

Doctrine of Sin

Contents

DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES	2
THE SEQUENCE OF SIN	2
CHRIST’S WORK REGARDING SIN	2
THE SLAVE MARKET OF SIN	3
THE SIN NATURE	3
The Essence of the Sin Nature	3
Bible Synonyms for the Sin Nature	3
Principles Related to the Sin Nature	4
Solutions to the Problem of the Sin Nature	4
The Hazards of Negative Volition	4
MENTAL ATTITUDE SINS	5
The Sin of “Not Thinking Grace”	5
Characteristics of the Believer’s Mental Attitude	6
Human vs Divine Viewpoint	6
The Human Conscience	7
The Mechanics of Replacing Human Thinking with Divine Viewpoint	7
The Benefits of Having a Proper Mental Attitude	7
Mental Attitude and the Believer’s Ministry	8
THE SINS THAT GOD HATES	8
SINS OF THE TONGUE	8
Types of Sins of the Tongue	9
How to Have Victory Over Sins of the Tongue	9
THE SIN UNTO DEATH	10

SIN’S VICIOUS CIRCLE 10

THE PLACE OF CONFESSION IN SOLVING THE SIN PROBLEM 11

God Encourages the Believer to Confess Sin 12
 The Mechanics of Confession of Sin 12

DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES

The Bible uses the word “sin” to refer to any activity or pattern of thinking that is independent of God’s standards or of His provisions for human life. God loves you, and He has your best interests in mind all the time. Because He has always known what is best for any individual, and for our communities and nation, He has laid out standards by which people can have lives of great happiness and productivity. These standards are known as the Plan of God, or the Christian Way of Life.

Because it is so important that people adjust themselves to the Plan of God, the subject of sin is found in most Bible passages in some form. These authoritative declarations of the Word of God are in stark contrast to the relativism and permissiveness of modern society.

This study deals categorically with many of the specific sin areas which are dealt with in the Bible. The problem of personal sin is discussed in detail with the objective of providing the Christian believer with information about how to have personal victory over sin in the life.

You may want to read this paper through fairly quickly, at first, in order to get an overview of the subject matter. But to get the most out of a study like this, you should read and meditate upon each Bible passage cited in this paper, using the comments as study aids. By studying as much as possible about God’s standards, and His plan for living the Christian life, you can learn how to profit as much as possible from a close walk with the Lord, while being hindered as little as possible by the consequences of acts of personal sin.

You can gain victory over the dominating influence of sin by becoming skilled in the mechanics of Christian living. Victorious Christian living requires the regular intake of Bible truth and the constant filling and control of the Holy Spirit. As you grow in grace, you become an “edified” believer, and

your life begins to “conform to the image of Christ”. This spiritual growth is the basis for victory over sin.

THE SEQUENCE OF SIN

In the Bible, sin is discussed under three types. The first type of sin is called Imputed Sin. This is the concept that, when Adam sinned, the whole human race sinned. Thus, when Adam was counted guilty, every human being shares his guilt. These things are mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:22; Rom. 5:12; and Rom. 3:23.

The second part of the sin “package” is known as Inherited Sin. Adam acquired a Sin Nature when he sinned. Since then, every human being has inherited a Sin Nature at the time of birth – we are born sinners. Rom. 5:12; Psalm 51:5. The Sin Nature is described in detail in Section 2.0.

Third, the result of having a Sin Nature is that each person leads a life in which he commits Personal Sins, both before and after being born again. These personal sins are the result and manifestation of the Sin Nature and occur whenever a person decides to think or act independently of the will of the Father.

CHRIST’S WORK REGARDING SIN

The Lord Jesus Christ bore the penalty for all the sin of the human race, including each aspect of sin mentioned in the previous section.

As far as Imputed Sin is concerned, although in Adam we are counted “guilty” and spiritually dead, in Jesus Christ we are counted “not guilty” and spiritually alive. 1 Cor. 15:22; Eph 2:1,5,6.

The problem of Inherited Sin was also dealt with at the Cross, as Jesus died to provide for the Sin Nature. 1 John 1:7. Human good, which is a product

of the Sin Nature, was rejected at the Cross, making salvation and all other spiritual benefits to be total products of the Grace of God, “not of works lest any man should boast”. Eph. 2:8,9; Rom. 4:4; 6:10.

