

DEADLY

Why Sin Still Matters

A Biblical Study of the
Seven Deadly Sins

By John H. Munro

THE VERDICT
WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO



*"None is righteous, no, not one;
no one understands;
no one seeks for God.
All have turned aside;
together they have become worthless;
no one does good,
not even one."*

ROMANS 3:10-12

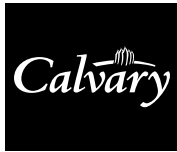
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Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
 PART ONE The Significance of Sin	
Sin Enters the World	7
The Problem of Sin	10
Taking Sin Seriously	13
 PART TWO The Seven Deadly Sins	
Pride	17
Envy	23
Anger	27
Sloth	31
Gluttony	35
Greed	39
Lust	43
 CONCLUSION The Fruitful Life	 47

Introduction

When did you last hear someone use the word “sin”?

FOR GENERATIONS, SIN WAS VERY MUCH at the forefront of discussion, not only by religious people but in everyday conversation. But today sin seems an old-fashioned, negative, judgmental term that should be relegated to the past. To a large extent, sin has been defanged, domesticated, and in many instances, discarded.

Sin has become a word of fun, a word we smirk about. We talk about “sinful” pleasures such as eating chocolate cake or our favorite ice cream. Sin is so negative, so passé, so judgmental, so “your grandfather’s church.” There is no place for it in the contemporary church where we want to feel good about ourselves and hear how wonderful we are. We are told that our problem is not sin but a lack of self-esteem and self-belief.

Even those who may believe in sin adopt more user-friendly terminology. For example, we talk about people who hook up, sleep together, have affairs, and have addictions. Having an affair sounds nice, exciting, freeing, and even understandable—almost a good thing! Fornication, adultery, and drunkenness sound too harsh, too ugly, too judgmental, too destructive.

So, in our therapeutic society, instead of talking of sin, transgressions, and rebellion, we discuss disorders, dysfunctions, disease, and dependencies. Chuck Colson wrote, “This myth (that mankind is basically good) deludes people into thinking that they are also victims, never villains; always deprived, never depraved. It diminishes responsibility as the teaching of a darker age. It can excuse any crime, because it can always blame something else—a sickness of our society or a sickness of the mind.”

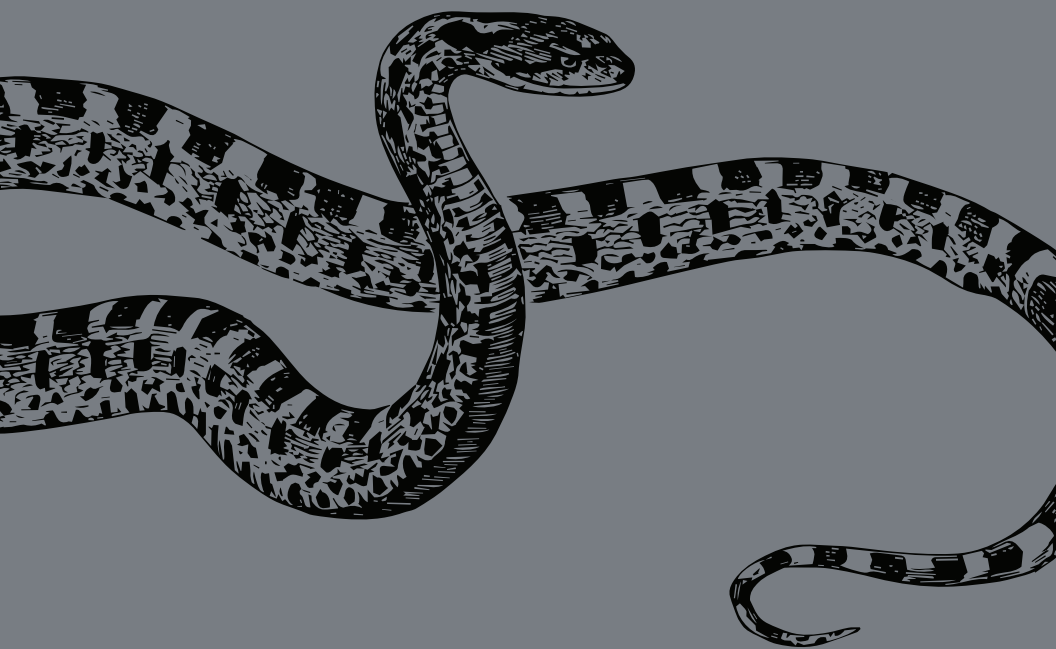
**However,
as we look around
at our world,
doesn't something
seem broken?**

IF THERE IS NO SIN, WHY IS THERE SO MUCH PAIN, violence, war, prejudice, conflict, abuse, crime, deceit, and manipulation? Are we as human beings really evolving and improving, or is there some inherent flaw within each of us?

As we turn to the Holy Scriptures for answers to these important questions, we will be reminded that sin not only exists but is a huge problem for each one of us. Sin separates us from God and isolates us in darkness. And it is only when we have a correct understanding of sin that we are able to acknowledge our own sinfulness and embrace the matchless grace and forgiveness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

PART ONE

The Significance of Sin



CHAPTER ONE

Sin Enters the World

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” — Genesis 1:1

GOD CREATED MAN AND WOMAN IN HIS IMAGE to live in communion with Him. The creation account is given to us in Genesis 1–2. So what happened?

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make

one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”

GENESIS 3:1–7

We Have an Enemy

Into this perfect world where God is King, there enters another kingdom—a kingdom of evil and deadly sin—the kingdom of Satan. Make no mistake, the devil is real, and he is our enemy. He was expelled from heaven for his pride and his rebellion against God, and he lives to oppose God—to tempt, deceive, and accuse.

The story of the Bible is about the conflict between these two kingdoms (Genesis 3:15). Jerusalem and Babylon. The Kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. So don't allow the world to tell you that the devil doesn't exist. The Bible tells us otherwise.

As we seek to understand sin better and its impact on our lives, take a closer look at Satan's strategy of temptation.

Satan Questions God's Word

One of Satan's favorite questions is, *“Has God said?”* It was a skillful question calculated to cause doubt in Eve's mind and to draw Eve into a dialogue (Genesis 3:2). Behind Satan's question was the subtle suggestion that a God who truly loved Eve would not restrict or limit her in any way!

The temptation to sin often comes at the point of restraint or limitation. Consider God's generosity and lavish bounty to Adam and Eve living in a perfect garden (Genesis 2:8–9, 15–16). But the devil's subtle strategy focuses on the one thing God commands them not to do. Doesn't that ring true? Instead of thanking and loving God for all we have, we reject His boundaries and wonder why a loving God would limit or restrict us.

Satan Contradicts God's Word

Having planted doubt in Eve's mind, Satan then attacks God's Word. Here is his outright lie: *"You surely shall not die."* The implication is one of the most deceptive of all lies: Go ahead and sin. You will escape its consequences. You are different. The rules don't apply to you. You deserve it. You can get away with it! You will not surely die. Throw off all restraints; then you will be free!

