

Overcoming Sin (Part I)

The Nature of Sin

Romans 7:13

I. Introduction: 1, 2

1. **3** This lesson marks the beginning of a series of lessons on “Overcoming Sin.” My goal is to make the overall series as practical as possible so that all of us may be armed with specific tools/strategies we can use every day to overcome sin.
2. As we begin a study on “Overcoming Sin” it is essential that we have an understanding of some basic concepts concerning sin:
 - A. We must come to a knowledge of sin’s characteristics, its qualities, its dispositions and its tendencies—that which makes sin what it is.
 - B. Sin is not an abstract concept, it’s a real, present and potent force in our lives and in the world.
3. In this first lesson in our series we will consider **The Nature of Sin**. And appreciate the *exceeding sinfulness of sin*.

II. Discussion:

I. **4** Sin Is Deceitful:

- A. God’s word warns us about the deceitfulness of sin (**Heb. 13:3**: “*but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*”).
- B. The word “deceitfulness” comes from a Greek word meaning “delusion” (Strong), “to cheat, deceive, beguile, that which gives a false impression, whether by appearance, statement or influence” it also is suggestive of something “void of anything profitable” (Vine).
- C. Sin does not tell us the truth! By its very nature, sin sets out from the beginning to deceive us! If more people could see sin for what it really is, more would avoid it.
- D. We can plainly see the deceitful nature of sin by looking at the very first sin (**Gen. 3:1-8**).

(1) **5** Sin deceived Eve by making her believe there were no consequences:

- (a) God “*commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; / 7 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’*” (Gen. 2:16-17)
- (b) Satan “*beguiled (“deceived” NKJV) Eve through his subtilty*” (“*craftiness*” NKJV; cf. 1 Tim. 2:14).
- (c) Through deception Satan convinced Eve there would be no negative consequences for eating the fruit, only positive consequences. That’s the sales pitch sin always makes! “Buy now, pay later!”
- (d) It is sort of like those deals that say “don’t pay any interest for six months”; but if you fail to pay off only a penny by the due date you must pay the entire amount of interest!
- (e) Don’t be deceived! The payment for sin always eventually comes due...the full amount, plus interest; it must be paid!

(2) **6** Sin deceived Eve by making promises it had no intention of keeping:

- (a) Satan told Eve that if she ate the fruit “*you will be like God*” (Gen. 3:5); in other words, you will be equal to God.
- (b) What did she find out when she ate? Satan’s promise was a lie! She wasn’t equal to God, she was separated and alienated from God!
- (c) All sin makes the same promises today. For example:

- (i) People drink alcohol or take drugs thinking it will provide an escape from the dreary reality of life. The opposite is the case, drugs or alcohol cannot keep that promise; they only bring a worse “reality”!
- (ii) People commit fornication with the promise of making their lives more fulfilling. Some turn to cheating, lying and/or stealing to provide a short-cut to success and increased wealth (Sheriff’s candidate in Gainesville; Waylon Clifton). These promises are all lies!
- (iii) Sin promises liberty, but only can deliver bondage (**2 Pet. 2:19**: “*While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*”).
- (iv) Sin promises happiness, but brings misery. Sin promises pleasure, but brings pain; promises success, but brings failure; promises life, but brings death (Rom. 6:23).

(3) 7 Sin deceived Eve by making itself attractive:

- (a) To Eve the fruit “*was pleasant to the eyes*” (Gen. 3:6); it was attractive, it looked great!
- (b) In the commercial world they call that “marketing.” You have to package products attractively in order for them to sell.
- (c) Sin is no different. Satan packages sin in an attractive package.
- (d) Beer and liquor commercials; tobacco commercials. Meth-heads, heroin addicts.
- (e) People are lured to the bed of fornication because of the lust of the eyes.
- (f) Sin undoubtedly delivers a measure of pleasure, but it is only temporary (Heb. 11:25); lusts are “*deceitful*” (Eph. 4:22) and we need to take this warning to heart.

