable and beyond anyone's condemnation. Even terrorist attacks (involving the murder of thousands of innocent victims) are being justified by certain university "professors." Not so long ago a "president" of the United States engaged in adulterous behavior, and our nation could not even blush. Nor were his lies told under oath or his obstruction of justice of any great concern—even to senators who could not be bothered with such trifles as evidence.

Lies, adultery, murder—society is pretty far down the path to destruction to have so little conscience left. On the other hand, what else might we expect from those who prefer darkness to light? Even more disturbing, however, is the lack of concern about sin among those professing to be Christians. How many congregations have given up adhering to the clear message of Matthew 19:3-9? How many condemn social drinking? How many uphold the wearing of modest apparel? How many churches have withdrawn fellowship from anyone in the last ten years?

Therefore, it is not expected that a series of lessons on **sin** will be enthusiastically received—except by those who are sincerely endeavoring to travel the narrow road to eternal life. Those who are determined to please God will rejoice in the thorough definitions of sin—so that we might do all that is within our power to avoid it. The Bible provides all that we need to understand the problem and the solution.

This study seeks to approach sin in a systematic and topical way. Most quotations are from the New King James, although some of the word studies were based on the King James Version. Occasionally, both are used for comparison purposes. The student who completes this study ought to be impressed by how much the Bible emphasizes sin. It is our prayer that each one will profit from the material presented—so that we all may be prepared for eternity.

Gary W. Summers
Winter Park, Florida
February 10, 2005

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INTRODUCTION

Whatever Became of Sin? was the question asked by Dr. Karl Menninger in his 1973 book. The concept of sin is even less popular today than it was then. It should be obvious from the behavior of most people that they are not greatly concerned about sinning against a holy God. Most people “feel” that they are good folks regardless of a few “indiscretions” here or there. The general population certainly does not think they have done anything to merit the punishment of eternal damnation; in fact, three-fourths of them do not even believe in the Biblical doctrine of hell.

While we might expect such an attitude from worldly-minded people, many who profess to believe the Bible have also grown to discount its teachings about everlasting punishment. In most cases they have tried to “explain away” all of the passages dealing with hell. In recent years voices have arisen within the churches of Christ which echo the same misinformation—supplied by the instigators of the false doctrine. Some teach immediate annihilation for the wicked at the judgment (F. LeGard Smith), while others hold to a brief period of suffering for them, a sort of purgatory prior to extinction (Edward Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*).

Along with these misconceptions has arisen an unwarranted emphasis upon God’s grace. Of course, grace is a Biblical doctrine (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 2:11), but some would make it do away with any need for obedience whatsoever, which is clearly false. Jesus is described as “the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Heb. 5:8-9). And while grace covers the imperfections of the child of God endeavoring to walk in the light (1 John 1:7-9), it will not acquit the rebellious and the lawless (2 Thess. 1:8).

So on the one hand few people are concerned about their own sinfulness or being separated from God throughout eternity, and on the other hand grace zealots (gracists) are assuring people that they will be saved no matter what. The only problem is that all these popular precepts are deficient as regards Truth. Furthermore, they remove a primary motive that God has always used to encourage people to obey Him—fear.

Some will react to this last statement by standing with their mouths agape and then affirming we ought to be motivated by love, not fear. Such may be ideal, but it is scarcely realistic. God has always used both motivations, with sometimes more emphasis upon fear than love (read the covenant of blessing and cursing—Deut. 28). Jesus warned of the fires of hell from which He came to save mankind. If the place of eternal torment poses no threat to us (either because it does not exist or grace will cover everyone), then Jesus died on the cross in vain. Any doctrine which implies a contradiction or an absurdity is itself false. Jesus poured out His soul unto death because sin brings devastating consequences, the greatest of which is being separated from God throughout eternity (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

It is important that we study the topic of sin because:

1. We must be able to recognize it for what it is in its various forms. Some have never been taught that stealing is wrong or that fornication or homosexuality is sinful. Or maybe they have just never been taught the Scriptural definitions of these words. We cannot avoid sin if we cannot recognize it.
2. We must understand the serious consequences that result from sin both now and in eternity.
3. We must understand that Jesus died to redeem us from our sins. If we do not understand what it means to be lost, we cannot appreciate salvation.
4. The more we understand about sin, the more we will be able to: (1) avoid it and (2) please the One who created us.
5. It is only through a knowledge of Truth that we can be truly profited.

A. THE NATURE OF SIN

The Old and New Testaments use many words which have been translated into English as “sin,” “iniquity,” “trespass,” “wickedness,” “evil,” or some other synonym. These words are important and therefore will receive more attention in a later lesson, but for now let us consider the nature of sin. What is at the heart of it? From what is it made? What lies at its very core?

“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4). One who chooses to sin considers that he has no obligation to keep God’s commandments. The essence of sin is disobedience. To sin is to disobey whatever God commands, whether it be to do what He forbids (“You shall not commit adultery”) or to neglect what He enjoins (“Honor your father and mother”).

1. An incident that illustrates both of these forms of lawlessness may be found in Numbers 14. God was at the point of giving His people the Promised Land but, because of the evil report brought against it, they refused to conquer it. God punished that generation by keeping them out of the land and forcing them to die in the wilderness. Then some relented and determined that they would fight after all. But it was too late and no longer God’s will; their tardy attempt met with defeat because once again they disobeyed God. A more detailed account of this event follows.
 - a. Although it was God’s will for Israel to conquer the land, ten of the twelve spies were fearful (instead of faithful) and said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we”

(Num. 13:31). Joshua responds by addressing their lack of faith and pointing out their rejection of the Lord's command.

"If the Lord delights in us, then he will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them" (Num. 14:8-9).

Israel, however, rejected Jehovah's plan. As they were on the verge of stoning these faithful men of God, He intervenes (Num. 14:10). He rescues Joshua, Caleb, Moses, and Aaron from the hands of a congregation now turned violent. Then He pronounces punishment upon His rebellious people: they will not receive the land. God had given them a positive commandment, a task to perform; they refused to obey. [Lest we become self-righteous, how well are we keeping the command to be evangelistic (Matt. 28:18-20)?]

- b. After God's rebuke, the people "mourned greatly" (Num. 14:39). They felt so bad that they decided they should repent by immediately conquering the land (as they should have done in the first place). "Here we are, and we will go up to the place which the Lord has promised, for we have sinned!" (Num. 14:40). Although repentance is always necessary for one's spiritual well-being, it often comes too late to avoid the earthly consequences of one's actions. God had already decreed that for their rebellion they would remain in the wilderness forty years and die there (Num. 14:26-35). Their change in heart cannot undo their punishment.

In fact, their determination to go and fight now brings them into a further state of rebellion. Moses apprises them: "Now why do you transgress the command of the Lord? For this will not succeed. Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the Lord is not among you" (Num. 14:41-42). God had told them they would not inherit their land but instead die in the wilderness; they think that obeying the initial command will undo their punishment, but it results only in further tragic consequences (they were defeated). [Many today spend more effort in resisting the consequences of their sins than they ever gave to avoiding them in the first place.]

Thus, in just one chapter (Numbers 14), we have witnessed Israel (1) refusing to keep a positive command of God (Do this—No, I won't) and (2) insisting on violating a negative command (Don't do

this—Yes, I will). Both attitudes are wrong and deserving of punishment.

2. Disobedience was the chief characteristic of the very first sin committed on earth. Adam and Eve transgressed a “don’t do this.” They ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which had been forbidden them. The sin was not done out of ignorance; Eve repeated the command given by God: “God has said, ‘You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die’” (Gen. 3:3). Yet by the end of verse six both the man and the woman have eaten the fruit.

Two valuable lessons can be learned from this historical event. One is that sin is always punished (Gen. 3:14-19). The second is that sin need not carry with it tremendous moral consequences for it to be sin. Many in our culture have erroneously decided that if a person’s actions do not harm anyone else, then no sin has been committed.

Many refuse to consider that fornication (sex between two individuals not married to each other) or homosexuality is wrong if the two parties consent to it and no one is hurt by it. Even if such could be guaranteed, it would still be sinful because it transgresses *God’s law*. Whether or not we see any harmful consequences to a specific act is irrelevant. Disobedience is sin.

When a fellow human being is killed (one who is unworthy of death), as Abel was murdered by his brother Cain, we mourn the injustice and the loss of the man. His positive contributions to society will be missed. All can easily see the sinfulness of sin because in this instance the death of an innocent man affects us all. The poet John Donne wrote, “Any man’s death diminishes me.” How much sadder is it when he was robbed of his life by a murderer?

If a highly respected businessman or military general or president cheats on his wife, however, most people do not become outraged. Some may be disappointed, and a few will verbally abuse him, but most will remain indifferent to his sin because the consequences of his actions do not touch them personally. Whereas people would clamor for justice against the murderer, most do not care what happens to the unfaithful husband.

But God subscribes to a different set of standards. Both the murderer and the adulterer have transgressed His law; both stand guilty before Him. The point that all must come to understand is that refusing to abide by God’s Word is sinful—regardless of the earthly consequences!

3. The free will we all possess allows us to choose or reject God's teaching. God always gives people the freedom to pursue either direction—obedience or rejection. But this freedom is not free of consequences. In other words, there is a reward for righteousness and punishment for rebellion.

In Genesis 17 God instituted the covenant of circumcision with Abraham. After giving several commands concerning this practice (Gen. 17:10-13), God makes known the wages of disobedience in the next verse: "And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people: he has broken My covenant."

The principles that have already been stressed throughout this lesson apply also to this requirement for being under the covenant. We see that: 1) Disobedience carries with it a price (being cut off from Israel); 2) That penalty, however, does not occur as the natural consequence of the sin (God brings it about); and 3) God recognizes that the same freedom that creates the opportunity for us to obey also opens the door for disobedience (just as it did in the garden of Eden).

Notice that circumcision is not a matter of morality. Whether or not a male infant is circumcised will have no effect on society in general. In fact, no human being might know for years whether the surgery had been performed or not. No ill effects would naturally follow, such as prostitution in the streets of a city, gambling casinos in the heart of town, or an increase in thefts. Crime would not escalate if an Israelite failed to circumcise his son.

But (despite no harmful effects to the culture) those who rebelled in this fashion would be sinning anyway—simply because they refused to do what God commanded them to do. Disobedience is the essence of sin. No moral wrong or unethical behavior need be associated with a transgression to make it sinful. If God denies us something, but we partake of it anyway, we have sinned. If God commands us to do something, and we refuse, we have sinned. No other human being need be involved in our transgression or affected by it; sin is against God.

4. Mankind is always concerned about what other people think. This emphasis is misplaced; the question is: "How does God view my actions?" Frequently, an individual's sins do cause others to suffer, but the detrimental results of their sinful actions do not make the actions sinful. First and foremost is one's disobedience to God. When people suffer at another's hands, we may become angry with the transgressor, but are we angry at the tragic consequences of one's actions—or at the fact that he sinned against God? If, for example, a drunk driver runs a stoplight and

kills a young girl two days before her wedding, do we become angry because he sinned against God by becoming drunk or because of the tragedy he caused while under the influence of alcohol?

In other words, we cannot judge something to be sinful (although we do) merely on the basis of what the sin leads to; sin has been committed at the moment the rebellious act occurs. Consider the following instances.

- a. Potiphar's wife wanted Joseph to commit adultery with her. She sinned in begging him to cooperate in this sin, regardless of whether he accepts the offer or not. Had he given in to her constant badgering, he would have been wrong in doing so whether or not Potiphar ever found out. But Joseph said, "How then I can do this great wickedness and sin against God?"
- b. When David gave the order for Uriah's death, he sinned against that noble man, but in Psalm 51:4 he laments: "Against You, You only have I sinned...." David would have sinned even if Joab had refused to follow his orders. Good results do not mitigate evil intent.
- c. Ananias and Sapphira attempted to deceive members of the church about the amount of money they had given, but Peter said they lied to the Holy Spirit. He later added, "You have not lied to men but to God" (Acts 5:3-4). Notice that no one else was injured by their lie, but it was still wrong.

To define sin is to recognize that it means violating the Word of God. It may involve doing that which God has forbidden (such as eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), or it may be refusing to do what God has commanded (circumcision). Although consequences are important, they do not make an act sinful. All sin is against God, and God punishes sin.

B. PUNISHMENT FOR SIN

That God punishes sin is easily seen throughout the Bible—from the moment of the first sin being committed in Genesis 3 until the final assurance is given that nothing sinful will be allowed inside the holy city in the last chapter of Revelation (22:14-15). Let's begin with a look at the consequences of the very first sin in the Garden of Eden.

1. There are always some natural results, which sin brings forth. Adam and Eve could hardly have been surprised about being punished for their disobedience; when God gave them the commandment to refrain from touching or eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,

He attached to the violation a penalty: "...for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

How ought this statement to be interpreted? The chief property of death is *separation*. In physical death the spirit separates from the body (James 2:26). Final spiritual death means that the soul is separated from God throughout eternity (Rev. 21:8). Initial spiritual death may be defined as man being separated from God by sin, which interrupts the perfect communion and fellowship that once existed between man and his Creator. In this sense Adam and Eve died immediately, as evidenced by the change in their relationship to God and the fact that they were driven out of Eden (Gen. 3:22-24).

This loss of fellowship would have fulfilled what God had already warned them about, but God added some punishments of which there is no prior mention. Similarly, He later chastised the world for refusing to fulfill the positive command: "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). He confounded their language and scattered them when they were in the process of building the tower of Babel. There was no mention of this penalty ahead of time, but God's attitude toward sin is clearly seen by His insistence that His creation obey Him.

Both Adam and Eve received two additional penalties apiece. Although Eve would have delivered children anyway because of the Divine design, now the process of childbirth would be painful. A second affliction (a subject of great controversy during the last half of the twentieth century) is that of submissiveness to her husband (the loss of leadership in the home).

To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain shall you bring forth children; your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16).

Paul writes in the New Testament that this arrangement remains in force: that the wives are to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22-24). Paul further cites this same event as the reason for man's headship in the church (1 Tim. 2:11-14). These restrictions do not authorize men to be obnoxious in general nor (in the home) to mistreat, abuse, or be insensitive to their wives (Eph. 5:25). But they have clearly been authorized (and have the responsibility) to exercise leadership.

God's judgment upon Adam involved providing him with a generous supply of ever-present (and usually quite hearty) weeds.

“Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil shall you eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return” (Gen. 17b-19).

Again, God had already assigned Adam the task of tending and keeping the garden (Gen. 2:15), but now the job would be much more difficult. Due to the thorns and thistles, the work became (1) quite time consuming and (2) would now involved sweat.

Notice that none of these “sentences” is temporary. All four punishments upon the first man and woman remain in force to this day. As we ponder the far-reaching effects of Adam and Eve’s disobedience, we cannot fail to see clearly God’s attitude toward sin.

2. By the time we arrive at Genesis 6, we discover that not only has man multiplied on the face of the earth, so has sin. The condition of mankind stated in Genesis 6:5 ought to haunt us continually; it should forever remind us of the depths into which humanity can sink: “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Is it possible to imagine a more comprehensive description of sin’s domination in the lives of those created in God’s image?

God’s response would probably come as a shock to most of us had we not learned about the flood from the time we were small children. “I will destroy man whom I created from the face of the earth...for I am sorry that I have made them” (Gen. 6:7). What? Utterly destroy all humankind? Is not such a course of action a little drastic? Why not instead initiate reforms, commission several men to preach, make an example out of a city or two, or bring on a few plagues that might cause the people to repent?

The only answer appears to be (in light of the fact that God has used all of these approaches on other occasions) that none of these remedies would have worked. Man was so entrenched in sin that there was no basis left upon which to appeal. Total destruction and a new beginning was the only solution to the problem. In the catastrophe of the universal flood we realize again God’s attitude toward sin; extreme hardness of heart and persistence in wickedness will be rewarded according to their works.

The flood should not be considered just a story for children—but rather a sobering and vivid object lesson for adults. Comparatively early in the history of mankind God’s reaction toward sin and disobedience becomes indelibly etched in our minds by His use of a forceful and unforgettable demonstration. The life-destroying flood serves as a reminder that what God has done once He can do again. He will not annihilate the earth with a flood again, but He will dissolve this planet and all of its wickedness with fire, after which He shall establish a new heaven and a new earth, in which righteousness shall dwell (2 Peter 3:3-7, 10-13).

3. Not only has God shown convincingly His attitude toward sin by means of the earthly judgments He has rendered (as with Adam and Eve and the excessive evil that brought about the flood), the Scriptures reveal to us that sin is a spiritual concept that merits a spiritual penalty. “For the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

The first time we sin (after we recognize the difference between good and evil) we experience the loss of fellowship with God. Just as the first couple was separated from God by sin, so we have distanced ourselves from our Creator. That loss of fellowship (initial spiritual death) will result in permanent spiritual death when we depart from this earth—unless we learn the way of redemption and obey it. Those who are not saved from their sins (“who do not obey the gospel”—2 Thess. 1:8) will be separated from God through all eternity.

Not only does our initial disobedience interrupt our communion with the Sovereign Creator of the universe (and the privileges that attend such fellowship), but we place ourselves in further jeopardy if we continually reject God’s plan for redeeming mankind. Choosing a life of rebellion against the will of God proves to be a bad enough experience (in which we rob ourselves of contentment, peace, joy, forgiveness of sins, a clear conscience, etc.), but dying in disobedience carries the price tag of eternal condemnation.

Jesus will say to the majority (Matt. 7:12) of people, “Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). John records that the wicked are cast into “the lake of fire,” which he calls “the second death” (Rev. 20:13-15). Paul writes that, when Jesus returns from heaven with His mighty angels, He will come “in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” These “shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

GOD PUNISHES SIN!! Add to the above examples that God greatly punished King David, “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14). God does not exempt even the best of men from His Divine discipline. When David sinned grievously, God made sure that he knew that the various future occurrences (regarding his family) would serve as retribution for his sins.

God refused to tolerate sin among His people, the nation of Israel. When they proved rebellious over a long period of time (thus ignoring His warnings and pleas for their repentance, which He sent to them through the prophets), He removed Israel to Assyria and Judah to Babylon. God takes the subject of sin seriously. The books of Jude and 2 Peter demonstrate unmistakably that God does not allow sin to go unrewarded. “For if God spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment...” (2 Peter 2:4ff). The entire second chapter veritably shouts: “*God always punishes sin!*”

Like Adam and Eve, we were cut off from God’s fellowship when we sinned; like all mankind we endure the earthly consequences of our actions. If we fail to repent and obey the gospel, we will receive the eternal consequences of our behavior—everlasting separation from God. Why does God feel this way toward sin? If we never understand His reasoning, we nevertheless know enough to realize that (1) God hates sin and (2) He will (He must) punish it.

WHY DOES GOD PUNISH SIN?

What does God think about sin? Actually, such a question is misleading since it implies that what God thinks is merely an opinion. We tend to view God's "thoughts" on sin the way we view others' thoughts—simply as ideas of equal value.

Someone might ask, for example, "What do you think of pornography?" The answer would be a human judgment, perhaps based on the facts—and perhaps not. If the person who is asked the question enjoys lusting after someone else's body, he would probably answer in favor of it. Those opposed to it are probably convinced that: 1) pornography exploits people (even if they are willing participants in it); 2) nakedness is shameful (something that Adam and Eve recognized after they sinned); 3) pornography corrupts and defiles all who participate in it; 4) it leads to crimes of sexual violence against women. Some will undoubtedly regard either rationale as opinion—even though the second one reflects the truth (Matt. 5:27-28; Matt. 15:18-20; Phil. 4:8, 1 Peter 2:11).

God does not just dispense opinions; He relates to us *reality* (the way things actually are). Whether or not we understand why God punishes sin, the fact is that He does. But since our curiosity prefers having an explanation, we now turn to a study of the Scriptures on this subject.

1. God is *holy*. Actually, God possesses many characteristics. For many people love often comes to mind first—perhaps because the New Testament emphasis upon it (1 John 4:7-8). Unfortunately, many people begin and end with the one quality even though a number of others are mentioned—including God's holiness, justice, and wrath.

These lesser-emphasized characteristics must be understood, however, before we can understand God's grace, love, and mercy. There are five words in the Old Testament translated "holy," most of which are related. Following is a composite definition from all five words: "hallowed, dedicated, consecrated, clean ceremonially and morally, pure, pious, religiously kind, good, sacred." The New Testament words for "holy" are also related to each other, and they have the same approximate meanings.

God is totally untainted by any kind of corruption or immorality. Although aware of evil, He never desires to sin or practice wickedness. How fortunate for us—since we probably could not even *imagine* a universe under the control of a malevolent God (a capricious being perverted by the lust for power and imperfect in His self-control), let alone *live* in one so constructed.

God's spiritual creation was perfect. He created the heavenly host, however, with free will; Satan took advantage of this freedom and led a rebellion against

God (some of the other angels foolishly joining him). They recklessly discarded the pleasures of heaven and the safety that exists in submitting to the will of God. This transgression was repeated on earth. Mankind chose to disobey God's commandment and, in so doing, lost the earthly paradise that God had granted to Adam and Eve.

2. A pure and holy God cannot dwell amidst corruption and evil. We all understand this principle in some measure; none of us would want to eat a piece of pie that had been thrown into the garbage. Neither could we abide a smoke-filled room if we were allergic to it or it made us nauseous. Therefore, we ought to understand that a pure, righteous, holy being *cannot* fellowship corruption, wickedness, and moral pollution. Goodness and evil cannot commune (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Furthermore, God has no choice but to punish sin because He is just. Sin violates the morality and ethics that flow from God's character. It is not the case that God no longer loves us, but sin ruptures fellowship (just as it did with Adam and Eve). It is not a matter of God being arbitrarily mean or petty when He excludes us from His fellowship; by its very nature sin (which we freely chose to commit) brought about this separation.

Let's suppose that several children were playing in the park. One of the park benches has just been painted with a fresh coat of green paint. The children are appropriately warned not to touch or go near the bench. Most obey the prohibition, but some do not. Could you tell which was which? Certainly the telltale green on their hands or their clothes would give it away. Now those who obeyed the command "not to touch" are in fine shape, but those who disobeyed must be separated and cleaned up. If they had all touched the paint, they would all need to be washed. In fact, all mankind has sinned and needs to be washed by the blood of Jesus.

3. When it comes to separating the evil from the good for eternity, God looks at each individual carefully. The majority (Matt. 7:13-14) will be souls who are stained with the sins of their lives; a few will be spotless, having been made so by the blood of the Lamb. God has warned us of sin and its consequences (it is at this point that His grace, love, and mercy become involved); He has communicated the one gospel to us, by which we are cleansed if we obey it and continue in it. God will not arbitrarily save some and condemn others. His judgment will be based on the way we have responded to His gracious offer of salvation.
4. God punishes earthly sins in a concrete way to express the reality of sin's results. We cannot discern by physical means the spiritual reality of our loss of fellowship with God; such knowledge comes through the Word of God. Neither would we understand the reward or punishment we receive after death, except that God has given us a glimpse of it in Luke 16:19-31. While awaiting the final judgment, Lazarus (a poor man but rich toward God) was rewarded, but the rich man (who

fares sumptuously but lacked compassion) was in torment, reaping the wages of sin.

None of us could see into the Hadean realm with our literal eyes. We would not know of the loss of fellowship with God that we experience both now and throughout eternity unless God revealed it to us supernaturally in His Word. We would only suffer the earthly consequences of our actions, but even then we need the Bible to explain to us that God is chastising us (Heb. 12:6-11). The Scriptures make clear to us that sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2), which should cause us to see that sin possesses serious consequences. If we refuse to repent of our sins, our condition is so serious that it merits eternal condemnation.

5. So that we can make no mistake about God's disposition toward sin, He has provided us with a few vivid examples that we can see with our own eyes as a strong reminder. Undoubtedly, Adam and Eve became convinced of God's attitude toward sin as they departed from Eden. But Eve further realized the sad results of sin with each child she bore (not to mention the continual submission to her husband). Adam learned too late that the earth could be as stubborn as it once was cooperative. The sweat of his own brow proved to him that sin carries with it retribution.

Nadab and Abihu served as an object lesson to their fellow Israelites that the profane cannot be mixed with the holy. They offered a strange fire to the Lord which had not been set apart (made holy) for that purpose, and fire came out from the Lord to destroy them (Lev. 10:1-2). These men were priests, sons of Aaron, but they were not exempt from obedience or the consequences of sin.

David was "a man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), but God refused to overlook his sins. David suffered grievously because of them (2 Sam. 12:10-24). Surely, if there were a person whom God would want to be spared sin's hardships, it would have been David. But by His very nature God cannot merely ignore it.

Poor Uzzah had the best of motives when he reached forth his hand to steady the ark of the covenant so that it would not fall to the ground. So far as we know, it was not his fault that the ark was being transported improperly, but nevertheless he was struck dead for violating God's commandment (1 Chr. 13:9-10). Whether Uzzah knew of the penalty for touching the holy objects does not matter; God had declared the death penalty for doing so, and it was recorded in the law (Num. 4:15). Uzzah did not realize that he was as profane as the ground; though sincere he lost his life because he transgressed God's law. What a striking reminder of the fact that sincere motives are not enough; obedience is also necessary.

God punishes sin because He must. No man's death brings Him pleasure (Ezek. 18:32), but to let the sinner escape justice would violate His very nature. For this reason Jesus had to pay the full, horrible price for our sins. Only through a legitimate, perfect sacrifice could the demands of justice be met and the price for our sins be paid. Through the blood of Christ, prompted by God's grace and love, He offers forgiveness for our sins. His plan of redemption is the only means of removing our sins and restoring fellowship with God.

A. "SIN" WORDS.

What do the words that God uses to describe "sin" mean? We have all heard these words and read them beginning in Genesis and extending throughout the Bible. Each word possesses its own significance and has its own history. Consider some of the words used most frequently in the Bible.

1. SIN. Perhaps you have already learned that sin may be presented as an archer aiming at a target and "missing the mark." This concept is valid for both the Old and New Testaments, although in the latter there is a further implication: the archer who misses the target fails to share in the prize.

God has set a target for all of us to aim at. When we hit it, we are pleasing to Him; when we miss it, we have fallen short of His expectations, and we no longer have the privilege of enjoying or sharing in the reward.

The first time the word *sin* (not the concept) appears in the Bible is in reference to Cain. God tells him, "If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it" (Gen. 4:7).