How many lives have been wrecked? How many homes have been destroyed? How many souls are in hell because that lie has been believed? Never listen to the devil; he is the father of lies!

Satan Questions God's Character

If God really loved you, He would not restrict you. *"You will be like God."* This old lie of Genesis 3:5 is the one we hear repeatedly today. You can be a god. You can do anything you want to do. You can be anything you want to be. You have unlimited potential. Nothing and no one should limit or restrain you as you seek to be the best version of yourself.

Satan caused Eve to question the goodness of God. You've heard this lie from our adversary! If God really loves me and if God is good, He will let me do anything I want to do (or at least He will understand). If God loves me, He wants the very best for me. He wants me to be happy! This is the deception that nothing else matters in my life besides my personal happiness.

Notice what Satan is doing. He is separating God's commands from God's character. God does love you. He is not a cosmic killjoy. But don't believe the lie that because you want to do something and it feels good, it is right.

When Eve looked, the tree was "good for food; a delight to the eyes, desired to make one wise" (Genesis 3:6). Our sin is rooted in not believing God—not believing in His goodness and love, not obeying His Word, and thinking we know best.

CHAPTER TWO

The Problem of Sin

WHEN ADAM AND EVE SINNED, they were expelled from the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. Mankind was no longer a perfect creation. As Paul explains in Romans, “Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). This is what sin does. Sin alienates us from God. Indeed, our sin has grievous consequences for us. And our sin has drastic implications for others. But fundamentally, our sin is against God.

The Holiness of God

To fully appreciate our situation, we must understand the holiness of God. God alone is perfect in who He is and in everything He does. Unlike us, His attributes are perfectly balanced. God is loving, but He is not sentimental. God is gracious, but He is also truthful. God is compassionate, but He is also just. God is loving, but He is also holy. God is forgiving, but He is also a God of wrath. God’s wrath is not an emotional rage but is (as one commentator puts it) a “deeply personal abhorrence” of evil. God loves righteousness and hates wickedness (Hebrews 1:9).

What would be your reaction if someone abused your five-year-old daughter or granddaughter? What is your reaction when you hear of a school shooting? We are outraged. We are justifiably angry. These situations call for something to be done. God would not be perfect and holy if He tolerated sin and ungodliness. So why do we struggle with the idea of the wrath of God against sin?

Instead of being upset about our sin, we laugh at it. We enjoy it. We are hardened against it. We prefer to compare our conduct to society's norms rather than by God's standards and His Word. But God's standards don't change according to the culture. God is holy. God is always angry at sin, and as sinful people, we stand under the wrath of God.

The Basic Problem

Our society argues that most people are basically good. But this is neither true to Scripture nor human experience. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Consider our words; they are often deceptive, poisonous, angry, and bitter. Consider the violence of humanity. History is filled with misery, war, crime, and abuse. Even the best men and women are sinful. There are no exemptions.

Everyone you know is "under sin" (Romans 3:9). Everyone you don't know is "under sin." Remember that when you start a new job. Remember that when you get married. Remember that when you get frustrated with your friends. Remember that when you watch the news. We are sinful people, and we live in a fallen world. No one is perfect.

Of course, focusing on things that make us feel good about ourselves is much more enjoyable. It is easier to pursue self-acceptance and self-fulfillment rather than take personal responsibility for our wrongdoing. It is tempting to see ourselves and others as well-meaning victims of circumstance and a flawed society. But as we learn about sin, I challenge you to see yourself not as a victim but as someone in desperate need of the forgiveness of God and His transformation.

Our fundamental problem, the problem of our world, is not a problem of circumstances and solutions. The problem is within us—our sinful hearts. And we are powerless to save ourselves.

The Good News of the Gospel

But this is not the end of the story! This is where the Gospel of Jesus Christ shines so brightly. There is hope!

Despite the fact that we deserve the wrath of God, God Himself has provided a way of salvation and reconciliation. Not because we deserve it—but as a gift of God’s grace. “For God so loved the world He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Our Lord Jesus Christ takes on Himself our deadly sins—indeed all of the sins of the world, pays the price, dies in our place, is buried, and is raised from the dead. And the blood of Jesus, God’s Son, cleanses us from all sin. That’s the promise of the Gospel. “For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

CHAPTER THREE

Taking Sin Seriously

IN SCRIPTURE, THE TEN COMMANDMENTS formed the basis of the holy law given by God to the nation of Israel. Various sins are mentioned individually. The term “seven deadly sins” arose in the 4th or 5th centuries and then was codified by the medieval church. The term continued to prominence as Dante and Thomas Aquinas wrote on the topic at length. Today, the “seven deadly sins” have become part of our language and are often thought of as the key categories when we think about sin. So they provide a helpful structure for our study, but make no mistake—all sin is deadly!

We are created in the image of God to find our fulfillment in communion with the Triune God and with one another. As we pursue sin—pride, envy, anger, sloth, gluttony, greed, lust, and others—we are waging war against our souls and destroying ourselves.

These sins promise pleasure, happiness, and a good time. But the fruit is not only bitter but deadly. Separation from God. Deceit. Cover up. Broken relationships within your home, within your family, within your friends, within your work situation. Lust, for example, focuses so much on self that healthy relationships of love and intimacy are never experienced. Envy of others leads to alienation, bitterness, anger, and hatred. If you pursue these deadly

sins, you will end up isolated, struggling to have healthy relationships, and overwhelmed with guilt and shame. These sins always lead you downwards and ultimately end in death. “For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

Left to ourselves, we are unable to affect radical change. We may modify our behavior. We may try to clean up our act. We may try religion or do good things. But there is only one way that your heart can be changed: through the power of God in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In a world that prefers to ignore sin, we must take sin seriously. Using the Word of God as our guide, we must recognize sin for what it is and, before God, acknowledge our sinfulness. Then we will be able to accept the free gift of salvation that is offered to us through the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