2. 8 Sin Is Enslaving:

- A. The world scoffs when we begin talking about sin. The world pictures sin as something to be desired and embraced. It’s no big deal.
- B. But the Bible does not picture sin as a harmless object to be enjoyed without consequences. The Bible rightly pictures sin as a cruel taskmaster (think of the Egyptian bondage as a figure of sin), who catches us in a trap and extends its tentacles into every fiber of our being (think of being trapped in a spider web)(**Jn. 8:34**: “*Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.*”).
- C. Without God, without repentance; sin becomes a way of life; one gives himself over to the habitual practice of sin (**Prov. 5:22**: “*His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin.*”; **Acts 8:23**: “*For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.*”).
- D. **9** The deceitfulness of sin and its binding power become so strong that most fail to see that they are slaves (**2 Pet. 2:19**: “*While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*”). How ironic! False teachers promise liberty when they themselves “*are slaves of corruption.*”
- D. Only forgiveness can free us from the bondage of sin (**Rom. 6:17-18, 22**).
- E. Even though forgiven, bad habits are hard to break. Just ask Simon the sorcerer! **Acts 8:18-19**
 - (1) Our past sins will always be an obstacle to future faithfulness (**Heb. 12:1**: “*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.*”).
 - (2) The word “ensnares” is from a Greek word meaning to surround or prevent the advancement of a runner. Even when a specific sin has been forgiven it can continue to be a formidable opponent that seeks to hinder us from advancing in our service to the Lord.

(3) Sin is not a harmless friend; we cannot be lured into the lie that we can occasionally indulge in sin and walk away unscathed. The Bible warns of searing our “conscience” (1 Tim. 4:2). “It is easier to suppress the first desire than it is to satisfy all that follow it.” (Want a strategy? **Jas. 4:7-10**).

H. Many are smug in their sins; they scoff when others warn them about the enslaving nature of sin. Sin deceives them and turns them into an imprisoned fool!

3. **10** Sin Is Defiling:

A. Very few are able to see the extent to which sin defiles their character, their reputation, their soul.

B. They may even be able to hide that defilement from many people, but God always sees the stain (**Isa. 1:18**: “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”). The Hebrew word translated “scarlet” refers to a bright red dye. According to one famous Bible commentator:

“This color was obtained from the eggs of the *coccus ilicis*, a small insect found on the leaves of the oak in Spain, and in the countries east of the Mediterranean. The cotton cloth was dipped in this color twice; and the word used to express it means also double-dyed, from the verb *shaanaah*, to repeat...This was a fast, or fixed color. Neither dew, nor rain, nor washing, nor long usage, would remove it. Hence, it is used to represent the fixedness and permanency of sins in the heart. No human means will wash them out. No effort or man, no external rites, no tears, no sacrifices, no prayers, are of themselves sufficient to take them away. They are deep fixed in the heart, as the scarlet color was in the web of cloth, and an almighty power is needful to remove them” (Barnes, p. 72).

C. Sometimes men become aware of their defilement, sometimes they’re not aware:

(1) Aware: David (**Psa. 51:1-3, 7**).

(2) Unaware: **Titus 1:15-16**; **Heb. 3:13**: “but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

(a) Sin has so penetrated and been absorbed in their heart that such men cannot see their defilement due to sin.

(b) Such men are almost beyond the reach of the gospel.

D. * Make no mistake, sin is not harmless; its pollution stains our soul and life and separates us from God (**2 Cor. 6:17-7:1**). “perfecting holiness in the fear of God” requires a conscious decision and diligent effort each and every day.

4. **11** Sin Is Destructive:

A. By its very nature, sin cannot peacefully co-exist with God’s creation (**1 Jn. 3:4**: “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”; **Rom. 8:20-22**: “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.”).

B. Sin is incompatible with God’s holy and righteous nature; it is opposed to God’s laws and standards; sin upsets and ruins God’s peace and order; sin causes man to live in a way that the Creator never intended him to live.