And, Christ bore everyone’s personal sins (1 John 2:2) because He was judged for the sins of the whole world. His spiritual death on the Cross was substituted for our spiritual death, making it possible for anyone to become spiritually alive. The sin issue is resolved for all of us by the work of Christ. So the issue for anyone is simply faith in Christ and in His finished work of salvation. John 3:18,36.

THE SLAVE MARKET OF SIN

A person is born into the world spiritually dead because of the sin passed on through human procreation. Rom. 5:12. The sin of Adam is imputed to all mankind. 1 Cor. 15:22. There are three categories of people in the world, all of whom are born in sin and all of whom have sinful natures. They are: (1) the immoral person, Rom. 1:18-32; (2) the moral person, Rom. 2:1-6 and Isa. 64:6; and (3) the religious person, Rom. 2:17-29 and 4:4.

Every human being is born into the slave market of sin, according to John 8:34,35 and Gal. 3:31. The Law cannot free a person from the slave market of sin. Only a free man can free a slave. Jesus Christ was born free from sin, without a sin nature, and He never committed personal sin. 2 Cor. 5:21. He was therefore a free man and not in the slave market with us.

The Lord Jesus Christ purchased us from the slave market of sin and set us free. 1 Pet. 1:18,19; 1 Cor. 6:20; Eph. 1:7. The gate to the slave market has been removed for all people; but actual freedom depends on whether the individual exercises his free will in accepting the offer of freedom. The only way out of the slave market of sin is through Jesus Christ. John 14:6; 8:36

THE SIN NATURE

The Sin Nature is that part of the essence of the soul acquired at Adam’s fall and subsequently passed on to every person at birth. The Sin Nature

is the center of the soul’s rebellion against God. The essence of the soul contains:

- Self-consciousness
- Mentality
- Volition
- Emotion
- The Sin Nature

The Essence of the Sin Nature

The Sin Nature has an “area” of strengths in which human good is produced, that is, those good deeds and thoughts which are acceptable to man but which are unacceptable to God for purposes of salvation or spiritual growth. Isa. 64:6; Rom. 8:8. In the Bible, human good is contrasted with divine good, which is the work produced by the Spirit of God in the life of a believer who is walking in daily fellowship with the Lord under the control of the Holy Spirit.

The Sin Nature also has an “area” of weakness which directs the production of all personal sin. Heb. 12:1. Three types of personal sin are produced here: mental attitude sins, sins of the tongue, and open sinful activity.

The Sin Nature has patterns of lusts, or desires, the basic motivators of all the activities of human life. The basic drives include the desire for power, approbation, ego satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, material satisfaction, and so forth.

The Sin Nature has a system of trends, or inclinations, which vary among individuals. Some people have an inclination toward immorality or lasciviousness. Rom. 1. Others have trends toward morality or asceticism. Either trend is a product of Sin Nature activity.

Bible Synonyms for the Sin Nature

There are several terms used in scripture to refer to what is known as the Sin Nature.

Sin (in the singular) – Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12; 7:14; 1 John 1:8.

Flesh – the emphasis here is on the location of the Sin Nature in the “flesh” or life of the individual. Rom. 8:8; 7:18; 13:14; Gal. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:3.

Old Man – referring to the believer’s former manner of life as an unbeliever. Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:5–9.

Heart – in some usages the word “heart” refers to a facet of the soul which is the source of sin. Jer. 17:9; Mt. 12:34; 15:19; Mark 7:21-23; Ps. 58:2-5.

Carnality – derived from the Latin for “flesh”. Rom. 7:14; 8:6-8; 1 Cor. 3:1-3.

Principles Related to the Sin Nature

The Sin Nature is the source of spiritual death. Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1,5.

The Sin Nature is perpetuated in human beings through physical birth. Ps. 51:5; 1 Tim. 2:13,14. The believer continues to have his Sin Nature after salvation. 1 Cor. 3:1; 1 John 1:8. The believer under the control of the Sin Nature is called “carnal”. Rom. 7:14; 1 Cor. 3:1ff

The Sin Nature frustrates the production of divine good. Rom. 7:15.

The Sin Nature is not found in the believer’s resurrection body. 1 Cor. 15:56; Phil. 3:21; Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 5:23.