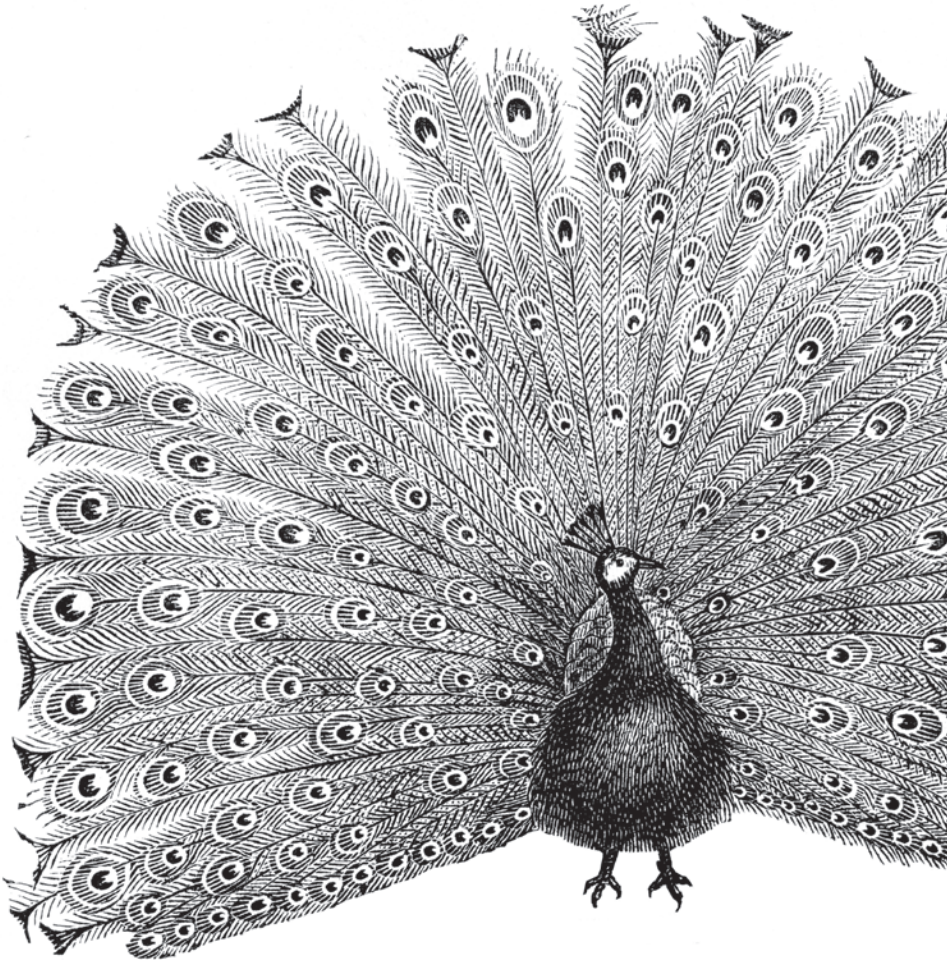
For those already following Christ, it is also important to realize that sin is not expunged from our hearts when we trust the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior. We are still imperfect human beings living in a fallen world. But those who place their faith in Jesus Christ are given the power of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to live a transformed life. Our sinful desires continue to exist, but we must be faithful to resist temptation and allow the Holy Spirit to empower us to choose to live a life that is holy and pleasing to God. Sometimes we will fail, but “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

As we consider each of the “seven deadly sins” in the following chapters, I challenge you to examine your life. Have you come to God with a humble heart, repenting of your sin and trusting in the Lord Jesus as Savior? If you follow Christ, are you walking closely with Jesus and obeying His Word? Are you striving to put these sins to death each day and live in the power of the Spirit?

PART TWO

The Seven Deadly Sins





CHAPTER FOUR

Pride

The Universal Sin

"Pride is the beginning of sin." — Augustine

"Pride is the one vice of which no person in the world is free." — C.S. Lewis

PRIDE COMES IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES. It is easily seen in arrogance but can often manifest itself in much more subtle ways. We usually recognize pride in others before we recognize it in ourselves, but make no mistake, pride is a universal sin.

As an aside, understand that the sin of pride does not include acknowledging and being thankful for the gifts God, in His grace, gives us. We sometimes say to others, particularly to children, "I am proud of you." By that, we typically mean we are pleased with their endeavor or attitude.

The sin of pride is an excessive, ruthless preoccupation with self. When we see ourselves as superior to others, we are proud. When we can't receive any valid criticism or correction, we are proud. When we always turn the conversation to ourselves, that is pride. We are proud when we refuse to apologize when we know we are wrong. We are proud when we are upset that no one has asked our opinion about an issue.

Pride makes us the object of worship. Pride makes us think that the rules don't apply to us. Pride is patronizing and dismissive of others. Pride is destructive in our relationships.

God's View of Pride

God hates pride. At the top of the list of things which are an abomination to the Lord is "haughty eyes" (Proverbs 6:17). "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord" (Proverbs 16:5). "Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5).

Don't think of yourself "more highly than you ought to think" (Romans 12:3). We are to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than ourselves" (Philippians 2:3). "But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). Pride puts self at center-stage. Pride forgets that all we are and have comes from God's good and gracious hand. Pride separates us from God. Pride defies God. Satan was cast down by God because of his pride. In this way, pride was the first sin.

*"How you are fallen from heaven,
O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground,
you who laid the nations low!
You said in your heart,
'I will ascend to heaven;
above the stars of God
I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly
in the far reaches of the north;[a]
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.'
But you are brought down to Sheol,
to the far reaches of the pit."*

ISAIAH 14:12-15

But pride is also found in so-called “good” people. King Uzziah, king of Judah, reigned for 52 years, and the Lord marvelously helped Uzziah throughout his reign. But at the pinnacle of his power, Uzziah had a dramatic fall. He fell in love with himself and forgot that God had helped him. “But when he was strong, he grew proud, to his destruction” (2 Chronicles 26:16). Uzziah thought the law of God didn’t apply to him. When he refused to observe God’s commands regarding access to the Temple, the Lord struck him with leprosy. And for the rest of his reign, Uzziah lived as a leper, isolated and alienated from his people.

The Opposite of Pride

As we understand the problem of pride, we must remember the supreme example of humility: our Lord Jesus Christ. Though our Lord Jesus “was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6–8).

The answer to our pride is the cross of Christ. “God forbid I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). Remembering the cross of Christ ends our striving for self-promotion, selfishness, and self-indulgence. The cross provides the model and motivation for true humility. Isaac Watts penned in the hymn, “My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.” John Stott writes, “It is there at the foot of the cross, that we shrink to our true size.”

Responses to Our Pride

Are you proud? Pretending to be humble? C.S. Lewis said, “A man is never so proud as when striking an attitude of humility.” False pretentious humility is one of the worst forms of pride.

Repent and Confess

Humbly acknowledge you are proud. Without repentance, there is no forgiveness of sin.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

1 JOHN 1:9

If you don't get into the practice of confessing sin, your heart will become hard. And such is the self-deception of pride that you miss seeing the pride in yourself while at the same time becoming more critical of others. God looks for "a broken and contrite heart" (Psalm 51:17).

Worship

Focus on our awesome and holy God. In the presence of a holy God, we are aware of our insignificance and sinfulness. This great God in mercy saved you, has offered to bring you into His family, gifted you, and loves you! Authentic worship produces humility.

Be secure in your identity in Christ

So much of our pride is a demonstration of our insecurities. The Gospel humbles us and gives us a new identity "in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17). When you are secure in this new identity, there is no need always to be correct, compete with others, and want every conversation to revolve around you. Instead, we rejoice in Christ and thank God for His sovereign work in our lives.

Serve

Serve others in the small, trivial things of daily life. In many ways, we are often too interested in the trappings of leadership and power. Instead, serve in practical ways that may not be acknowledged or applauded. This keeps us humble and follows the steps of our Master, the perfect Servant.

Today will you face your pride? Confess it before the Lord. Our only boast should be in the Lord.

