

It Is Written

*A weekly publication of the
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.
Vol. 5 December 24, 2023 No. 52*

When Sin Becomes Trivial

By Bobby L. Graham

People sometimes indulge themselves in wickedness to the point that it no longer seems wicked. The danger of sin is that it can easily deceive us and eventually lull us to sleep so that our former awareness of God's will and sin's violation of that will becomes foreign soil to us.

Daily exhortation is the Lord's means appointed to prevent the process of hardening exerted by sin's deceitfulness (Heb. 3:13). "...lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." The Lord said that the heart becomes hardened, calloused, by sin because of its deceitful quality. There is something about sin - any sin - all sin that is deceptive. While we seem to be faring well and enjoying ourselves, basking in the adulation and esteem of others, sin is hardening our hearts. It is through this process that sin becomes trivial, a light thing to us.

In 1 Kings 16, near the end of the chapter, we have an example of sin becoming trivial in the day of King Ahab. Ahab served as king in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, in that long line of wicked kings after Jeroboam. Not one of his predecessors had deviated from the ways of evil launched into by Jeroboam. For years these kings had practiced evil instead of righteousness in leading the people of the nation. Is it any wonder that Ahab did wickedness "more than all who were before him" (v. 30)? Sin had become the usual way of life for all of the leaders of the nation. Verse thirty-one says that he took as wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and that he went to serve and worship Baal in a temple that he had built in Samaria. The Lord's explanation as to how such departure from God could take place is found in the same verse: "as though it had become a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat." Sin had become trivial to him.

Remember that a calloused attitude develops slowly, so that the person is hardened in his feelings, insensitive in his response to those influences designed by God to prick and goad him to do right.

The warnings of God mean increasingly little to him as the hardening process proceeds. When sin becomes trivial to one, it usually spreads contagiously so that it is then trivialized by many; in fact, the trivializing of sin becomes almost institutionalized.

I hope this thought scares us to avoid sin. It is not the harmless plaything that we sometimes think it to be. It can paralyze us spiritually and damn us eternally!

When our attitude toward the vulgar and irreverent speech so common in our world declines so that we begin viewing it as not so bad after all, we need to wake up. When we start thinking that one's clothing has little to do with his godliness, so that we start experimenting with styles and garments bordering on indecency, we need to wake up. When we start thinking that our children's popularity and acceptance are more important than the positive influence for good that they should exert, then we need to wake up. When we allow the ungodliness and abounding iniquity in the world to dampen our zeal to save the lost and to set examples for good, we need to wake up. When we permit the loose thinking in the world and in the church to drift into our attitude and practice, no longer striving to hold fast to the pattern of sound words set forth in the Scriptures, then we need to wake up. Sin is becoming trivial to us, and the sad thing is that we don't even realize it.

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent; the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast

off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts (Rom. 13:11-14).

Can We Play The Lottery?

By Kent Heaton

The word "covet" is found (in various forms) eighteen times in the Old Testament and twenty-two times in the New Testament. Webster defines covet: "to desire (passionately) [especially, something that another person has]." The Greek meaning of the word is "to fix the desire upon (syn., lust)."

The Christian is bound by the Law of Christ with such passages as Colossians 3:5, "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." The nature of covetousness is the act of idolatry. In this realm, God is not put first but the fleshly desire for wealth. Observe the kind of company covetousness keeps: "Being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers" (Rom. 1:29).

The apostle Paul warns Timothy of what men will become in turning from the Lord: "For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" (2 Timothy 3:2). To be "lovers of money" is the very nature of covetousness. In Luke 12:16-21, Jesus teaches His disciples that life is not about the things we possess. "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (v. 15).

The true danger of covetousness is that a person will lose their soul and be damned to hell for it. Paul speaks very plainly when he describes those who will not be saved: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Consider again Paul's words, "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God" (Eph. 5:5).

The lottery is very popular in our culture and has caused a lot of people to spend millions of dollars trying to win an elusive prize. For the Christian, the money is not the problem, rather the heart that desires the riches of this world. Playing the lottery is the sin of covetousness and the Lord reminds us that covetousness will damn a soul to Hell. "'No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.' Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him" (Luke 16:13-14). Will you also deride the Lord Jesus Christ by playing the Lottery? "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints" (Eph. 5:3).