Solutions to the Problem of the Sin Nature

God has arranged to provide all that is needed to deal with the problems caused by the Sin Nature in a believer’s life. The personal sins of the individual were borne by Jesus Christ on the Cross. 1 Pet. 2:24. These sins will never be mentioned again because they have already been judged in Christ. Rev. 20:12.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ rejected the human good produced by the Sin Nature in terms of its use as “currency” to purchase salvation, Eph. 2:8,9. This made the way clear for God to provide salvation by grace. The unbeliever will be at the Great White Throne judgment because of his rejection of this grace provision. Rev. 20:11-15.

The believer’s sins were borne on the Cross by the Lord, as were those of all people. 2 Cor. 5:21. When a believer sins, Satan accuses him in heaven. Jesus Christ is our Advocate; He pleads our case, and the case is thrown out of court.

God has provided confession of sin as a means of restoring the broken fellowship with God caused by

the believer’s personal sin. The believer can repent and confess and be filled with the Spirit. 1 John 1:9; Prov. 1:23.

Human good, rejected by Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8,9), is never acceptable to God, and it does not produce blessing in the life of the believer. It is contrary to the principle of Grace, in which God does the work. In Christian growth, the Holy Spirit provides for the production of divine good in the believer’s life, through His filling, control, and teaching functions. God does the giving; man does the receiving.

Legalism is human good production for the purpose of earning and receiving merit or blessing from God. In Legalism, man does the work and receives the credit. Therefore, Legalism is a product of the Sin Nature lust patterns. Under Grace, God does the work and receives the “credit” (glory). Human good production of the Sin Nature will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is called “wood, hay, and stubble” and will be burned. The “gold, silver, and precious stones”, of divine good production of the Holy Spirit, will remain. 1 Cor. 3:10-15

The Hazards of Negative Volition

The Apostle Paul issued a stern warning to mature Christian believers living at Ephesus when he told them to beware of falling into a state of indifference to, or antagonism to, the Word of God. He stated that if they were to become negative to the Lord’s teachings, their lives would very quickly become indistinguishable from those of unbelievers in terms of fruitfulness and Christian character.

Ephesians 4:17-19, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity (emptiness) of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

The “darkness” referred to in these verses begins with a negative disposition toward the Word of God. This volitional decision not to follow the Scriptures leads immediately to a breakdown in the faith system of understanding divine viewpoint. There is a cessation in the spiritual growth process; and there is actually a total reversal in progress in the Christian life (backsliding, or reversion).

As a result of the lack of divine viewpoint in the soul, the negative person begins to entertain human standards, human criteria, human doctrine, human programs – these things, plus the full gamut of Satanic doctrine, are substituted for the plan of God. The further result is subjectivity, unhappiness, and deep frustration in trying to live by techniques which do not work.

These conditions lead to a frantic search for happiness through details of life such as riches, friendships, possessions, human approbation, personal influence and power, and so forth. The believer on this treadmill is a slave to these details of life rather than being a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. While the believer thus engaged is still “in Christ” positionally, he is actually no better off than an unbeliever as far as this life is concerned. In fact, he is destined to be far unhappier than the unbeliever, as will be shown in the following paragraphs.

The time, energy, and emotional commitments to this person’s search for happiness lead to further isolation from the teachings of the Word of God. He is spending maximum effort to find happiness through other means. Thus, the very method for reversing the downward trend is ignored.

During this process, neuroses and psychoses are being developed, aggravated by the self-induced misery which accompanies chronic and unmitigated sins of the mind such as pride, jealousy, envy, vindictiveness, worry, fear, mental adultery, implacability, and the like, from which there is no relief outside of the plan of God.

Because of these sin patterns, divine discipline is compounded daily. The believer has a horrible life composed of his own failures, doubled and re-doubled chastisement, his self-induced unhappiness, and the fact that he has no defense against the attacks of Satan and his demons. His “righteousness” (-r) has replaced the righteousness (+R) of God. This whole miserable situation is avoidable, as you will see with further study.

MENTAL ATTITUDE SINS

As a believer progresses in his Christian life, he experiences many profound changes in his thinking. His standards change gradually but radically; his frame of reference changes; his mental attitude soon becomes very different from what it once was. His previous way of thinking is replaced by the

“mind of Christ”, and God’s viewpoint is becoming his own.

The greatest occupational hazard faced by a Christian is the failure to grow in Christ. Persistent personal sin carried on without repentance and confession keeps the Christian out of fellowship with the Lord and hinders the work of the Holy Spirit in the life.

