

Whatever Happened to Sin?

Search me, O God. Psalm 139:22-24

Really? Do you really want your heavenly father to use his words and point out sin in your life? Do you want him to do so today? This morning? Right now?

Definition of sin: Any personal lack of conformity to the moral character or the expressed desire of God.

In thinking through this message, there were several different routes I could have taken. Some would have been easier and more comfortable for all of us, believe me. And at least one may have been more difficult. I'm certain that this message will be one that will rub the cockles of the heart the wrong way for not a few. To put not to fine a point on it, some of you will be mad at me when I'm done. Perhaps some won't greet me at the end of the service because of what is said today. There may be a few visitors who won't come back, saying, "Wow, if that is how he is going to preach, let's go to the less-offensive church down the street." The goal, of course, is not to drive people away, the goal is to give help and hope that will lead to joy and peace.

Probably the hardest of the lot.

The Seven Deadly Sins

The way I have decided to talk about sin is to discuss what has come to be known as the seven deadly sins.

Gregory the Great, at the end of the sixth century, divided all sins under seven heads. He said that every sin that a man commits can be classified by seven words. He named the sins: pride, anger, envy, sexual impurity, gluttony, slothfulness and greed. They have been called down through the centuries "the seven deadly sins." These sins are nowhere collectively mentioned in a single passage in the Bible, and yet they are all condemned separately in many places. Most of the great theologians have agreed with Gregory, and these seven deadly sins have become a recognized part of moral theology.

The List

Pride, anger, envy, sexual impurity, gluttony, slothfulness and greed.

The Danger

To see it in others and not yourself.

Pride

Pride is:

The mindset of self (the master's mindset, not the servant's): a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self exaltation and the use of all things for self.¹ Proverbs 16:5; 26:12

Evidence of Pride:²

Complaining against God. He or she may say, "Look how God has treated me after all I've done for him," Numbers 14:1-4, 9-11; Romans 9:20

Lack of gratitude in general. The proud person sees no reason to be thankful, after all, he/she has deserved all they have gotten (2 Chron 32:35). Proud people rarely say "thank you."

Sinful anger. I did not get what I deserve (Matthew 20:1-16).

Having an inflated view of your gifts, abilities, importance (1 Cor 4:7)

Perfectionism. Often perfectionists do what they do so they can feel good about themselves. The basic problem is making the less important things the more important things (Matthew 23:24-28).

Talking too much or talking too much about yourself. Proud people think that what they have to say is more important than what anyone else would have to say.

Being sarcastic, hurtful or degrading. Those who belittle others usually want to raise themselves up (Proverbs 12:18, 23)

Focusing on your lack of abilities or being devastated by criticism. Often self-pity is pride! An inability to handle criticism or correction well is also pride (1 Cor 12:14-25; Proverbs 13:1).

Anger

¹ Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, p. 179.

² Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, p. 180-183.

A question that on first blush most people get wrong is this: Who is the angriest person in the Bible? The answer, of course is God.

Anger isn't always wrong, but it is like hitting black ice. All too often you can end up in the ditch of sinful reactions that cause damage to yourself and others.

Definition of anger: Anger is a whole-personed active response of negative moral judgment against perceived evil.³

What makes you angry?

Kids, boss, job, spouse, health, traffic, other circumstances.

Not so, says the Bible: "Don't they come from your desires that battle within you," James 4:1, 2?

How is anger sinfully expressed?

Claming up, internalizing

Blowing up, ventilating, for both see Ephesians 4:31

Envy

Definition: Envy is a strong displeasure over the advantages, gifts, situations of others, Psalm 73.

In many ways, it is the wicked stepsister of pride.

How is it displayed?

When one learns that someone else has been blessed or benefited, they experience some "heartburn" because they did not get the blessing or benefit, Galatians 5:21; 1 Timothy 6:4; Philippians 1:15.

It can express itself by seething in resentment: brooding, pouting, sulking, depression, bad moods.

Or, it can seek revenge and even murder.

Sexual Impurity

Definition: Any sexual gratification, either mental or physical that is outside of the relationship of husband/wife, Matthew 5:27-28; Gal 5:19-21; Hebrews 13:4

³ Robert D. Jones, *Uprooting Anger: Biblical Help for a Common Problem*, p. 15.

Gluttony

This is the sin that will cause me the most criticism today, Philippians 3:19; Proverbs 23:1-3

Gluttony is misdirected hunger. It is the mad pursuit of the bodily pleasures that never completely satisfy. It seeks to feed the soul with the body's food. Food can bring such satisfaction that a person loses their appetite for God. The gluttonous have not only misdirected hunger but also a misplaced God.⁴

Let me pre-empt the need for launching missiles here. First, the weight-watchers weight statistics are not “thus saith the Lord.”

Second, one can worship thinness and a healthy body as well as one can worship a wrong perspective on food. There is no command to be “thin” in the Bible, even though some people zealously pray for that and pay for that. Worshipping the idol of “thin” or “muscular” body can be equally as sinful!

Slothfulness

Slothfulness is a disinclination to action or labor; it is apathy or inactivity when diligence and industriousness should be exhibited, Proverbs 26:16; 19:15; 20:4; 12; 27.

Slothful people make too many soft choices, Proverbs 6:10-11

Slothful people don't value time and opportunities, Proverbs 12:24; 20:4

Slothful people do not finish activities, Proverbs 24:30-31.

Slothful people are victims of self-induced fears; Proverbs 22:13

Greed

Greed is an obsession with stuff, money, possessions, position, prestige. It is an inordinate desire for more, a never satisfied desire to possess. It always wants a more than it has. Greed is like saltwater; the more you drink, the thirstier you become.

Why this message?

To make you feel guilty?

⁴ Rick Ezel, *The 7 Sins of Highly Defective People*, p. 129.

Well yes, and no!

Our culture calls these “alternative lifestyles,” acceptable behaviors or in some cases, even disease.

God calls this sin.

So that you will repent of lifestyles and can walk in newness of life, hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Why?

God has an answer to sin!

The answer is that he sent his son to do on the cross. Not just to forgive you of your sin, but to help you overcome it.

What should you do?

Agree with God, don't argue with him.

Ask for forgiveness

Learn how to overcome it, persevere until you do so

Get help if necessary

You will never find joy with your creator until you do so.

The danger

To see it in others and not yourself