C. Sin is also unrighteousness (**1 Jn. 5:17**: “All unrighteousness is sin”). Sin is opposed to righteousness and justice, wreaks havoc upon mankind, destroys lives, families, relationships, churches and even entire nations (**Prov. 14:34**: “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.”).

D. **12** The destructiveness of sin...

(1) Can be seen in the very first sin (**Gen. 3:16-22**). We can learn a lot from the very first sin:

- (a) Sin destroys man's innocence (Gen. 3:7); sin opened Adam and Eve's eyes that they knew right from wrong.
- (b) Sin destroys man's peace with God (Gen. 3:8); they were, for the first time, aware of the presence of God and were afraid.
- (c) Sin destroys man's physical world (Gen. 3:17); God cursed the ground because of man's sin.
- (d) Sin destroys man's life (Gen. 3:19); man became doomed to physical death because of sin (Rom. 5:12).

E. Sin is no friend of man. Sin is ugly, destructive and deadly.

5. **13** Sin Is Progressive:

- A. Sin is a voracious monster! It is never satisfied! Give it an inch, it will take a mile; give it a mile and it will take 100 more!
- B. Once sin has its foot in the door, it is like a metastasizing cancer until it infiltrates every corner of our heart (2 Tim. 2:17: *"And their message will spread like a cancer. Hymanaeus and Philetus are of this sort."*).
- C. The Lord and His apostles likened sin to leaven (Matt. 16:6, 11; Lk. 12:1; 1 Cor. 5:6-8). Sin, like leaven, starts out small, but its influence is inexorable, unrelenting; and it eventually affects everything within its reach.
- D. **14** The progressive nature of sin can be seen by:
 - (1) Looking at its development in less than 1,700 years from the Garden of Eden to the flood (**Gen. 6:5**: *"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."*).
 - (2) Without repentance sin led to an inevitable progression, or spiral downward, among the Gentiles (**Rom. 1:18-32**):
 - (a) Began with a refusal to glorify God as God and be thankful, that led them into idolatry (Rom. 1:20-23), a seemingly harmless infraction.
 - (b) This led downward to self-worship and perverted sexual behavior (Rom. 1:24-27).
 - (c) Finally God gave them over to a debased mind, in other words, he let them "stew in their own juice" and allowed them to spiral increasingly into the depths of more and more sin (Rom. 1:28-32; cf. 2 Tim. 3:13).
- E. **15** The progressive nature of sin can be seen in the lives of individuals: For example, David: Looked at Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:2)→inquired about her (2 Sam. 11:3)→lay with her (2 Sam. 11:4)→attempted to deceive Uriah (2 Sam. 11:6-11)→tried to ply Uriah with alcohol (2 Sam. 11:12-13)→had Uriah murdered (2 Sam. 11:14ff)→tried to cover it up (2 Sam. 11:25).
- F. As I've preached before: sin promises more than it can deliver, it keeps you longer than you wanted to stay, and it costs you more than you wanted to pay.
- G. Sin, by its very nature, is not a harmless, one-time experience. Once it lures us in, it enslaves us and continues to take us further and further down the "rabbit hole"; further away from God and all that is good!

III. **Conclusion:**

- I. **16** Sin is an ever-present reality; sin is a C-H-O-I-C-E! **Rom. 6:16**: *"Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?"* And, it is not a harmless choice! Rom. 6:23

2. Due to God's word we have an advantage over Adam and Eve. The Bible plainly tells us the true nature of sin→Sin is deceptive, enslaving, defiling, destructive, and progressive.
3. We need to learn to appreciate the “*exceedingly sinful*[ness]” of sin (Rom. 7:13).
4. Lord willing, in future lessons on “Overcoming Sin,” we will examine sin more specifically and suggest strategies for overcoming specific sins.

Adapted from *Overcoming Sin*, by Heath Rogers, 2013, One Stone Press, Bowling Green, KY (pp. 7-11).