"Thus says the Lord: 'Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and

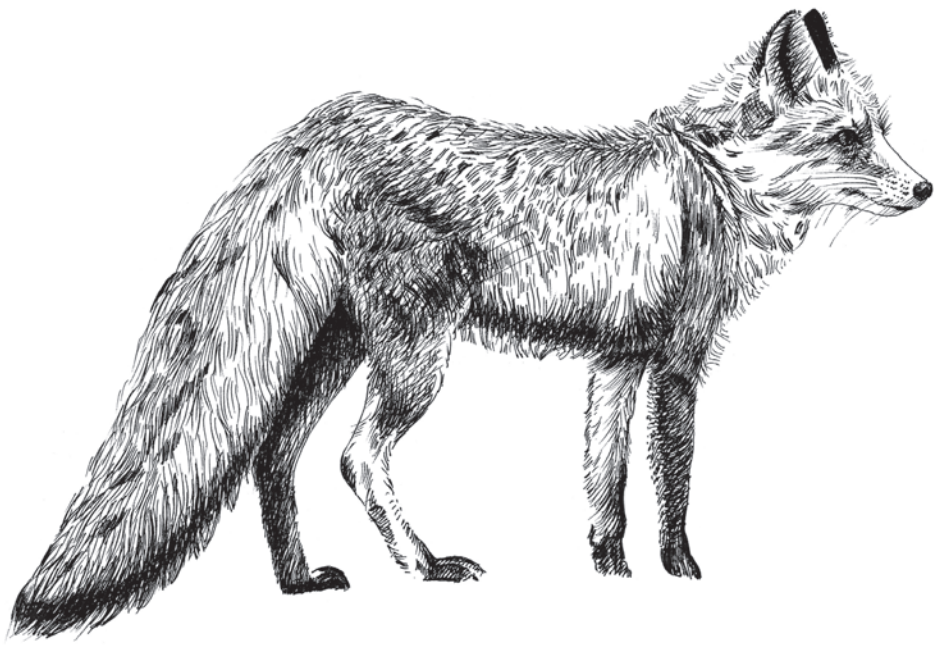
knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord.”

JEREMIAH 9:23–24

Look up to Christ. Serve others. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

LUKE 14:11



CHAPTER FIVE

Envy

A Most Unusual Sin

“Whenever a person succeeds, a little something in me dies.” — Gore Vidal

ENVY IS A MOST UNUSUAL SIN. Although it is prevalent (and the advertising industry exploits it), it is rarely acknowledged or confessed and seldom enjoyed by those who commit it. Other sins, such as laziness or gluttony, give a certain amount of enjoyment, but envy is a disconcerting, unhappy experience from the beginning. The more envious you are, the greater the torment you experience.

Envy is an insidious sin because although it does not typically harm others, it dramatically hurts your soul. Envy may seem petty when it begins, but it can quickly become all-consuming and insatiable. Envy is always self-destructive. “Put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander” (1 Peter 2:1). Malice and envy are usually close companions.

Recognizing Envy

The Tenth Commandment is “You shall not covet.” You know what it is to covet someone’s success, looks, achievements, friends, popularity, and possessions. You want what they have.

Envy goes beyond covetousness and jealousy

Envy is not simply wanting what someone else has or is. At the heart of envy is to begrudge what another has, to be resentful of their happiness. You are eaten alive by their success and want that success removed. Envy is secretly happy when some misfortune happens to the other person. With envy, it is not enough to succeed; others must fail.

Envy is a sin of the heart

Those around us are usually unaware of our envy. The sins of theft, anger, or immorality often become known to others, but envy is a subtle and deceitful sin. It deals not so much with our outward actions but with our inward attitudes. Jesus said it is not what comes from outside into us that defiles us, but what comes from our hearts (Mark 7:20–23). Envy is a nasty sin of the heart.

Envy leads to other sins

What begins with an inner attitude of the heart quickly springs to other sins. If you envy another person's appearance or achievements you may slander or lie about them. The individual at work who is envious of another person's promotion or compensation may gossip about the person or even plot against them. So envy can lead to slander, resentment, anger, hatred, and even murder.

Envy is usually a sin of proximity

We are generally not envious of those we don't personally know. You are more likely to envy your friends or acquaintances or someone in your family. You resent that friend who is wealthier than you, although you believe you work harder and certainly are smarter! This is why arguments between family or friends can be so acrimonious and bitter.

The Cure for Envy

Be content

Contentment is living in dependence on God and being independent of our circumstances, appearance, achievements, and possessions.

"Keep your life free from love of money and be content with what you have for He has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'"

HEBREWS 13:5

When you are envious, you are not trusting God. When you are envious, you say God is not treating you as you deserve. Stop making comparisons. Rather than being resentful and envious of what you do not have, thank God for all you are and have. Then you will be joyful and generous rather than envious, coveting, frustrated, and resentful.

Accept your appearance, your strengths, and your limitations. Accept where God has placed you in life under His sovereign providence. The envious person is restless, confused, unhappy, and not at peace. "Be not envious of wrongdoers." Why? "For they will soon fade like the grass and wither like the green herb" (Psalm 37:1–2).

Love God and others

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude."

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4

When you are proud and envious, you are not loving. You may flatter someone you envy but don't love them. Where there is love and kindness, envy dies. Learn to celebrate the joy and success of others.

When you are envious, you are not experiencing God's love for you nor focusing on your gifts, abilities, blessings, and opportunities. The God who created you and made you as you are loves you. The God who decided on your height and the color of your eyes loves you. The God who gave you intellectual, artistic, and athletic abilities is the One who loves you. And God's purposes for your life will be carried out (Psalm 57:2).

The seed of envy lies in all our hearts. Instead of being envious, be content. Trust the Lord and rest on His goodness, faithfulness, and sovereignty. Praise God for all you have in Jesus Christ, and walk by faith.



CHAPTER SIX

Anger

A Burning Fuse

“Whatever is begun in anger, ends in shame.” — Benjamin Franklin

“Hot heads and cold hearts never solved anything.” — Billy Graham

SOME DEADLY SINS such as envy, lust, and greed can be hidden—but not anger! This deadly sin is all around us. The smallest slight, real or perceived, may prompt anger and even uncontrollable rage. We see it in family disputes, work issues, politics, road rage, and social media, where vitriol and boiling anger seem all-pervasive.

Anger often explodes with vicious words and curses, sometimes leading to assault and abuse. Other times anger is suppressed and produces bitterness, sarcasm, sullenness, or passive-aggressive behavior. Anger is a devastating sin in our lives, relationships, and society.

Anger first appears in the Bible when the Lord had regard for Abel’s offering but not Cain’s. “So Cain was very angry, and his face fell” (Genesis 4:5). Cain could not hide his anger and then murdered his brother.

Are there any danger signs of anger in your life? Are you irritable? Do you snap at people? Do you shout or curse? Do you lie awake at night mulling over real or imagined hurts? Are you so angry over the political situation that it is causing problems in your home and relationships? Don't ignore the danger signs. Check your anger quickly, or it will get out of control. Anger is a deadly sin.

