

The Truth about Sin, 1 Samuel 15:18-28, Galatians 6:7-8

Adapted from "Truths About Sin" by Charles Wall, Jr. @ SermonCentral.Com

This month I have been introducing you to the Heidelberg Catechism as a teaching aid to help you and your family grow deeper in your faith. But since the Catechism is designed to run for a year, we have only been able to look at the first five weeks together. And the problem with that is that all we have looked at so far are the "*misery of my sin*" questions (which has been kind of depressing). But I have good news for you, next week I will get you started in the questions dealing with how Jesus Christ saves us (Lord's Day 5-32). Then you can continue reading for yourself and after that, read also the questions on how we can express our gratitude to God (Lord's Day 33-52). I hope you will continue.

But for today, let's just take one more look at the nature of sin. Question nine of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, "*But doesn't God do us an injustice by requiring in His law what we are unable to do?*"

And the answer is: No, God created humans with the ability to keep the law. They, however, tempted by the Devil, in reckless disobedience robbed themselves and all their descendants of these gifts. (c. 1989 Faith Alive version of HC)

Tempted, disobedient, and robbed. Today let's look at the truth about sin.

1. Sin will take you further than you want to go.
2. Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay.
3. Sin will cost you more than you want to pay.

Dermatologist Michael Kalman has issued a warning to those who constantly strive for that golden brown suntan, "***Today's deeply tanned beauties are tomorrow's wrinkled prunes.***" In a similar way, sin is kind of like getting a suntan. It may look great today, it may be fun or exciting today, but tomorrow is a different story.

Have you have heard the saying: *everything fun is either illegal, immoral or fattening?* Well it's not true. The problem is that what we are often offered is only a cheap imitation of fun. **Psalm16:11** declares, "***In Thy presence is fullness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures forever.***" "Fullness of joy" and "pleasures forever" both sound pretty good to me.

So it is a lie from Satan that sin is fun and godliness is boring. The truth about sin as it is revealed in the Bible and in human experience is far different from the bill of goods Satan tries to sell us. The devil is a liar. The truth about sin is that it is deceptive, destructive, and deadly. And as our New Testament Scripture points out: whatever you sow is what you will reap--either to the flesh or to the Spirit.

In light of that, let us look at these truths about sin:

First, SIN WILL TAKE YOU FURTHER THAN YOU WANT TO GO! The Bible is filled with cautionary tales of great people who were brought low because one sin kept leading to other “bigger” ones.

Jacob never envisioned the lengths and literally distance sin would take him when he first started scheming—with a bowl of beans—against his easily duped twin brother Esau. At first it was just a petty sibling rivalry and competition between these two very different brothers. But you never escape the truth that sin will take you further than you want to go even when that sin is simply a wrong attitude toward someone. Who could imagine that such childish competition would end with Jacob fleeing home to escape his murderously angry brother.

Or consider the **children of Israel**: a little over two years after leaving Egypt, they arrived at the border of the Promised Land. In preparation for entering their God-given land, Moses sent spies into the region; but the returning spies brought back a conflicted report. While they all saw how fertile the land was, some saw God’s ability to give them the land, but others saw giants. And when the fearful spies spread rumors through the camp the people focused on the giants and not God’s promise to protect them as He had been miraculously doing to that point. Believing the rumors, the people started complaining against Moses, which led to questioning God’s goodness and intentions, even leading to talk of returning to Egypt, I’m sure they never realized that their sin of unbelief would end with none of them ever entering the Promised Land. They didn’t realize that sin always takes you further than you want to go. *In Israel’s case, 40 years further.*

Then there was **Saul**, Israel’s first king. In his early years, he was humble, obedient to God, filled with the Spirit. But then the idea of being the king went to his head. One day being impatient for Samuel the priest to arrive Saul decided to offer his own sacrifice at the Tabernacle—that was Saul’s first step into disobedience. After that as we read today, under God’s specific instructions to wipe out everything—all people all livestock—of the evil Amalekite nation, instead Saul listened to his soldiers and decided to keep as a prisoner their king Agag, and to spare the best of the sheep and cattle—so they could offer them to God—so he said. But from that act of disobedience forward Saul’s kingship spiraled out of control.

Contrary to another FALSE wisdom saying: ***Initial obedience is always better than getting forgiveness later.***

Or consider the next king. **David** was truly one of the great men of all time. Declared “a man after God’s own heart,” David was always sensitive to God’s guidance (1 Samuel 13:14). He was a great warrior, a wise man, a gifted musician, and a completely godly man except for that one affair with Bathsheba and Uriah

1 Kings 15: 5

David did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and did not turn aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.