The normal Christian life is a supernatural life. This life cannot be lived apart from the daily intake of spiritual food, the sustenance which comes with the study of the Bible accompanied by the continuous control and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Inattention to the teaching of the Word of God concerning the mechanics of daily Christian living results in failure to grow in Christ. The believer who will not overcome these problems will not be able to enjoy the benefits and blessings of the Christian life, and he will certainly not be productive as a child of God.

This section of the study of the topic of Sin reviews several factors relating to the subject of the believer’s mental attitude. First, we note several categories of mental attitude sin which are the result of “not thinking Grace”. Then we see the methods by which God arranges for human viewpoint thinking to be replaced with divine viewpoint thinking. This section will also show some of the important results in the life of the Christian who develops a godly mental attitude.

The Sin of “Not Thinking Grace”

A Christian decides many times every day whether he will follow God’s plan for his life. In decisions great or small he expresses either his dependence on the Lord or his desire to be independent of God’s direction. A believer has access to the perfect plan of God for his life, a plan which has certain predetermined divine standards by which every situation can be measured, by which every decisive opportunity can be judged. Many promises and blessings are available for use by the person who orders his life according to the patterns laid out in the Bible.

The person who is not positive to the plan of God, and who would apply his own human standards to life situations, does not operate by divine standards. He becomes involved in a variety of mental attitude sin problems stemming from his original decision to be independent of God. His life takes on the characteristics of one who does not “think Grace”.

The Grace of God is that characteristic of His which is an extension of His love for the human race and which causes Him to provide for every human need for time and eternity. The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ on the Cross was the Work which made it possible for God to view every person as free from the guilt of sin and as an object of God's Grace provisions.

Failure to order one's thinking according to Grace involves several aspects of mental attitude sin, including the following :

A spirit of pride – this is an exalted feeling based on personal success or position, or based on good training or education, on personal appearance, or on some natural gift or ability. Sinful pride is an inner feeling of self-importance which does not take into account God's provision of every resource and quality which goes into one's human traits and capabilities.

Love of, or desire for, human approbation and praise – this is a secret fondness for being noticed and recognized. It is a love of supremacy, or it is the drawing of attention to oneself by various types of exhibitionism or by spiritual one-upmanship.

Self will – this is the concept of the stubborn or unteachable nature, or implacability. Self will is a disposition to be argumentative, harsh, bitter, which causes one to be a “nit picker” or critical in the extreme, or to mind the business of others, or to fail to recognize the rights and privacy of others.

Sinful reaction to social pressures – these are the sins of anger, impatience, touchiness, or of having a sensitive nature. There is often resentment and retaliation when disapproved or contradicted. This area of sin generates jealousy, sour grapes, envy, and the accompanying bitterness, hatred, carrying of grudges, revenge tactics, and so forth.

Magnifying the faults and failings of others while emphasizing one's own virtues.

Negative disposition – this is peevishness, a fretful disposition, one that loves to be coaxed and honored. It is a dishonest, deceitful attitude. It is a disposition that tends toward discouragement and dependency under pressure along with the attempt to solve one's problems by hysteria and tantrums.

Apathy – this sin is that of indifference to doctrine and to the Word of God in general. It is indifference to the lost condition of unbelievers or to the carnal condition of other believers.

Characteristics of the Believer's Mental Attitude

The true character of a believer in Jesus Christ is determined by his mental attitude. Prov. 23:7, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he”. See also 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:1; Heb. 12:3; Col. 3:1,2; 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 10:4,5.

A Christian's mental attitude is not always apparent in his actions, but God always knows perfectly what a person is thinking. Heb. 4:12,13; Prov. 21:2. The following are examples of mental attitude thinking.

Worldliness is a mental attitude. Worldliness is not the doing of something wrong; it is the thinking which takes place independently of God's viewpoint. The remedy to the problem of worldliness is not in turning over a new leaf. It is a change in thinking (repentance) rather than a change in activity. Divine viewpoint must replace human viewpoint before a change in character can be expected. One can have an outward life which appears good, yet be filled with mental attitude sins. Col. 3:2; James 4:4.

Toughness, strength, and determination are mental attitudes. One is not beaten until he gives up mentally.

True Christian inner peace is a mental attitude. It is the relaxed mental state which enables one to enjoy the Christian life regardless of people or outward circumstances. With a good mental attitude, the believer can be joyful, relaxed, and can even enjoy the battle.