Not All Anger Is Sin

Anger is a natural human emotion, and anger in and of itself is not sinful. There are things and situations which rightly make us angry. Jesus was angry when He cleansed the Temple of the money changers. His righteous indignation was against those who violated the Law of God and exploited others in the name of God. But anger is a strong emotion that can quickly and easily get out of hand. It is possible to say we are righteously indignant when simply being bad-tempered. Sinful anger is selfish and deadly.

When you experience anger, be very careful. "Be angry and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26). The warning light is on. Take a deep breath. Ask God for help. "Be slow to anger for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God" (James 1:19–20). In anger, there is much of the flesh and very little of God! Commit to the Lord the situation which is causing your irritation. If you have been unjustly criticized or offended sometimes, silence is best (1 Peter 2:23).

Resolve Your Anger Quickly

When we are angry, we often do the devil's work. "Do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the devil" (Ephesians 4:26–27). When we don't resolve our anger quickly, resentment and bitterness can build. Allowed to fester, anger and unresolved conflict can create havoc.

Don't say you can't help your anger. You are not a robot or machine. Life is full of irritations, setbacks, disappointments, failures, and crises. Expect them. Learn to deal with them. It is immature and unrealistic to act otherwise. When difficult situations present themselves, ask God for His wisdom and strength.

And don't make a mountain out of a molehill. "A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression" (Proverbs 19:11). "Love covers a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). Overlook the slight. Move on. Love is patient. Love is kind. Resolve your anger quickly and maturely.

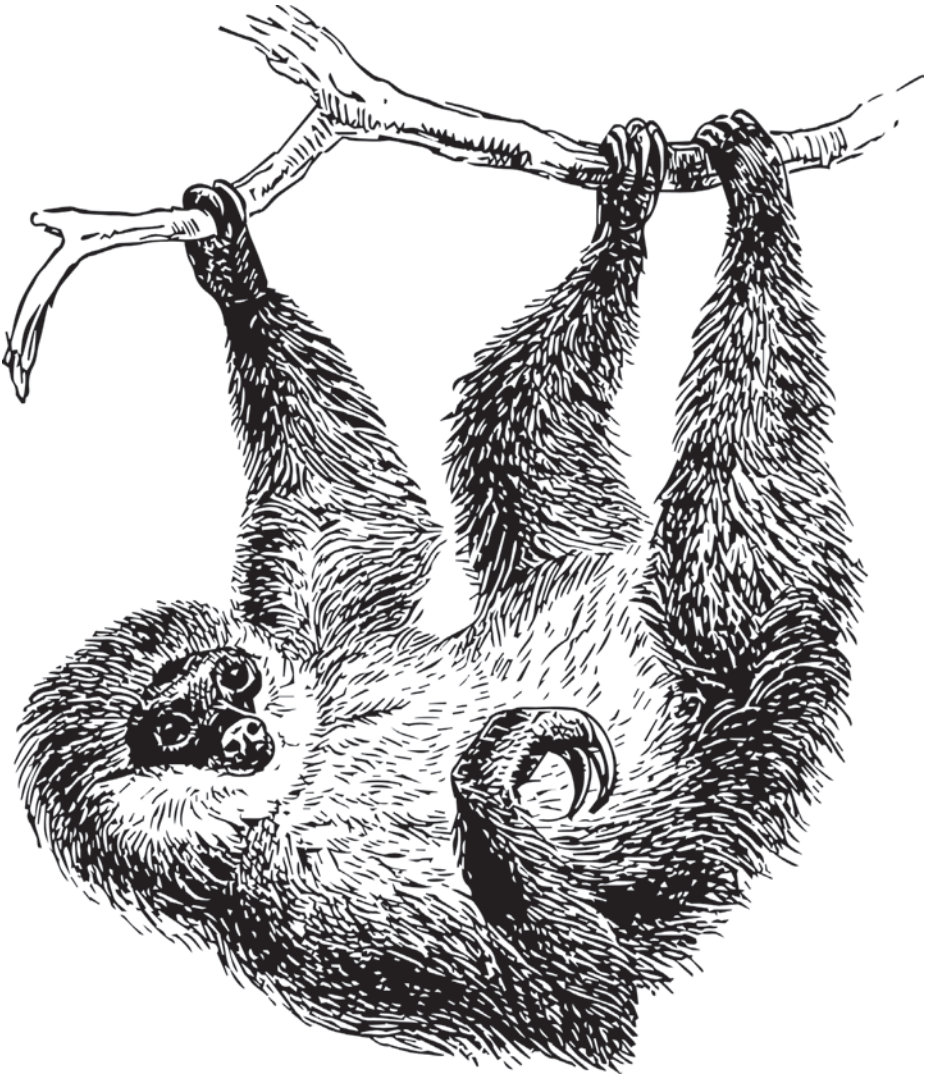
Be Gentle, Kind, and Forgiving

"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32). Christ bore the anger of God on the cross, which you deserved because of your sin. Today, come to the cross for the forgiveness of all your sins, including the deadly sin of your anger. Then, forgive others as you have been forgiven.

The apostle Paul instructs followers of Christ to put off the old self and put on the new self (Ephesians 4:22–24). This is the outworking of grace in our lives. You can choose to hold onto your anger or "put it away from you" (Ephesians 4:31). Instead of retaliating in anger, say something kind. Try it!

You may have been carrying anger and bitterness for many years. You may feel you have a right to be angry. Stop seeing yourself as a victim. If you don't put away your anger, bitterness and resentment will completely dominate you, destroying your relationships and robbing you of the joy of the Lord.

End your anger. Come to the cross. Repent of your sin. You can't change the damage your anger has caused in the past, but with Christ's forgiveness and power, you can change who you are now and will be in the future. God's will for your life is to replace your anger with kindness and forgiveness.



CHAPTER SEVEN

Sloth

Is It Really a Sin?

“How do we explain the irony that the very society which for the first time has conquered nature by technology and turned the world into a giant fun-and-games factory, a rich kid’s playroom, the very society which has the least reason to be bored, is the most bored?” — Peter Kreeft

MY WIFE, GUDNY, AND I were in Costa Rica a few years ago. On an excursion, we saw several sloths. Gudny even thought one of them was cute! But how can this be the picture of a deadly sin? Is sloth a sin at all?

Sloth Is Laziness

Scripture is clear on the subject of work. Work is honorable. God expects us to work with integrity and enthusiasm. “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men” (Colossians 3:23–24). In the Garden of Eden before the fall, God took Adam “and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). In Proverbs, there are repeated descriptions of the lazy person—including the slothful hunter who will not even roast his own game (Proverbs 6:6–11, 12:27, 26:13–16). The apostle Paul seriously warns against laziness in 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15 and 1 Timothy 5:8.

"For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living."

2 THSSALONIANS 3:10–12

We live in a society of entitlement where some people almost boast that they don't work. A common caricature is of the 29-year-old single man who lives in his parents' basement. Others need to be motivated to work. Did our grandparents need such motivation? They believed (as the apostle Paul did) that if you are not willing to work, you don't eat! Sloth is displeasing to the Lord.

Sloth Is More Than Laziness

But sloth is more than physical laziness. At the heart of the deadly sin of sloth is a life without purpose. Sloth is not merely someone who doesn't work or is idle. The problem is deeper. The slothful person cares for nothing, enjoys nothing, lives for nothing, and finds purpose in nothing.