Sin is defined in this text as "not doing well." In other words, Cain knew the difference between hitting the target and missing it. He could have chosen to do well, thereby pleasing God. Instead, he aimed his arrow somewhere else, purposely missing the target. He gave in to sin. The alternative to obeying God is always "not doing well."

A second thing this verse teaches us is that, when we find ourselves in an emotional turmoil between right and wrong, Sin (as though it had a character all its own—or perhaps the term stands here for Satan) paces up and down (as a restless coach might do on the sidelines while his team is out on the field) rooting for us to follow the inclinations of our rebellious hearts. The word *lies* conveys the picture of an animal crouching in a resting position right outside the door of a house. Another image to keep in mind is that in 1 Peter 5:8—"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

“And its [Sin’s, gws] desire is for you.” Open that door, and the slumbering beast will arise, attack, and devour you. Notice, however, that he is powerless to do anything—unless YOU open the door. This doorway of disobedience is controlled by each one of us. Cain threw it wide open. Abel, however, paid for Cain’s temper with the loss of his life; Cain too paid the rest of his life. (Part of his punishment was to take away from him that which he loved the most—tilling the ground successfully.)

Although Cain had the ability to rule over sin, he chose not to exercise that measure of self-control. We make the same choices in our lives. We either exhibit self-discipline (in which we dominate sin), or we take liberties (licentiousness) which God has not granted us (sin dominates us). Paul exhorts Christians in Romans 6:11 to be dead indeed to sin but alive to God through Jesus Christ. “Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body” (Rom. 6:12).

2. INIQUITY/EVIL/WICKEDNESS. Examining some of these other words involves a little difficulty. Unlike *sin*, which is usually translated from one Hebrew word in the Old Testament and from one in the New Testament, these three words may translate several Hebrew words. It is difficult to tell why one English word was chosen over another for any particular passage.

- a. *Iniquity*, for example, is assigned to four different Hebrew words (also four different Greek words in the New Testament); *wickedness* is used to translate thirteen Hebrew words (and four Greek words). The word *evil* is synonymous with the other two and has no new or different meanings than the others in the Old Testament. Collectively, the OT words mean:

“Fault, iniquity, mischief.”

“To crook.” Definitions include “do amiss, bow down, make crooked, commit iniquity, pervert, do wickedly, do wrong, bend, curve, twist, distort.”

“To plant (hence to exert oneself, usually in vain), to come to naught, strictly nothingness, trouble, vanity, wickedness, emptiness.”

“Moral evil, iniquity, perverseness, unjust.” (All definitions are taken from Strong and Gesenius.)

Whereas “sin” seems to indicate failure to live up to a standard (or a weakness to give in to temptation instead of fighting and con-

trolling it), iniquity implies a more active role on the part of the transgressor. This person is purposefully sinful; he or she takes an active role in violating the law of God and in causing harm to others.

The word “iniquity” first appears in Genesis 15:16, when God tells Abraham that his descendants would not return (from Egypt) until the fourth generation because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. This word appears many times in Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Perhaps one of the most well-known verses is Isaiah 53:6: “And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

New Testament “iniquity” and “wickedness” are both used to translate the Greek word *anomia*, meaning literally “without law.”

- b. *Wicked*, in Old English, was *wicca*, meaning “wizard.” There are thirteen Hebrew words that are translated “wicked” [The origin of our English word *evil* is the German word *ubilaz*, which meant “exceeding the proper limit.”] Other words collectively refer to:

“to spoil (literally ‘by breaking to pieces’), to make or be good for nothing, do harm, hurt, to make a loud noise, breaking, crushing, evil (raging), noxious, hurtful.” This word seems to reek with destructiveness and violence.

“adversity, affliction, calamity, sorrow, trouble, and wretchedness.”

Poneros is a key New Testament Greek word, which is translated as both “wicked” and “evil” (occasionally).

3. *Trespass/Transgression*. These two words mean “to cover up, act covertly and treacherously, be faithless, turn aside from God.” They also mean “to cross over, pass over, go beyond, alienate.” Two illustrations of this word are an army whose ranks are swelling or a river overflowing its banks.

Another word from which “trespass” comes means “to break away from just authority, apostatize, quarrel, offend, rebel, revolt.” The Greek word most often translated “trespass” usually means “to go contrary to, violate a command.”

What is also interesting is the derivation of *transgress* and *trespass* as they come to us in the English language. *Trespass* comes from the Latin *trans* (“across”) and *passus* (“step” or “pace”). To trespass, then, literally means “to step across” a legitimate boundary. *Transgress* possesses an

almost identical meaning. It is derived from *trans* and *gradior* (the third principle part of the verb is *gressus* (“to walk, to step”). Thus, it too means to walk across the proper boundaries.

4. *Corrupt* comes to the English language from the Latin *corruptus* (“to break in pieces, destroy, or ruin”). There are five Hebrew words which are translated as “corrupt,” but the main word means “to decay, thus to cause ruin.” Various other definitions include “to batter, cast off, destroy, lose, mar, perish, spill, spoil.” The word is used three times in Genesis 6:11-12.

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

In the New Testament a half dozen words are also translated “corrupt”; two of them appear with greater frequency: one means “rotten or worthless,” either literally or morally speaking, and the other “to shrivel or wither, spoil (by any process), ruin, defile, destroy.” The former word is used to describe the corrupt tree bringing forth corrupt fruit (Matt. 7:17-18); the latter is used in 1 Corinthians 15:33 (“Evil companions corrupt good morals”), Romans 1:23, 1 Corinthians 15:33-34, 1 Peter 1:18, 23, and Jude 10, in which it is said that the false teachers “corrupt” themselves.

5. The next pair of words is *perverse* and *froward*; they too are often used interchangeably. Well over a dozen different Hebrew words are translated by them. Some of the Hebrew words usually translated “sin” or “iniquity” are occasionally rendered “perverse.”

But the most common word for this particular pair is the Hebrew word which means “to knot or distort, make crooked.” Eight times this word (or a variation of it) is translated “perverse,” and eight times it is translated “froward.” Another word translated “perverse” means “to turn about or turn over,” such as would involve the action of making up a bed (“change, overturn, overthrow, tumble”). The most common Greek word means “to distort, misinterpret.” The English word *perverse* comes from the Latin *perversus* (“to turn the wrong way”).

Froward appears to be descended from the Old Norse *fra*—meaning “away from.” In the expression *to and fro* we use *fro* in exactly that sense: *to* means “coming near,” and *fro* means “going away from.” The suffix *-ward* indicates the direction one is moving toward; thus *froward* literally refers to one who is “continually moving away from where he should be.”

6. *Wrong* in the Old Testament might be translated from one of eight words, none of which is used more than its companions. It is interesting to note,

however, that some of the meanings of the words translated "wrong" connote violence. One such word refers to "unjust gain, cruelty, damage, falsity, injustice, oppression, unrighteousness, violent dealing." This Hebrew word is even translated "violence" in Genesis 6:11 and more than thirty other times in the Old Testament. It is rendered as "wrong" in Genesis 16:5.

Any time *wrong* is used in the New Testament it is translated from the same word sometimes translated "iniquity." The English word *wrong* is derived from the Old Norse *rangr*, meaning "curved, crooked." A few Scriptures using the word are Acts 7:24, 26-27, 1 Cor. 6:7-8, and Philemon 18.

These are most of the words related to the subject of sin that we find in the Bible. To summarize, that which God hates (and which He must punish) can be defined as "an offense, to err from the mark, become guilty, do amiss, make crooked, twist, distort, do wrong, hurt, injure, trouble, disturb, violate, be naughty, lewd, worthless or without profit, cross over, go beyond, cover up, act treacherously, deal deceitfully with, break away from just authority, apostatize, rebel, disfigure, mar, go contrary to the law, be violent, or be constantly going away from God."

THE WEIGHT AND ALLUREMENT OF SIN

A. THE WEIGHT OF SIN.

How many times have you heard the expression, “All sins are the same; some are not worse than others,” or “All sins are alike to God”? Does the Word of God bear these statements out? Upon what Scriptures can an argument be based to establish such a position?

We might draw such a conclusion from the definition of the word translated “sin” (*hamartano*, which means “to miss the mark”). If we picture an archer missing the target, does the distance away from the goal really matter? After all, you can only be successful by embedding the arrow in the target. Failure wins nothing—“a miss is as good as a mile.”

Since all sin-arrows fall wide of the mark and transgress the will of God, we might conclude that a violation is a violation. From one perspective, then, all sin is alike. How far the archer misses the target is irrelevant—unless he shoots one of the spectators. Actually, however, the Bible does teach that some sins are worse than others.

1. A glance through the history of Israel will confirm that, while all sins have in common transgressing the will of God, some of them are indeed more serious than others. The sins of the sons of Eli are called “*very great* before the Lord” (1 Sam. 2:17). If all sins are equal in the eyes of God, how do we account for the fact that these particular sins were “very great”?

What had these men done to warrant such a description of their actions? Verses 12-16 reveal that they were perverting the process of offering sacrifices to the Lord by seizing the meat while it was, or prior to its, boiling. They also “lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting” (verse 23). In other words, they had abused their positions of authority for selfish, immoral, ungodly purposes. Eli warned them: “You make the Lord’s people transgress” (24). By involving others in their sins (people who were trying to do right), they became stumbling blocks as well. For all these reasons God determined to kill them (25). This moral and spiritual perversion, involving the corruption of sincere, innocent people, was worse than many other sins these men might have committed. Therefore, God took action against them.

Other statements comparing the deeds of one with the deeds of another are found in Israel’s long, sad history. “Omri did evil in the eyes of the

Lord, and did worse than all who were before him” (2 Kings 16:25). But just eight verses later Omri was outdone: “Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him” (33). The “more” that he did may have been in terms of quality or quantity (or both); nevertheless, the inspired writer draws the comparison.

In a summary passage of Israel’s departure from God (written at the time of their captivity), it is pointed out that Jeroboam, who led Israel into apostate worship, “made them commit a *great sin*” (2 Kings 17:21). They never (so far as the text reveals) returned to the true worship of God once Jeroboam changed it (1 Kings 12:25-33). Except for the few who periodically returned to Jerusalem, the vast majority followed in the sins of Jeroboam.

Finally, we notice at one of the low points in Judah’s history that “Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Chron. 33:9).

2. Actually, one need not venture very far into the sacred writings to discern that some conditions are worse than others. God brought a flood upon the earth to destroy every living thing (that was not aboard the ark) because “the wickedness of man was *great* in the earth” (Gen. 6:5). Wickedness had existed from the first bite of the forbidden fruit onward, but by Noah’s day it had infiltrated and dominated all but a few. It had become *great*.

Later, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of the outcry against them and because their sin was *very grievous* (Gen. 18:20). What was this sin? As two of the angels entered the city, the men who lived in the city saw them, lusted after them, and insisted that Lot bring them out so that they could “know them carnally” (Gen. 19:5). Their practice of homosexuality was universal in that “the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house” (19:4). Further more, they would have forced this practice upon two visitors to their community; it is no wonder that *three* times the text mentions that the outcry against the city had reached God’s ears (Gen. 18:20-21; 19:13). [God’s attitude toward this sin should not be ignored in today’s world (Jude 7).]

3. When Moses came down from the mountain, as he drew near the camp, he saw the golden calf and the people dancing (in revelry). First, he chastised Aaron: “What did this people do to you that you have brought so *great a sin* upon them?” (Ex. 32:21). Later Moses told the people (and God) that they had “sinned a great sin” by making themselves gods of gold (Ex. 32:30-31). Whereas many passages in the Bible may refer to

the quantity of sins (as in Ahab doing “more” to provoke God), this event must unquestionably refer to the quality (or magnitude) of the sin.

4. When God used the nation of Israel to destroy the Canaanites, the main reason was (of course) their sinfulness. They had already been wicked for a long time, but God postponed their punishment until the appropriate time, which He defined for Abraham in His explanation of the delay— “for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete” (Gen. 15:16).
5. The prophets obviously dealt with the problem of sin quite often; they, too, sometimes expressed the concept of “worseness.” God tells Jeremiah that His people in Judah “did worse than their fathers” (7:26), and he is instructed to convey that message to the people. In fact, they had degenerated so far that they are reminiscent of the people living at the time of the flood: “And you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, each one walks according to the imagination of his own evil heart, so that no one listens to me” (Jer. 6:12). No wonder they were about to be taken captive.

The book of Ezekiel contains a fascinating text that should forever put to rest the contention that all sins are equal. God Himself ranks certain sins as He reveals to the prophet the sorry state of affairs among the leaders of God’s people. Three times Ezekiel is shown the wickedness of the nation, and three times he is told that he will see “*greater* abominations” (8:6, 13, 15).

How much more evidence is needed to convince us that some sins are worse in nature than others and that the quantity of transgressions also matters? Jesus, after proving to the Pharisees that they were as guilty of sin as their ancestors, told them, “Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers’ guilt” (Matt. 23:32). God allows people to go so far, and then He brings judgment upon them. Up to a point repentance is possible, but after hearts degenerate to “past feeling,” sinners face certain judgment.

6. The New Testament also sets forth the same principles that we have been observing. Peter made clear that those who are overcome by sin after they had become Christians are in far worse shape than those who have never obeyed the gospel.

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is *worse* than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness,

than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them (2 Peter 2:20-21).

In this instance (unlike in the Old Testament), they are in danger of more than physical judgment; rather, their souls stand in jeopardy. Most of us are familiar with the appraisal of duty-dodgers given by Paul: "If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is *worse* than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8). If all sins possess equality, how can a Christian be worse than an infidel?

7. Jesus made several comparisons. One involves the man who had a demon cast out of him, but he failed to fill his life in the appropriate manner; so the demon returned with seven of his friends, "and the last state of the man is worse than the first" (Matt. 12:45). Probably the most explicit text which clearly involves future judgment is Mark 12:40, which refers to the Pharisees who feigned righteousness but were actually greedy (and devoured widows' houses). Jesus affirmed, "These will receive greater condemnation."
8. Not only can sins be spoken of in comparative terms (greater), as well as judgment (see above), so can righteousness and love. Judah acknowledged that Tamar had been "more righteous" than he had (Gen. 38:26), and Saul once admitted the same sentiment to David (1 Sam. 24:17). Jesus once affirmed that no one could show *greater* love than by laying down his life for his friends (John 15:13). He also said there were no *greater* commandments than (1) loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and (2) loving your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:30-31).

But, someone might protest, "What about James 2:8-11?" Surely these verses prove that all sins are equal. Consider the text.

If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law.

The thrust of this text is not that all sins are equal; the heart of the matter (and the context bears it out) is that a person cannot keep part of God's law while ignoring other parts. One must be completely obedient to God in every aspect of life in order to please Him (not that we are perfect, but we must desire to be obedient in all things). If we know what God teaches on a certain subject, but we

reject that doctrine for some reason, then we stand guilty of the whole law—because we are sitting in judgment on God who gave all the commandments, along with warnings not to add to it or take away from it. If we disregard any law, then we have in practicality “taken away” from His Word. Even if we think we are justified with excellent reasons for taking such an action, we stand condemned—not because all sins are equal, but because we have judged presumptuously and arrogantly concluded that our judgment is better than God’s. As God’s children, we will want to avoid all sins (even though some are worse than others). Certainly we will want to obey in all matters because we love God and trust His judgment (Matt. 7:21-27; Heb. 5:8-9).

B. THE ALLUREMENT OF SIN.

1. Consider James 1:12-15.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

2. Several important principles may be gleaned from this passage of Scripture.

- a. Temptation is to be endured (Jesus faced it just as we all do).
- b. Temptation is a test; it reveals to us what we are made of.
- c. Overcoming temptation carries with it a reward—a crown, in fact.
- d. God does not tempt us; He does, however, allow Satan some power to test us. The devil knows our weaknesses; so we must be very careful, but God does not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13).
- e. Although Satan does the tempting, that is all that he can do. He cannot force us to sin or disobey God, but he can make sin so appealing that we have a difficult time resisting.

- f. We are drawn away by our own lusts and desires. Instead of fighting against our impulses and urges, instead of thinking logically about the consequences of our actions, instead of summoning strength and depending on God to see us through, we give in, thinking only of our own satisfaction and pleasure.
- g. The desire is implanted in our minds where we nourish it and develop it with lip-smacking delight; the thought of having what we lust after grows with increasing relish. Soon we can no longer be satisfied with the mere mental images we have been entertaining; the deed must be expressed in action. When the sin has been committed, the result is death.

Think about it. Except for sins committed in the heat of passion, do not all sins follow this pattern? Satan thus entices and allures; he promises much delight but delivers little (except the forthcoming misery). As we contemplate sinful acts, he hides from our sight the reality of the situation.

Enticement works in much the same fashion that the battle of Ai was won. Having suffered defeat in the first skirmish, Israel decided upon an interesting stratagem. The second time they went forth to battle, they divided up their army. Part waited behind the city while the others made a frontal attack upon the walled fortress. Those in the front lines retreated and pretended they were as over-powered as they were in the first attack. The soldiers within the city (with visions of victory on their minds) were then *drawn out* into the open to vanquish (they erroneously assumed) their enemy. From their perspective, it seemed as if everything was going their way. But they did not adequately survey the entire situation. As the enemy appeared to retreat before them, the defenders departed the safety of the city. Had they been more cautious, they might have discovered the Israelites waiting to ambush them.

Such is the way sin works. If we keep our wits about us and look at a particular situation from all directions, we could avoid a great deal of sin. But Satan tries to get us to narrow our field of vision (just as Israel entrapped Ai). The warriors of the city could only see straight ahead. They did not analyze why they were winning or if Israel's apparent defeat was just a ruse; thus they were enticed out of the city unto their deaths.

- 3. This lesson closes with a few examples of those enticed by sin—to their destruction.
 - a. Eve (Gen. 3:6).
 - b. Shechem (Gen. 34:1-3).

- c. Israelite men (Num. 25:1-2; 31:14-17).
- d. Samson (Judges 14:1-3 and 16:1, 4-5).
- e. David (2 Sam. 11:1-4) Adultery (Pr. 6:20-7:27).
- f. Amnon (2 Sam. 13:1-2).
- g. Ahab (1 Kings 21:1-7).
- h. Judas (Matt. 26:14-16; John 12:1-6).
- i. Peer Pressure (Pr. 1:10-19; 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:33).
- j. False Religion (Deut. 13:1-8).
- k. Immorality and False Doctrine (2 Peter 2:1-2, 12-19).

THE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

Previously, we examined how God punishes sin, but now we want to focus on the *natural* consequences that follow when a person commits sin. Whereas Genesis 2:25 tells us that Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed before their transgression, afterward they gained a knowledge they would have been better off not possessing. They now realize what their nakedness means, and out of shame they make themselves coverings (Gen. 3:7).

A. SHAME.

This feeling of embarrassment usually results when others find out about our actions. Sometimes a public revelation of our deeds is the only thing that brings shame. Jim Bakker became greatly ashamed when his immoralities became known to virtually everyone. Where was his remorse, however, while the matter remained a secret? In many instances, no one needs to rebuke us; we are keenly aware that we have erred because we live with a sense of the presence of God in our daily lives, and our sins grieve us.

Still, those people who only experience shame when their wickedness is revealed are a cut above those who refused to be ashamed and cannot be made to blush (Jer. 6:15). You hear them on television “talk shows”; they lack even a small measure of regret and blissfully assert they have done nothing wrong. If they have been involved in numerous sexual sins, they revel in it, or if they have appeared nude for some pornographic magazine, they do not understand what all the fuss is about (and why they were fired from being a preschool teacher or a nurse). Obviously, they have learned to deny what Adam and Eve learned from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—that nakedness is a *shame*. (Those who clothe themselves provocatively and scantily do not reflect modesty, either.)

Such a denial of one’s sins is often prompted by pride. None of us wants to think of himself as an “awful” person; so we justify ourselves by trying to convince everyone that our actions were right and acceptable. But, as Proverbs teaches, shame follows pride and those who refuse correction (11:2; 13:18).

Experiencing shame is probably a more common feeling for children of God because our values and consciences are based upon the Word of God. Also, we face more positive peer pressure from our brothers and sisters, which those in the world do not receive. If a Christian chooses to sin, he must face the church and the eventual prospect of being withdrawn from if repentance is not forthcoming (2 Thess. 3:14). Avoiding shame can be a powerful motivation for the Christian.

Especially hurtful to us is the realization that our sins crucify the Lord afresh and put Him to an open shame (Heb. 6:4-6). Whether we deny Him in words, poor attitudes, lack of enthusiasm, or evil deeds, the result is detrimental. No true follower of Jesus would want to do anything that would reflect unfavorably upon the Lord or cause non-Christians to speak evil of the way of truth (2 Peter 2:1-2).

When we became Christians, we gave up all of the worldly allurements and attractions that once charmed us and kept us within their power. Paul writes that we are now ashamed of those things which we once practiced; we realize that their reward was death (Rom. 6:21). We would be doubly ashamed to embarrass our Savior now that we have put corruption aside.

B. FEAR.

Not only did shame result from the guilty couple's first sin, but so did fear. As God makes His presence known in the garden, Adam and Eve attempt to hide from Him (Gen. 3:8-10). Notice that Adam said he was afraid because he was naked—not because he had disobeyed God. He obviously experienced fear: his actions and his words confirm the fact. But did he state the correct cause of his fear? Or was the remark about nakedness just to misdirect God's attention from their disobedience?

In either case, how sad it is to feel compelled to hide from the benevolent and all-powerful Giver of life! The father and mother of humanity know they have disobeyed their Creator; they remember that there will be a penalty to pay (Gen. 2:17). If they entertained any doubts that God would keep His word, they will soon discover that, in fact, He does: He holds men accountable for their transgressions (Rom. 14:11-12; 2 Cor. 5:10). There is nowhere to hide (Heb. 4:13)!

Sin also affects fellowship with God. The very fact that Adam and Eve tried to hide from Him reveals a change in their relationship with their Father. They cannot enjoy any longer the full and open fellowship with which they were once blessed. Their sin has merited God's disapproval; their former joy has turned into dread.

Those who know that God means what He says will understand that God will not overlook sin; instead He requires an account of one's actions. When we deliberately violate God's law, we ought to be fearful. Felix was, although he apparently overcame it (Acts 24:25). He must have chosen ultimately to reject Paul's preaching because no one who believes the blessings of heaven and the misery of hell could be callous enough to disregard this truth. If a person really comprehends what it means to be lost, he would never jeopardize his soul. When a Christian sins willfully, there is a certain "fearful looking for of judgment" (Heb. 10:26-27).

When Paul learned the truth about Jesus' identity, he trembled and was astonished (Acts 9:6). When the jailer saw supernatural evidence, he trembled and fell down before Paul and Silas (Acts 16:29). Conscientious people demonstrate a healthy regard for God. They understand His power and the need to please Him in the way they live and worship.

Christians are commanded to "work out" their "own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). Even though we are recipients of God's grace and mercy, we know that we still be held responsible for doing good and rejecting evil. God has removed the overwhelming burden of guilt so that we may enjoy peace with Him and assurance of salvation, but nowhere in the work of Christ did He remove our responsibilities toward God or man. God expects certain attitudes and actions from us; He will indeed hold us accountable if we do not provide what He commands.

C. GUILT.

Adam and Eve experienced the feeling of *guilt* as well as shame and fear. People respond variously to the wrongful actions they commit. Frequently they seek to deny what they have done by suppressing or altering the facts. Everyone must live with himself, and all have a self-image to maintain, which is difficult to do if guilt is trying to live in the same place. The simplest solution to this conflict is to apply a thick coating of self-deception.

A fictional account of one's conduct is substituted for the unflattering factual one. Some may even convince themselves altogether that their indiscretion never occurred. "No, I was never unfaithful to my wife/husband before the divorce." [Never mind that twenty witnesses know better.] Here is the rationale (or rationalization) that is used: "I know that adultery is wrong, and I'm not the kind of person that would willfully disobey God; therefore, I didn't do anything wrong. I never committed adultery; I have done nothing to be ashamed of or to feel guilty about."

Another defense mechanism involves admitting one's guilt—but then affixing the blame on some one else. Adam and Eve took this approach since there was scarcely time to "rewrite the past." Adam blamed Eve for his sin (and indirectly God Himself); Eve blamed the serpent; and the formerly loquacious serpent became suddenly silent. Although some else may contribute to a person's sins (Matt. 18:7), each INDIVIDUAL remains accountable for his actions.

Sometimes transgressors convince themselves that God must be mistaken since the sins they are committing do not "seem" wrong or "feel" inappropriate. How foolish for the creature to sit in judgment on the Creator; how arrogant for man to condemn eternal truths in a vain attempt to justify his evil ways! Zechariah spoke of those who "hold themselves not guilty" (11:4-5). As proof of their innocence,

they cite their prosperity or blessings, just as their forefathers did in the days of Jeremiah, when they proclaimed, “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these” (Jer. 7:4). One lesson the Bible teaches repeatedly is that *success* does not prove God’s approval just as adversity is not necessarily evidence of His scorn.

Each of us must be careful about the way we handle guilt. We might become so adept at justifying our sins that one day our consciences will no longer bother us at all. The people to whom Jeremiah preached could not even blush (6:15). Similarly, Paul referred to those who were “past feeling” (Eph. 4:19). Even the godly David did not deal with his sin in a wise manner; he suppressed it and did not confess it until Nathan confronted him. Lest we think David was totally guilt-free during this time, Psalm 51 reveals the agony he suffered. His sin was ever before him (3), his relationship with God had suffered (12, see also Psalm 66:18), and he could no longer be an effective servant of the Most High God (13).

Sin causes so many problems that we all ought to realize that it is well worth avoiding. Usually at the moment of enticement we are not thinking of the consequences of our actions; for that reason we must be vividly aware *ahead of time* of the shame that we will bring to our families and the guilt we will experience in our own minds.

Perhaps recalling that God cannot fellowship sin and that He must punish it (unless we repent of it) will be sufficient to deter us from wrongful behavior. And if we fail to overcome temptation, what will we do about our guilt? Will we deny the sin, rationalize it, hide it, or accuse God of being too harsh in a clumsy effort to salvage our self-esteem? Or confess it? The best way to circumvent guilt is to avoid sin. We must prepare ourselves thoroughly for the day of temptation!

D. THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

One of the key elements of sin is deceit, which is an integral part of the character of sin. Satan is “the father of lies” (John 8:44). His chief tool is deceit; in fact, in Revelation 12:9 the Word of God describes him as the one “who deceives the whole world.”