This single instance of sin caused David and his family more pain and heartache than he could ever have imagined.

On this occasion, while the army was out fighting battles for him and the country, King David was loafing at home, which was perhaps his first mistake. The Bible records that being sleepless David arose from his bed and walked around the roof of the King's house. As he looked over the rooftops of Jerusalem, he spied a beautiful woman bathing. Asking who this was, he was told this is Bathsheba the wife of Uriah, one of David's valiant soldiers. But David sent for her anyway and committed adultery with her.

It is very doubtful, that when David first looked from his roof top and saw Bathsheba that he ever planned to commit adultery with her, but he didn't stop to realize that sin will take you further than you want to go. Instead of immediately turning away, he kept looking; and before that night was over, this godly man would sin in a way that he never thought himself capable of. Later on he would judge himself as worthy of death for this crime he committed. Sin will always take you further than you want to go.

But, what about the next king: **Solomon**? He was supposedly the wisest man, other than Jesus, who ever lived. Surely if anyone could keep from falling into sin's trap, it would be Solomon. But Solomon's love for women, contrary to God's command, led him to eventually marry 700 wives and keep another 300 concubines.

God gave specific instructions for the future kings of Israel back when the nation first came into the land.

[God] said, "Neither shall [the king] multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away" (Deuteronomy 17:17)

As a young king, Solomon had prayed for the wisdom to guide God's people Israel. And God had replied that He would not only give Solomon wisdom but great wealth and fame as long

as long as you walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, (1 Kings 3:14).

Did you notice the condition placed on God's continued blessing?

Now who knows what Solomon thought? But it is possible that he thought something to the effect of, "*I'm Solomon, wisest of the wise, blessed with God's wisdom. I don't have to worry about others turning my heart away from God. I can handle all these wives. This isn't going to affect my relationship with God.*" **How often have we thought similarly when justifying our actions (our sin?)--this won't have any effect on me?** But even the wisest man on earth could not escape the truth that sin will take you further than you want to go.

Not long ago the majestic lodge pole pines of Colorado began falling to the ground. Some of these trees were over 400 years old. They were already standing before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock. Over the centuries they had been struck by lightning, braved great windstorms, and even defied an earthquake. In the end, however, all these mighty trees were killed by a little beetle boring under their bark. Around 1996 a long period of drought and too many mature trees, let the pine beetle infestation get out of control until these little bugs had killed all those mighty trees. Now lodge pole pines are almost completely extinct in mountains of Colorado.

That's what sin does. It may seem so small and insignificant at first, but it continues to gnaw away at your spiritual life and grows until, if left unchecked, it leads to your downfall.

SIN WILL TAKE YOU FURTHER THAN YOU WANT TO GO AND KEEP YOU LONGER THAN YOU WANT TO STAY!

Jacob probably did not realize when he first started harboring jealousy toward his brother's first-born birthright, how that would get a grip on him and gnaw at him over the years--so much so that he would end up, with Mom's help, impersonating his brother and lying to his father. But sin, if it is not dealt with, will keep you longer than you want to stay.

And the **children of Israel** probably never realized when they first questioned whether God could lead them victoriously into the Promised Land that their sin would result in their wandering in the wilderness for the next 40 years.

And **David** probably expected his affair with Bathsheba to just be a "one-night stand." No doubt he meant to have his "fun" and forget about it, after all he was king. He didn't understand that sin will keep you longer than you want to stay. So with Bathsheba pregnant, David's tries by trickery to get her husband to spend some time with his wife to make it appear that the baby was Uriah's. His scheme failed.

You might recall that, having been brought from the battle field, Uriah refused to go home to enjoy the comfort of his wife while his fellow soldiers were fighting and dying. So David sent Uriah back to the battle with secret instructions to have him killed. Had David known that his lust would lead to adultery which would lead him to murder one of his most loyal soldiers and that his sin would still be exposed and he would have to marry Bathsheba, he would have never have fetched her to his house. That night when he saw Bathsheba on the roof it was just one act, but you see sin gets its claws in you and ends up keeping you longer than you want to stay.

How long did sin hang on to **Solomon**?--long enough so that he ended up building and with his wives worshipping at altars to Chemosh and Molech, false gods that people literally sacrificed children to.

