What the Bible Reveals about Various Categories of Sin - 3rd Lesson
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This is the broadcast for Dr. Talbot's Bible Study Hour on station KGER for Tuesday, January the 8th. [10 second pause]

Now, friends, we come to our third study on the subject of sin as we consider what the Bible reveals about the various categories of sin. Through the centuries, it has been the custom for men to make distinctions between various kinds of sin. While it must be acknowledged that the Bible itself recognizes differences in the degree of guilt connected with different kinds of sin, it is nevertheless true that men have drawn distinctions between sins which are without biblical warrant.

There are those, for example, who make unscriptural distinctions between venial and mortal sin. The venial sin is that which may be forgiven. The mortal sin, the one that is not pardoned, so we are told. Others have not done much better as they have pressed the distinction between sins of omission and sins of commission.

A brilliant but spiritually blind religious leader of radio and television fame once spoke of the seven deadly sins, which may be called the seven pallbearers of character: pride, avarice, envy, lust, anger, gluttony, and sloth. It is this emphasis upon specific sins which seem to concern men most. But in their classifying, they have neglected and ignored the deeper and more important aspects of sin. The roots of the sin problem are deep. But men have been content to give attention
only to the fruit. They have made their analyses of the stinking streams, but ignored the foul fountain from which they flow. The lying and the lust, the drunkenness and the deception, the pride and the profanity, the stealing and the self-righteousness. These, my friends, are only the symptoms of the dread disease of the human heart in sin.

The explanation of our troubles and the reasons for our condemnation in the sight of a holy God lie in the categories of sin as presented by the Bible. There are four distinct aspects of sin revealed in the scriptures from which we may secure a very accurate picture of how God views us in connection with sin.

I want you to take your Bible now and turn to our first reference, which is Romans 3:23. Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Here we see sin as personal indulgence. This aspect of sin, of course, is the one with which we are most familiar because it is that which concerns the sin of our lives. It is that which comes within the compass of our own experience and produces not only suffering and sorrow for us, but misery and trouble for others. Personal sin is that sin which we produce and for which we are guilty. The form, of course, may vary. It may be wrong thoughts, wrong attitudes, wrong words, wrong actions. It may take the form of what is known as the grosser sins, for instance, impurity and intemperance, profanity, blasphemy, stealing, even murder. Or it may assume the form of what is regarded as the more refined sin, greed and envy and self-righteousness and pride. But while the form may vary, the fact remains it is sin. S-I-N. It is the thing which is so unlike the character of God.
I want you to notice that sin as personal indulgence is predicated of all men by the Word of God. For instance, in First Kings, chapter eight, verse forty six. First Kings 8:46, we read "For there is no man that sinneth not." That's pretty plain, isn't it? "There is no man that sinneth not." In Romans 3:10, we read "As it is written there is none righteous. No, not one."

Also in that third chapter of Romans we noticed verse 19, Romans 3:19. "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God." And then in first John, chapter one, verse ten. First John 1:10 "If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us."

Yes, my friends, the scriptures affirm it and in our better moments, our own hearts confirm it. We are sinful beings, men and women who are guilty of acts and attitudes that fail to conform to the perfect character of God. I do not wish to labor this truth, for surely this is the one phase of sin of which we are most conscious: sin as personal indulgence. But secondly, I want you to think of sin as positive inheritance.

You turn to Romans five, verse nineteen. You will read these words, Romans 5:19 "For as by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners. So by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." As the stream is related to the fountainhead, so is personal sin related to the nature with which man is born.
Whiting - What the Bible Reveals about Various Categories of Sin

In our former studies, you will remember we have seen that Adam's first sin brought about a startling change in his constitution. The effect of that sin was an awful degeneration in every part of his makeup. As his spirit was severed from God, his understanding was darkened. His emotions were corrupted. His will was weakened. And his body was sewn with the seeds of decay and death. His first sin made him a far different being from what he had been when he came from the creative hand of God. Now he was a sinner. And he had become such through the exercise of his own will against God.

Adam became a sinner by sinning. We sin because we are sinners. Sinners by birth. By the inflexible law of generation like produces like. We cannot escape from that. Like produces like; never forget it. Adam transmitted his sinful nature to his progeny. Thus, every member of the human race since Adam, of course, with one exception, the sinless son of God. But every member of the human race since Adam has entered the world under the stigma and with the disability of a nature corrupted by sin and alienated from God.