What is deceit? Basically, it is misrepresentation—to make something appear to be what it is not, and vice versa. Deceit is not always verbal; either words or appearances can convey a false impression. In 1 Samuel 19:13, for example, “Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, put a cover of goat’s hair for his head, and covered it with clothes” so that Saul’s men would think that her sick husband was lying in it. Not unexpectedly, when Saul discovered the truth, he demanded, “Why have you deceived me like this...?” (1 Sam. 19:17).

1. Examples of Deceit.

Each of the following illustrations bears out the definition given above for deceit. Many others could be found, but these are specifically labeled as deceit.

- a. Genesis 34:13. Simeon and Levi made an agreement with Shechem and Hamor that if they and the men of the city would consent to circumcision, then Shechem could marry Dinah and the two peoples could intermingle, but they spoke *deceitfully*. They pretended that all would work out well, but actually they were planning to kill the men while they were weak from circumcision (which they did).
- b. Exodus 8:29. Moses cautioned Pharaoh not to deal deceitfully by promising to let the people go, but then refusing to do so once the plague abated.
- c. Genesis 31:7. Here we find a business arrangement violated. Jacob tells Rachel, "Yet your father had deceived me and changed my wages ten times..."
- d. Malachi 1:14: "But cursed be the deceiver who has in his flock a male, and makes a vow, but sacrifices to the Lord what is blemished—for I am a great King," says the Lord of hosts. God required a perfect sacrifice. Whether He could have accepted less than that (if that is all a poor person had to offer) is not the point. These people possessed better sacrifices; they just did not want to part with them.
- e. Genesis 3:13; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14. In the very first sin that occurred Satan used deception. His argument that Adam and Eve would become like God misrepresented the facts. In the sense of knowing good and evil, the statement was true (Gen. 3:22), but Satan slandered God when he assigned an ignoble motive to Him. He lied. Deception played a key role in this first sin.

2. Forms of Deceit.

What are some of those things that deceive us? And how do they operate on us so effectively? A careful study of the Scriptures should convince us that deceit is an integral part of sin, involved in just about every aspect of the process of temptation.

Hebrews 3:13 warns us not to be hardened through "the deceitfulness of sin." The warning is directed to Christians in connection with not developing an evil heart of unbelief. Truly, God's people can allow themselves

to be as deceived by sin as anyone. According to Ephesians 1:3 and 2 Peter 1:3, Christians have it all. God has given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness; He has also blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Despite being given everything that we need, Satan deceives us into thinking that God has withheld something from us. Sin's allurements are deceptive, promising what they cannot deliver. Following are some of them.

- a. Proverbs 20:1. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise." How is wine deceptive? It deceives us when we consider its appearance: it looks good, we think it will taste good, and perhaps we associate good times with it (due to the abundance of commercials that insist happiness can not be achieved without it). But the wise man asks: "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look at the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly. At the last, it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder" (Pr. 23:29-32).
- b, Matthew 13:22. One of the four types of soil is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word so that he becomes unfruitful. The number of people who have been deceived by riches is beyond calculation. Greed causes people to steal, cheat, and commit a number of atrocities on one's fellow man. How many stocks have been manipulated? How many different types of scams are there to bilk people out of their money? Has there ever been any price-fixing? How many times have companies been embezzled? But the problem cited in Matthew 13 does not involve anything so drastic or so obvious. Christians just become dominated by materialistic thoughts to the extent that their faith diminishes, and they are tempted to trust more in earthly riches than in God.
- c. Ephesians 4:22. Paul advises brethren to put off "the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." All lusts are deceitful in that they promise more than they could possibly grant. Does the prospect of fornication or adultery promise much pleasure? Yet Proverbs 6:20-7:27 reveals the disastrous results of the deception.
- d. Ephesians 5:6 emphasizes the impact of the verbal arguments Satan uses on us. "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience." The text indicates that these deceitful speakers

were trying to get brethren to commit fornication (see also Revelation 2:20 and 2 Peter 2:18-19), be covetous, and partake of other sinful practices. No matter how smooth-sounding anyone is, God's people must resist attempts to rationalize and justify sin.

- e. Colossians 2:4. Paul was also concerned that brethren might be led to believe a false doctrine due to the convincing speech of some false teachers. "Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you through persuasive words." We must guard against false doctrine just as we would immorality.
- f. 1 Corinthians 3:18. "Let no one deceive himself." The application of this text is that we should not fool ourselves into thinking that worldly wisdom is worth something. We do not always need the persuasive arguments of others to entice us to sin; we can deceive ourselves. This process is not uncommon among false teachers. "But evil men and seducers will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). Brethren have proven themselves capable of being deceived about doctrine, morality, their own worth, their honesty, and their integrity.

One way we deceive ourselves is described by James. If we only hear the Word of God, but do not do it, we deceive ourselves into thinking that we can be saved (1:22). The inspired writer demonstrates that faith must be accompanied by works, or else it is dead (2:14-16). Just accepting something as true does little good until we put it into practice. To their eternal regret many members of the Lord's church have undoubtedly convinced themselves that they will be saved eternally because they have been baptized—even though they have never *lived* Christianity.

- g. Obadiah 3. The Edomites were told in this verse: "The pride of your heart has deceived you." Pride can often be the motive behind self-deception. Pride prohibits people from admitting mistakes or that a philosophy of living is faulty. Pride keeps even members of the church from repenting and confessing sin. Pride will keep many out of heaven.

Satan achieves great success through the use of deceit in the variety of ways we have looked at. We need to check ourselves periodically to see if we are deceiving ourselves or allowing ourselves to be deceived by others (2 Cor. 13:5). To avoid deception we believe and must be committed to the Truth. The devil possesses many techniques which he uses to ensnare and destroy us.

It should be one of our most important life goals to be certain that we are not being deceived.

- h. Discouragement. When we become discouraged, we are succumbing to one of the most effective forms of deceit. Discouragement is distortion. Elijah thought he was the only faithful servant of God (1 Kings 19:10). Satan exaggerates the perception we have of reality; thus we get depressed and want to give up. The letter of Hebrews contains several exhortations—including one to overcome discouragement (12:1-4).

Satan uses deceit, his master-tool, to achieve his steadfast goal of getting all mankind to be disobedient to God (his Creator and ours). He uses deception to make sin look more attractive than it really is; with discouragement he uses deception to make reality look worse than it really is. But since we are not ignorant of his devices, let us overcome all temptations and stand in the power of God's might.

THE DEVIL'S CHARACTER AND HIS METHODS

As we have already seen, each of us is responsible for our own actions—even though another may have contributed to our decision to sin. Satan is everyone's chief stumbling block; he deserves a significant share of the blame in most evil deeds. He tempted the very first human couple, leading them into sin and its consequences. Could they have fallen without the devil to spur them along?

If we answer in the negative, then we might be tempted to draw the conclusion that God wanted men to sin, since He could have kept Satan out of the garden if doing so would have insured man's perfection. A second point to consider is that if we must have the devil to account for man's sin, then how was the devil himself tempted?

But some may wonder, "If man could have sinned without Satan's presence in the garden, then why was he there?" We know that man could have sinned without the devil's assistance because God created him with a free will. We do not need Satan to suggest doing evil; we are capable of choosing that alternative all by ourselves. But the devil can make sin look attractive; he can make what will prove to be a disastrous decision look like the right thing to do. He is the champion of enticement and can suggest far worse things than what we might have initially imagined (all of the following definitions are from *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*).

A. SATAN'S NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS.

1. Satan (saw tawn')—"the arch-enemy of good, adversary. From (saw tan'), a primary root word—to attack, (fig.) accuse, be an adversary."
2. Devil (*diabolos*)—"false accuser, devil, slanderer" [not found in the Old Testament—used only in the Greek].
3. Belial (bel ee' el)—"worthlessness" (2 Cor. 6:15).
4. Abaddon (ab-ad-done'—Hebrew for "destroyer") (Rev. 9:11).
5. Apollyon (Greek for "destroyer") (Rev. 9:11).
6. Dragon (Rev. 12:9).
7. Serpent (Rev. 12:9).
8. Deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 12:9).
9. Accuser of our brethren (Rev. 12:10).

10. Angel of the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1).
11. Beelzebub (lit. "Lord of the Flies") (Matt. 12:24).
12. Prince of demons (Matt. 12:24).
13. Prince of this world (John 12:32; 14:30; 16:11).
14. Ruler (prince) of darkness (Eph. 6:12).
15. Prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2).
16. Power of darkness (Col. 1:13).
17. God of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).
18. Adversary (1 Peter 5:8).
19. Roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8).
20. Evil one (Matt. 6:13).
21. Wicked one (Matt 13:19, 38).
22. Enemy (Matt. 12:39).
23. Liar, the father of lies (John 8:44).
24. Murderer (John 8:44).
25. Oppressor (Acts 10:38).
26. Subtle (shrewd, clever, wise) (Luke 16:8).
27. Angel of darkness (implied) (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

B. LUCIFER?

For centuries many have thought that Lucifer is another name for Satan, but a careful reading of Isaiah 14:4ff (the name is found in verse 12) will show that the subject under discussion is the pride of the *king of Babylon*.

The Hebrew word is *Heylel*; the Septuagint equivalent is *Heosphoros*. Literally, the word means "light bearer" or "light bringer," and it refers to the planet Venus, the morning star. [This information comes from McClintock and Strong's

Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature 5:542-43.] When Jerome translated the Vulgate, he used the word *Lucifer*, a form of the Latin word for “light” (*lux, lucis*). Tertullian and Gregory the Great understood the Isaiah passage as the fall of Satan, and that interpretation remains generally accepted. The evidence, however, points to the idea that the Biblical writer had specific reference to the king of Babylon (and to Venus as a symbol).

Dr. Henderson is accurate in his remarks about this passage in his commentary on *Isaiah*: “The application of this passage to Satan, and to the fall of apostate angels, is one of the gross perversions of Sacred Writ....” He adds that such an interpretation stems from “a proneness to seek for more in any given passage than it really contains” and “an implicit faith in received interpretations” (5:543). The *Cyclopedia* also points out: “In the figurative language of the Hebrews, a *star* signifies an illustrious king or prince (Numb. xxiv, 17; compare Rev. ii, 28; xxii, 16)” and “Falling from heaven denotes a sudden political overthrow—a removal from the position of high and conspicuous dignity formerly occupied (comp. Rev. vi, 13; viii, 10)” (5:543). Actually, this same point is true of Satan in Luke 10:18: he was losing his power.

C. Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 28:12-19 is another passage frequently cited as a reference to Satan although it clearly refers to the king of Tyre. The careful Bible student must remember that hyperbole (poetic exaggeration) is frequently used in the Scriptures, as are similes, metaphors, personifications, synecdoches, and other figures of speech. “You were in Eden, the garden of God” (Ezek. 28:13) is a poetic way of proclaiming the beauty, perfection, and glory of the king. 1 Timothy 3:6 *may* imply that the devil was exalted, lifted up with pride, and then fell into sin and damnation, from which he will never emerge. If such is the case, the devil was just the first of many who have unwittingly followed ever since, but each individual who repeats his mistake is not himself Satan; he is only similar to him.

D. SATAN’S METHODS.

How does Satan work on us? How does he succeed even when we know what his plans and methods are? It is important to understand some of the fundamentals about our “adversary” before answering these specific questions.

E. SATAN’S POWER.

What we know for certain about the devil’s power is that he possesses more than we do, but less than God. With respect to Job, Satan had power over the wind (which resulted in a “natural” disaster, in which the lives of Job’s seven sons and three daughters were lost). He also arranged for Job to lose all his earthly possessions through a sequence of events, which might be termed “negative

providence” (Job 1). The “enemy” then proceeded to afflict Job “with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head” (Job 2:7; see also Luke 13:16 and 2 Cor. 12:7). These demonstrations of Satan’s power cover just about every avenue of life. Add to all of these that Satan hindered Paul from achieving certain spiritual goals that he had set (1 Thess. 2:18).

Occasionally Satan has demonstrated miraculous or supernatural abilities, but God’s power is always greater (Luke 10:18). An indication of the wicked one’s shrewdness is that he knows the best techniques to use, as he demonstrated right from the first in the garden of Eden: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). All three were used on Eve (Gen. 3:4-6), and even though a few thousand years pass by, we find those same techniques being used on Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11). Satan knew enough about mankind that he could be a stumbling block to us right at the start.

Satan’s power, however, is not unlimited. God restricted him twice in the book of Job (1:12; 2:6). The devil will never have enough power to unseat God or to successfully challenge Him; God, however, can bind or loose Satan according to His will. God protects His children from having to bear more than they can endure (1 Cor. 10:13; John 10:27-29), which restricts the power of the devil. God forbade Satan from getting to Peter (Luke 22:31-32).

F. SATAN’S PURPOSES.

1. To fight against God. Beginning with the first sin, and continuing through the entire Old Testament, Satan is God’s adversary. He helped introduce sin into this world, and ever since he has tried to obstruct God’s plan of redemption. Time after time he tried to destroy the nation of Israel (or at least the seed line) so that Jesus could not be born. Herod slaughtered all the children of Bethlehem in an effort to keep Jesus from being king (or Savior). Then Satan tempted Jesus with everything in his arsenal in an effort to disqualify Him as the perfect Lamb of God. Satan’s record is one of centuries of failure. His only recourse is to prevent souls from obeying the Gospel, entice Christians away from their Lord, and to wreak havoc upon the church.
2. To fight against you. Seeking to devour everyone—even faithful Christians (1 Peter 5:8)—he slanders your name as he did Job’s and accuses you to the Father (Rev. 12:10).
3. To destroy your soul (Matt. 25:41). The way in which he accomplishes his purpose will be seen as the study proceeds.
4. To make the church ineffective (John 17:20-21).

G. SATAN'S KINGDOM.

There are two kingdoms: Christ's and Satan's. Everyone is a member of one or the other (Matt. 12:30). When one becomes a Christian, he turns "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18). Note also that Paul wrote that God "has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Therefore, it is said (when it is necessary to withdraw fellowship from someone) that we are delivering them to Satan (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 5:20) since they can no longer abide in the kingdom of Christ.

H. THE THREE MAIN TYPES.

1 John 2:15-17 lists three types of sins: "the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes," and "the pride of life." The first of these includes those things that would unlawfully satisfy fleshly appetites, such as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness (and other sexual sins and perversions), drunkenness, gluttony, reveling, and the use of drugs or narcotics in any form.

Lust of the eyes refers to the idea of "wanting something not lawfully yours so much that you would become unscrupulous in the way you went about obtaining it." Among these sins would be covetousness, idolatry, certain wrong attitudes, and possible combinations of other sins mentioned both above and below.

Pride is perhaps the worst of the three because it is the least recognizable. It often works in tandem with evil attitudes, defects of character, and sins of the flesh and of the eyes. It lies at the root of stubbornness and rebellion, the uncooperative spirit, doctrinal error; it participates in every kind of sin imaginable. It contributed to Eve's sin and plays a vital role in Cain's killing of Abel. Pride was a major factor in the conflict that the Pharisees had with Jesus.

I. WHAT CAN SATAN DO?

1. He tempts us. He prompts us to think about things in such a way that committing the sin seems desirable—perhaps even a compulsion (Matt. 4:1-11; James 1:12-15).
2. He suggests sin to us (John 13:2). Perhaps we are not even thinking about doing anything wrong. We may have just emerged from a worship assembly or from having read the Holy Scriptures with the possibility of sinning far removed from our thoughts. Suddenly, we find ourselves acting on some impulse that we were totally unaware of just seconds ago; we become conscious of the fact that we have "missed the mark" once more. Or maybe we had confronted the sinful idea and were confident

that we had overcome the inordinate desire but, almost without thinking about it, we have done the very thing we were determined not to do.

3. Satan fills a person's heart (Acts 5:3). Sometimes we convince ourselves that the thing we are contemplating is not really so bad—or maybe it is, but we “feel” that we have no choice. Regardless, the prospects of what we hope to achieve become of paramount importance. We delude ourselves into thinking that we must gain our objective—no matter how—and we dwell on the success we think we shall enjoy (as Amnon did concerning Tamar).
4. He beguiles us. The devil deceives us in leading us astray. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). He tricks us into believing something that is not true. He is clever enough to seduce even the most spiritual and most saintly of brethren—if we are not careful. (Christ had to rebuke Peter—Matthew 16:23; years afterward Paul found it necessary also to rebuke Peter, saying that he was to be blamed—Galatians 2:11).
5. Some become the devil's captives (2 Tim. 2:26), meaning that they are frequently doing His will, although they are oblivious to the fact, thinking that they belong to the Lord.
6. He blinds minds. “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Notice that those who are blinded are willing participants. They crave an excuse; they want an “out.” Satan just helps them in their self-deception. Paul mentions their counterparts in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. They would rather believe lies instead of the truth because: 1) they do not possess a love of the truth; 2) they did not believe the truth when they heard it; and 3) they delighted more in the pleasures of unrighteousness.

This group of people could probably be classified in the first category of those mentioned in the parable of the sower—the ones who do not understand the Word of the kingdom—those from whom the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in the heart (Matt. 13:19). Speaking of this parable, there are three other classifications of people in it.

J. TECHNIQUES.

1. Persecution/discouragement. Although the “stony-ground” Christians rejoice in their reception of the Word, they prove themselves shallow by giving up their faith in the face of persecution (Matt. 13:20-21). And will we today suffer as others have? “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus informed the church at Smyrna that “the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). The book of Hebrews is written largely to encourage, admonish, and exhort brethren not to quit when faced with severe trials.
2. Other Christians in the parable of the sower become unfruitful because “the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word” (Matt. 13:22). These snares could be avoided by a strong faith in the providence of God, as Jesus taught in Matthew 6:25-34. In America we undoubtedly over-emphasize the need for wealth. “Financial security” is far more of a concern than “salvation from sin”—even among Christians!? [The third group of Christians in Matthew 13:23 bears proper fruit.]
3. Satan hinders us from accomplishing the spiritual goals we have set. On more than one occasion Paul had purposed to see the brethren in Thessalonica, but Satan hindered him from doing so (1 Thess. 2:18). Sometimes our good intentions also fail, and we may think poorly of ourselves; we ought to consider that Satan might be throwing obstacles in our way (negative providence). We should try to avoid discouragement while pursuing the goal that much harder (if it is good, right, and in harmony with the will of God).
4. Satan can use our righteousness, our Christianity, our good thoughts, and our good motives against us. Consider the text of the passage from which comes the phrase, *for we are not ignorant of his devices* (2 Cor. 2:11). In Paul’s first letter to the brethren at Corinth, he had commanded them to withdraw fellowship from the brother living with his father’s wife. They followed Paul’s instructions—so well that, apparently, they would not accept the penitent soul back into fellowship. Paul tells them that the punishment was sufficient and that now they ought to forgive and comfort him—lest Satan take advantage of them. Their righteousness had sparked so much zeal that it crowded out compassion for the heart that had truly repented.

One of the chief failings of the Pharisees was their self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14). They were attempting to do right, live right, and be right, but such noble purposes can often give way to ignoble practices—namely,

thinking that we are better than others or that somehow we deserve to be saved (or have earned our salvation). The Corinthians withdrew fellowship from the sinful brother as they were commanded, but they evidently became so carried away with their righteous indignation that they were reluctant to forgive him and welcome him back—even though he had repented.

Satan loves for us to take Biblical principles and push them too far in some direction. If we are not careful, we can lose sight of the balance that exists in the Scriptures. Many subjects, such as faith and works must be harmonized, since neither one by itself saves us. Statements in the Scriptures made to emphasize a point do not negate the other side of the coin (Eph. 2:8-9 and James 2:17)

5. Satan can use others to serve as stumbling blocks for us. They could be strangers, friends, family members, or even Christians.
 - a. There were a few times in the life of the wicked king Ahab when he evidenced sparks of goodness. But just about that time his wife would goad him into doing evil. After Elijah soundly defeated the 450 false prophets of Baal, Ahab became convinced that he should listen to this great man of God, but when he told his wife Jezebel what had occurred, she was not impressed. In fact, she vowed to take Elijah's life (1 Kings 18:39-19:2). Later, it was her plan that resulted in the death of the innocent Naboth (1 Kings 21). She was a perpetual stumbling block to her husband, stifling every good, noble, decent impulse that he might have otherwise had or acted upon.
 - b. Peter inadvertently threw a temptation into the path of Jesus. When the Lord made known the suffering and death that awaited Him at Jerusalem, Peter began to rebuke the Lord, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord; this shall not happen to you!" But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matt. 16:21-23). No one could doubt the sincere motives of Peter, but he did not grasp the significance of what Jesus had prophesied.
 - c. What about ourselves? We would probably never think of ourselves as stumbling blocks, but are we? Do we encourage our husbands/wives in the home, or are we a hindrance to spiritual growth and development? Before our children's eyes do we regard school activities and making money in a career above learning the Word of God and holy living? [Wouldn't it be sad on the Day of Judgment to learn that we as parents proved to be the worst stum-

bling block to our children—that we played a major role in keeping them out of heaven?]

- d. Are we a stumbling block in the church? When a brother advances a new idea, are we quick to quench his enthusiasm over it? Do we set forth positive plans for church growth ourselves, or just criticize everyone else's? The effort it requires to tear something apart is considerably less than it takes to build something up.

K. THE DEVIL'S REWARD.

Hell has been prepared for the devil and his servants (Matt. 25:41): he will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone; he will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10). It is nothing less than he deserves, since in several thousand years he has not shown the least interest in repentance. He is committed to evil; his punishment has already been decreed.

THE HORROR OF SIN—ETERNAL DAMNATION

We have studied the consequences of sin previously, but now we want to look more closely at what happens to the devil and all those who follow after him. Aside from the many possible miseries that may be experienced in this life on earth, the impenitent individual must also suffer intensely throughout eternity. Many things in life have a good news/bad news side; hell is not one of them. It is rather a bad news/worse news situation. Its very essence is horrible, but (worse yet) there can be no escape nor any relief from the suffering.

A. DURATION—ETERNITY

Our society at this time is geared toward freedom from suffering. Instant relief is the order of the day, and we would rather kill someone than watch them endure pain. Therefore, people find it convenient and much more appealing to reject the doctrine of hell. Atheists, of course, do not accept the concept; neither do the Jehovah's Witnesses. Unfortunately, among the general population, we usually find that people are more willing to believe in heaven than hell.

But what matters is what the Scriptures say. Although we might wish that souls will not have to suffer throughout eternity, reality says they will; for this reason everyone needs to prevent that possibility from occurring now (both for self and for others) because there can be no remedy later on.

The New Testament teaches that both heaven and hell exist for an identical amount of time. "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46). However long the one lasts, that's the duration of the other as well. In 2 Thessalonians 1 Paul states that there are two classifications of people: the troublers and the troubled. Both shall receive recompense: the persecuted shall receive rest; the persecutors shall receive everlasting destruction (3-10). Both the afflicted and the afflictors existed temporally, but both shall be rewarded eternally. The same time frame is applied to each category.

But some argue that eternal death is annihilation—that one's soul is destroyed, and the results are permanent. That soul shall never be resurrected or returned to life, its consciousness having been utterly obliterated. Such a theory would make the punishment momentary—although the results would be permanent. This idea destroys the parallelism already mentioned and, in fact, would not be a punishment of the magnitude described in the Scriptures at all.

Jesus said, "For the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life,

and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29). What would be the point of resurrecting people simply to annihilate them? The fact is that hell is a living death.

Consider Mark 9:42-48. Hell is described as a place in which the fire shall *never be quenched* and where their worm does not die. Why would the fire need to continue burning if every soul had already been annihilated? And of what significance would the worm be if destruction had already occurred? This image is based on Isaiah 66:24 which mentions the worm afflicting the corpses of men. Again, the plague is a continuous one, not a one-time problem.

B. REASONS FOR CONDEMNATION

Since eternal suffering is involved, what possible transgressions would send someone there? It is not a matter of making *one* mistake and suddenly being condemned for eternity; it is more a philosophy of how to live in this world and how to relate to God.

1. 1 John 5:16. The sin that leads to death is the one that a person will not repent of (Luke 13:3). It comes between the individual and God regardless of what the Scriptures teach (an idol—1 John 5:21). God insists on (and deserves) first place (Matt. 22:37-39; Luke 14:26,27).
2. Mark 16:16. Unbelief will prevent a relationship with God.
3. Mark 3:29. Rejecting the evidence for Jesus being the Son of God will keep Him from being one’s Savior (John 8:24).
4. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. Those who do not believe the truth cannot be saved.
5. 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. Those who prefer unrighteousness to godliness cannot enjoy the holiness of heaven (John 3:19). See lists such as those provided in Galatians 5:19-21, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Romans 1:18-32, or Revelation 21:8.
6. 2 Thessalonians 1:8. Those who have never taken time in their lives to come to know their Creator.
7. 2 Thessalonians 1:8. Those who have never obeyed the gospel. One must accept the salvation that God holds out to him.
8. Matthew 23:13-33. Those who are self-righteous.
9. 2 Peter 2:10-12. Those who are rebellious and disobedient.

10. 2 Peter 2:1-3. Those who teach destructive doctrines that will cause others to be lost.

In other words, God expects His children to know, love, and serve Him. We owe Him these things because He created us and offers eternal life to us as well. His constant care and love for us demands a loving response and a willingness to obey Him in all things (Heb. 5:9). It is in the course of this life that we make the choice as to whether we want to continue to live with God throughout eternity or whether we would like life better without Him; hell is the realm where God is absent.

C. CHARACTERISTICS OF HELL

1. The first image that usually comes to mind is that of fire, which Jesus used quite frequently (Matt. 18:6-9 and Mark 9:42-48; Matt. 5:22; 25:46). This hell fire is termed *everlasting*. In Luke 16 the rich man is portrayed as being tormented in flame (24). In Revelation 14:10 we learn that those who worship the beast and his image shall be tormented with fire and brimstone. In fact, the devil shall be cast into a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10, 14; 21:8). For company he shall have all those who are not found written in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:15).

All human beings are aware of the properties of fire. We all crave relief from the heat; we will instinctively move away from a fire. But hell consists of eternal flames; there will be nowhere to move where it will be more comfortable. Some days will not be cooler than others. The heat will never die down; the burning sensation will never stop (Jude 7).

