

WHICH SIN IS THE WORST SIN?

LYING

RELIGIOSITY

BACKBITING

GOSSIP

BOASTFULNESS

LUST

ADULTRY

STEALING

GLUTTONY

RELIGIOSITY

ABORTION

By Conrad Barrett

By definition sin can be described as deliberately breaking divine laws, an intentional assault upon the rights and liberties of others, wickedness, a transgression, and in some cases neglect. Other words may be used to describe certain sins. Since sin relates to human behavior in so many applicable ways, it's difficult to be specific in all the ways when and where it is relative.

A number of words appear on the front of this brochure and most certainly they do not comprise an exhausted list of sins. No doubt there are many more that could be listed as a part of this subject.

"Sin is sin and no sin is worse than another", many have said; however, in one sense this may be true, but in another sense it may not be true. For instance if one allows the heart to be filled with murderous thoughts and would like to see another person dead, certainly, harboring such thoughts would be a sin, but actually committing murder is different. If the thought to commit murder is translated into action, then another person will be affected and such a person may have no knowledge that someone wants him or her dead. At least two people will become involved once a murder is committed. What began as a thought now has become an action and that action can go much further than the murder act. It can extend to families and others for generations. Bad thoughts, whatever they may be, and in whatever context they may be, can steer one in the wrong direction. But, if one cultivates them and acts upon them, the end of such a matter can become devastating as well as extensive.

Temptations and lust along with other thoughts and ideas, both good and bad, seem to be present for all to consider. Shakespeare may have offered more reason than philosophy when he said "to be or not to be, that is the question". Most choices are ours to make and some have more choices than others. Both Christians and non-Christians have similar patterns of thoughts to contemplate.

James, the half brother of Jesus, framed the subject of sin very well when he wrote: "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does He tempt man: But every man is tempted when he is drawn away from his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death". James 1:13-15 (KJV)

Based on what James has written, the sin factor seems to be one of progression in some cases. First, the thought and then the conception of sin (which really means that we harbor and cultivate the thought) and then, it becomes sin. The finality is death according to James. At least two kinds of death are described in the Bible: One is spiritual death and the other is physical death.

The thought of murder is a sin, but the commission of the act is worse, especially if you or I become the victim.

It is interesting to note what Jesus said about the punishment of sins and whom He was addressing in the context. Some of His strongest language was used against the religiosity of His day. Think about this: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, for ye devour widow's houses and for pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the **greater** damnation" Matthew 23:14. This same context appears in Mark and Luke, too. Consequences in this context differ by the usage of the word **greater**.

Pursuing this subject further another scripture should be considered. It's a quote from Matthew 23:23, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone".

Religious practice seems to be the target to which Christ was pointing and that target deserves our attention. Think about it!

Could it be that the religious emphasis of our day is misdirected? Are we over working the smaller things and neglecting the greater things? Does the emphasis of our day draw attention more to the harness than to the horse? Each Christian must judge these matters for himself or herself and not rationalize such judgment based on the behavior of others. Each must answer to God for whatever he or she has done during the course of this life.

“Weightier matters” which Christ pointed out in Matthew 23:23 relate directly to law (discretion) judgment (evaluation) mercy (a gift of forgiveness) and faith (an active emotion). Things such as tithing and other amenities and “doable” things are important, but the greater emphasis relates directly to the heart of the person. Be aware and think!

Could it be that we have allowed religion or the religious spirit to over crowd our spiritual life? Have minors really become our majors and majors our minors? Are we happier to be church members than Christians? Are we happier with our church building than we are with our fellow worshippers? Only God and we can really judge our hearts. Think seriously about this!

Denominational preference can be a good thing because it provides choices as to where and with whom we wish to worship. People need such diversification, but such diversification should not place anyone in a clandestine mode where superiority is taught and believed at the expense of others. Actually, Christians are Christians wherever they meet. Some of God’s most dedicated people meet in beautiful sanctuaries; others worship in caves, tents, homes and in very limited accommodations. Without respect for skin color, educational background or monetary status, God’s people belong to Him and true spiritual wisdom demands that we love and honor each other, regardless.

It is difficult to really know what is the worst sin because all sin is bad but the sin of religiosity may be among our greatest. Some church people seem to have difficulty in distinguishing between the church and the Christ of the church. Remember, it was He who pointed out to the religious leaders of His day that some damnation is worse. They seemed to be totally embraced in Moses and the law, but missed the greatest embrace of life when they rejected the greatest personality of all time who was in their company at that time. Too bad they got spiritual things so mixed up.

When Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, was hanging on a cross with nails driven through His hands and feet and when suffering was indescribable, He looked upon the religious folks and others of His day and said, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do”. That prayer was to Father God, but was spoken for the benefit of all the hearers assembled around the cross and for Luke to record in his book Luke 23:34. Now, we know. The theme of the crucifixion cannot be laid solely at the feet of Roman soldiers, but at the feet of the religious leaders, too. It’s true the Romans did the actual execution, but it was religion that was the energy that caused the crucifixion.

The greater picture which should be realized here is that Jesus died for us all. Now we can all be saved by believing in Him and accepting Him. Both the Romans and the religious zealots of the time of the crucifixion must shoulder some blame, but the offence was for a greater cause which was the salvation of us all.

Jesus clarified the divine position when He made plain the real cause of why He came. He said: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” St. John 10:17, 18.

In whatever vein of life we experience sin or its influence and in whatever way it may affect us, sin has the commission aspect, but also it has wages. Unless forgiven, “the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord” Romans 6:23.

All sin is bad, but can be forgiven. Only one is not forgivable. Matthew 12:31. It would be most difficult to say which sin is our worst, but we ought to think very carefully about the sin of religiosity. It could very well be our worst. Think about it.

The subject of sin is always before us and all sin has its particular influence, but we know that the consequences of some sins extend much further than others.

It is interesting to listen to the descriptions of some sins. If sin is sin and if there is no difference, then why don’t they all get the same degree of treatment? For instance lying doesn’t seem to be as distasteful as adultery and

adultery doesn't seem to equal the same consequences as some other sins. Perhaps it may be in our interpretation, or maybe we are just getting use to certain sins.

Sin is sin and all sin is bad, and we must all answer to God for our behavior, whether good or bad. Justification or condemnation may be more in the mind of people than in the mind of God.

Who can say that one sin is greater or worse than another? We need both the Bible and the Holy Spirit to give us guidance here.

The good message that we have is that Jesus Christ forgives us our sins when we ask Him and they will be remembered against us no more.

The other message is that we should be careful about justifying some sins while condemning others!

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