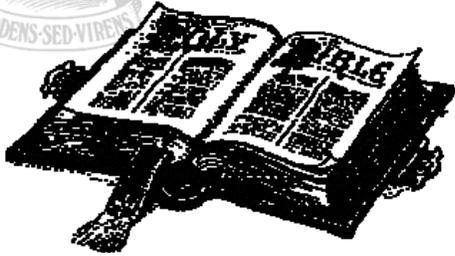




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The Problem of Sin in the Church No. 4 (part 3) - "The dire consequences"

"Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you," Joshua 7:11-12.

As we conclude this section of our overall consideration of the consequences of sin in the church we will ponder how:

SIN WILL ROB US OF GOD'S PRESENCE AND HELP

The verses that we are looking at are found in Joshua 7. They are verses 11-12.

"Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you."

We cannot stand against the enemies of the gospel if we have not the presence of the Lord with us. Sin will work havoc in our lives to a greater degree than any other malady!

1. We are accursed rather than blessed. ". . . *but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed,*" verse 12. They were now viewed the same as the people in the city of Jericho: "And the city shall be accursed, *even it, and all that are therein,*" Joshua 6:17.

The grace of God has made the believer a blessed person through Christ. "Blessed *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile,*" Psalm 32:1-2.

But sin can rob us of the enjoyment of that blessed state. It can rob us of God's blessing. That is what happened to Israel in Joshua 7.

Paul lists an extensive catalogue of enemies which cannot separate us from God. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,*" Romans 8:35-39. While these enemies cannot



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separate us from the blessing of God, sin can. "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear," Isaiah 59:1-2.

How much we should fear sin and seek to remain unspotted by it! It will make God our enemy. "For he said, Surely they *are* my people, children *that* will not lie: so he was their Saviour. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, *and* he fought against them," Isaiah 63:8-10.

2. Loss of grace means loss of strength. Samson is the warning, Judges 16:20. His sin cost him the presence of the Lord. He never noticed the Lord leaving because he had taken his eyes, his affections and his thoughts off the Lord. The word "departed" in Judges 16:20, is the same word translated "off" in Exodus 14:25. "And took **off** their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians." If God takes off the wheels of our chariots we are not going to get very far or succeed very well in anything we seek to do!

So it was that the Lord left the church in Laodicea. He had to write to them in order to draw their attention to the fact that He was departed. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me," Revelation 3:20.

Sin will leave us weak and helpless.

3. It means defeat at the hands of our enemies. Without Him we have neither the strength nor the strategy to defeat the enemy. "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, *but* turned *their* backs before their enemies, because they were accursed: neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you," Joshua 7:12.

What happened Jericho, that accursed city, when Israel moved against it? The walls fell down. They were left defenceless with nothing to hinder the advance of the Israelite army into the city. So it is when sin pollutes us. We are left defenceless before our enemies.

4. Sin turns us into cowards. "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies," verse 12. Peter is an example of this. How cowardly he was before those who questioned him on his relationship with Jesus of Nazareth!

Napoleon would ever place himself in a position where his soldiers could see him, so that his presence might spur them on. The news of a leader's death has turned the tide in many a battle. When the Lord forsakes us because of our sin, we cannot win against the enemy.

5. It will end in our defeat and poverty. "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" Joshua 7:8-9.



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Utter ruin in the midst of an alien environment was what faced Israel and it faces God's people, wherever they live, should they lose the presence and blessing of God.

The empty churches scattered throughout the United Kingdom are monuments to this solemn truth. Once they were places where the gospel was preached in power but no more is that so!

God help us to maintain true and pure religion. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep himself unspotted from the world," James 1:27.

Unspotted Christianity is undefeated Christianity.

This is the third part of our fourth study in a short series of messages on "The problem of sin in the church". [Click here](#) to listen to/download a recording of each of the messages in the series.