2. A second notable feature of hell will be the darkness (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). To have both fire and darkness may seem like a contradiction, but perhaps the smoke of their torment (Rev. 14:11) is so thick that no one can see anything. [Remember the thick darkness in Egypt? They could not even see one another (Ex. 10:23).] What a horrible yet appropriate punishment for those who choose to walk in darkness instead of the light! What makes this aspect of hell terrifying is the loss of sight and our fear of the unknown. All will want to avoid the "blackness of darkness" (Jude 13; see also verse 6).
3. The third horrifying feature of hell is excruciating pain, the response to which is described as "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 24:51; and 25:30). Two different words for torment are used in Luke 16:23-28. According to Robertson, the Greek word in Luke 16:23 and 28 referred to 1) the touchstone by which gold and other metals were tested, 2) then the rack which was used for torturing people. The word in verses

24-25 means intense pain and anguish. No doubt Jesus intends to underscore the severity of the pain.

The question arises, “Are these intended to be literal descriptions of hell?” We could argue that God used physical terms to describe torment because the soul is a spiritual entity and we can only understand and respond to the things that afflict the body. But even if that is so, the suffering that the soul will experience in hell will be every bit as painful as what is described in these passages.

4. Hell is a place of no rest (versus the rest that heaven offers, Rev. 14:11; 20:10). There will never be a time of relief or respite—no matter how brief. The intensity persists forever.
5. No requests will be granted (Luke 16:19-31). The rich man asked for a little relief and got none. What you receive the first day is yours forever; it never changes.
6. Hell is a place of no hope. On earth there is always hope, no matter how dark or grim a situation appears, but in hell there is nothing to look forward to because nothing will ever change. Therefore, there can be no comfort of a better time; all pleas for help and cries of anguish will go unheeded. No prayer for an improved situation will be heard; petition will be futile. There will be no end of suffering, no change to make it more bearable, and no hope.
7. Perhaps the most fundamental quality of hell is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 1:9. This everlasting destruction (Matt. 10:28; 2 Peter 2:3), which is also called the second death (Rev. 20:14; 21:8), is *away* from the presence of God. One can only try to imagine what existence would be like without any of God’s blessings. What would it be like if He withdrew His goodness, holiness, righteousness, and all other good things from the world? Such is the essence of hell. However vivid our imaginations are, they probably cannot match this reality; we should live in such a way (faithful obedience) that we never find out.

Now do we see how horrible sin is? Although people laugh and joke about it and fail to take it seriously, the fact is that sin is so serious that it merits a place of eternal suffering away from the presence of God. God’s justice forces Him to condemn those who die in sin. While we may have thought that sin was no “big deal,” it obviously carries greater consequences than many have thought or even yet understand. But if an eternity of torment is the price of sin, then we ought to avoid it in all of its multitude of forms and make sure that our sins have been washed away by the blood of Christ.

D. THE HORROR OF SIN—ITS COST

After considering the concept of hell, many have rejected the doctrine outright or (because of this teaching) God Himself. They feel that a Deity that would torture His creation throughout eternity is too cruel to be worthy of our attention or devotion. The problem with such a response is that (although it may make the person feel better and more noble for rejecting such “pagan” ideas) it changes nothing; the person who closes his eyes in a rainstorm gets wet anyway.

God has told us how things are; if we think He’s unjust, the problem is with us—not Him. There must be certain facts or concepts that we fail to understand completely. But even if our knowledge never leads us into a state in which we become satisfied with the New Testament teaching on hell, we must realize that it is nevertheless the Truth. We would be most inconsistent to attempt to accept the principles of the Bible we agree with and enjoy while rejecting those that fail to meet our fancy. The following Biblical points should be considered.

1. God created us. That fact alone means that we are indebted to Him. To remark snidely that we didn’t ask to be created amounts to gross ingratitude (Rom. 1:18-23).
2. God also sustains us; therefore, we continually owe Him for the blessings we have (Acts 17:25-26; Col. 1:17).
3. We have the responsibility to know God. Even if He were cruel and harsh (which He is *not*), we would still be foolish not to want to understand and please a Being with complete power.
4. God is not cruel, but He is holy. We have offended Him by breaking His laws and practicing sin.
5. But He loves us anyway and provided a means by which the penalty for sin that we are due could be paid for us. God does not want even one person to suffer in hell (2 Peter 3:9).
6. So far is God from rejoicing in the miseries of man or his torment in hell that the Bible says, “God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked” (Ezek. 33:11; 18:32).
7. Those who are lost will be lost because they made the decision for themselves. God has provided Truth in written form, as well as preachers and Christians to spread the gospel.
8. The punishment of hell (as well as the reward of heaven) will be eternal because, when time ends, eternity is all that will be left.

9. Once created, the soul cannot be destroyed (in terms of annihilation). We may not understand the reason, but such is the case. Therefore, we ought to heed the admonition that the soul is worth more than all the world (Matt. 16:26) and take great care to protect and preserve it.
10. *NOW* is the only hour that we are guaranteed. The decision to obey God must be made *now* (2 Cor. 6:2). With whatever time remains we must grow, perfect ourselves, and engage in service that will honor Christ and build up His kingdom.

The horror of sin, then, is seen in the fact that the sinful are assigned a place in the eternal fires of hell. Knowing what will befall the ungodly, God determined to save men from the consequences of his own actions. Following is a description of the components of the plan He inaugurated.

1. God's *holiness* means that He is offended by sin. The Lord is infinite in all of His attributes; therefore, He is thoroughly holy. He is righteous: He cannot sin; He cannot even be tempted by sin. Furthermore, He cannot fellowship sin (Hab. 1:13).
2. God's *justice* means that He must punish sin. He cannot merely pretend that man's disobedience never happened and forgive on such a basis. His nature will not allow such a posture. He would not be Himself, and we would have no more respect for Him than a child would for a parent who repeatedly threatened punishment for wrongdoing but then relented.
3. God's *love* demanded of Himself a solution to man's dilemma. His intention in creating mankind was to bestow blessings upon us—not to punish us because of our transgressions. But we sinned and stood condemned because of our willing participation in sin with no way to undo what had been done.
4. We stood condemned and therefore merited punishment—unless somehow someone else could take our place. But who? No man was without sin. No animal could make a conscious decision to stand in for us. No angelic being nor God Himself could pay the price because as a spiritual being the punishment would of necessity be eternal.
5. The perfect and appropriate sacrifice could only be a God-man, a unique Being who would qualify as the sacrifice we need by living a life of perfection. He would demonstrate in a vivid way God's concern for mankind; it would be possible to offer Him in time instead of eternity.
6. Jesus became God-in-the-flesh (John 1:14) and paid the penalty for sin that we were due. The justice of God demanded punishment but, instead

of pouring out His wrath on us, God permitted Jesus, a perfect man, to step in and receive the sentence that would have been pronounced against us.

7. Since Jesus took upon Himself our punishment, we do not need to experience the horrors of hell throughout eternity. But God does not grant pardon to each individual universally or unconditionally. He forgives on the basis of our trust in Him, our repentance, and our willingness to obey Him. To bestow absolution upon all, regardless of our spiritual condition, would be to cast pearls before swine. Some do not want God's forgiveness, and many would not appreciate it. Therefore, God sets forth conditions for Christ's blood being applied.
 - a. Faith in God and in Christ (John 8:24; Heb. 11:6).
 - b. Love of God. We ought to realize that God is on our side; He is for us, not against us. He has done everything He can to procure our salvation (Matt. 22:37-39).
 - c. Repentance of sin. It would do no good to receive pardon for sins and then continue to walk the same path that made salvation necessary in the first place. We must be prepared to give up the various forms of sin we have committed *before* God forgives us. When we have died to sin, then we are ready to be buried with Christ in baptism for its remission (Rom. 6:3-7).
 - d. Confession of His name. In this act we acknowledge the Deity of Christ and God's personal involvement in our salvation (Acts 8:37; 1 Tim. 6:12).
 - e. Baptism for the forgiveness of sins. All of the preceding steps are necessary, but it is baptism that finally puts us in contact with the blood of Christ so that sins are actually washed away (Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5). Baptism also shows obedience on our part, which indicates that we are willing to follow Him wherever He leads. Immersion into Christ accompanies faith (Mark 16:15) and repentance (Acts 2:38). Its role in salvation cannot be denied since the inspired apostle says that "baptism doth also now save us" (1 Peter 3:21, KJV).

E. The Sacrifice of Jesus

Just what was involved in the death of Jesus for our sins? God developed an ironclad plan of redemption which did not possess, nor yet possesses, any flexibility. Our Lord prayed so earnestly that the cup of suffering pass from Him that He sweat great drops as of blood (Matt. 26:39-44; Luke 22:44). Could God have changed the way in which salvation from sins for us was to be obtained? If so, how? His holiness and justice still required that mankind be redeemed from sin. Jesus was the only perfect Lamb of God. And God's love for man required Him to do what He had already purposed. *There was no other way!!*

Hereby do we perceive the horror of sin, not only because of the punishment itself (hell), but also because of the price of redemption (the death and shed blood of a perfect and innocent being). Picture Jesus upon Calvary, pouring out His soul unto death (Isa. 53:11). Crucifixion was reserved for the worst of sinners. It involved more than just putting a criminal to death: it was the most painful, long, and drawn out process imaginable. How much quicker it would have been to run a malefactor through with a sword. Crucifixion was designed to prolong the agony, to humiliate, and to torment the criminal. Roman citizens would not face such a death; they might be exiled or killed—but never crucified (except for treason). It was regarded as too inhuman for them to suffer. Only slaves and non-Romans were made to bear the shame and stigma attached to the cross.

Having been scourged (which in itself could be quite brutal), and humiliated, Jesus hangs upon the cross, enduring the insults of the ignorant crowd—Jews, who proved to be stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear. Perhaps some in the crowd echoed Pilate's sentiments, asking themselves, "Why? What evil has He done?" And the answer that will ring throughout time is: "None. He has committed no sin. He is unworthy of death."

None of us likes to see an injustice. We experience satisfaction (and relief) when criminals are caught and punished, but we greatly regret it if an innocent person is condemned. We dislike it so much that we have an elaborate appeals process to be certain that a convicted person gets a fair hearing. The crowd that clamored for Jesus' crucifixion, however, never gave Him a chance. He was taken prisoner late one evening and crucified the next morning. When Pilate suggested releasing one prisoner as an escape for the Lord, the multitude insisted they be granted Barabbas, a convicted thief and murderer.

In most movies and television shows someone shows up "in the nick of time" to save the innocent soul from death. The Lone Ranger, Superman, or the detective always rescues the intended victim, and the audience breathes a collective sigh of relief. But as we envision Jesus being led to Calvary, carrying His own cross, we know that no one will come to rescue this innocent man—not even the

Father. *Sin will not allow it!* The Father does not lack power to remove Jesus from the cross, and Jesus could have left it of His own accord. But love (for condemned mankind) demanded that Jesus remain on the cross to endure the full punishment for sin.

“Wait a minute,” someone protests. “On the cross there was no fire, no smoke (darkness, yes), and certainly nothing the length of eternity.” All of those observations are true, but there was present the essential ingredient of hell—the absence of God’s presence. The Father severed all fellowship with the Son for the first (and only) time in all eternity—because Jesus was bearing our sins. What the lost will experience from the day of judgment onward (being cast out of His presence), Jesus experienced on the cross. It is this separation that He petitioned God in agony to avoid, and it was due to the torment of God’s absence that He cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” God Himself paid the penalty for our sins because of His immense love for us. That love cost Him dearly!!

F. Concepts of the Crucifixion

The word *propitiation* carries with it the idea of satisfying or appeasing someone. Among the pagans an offering needed to be made to appease the wrath of the gods. The situation is not exactly parallel to such savagery. In the first place, the justice of God does not involve arbitrary anger on His part. God is holy, but man is sinful. God cannot simply disregard sin, which merits eternal condemnation, and say, “Let’s fellowship one another anyway.” The penalty for sin had to be paid. Biblical propitiation is fulfilled by God Himself. Jesus agreed to come in the flesh and be the perfect sacrifice for sins. Once He died for us, then we could participate in His death by dying to sin and being buried in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5-7). Having paid the price we owe, Jesus has released us from our debt—if and only if, however, we participate in His death (through repentance and baptism).

Propitiation—Romans 3:24-25; 1 John 2:1-2; 4:10.

Propitiate—Luke 18:13; Hebrews 2:17.

Ransom—Matthew 20:28; Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:6.

Redeem—Galatians 4:5; Titus 2:14.

Redeemed—Luke 1:68; 24:21; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:18; Revelation 5:9; 14:3-4.

Redemption—Luke 2:38; 21:28; Romans 3:24; 8:23; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:7,14; 4:30; Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12, 15.

The concept behind these last four words is “buying back.” The idea appears frequently in the Old Testament. God is said to have redeemed His people (Ex. 15:13). Redemption money is mentioned in Numbers 3:51. Just as Israel was redeemed out of the Egyptian house of bondage (Deut. 13:5), so Jesus redeemed us out of the bondage of sin, being the ransom for us. The imagery cannot be taken to extremes (as in trying to determine *who* sold us into slavery or *who* received the ransom payment). It is not just that such efforts fail when tried in the New Testament; they do not work in the Old Testament, either. Although Joseph was sold into Egypt as a slave (which was a two-part process), he later became free, and his family moved there of their own free will. So, in what sense were they “sold”? And to whom did Jehovah pay the ransom when He redeemed them? We sinned of our own free will and thereby stood in need of salvation. The price of our redemption was the blood of Christ (Rev. 5:9).

Reconcile—Romans 5:10; 11:15; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Colossians 1:20-21.

Reconciliation—2 Corinthians 5:18-19; Hebrews 2:17.

Sin has made us the enemies of God: it puts a barrier between us and destroys the fellowship we once had with each other. Notice that we are the ones who have changed, not God. The Scriptures consistently speak of mankind (or the world) being reconciled to God; never do we find that God is reconciled to the world. We would not, if we thought about it, want a holy God to move away from His purity to come join us. The results of such an action would be catastrophic. Jesus has reconciled us to Him, meaning that He made it possible for us to return to the holy state we once left and enjoy fellowship with God again.

Justification—Romans 4:25; 5:16, 18.

Justify—Romans 3:24, 26; 1 Corinthians 6:11, and numerous other passages.

Having stood under the condemnation of sin, we are now (because of the sacrifice of Jesus) justified (cleared of guilt). The question is, “By what means are we justified?” Justification occurs as a result of a combination of things, but it does not come as a result of having a clear conscience (1 Cor. 4:4), the law of Moses (Acts 13:39), or the works of the law (Gal. 2:16; 3:11). We are, however, justified by grace (Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:7), the blood of Christ (Rom. 5:9), faith (Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:28; 5:1; Gal. 2:16; 3:24), and obedience (James 2:25).

GENERAL “SIN” TERMS

The words we will consider now do not designate a specific violation of God’s will, although the text in which the word is found may be dealing with a specific sin. Consider, for example, the account of Abraham’s lying to Abimelech about Sarah being his sister (rather than his wife). Lying, of course, is a specific type of sin (a sin of the tongue). But a general phrase is also used regarding what Abraham had done.

Abimelech states: “You have done deeds to me that ought not to have been done” (Gen. 20:9). The text reveals that this phrase refers to the lie Abraham had told him (and the possible ramifications that the acceptance of that lie might have caused). We want to consider various examples of “general” words or phrases that delineate sinful conduct. These may or may not be in a text that mentions a specific sin.

1. Cain did *NOT DO WELL* (Gen. 4:7). Abraham did *deeds* that *OUGHT NOT* to have been done (Gen. 20:9). Shechem had done a *DISGRACEFUL THING* (*WROUGHT FOLLY*, KJV), a thing which *OUGHT NOT* to be done (Gen. 34:7).
2. Man’s *WICKEDNESS* was great; his thoughts were only *EVIL* continually (Gen. 6:5).
3. All mankind had become *CORRUPT* (Gen. 6:12).
4. The men of Sodom were wicked and *SINNERS* against the Lord (Gen. 13:13).
5. The *INIQUITY* of the Amorites was not yet complete (full) (Gen. 15:16).
6. Sarah wished her *WRONG* upon Abraham (Gen. 16:5).
7. Laban was not allowed by the Lord to speak either *BAD* or good (Gen. 24:50).
8. Jacob wanted to know what his *TRESPASS* was (Gen. 31:36).
9. The butler and the baker had *OFFENDED* the king; woe to the man by whom the *OFFENSE* comes (Gen. 40:1; Matt. 18:7).
10. Joseph’s brothers were *GUILTY* concerning him (Gen. 42:21).
11. Judah volunteered to bear the *BLAME* if something went wrong (Gen. 43:9; 44:32).
12. Joseph was *DISPLEASED* (Gen. 48:17).

13. Simeon and Levi are called instruments of *CRUELTY* ("crime," NKJ) (Gen. 49:5; Judges 9:24).
14. "It's your own *FAULT*" (Ex. 5:16).
15. God will not pardon your *TRANSGRESSIONS* (Ex. 23:21).
16. Nakedness ("unrestrained," KJV) is a *SHAME* (Ex. 32:25).
17. There is a sin of *FAILING TO KEEP A COMMANDMENT* (James 4:17). The firstling of a donkey was to be redeemed with a lamb, or else his neck was to be broken as a penalty (Ex 34:20).
18. One can sin *UNINTENTIONALLY* (NKJ) ("through ignorance," KJV) in something which ought not to be done (Lev. 4:2).
19. One could become *UNCLEAN* and guilty (Lev. 5:2).
20. Such a person could also become *DEFILED* (Lev. 5:3).
21. One may sin by doing something that is *FORBIDDEN* (Lev. 5:17). [Notice that *guilty* and *iniquity* are also used.]
22. One can *ERR* in ignorance (Lev. 5:18).
23. One could make himself an *ABOMINATION* (Lev. 7:18).
24. Defiling oneself caused a man to also *PROFANE* himself (Lev. 21:4).
25. Some *HARRASSED* (*VEXED*, KJV) the Israelites with their *SCHEMES* (*WILES*, KJV) by which they *SEDUCED* (*BEGUILED*, KJV) them (Num. 25:18; see Pr. 28:10).
26. The congregation had *REBELLED* in the wilderness (Num. 27:14).
27. One can behave *UNRIGHTEOUSLY* (Deut. 25:16).
28. They were also a *CROOKED* generation (Deut. 32:5).
29. Israel is called a *PERVERSE* (*FROWARD*) generation (Deut. 32:20).
30. It is possible to deal *TREACHEROUSLY* with someone (Judges 9:23).
31. Such inappropriate dealing may be called a *CRIME* (*CRUELTY*, KJV) (Judges 9:24).

32. It is possible to *TROUBLE* someone (Judges 11:35).
33. Samson's wife *ENTICED* him (Judges 14:15).
34. Some actions can be termed *VILE* (Judges 19:24; see Rom. 1:26).
35. Many men can be called *UNGODLY* (2 Sam. 22:5, KJV).
36. We must guard against being *DISOBEDIENT* (1 Kings 13:26).

REBELLION AND STUBBORNNESS

Having completed a brief discussion of general words used to designate sin, we now want to begin a study of the various types of sins that are found in the Bible, starting with rebellion. There is a little "rebel without a cause" in each of us. Sometimes we call it being cantankerous, obstinate, or being born in the kickative mood and the objective case. What is it? It is that attitude or impulse that causes us to be disagreeable even if doing so is irrational or harmful to ourselves. Most of us have heard about the individual who would "cut off his nose to spite his face." We could classify such temper as self-destructive behavior, which is certainly correct when we manifest such attitudes toward God.

Rebelling against God is a foolish endeavor both for mortals and angels. Why? What are the chances of winning in a fight against God? Even if He were wrong (which never happens), we still do not have the power to defeat Him. Talk about an exercise in futility! Fortunately, God has never shown Himself to be capricious or malicious; He instead displays perfect love and kindness toward us. The marvelous benevolence and wondrous blessings He provides call for a loving response. Intentional disobedience compounds our ingratitude toward Him and places us in jeopardy of judgment.

WAYS TO BE REBELLIOUS

One of the most stubborn men ever to have lived was Pharaoh. Exodus 9:21 says that those who did not regard the Word of the Lord left his servant and his cattle in the field—where it was destroyed by hail. *Not regarding the Word of the Lord* sums up Pharaoh's attitude toward Jehovah; he was always *disregarding* God and His Word. Any time we might possess such an attitude we are wrong. No one can afford to disregard God.

Sometimes God's own people make the mistake of refusing outright to do the will of God. Israel refused to heed the pleadings of Joshua and Caleb to take the land that God was giving to them. In fact, they were so rebellious they were on the verge of stoning them, along with Moses and Aaron, when the Lord appears and asks: "How long will these people reject Me?" (Num. 14:11).

They might have argued that they had no intention of rejecting God, but such was God's perspective of the matter. How many times have we (in effect) disregarded the Word of God or rejected Him? Dathan and Abiram (along with Korah) rose up and rebelled against Moses (evidently to gain control of the leadership of the nation). When Moses sent for the two men, they refused even to come. The Lord viewed their rejection of Moses a rejection of Him (Num. 16:30). Approximately 400 years later God would tell Samuel to comply with the people's demand to have a king; their desire for a king was not a rejection of Samuel, however, but of God (1 Sam. 8:7).

Some of the most blatant rejections of the Word of God occur in the book of Jeremiah. First of all, there was the nation of Judah as a whole: "O Lord. Are not your eyes on the truth? You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; You have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to return" (Jer. 5:3). "Hear, O earth! Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not heeded My words, nor My law, but rejected it" (Jer. 6:19).

It would be difficult to exceed what we have just read, but King Jehoiakim serves as a striking instance of even greater hostility: he literally cut up a scroll containing the written Word of God and cast it into the fire (Jer. 36:23).

A third example of maximum rebellion involves the people who remained in the land after most of the people had been taken captive. They not only rejected the Word of God, but they constitute the classic case of those who insist: "Tell me what I want to hear." They urged Jeremiah to inquire of the Lord as to what they should do; they promised to obey Him—no matter what the reply (Jer. 42:6). When God's answer was not what they wanted to hear, however, they told Jeremiah, "You speak falsely!" (Jer. 43:2). Then they did what they had wanted to do all along.

Rejection of God's Word is bad enough, but often the evidence He provides to convince people of the Truth is also ignored. Numbers 14:11 expresses this point well: "And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them?" In Matthew 12:24 the Pharisees accused Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, thus calling into question the evidence that proved Him to be the Son of God (not to mention His source of power). Jesus responds by showing them the fallacies in their reasoning (Matt. 12:25-30). Then He issues them a stern warning: "Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matt. 12:31-32). Why does the Lord speak so severely? The reason is that the Pharisees were so stubborn that they had rejected the evidence, the proof (the miracles Jesus performed by the power of the Holy Spirit) of His identity. Whenever we ignore conclusive evidence about Jesus (the Bible, for example, which provides that evidence), or whenever we deny what the Bible clearly teaches, our souls stand in jeopardy.

VARIOUS EXAMPLES

1. Exodus 32:9. This sin is often referred to as being *STIFF-NECKED*.
2. Leviticus 26:14-15, 21. *OBEY NOT, OBSERVE NOT, DESPISE MY STATUTES, ABHOR MY JUDGMENTS, PERFORM NOT MY COMMANDMENTS, BREAK MY COVENANT, WALK CONTRARY TO ME.*
3. Numbers 14:43. *TURNED AWAY FROM THE LORD.*
4. Numbers 15:31. *DESPISED THE LORD'S WORD; BROKEN HIS COMMANDMENT.*
5. Numbers 20:13. *CONTENDED WITH THE LORD.*
6. Deuteronomy 1:43. *REBELLED, ACTED PRESUMPTUOUSLY.*
7. Deuteronomy 4:25. *PROVOKE THE LORD TO ANGER.*
8. Deuteronomy 6:16. *TEMPT THE LORD YOUR GOD.*
9. Deuteronomy 25:18. *DID NOT FEAR GOD.*
10. Deuteronomy 28:58. *DID NOT CAREFULLY OBSERVE ALL THE WORDS THAT ARE WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK.*
11. Deuteronomy 29:19. *"I SHALL HAVE PEACE, EVEN THOUGH I FOLLOW THE DICTATES OF MY HEART...."*
12. Deuteronomy 32:15. *HE FORSOOK GOD.*
13. Matthew 12:24, 31. *BLASPHEMING GOD.*
14. Acts 4:15-17; 5:28, 33. *THREATENING, PLOTTING TO KILL THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.*
15. Acts 7:51. *RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.*
16. Acts 7:59; 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16. *KILLING THE RIGHTEOUS.*

We have seen in this lesson a number of general words that describe sin and, more particularly, we have looked at the different ways of being rebellious, including some specific examples. Yet we have just scratched the surface of ways and means to sin against God. Man is both energetic and inventive when it comes to ways of departing

from Him; what a different world it might be if we used our ingenuity to obey Him and do His work!

FLESHLY SINS

God gave us fleshly appetites and there is nothing wrong with satisfying them, so long as we stay within the proper bounds. Hunger, for example, is a legitimate craving, but Eve transgressed God's boundaries when she ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thus giving in to the lust of the flesh (Gen. 3:6). She could have satisfied herself in a lawful manner by eating of any of the trees which God had authorized. Similarly, David could have assuaged his sexual appetite with any one of his wives, but he chose to take another man's wife instead. When Nathan confronted David, he made that exact point to him. God has established bounds for eating, drinking, nakedness, and sexual intercourse—all of which are discussed below.