Sloth is an attitude toward life that produces listlessness, lethargy, apathy, and not seeing the point of anything. The slothful person finds no joy or pleasure in anything. Everything is boring. They seem to have given up on life. Many people are anxious, but the slothful person doesn't know what they are anxious about!

There is an emptiness in many people crying out for fulfillment and meaning. Sloth is the opposite of a passion for life and for God. Thomas Aquinas described sloth as "sadness and abhorrence or boredom regarding a spiritual and divine good." Sloth is a spiritual dejection where we do not pursue God. In that sense, sloth is the opposite of a passion for life and God.

Created for a Purpose

God created you not for sloth but for a purpose. You are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). This means you are a spiritual being and are made to know, commune, and glorify God, who is your Creator. Without a living and

growing relationship with God, you will experience this emptiness, futility, and meaningless, which can lead to sloth.

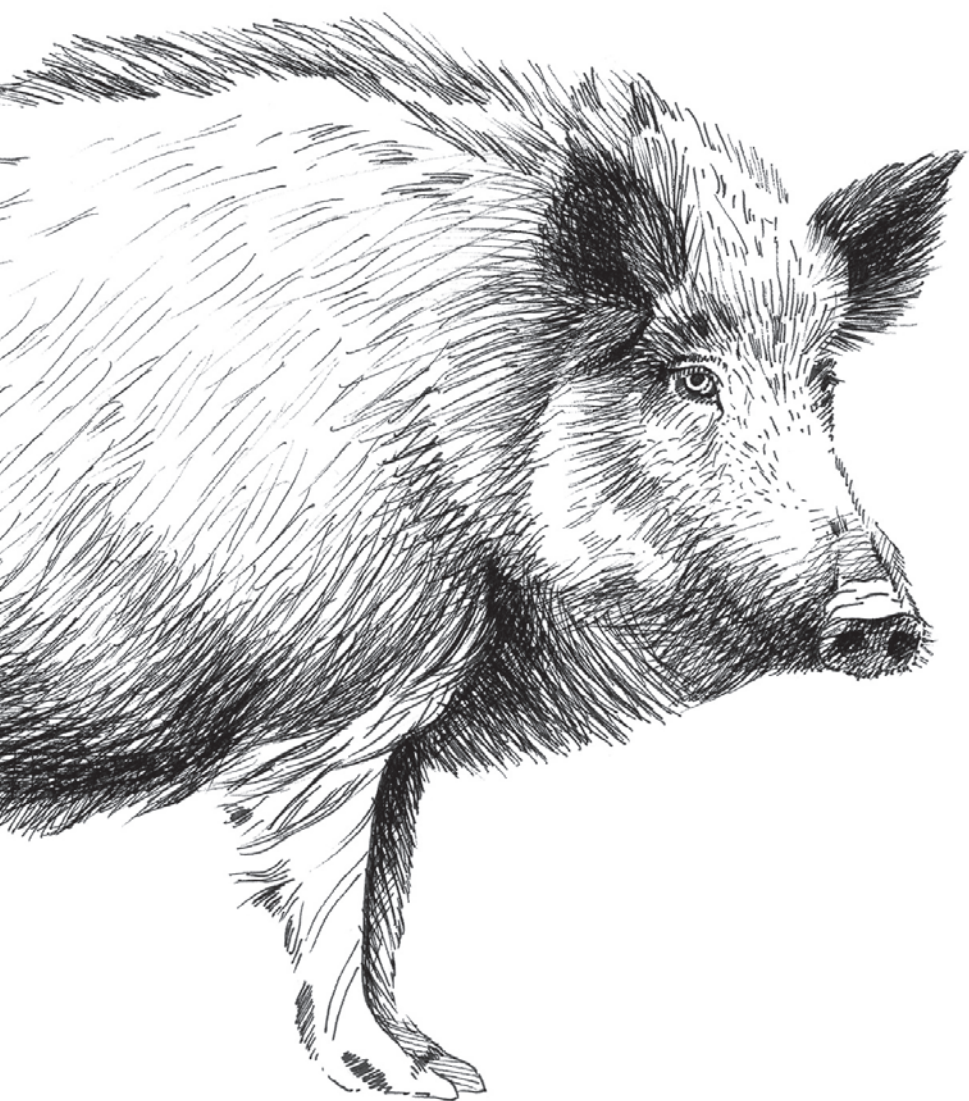
When I was a teenager, this famous quote by Augustine had a significant impact on me: “Thou has created us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” So likewise, Jesus taught us to hunger and thirst after righteousness—after God Himself, who is inexhaustible. The love, joy, and peace of knowing Jesus Christ are incomparable. You will never be bored with God, as He is infinite.

“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you.”

PSALM 63:1

God, who is all wise, all loving, and all good, made you for a purpose. And when you fulfill His purposes for your life, you will experience not sloth but His pleasure and joy. We are to live passionately and work enthusiastically. Life is not found in living independently of God but rather in knowing God, loving God, surrendering to God, and seeking and pursuing God with all our hearts.

Only lasting things give lasting pleasure. God in Jesus Christ has come into our world to seek us, to die for us, and to save us so that our sins can be forgiven and we can experience abundant and supernatural life.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Gluttony

The Sin of Excess

"We clean our plates, yet we're still famished — starving for something other than food." — Kate Wicker

ONE OF LIFE'S GREAT JOYS IS A DELICIOUS MEAL, particularly with family and friends. Paul writes that God "richly provides us with everything to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17), including food and drink. We eat the bread and drink the wine at the Lord's Supper, which Jesus instituted. So Scripture is not saying that eating and drinking (or enjoying eating and drinking) are sinful. But as we will learn, it is sinful to eat or drink to excess, to be fixated on consumption.

For many people, their lives revolve around food. Some people enjoy all-you-can-eat buffets and super-sized fast-food meals. At the other extreme, people obsess about eating as little as possible or following strict specific diets. It appears that many of us are obsessed with either eating too much or too little. In both cases, there is a very unhealthy view of food. If we are not careful, food or drink controls our lives.

Biblical Warnings

Scripture provides us with numerous warnings against drunkenness and gluttony. “Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat...” (Proverbs 23:20). When faced with delicacies, don’t be deceived. Don’t be given to overindulgence (Proverbs 23:1–3). In Crete, there were those described as “lazy gluttons” (Titus 1:12). The sin of sloth is compounded by being a glutton. Laziness and gluttony often go together.

Drunkenness is also roundly condemned. Proverbs 23:29–35 paints a remarkably vivid picture of the destructive pattern of drinking too much. Yet “when shall I wake, I must have another drink” (35). At those events where people drink too much, there is often immorality and drugs. The apostle Paul writes, “Let us walk properly as in the daytime not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy” (Romans 13:13).