Mental stability is the result of thinking from a proper frame of reference, that is, Biblical thinking. The Christian who has mental fear, who is a chronic worrier, who cannot think clearly under pressure, who blames others for his problems, who cannot make correct decisions – that believer is unstable. His emotions interfere with his thinking. Since emotion always follows thinking, emotional instability will always follow from incorrect (HVP) thinking. But God's Plan of Grace leads to rock-solid mental and emotional stability.

Human vs Divine Viewpoint

Thinking requires words - vocabulary. Divine thinking requires divine vocabulary. “Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Under any kind

of spiritual pressure, human vocabulary, or human thinking, is not adequate. Only God's words can give the ability to think correctly under pressure. The Christian's ability to think correctly is based on how much Bible teaching is resident (applied) in the soul of the believer.

The Christian is commanded to have a new mental attitude. Col. 3:1,2; 2 Cor. 10:4,5; 1 Cor. 2:16; Phil. 2:5.

The warfare between two viewpoints in the believer's soul must be fought from within, first by knowledge of doctrine, and then by the application of truth to the life. 2 Tim. 2:15; 1 John 1:9.

Every believer has a mind which is capable of looking at life from God's point of view. Rom. 1:18 ff. Mental attitude divine viewpoint is obtained only through Bible study accompanied by the controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Christian who habitually studies the Word learns to concentrate and to think from God's point of view, and thus he becomes stabilized. The "mind of Christ" (the source of God's viewpoint) is made clear in the Bible.

The Christian can be "transformed by the renewing of the mind" through study, knowledge, and application of Bible truth. By this means his decisions and actions are most likely to be in agreement with Bible principle. And this is the only sure sign of Christian maturity and victorious Christian living.

The Human Conscience

The conscience is located in the mind and is the center for the operating standards of the human soul. Titus 1:15. The conscience convicts the Christian of evil or wrongdoing. John 8:9. The conscience establishes standards for both human and divine relationships. Acts 24:16.

The conscience functions on thinking; and the believer in fellowship has a conscience which functions from resident (applied) divine viewpoint. Rom. 2:15; 9:1, as related to applied Bible teaching. The conscience establishes standards for serving God. 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 9:14. But false operating standards in the conscience produce legalism. 1 Cor. 8:7.

The more the believer uses applied Bible doctrine, the stronger his conscience becomes in using such things as the Law of Liberty and the superseding laws of love and sacrifice. 1 Cor. 10:24-29. Conscience is the basis for enduring mistreatment and

misunderstanding without defending oneself. 1 Pet. 2:19; 3:16. The conscience can be damaged or destroyed with false doctrine and with a calloused soul. 1 Tim. 4:1,2.

The Mechanics of Replacing Human Thinking with Divine Viewpoint

The Christian life is a supernatural life and cannot be lived without the filling of the Holy Spirit and the daily function of applied Bible teaching. Rom. 8:2; 7:6; Gal. 5:25; Eph. 5:18. All changes must come from within, and the Holy Spirit must originate divine good by applying doctrine to the life.

We begin a change of viewpoint at the moment of salvation. At that time we changed our mental attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 3:19. That was repentance and faith, and it resulted in our regeneration. John 3:16. At that moment many benefits were made available to us, blessings and promises from God which enable us to live in a manner which is both acceptable to the Lord and which also produces great happiness for us. We are given the ability to think those things which will bring honor to the Lord. Eph. 5:18; 4:23; Col. 3:2.

The choice of whether to make use of the divine operating assets is made by the believer every day. The power of our walk with the Lord depends on Bible teaching, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the believer's positive volition. Daily Bible teaching under the controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit builds up divine standards in the human soul and conscience. 1 Tim. 1:5,19; 3:9.

The Benefits of Having a Proper Mental Attitude

With the proper mental attitude, the Christian will have victory, peace, power, and mental stability. Phil. 2:5; 2 Tim. 1:7. The Christian can experience perfect inner peace, even during times of difficulty and suffering. Phil. 4:7. Inner peace comes from what we think. Isa. 26:3. Divine viewpoint brings mental stability and eliminates discouragement, anxiety, instability, fearfulness, and double-mindedness. Stability of mind and character is a mental attitude of strength.

The believer with divine viewpoint has a gracious attitude toward others. He is a mature believer

characterized by mental attitude love who is a channel of the Grace of God. Deut. 6:5; 11:13. A mental attitude from DVP produces confidences based on absolute values and standards. 2 Cor. 5:1,6,8.