1. **DRUNKENNESS** (Gen. 9:21). Noah gets first "honors" for this sin. Were they so thoroughly perverted before the Flood that they practiced all that evil while sober (without the aid of alcohol)?
 - a. Drunkenness often leads to, or is associated with, other sins. In Noah's case he became uncovered in his tent. Why was this action wrong since he was in his own tent at the time? [If it was wrong for his sons to see him, it was wrong for him to be this way.]
 - b. Other sins associated with drunkenness are incest (Gen. 19:32-36), rebellion (Judges 9:27), and jeopardizing one's life (2 Sam. 13:28).
 - c. Warnings against drunkenness are found in Leviticus 10:9 (consider 10:1-2), Proverbs 20:1, and Proverbs 23:29-35.
2. **GLUTTONY**. To *glut* something is to fill it beyond capacity. One ancient custom was to eat until full and then induce vomiting so that one could continue eating. One can eat to excess, however, without going that far. Jesus was accused of being both a glutton and a winebibber (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34), but the charge was not based on reality. God's people were charged with unlawful lusting after food in Numbers 11 (esp. v. 34). Jesus turned down food that would have been obtained through lust (Matt. 4:1-4).
3. **SEXUAL SINS**. This classification includes many wrongful actions; mankind has been quite inventive in perverting God's original plan. Galatians 5:19-21 lists the works of the flesh. Among them are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, drunkenness, revelries, and such like. We want to consider all of these, as well as a few that are not listed.
 - a. **DANCING**. In most languages (including Hebrew, Greek, and English) *dancing* is a neutral term, meaning that it may be used in either a good or

bad context. David danced before the Lord (2 Sam. 6:14) and is not condemned. The women of Israel also danced in celebration the nation's deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 15:20). These were exuberant expressions of joy. However, dancing can also be of a lascivious nature. According to the *Pulpit Commentary's* comments on Exodus 32:19: "In Egypt, the dancers appear to have been professionals of a degraded class, and the dancing itself to have been always sensual and indecent; while in Syria, Asia Minor, and Babylon, dancing was a wild orgy, at once licentious and productive of a species of frenzy. We must suspect that it was this sort of dancing in which the Israelites were engaged—whence the terrible anger of Moses" (1:2:334).

Dancing can fit the definition of a sexual sin. Some have called it a vertical expression of a horizontal idea. Those who think it is harmless are less than honest about it. Juice Newton sang, in her song, "Heart of the Night" (1982-83): "From dancing so close we already know how good it will feel." Foreigner asked the musical question in "Hot Blooded" (1978): "C'mon, baby, do you do more than dance?" as if this "accepted" social custom were merely a prelude to what is on each partner's mind. What more needs to be said about the purpose for many of the modern dances? Christians should not attempt to justify what many freely admit constitutes immoral behavior.

- b. **NAKEDNESS.** In the *Pulpit Commentary* the editors designate chapter 18 of Leviticus as Part III, Section 3, and title it "Moral Uncleaness and Its Punishment." Notice the emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the sanctification of Israel, and the nation's responsibility to keep God's commandments. The theme and underlying principle of this chapter is found in verse 6; the next several verses (7-23) spell out various applications of that precept. Most commentators refer to these as "Marriage Restrictions." Leviticus 20:10-21 is a similar passage, and verse 21 defines taking a brother's wife as "uncovering his brother's nakedness."

The Bible uses the term *nakedness* in more than one sense: sometimes the word means "total nudity," and sometimes it means "*nearly* total nudity." Obviously, Genesis 2:25 refers to the former while 1 Samuel 19:24, 2 Samuel 6:20, and John 21:7 refer to the latter.

What inferences can be drawn from what the Bible teaches about nakedness (Genesis 9:21-23)? What about pornography and x-rated movies (forget x-rated; what about those rated R)? What about nude beaches? What about near-nudity? Should a child of God wear seductive and revealing clothing? What kind of thinking gets as close to shameful as possible?

Notice that, as pertains to the crucifixion, how much the Holy Spirit had to say about clothes (Matt. 27:28, 31-35, 36, 59). Exposing one's nakedness was to heap shame on that individual (Rev. 3:18). What are the implications of Genesis 2:25?

- c. *INCEST* (Lev. 18:6-18; Gen. 19:33-38; 35:22; 2 Sam. 13; Deut. 22:30; 1 Cor. 5:1).
- d. *UNCLEANNES*. This category includes both ceremonial and moral uncleanness (Lev. 5:2-3; 20:21).
- e. *UNLAWFUL SEXUAL DESIRE* (Gen. 39:7; Ex. 20:17; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5).
- f. *RAPE* (Gen. 19:4-5; 34:1-7; Judges 19:22-30; 20:5; 2 Sam. 13; Deut. 22:25-29).
- g. *SEDUCTION*: passive? (2 Sam. 11:2); active (Gen. 39:7).
- h. *HARLOTRY* (Pr. 6:20-35; 7:1-27; 9:13-18; 22:14; 23:27-28; 30:20). Consider also the Moabite women (Num. 25:1-8).
- i. *FORNICATION* (Deut. 22:13-30; 1 Cor. 6:18-20).
- j. *HOMOSEXUALITY* (Gen. 19:4-5; Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17; Judges 19:22; 1 Kings 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7; Rom. 1:24-28; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; Jude 7).

(1) Some have argued that homosexuality cannot be all that bad since in the New Testament Jesus did not condemn it. First of all, the Bible student should recall that Paul, an apostle born out of due time and chosen specifically by Jesus (Acts 9, 22), condemns the practice in several passages. Second, all of the apostles were inspired by the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-13; 1 Cor. 14:37). Third, when Jesus used the Greek word *porneia*, the definition includes "homosexuality." *Strong's* says of the verb form *porneuo*: "to act the harlot, i.e. (lit.) indulge unlawful lust (of either sex), or (fig.) practice idolatry:—commit (fornication)" [#4203, page 59 in the Greek dictionary section]. *Kittel* states that *porneia* "can be 'unnatural vice'...e.g. sodomy..." (6:587).

(2) Some are arguing that the dietary laws prohibiting the eating of certain meats in the Old Testament are equal to these pronouncements against homosexuality. The fact is, however, that the moral prohibitions against homosexuality both predate and postdate the Law of Moses. Sodom was destroyed for its homosexuality before

Moses, and the New Testament (which replaces the Old) also teaches against the vile practice.

- (3) Does anyone want to argue that bestiality and rape are acceptable practices because Jesus did not specifically condemn these sexual sins?

k. *BESTIALITY* (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23; 20:15,16; Deut. 27:21).

l. *ADULTERY*. There are four kinds of adultery described in the Bible.

- (1) *PHYSICAL* (Gen. 39:7-10; Ex. 20:14, 17; Lev. 18:20; Num. 5:11-31; 25:1-8; Deut. 22:22-27; Jer. 5:8; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 21:8).
- (2) *SPIRITUAL* (Jer. 3:8-9).
- (3) *MENTAL* (Matt. 5:27-28).
- (4) *MARITAL* (Matt. 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18). Matthew is the only writer who records the exception.
- (5) Other Old Testament passages pertinent to this study:
 - (a) Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (Jer. 3:1). To what does the *uncleanness* refer? This is the word [6172] translated “nakedness” in Genesis 9:22-23 (Noah), throughout Leviticus 18 (23 times), Leviticus 20 (8 times), and Ezekiel 16 (4 times). It is translated “shame” in Isaiah 20:4. *The Pulpit Commentary* states: “literally, *a thing or matter of nakedness*, i.e. some shameful thing, something disgraceful.”

Since one could be put to death for adultery (Lev. 20:10), this may refer to some lewd or licentious behavior. Rabbis disagreed over the meaning of the verse. This principle cannot parallel New Testament teaching for several reasons. First, she could only be put away for fornication (and we in this gospel age have no authority for putting the adulterer to death). She could not be put away for whatever “uncleanness” means (since it does not mean adultery). Second, she is free to remarry. In the New Testament, she would not be allowed to remarry whether guilty or innocent. If guilty of adultery, she has no authority to remarry; if innocent, no adultery has been committed that would break the marriage bond, which would allow for remarriage.

How do 2 Samuel 3:13-16 and 6:20-23 relate to this passage?

- (a) Ezra 10:3, 10-12, 44.
 - (b) Nehemiah 13:23-28.
 - (c) Malachi 2:14-16.
- (6) Other New Testament passages pertinent to this study:
- (a) John and Herod (Matt. 14:3-4; Mark 6:17-18). Note that there is an *accommodative* sense of the terms *married* and *wife* (as in 2 Sam. 3). Herod “married” Herodias (Mark 6:17), but she was his brother’s “wife” (Mark 6:18). How could Herod “marry” her if she was another man’s “wife,” which was “unlawful”? The answer is that he married her according to the legal customs of the day, but it was not a Scriptural marriage (one recognized and approved by God).
 - (b) Romans 7:1-4. A woman married to another man while her husband lives is an adulteress, as per Mark and Luke.
 - (c) 1 Corinthians 7:10-17. This passage can only amplify or clarify all of the preceding precepts taught by the Lord. However it may be interpreted, it cannot invalidate or contradict all other teaching (actually it was written five years before Matthew records what Jesus taught). 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 authorize separation but not divorce; verses 12-17 (desertion) likewise do not authorize remarriage.

Obviously, human beings have many ways in which to participate in the sins of the flesh; we must guard ourselves against those things and sow to the spirit instead.

SINS OF THE TONGUE

An entire book could be written on this subject since there are more than fifty types of “tongue” sins. We will begin with the most obvious and then define others.

1. *THE LIE.* According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, a *lie* is defined as: “**1.** A false statement or piece of information deliberately presented as being true; a falsehood. **2.** Anything meant to deceive or give a wrong impression... .” To *lie* is: “to present information with the intention of deceiving” (754). The first two lies ever spoken on earth will bear out these definitions.
 - a. Genesis 3:4. This statement is an outright contradiction of what God had said. In fact, the two statements are exact opposites. In verse 5 Satan offers a rationale to make his lie sound credible. He impugns God’s character, as well as his motives. Why do people listen to him? Could it be that we like people who tell us what we want to hear (2 Tim. 4:3-4)? Or do we just not have enough love and respect for the Truth (2 Thess. 2:10)?
 - b. Genesis 4:9. Cain lied out of fear; notice that he also stated the exact opposite of the truth. He knew precisely where his brother was.
 - c. John 8:44. The devil makes known his true character the first time we see him. Why do we ever listen to him afterward?
 - d. Although Satan speaks lies to propagate evil and cause deliberate harm, many of the lies of mankind are spoken out of fear, as in the following instances.
 - (1) Abraham (Gen. 12:13; 20:2).
 - (2) Sarah (Gen. 18:15).
 - (3) Isaac (Gen. 26:7-9).
 - (4) Joseph’s brothers (Gen. 50:15-21).
 - (5) Gibeonites (Joshua 9:3-15).
 - (6) Saul (1 Sam. 15:13, 20).
 - (7) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3).

e. Lie-related Sins of the Tongue.

- (1) *MAKING EXCUSES*. Just as the motivation in telling a lie may be fear, so contriving a plausible theory to explain, justify, or rationalize one's behavior is generally done out fear of reprisal.
 - (a) Adam (Gen. 3:12).
 - (b) Moses (Ex. 3:11,12, 13-22; 4:1-9, 10-12, 13-17).
 - (c) Aaron (Ex. 32:24).
 - (d) Saul (1 Sam. 15:24).
- (2) *DECEPTION* (Gen. 27:8-13, 16-29).
- (3) *BREAKING ONE'S WORD* (intentionally, for insufficient reasons) (Gen. 31:7, 41; Ex. 8:15, 32; Num. 30:2). Circumstances can change one's intentions (2 Cor. 1:15-23).
- (4) *BEARING FALSE WITNESS* (Ex. 20:16; Deut. 5:20; 1 Kings 21:8-14; Mark 14:56-58).
- (5) *FLATTERY* (2 Sam. 15:3-5; Ps. 5:9; 78:36-37; Pr. 2:16; 6:24; 7:5, 21; 26:28; 28:23; 29:5).
- (6) *SLANDER* (2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 31:13; Pr. 10:18; 1 Tim. 3:11; Deut. 22:13-19).

2. Other Sins of the Tongue.

a. *CORRUPT SPEECH*

- (1) Taking the Lord's name in vain (blasphemy) (Ex. 20:7; Lev. 24:10-16; Deut. 5:11; Matt. 15:19; Col. 3:8).
- (2) Reviling God (Ex. 22:28).
- (3) Profaning God's name (Lev. 18:21; 19:12; 20:3; 21:6; 22:2, 32). What deeds are associated with profaning God's name?
- (4) Corrupt communication (Eph. 4:29-31).

b. *GOSSIP-RELATED SPEECH.*

- (1) Murmuring (Ex. 14:11-12; 15:24; 16:2-3, 7-12; Num. 11:1-9; 12:1-8; 14:2-3, 27-29; 16:11, 41; 17:5, 10; 21:5-7).
- (2) Talebearing (Lev. 19:16; Pr. 11:13; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20-22; James 3:5-6).
- (3) Backbiting (Ps. 15:3; Pr. 25:23; Rom. 1:30; 2 Cor. 12:20).
- (4) Whispering (Ps. 41:7; Pr. 16:28; Rom. 1:29; 2 Cor. 12:20).
- (5) Railing ("reviling," NKJ) (1 Sam. 25:14; 2 Chron. 32:17; Mark 15:29; Luke 23:39; 1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Tim. 6:4; 1 Peter 3:9; 2 Peter 2:11; Jude 9).

c. *BAD ATTITUDE-RELATED SPEECH.*

- (1) "Smart mouth" (Gen. 4:9; Ex. 2:14; 5:2; 1 Sam. 25:10).
- (2) Mocking (Judges 16:10, 13, 15; 1 Sam. 25:10; 2 Sam. 5:6; Neh. 4:1; Job 21:3; Pr. 14:9; Matt. 27:41; Acts 2:13).
- (3) Cursing father or mother (Lev. 20:9).
- (4) Cursing a ruler (Ex. 22:28; 2 Sam. 16:5-13; 19:21; 1 Kings 2:8-9).
- (5) Pride (Boasting) (Gen. 4:23; Ex. 15:9; Judges 9:28, 38; 1 Sam. 2:3; 17:44; 1 Kings 20:11).

Can the tongue do anything good (Pr. 15:4, 23; 25:11-12; Isa. 50:4; James 3:9a)?

SINS OF ATTITUDE (PART 1)

Many of the “tongue” sins discussed in the last lesson spring from attitudes we ought not to have, which God designates as sinful. There are two difficulties in connection with possessing these undesirable characteristics. The first is that we may not be able to recognize some of them in ourselves; bad attitudes are deceitful that way. One way of avoiding them is to be honest in our evaluation of ourselves; the second is to have a spouse or friend who will point them out to us in a kind manner. The second problem with attitudes is that even when we understand what should and should not be done, we have a difficult time keeping ourselves from straying from the objective standards with which we agree.

Time is required to change attitudes. We need to change our actions and the way we think. Eventually, the wrong ways of thinking which we have developed over the years will change—if we work at it.

An attempt is made below to categorize attitude sins into various clusters. Admittedly, this effort falls short of perfection; some groupings may overlap, and some sins might be attributable to more than one source. The goal, however, is to achieve some sort of order.

1. *PRIDE*. This fault reigns supreme over nearly all wrong attitudes. Particularly prominent was it in the first sin ever committed (Gen. 3:5-6). As the serpent entices Eve, he explains that God commanded the first couple not to eat of it because they would become like God. When she realizes that the fruit will make her wise (like God), her pride demands that she eat it.

Other examples in the Bible in which pride played a role include: the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:4), Pharaoh (Ex. 5:2; 10:3), Aaron and Miriam (Num. 12:1-2), Micah's priest (Judges 18:19), Hannah (1 Sam. 2:3), Abner (2 Sam. 3:8), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11), false teachers (Acts 20:30), and the Pharisees who eventually crucified Jesus (John 7:45-49; 9:34).

- a. Despising someone (based on something you can do that the other person cannot). In Genesis 16:4-5, after Hagar had conceived (and remember that Sarah had not been able thus far), she despised her mistress. A similar situation existed between Hannah and Penninah (1 Sam. 1:6; 2:3). The fallacy of this aspect of pride is that we begin to think, “Because I have this talent, ability, etc., I'm better than others,” which in turn tends to cause us to view others as inferior and, therefore, worthy of our disdain. Paul asked the Corinthians, “For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you glory as if you had not received it?” (1 Cor. 4:6-7). This

pitfall could especially ensnare kings, such as Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:30-33; Deut. 17:20).

- b. Self-righteousness also results from pride and is closely related to despising someone, as the Pharisees felt about the publican (Luke 18:9-14). God warned Israel against adopting such attitudes (Deut. 9:4-6; 8:17).
- c. Arrogance. 1 Samuel 10:27 and 25:10. [Remember also Proverbs 16:18, 11:2, 13:10, and 29:23.]

2. *JEALOUSY / ENVY*. Did it play a role in the first sin? Was Satan envious of man in the earthly paradise that God had placed him in? Can the devil stand for anyone else to be happy or to enjoy the things that he lost for himself? Certainly we know that Satan likewise set about to destroy Job because of his righteousness; was not envy a contributing factor in that instance, also? The devil's motive in destroying Christ was primarily to keep Him from being the Savior of the world, but the motive of the chief priests was envy (Matt. 27:18). His success in getting people to listen to Him (thus taking away from their authority and popularity) grated on them to the point that they were willing to ignore both reason and law just to get rid of him. Joseph's brothers were likewise envious to the point of murder, but sold him instead (Gen. 37:11).

Jealousy played a part in conflicts between sisters, wives, and concubines—especially as it pertained to being able to have children (Gen. 16:5; 21:10; 30:1, and 1 Sam. 1:6). Sometimes jealousy was built on a political foundation, as when Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses (Num. 12:1-2) or when Saul felt threatened by David (1 Sam. 18:8). There was even a test for husbands who felt suspicious of their wives (Num. 5:11-31).

Occasionally, the followers of a great leader became jealous on his behalf. When Joshua heard that two men were prophesying in the camp, he asked Moses to forbid them. Why? He evidently thought they were a threat to Moses' leadership. Moses, however, rejoiced in the event (Num. 11:27-29). Similarly, Jesus' disciples told Him that they had forbade a man casting out demons because he was not one of them (Luke 9:49-50). Jesus, however, did not count this man as a rival but rather a helper.

3. *ANGER* does not always have to be a problem—if we do not let the sun go down upon our wrath or let the devil get control of us through it (Eph. 4:26-27). [Being angry—but not to the point of allowing it to be in control—was a huge factor in Luke's success in *The Return of the Jedi*.] There is such a thing as righteous anger (Matt. 21:12-13), provided that we handle it properly.

There can be named at least three problems man has with anger. One snare is that we may (carried by emotion) tend to punish someone *more* than his action

calls for. A second flaw in us revolves around our being more bent on vengeance at times than on giving someone a chance to repent or have a second chance. Third, we may be angry due to a wrong motivation, in which case we should surely be careful. Following are a few instances of these which may be found as early as the book of Genesis.

- a. Cain became angry because God accepted his brother's sacrifice but not his. His envy spread past anger to murder (4:5-8).
- b. The men of Sodom grew angry with Lot because his righteousness condemned their evil and would have prevented it (19:9).
- c. Esau (no doubt feeling justified) allowed his anger to turn to fury as he coolly planned to murder his brother at the right time (27:41, 44-45).
- d. Jacob rebuked his favorite wife for her insistence on having children (30:2), but no further harm occurred.
- e. Jacob similarly responded to Laban's hot pursuit of him (31:36).
- f. The sons of Jacob were "wroth" over the defiling of Dinah, their sister (34:7).
- g. Potiphar became furious after hearing his wife's account of his hired servant trying to rape her (39:19).
- h. Pharaoh placed his butler and baker in prison (40:2; 41:10).
- i. Judah pleaded for Pharaoh not to be angry (44:18).
- j. Joseph told his brothers not to be angry with themselves (45:5).
- k. Simeon and Levi unjustly put to death a man in their fierce, cruel wrath (49:6-7).

Other Scriptural examples are too numerous to list; anger is obviously one of the most common attitude problems that we need to guard against. The first thing we ought to do when we experience one of the shades of wrath is to ask ourselves the question God posed to Jonah: "Doest thou well to be angry?"

Attitudes Associated with Anger

- a. Hatred. Anger can quickly develop into hatred, which in turn can lead to spite, provoking someone, being an enemy, and even strife (or murder as in the case of Cain). Joseph's brothers (Gen. 37:4, 5, and 8; 50:15). [What about the enmity that exists between the two seed lines (Gen. 3:15)?]
- b. We should not abhor (Deut. 23:7), detest (Deut. 22:13), disdain (1 Sam. 17:42), or despise someone (as Michal did David—2 Sam. 6:16) even if the person practices evil or is an apostate brother (Jude 22-23).
- c. Spite (that "I'll get even" mentality). When Samson learned his bride was given to someone else, he burned up the Philistine grain fields (Judges 15:4-7), whereupon the Philistines burned her and her father with fire, which caused Samson to take vengeance on them. How frequently does it happen that actions done out of spite result in more harm to the afflictor than they do to the would-be victim. (Who fared worse: Jesus, or those who put Him to death to get even?)
- c. Provocation. Hatred can lead to goading someone on or provoking them (1 Sam. 1:6-7) with nothing good to gain; this attitude is nothing more than littleness and meanness of spirit.
- d. Enemies. The provoker may rightly be regarded as an enemy (1 Sam. 2:1). Hatred makes people enemies. In Saul's case he was not only jealous of David's popularity; he feared him and became his enemy (1 Sam. 18:29). Adversaries may be temporary (such as the sons of Zeruiah were to David (2 Sam. 19:22) or as Peter was to Christ (Matt. 16:21-23), but we all have one who not only hates us but is also our sworn enemy; his name even means "adversary."
- e. Strife (Gen. 13:7-8). Conflicts between brethren need to be resolved not ignored. Isaac avoided war through appeasement (Gen. 26:18-22). Compare Judges 8:1-3 with Judges 12:1-6. See also Proverbs 15:18, 20:3, 26:20-21, 28:25, 29:22, and 30:33. In the New Testament consider Romans 12:18, Galatians 5:14-15, 19-20, Philippians 2:3, and James 3:14-18.

SINS OF ATTITUDE (PART 2)

4. **HARSHNESS.** Not too far distant from anger is this one, which describes a person more concerned about self than others as characterized by this individual's rough and unfeeling treatment of others.
- a. Because of her anger and her hurt pride, Sarah dealt harshly with Hagar (Gen. 16:6). Nabal attempted to be harsh in his treatment of David (1 Sam. 25:3); it cost him his life.
 - b. The nation of Israel received some fairly harsh treatment from other nations in the region, such as Edom (Num. 20:18-21), Sihon (Num. 21:21-24), and Og (Num. 21:33).
 - c. Harshness cannot always be measured in rough actions but in non-actions, such as failure to help and refresh someone else (Deut. 23:3-4; James 4:17) or even refusing to come to their aid (Obadiah 10-14).
 - d. This attitude can seek to humiliate someone as Hanun did David's servants (2 Sam. 10:4); it is wrong (Deut. 25:3). It is just such an attitude that led the Philistines to "make sport of" Samson and the multitude to mock and humiliate Jesus.

Related Terms

- a. **Unforgiving.** If there is one subject Jesus taught clearly, it is this one (Matt. 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-35). Those who bear grudges have not forgiven (Lev. 19:18).
- b. **Unmerciful.** Joseph's brothers admitted that they had no compassion (Gen. 42:21). Even David lacked pity for Uriah the Hittite—a noble, loyal, and honorable soldier (2 Sam. 12:6). Perhaps one of the worst was Manasseh (2 Kings 21:16), although anyone who perverts justice would surely likewise qualify (Pr. 17:15; Amos 5:12).
- c. **Bitterness.** People who are bitter are also somewhat consumed with their own problems; notice the initial cold attitude of Naomi (Ruth 1:19-21). Could she have been a little happier? From what does she take her name (Ex. 15:23)? Did Job develop this attitude (Job 30:9-31)? Jonah is clearly presented as being angry, but can the Bible student not feel the resentment and bitterness in his actions and speech (Jonah 4:9)?

- d. Suspicious. Sometimes it is wise to be cautious, but possessing a suspicious nature in general can prove to be unhealthy (Judges 11:20). Hanun certainly listened to bad advice (2 Sam. 10:3). Come to think of it, did Satan not make Eve suspicious of God's motives for denying them the forbidden fruit?
5. *INTOLERANCE*. We live in a world full of disagreement, which is not an evil thing per se. We were not all reared the same; we have not all cultivated the same values. When it comes to the Scripture, we must conform ourselves and our way of thinking to God's objective truth. But in matters of opinion there must be liberty to express differences. Intolerance demands that others conform to my viewpoint whether or not I am right in my thinking, whether or not my decision is the best—or if it is related to pride. The men of Ephraim demanded that everyone conform to their point of view (Judges 8:1; 12:1).
- Some intolerance can take the form of prejudice, in which it is not so much a matter of clashing thoughts as it is a discrepancy of race, social standing, or educational achievements. Jephthah was looked down upon by his half-brothers because he was the son of a harlot. He became a great hero anyway (Judges 11:2, 7). Other sentiments along these lines may be found in James 2:1-5 and Galatians 3:26-28.
- a. Browbeating someone (either to berate or to get him to cooperate) (Judges 14:16-17; 16:16; 1 Sam. 20:30-33; Matt. 26:59-64).
 - b. Being inhospitable (Lev. 19:33-34; Judges 19:15-21). Conversely, God expects His people to be hospitable (1 Tim. 3:2; Heb. 13:2).
6. *COMPLAIN / WHINE / MURMUR*. Among his other sins, notice that Cain could not even take his punishment like a man (Gen. 4:13-14). Naomi complains about the way God treated her (Ruth 1:13).

Philippians 2:14 should be one of those Scriptures we stow away and preserve carefully in our hearts. We might connect 1 Corinthians 10:10 with all the occasions in which Israel murmured in the wilderness (Ex. 15:24; 16:7; 17:3, Num. 11:1, 4-11; 14:2, 27, 29, 36; 16:2-3, 11, 41; 17:5, 10; 20:2-5; 21:4-5).

A close associate with this category (and many of the above examples fit right in) would be *ingratitude*, which may result in a vocal complaint but definitely be seen in attitudes and actions. "Blow, blow, thou winter wind; thou art not so unkind as ingratitude," wrote Shakespeare.

- a. Genesis 25:29-34. Esau was ungrateful to God for his birthright to sell it so cheaply (Heb. 12:16).