The Underlying Spiritual Problem

But as we look closer, we understand there is more to the sins of gluttony and drunkenness. These habits betray a more serious spiritual issue. In his letter to the Philippian believers, Paul warns against those who “walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things” (Philippians 3:18–19). Rather than blushing at their sin, they glory in it. Sound familiar? They are controlled by their belly (their physical appetites), which has become an idol to them. Notice the contrast with followers of Jesus Christ, whose focus is not on food or earthly desires but on the Savior coming from heaven (Philippians 3:20–21).

Ultimately two principles will guide us as we seek to ensure that we are keeping our physical appetites (both literal and physical) in the proper context.

Principle #1 | Do all to the glory of God

In the early Corinthian church, there was a quarrel about whether believers should eat meat offered to idols. Paul reminds them that “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof” and “whether you eat or drink, or whatever

you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:26, 31). Food and drink are gifts from God, and even in these seemingly trivial activities, we are to do all to the glory of God. Your goal is not self-indulgence but to glorify God.

Paul makes a related point that while we have freedom in Christ, we must also be aware of how our actions impact others. “All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful” (1 Corinthians 10:23). Even between followers of Christ, there are different opinions and cultural norms, and we are to try not to offend or cause others to stumble. Instead, make choices that will build up others. Remember, you are made in the image of God. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you have been redeemed by His precious blood. Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. As such, do not abuse your body by being a glutton or a drunkard.

Principle #2 | Be filled by the Holy Spirit

“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). While the Holy Spirit indwells all believers in Jesus Christ, we are not always “filled” or controlled by the Spirit. Those who are drunk or gluttons are controlled by food and drink! Every area of life, including eating and drinking, is to be Christ-like, controlled not by your fleshly desires but by the Holy Spirit.

Being filled with the Spirit also means you find your satisfaction in God. If you are trying to find satisfaction in food and drink, you will never be fully satisfied. The glutton or the drunkard is often eating or drinking out of a tremendous emptiness or loneliness or hurt. Instead of seeking your satisfaction in food or drink, allow the powerful and joyful Spirit of God to fill and control you.

Have you made food an idol? Are you eating too much or too little? Don’t allow food to define your identity. Eat and drink to the glory of God. Be balanced. Don’t be extreme! The Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer, is more powerful than your desire for more food and drink and more powerful than your desire for control.



CHAPTER NINE

Greed

The Sin of Wanting More

"Few of us can stand prosperity. Another man's I mean." — Mark Twain

WE ALL UNDERSTAND what it is to be greedy. It's an insatiable desire for more and more. Greed is all around us—in our personal lives, at work, and in society. "Greed is good" was a famous slogan. But make no mistake; greed is a deadly sin.

Greed is a form of idolatry where we put our selfish desires for more and more above God (Colossians 3:5). This desire for more is not because we need more but simply because we want more, to have more than others.

There are no State or Federal laws against greed. Most people will never challenge you if you are greedy, but it is against the Tenth Commandment: "You shall not covet" (Exodus 20:17). Greed can easily lead to theft, falsifying expenses, not paying taxes, and other deceitful conduct. Greed may also result in our environment and natural resources being depleted and destroyed. It is a selfish, deadly sin.

One of the most common manifestations of greed is wanting more and more money. Money is not evil in and of itself. "The love of money is a root of all

kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). Greed is the insatiable desire for more money. Greed may manifest itself through impulsive buying and consumption. Greed may be reckless like the gambler or stingy like the miser. The greedier we are, the less we are concerned with those around us. And the greedier we are, the less we enjoy what we have.

Biblical Examples of Greed

When the people of Israel went into the Promised Land, the Israelites were forbidden to take things belonging to the pagans. But Achan saw a beautiful cloak and some silver and gold. He "coveted them and took them" (Joshua 7:21). His greed spiritually impacted all of Israel. The Lord was so angry He took Achan's life. Greed is serious.

Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, is another example of greed in the Old Testament. When Elisha told the Syrian commander to wash in the Jordan to cure his leprosy (2 Kings 5), Naaman was so appreciative that he wanted to reward Elisha. But Elisha wouldn't take anything. Gehazi, his greedy servant, ran after Naaman and took some silver and clothes. For that sin of greed, the leprosy of Naaman clung to Gehazi.

In the New Testament, we have various occurrences of greed and coveting (Mark 7:22, Ephesians 4:19, 5:3, and Colossians 3:5). In 2 Peter, the word is used to describe false teachers particularly. "In their greed they will exploit you with false words" (2 Peter 2:3). "They have hearts trained in greed" (2 Peter 2:14). Scripture gives clear warnings. Greed is destructive. It will wreck your life. It is a deadly sin.

In Luke 12:13–21, Jesus tells a parable about a greedy man who was consumed with building his wealth to ensure a comfortable life. Jesus is teaching that life does not consist of the abundance of our possessions. There is far more to life than your money, savings, pension, investments, or material possessions. "Eat, drink, and be merry" is a selfish, self-indulgent, greedy philosophy of life. God called this rich, greedy man "fool." He was "rich for himself" but not "rich toward God" (Luke 12:20). And how much did the greedy man leave when he died that night? Everything!

The Cure for Greed

Contentment

When we are greedy, we are not content (1 Timothy 6:6–10). We need an eternal perspective. Trust God to provide for your needs, and then be content with what you have. “In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11–13).

Faith in God

The just shall live by faith. When you are greedy, you are not living by faith. You are saying that God has not cared for you as He should. You think you need something or someone else. Find your joy and satisfaction in the all-sufficient God. Trust Him to take care of you. Be content today. Don't worry about tomorrow.

Generosity

Generosity breaks the stranglehold of greed. Consider the generosity of God, who lavishes His grace on us. Everything you have belongs to the Lord. “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:17–18). Share your resources with others. You are accountable to the Lord for how you use your resources. Don't be greedy. Be generous in every circumstance of life.



CHAPTER TEN

Lust

The Sin of the Flesh

“Love is the great conqueror of lust.” — C.S. Lewis

THE CHRISTIAN HAS THREE ENEMIES. First, there is **the devil, our adversary**. “Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Second, there is **the world**. “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). Third, there is **the desires (lust) of our flesh** (Galatians 5:16–21). “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other” (17). In our sinful nature, we may lust after many things—such as money, power, and popularity—but most often, we think of lust as sexual lust.

We may not consider the flesh to be our enemy. In many ways, we enjoy the flesh. We cater and pander to it with its many feelings and moods. But our flesh is a deadly, deceptive, and dangerous enemy. Our flesh acts independently of God and seeks to dominate everything we do. In many disguises, it appears to be a friend, but it is plotting our destruction from within.

Abstain from Fleshly Lusts

As human beings created by God, we all have sexual desires which we celebrate. However, these sexual desires can quickly become sinful lusts. Sin and the devil distort and seek to destroy these God-given desires.

“Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11). The apostle Peter uses the term “wage war.” This is not an occasional isolated battle but an ongoing war. Do you understand the seriousness of the situation? Your sinful lusts are more than a problem or a distraction to indulge in; they are your enemy.

Tolerance and moderation are not the answers. You can’t tolerate someone who is out to destroy you! The devil will whisper that a little bit of lust is alright! But the command is “abstain.” “Flee youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2:22). Joseph in Genesis 39 provides a positive example. Have a zero-tolerance policy!