We are not as Pelagius said "Born without virtue and without vice, but capable of both." Far from it. It is the possession of such a perverted nature at birth that makes us displeasing to God. In John 3:6 we read "That which is born of the flesh is flesh. In Romans 8:8 we read "So then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Will you remember that? "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." Nothing that such a person does in self effort can commend that one to God. Of that, we can be absolutely certain.
It is the possession of this polluted nature transmitted to us at birth that is responsible for our
disposition toward that which is evil. Even after a person has received Christ as savior and been
truly born again, he discovers that the sin nature has not been removed. It is still in him, and
given the opportunity, it will plainly manifest itself.

While the Lord has made gracious and adequate provision against this inborn sin through the
indwelling Holy Spirit, it is something that remains in the believer as a real force to be reckoned
with as long as the believer is in this mortal body. Of that, we can be absolutely sure. Yes. Sin is
a positive inheritance. But thirdly, I want you to think of sin as a divine imputation. And this
perhaps is the most difficult aspect of sin for us to grasp: sin as divine imputation.

Take, for instance, Romans 3:23. We looked at it a moment ago, but we'll come, we're coming
back to it now. Romans 3:23. This is one of those verses that is well-known among Christian
workers, but it is safe to say that it is little understood in all the depth of its meaning. You see, it
is so easy to quote scripture without realizing the real depths of truths that are there. And much
of the truth in Romans 3:23 is placed in the tenses used.

You see, friends, the Holy Spirit has put a great deal of truth in tenses. He observed the law of
grammar, and we must always be on the lookout for the grammar of the Bible. Our English verse
fails to disclose the niceties that the tenses employed by the Holy Spirit through Paul, although
there is a marginal note in the American Standard Version which seeks to draw attention to a
difference. Literally, it reads "All sinned and are falling short of the glory of God."
Did you see that difference? A difference in tense, instead of reading "All have sinned." We read "All sinned." And instead of reading "and are come short of the glory of God;" we read "and are falling short of the glory of God." It is commonly thought that the verse is referring to the truth that we have been guilty of overt acts of sin. But the tenses used point to a very, very real difference. Undoubtedly the last part of the verse, that part would says "and are falling short of the glory of God." That undoubtedly is referring to the sins men now commit. And which caused them to fall short of the divine standard of perfection. But the first part is speaking of something other than personal sins in this present life. When it says "All sinned." I want you to notice the difference here between these tenses, "All sinned" refers to a crisis, something in the past. "[A]re falling short" refers to a continuous process, something that is always going on. And here, my friends, we have a wonderful distinction.

The crisis, revealed to us in the words "All sinned," the crisis is pointing back to the first human sin in the Garden of Eden performed by Adam himself. And it is indicating that when Adam sinned, we sinned also. This is the truth which is further developed in the fifth chapter of Romans. And I wish you would turn to it please now. Romans chapter five, verses 12, 13 and 14. The fifth chapter of Romans, beginning at verse twelve. "Wherefore as by one man, sin entered into the world and death by sin. And so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned. For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed or reckoned when there is no law. Nevertheless," says the Word, "death reigned from Adam to Moses. Even over them, that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression who is the figure of Him that was to come."
Now, I want you to notice a number of things here. Take first of all, this word *impute*. To *impute* is a translation of a Greek verb that occurs in only one other New Testament passage. That passage is *Philemon*, verse 18. The little book of *Philemon* and the 18th verse. And there we find this verb rendered, "Put that on mine account." Charge it to me, is what we would say today, charge it to me.

Thus, *Romans 5:13* is saying that sin is not charged to the account of the sinner when there is no law. That, of course, does not mean that all who lived between Adam and Moses were not charged with the guilt of their sins. Sin certainly was in the world from Adam to Moses. And as *Romans two*, verse 12 says, "As many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law." They may not have had a written law, but believe me, there was the operation of conscience and the observance of God's judgments against evil. Their sin was different from the sin of Adam. Adam sinned in the face of an express command. God had told him not to do this; but there was no express command against what these people did. There was a difference in their sin. Yet in spite of this, they suffered death even as Adam did. Those who lived between Adam and Moses died physically. Why? Because they were all dead spiritually. God specifically says he did not charge to their account the sins of which they were guilty.