- b. Genesis 40:23 and 41:9. The butler was at fault for forgetting Joseph.
 - c. Exodus 14:11-12. Israel forgets the privileges of freedom the first time something appears to go wrong.
 - d. Judges 8:34-35. Kindnesses go unremembered (Judges 18:18-20; 2 Chr. 22:10-23:11; 24:17-22).
 - e. Luke 17:11-19. Kindnesses go unpraised.
 - f. 2 Samuel 12:7-10. Participation in sin is to be ungrateful for all that God has done.
 - g. Deuteronomy 4:9. Don't forget what God has done (Deut. 6:10-12; 8:14-20). To help us remember, we have the Lord's Supper.
7. *REJECTION OF GOD* and His will. A full-scale rebellion took place when it came time to conquer the land (Num. 14:11). The people easily forsook their leader (Moses) and their God (who had shown Himself capable of leading them out of Egypt and through the Red Sea). A similar lack of faith accompanied their demand to have a king (1 Sam. 8:7-8; Deut. 17:14). God warned them about this eventuality at the time He gave them the law (Deut. 8:11-20).
- a. Willful ignorance. Hosea said his people were destroyed for a lack of knowledge (4:6). It was not that they could not know the will of God; they chose not to know. God condemns this attitude whether it concerns His law or someone else's sins (Lev. 20:4-5). The Gentiles originally followed this pattern (Rom. 1:21).
 - b. Being irresponsible (Deut. 22:1-4). Consider also Philippians 2:4 and 1 Corinthians 10:24. We need to possess a spirit of helpfulness.
 - c. Evil. Rejection of God is grounded in acceptance of evil. What else could be standing in the way? (See Genesis 6:5 and 8:21.)
8. *STUBBORNNESS*—frequently to the point of irrationality. Consider the men of Sodom (Gen. 19:6-9). Learn to what extremes people will go in order to maintain their sins. From Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 it becomes apparent that even severe chastisement will sometimes not motivate brethren to give up their wicked ways.
- a. Usually such stubbornness cares nothing about rebelling against those in authority, as Israel frequently rejected Moses (Ex. 6:9). These brethren are uncircumcised in heart and ear (Lev. 26:41; Jer. 4:4; 6:10, 9:25-26;

Acts 7:51). They would rather walk in their own willful way than listen to what God or anyone who loves them has to say.

- b. Sihon serves as an example of the obstinate person (Deut. 2:30).
 - c. But the greatest example of hard-heartedness is Pharaoh. Following his trial of rebellion against God is an arduous task (Ex. 4:21; 7:3, 13; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:12; 10:1; 13:15; 14:4, 8, 17).
9. *FEARFUL*. God's people are constantly encouraged not to be fearful. Remember the assurance God gave to Joshua (Joshua 1:5-9; Deut. 20:1)? How about Jesus' teaching to the disciples on this subject (Matt. 10:28; 6:25-34)? Paul wrote to Timothy to exhort the young evangelist out of that frame of mind (2 Tim. 1:7), and the book of Revelation was penned as a plea for faithfulness in the face of persecution (Rev. 14:13; 21:8).
- a. Adam and Eve became fearful—for a legitimate reason (Gen. 3:8-10).
 - b. Abram feared what men might do to him (Gen. 12:12-13).
 - c. Sarah feared the results of her actions (Gen. 18:15). [Can anyone hide from God a thought, let alone an action?]
10. *DISCOURAGEMENT* is an attitude that Satan can develop within us if we allow him to. Israel became discouraged often (Num. 21:4). When Moses mistakenly thought that Reuben and Gad would discourage the people, he chastised them (Num. 32:6-9). Consider also Deuteronomy 1:21, 28. Events had made Naomi discouraged (Ruth 1:13). Often times this attitude arises from self-pity (1 Kings 19:4). But, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

IDOLATRY / COVETOUSNESS

Why put these two sins together? Paul did (Eph. 5:5 and Col. 3:5). Ironically, these two sins are at the opposite ends of the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:3—"You shall have no other gods before Me." In other words, it is just as Jesus proclaims in the New Testament: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). God must be first; He cannot tolerate anything else being placed before Him—not because He is egotistical but because, in fact, He is the greatest power in the universe and worthy of all glory, honor, and worship.

Exodus 20:4—"You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them..." (Ex. 20:4-5a). Since God is all-powerful, no other beings actually exist—and, therefore, are unworthy of worship.

Exodus 20:17—"You shall not covet..." To covet something that is not yours implies several possibilities: that you do not trust God to provide it for you; that if He refuses, you don't trust His judgment; that it's something you need more than you need to obey the laws of God (and thus would break the one against stealing to obtain it); that there is, therefore, something more important to you than God and His righteousness.

Even in the Old Testament there is a link between idolatry and covetousness. In the New Testament the word translated "idolatry" comes from a close approximation of the Greek word *eidololatreia* that has for a root word *latreuo*, which is translated either "serve" or "worship" (see Matt. 4:10; Acts 7:42; 27:23; Heb. 9:14; Rev. 7:15). Once again, to be an idolater means to put something before, or in the place of, God; something man covets and wants to have or possess more than God's favor.

Since Paul's admonition is to Christians, we must recognize that we stand in jeopardy of committing the same sins that Israel did under the old covenant. We see them regarding idols time and again, and we shake our heads. But are we guilty of counting certain things more important than God, as they did? Do we covet a job more than the worship of God (even though He provides these things)? Do we covet material comforts more than having time to serve our Savior and His church? Do we covet recreation more highly than studying the Bible with someone? Perhaps we are blind to our idolatries!

Who can forget the haunting conclusion of John's first epistle: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen" (1 John 5:21)? It is not for nothing that he includes this conspicuous warning.

Besides the warning in the Ten Commandments, God also added Exodus 22:20 and 23:13, 24, and 32. Yet while Moses was up on the mountain, we find the children of Israel demanding that Aaron make them gods (Ex. 32:1). Aaron molded or fashioned them a calf and declared it was a representation of the gods that had delivered them out of Egypt (Ex. 32:4). Worse than that, they worshipped it and offered sacrifices to it (Ex. 32:8). They also engaged in the immoralities frequently attending idolatry. Thus, within a very short time, they violated just about every caution God had given them. No wonder we are likewise warned against idolatry. There are many aspects of this subject which could be discussed; following are a few important areas.

1. Observe the link between IDOLATRY AND IMMORALITY.

- a. Exodus 32:4, 6, 8, and 19. (See also 1 Corinthians 10:7. Notice that, when we give up being faithful in one respect, how easy it is to be loose in some other area.)
- b. Numbers 25:1-9. Which came first—the physical or spiritual harlotry? (See also Numbers 31:16-17 and 1 Corinthians 10:8).
- c. 1 Kings 11:1-10 (see also Deut. 17:17).
- d. Hosea 4:11-14.
- e. Romans 16:17-18, 2 Peter 2:1, 18-19, and Jude 16-19.

2. *OTHER FORMS OF IDOLATRY.*

- a. Leviticus 19:26-31. Notice what is forbidden: divination, soothsaying, mediums, familiar spirits, as well as various customs of the heathens such as shaving around the sides of one's head, disfiguring the edges of the beard, cutting the flesh (on behalf of the dead), or tattoos. [Two basic principles seem to be operative here. 1) It is wrong to trust in something besides God—especially as regards the desire to want to know the future or to communicate with the departed. 2) It is wrong to want to be like those around us (in the world and like the world)—especially with respect to their unholy or at least questionable pagan practices.]
- b. Leviticus 20:6-7. Seeking these alternatives is idolatry. The one who engages in these practices prostitutes himself.
- c. Leviticus 20:27. The penalty for these practices was death (see also 1 Sam. 28:3, 8).

- d. Deuteronomy 4:19. Worship of the sun, the moon, and the stars (along with the host of heaven) was also forbidden. The penalty for this sin was death, also (Deut. 17:2-5).
 - e. Isaiah 47:12-13. Add to the list the astrologers, the stargazers, and the monthly prognosticators. So much for the value of daily horoscopes. Any other similar means not specified would also be included (readers of tea leaves, palm readers, those skilled with tarot cards, ouija boards, etc.). The principle behind all of these forms is to obtain knowledge apart from the Word of God. In effect, all such efforts depreciate God's care and protection. Seeking them only serves to say to God that we do not trust Him or His providence.
 - f. Deuteronomy 18:9-14. All of the above are included here, but also added is the grievous sin of making a son or daughter pass through the fire (see also Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5; Deut. 12:31; 2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; 2 Chron. 33:6; Jer. 7:31; 32:35; Ezek. 20:26, 31).
3. They were not to eat of food sacrificed to idols (Ex. 34:15). Consider Acts 15:20, 29, 1 Corinthians 8-10. Compare 1 Corinthians 8:4 with 1 Samuel 12:21.

COVETOUSNESS

- 1. In the New Testament there is a noun, adjective, and verb form of this word. The adjective appears in passages like 1 Corinthians 5:10-11 and 6:10, Ephesians 4:19 (greediness), and 5:5. The noun may be found in Luke 12:15, Colossians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 2:5, and 2 Peter 2:3, 14. Paul uses the verb frequently in 2 Corinthians 2:11 ("take advantage of"), 7:2 ("defrauded"), and 12:17-18 ("take advantage").
- 2. Being over-desirous of money is the most common usage and definition of covetous, but it can be a very general word: one can covet much more than just money.
 - a. Possessions (Ex. 20:17). Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1-19).
 - b. In Genesis 3:6 Eve noticed that the forbidden fruit was "pleasant to the eyes." She coveted it. Even though she knew God's command to abstain from it, she desired and wanted it to the point of forsaking God's word. Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him the kingdoms of the world and their glory in hopes that HE would drool over them to the point of falling down and worshipping him. Jesus was not covetous of these things.

- c. Besides wealth and possessions, people covet power and prestige.
 - (1) Simon (Acts 8:9,13,18-19).
 - (2) False teachers (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Tim. 3:6-7; 3 John 9-10).
 - d. Adultery (and fornication) can even be categorized as covetousness (Ex. 20:17; Jer. 5:8).
3. However, covetousness usually means the unlawful desire to possess; following are some sins associated with *covetousness*.
- a. Greed (Gen. 13:10-11; 14:11-12; 25:31).
 - b. Stealing (Ex. 20:15; Lev. 6:2-4; 19:13; Joshua 7:11).
 - c. Stealing men for profit (kidnaping—Deut. 24:7).
 - (1) Using what belongs to someone else (Ex. 22:5).
 - (2) Not paying what one owes (Gen. 31:42).
 - (3) Removing a neighbor's landmark (Deut. 19:14; 27:17).
 - d. Usury (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-37; Deut. 23:19-20).
 - e. Bribes (Ex. 23:8; Deut. 10:17; 16:19; 27:25). (Judas—Matt. 26:14-16.)
 - f. Using different weights and measures (Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16).
 - g. Gambling (Judges 14:12-13). Is it the unlawful desire to possess? In other words, gambling seeks to circumvent the ordinary means of obtaining something, which is through work and proper purchase.
 - h. Stinginess, as typified by Nabal (1 Sam. 25:10-11, 37).
 - (1) Spirituality, cheating God (2 Sam. 24:24; Mal. 1:7-8, 12-14; 3:8).
 - (2) In paying God's workers (Deut. 25:4; 1 Cor. 9:9).

Let us not love anything so much—especially money—that we make it an idol in our hearts. It will replace our love of God, which we must keep and maintain if we plan to go to heaven to receive the richest and best reward of all.

VIOLENCE

Violence certainly seems to be a part of our lives and culture. Generally, most of the things associated with violence stand condemned, although there remain a few justified uses of it.

1. *MURDER*. The most permanent and ultimate form of violence would be murder, and we need not venture far into the Scriptures or out of Paradise to find it (Gen. 4:8-10). Consider some facts about this event.
 - a. The violence was unprovoked.
 - b. The murder did not escape God's attention.
 - c. Justice prevailed because God placed a penalty on Cain. Later on, that retribution would be capital punishment (Gen. 9:5-6). Is killing a person guilty of murder (or one of several other crimes) using violence in return? Yes, but it is justified. Is it murder? No, it is retribution. The sixth commandment (Ex. 20:13) is often misunderstood to mean that no one should be put to death for any reason. Such is an absurdity in the face of the facts. Israel was to put to death the people of the land because of their sins (Deut. 7:1-3), as well as any of their own people who violated the various precepts of God's law (Num. 15:32-36; Joshua 7:19-26), including premeditated murder (Ex. 21:12-14). When someone is put to death because he is worthy of it (and has had due process of law), we call it justice, not murder. Murder is the taking of person's life when it is not justified, as in the case of Cain slaying Abel.
 - d. Murder costs more than it is worth. Look at the results of this one:
 - (1) Cain is punished by being separated from the occupation he loves; he will forever be remembered as the first murderer. Was his own life really worth living after he killed his brother? Did he accomplish what he thought he would? Was it worth the temporary satisfaction he obtained?
 - (2) "By faith Abel offered God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks" (Heb. 11:4).
2. The Old Testament distinguished between premeditated murder and manslaughter (Num. 35:9-18).

3. In the Old Testament a murderer would be put to death by the avenger of blood (Num. 35:19-21); in the New Testament capital punishment is the prerogative of the state (Rom. 13:1-7).

4. Murderers and mass-murderers in the Bible.

Cain (Gen. 4:8)	Lamech (Gen. 4:23-24)
Simeon & Levi (Gen. 34:25)	Pharaoh (Ex. 1:16, 22)
Abimelech (Judges 9:5, 56)	Saul & Doeg (1 Sam. 22:18-19)
Saul (2 Sam. 21:1-2)	Joab and Abishai (2 Sam. 3:30)
Rechab and Baanah (2 Sam. 4:5-12)	David (2 Sam. 12:9)
Joab (2 Sam. 18:14)	Joab (2 Sam. 20:9-10)
Ahab & Jezebel (1 Kings 21:9-11, 15, 19)	Athaliah (2 Kings 11:1)
Manasseh (2 Kings 21:16)	Joash (2 Chron. 24:20-21)
Herod (Matt. 2:16-18)	Herod the tetrarch (Matt. 14:1-10)
The Jews (Matt. 26:22-25; 1 Thess. 2:14-16)	Barabbas (Luke 23:18-19; Acts 3:14)
Herod (Acts 12:1-2)	Saul (before becoming Paul) (Acts 8:1; 26:9-11)

When one considers the numerous people of God who put to death others (and yet have never been considered murderers), it becomes obvious that the definition of a murderer must include the *motive* of the one who takes another's life plus the innocence or guilt of the one who loses his life. An additional factor would be that God has authorized the execution. Although personal (subjective) vengeance is forbidden (Gen. 50:19; Lev. 19:18; Rom. 12:19-21), objective vengeance (God-authorized) is allowed.

5. *TYPES OF SIN.*

- a. Mob violence (Num. 14:10).
- b. Lack of due process (2 Sam. 18:14).
- c. Premeditated murder (Num. 35:16-21).

- d. Infanticide (Ex. 1:16, 22; Matt. 2:16-18).
- e. Abortion. Notice that abortion must be classified as murder, since God does not authorize it and the child cannot be considered guilty or worthy of death. The question of motive is highly suspect in the vast majority of cases, but even if a woman convinced herself that she had a good motive, it would still be murder (Deut. 19:10-13; 21:8-9). 1 Samuel 19:5 defines innocent blood as one who is unworthy of death.
- f. Attempted murder. Saul was guilty of this crime as well as the actual act (1 Sam. 18:11; 20:33). How much of a penalty does “attempted murder” warrant (Esther 7:9)?
- g. Conspiracy (2 Sam. 11:15-16; 13:28; 15:12; Acts 23:12-16).
- h. Betrayal and treachery (1 Sam. 23:11-12; 2 Sam. 20:9-10; Matt. 26:14-16, 47-50).

SUICIDE (Self-Murder)

- 1. Instances of:
 - a. Saul (1 Sam. 31:4-5; 1 Chron. 10:4-5).
 - b. Ahithopel (2 Sam. 17:23).
 - c. Zimri (1 Kings 16:18).
 - d. Judas (Matt. 27:5; Acts 1:18).
- 2. Attempted suicide: the Philippian jailer (Acts 1:18).
- 3. Requested death from God.
 - a. Samson (Judges 16:28-30).
 - b. Job (Job 3:20-22; 6:8-11).
- 4. Active but disappointed seekers of death (Rev. 6:16; 9:6).
- 5. Philosophy (2 Sam. 18:13).
- 6. Violence. This general word first appears in Genesis 6:11, 13. The book states the “the earth was filled with violence.” According to *Strong's*, the word means:

“cruel (ty), damage, false, injustice, oppressor, unrighteous, violence (against, done), violent (dealing), wrong” (41). The word is mentioned several times throughout the Old Testament and is frequently mentioned by the prophets as a complaint of God against Israel. David described succinctly God’s attitude towards this sin: “The Lord tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates” (Ps. 11:5).

- a. *Fighting*. Judges 11:12, 20, 27. Fighting against someone is not necessarily sin. But, like killing, it depends upon the motive, the innocence or guilt of the opponent, and God’s authority. The people of Ammon were wrong in being prone to fight. Fighting on a large scale is called war, which may or may not be justified. Some wars are fought over nothing but a pretext (Judges 11:26; 12:1), but others are authorized (Deut. 20:16-18).
 - b. *Bloodthirsty* refers to the attitude of being prone to fight. Shimei accused David of possessing this evil attribute (2 Sam. 16:8). Saul and his house actually were bloodthirsty—God Himself uses the term to apply to them (2 Sam. 21:1). Joab and Abishai could be described by this term (2 Sam. 16:9-19), as well as James and John—at least on one occasion (Luke 9:51-56).
7. *Attacking or beating someone* (Deut. 25:17-18; 27:24). Of course, taskmasters frequently afflicted the people of Israel (Ex. 1:11-14; 2:11). One of the passages that deals with some of the possibilities of one person striking another is Exodus 21:12-27. Verse 25 points out that there are several ways for one person to injure another. Leviticus 24:19-20 prescribes a solution for dealing with the one who disfigures another. Samson was tormented a little by Delilah (Judges 16:19)—probably as a small foretaste of what the Philistines had in mind (v. 21). *Afflicting, tormenting, oppressing, and assaulting* are all words describing violent behavior toward another individual.
8. Other forms of violence include:
- a. Imprisonment (Gen. 37:22, 24).
 - b. Kidnaping (Ex. 21:16; Deut. 24:7).
 - c. Bullying (Ex. 22:22-24; 32:21; Deut. 26:6-7; Judges 18:25).
 - d. Arson (Ex. 22:6).
 - e. Excessive punishment (Deut. 25:3).
 - f. Violence in idolatry (Lev. 18:21)—passing through the fire. See idolatry (2ff), page 81.

Material from *WHEN IS IT RIGHT TO DIE?*

- 56 “No decent human being would allow an animal to suffer without putting it out of its misery. It is only to human beings that human beings are so cruel as to allow them to live on in pain, in hopelessness, in living death, without moving a muscle to help them.” – Isaac Asimov
- 57 “It was a story about when a depressed person who wanted a friend to put a gun to her head to relieve the suffering. When the friend protested, Jane Fonda said, with woeful eyes, ‘They shoot horses, don’t they?’”
- 70 “We would like to be able to make a life-and-death decision in a vacuum or even at arm’s-length distance from others.”
- 71 “...they do not consider the significance of their decision on the wider circle of life.”
- 71 “When people observe perseverance, endurance, and courage, their moral fiber is reinforced.”
- 72 “If everybody ended their lives as a solution to problems, the very fabric of our society would ultimately unravel, and with it the individual rights you enjoy.”
- 73 “...the tendency to place ourselves at the center of the moral universe.”
- 82-83 Viktor Frankl, Auschwitz survivor, in his book, *Man’s Search for Meaning*: “We who lived in concentration camps can remember the men, who walked through the huts comforting others, giving away their last piece of bread. They may have been few in number, but they offer sufficient proof that everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances.”
- These quotes are from: *When Is It Right To Die: Suicide, Euthanasia, Suffering, Mercy* by Joni Eareckson Tada (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992).

SATAN’S LIES

1. “No one cares.”
2. “There’s nothing more to expect from life.”
3. “I can’t live with this depression.”

4. “Nothing awaits me after death” (“I’ll be better off when this life is over”).

THE BIBLE’S RELEVANCE

“God by nature can’t say, ‘Well, people, I don’t know what to do about those machines and treatments you’ve invented. They’re new to me’” (132).

1. The book of Job.
2. Genesis 50:19.
3. Ecclesiastes 8:6-8.
4. 2 Corinthians 5:10.

FELLOWSHIP

One of the difficulties today that brethren are faced with is the problem of distinguishing between those to whom we ought to extend fellowship and those to whom it should be denied. Not surprisingly, opposite views are held by members of the Lord's church. At one extreme we find some who want to withdraw fellowship for matters of opinion (or at best poorly substantiated positions of highly questionable interpretation); at the other we find a kind of open door policy in which fellowship with just about anyone is justified or explained away. The proper view lies between these two extremes. There are several Greek words relevant to this study. The definitions below are based on the KJV.

1. The verb *koinoneo* appears eight times in the New Testament: it is translated as "distributing" (Rom. 12:13), "communicate" (Gal. 6:6; Phil. 4:15), and "are partakers of" (Rom. 15:27; 1 Tim. 5:22; Heb. 2:14; 1 Peter 4:13; 2 John 11).
2. The noun *koinonia* is used twenty times and translated as "contribution" (Rom. 15:26), "distribution" (2 Cor. 9:13), "communion" (1 Cor. 10:16 [twice]; 2 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 13:14), and "communication" (Phile. 6; Heb. 13:16). Twelve other times it is designated by the word "fellowship" (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 8:4; Gal. 2:9; Eph. 3:9; Phil. 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; 1 John 1:3 [twice], 6, and 7).
3. *Koinonikos* is found only in 1 Timothy 6:18 as "willing to communicate."
4. *Koinonos* appears ten times in the following ways: "partners" (Luke 5:10; 2 Cor. 8:23; Phile. 17), "partakers" (Matt. 23:30; 1 Cor. 10:18; 2 Cor. 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 Peter 1:4), "fellowship" (1 Cor. 10:20), and "companions" (Heb. 10:33).
5. Another set of words includes *metecho*, which is usually translated as "partaker" (1 Cor. 9:10, 12; 1 Cor. 10:17, 21, 30; Heb. 2:14; 5:13). Only in the book of Hebrews do we find it rendered "belongs" (7:13).
6. *Metekos* contains no surprises; it appears as "partners," "companions," or "partakers" (Luke 5:7; Heb. 1:9; 3:1, 14; 6:4; 12:8).
7. *Metochee* is used only in 2 Corinthians 6:14 as "fellowship."
8. *Sunkoinoneo* is found three times in the New Testament and translated as "fellowship, communicate, and partakers" (Eph. 5:11; Phil. 4:14; Rev. 18:4). The second of these refers once again to having fellowship by means of money. The other two Scriptures advise against having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness or being partakers of someone else's sins.

9. *Sunkoinonos* is translated as “partakers” or “companions” in each of its four appearances (Rom. 11:17; 1 Cor. 9:23; Phil. 1:7; Rev. 1:9).
10. *Summerizomai* means “partakers” in its only usage (1 Cor. 9:13).
11. *Summetokos* is used twice (Eph. 3:6; 5:7) and also means “partakers.”

With so much material available on the subject just in the New Testament, there is much to say. And what we have mentioned so far does not even include other related words, such as *sunanamignumi* (1 Cor. 5:9, 11; 2 Thess. 3:14) as an instruction to “have no company” with certain ones; *ekklino*—“avoid them” (Rom. 16:17); and *paraiteomai*—“reject” the heretic (Titus 3:10).

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER

1. 1 John 1:1-10. This is a fundamental passage on the nature of fellowship; these few verses in particular define important aspects of fellowship (as does the book of 1 John in general).
 - a. 1 John 1:1-4. Human beings may have fellowship with the Father and the Son (a marvelous fact!). John does not set forth here the means by which man is reconciled to God and thus obtains this precious fellowship.
 - b. 1 John 1:5-10. Since fellowship already exists between God and His children, John outlines ways in which fellowship may be maintained—or lost.
 - (1) God is light, and we must walk in the light to maintain fellowship. If we choose darkness, we lose His fellowship. Notice that this is not determined subjectively—by what we feel about it. God determines who is in fellowship with Him and who is not. We must “walk in the light,” which gives us fellowship with God and our brethren; if we do not, we have fellowship with neither. God uses an objective means for determining this matter.
 - (2) A second requirement for fellowship with God is that we confess our sins (1 John 1:9). We cannot deny we sin, but rather humbly confess them.
 - (3) 1 John 2:3-5. We have fellowship if we know Him; we can only claim to know Him if we keep His commandments. No obedience means no fellowship. Keeping His word is the means by which our love is perfected, by which we know we are in Him (see also 5:1-3).

- (4) 1 John 2:8-11. If you hate your brother, you are in darkness and, therefore, not in fellowship with the Father.
- (5) 1 John 3:4-9. Those who practice sin and lawlessness are out of fellowship with God. We must practice righteousness to remain in God's favor. That means "loving not the things of the world"—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life—1 John 2:15-17. It also means believing the truth with respect to doctrine—1 John 4:1-3 (consider also 1:1-2 and 4:14-16).
- (6) 1 John 3:17-19. It is not enough to simply refrain from hating your brother; you must love him as well (1 John 4:7-8). But that love includes certain responsibilities. By our thoughtful consideration (helping him in time of need) we know that we are of the truth.
- (7) 1 John 5:16-17. Repentance is essential to keep God's fellowship. The sin that leads to death is the one we refuse to acknowledge and repent of—and continue to practice.

To summarize, then, God will not fellowship with us if: (1) we do not walk in the light, (2) we refuse to obey him and do not keep his commandments, (3) we love the things of this world but practice sin, (4) we fail to repent of sin, (5) we fail to confess our sin, and (6) we do not love our brothers in the proper way.

- 2. But many of these points might seem vague or hard to define; therefore, we need to give some thought to specifics. This section will present a list of things we may have fellowship in; the last section will try to determine things we cannot have fellowship in.