Mental Attitude and the Believer's Ministry

The mature believer "thinks Grace", which is the "mind of Christ". Therefore, the Christian's life and personality are characterized by many of the qualities of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 5:22 ff. In every one of these characteristics the Christian has one basic ingredient - correct thinking according to divine viewpoint. 1 Pet. 3:8

Therefore, the mature believer is gentle, compassionate, caring, and has a gracious attitude toward others. These are essential life qualities in any believer who is a good witness for Christ. With these qualities, and with the knowledge of the Word of God being acquired on the way to maturity, the believer cannot help but be an outstanding witness for Christ and a skilful practitioner in the use of his spiritual gifts.

THE SINS THAT GOD HATES

In the Bible passage Proverbs 6:16-19 are listed seven things that God the Father despises. The paragraph cited uses the phrase "an abomination unto Him" to indicate God's attitude of repugnance toward the sins listed there. Four of the sins are sins of the tongue; two are mental attitude sins; and one sin, murder, is an open sin.

"A proud look" is a sin manifested in the features of the face. This sin reveals the mental attitude sin of pride, and it refers to arrogance which is revealed in expression, attitude, and bearing.

"A lying tongue" refers to inveterate, habitual lying.

"Hands that shed innocent blood" refers to murder. It does not refer to killing in battle, which is bona fide, but to the unlawful taking of a life.

"A heart that devises wicked imaginations" is a sin in which the mind is controlled by the emotions with the result that there is the mental attitude sin of jealousy or suspicion, which cause a person to think the worst.

"Feet that are swift in running to mischief" refers to sins of the tongue plus overt sins. It relates to the person who goes out of his way to make trouble through gossip, maligning, judging, vindictiveness, tactics of revenge, and any overt tactic which will make trouble for others.

"A false witness that spreads lies" refers to perjury, another form of lying. Or, it means to downgrade someone.

"He that soweth discord among the brethren" indicates maligning, carrying tales, backbiting, destructive criticism, and so forth.

SINS OF THE TONGUE

READ Psalm 64:1-10.

Sins of the tongue have their origin in the Sin Nature. These sins are among the most devastating of all of the categories of sin. Of the seven sins mentioned in Proverbs 6:16-19 as being especially hated by God, three are sins of the tongue. As a Christian believer, you must learn as much as possible about this type of sin. And you must do everything possible to gain victory over this in order to be able to make progress in the Christian Way of Life.

Psalm 34:11-14.

Sins of the tongue are motivated by mental sins such as arrogance, jealousy, bitterness, vindictiveness, implacability, hatred, mental adultery, pettiness, envy, guilt feelings, etc. All of these sins are focused at other people at one time or another. When someone reaches out to attack another person, the tongue is used to voice the inner mental sins which are already present. Such talk may be direct and scathing, even vulgar. Or the talk may be subtle, refined, intellectual, even couched in Christian terms. "There is a matter that I need to share with you as a prayer request; this is just between us spiritual believers..."

NOTE : If you know something bad about a person, or you suspect something, do not share it with anyone unless that person has a direct hand in the solution of the problem. If in doubt, don't talk about it!

Sins of the tongue are a sign of the believer's reverting to the old way of life, the condition of the carnal man. James 4:11; 5:9; 5:12, Romans 3:13,14. In fact, the believer who indulges in sins of the tongue cannot be distinguished from an unbeliever.

The believer is warned in Ephesians 4 not to fall into the life patterns of the unbeliever.

Eph. 4:17-22, 25, 29-32.

Verbal sins can destroy a family or a congregation. Things like gossip, slander, maligning, judging, backbiting, and boasting are malicious, venal, and destructive. James 3:5,6. Troublemakers are always characterized by sins of the tongue. Psalm 52:2.

It is the duty of the pastor to warn against these things. 2 Tim. 2:14-17. And believers are commanded to separate themselves from such troublemakers. Rom. 16:17,18. This separation may be just a turning away or refusal to comment or to reply in a conversation. Separation does not mean ostracism or excommunication except in the worst cases. It means, at first, refusal to participate. Teaching on this topic may involve exhortation and rebuke, as in Titus 2:15. But such teaching, plus the refusal of believers to participate in sins of the tongue, will help the one who is having trouble with this to have victory.

Titus 1:10,11.