1 Kings 11:4-8

when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods ... Then Solomon built alters for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrificed to their gods.

And you notice where he built them? On the Mount of Olives, right across the valley from the magnificent temple he had earlier built and consecrated with these words,

"so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no one else"

1 Kings 8:60

You see? Sin will take you further than you want to go and will keep you longer than you want to stay. But also SIN WILL COST YOU MORE THAN YOU WANT TO PAY!

What did it cost **Jacob?**--21 years of exile from his family doing hard labor for his greedy father-in-law. It also cost a 21-year break in his relationship with his only brother. When Rebekah originally decided to send Jacob safely away to her relatives, she told Jacob to go to them for a few days "*until your brother's anger against you subsides...then I shall send and get you.*" **But that word from Rebekah never came.** I wonder what Jacob thought all those years of waiting. I wonder what mental anguish he endured whenever he thought back to what he had done and why no word had come from his mother. What else did it cost him? He never saw his beloved mother again. She died before he could get back home.

What did it cost the **children of Israel?** It cost them the very thing they had been waiting for, the very thing they had desired for over 400 years--the Promised Land. It cost them God's rich blessing on their lives. It cost them their hopes and dreams. It cost them their lives too. I don't believe a one of them would have said that they wanted to give all that up, but you see, sin will cost you much more than you're willing to pay.

And Saul, what did it cost him? Having begun as a beloved king, Saul reigned for 27 years before David was anointed to replace him and 15 more after that. But he passed those later years watching and growing ever more mad with jealousy as David's fame increased while his decreased. Saul spent the last 10 years of his reign losing the love of his people, and the respect of his son Jonathan, as he hunted David across the countryside. Saul even killed 85 of God's priests and then all their families just for having shown hospitality to David. Desperate to again hear from God as he had once before, Saul even ended up consulting the same witches that he had formerly banned. In the end, fatally wounded in battle, he committed suicide.

And what did it cost **David?** Once deeply loved and respected by his subjects, he became known as an adulterer and murderer. The baby that was born to him and Bathsheba died. And for a time his intimacy with God was broken. Even today, if you ask people what they know about David, out of the three or four things they list, they always remember the story of Bathsheba. This became a permanent blot on David's name.

But that is not all. Because of David's sin, God's pronounced discipline was that the sword would not depart from David's house and that his reign would end in turmoil. And that happened soon thereafter as Amnon, David's son by one wife, raped his half-sister by another of David's wives, Tamar. Then Absalom, Tamar's brother and one of David's most loved sons, murdered Amnon in revenge for what Amnon did to his sister.

This launched a father-son battle that tore David's kingdom apart. Banned for two years for the murder of Amnon and forbidden to see the face of his father, in revenge Absalom begins to undermine David's reign and even succeeds--for a while--in stealing David's throne and forcing his father into exile. Then when David eventually

regains his throne, against his specific orders, Absalom is killed anyway, and to the disgust of his loyal officers who defended him, David weeps bitterly over the death of his son. You start adding it up and you will find that David paid a tremendous cost for one night of sin. Sin will cost you more that you want to pay.

What did it cost **Solomon**? God declared that He would tear the kingdom away from Solomon and his descendants. In other words, the splitting of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms was the result of Solomon's sin. It cost him peace throughout the kingdom as God raised up adversaries to war against him. But most importantly, it cost him the blessing of God on his life and his legacy. This king, supposedly the wisest king on earth, was responsible for the bankruptcy and downfall of the nation of Israel.

How about you? Have you paid much more than you were willing to pay because of becoming involved in a wrong relationship? Do you think any of these people envisioned what they would have to endure because of sin? Don't be lulled into thinking that somehow you're an exception.

It's easy to acknowledge these truths about sin when you're talking about "big" sins, such as David's adultery or Solomon's idolatry. But take note, these principles are just as true of "lesser" sins such Jacob's jealousies, and the children of Israel's unwillingness to simply trust and believe God, or Saul's rationalizing of God's commands, and Solomon's belief that he was too smart to succumb to sin.

How ironic that wise King Solomon once advised others to,

"catch the foxes, the little foxes, that ruin the vineyards while they are in blossom"
(Song of Solomon 2:15);

meaning that it is the little unchecked sins that can ruin everything, which he himself eventually learned.

Because, sin will take you further than you want to go!
Sin will keep you longer than you want to stay!
And sin will cost you more that you want to pay!

Let's pray.