Then we ask the question, why did they die? And the answer is simple in the light of this passage. They died because the sin of Adam was the sin of all. The original sin of Adam caused the death of the race because it was truly the sin of the race. God reckoned the sin of Adam to be the sin of the entire human race. You know, friends, the Puritans had a little couplet, which I believe well expresses the thought of this passage. This is how it went: "In Adam's fall, we
sinned all." If you say that this cannot be because you were not there when it happened, the answer simply is that you were there. Adam was all the human race there was. He represented them and he contained that. You see, friends, the whole of the human race was contained in Adam seminally in a way that was not true of any of his descendants. He was the one and only man acting for all men in him.

A striking illustration of how descendants are divinely reckoned as acting in their racial head is seen in Hebrews chapter seven, verses nine and ten. Hebrews seven, verses nine and ten. Let me read them to you. "And as I may so say, Levi, also who received tithes, paid tithes in Abraham for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." Now that of course is Hebrews seven verses nine and ten. I want you to notice what is said here.

God says here that when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, Levi paid him tithes. Yet the truth of the matter is, my friends, Levi at that time was unborn. He had not yet come into being. And yet the word of God says that he paid him tithes. Levi paid tithes in Abraham, although he never did it consciously and volitionally, but he did it just the same. Thus it is that God says in Romans five verses 12 to 14, the passage we've been looking at, that each member of the race is counted as having sinned in Adam's initial sin.

We did not do it consciously or purposely, but we did it nevertheless in Adam as our head. It is this connection with Adam and our sharing in his initial sin, which explains the presence of physical death in our midst. Never forget it. We die as a penalty for sin. But it is not our own personal sin committed since birth, but our sharing in the sin of Adam.
Babies do not die because of their own sin. For some of them never live long enough to become guilty of personal sin. No, my friends, they die because of their relationship to Adam's sin. We are charged with Adam's sin because it is our own. There are those, of course, who would severely criticize God for allowing such an arrangement in judgment. But the sufficient answer is this: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Did not God know that any one of us would have done exactly what Adam did if he had been in Adam's place? Of course He did. God never makes a mistake.

Now notice, if you will, the fourth and the final aspect of sin: sin as decreed positional demerit. Three times in the New Testament, we find a very strange phrase: "under sin." It occurs in these scriptures. It occurs in Romans 3:9 "For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin." It occurs in Romans 7:14, "but I am carnal, sold under sin." It occurs in Galatians 3:22, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe."

There are three things I want you to notice in connection with this aspect of sin: sin as decreed positional demerit. Notice, first of all, its meaning: what is meant by being under sin? To be under a thing generally has the idea of being controlled by that thing; to be under its power and influence. That is certainly true of the expressions under law and under grace. The words under sin, however, rarely describe a position occupied and evidently something more than the thought of control is in view. Since the context of Romans 3:9 presents the estate of man before God. When this third chapter of Romans is carefully examined, it becomes evident that a man's
position before God is entirely one of demerit. God makes it clear that man is a spiritual bankrupt with nothing acceptable which he can contribute to his salvation.

To be under sin is to stand before God in spiritual nakedness, devoid of anything that pleases Him. Notice, if you will, the extent of this. The language leaves no doubt as to those affected by this divine decree. Both Jew and Gentile, all. The church religionist and the gutter bum are alike condemned. All alike, regardless of their status in society, are divinely proclaimed to be sinners. Lost, undone, and under sin. The whole human race, without exception, is indicated as without merit.

Finally, notice, if you will, the intent of this aspect of sin. Galatians 3:22, puts it "that the promise of faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." When God removes from men every ground and particle of supposed goodness, then He is free to move in and to deal with men in grace so that through faith alone they may secure all the goodness they need. It is, as man accepts the divine verdict upon him and receives the divine provision for his need that these four dreadful categories of sin ceased to condemn.

When the sinner receives the savior, his personal sin is met with divine forgiveness. His sin nature is met with a new divine nature. His imputed sin is met with the gift of eternal life. His position of demerit is met with the merit of Christ.

Let us pray. Our Father, we are indeed thankful for the wealth of Thy provision for us in Thy Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We praise Thee for all that Thou has made available in Him and
through Him. Lord, cause that the great gap between our deep need and Thy full provision may be bridged by faith and may some, even now as they listen, place their confidence in the values of the Savior's death. We ask it all in His blessed name, amen.

And now friends. We must video goodbye for the present. May the joy of the Lord always be your strength as you keep looking up.