Sins of the tongue produce compounded divine discipline. Ps. 64:8; Matt. 7:1,2. First, there is discipline for the mental attitude sin which motivates the verbal sin. Second, there is discipline for the verbal sin itself. Third, there is discipline for the sins which one assigns to another person in wrongly judging him - "with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Types of Sins of the Tongue

Backbiting - slander, defamation of character, evil speech, detraction. Found in several places in the Bible, including Rom. 1:30 as one of the sins of the immoral person who has rejected God. READ Psalm 15:3; 50:20; 101:5; Proverbs 25:23; Jer. 9:4; Rom. 1:30; 2 Cor. 12:20.

False Witness - lying about people, especially while under oath. Prov. 25:28; Exo. 32:1; Prov. 19:9. Examples of false witness:

- Against Stephen, Acts. 6:11
- Against Paul, Acts 25:7
- Against Christ, Matthew and Mark

Perjury - lying under oath. READ Lev. 6:3; 19:12; Zech. 5:4; Mal. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1:10

Lying - READ Prov. 12:22; 21:6; Col. 3:9; Lev. 19:11; Luke 20:20.

Dissimulation - Faking it, covering up, hypocrisy. Example: calling in sick when not sick. READ 1 Sam. 21:13; Acts 23:12-15; 2 Sam. 14:2; 2 Kings 10:19; Luke 20:20.

Busybody - self-appointed monitor, or one who tries to straighten others out. This word appears as a translation of several Greek originals.

From *βουλεύω*, part. of *βουλεύω* "to do something useless or unnecessary". Literally, "to work around". Also used in Greek to mean "undue anxiety" over something which is not really a proper concern.

2 Thess. 3:11.

Also from *ἐπίσκοπος*, a combining form from *ἐπί*, "belonging to another", and *σκοπος*, "bishop". Hence, the busybody is "another man's bishop".

1 Pet. 4:15.

Talebearing - slandering, whispering behind backs. Prov. 11:13; 17:9; 18:8

Evil Whispering - Prov. 16:28.

Slander- Psalm 101:5; 50:20; Prov. 10:18; 11:9; 2 Sam. 10:3; Job 1:11; Luke 7:33.

False Accusation - READ 1 Sam. 1:14; Neh. 6:7; Job 2:5; 22:6; Jer. 33:17; Matt. 5:11; 27:12; Luke 6:7; 1 Peter 3:16.

Evil Speaking - READ Ps. 5:9; 10:7; 36:3; 55:21; Prov. 12:18; 24:2; Matt. 12:34; Rom. 3:13; James 3:6; 4:11.

God provides protection for the believer who is, himself, a victim of sins of the tongue. Job. 5:19-21.

Control of the tongue, the absence of verbal sins, is a sign of Christian edification in the believer, and it is a sign of considerable growth in Grace. James 3:2; 4:11,12. By avoiding sins of the tongue, the Christian can lengthen his life and find great happiness. Ps. 34:12,13.

How to Have Victory Over Sins of the Tongue

1. Grow daily in conformity with the Lord Jesus Christ

2. Ask God the Father for provision and protection in this area.
3. Confess this sin each time you are convicted of it.
4. Learn to recognize all of the verbal sins – some are obvious, some are subtle.
5. Keep silent during discussion of a bad situation.
6. Keep silent during discussion of another person.
7. Keep silent.

RULE: Do not pass on derogatory or uncomplimentary information about anyone, unless the Word of God has given you the specific authority and responsibility to do so, and the person you are informing likewise has responsibility in the situation and a need-to-know the information.

THE SIN UNTO DEATH

The phrase “sin unto death” describes the final stage of divine discipline in which God removes from the earth the person who is totally alienated from God. The “sin unto death” is not a particular sin; but it is, rather, a mental attitude of total indifference to and rebellion against the will and purpose of God.

The spiritual condition of the person who comes under the “sin unto death” is characterized by continual and maximum carnality; and this punishment represents God’s final step of chastisement to those who are in maximum alienation from God. Only God can discern the true nature of a person’s mind, attitude, or volition; and only God knows whether a person is actually implacable and deserving of physical death.

The “sin unto death” is described as a principle in 1 John 5:16; Psalm 118:17,18; and Ezek. 18:21-32.

It is important for the Christian to understand the circumstances under which sins are not “unto death”.

