

It Is Written

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“The Continuing Effects Of Sin”

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Any sin man commits has its basis in selfishness. I believe this to be true because any sin we commit occurs because we want it to happen! We surrender to the lusts of the flesh and eyes and the pride of life because this is what we want to do (I Jn. 2:15-17). We commit unrighteousness because it's "fun," or makes us feel good or powerful, etc. (I Jn. 5:17). This was true when Adam and Eve sinned, and it's true today.

When we think of James' statement that he who knows to do good and doesn't do it has sinned (Jas. 4:17), we know that selfishness is the motivating factor behind my refusal to do what I know to do. Selfishness rules the day in too many cases. Let's learn from the examples of Christ and the apostles and think of others more than self. Let's not look merely upon our own things, but look upon "the things of others" (Phil. 2:4). In other words, help others bear their burdens and "fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2).

Sadly, we often experience the reality that folks succumb to selfish impulses and sin and fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). Inherent in sin is often the selfish thought, "It is my body and my life. It is a free country, and I can do what I want. My sin will not harm anyone else." Be honest, haven't we at times justified sin based upon such selfish thoughts? I have, too.

The Bible reveals that sin and its effects aren't limited to those engaged in the act of sin. Instead, sin has continuing and lingering effects on the lives of others as well. Sometimes, our sins affect those we love and admire. At other times, we see that our sins affect strangers we have never met. Either way, our sin and its effects didn't remain "static" but continued to spread. Like the ripples created when a stone is thrown in the lake, if they aren't stopped, reversed, or obstructed by something, the waves won't end until they reach the shore.

Let's study some Bible examples of the continuing effects of sin and make applications to our lives.

Adam And Eve

For this study, it would be best to begin with the first couple. They lived in a sinless world for a time (Gen. 2), but when tempted and lied to by Satan (Gen. 3:1-6), Adam and Eve submitted to their selfish wills and ate of the fruit of the tree God had forbidden (Gen. 2:15-17, 3:6). When God spoke to Adam and Eve, He made it clear that there were consequences to their sins. Genesis 3:16-19 tells of the punishments for the man and woman. God then drove them from the Garden, and they had to make a life for themselves away from the Garden God had made for them (Gen. 3:23-24).

Did their sin only affect them? Of course, not. Their sins affected them, their children, and the ground itself. We continue to live with the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin today! The sin of that time didn't remain static, did it? While we don't inherit the guilt of Adam's sin (Ezek. 18:4, 20), we do live with the physical consequences of what they did that day.

Cain And Abel

Born, not in the Garden, but outside of it, we see that Cain and Abel were already living with the consequences of their parents' decisions (Gen. 4:1-2). Dad and Mom's selfishness in the Garden affected their sons!

On one occasion, these two sons of Adam offered sacrifices to God, but one man's sacrifice wasn't sufficient (Gen. 4:5). It wasn't offered "by faith" (Heb. 11:4), while the other was! Had he chosen to correct his sin, all would've been well (Gen. 4:7). Yet, Cain decided to take his anger out on his brother instead. He, therefore, killed Abel (Gen. 4:8). Remember, sin doesn't remain static! Instead of stopping and correcting his way, he continued in his error and made things worse.

Therefore, when God spoke with Cain, He punished him for his crime (Gen. 4:11-12). When Cain heard

those words, he pronounced his fear that someone else might kill him (Gen. 4:14). Later on, we see that the children of Cain take after their father, and in the seventh generation, Lamech, a man who married two wives (not one wife, Gen. 2:18-25), and killed a man, bragged about it and claimed that he'd be avenged even more than Cain if someone tried to kill him (Gen. 4:23-24). In other words, sin hasn't remained static, has it? Friends, are we not yet scared when we consider the continuing effects of sin?

David and Bathsheba

When we speak of this pair, their sin is well-known (II Sam. 11:1-27). God said that though they had been "secret" in their actions, their punishment would occur "before all Israel and before the sun" (II Sam. 12:11-12).

No, their sin wouldn't remain "static," others would feel the effects of their sin. First, we know that David and Bathsheba had sinned before God and sinned against their own bodies (II Sam. 12:13; I Cor. 6:18-20). At the same time, we find that the child conceived in adultery would die (II Sam. 12:14). Do you imagine that when David began this descent into sin, he was plotting how to kill an innocent man and an innocent child? Yet, this is what happened (II Sam. 11:15-17, 12:19)! What started as David's lustful look continued until two lives were taken, and even affected the remaining children.

David's Children

After the tragedies recorded in II Samuel 11 and 12, we find that this wasn't the end of David's woes. The continuing effects of sin were felt with Amnon and Tamar (II Sam. 13). As a result of his lust for his half-sister, Amnon tricked and forced himself upon Tamar (II Sam. 13:2, 6, 8-15). After this event, we see that Absalom hated Amnon (II Sam. 13:22), and that after two full years, Absalom had his revenge by getting Amnon drunk and then having him killed (II Sam. 13:23-28). Absalom's rebellion against David is recorded in the following chapters, concluding with Absalom's death (II Sam. 18).

Just think, what started as a lustful look by David ended in the humiliation of a daughter, the deaths of three sons of David, unrest in the kingdom, and a broken-hearted father! Yes, sin has continuing effects in the lives of people!

Making Applications To What We Have Learned ...

I believe we can see the continuing effects of sin. Just as the ripple of water (if unobstructed) continues until it reaches the shore, so also, "your sin will find you out" (Num. 32:23). There is a reason Peter told Simon, "repent therefore of this thy wickedness ..." (Acts 8:22). He needed to repent before things became worse!

We see today how folks deal with the continuing effects of sin. How many times have we been made aware of small children born addicted to drugs, alcohol, and other things because of something their parents did? If a parent is abusive and acts ungodly toward the children, they are likely to take on those behaviors, too. Sin continues to touch the lives of people long after the initial incident has passed!

Though sin doesn't remain static, God has given us great power. We have the power to repent and reverse the course of sin in our lives (Lk. 13:3; Acts 8:23; Acts 17:30; II Pet. 3:9)!

What do I mean? Please go back and read again the occasions of sin we have studied. Though problems seemed "inevitable," please understand each person had the choice to change and do what is right in God's sight! Adam and Eve didn't have to sin, nor did Cain have to murder Abel. Lamech didn't have to follow in Cain's footsteps, nor did David and his family have to engage in their various sins. At each point along the way, the people could've stopped, repented, and obeyed God's will. The fact that they didn't just show us what is the easiest to do!

Conclusion

Instead of doing what is "easiest," let's do what is right! In so doing, we can stop the "ripple effect" and chart a new course — a course that leads us to an eternity in Heaven (Matt. 7:13-14). Isn't this the enduring message of the Bible? We can be redeemed and follow in Christ's footsteps (II Pet. 2:21-22). We can stop the continuing effect of sin, but it requires a conscious effort to repent and obey the will of Christ (Act 2:38). Even then, we may not save others, but we can save ourselves!