SHARING AREAS

- a. Partakers of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4)
- b. Partakers of Christ (Heb. 3:14)
- c. Partakers of the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6:4; 2 Cor. 13:14)
- d. Partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1)
- e. Fellowship in the gospel (Phil. 1:5)
- f. Fellowship in giving (Rom. 15:26)
- g. Fellowship in salvation (Jude 3)

- h. Fellowship in acceptance of one another as brethren (Gal. 2:9)
 - i. Fellowship in worship (1 Cor. 10:18)
 - j. Fellowship in the Lord's work (2 Cor. 8:23)
 - k. Fellowship in sufferings (2 Cor. 1:7)
 - l. Partakers of future glory (1 Peter 5:1)
3. Now, for our last consideration, we want to think about what God wants us to share or not share in. Remember, if we want to have fellowship with God, then we must obey Him (1 John 2:3-5). To disobey God by having fellowship in that which is evil or that which God forbids certainly puts us in jeopardy of our own fellowship with Him.
- a. Don't participate in something that is evil—even if the majority seems to be doing it (Ex. 23:2). Notice this precept was violated in Numbers 13-14.
 - b. Don't become too close to false religion (Deut. 12:29-30). If we know the truth, why pursue error? More questions present themselves here than answers.
 - (1) If Israel annihilated these peoples, then who would be left to ask about the old ways? Perhaps the verse presupposes the fact that they would not kill utterly the inhabitants.
 - (2) Why would Israel become ensnared? After all, they defeated the natives; why would the conquerors want to adopt gods which were too impotent to save those who had now become the conquered? Strange? Yes, but 2 Chronicles 25:14-15 gives us an exact illustration of this oddity, which was authorized by Amaziah.
 - (3) We always tend to think of ourselves as stronger than perhaps we really are. ("I can view pornography; it doesn't affect me." "Fellowshipping false religion can't hurt me; I know the truth.") Paul advised: "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Some things might serve as a snare that we would never have imagined.
 - (4) People practice error; we tend to think of them as really rotten individuals when in fact in many respects they are just like us. They may hate *certain* forms of sin, love their families, etc. Once we notice the similarities, it becomes easier to minimize the *dissimilarities*, which leads ultimately to acceptance of their religion.

Unfortunately, the discovery that these are “good people” seems to suggest they have “good religion” as well.

- c. Joshua 23:11-13. Close association, such as intermarriage, can eventually draw a Christian away from God. Consider the tragic lesson of Genesis 6:1-2, 5—when the righteous intermingled with the wicked.
- d. Daniel 1:8-16. Daniel and his friends determined to avoid defilement from the king’s delicacies. We ought likewise to avoid the various contaminants the world presents to us.
- e. 2 Chronicles 18:1-3. Jehoshaphat, an otherwise godly king, allied himself by marriage to the wicked house of Ahab. Furthermore, the words, *I am as you are*, may be counted among the saddest words in the Bible. How could the righteous suggest such equality with the wicked? In 2 Chronicles 19:1-2 the prophet tells this king who erred, “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Therefore, the wrath of the Lord is upon you.” We (as members of the God’s kingdom, while avoiding the pitfall of self-righteousness) want to avoid anything that puts us on a par with false religion or would tend to equate the Lord’s church with denominationalism.
- f. 2 Chronicles 20:35-37. Jehoshaphat failed to learn this lesson and arranged a joint venture with another wicked king which also displeased God. We need to learn that we cannot join hands with those who are not brethren, to work with them. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 still commands us to “be not unequally yoked together.” We are not to be “partakers” with the “sons of disobedience” nor have fellowship with the “unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:7, 11).
- g. 1 Timothy 5:22 and Revelation 18:4. We are not to share in the sins of others. The verse regarding Timothy may imply that, by giving approval to others (who are unworthy), we can be guilty of sin ourselves.
- h. 1 Corinthians 10:17-22. Partaking of some aspect of false religion (such as its worship) is to share in the false religion.
- i. 2 John 9-11. Endorsing or encouraging false teachers is to make oneself guilty of their sins. Following are a few applications of this principle.
 - (1) A soul-winning workshop or some such event is scheduled. Men who have a reputation of preaching false doctrine are scheduled to speak. One has openly fellowshiped those in doctrinal error (not unlike Jehoshaphat); another has spoken publicly advocating false doctrines such as women should be allowed to preach and we

ought to fellowship all who were baptized (whether or not they did it to obtain forgiveness of sins). Do you:

- (a) attend the workshop including the classes of the men described above;
- (b) attend the workshop but avoid those particular men; or
- (c) refuse to support the workshop in any way?

Justify your answers based on the above Scriptures that deal with fellowship (considering God's view of it).

- (2) The husband in a family whom you have known for years dies. His funeral is held in a denominational church building. You know the service will include the use of instrumental music and include false doctrine being taught. Do you attend and participate? Attend only? Refuse to attend?
- (3) All the churches in town are invited to set up a booth for "Church" day. Do you put the Lord's church in the midst of them or not participate at all?

The principle discussed in this lesson will help us to answer questions like these. We need to make wise decisions on these matters; they are not just hypothetical questions. Fellowship is very precious. We do not want to withhold it from anyone walking in the light or extend it to those who are walking in darkness.

SINS OF CHARACTER

Numerous sins relate to a person's character. These are reflected in what he does, but it is more a matter of what he is. These might be termed character flaws or defects, but the fact is that, despite some natural propensities or inclinations, we are what we choose to be. We will begin with two of the most obvious ones from Proverbs and then list some of the others.

1. LAZINESS. The book of Proverbs is not the only place that describes the sluggard, the slothful man. Pharaoh accused the Israelites of idleness when they wanted to go into the desert to worship God (Ex. 5:8, 17). Although David was not generally an idle soul, when he was not engaged in his usual duties, he fell into sin (2 Sam. 11:1). In the New Testament Jesus spoke of the one who hid his talent in the earth as wicked and slothful (Matt. 25:26). Paul spoke of the Cretans (Titus 1:12-13). But most of the descriptions of the lazy person can be found in Proverbs.
 - a. Proverbs 6:6-11; 24:33-34. A general description.
 - b. Proverbs 10:26. Whatever task he is given, he will unlikely complete it or do it well (1 Kings 20:39-40, although the situation was contrived).
 - c. How lazy is he (Pr. 12:27; 19:24; 26:15)?
 - d. Proverbs 24:30-33. He does not take care of his property.
 - e. Proverbs 13:4. The sluggard has no real ambition (21:25).
 - f. Proverbs 19:15. His sluggishness keeps him from eating (20:4).
 - g. Proverbs 22:13. The lazy person is an excuse maker (26:13).
 - h. Proverbs 26:16. Nevertheless, the sluggard possesses good self-esteem.
 - i. Proverbs 18:9 declares his true character.
 - j. Proverbs 15:19 says that his way is always hard.
2. FOOLISHNESS. What are some of the Biblical definitions of foolishness?
 - a. One who does not fear God (Pr. 1:29; 2 Kings 17:25; Isa. 57:11; Jer. 5:22; Mal. 3:5; Rom. 3:18).

- b. One who mocks at sin and delights in perversity (Pr. 14:9; 2:14).
- c. One who engages in immorality.
 - (1) Adultery (Pr. 5:20-23).
 - (2) Drunkard (Pr. 20:1).
 - (3) Cannot control anger (Pr. 29:11, 20; Ecc. 7:9).
 - (4) Rape (2 Sam. 13:13).
- d. One who troubles himself (Jer. 26:19; 44:7) and his own house (Pr. 11:29; 14:1).
- e. One who feeds on foolishness and is a follower of frivolity (Pr. 15:14; 12:11, NKJ; Ecc. 7:4-6; Isa. 32:6).
- f. One who refuses counsel, wise advice, and correction (Deut. 32:28; 1 Kings 12:1-16; Ps. 141:5; Pr. 1:25; 12:1; 13:19; Jer. 2:30; 5:3; 7:28; Zeph. 3:2; Matt. 18:15-17. In fact, he outright despises it (Pr. 1:7, 22, 29-30).
- g. One who answers a matter before he hears it (Pr. 18:13). This could be due to bias and partiality (Pr. 17:15; Ps. 81:11-13; James 2:1-4), which gives rise to prejudice (Ex. 23:3, 6; Deut. 10:17; 16:19). One might for this reason know someone is guilty of sin and not say anything (Lev. 5:1).
- h. One who is right in his own eyes (Pr. 12:15; 14:14; 21:2; 26:12; 28:26 [cf. Jer. 17:9 and 10:23]; 30:12-13).
- i. One who allows himself to be deceived (Jer. 5:1, 31).
- j. One who makes a vow and does not pay (Ecc. 5:4-5).
- k. One who requites the Lord by practicing evil instead of good (Deut. 32:4-6).
- l. One who requites a righteous man by paying back evil for good (Gen. 44:4-5 although Benjamin had not actually stolen the cup; 1 Sam. 24:17; 25:21; John 10:31-32).
- m. One who does not rely on God (2 Chron. 16:7-9).
- n. One who does not understand the greatness of God's works or thoughts (Ps. 92:4-6).

- o. One who does not understand the basis for God's blessings and cursings (Deut. 32:26-29).
 - p. Those who think the Lord does not see (Ps. 94:7-11; Isa. 29:15-16; 40:27-28; Jer. 12:4; Ezek. 8:12; Zeph. 1:12).
 - q. One who denies the existence of God (Ps. 14:1; 53:1).
 - r. The believer who hears but does not do (Matt. 7:24-27, esp. v. 26). Two examples of this point are Saul (1 Sam. 13:13) and David (2 Sam. 24:10; 1 Chron. 21:8).
3. Some choose the ways of worthlessness (Judges 9:4; 11:3; 1 Sam. 30:22) and recklessness (Judges 9:4); they may be called scoundrels (1 Sam. 25:17, 25) and base fellows (2 Sam. 6:20).
 4. Some have forgotten God (Isa. 17:10; 22:11; 30:2; 65:1; Jer. 2:32; 18:15; Hosea 8:14; 13:6).
 5. Some have forsaken God (Jer. 2:13, 17; 5:19; 15:6; 16:11; 17:13; 19:4; 22:9), even to the point of dealing treacherously with Him (Jer. 3:20; 5:11).
 6. Some go so far as to strengthen the hands of the wicked (Ezek. 13:22). They love worthlessness (Ps. 4:2) and devise wicked plans (Isa. 32:7; 59:7; Jer. 4:22; 11:19). They walk according to their own imaginations (Gen. 6:5; Jer. 9:14; 11:8; 13:10; 16:12; 18:12; 23:17, 26). They are actually disturbed at good (Neh. 2:10) and seek falsehood (Ps. 4:2)—or what God has not commanded (Jer. 7:22; 19:5). They speak what is not right (Job 42:8) and openly flaunt sin (Isa. 3:9). Some even go so far as to mock God (Jer. 17:15; 2 Peter 3:3) and complain about His ways (Mal. 2:17). These are often more prone to trust in man (Ps. 118:8; Jer. 17:5); they do not mind fighting against God (2 Chron. 13:12; Hosea 7:15) or His people (Isa. 29:21; Jer. 2:30; 18:18; 20:2, 10; 26:8-9, 11, 24; 29:27; 32:2-3; 37:13-15, 21; 38:4-6).
 7. Overconfidence (Judges 9:26-29, 36-41; 1 Kings 20:11; 2 Chron. 25:17-24; Rev. 3:1-6, 14-22).
 8. Growing fat, becoming lazy, and indifferent (Deut. 32:15; Amos 6:1, 4-6; Zeph. 1:12; Hag. 1:4, 9). Frequently, when we become self-satisfied, we do not seek God (Jer. 2:6; Hosea 7:7, 14; Zeph. 1:6; 3:2; Heb. 11:6). When God calls, there is no answer (Isa. 65:1-2; 66:4; Jer. 35:17).
 9. Some do not prepare their hearts to seek the Lord (2 Chron. 12:14; 20:33; Pr. 3:1; 4:2; 17:16; Hosea 8:12 [Ezra is a counter example, 7:10]). Therefore they choose the inferior instead of the best (2 Kings 16:10-11; 17:8; Isa. 55:2).

10. Some do not regard the work of the Lord (Isa. 5:12). Basically they have or want no knowledge (Isa. 5:13, 24; 6:9-10; 27:11; Jer. 5:3-4, 21; 9:3; 10:14; Hosea 4:6; Micah 4:12). For them it is vain to serve God (Mal. 3:14), and worship is a weariness (Mal. 1:8-13; 2:17).
11. Some sin by leaving out what should be done (James 4:17). It is a sin not to plead for truth and to call for justice (Isa. 59:4, 14-15; Jer. 5:28; 7:28; 9:3).
12. A lack of compassion or mercy is also a sin (1 Kings 3:26; Job 22:7, 9; 24:10; 31:13, 16-17, 19, 21-23; Ps. 109:16; Isa 57:1; James 5:19-20; Ezek. 33:6-11; 2 Kings 7:9; Matt. 25:31-46). Some go so far as to oppress the poor and needy (Isa. 3:5; Jer. 7:6; Matt. 23:13-14).
13. Some are disloyal (Judges 18:19-20; 2 Sam. 16:17; 20:2, although Hushai was not actually disloyal). At its worst, this sin takes the form of betrayal (Absalom, Ahithophel, Judas).
14. Some, by their actions, make themselves odious, obnoxious, or repulsive (Gen. 31; Gen. 34:30; 2 Sam. 10:6; 19:5-6; 1 Chron. 19:6).
15. Some neither remember the covenant of brotherhood (Amos 1:9; 1 John 2:9-11; 3:15; 4:20), nor are they hospitable (Judges 19:15, 18 [cf. Gen. 18:1-8; Heb. 13:2; Rom. 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9; 1 Tim. 3:2]). Mary and Joseph were turned away from the inn (Luke 2:7).
16. Some are hypocrites (Isa. 33:14; Jer. 12:2; 42:20; Matt. 23; 26:25; Mark 7:6; James 1:8; 3:10-12, 17). "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15). "By love led, by duty driven" is not hypocrisy.
17. Some are shameless (Jer. 6:15).
18. Some sell themselves to the devil and do evil (1 Kings 21:20, 25; 2 Kings 17:17).
19. Some are prone to make excuses (Gen. 3:10-19; 34:31; Matt. 25:14-30).
20. Miscellaneous character sins.
 - a. Giving God what cost us nothing (1 Chron. 21:24).
 - b. Religion is secondary, not primary (2 Kings 4:23; Luke 9:57-62; 14:26-33; Col. 3:1-5).
 - c. Not remembering kindness (2 Chron. 24:22).
 - d. Disrespect for leaders (Ex. 32:1, 23).

- e. Keeping the temptress alive (Num. 31:15-16).
- f. Pursuing vanity (Ecc. 1:2, 14; 2:11, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26; 3:19; 4:4, 6-8, 16; 5:7; 6:11; 12:8).
- g. Using “spin” (Isa. 5:20; 29:16; Jer. 2:20, 23; 8:6, 8; 16:10. Hosea 8:2; Mal. 2:17; 3:8).

Our character can reveal itself in ways we might not think of. We are known by what we are and what we do. May our character reflect the integrity, the sincerity, the truth, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SINS OF DOCTRINE

History teaches us repeatedly and convincingly that mankind for the most part has never seen the importance of doctrine as much as God has. Many brethren today show a visible lack of enthusiasm for the subject despite the fact that studying the Scriptures and being diligent students of the Word is what we were once (and still should be) known for. Some have chosen to make pitiful arguments in which they labor in vain to prove that we cannot know the Truth. The Bible could not be clearer in its warnings or in its illustrations of failure and the subsequent painful consequences. Below is an attempt to categorize some of these.

1. DO NOT ADD OR TAKE AWAY FROM THE WORD (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Pr. 30:6; Rev, 22:18-19). They may not be changed (Isa. 24:5; see Jeroboam, 2-c-(1) below).
2. DO NOT TURN ASIDE FROM THE WORD. God laments such an action.
 - a. God provides general statements of warning (Deut. 5:32; Joshua 23:6; 1 Sam. 12:20-21).
 - b. Reasons for turning aside.
 - (1) False gods turn people aside (Deut. 11:16, 28; 13:5; 30:17; Judges 2:17).
 - (2) Pride can turn a king aside (Deut. 17:19-20).
 - (3) Things of the flesh turn people aside (Deut. 17:17).
 - (4) False teachers turn people aside (Deut. 13:5; Gal. 1:8-9).
 - (5) Lies turn people aside (Ps. 40:4).
 - c. Doing what God has not authorized (Col. 3:17) is turning aside unless one's motives are in harmony with the will of God, for a godly purpose, or to honor God.
 - (1) Jeroboam sinned greatly. Doing what God had not authorized was for selfish purposes (1 Kings 12:26-33). Specifically, appointing priests from any tribe was not authorized (Heb. 7:14).
 - (2) The two-and-a-half tribes did what was technically unauthorized, but they did so for the purpose of edification (Joshua 22:16, 18, 23,

29). The healed leper turned back and glorified God for His healing (Luke 17:15-19). One is always authorized to express gratitude to God.

- (3) Uzzah had pure motives, but he violated a direct command of God (2 Sam. 6:7). Should the Israelites have transported the ark on a cart (2 Sam. 6:3)?
- (4) Should Abner have made Ishbosheth king (2 Sam. 2:8-9)? Should the men of Shechem have made Abimelech king (Judges 9:6)? Should Joab and Abiathar the priest have made Adonijah king (1 Kings 1:24-25)?
- (5) We have seen, then, that motives are important. Obviously, acting from improper or selfish motives is wrong—even if good results. Acting out of pure motives, however, is not sufficient if one violates a direct command of God or a spiritual principle.

- d. Consequences of turning aside (Ex. 32:8-10; Deut. 31:29; Ps. 125:5).
- e. We should hate the work of them that turn away (Ps. 101:3; 119:104; Gal. 1:8-9).

3. NOT TURNING TO THE RIGHT HAND OR THE LEFT (Joshua 1:7; 23:6). The Word of God is balanced. It specifies where we should be. Omitting certain things will cause us to drift one direction or another. If we neglect love and grace, for example, we will probably head toward legalism. If we emphasize grace and love too much, we put ourselves in jeopardy of thinking that obedience is not important. Jehu was zealous about eradicating idolaters (2 Kings 9:17-10:28, especially 10:16). However, Jehu's zeal was limited (2 Kings 10:29-31). Some may emphasize study in place of service or vice versa. We must do all that God commands and attempt to stay balanced.

4. FALSE STANDARDS. For some it is not a matter of veering off course somewhat; they have a different set of standards to which they adhere.

- a. It might be their OWN standard (Judges 17:6; 21:25).
- b. It might be one that a person claims on behalf of God (subjective) (Jer. 23:16, 21, 30-32, 27:9-10, 14-16; 29:9, 21, 23; Ezek. 13:2-3, 6, 17).
- c. It might be someone else's standards (2 Kings 17:19). This is to say: "We don't like the standards we have (which God gave us); let's use some other moral and ethical system."

- d. Some like to hold to tradition (Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:5-13). No wonder Jesus warned about such men (Matt. 16:12; Mark 8:15). [The Sadducees renounced the resurrection (Matt. 22:23-33).]
 - e. In fact, some become downright insistent on error (Isa. 30:10; Jer. 11:21; Amos 2:12; 7:12-13; 16; Micah 2:6) and do not even want to retain God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:28). Some suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18) or willingly exchange the truth of God for a lie (Rom. 1:25). Some will pervert the words of the living God (Jer. 23:36). We always have the option to restore things the way they were; therefore we are accountable for not doing what ought to be done (2 Kings 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35). Some just plain despise authority (2 Peter 2:10).
 - f. There will always be those who speak what God had not commanded (Deut. 18:20; Acts 15) and do what God has not commanded (Deut. 17:3). One man made a priest of a person whom God had not authorized (Judges 17:5, 10, 12-13; 18:4, 30). One must respect the silence of the Scriptures (Heb. 7:14).
5. FALSE TEACHERS. In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 13:1-11 has a great deal to say about false prophets (teachers). First of all, there is a test to discern who is a false prophet—in this case he may even perform a sign or a wonder, but if his goal is to lead people to follow other gods, then by definition he is a false prophet (1-5). No one should listen to him (3, 8), nor be enticed by him (5-6, 10, 13). No one should listen to such a person, much less consent to what he is saying (8). He should be neither pitied nor spared (8-9). He should not be concealed (aided in any way) (8).
- a. The first test of a false teacher is to determine if his doctrine takes one away from God (Deut. 13:1-5).
 - b. A second test is the failure of his prediction to come to pass (Deut. 18:20-22).
 - c. Their motives can be to have their own following (1 Kings 13:11-32; Acts 13:6-10; 20:30), financial gain (Rom. 16:18; Titus 1:11, 2 Peter 2:15), because they are just factious (1 Cor. 1:10-13; 3:1-5; 11:18-19; 12:25), to have their way (Gal. 2:4-5), or just to cause people to be destroyed (Jer. 27:14-15; 28:15-17; 29:31-32; Rev. 20:7-10).
 - d. The end of the false teacher (Jer. 23:33-34; 29:31-32; 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Gal. 1:8-9).
 - e. The New Testament deals with the subject of false teachers about as frequently as any other topic. Below are passages presented from nearly

every New Testament book: some are admonitions; some deal with false teachings. We might wonder why there are so many, but God has put them there for a reason.

Matthew 7:15-20; 12:24-37; 15:1-9,13; 16:6,11-12; 19:3-12; 22:23-33; 24:11, 23-24.

Mark 3:22-30; 7:1-13; 8:15-21; 10:1-12; 12:18-27; 13:21-22.

Luke 11:17-23; 12:1; 20:27-40.

John 8:30-59; 9:18-34; 10:11-18, 31-39.

Acts 6:8-14; 13:6-12, 45; 14:19; 15:1-2, 23-29; 16:16-24; 17:5-6, 13, 16-32; 18:12-13; 19:1-7, 23-41; 20:29-31; 21:26-29.

Romans 16:17-18 [Most of this book is written to fight the false doctrine of the Judaizing teachers who insisted on the Law being kept.]

1 Corinthians 15 exposes the error of the teaching that there is no resurrection.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1; 5:1-4,12.

Ephesians 4:14; 5:6.

Philippians 3:2,18-19.

Colossians 2:4,8,18.

1 Thessalonians 2:3, 5-6.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3, 9-12; 3:1-2.

1 Timothy 1:3-4, 18-20; 4:1-3, 7; 6:3-5, 20-21.

2 Timothy 1:13-15; 2:14-18; 3:5-8, 13-14; 4:3-4, 14-15.

Titus 1:10-16; 3:9-11.

Hebrews 13:9.

James 5:19-20.

1 Peter 4:11; 5:8.

2 Peter 1:16; 2:1-3, 22; 3:16-18.

1 John 2:19, 21-22, 26; 3:7; 4:1-6.

2 John 4, 7-11.

3 John 3-4.

Jude 3,4, 8-13.

Revelation 2:2, 9, 14-16, 20-24; 13:4-8, 11-14; 16:13-14; 17:3-6; 18:24;
19:1-2, 20; 20:4, 8-10; 21:8, 27; 22:15-19.

6. Bad Leaders. Undoubtedly, men find many ways to make themselves bad leaders.
 - a. Absent (Ezek. 34:5-10; Zech. 10:2-3).
 - b. Profane (Jer. 23:11,14; Lam. 4:13).
 - c. Blind Watchmen (Isa. 56:10).
 - d. Hirelings (John 10:12-13).
 - e. Those who cause God's people to err (Isa. 3:12; 9:16; Jer. 2:8; 5:31; 23:1-2,13, 25-26, 32; 29:8; 50:6; Ezek 13:6-10; Hosea 4:9; Zeph 3:4; Zech 11:3-5, 8,15-17).
7. The Way of Prevention.
 - a. Knowing the Word (Joshua 1:8).
 - b. Taking heed to the Word (2 Kings 10:31; Rom. 2:8; 2 Thess. 2:10-12; Deut. 27:26, "confirm," make the law his standard—Jer. 9:3-4; Luke 6:46).

SINS PERTAINING TO THE SABBATH, CEREMONIES AND WORSHIP

Many verses of Scripture do not deal directly with character, behavior, or morality. Many of them pertain to things we might not consider important in today's world. We have been taught that details are largely unimportant and are the unwelcome remnants of a legalistic era. To be sure, Jesus did rebuke the Jews for leaving omitting the weightier matters of the Law, but even then He said they should not leave the less significant matters undone (Matt. 23:23).

Why did God call attention to details? After all, is He not most concerned about a person's attitudes? If one loves God, is that not sufficient? Jesus taught a principle which might be applied to this subject. "Why do you call Me, 'Lord, lord,' and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). The point is: Whether or not something that God commands us is important to us or not is irrelevant. The fact is, it is important to Him, or He would not have commanded it in the first place. If it was important enough to be given as a commandment, then mankind has the responsibility to obey it.

1. THE SABBATH DAY. There was to be no work on this day (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:14-15; 35:2; Deut. 5:12-14). Even before the ten commandments were given, God had prohibited His people from gathering manna on that day (Ex. 16:27-29). Later, the penalty for gathering sticks was death (Num. 15:32-36). Presumably, gathering the sticks was for the purpose of building a fire, which is a form of work specifically mentioned in Exodus 35:1-3. Later, selling is specifically forbidden (Neh. 13:15-22). The people of Ezekiel's day profaned the Sabbath (Ezek. 20:21, 24; 22:8; 23:38).
 - a. There were other days in which no work was to be done: the day of Pentecost (Lev. 23:21), the first day of the seventh month (Lev. 23:24-25), the day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27-31), the first day of the Feast of the Tabernacles (Lev. 23:35), or the 15th and 22nd days of the Feast of the Ingathering (Lev. 23:39).
 - b. There was to be no work in the Sabbath year or the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:2-7, 10-12).
 - c. Keepers of the Sabbath are blessed (Isa. 56:2, 6; 58:13-14).
2. THE PASSOVER. It was instituted as a memorial to God's deliverance out of Egypt.
 - a. It was to be made without leaven (Ex. 12:15, 19-20; 13:7; Deut. 16:1-4).

- b. No uncircumcised male could eat the Passover (Ex. 12:48).
 - c. None of the Passover lamb could be left until the morning (Num. 9:9-12).
 - d. None of the bones of the Passover lamb could be broken (Num. 9:12).
 - e. A clean man, not on a journey, who failed to keep the Passover would bear his sin (Num. 9:13).
 - f. The Passover could not be observed with any of the gates (towns) that the Lord would give to them (Deut. 16:5-6).
 - g. On the seventh day of the Passover, there was to be a sacred assembly, and no work was to be done (Deut. 16:8).
 - h. In the days of King Hezekiah the Passover had not been kept for a long time in the prescribed manner (2 Chron. 30:5).
 - i. In the days of Josiah they observed the Passover as it had not been done since the days of Samuel the prophet (2 Chron. 35:16-18).
3. **SACRIFICES.** God commanded a number of sacrifices to be offered to Him. Each one of these had particular instructions, which are listed below.
- a. The blood of the Lord's sacrifice could not be offered with leavened bread (Ex. 23:18; 34:25).
 - b. The fat in the Lord's sacrifice could not wait until morning (Ex. 23:18).
 - c. A stranger could not eat of the ram of consecration (Ex. 29:31-33).
 - d. The flesh of the consecration offerings could not be eaten the next day (Ex. 29:34).
 - e. No drink offering was to be poured out on the altar of incense (Ex. 30:9b).
 - f. An offering to the Lord could not be blemished (Lev. 1:3; 22:21-23; Mal. 1:8).
 - g. No leaven (or honey) could be used in a grain offering (Lev. 2:11; 6:17).
 - h. Neither fat nor blood was to be eaten (Lev. 3:17; 7:23-25).