If you are involved in sexual sin, stop it now. It places you in spiritual bondage, distorts your thinking, compromises your view of intimacy and the value of your sexuality, and destroys your marriage and relationships. Pornography, in particular, views women as sex objects and isolates sexual fulfillment from a caring, intimate, loving relationship.

If you are lured into evil by your lusts, you will lose the sense of God’s power and presence in your life. Substantial spiritual damage will be done. So keep looking up, not down, not within. Lusts are fleeting, but those who do God’s will abide forever.

“For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”

1 JOHN 2:16–17

Love Versus Lust

Lust demands, takes, uses, manipulates, and is self-centered. Lust is never satisfied; it is insistent, impatient, and selfish. True love is the opposite of lust. Love gives and forgives. Love is patient, self-controlled, undemanding, sacrificial, pure, and honorable. Love never fails. Lust always fails. Lust promises so much and delivers so little. Love grows and grows, building respect in others. Lust humiliates and leaves people feeling used and cheap.

When you are tempted to yield to fleshly lust, reflect on God's love for you. God's love, divine love, is the opposite of lust. You are beloved of God. Your brothers and sisters in Christ love you. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Contrast God's love for you with your fleshly lusts.

Defeating the Sin of Lust

Don't allow lust to get a stronghold in your mind (Matthew 5:27–28). Jesus said, "Blessed as the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Guard your heart, and be careful what you hear, view, watch, and think about. "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is" (Colossians 3:1).

For believers in Christ, an essential outworking of our new life in Christ is that we put to death lust and sinful desires in our life (Colossians 3:5–6). Spiritually we are united with Christ; physically, we live in a fallen world. We have died to sin, but sin has not died to us! The reign of sin in our lives has been broken, but sin is not eradicated in the life of the believer. Each day in very practical ways, we have to claim our identity and put to death all sin—including sins of the flesh.

This deadly sin of lust is a powerful force in our lives. But followers of Christ have a greater power. We rely on the resources of the Holy Spirit to obey God and to abstain from fleshly lusts (Galatians 5:16). And if you have fallen into or struggle with sexual sin, don't despair. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. Come to the cross for cleansing and forgiveness. God will cleanse you and make you whole. "Though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18).



CONCLUSION

The Fruitful Life

D OES SIN STILL MATTER? ABSOLUTELY. Without a clear understanding of sin, we cannot have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. All sin—including the “seven deadly sins” of pride, envy, anger, sloth, gluttony, greed, and lust—is deadly.

With humble hearts, we must acknowledge our sins before God, repent of our sin, and trust in our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again. Salvation is found in Christ alone. Our Lord Jesus offers you eternal life and forgiveness of your sins if you place your trust in Him.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

ROMANS 6:23

You can’t work for your salvation. You can’t atone for your sins. You can’t by yourself get rid of these sins. Our salvation is based not on what we do, not on our achievements, not on our sincerity, not on our spiritual heritage, but entirely by the free sovereign grace of God. If you have not placed your faith

in Jesus Christ, I pray that you will receive the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord today.

"It is by grace that we are saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

EPHESIANS 2:8–9

Once we are saved by the grace of God, supernatural transformation takes place in us. At our conversion, we receive the Holy Spirit. Instead of being characterized by the works of the flesh, there is now displayed in our lives the fruit of the Spirit.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

GALATIANS 5:22–23

United to Christ

Authentic followers are united to Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides (remains) in Me and I in Him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). A branch apart from the vine will never bear grapes. Just as the life of the branches comes from the vine, our spiritual life comes from Jesus, the true vine.

Those united to the true vine can't return to living as they once did. Grace produces a radical change in our identity and our lifestyle. This union with Christ is the very foundation of our spiritual life. We have died to sin with Christ and have been raised to a new life. The power and reign of sin in our lives are broken. We are now united to Christ, who loves us.

Bearing Fruit

This new supernatural life produces fruit. Those who abide in Christ bear much fruit: outward acts and evidence of the fruit of the Spirit. But don't be confused. However gifted, hard-working, educated, and sincere you may be,

you cannot bear any fruit by yourself. The ability to produce fruit depends not on the branch but on the true vine, our Lord Jesus. And it is not our fruit that saves us. Fruit in our life is merely evidence that we are united with Christ.

Unbelievers produce the works of the flesh: believers in Christ have the fruit of the Spirit. “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples” (John 15:8).

Pruned for Growth

A fruitful life is pruned by God the Father. In growing grapes, the vines must be pruned from time to time. If a branch is not bearing fruit, it is taken away, and the branches which are bearing fruit are pruned by the gardener so that they will produce even more fruit (John 15:2).

When difficult and painful things happen, we must understand it is not because our Heavenly Father is angry with us or seeks to punish us. Our loving Heavenly Father is at work in our lives so that we may be even more fruitful. His goal is that we will become more and more like Jesus Christ. In all of our lives, there are sins, attitudes, and ambitions which are hindering our spiritual growth. But Jesus never throws His authentic followers away from the vine (John 6:37). Our union with Christ is eternal!

Nourished by God’s Word

A fruitful life is nourished by God’s Word. We begin the Christian life by hearing the Word and believing. Followers of Jesus not only know the truth intellectually but personally to respond to it. We must hear and obey the Word.

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

JOHN 5:24

Every stage of your spiritual growth is dependent on the Word of God. Read your Bible. Ask the Holy Spirit to teach you. Don’t be discouraged when you

can't remember or understand all you read. God's Word spiritually cleanses and teaches you.

"Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you."

JOHN 15:3

"Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth."

JOHN 17:17

If we are not abiding in His Word, we are not truly His disciples (John 8:31–32). Our enemy, the devil, seeks to enslave us with lies and illusions. The devil wants you to continue in these deadly sins. But our Lord Jesus Christ has defeated the devil and sets us free!

Are you united to Christ?

Is this living, dynamic, personal relationship a reality in your life? Do you know Jesus Christ? If not, I ask you to turn from your sin and trust Christ.

Are you bearing much fruit?

For those who are followers of Christ, fruitfulness is not about what you are doing; instead, it is about who you are. Are you loving and obeying Christ? Do you love others? Are you being nourished by God's Word? Are you displaying the fruit of the Spirit?

Yes, sin is deadly! But I want to point you to our beautiful Savior who came in love to pay the price of these sins. So enter into life eternal—a life of fruitfulness that truly makes a difference and overflows in blessing to others.



“For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ROMANS 3:10–12



“So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

ROMANS 6:11-14

THE VERDICT

WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO

"Where the Gospel is preached, the lives of men and women and boys and girls are transformed. Through His death and resurrection, Christ gives us peace with God, present power for living, and future hope for eternal life." — John H. Munro

The Verdict is a radio and podcast ministry featuring the expository Bible teaching of Pastor John Munro.



Born and raised in Scotland, John graduated from the University of Edinburgh and practiced law in Scotland before God called him to full-time ministry. He and his wife, Gudny, moved to Texas, where he attended Dallas Theological Seminary.

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