

Romans #13
Sin's Deception
Romans 5:1221

A man was trying to convince an acquaintance that one individual could make a lasting impression on others. After a rather heated discussion, his friend continued to doubt this principle. To prove his point, the first man declared that he would introduce a new word into the English language. That night he chalked on walls and pavements throughout Dublin, Ireland, four letters that he had chosen at random from the alphabet, and the four letters were QUIZ. The next morning everyone who saw this unusual express was baffled at it. One person after another would ask, "What does it mean?" It was not long until the newspapers took up the question, and eventually this strange sounding word was on the lips of everyone. Thus the term "quiz" was incorporated into the language as a synonym for "questioning." The originator had won his argument. He had left a lasting impression on many people by creating one new English word.

In our last study we saw how Satan, because of his hatred toward and God's new creation, brought sin into the world. But it is imperative that we understand that sin does not "just happen." By that, I mean that Adam and Eve did not just all of a sudden disobey God.

Temptation gained its first foothold in the Garden when the serpent (Satan) tempted Eve to doubt God's goodness and plan for her life. Sin always entices us to act independently of God. That is exactly same pattern that Satan followed when he rebelled against God.

The truth of the matter is this, anytime we yield to temptation, it is because we have chosen to go against the known will and Word of God for our life. Sin blinds us to the truth of God and leaves us feeling ashamed, fearful, and out of fellowship with the Lord.

Genesis 3:16 gives us this account, "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Has God indeed said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die. Then the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day 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, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." Satan's temptations may be summed as appealing to man in this way: (1) It made Eve desire to have what God had forbidden. (2) To know what God had not revealed. (3) To be what God had not intended her to be. In other words, man's first sin was the desire of the heart, and the outward expression was only a manifestation of a sin that had already been committed. James 1:13-14 reads like this in the Greek, "And remember, no one who wants to do wrong should ever say, God is tempting me. God is never tempted to do wrong, and he never tempts anyone else either. Temptation comes from the lure of our own evil desires. These evil desires lead to evil actions, and evil actions lead to death. So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters." The Bible is teaching us that the temptation that draws us away from God is the temptation that is received because of the desire that is already present. It is imperative that you and I realize that sin begins in the heart and soul of an individual, not so much with outward circumstances.

That is exactly what Jesus taught us in Matthew 5. Listen to what He said in verses 21-22, "You have heard that the Law of Moses says, Do not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment. But I say, if you are angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the high council. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell." He continues in verses 27-28, "You have heard that the Law of Moses says, Do not commit adultery. But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust in his eye has already committed adultery with her in his heart." And then in verses 33-36 He says, "Again, you have heard that the Law of Moses says, Do not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you have made to the Lord. But I say, don't make any vows! If you say, By heaven! It is a sacred vow because heaven is God's throne. And if you say, By the earth! It is a sacred vow because the earth is his footstool. And don't swear, By Jerusalem! For Jerusalem is the city of the great King. Don't even swear, By my head! For you can't turn one hair white or black." **What does all of that mean?** Jesus is simply saying that our outward actions will only show what has already developed in our hearts!

The problem with our heart is found in Jeremiah 17:9 where we have been told, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" **Therefore, one of the most deceiving aspects of sin comes when we mistakenly believe we no longer have a problem with temptation.** That is why Peter was so emphatic in his warning found in I Peter 5:8, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world."

Sin's great deception is that it will take you further than you ever wanted to go. It will promise you much and deliver nothing but heartaches and fear. Like a drama played out on the stage of life, sin promises contentment and satisfaction, but it delivers nothing but the opposite. Ask anyone who has experienced the ramification of sin's powerful blasts, and you will quickly receive a sorrowful list of consequences of sin's deception.

Sin's deception affects us in three ways: It enslaves us spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Before the fall, Adam and Eve did not know the power of sin. Only after they yielded to sin did they discover the dramatic impact of sin.

It impairs our relationship with God and other believers. That was demonstrated in the Garden after the fall. Adam had enjoyed sweet fellowship with the Lord, but sin introduced shame and fear into that relationship. For the first time, Adam hid when God came to meet him.

Sin deceives us into thinking that God has distanced Himself from us. This is sin's greatest deception: fear of the one who loves us most. Satan will do anything to keep us from knowing and experiencing the intimate, saving love of God.

Sin also drives a wedge between us and other believers. When our fellowship with God is hampered, we quickly discover that the sweetness of our fellowship with other believers also soon disappears.

Sin exposes the lost man to the wrath of God. It is through God's amazing grace that an unsaved person can experience eternal salvation. Those who have never accepted Christ as their Savior are under the penalty of sin, which is eternal death and separation from God.

If that, then, is the case, and it is, God's grace is the only cure for our sin. Paul put it this way in Romans 5:15, "The free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to many."

According to God's law, sin demands a sacrifice. This is why God instituted the sacrifice from sin. In the Old Testament this was carried out through the obedience to the Law. However, the coming of Christ, God's Son, eternally changed this, and that is why John the Baptist proclaimed in John 1:29, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." **No longer are we commanded to offer certain sacrifices for certain sins.** Christ's death on the Cross was sufficient payment for our sins past, present, and future.

God's demonstrated grace and forgiveness of mankind in no way is an excuse to continue in sin. Instead, it is a call for a deeper commitment of love and fellowship with Him.

1 John 1:7 tells us "the blood of Jesus Christ, (God's) Son, cleanses us from all sin." **What we could not do for ourselves, God did for us.** There is no way for man to free himself from the bondage of sin. Tying to be *good, disciplined, and committed* will never earn us enough credit in God's eyes. The only way we can stand in His presence as forgiven and cleansed from all sin is through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

John continues in I John 1:9 when he says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." **Now listen and get this, confession alone does not atone for sin.** We must identify with Christ's death on the Cross, and the only way to do this is by accepting Him as our Savior. He saves us from sin and eternal death.

As long as we live, sin will fight for dominance in the life of the believer. The lost man is helpless to defend himself against the evils of temptation. Therefore, sin can easily lay claim to his life through his passions and lusts. **However, those who believe in Christ have a supernatural strength residing within us.** Because our lives are hidden in Christ, we can choose to say "no" to sin and "yes" to holiness and purity in Christ.

The way we do this is through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus understood the power of temptation. Hebrews 4:15 reminds us that He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He faced temptation and came away the victor. The way He dissolved the power of the enemy was through the Word of God.

Child of God, that is our only defense against the schemes of Satan. While believers are no longer under the penalty of sin, we will have to endure the war that Satan wages against us each day of our lives. And while it is true that we might stumble and fall along the way, we have this promise in Romans 8:37, "...we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."