- i. No blood could be eaten—whether as part of an offering or in any other context (Lev. 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10,12,14; 19:26; Deut. 12:16, 23-25; 15:23; 1 Sam. 14:32-33; Acts 15:20, 29).
 - j. The flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering shall not be eaten on the third day (Lev. 7:15-18; 19:5-8).
 - k. Flesh that touches anything unclean cannot be eaten (Lev. 7:19).
 - l. One may not eat the flesh of the sacrifice of the peace offering if he is unclean or if he has touched anything unclean (Lev. 7:20-21).
 - m. One could not kill an ox, lamb, or goat and not offer it to the Lord at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. 17:2-4).
 - n. It was a serious offense not to bring a burnt offering or a sacrifice to the door of the tabernacle of meeting (Lev. 17:8-9).
 - o. Eli's son abhorred the offering of the lord (1 Sam. 2:17); they kicked at the sacrifices and offerings (1 Sam. 2:29).
4. **WORSHIP.** God possesses very definite ideas toward worship. In the New Testament, we do not find anything close to the number of restrictions God specified under the law. Truly, we ought to be thankful for the greater liberty we have; at the same time we must recognize our own requirements and respect them.
- a. Aaron's penalty for not wearing a golden bell was death (Ex. 28:33-35).
 - b. Aaron was required to wear a plate of pure gold (Ex. 28:36-38).
 - c. Aaron's sons were required to wear tunics that covered their nakedness (Ex. 28:40-43).
 - d. No strange incense could be offered on the altar of incense (Ex. 30:8-9a).
 - e. Aaron and his sons were required to wash their hands and feet prior to entering the tabernacle—or be killed (Ex. 30:18-21).
 - f. The fire upon the altar of burnt offering could not go out (Lev. 6:12-13).
 - g. Nadab and Abihu put strange fire upon their censers (Lev. 10:1-2).
 - h. Engaging in false religion (offering a child to Molech) constituted violating God's sanctuary and profaning His holy name (Lev. 20:2-3).

- i. Touching the body of a dead person also defiled His sanctuary (Num. 19:13).
 - j. The one who failed to purify himself also defiled the sanctuary (Num. 19:19-20).
 - k. Every man had to give a ransom for himself when a census was taken, or there would be a plague (Ex. 30:12).
 - l. A man could not sanctify the firstborn of a beast for himself; it belonged to God (Lev. 27:26).
 - m. No devoted beast could be sold or redeemed (Lev. 27:28).
 - n. None were to appear before God empty-handed (Ex. 34:20; Deut. 16:16).
5. THE DEAD.
- a. Anyone who touches a dead body shall be unclean seven days (Num. 19:11-13), but he may keep the Passover (Num. 9:6-10).
 - b. Priests shall not defile themselves by coming into contact with the dead, except with certain close relatives (Lev. 21:1-4, 11; Ezek. 44:25).
 - c. The Nazirite shall not make himself unclean for even his father and mother (Num. 6:6-7).
 - d. The one who was in the tent of one who has died shall be unclean 7 days (Num. 19:14).
 - e. Whoever touches a dead body in a field shall be unclean for seven days (Num. 19:16).
6. MANNA was not to be left over night (Ex. 16:19-20).
7. THE ARK OF THE COVENANT.
- a. The poles were not to be taken from the ark of the covenant (Ex. 25:15; 1 Kings 8:8).
 - b. No one was to look into the ark of the covenant (1 Sam. 6:19).
 - c. Wrongful transportation of the ark yielded tragedy (2 Sam. 6:6-7; 1 Chron. 13:7-10; 15:11-15).

8. FOOD RESTRICTIONS were several.
 - a. No one was allowed to eat meat torn by beasts (Ex. 22:31).
 - b. Certain animals and insects were prohibited (Lev. 11—esp. 8,11,13, 27, 29-31; Deut. 14:3ff).
 - c. Beasts that die of natural causes were forbidden (Lev. 11:39-40; 17:15-16; Deut. 14:21a).
 - d. In the New Testament, God changed the law; all of these unclean beasts are now acceptable (Acts 10:10-16; 15:1-29); no prohibition is listed.
9. PRIESTS. Several specific instructions were given to the priests:
 - a. Priests had to wash with water before offering sacrifices—or die (Ex. 30:20-21).
 - b. Priests were not allowed to marry harlots, widows, or divorced women (Lev. 21:7,14; Ezek. 44:22).
 - c. The high priest was not allowed to uncover his head or tear his clothes (Lev. 21:10).
 - d. The high priest was not allowed to go out of or defile the sanctuary (Lev. 21:12).
 - e. The high priest could not profane his posterity (Lev. 21:15).
 - f. No descendant of Aaron with a defect may approach to offer bread, come near the altar, or enter the veil (Lev. 21:17, 21, 23); these defects are defined (Lev. 21:18-20).
 - g. No descendant of Aaron can eat of the holy offerings if he is leprous, has a discharge, has touched a creeping thing, or is in any way unclean (Lev. 22:4-6).
 - h. Aaron's descendants may not eat anything torn by beasts (Lev. 22:8).
 - i. Eli's sons violated the prescribed manner of offering the sacrifices (1 Sam. 2:13-16).
 - (1) Aaron and his sons were allotted the breast and the right thigh, but Eli's sons took whatever they wanted (Lev. 7:29-34; 1 Sam. 2:13-14).

- (2) All the fat was the Lord's and was to be burned upon the altar (Lev. 3:16), but Eli's sons also took the fat for themselves (1 Sam. 2:15-16). Because of these violations, God abhorred the offerings (1 Sam. 2:17); He also determined that Eli's two sons would not live (1 Sam. 2:34-35; 4:4,11).
 - j. After the captivity, it was not lawful to tax the priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers, the Nethinim, or the servants of the house of God (Ezra 7:24).
 - k. Priests were required to wear linen and not wool garments (Ezek. 44:17).
 - l. Priests had to wear linen turbans and trousers; they could wear nothing that would make them sweat (Ezek. 44:18).
 - m. Priests had to change their clothing when going into the outer court (Ezek. 44:19).
 - n. Priests were not allowed to shave their heads nor let their hair grow too long (Ezek. 44:20).
 - o. Priests were not allowed to drink wine in the inner court (Ezek. 44:21).
 - p. Priests were supposed to know and teach the people the difference between the holy and the unholy, the clean and the unclean (Ezek. 44:23; 22:26).
 - q. Priests were not allowed to eat anything that died naturally (Ezek. 44:31).
10. UNCLEAN PEOPLE.
- a. Women were considered unclean and were not allowed to enter the sanctuary for a specified amount of time after giving birth (Lev. 12:4-5).
 - b. A leprous man was considered unclean (Lev. 13:44).
 - c. Garments could be leprous (Lev. 13:47-59).
 - d. A house could be leprous (Lev. 14:34-48).
 - e. Some individuals were considered unclean and could not enter the congregation of the Lord (Deut. 23:1-3): eunuchs (1), one born illegitimate (2), and foreigners to the tenth generation (3) (see also Nehemiah 13:1).
11. UNCLEAN ANIMALS (Lev. 11:4-7, 10; 20:25; Deut. 14:7-8, 12-19).

12. PASSING ON UNCLEANNES. Contamination causes contamination.
- a. Touching an unclean beast makes a person unclean (Lev. 5:2; 11:39-40).
 - b. Touching an unclean carcass makes a person unclean (Lev. 11:8,11, 24-28, 29-33).
 - c. Vessels, water, and seed (Lev. 11:34-38).
 - d. Lepers, those having a discharge, and one who has touched a dead body can defile others (Num. 5:2-3).
 - e. Whoever touches the unclean person shall become unclean (Num. 19:22).
 - f. Whoever touches what the unclean person touches shall be unclean (Num. 19:22).
13. HOLY THINGS were to be respected.
- a. No one was to touch a holy thing, lest he die (Num. 4:15; 2 Sam. 6:6).
 - b. Holy gifts could not be profaned (Num. 18:32).
 - c. Saul offered a burnt offering without God's authority (1 Sam. 13:9, 13-14); David and his men ate the holy bread (1 Sam. 21:6).
 - d. Some priests ate unleavened bread among the people instead of at Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:9).
 - e. Uzziah presumptuously offered incense (2 Chron. 26:16-20).
 - f. No one was to defile the holy temple (Ps. 79:1; Ezek. 9:7; 23:38; 25:3; 44:7, 9).
14. PARTAKING OF HOLY THINGS.
- a. No outsider could eat the priest's food (Lev. 22:10-13). Anyone who did so unintentionally had to restore it with a fifth more (Lev. 22:14). Holy offerings were not to be profaned (Lev. 22:15).
 - b. No foreigner could offer these things (Lev. 22:25). Outsiders were to be put to death (Num. 3:10). Outsiders could not even assist in the work of the tabernacle (Num. 18:4) or come near the sanctuary (Num. 3:38).

15. ETHICS. Besides the ten commandments, God legislated ethics in some matters.
- a. One could not use buying or selling as a way to oppress someone (Lev. 25:14-17).
 - b. Land could not be sold permanently (Lev. 25:23).
 - c. Cheating someone was forbidden (Lev. 27:9-10).
 - d. An inheritance could not be transferred to another tribe (Num. 36:6-9).
 - e. The Levites were not to be forsaken (Deut. 12:19; 14:27; Neh. 13:10-11).
16. MISCELLANEOUS WORSHIP SINS.
- a. Copying the holy ointment was worthy of death (Ex. 30:23-25, 31-33).
 - b. No incense could be made for personal use (Ex. 30:37-38).
 - c. Sinning unintentionally against holy things required a guilt offering (Lev. 5:15).
 - d. One was prohibited from killing a cow or a ewe and her young on the same day (Lev. 22:28).
 - e. No sacrifice of thanksgiving was to be left until the next day (Lev. 22:30).
 - f. One could not eat bread, parched grain, or fresh grain until the same day an offering was brought to God (Lev. 23:14).
 - g. One was required to afflict his soul on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:26-32).
 - h. No person under the ban could be redeemed (Lev. 27:29).
 - i. The tenth one of the flock or herd could not be exchanged; if it was both belonged to the Lord, and they could not be redeemed (Lev. 27:32-33).
 - j. The Levites were restricted from watching the holy things being covered (Num. 4:19-20).
 - k. The Levites were prohibited from working after then age of 50 (Num. 8:25).

- l. The Levites were prohibited from coming near the sanctuary or the altar; if they did, they would die, and so would the one who let them near (Num. 18:3).
- m. Israel could not come near the tabernacle of meeting, lest they die (Num. 18:22).
- n. Whoever had killed someone or touched any of the slain had to remain outside the camp for seven days (Num. 31:19).
- o. Tithes could not be eaten within the gates (Deut. 12:17).
- p. The firstborn of the flock or herd was sanctified to God; they were not to be sheared or put to work (Deut. 15:19).
- q. The firstborn of a donkey was to be redeemed, or his neck was to be broken (Ex. 34:20).
- r. The priests and Levites were to receive no inheritance (Deut. 18:1-2).
- s. The hire of a harlot or the price of a dog was not to be brought as an offering (Deut. 23:18).
- t. The house of God had been forsaken (Neh. 13:11; 2 Chron. 29:7).
- u. God tells His people they have perverted their worship (Isa. 65:3-4; Mal. 1:7-14). In fact, His house, designed for worship, had become a den of thieves (Jer. 7:11; 16:18; Matt. 21:13).
- v. The people had defiled the land (Jer. 2:7; 3:1-2, 9).
- w. Worshipers had to leave by a different gate from the one they entered (Ezek. 46:9).
- x. The priests had a certain place to prepare the offerings (Ezek. 46:20).
- y. Daniel would not defile himself with the king's delicacies (Dan. 1:8).

All of these commandments ought to impress upon us how that God is concerned with details—and that we should not depart from His Word, teachings, and principles—if our goal is to please Him.

MISCELLANEOUS SINS

Despite all of our efforts to catalog sins into various groups, there remain a number of them that did not quite seem appropriate in the other categories. Furthermore, they are difficult to group together because they are miscellaneous. We will, nevertheless, attempt to catalogue them.

1. **BEING A STUMBLING BLOCK** (Matt. 18:1-7). The Scriptures frequently point out the error of causing someone else to fall spiritually.
 - a. The ultimate stumbling block is, of course, Satan. He is dedicated to the destruction of as many souls as he can influence. He never tries to improve any individual—angel or man. He takes great delight in seeing someone fall into sin—any kind of sin (Gen. 3:1-6). Eve was deceived, but her free will was not trodden upon. She could have held firm to God's commandment and rejected the rationale the Devil provided her.
 - b. Eve proved to be a stumbling block to her husband (Gen. 3:6, 12). Adam was not deceived in the transgression, but he may have been influenced by his wife, realizing that the two of them were now unequal: she possessed knowledge that he did not have. His participation in the sin cannot be excused on that ground, since he too retained his free will.
 - c. Abram might have caused Pharaoh and Abimelech to sin (Gen. 12:13, 17-19; 20:5-6, 13, 17-18). Isaac furnished the same opportunity to Abimelech (Gen. 26:10).
 - d. The Canaanites proved to be a stumbling block to Israel (Ex. 23:31-33). Therefore, God's people were to remain separate from them (Ex. 34:12-16; Deut. 7:1-5, 16; Deut. 20:16-18).
 - e. Sometimes, events (if we let them) can serve as a stumbling block when no one is actively working against us (Ex. 32:1, 23).
 - f. Aaron became a stumbling block by refusing to restrain the Israelites (Ex. 32:25). Eli contributed to the delinquency of his own sons in the same way (1 Sam. 2:29; 3:13). The sons made the Lord's people transgress (1 Sam. 2:24-25).
 - g. Balaam was a stumbling block to the Israelites by virtue of his advice (Num. 31:16). Jonadab did not do Amnon any favors with his advice, either (2 Sam. 13:1-5).

- h. The fainthearted were to return home lest they be a stumbling block to their fellow soldiers (Deut. 20:8). The ten spies caused the hearts of the Israelites to faint (Num. 13:26-14:10; Joshua 14:8).
 - i. Peter was very nearly a stumbling block to the Lord to keep Him from accomplishing His purpose (Matt. 16:21-23). How sad to think one of the greatest stumbling blocks to our spiritual development and fulfillment of our purpose may be ourselves! We should weigh our actions carefully and be sure that we are an encouragement rather than a hindrance.
 - j. Paul's goal of going to strengthen the brethren was hindered by Satan (1 Thess. 2:18).
2. DISRESPECT. Many verses of Scripture give the positive command to render "honor to whom honor" is due (Rom. 13:7; 1 Peter 2:17). Disrespect and dishonoring those who are worthy is sinful. Included in this category would be those who are disrespectful to:
- a. The land (Num. 35:33-34).
 - b. Others. Jesus commands us to do good to others (Matt. 7:12). No harm should be done to:
 - (1) The deaf (Lev. 19:14).
 - (2) The blind (Lev. 19:14; Deut. 27:18).
 - c. Parents. On the positive side, the Israelites were told to honor their fathers and mothers (Ex. 20:12), and Christians are reminded of this truth (Eph. 6:1-3). Violations, however, of these commands have existed in every era (Gen. 9:22-23; Ex. 21:15, 17; Deut. 21:18-21; 27:16; Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:2).
 - d. The aged (Isa. 3:5).
 - e. Leaders. The rebellious attitude of Israel is seen in their discounting of Moses so soon after the ten commandments were given (Ex. 32:1, 23). Ten instances of their disrespect for Moses are mentioned in Numbers 14:22, but there were many rebellions after this verse, also.
 - (1) People disrespected Josiah and his reforms, as the prophet Jeremiah shows repeatedly throughout his book.

- (2) Jesus, despite the clear evidence He presented of His Deity, was continually disrespected by the religious leaders of His day, culminating in His crucifixion.
 - (3) Paul was continually challenged by the Judaizing teachers, who respected Paul not at all; to the Corinthian church (which he began) he was forced to make a defense of his apostleship (2 Cor. 10-13, esp. 10:7-11).
 - (4) John was dishonored by Diotrephes (3 John 9-10).
 - (5) Those who lack respect for God's leaders (elders, preachers, teachers) lack respect for God (1 Sam. 8:7).
- f. God. There are probably thousands of ways to disrespect God. Every time a person disobeys God, it is disrespect, but we will consider only two examples.
- (1) God's own leaders showed a lack of respect for Him—Moses and Aaron (Num. 20:12). Those who lead should be especially careful to set the right example (1 Tim. 4:12). The fact that elders and preachers often become frustrated due to the continuous problems that they face is an insufficient reason to act unwisely.
 - (2) The second one shows the usurping of authority (Judges 9:6). The men did not have authority to make this evil man a king; certainly, he did not have the authority of God to accept it. Later Athaliah was guilty of the same presumption (2 Kings 11:1-3). Leaders do not have the authority to originate new laws and enforce them; they must abide within the Word of God that He has revealed. To act without authority (by instituting innovations in worship, for example) reveals a lack of respect.
- g. God's Word. Once again, disobedience to the Word of God shows a lack of respect for Him, and instances of it would fill several pages. Listed here are some well-known ones.
- (1) Joshua spoke the word of the Lord with respect to the rebuilding of Jericho (6:26); this prophecy was either forgotten or ignored, but it was fulfilled (1 Kings 16:34).
 - (2) Jehoiakim brazenly destroyed the scroll upon which the Word of God was written (Jer. 36:20-24). Some are not so obvious but just as ruthless in their destruction of the Word (modernists such as

those who comprised the Jesus Seminar or worked on translations such as the NIV) (2 Peter 3:16).

- h. God's people. Those who opposed God's people, the Israelites, in the Old Testament were not always showing disrespect for God; sometimes, God raised them up for that purpose (Hab. 1:5-6). But those who defied Israel without God's authority were punished.

- (1) Goliath (1 Sam. 17:8-10, 25).

- (2) Goliath's brother (2 Sam. 21:21).

- i. The church. Since Jesus nourishes and cherishes the church, He does not want anyone to defile it in any way (Eph. 5:29). It would thus be particularly disrespectful to attack the church (whether from within or without) (1 Cor. 3:16-17). [We cannot help but view those who are trying to turn the body of Christ into a denomination as detractors and destroyers of that which is holy—men and women who will suffer the wrath of the Lamb for their presumptuous pronouncements.]

- 3. PREJUDICE has been a frequent theme in literature (*Romeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story*, et al.). The Bible condemns prejudice, as well as what it leads to—the mistreatment of others.

- a. Sometimes people favor the rich over the poor (Ex. 23:3, 6; James 2:1-9), which may include taking bribes (Deut. 16:19; 24:17). We model ourselves after God's character, who cannot be bribed and remains impartial (Deut. 10:17). Consider also Proverbs 14:20-21, 31; 19:4, 7). [Oliver Goldsmith wrote in *The Vicar of Wakefield*: "The jests of the rich are ever successful."]

- b. Prejudice is an abomination to God (Pr. 17:15).

- c. Prejudice may result in the mistreatment of others. We may think that the poor deserve persecution (an extension of the view of Job's friends) (Ex. 22:21-25; 23:9). Certainly the men of Sodom were willing to mistreat strangers (Gen. 19); they were prejudiced against anyone whose thinking was not as perverted as theirs. One should avoid mistreating a neighbor (Ex. 22:26-27).

- d. It is wrong to reward good with evil (1 Sam. 24:17; Ps. 109:5). In Saul's case, his actions were based on his prejudice against David. In the same manner as Saul did Nabal behave, although his motives were of a pecuniary nature (1 Sam. 25:21). Although Joseph was testing his brothers, He acted (through his servant) as though his goodness had been repaid with

evil (Gen. 44:4-5). Although he had died, Joash repaid Jehoida the priest with evil by killing his son (2 Chron. 22:11; 24:20-22). Joash had become prejudiced in favor of sin and against God.

e. Prejudice in family situations is not only unwise; it can be a sin.

(1) Wives (Gen. 29:31; Gen. 30:1; Deut. 21:16).

(2) Children (Gen. 25:28; 37:3-4; 42:4, 36, 38; 43:14, 34; 44:22, 29-31, 34).

4. LACK OF FAITH (sometimes caused by fearfulness). Sometimes a lack of faith can be fatal; other times we can recover from it.

a. Abraham (Gen. 12:12-13; 16:2; 20:6, 17-18).

b. Moses (Ex. 3:1-4:17).

c. The Israelites (Ex. 14:11-13; Num. 13:31-14:9; Deut. 1:21, 29, 32; 7:18-19; 31:6; 32:20). Afraid of the Philistines (1 Sam. 7:7).

d. Joshua is warned ahead of time (Deut. 31:8, Joshua 1:5-9).

e. Gideon (Judges 6:15, 23, 27; 7:10; 8:6, 8, 15).

f. Gideon's son (1 Sam. 8:20).

g. The Philistines (1 Sam. 4:7-9)

h. Eli (1 Sam. 4:13-18).

i. Saul was fearful of David (1 Sam. 18:15, 29).

j. Abiathar the priest (1 Sam. 22:23).

k. David, after the death of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:9).

l. Peter (Matt. 26:69-75).

m. The apostles (Matt. 26:56).

n. General admonition (Rev. 21:8).

5. BEING A SOURCE OF HARM.
 - a. A priest could through his sin bring guilt on the people (Lev. 4:3).
 - b. Children suffer for their parents' infidelity (Num. 14:33).
 - c. Being a source of harm to oneself (Joshua 23:13).
 - d. Causing someone to worry (1 Sam. 9:5; 10:2).
 - e. Troubling the land (the people) (1 Sam. 14:29).
 - f. Causing harm to God (2 Sam. 12:14; 2 Peter 2:2).
 - g. Speaking what does not need to be said (Esther 3:4).
 - h. Evil treatment of others (Ps. 56:5).
6. CARELESS / NEGLECT / IRRESPONSIBILITY. These could probably be made separate categories, but they are somewhat related, also.
 - a. Moses lists several circumstances in which someone could be held accountable for being careless.
 - (1) Animals who harm or kill humans (Ex. 21:28-32).
 - (2) An open pit (Ex. 21:33-34).
 - (3) Animals who harm other animals (Ex. 21:35-36).
 - (4) Watching others' property (Ex. 22:7-8,10-14).
 - (5) Breeding practices (Lev. 19:19).
 - (6) Make sure that the roof is safe (Deut. 22:8).
 - b. We must not neglect what we are responsible to do.
 - (1) We must treat all—even an enemy with kindness (Ex. 23:4-5; Deut. 22:1-4).
 - (2) Israel had neglected possessing/dividing all the land (Joshua 18:3).
 - (3) Israel had neglected rebuilding the temple (Haggai 1:4-8).

- (4) Some refused to be of help when they had the opportunity (James 4:17; Pr. 3:27).
 - (a) Meroz is cursed (Judges 5:23).
 - (b) The leaders of Succoth and Penuel refuse to help Gideon (Judges 8:6-9, 15-17).
 - (c) Edom refused to help Israel (Obadiah 10-14).
- (5) We dare not neglect our salvation, our spiritual responsibilities.
 - (a) Salvation (Heb. 2:1-4; 3:12-4:3; 10:36-39).
 - (b) Our work (Rev. 2:1-7, 3:1-6, 14-22).
- c. Responsibility.
 - (1) Onan and then Judah did not fulfill their responsibilities to Tamar (Gen. 38:8-11, 14, 26; Deut. 25:5-10).
 - (2) Taking care of one's family (Matt. 15:1-9; 1 Tim. 5:8).
 - (3) Violating an agreement (Joshua 2:19-20).
 - (4) Failing to guard the king (1 Sam. 26:15-16).
 - (5) Enjoy oneself while one's brethren are fighting (Num. 32:6; 2 Sam. 11:11).
 - (6) Leadership (1 Kings 20:39-42).

7. MISCELLANEOUS.

- a. Implacable (Gen. 16:12).
- b. Unstable (Gen. 49:4).
- c. Meanness, Unfairness (Ex. 5:7-9; 21:20-21, 26-27).
- d. Selecting influences (Ex. 23:2; Pr. 13:20; 1 Cor. 15:33).
- e. Keeping silent (Lev. 5:1).

- f. Reaping and gleaning / re-reaping (Lev. 19:10; 23:22; Deut. 24:19-21).
When fighting a war, fruit trees are not to be destroyed (Deut. 20:19).
- g. Don't sow with mixed seed or wear a garment of mixed fibers (Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:9-11).
- h. Presumption (Num. 14:44-45; Deut. 1:43-44; 17:12-13).
- i. Jericho and other cities were forbidden to be rebuilt (Deut. 13:15-16; Joshua 16:26; 1 Kings 16:34).
- j. A king cannot be a foreigner, multiply horses, wives, or gold and silver (Deut. 17:15-17).
- k. It is wrong to convict someone on the basis of one witness (Deut. 19:15).
- l. A rejected foreign wife cannot be sold for money (Deut. 21:10-14).
- m. Dead bodies are not allowed to hang over night (Deut. 21:22-23; 2 Sam. 21:10).
- n. Men and women may not wear each other's garments (Deut. 22:5).
- o. Delaying to pay a vow is condemned (Deut. 23:21-23; Ecc. 5:4-5).
- p. Amalek was to be blotted out (Deut. 25:17-19; 1 Sam. 15).
- q. Asking for a king (Deut. 17:14; Judges 8:22-23; 1 Sam. 8:5-7, 9-10, 22; 10:19; 12:12-13, 17, 19; Hosea 13:11).
- r. Ceasing to pray for someone (1 Sam. 12:23).
- s. Numbering Israel (2 Sam. 24:2-4, 9-10).
- t. The wicked speaking the truth (Ps. 50:16; Acts 16:16-18).
- u. Being filled with "eastern ways" (Isa. 2:6), the ways of Syria, Assyria, and Ammon.
- v. Seething a kid is his mother's milk (Ex. 23:19; 34:26; Deut. 14:21).
- w. Do not take the mother bird with her young (Deut. 22:6-7).

This last miscellaneous and seemingly insignificant commandment carries with it the same blessing as the one attached to the fifth commandment—long life. Truly, we must

avoid SIN—violating any of God’s commands. May all who profess to be Christians serve Him in loving obedience.