First, sin which is confessed is not “unto death”. 1 John 1:9; 1 Cor. 11:31; Ps. 32:5; Ps. 38.

Second, sin which is discontinued is not “unto death”. Heb. 12:1; Eze. 18:21-32.

Finally, the person who responds positively to divine discipline is not involved in the “sin unto death”. Heb. 12:6, cf. 12:11-15.

There are definite characteristics by which to recognize the conditions which lead to God’s applying the “sin unto death”. Persistent, unconfessed sin, sin which continues unchecked with no repentance, may bring a person under this category. Also, the person who persistently ignores Grace, warnings, and discipline may come under the “sin unto death”. Lev. 26. Then, sin which has a maximum adverse effect on other people (causing stumbling) may lead a person into severe discipline.

Some case histories of the “sin unto death”:

- The case of “lying to the Holy Spirit” (Ananias and Sapphira). Acts 5:1-10.
- The case of persistent carnality while sitting at the Lord’s Table, 1 Cor. 11:30,31.
- The case of disobedience to the Word of God. 1 Chron. 10:13,14; 1 Sam. 13:9-14. King Saul did not kill Agag although directly ordered to do so by God; he insisted on personally offering sacrifices in the place of divinely appointed priests; and he consulted a witch, itself a capital offense.
- The case of self-righteousness and dependence on man which was perpetuated (case of Hezekiah). Isa. 38.
- The case of apostasy on the part of a believer. Num. 31:8; 1 Tim. 1:19,20.

SIN’S VICIOUS CIRCLE

One sin leads to another. Sins are chained together and tend to reinforce each other. The Christian must make a conscious effort to halt the progress of sin at the beginning.

Mental attitude sins are the worst sins. They touch off other mental sins, sins of the tongue, and the overt or open sins. And a Christian will experience great self-induced misery in his life unless he learns how to nip sin in the bud through confession and victory. Learning how to recognize certain sin patterns is very useful in helping the believer to be forearmed in the conflict.

The following are some examples of types of “chain sinning” which are to be avoided.

Bitterness is a sin that involves someone else and leads to a chain of sins. Any sin may lead to divine discipline. Even when a sin is confessed, suffering which was begun under discipline may continue (even though the cursing has been turned to blessing in the case of actual suffering). Bitterness may reappear as the hurt continues – bitterness against God or against other people.

Bitterness has another person as an object. It leads to vindictiveness and implacability. These, in turn, lead to antagonism and revenge tactics. Revenge tactics can include sins of the tongue such as judging, maligning, gossip. Overt sin is possible, including social ostracism (snubbing, shunning, not speaking), harassment, even violence. Murder, for example, is the end result of a chain of sins stemming from bitterness. The Christian living in bitterness tries to sublimate in various ways, alcohol, drugs, emotional experiences, trying to maintain the rosy glow, but he is never satisfied.

Guilt Association is a guilt complex that involves various parts of the soul. The believer keeps bringing up sins of his past; his depression leads to guilt feelings. He begins to associate every trouble in the past with an ‘unforgiven’ sin of the past. He feels that God is permanently displeased with him. A guilt complex like this leads to blasphemy, that is, accusing God and maligning Him. This sin leads to a lack of faith, hatred toward God and toward others who might be thought responsible. Remember, when a sin is confessed, God forgets it; and the believer is wrong to remember it. God does not discipline us ten years after the fact. David had 26 good years after the Bathsheba incident.

Public confession of sin is used by people to vent a guilt complex. But the one who confesses publicly is giving out gossip, about himself if no one else. He presents material for temptation to other believers, temptations to judge, to hate, to malign, to gossip. Public confession leads to chain sinning in one’s own life and in the lives of others. This is a failure to preserve the privacy of the priesthood. A Christian may reveal sin problems privately to an intimate and confidential friend who is a believer and who is in a position to exhort or counsel from the Word of God. Otherwise, confession is made to God alone.

Intrusion upon divine prerogatives occurs when a believer tries to do the word of God in judging, condemning, disciplining other people. The Bible instructs each person to judge himself; and he may judge and discipline his own children. Otherwise,

it’s “live and let live”.

Gossip, the discussion of problems with outside parties is similar to public confession. It makes problems for people and encourages mental attitude sins and sins of the tongue. It leads to cliques, divisions, mutual admiration societies. This activity is an attempt to build one’s happiness on someone else’s unhappiness.

Failure to maintain relaxed mental attitude toward others refers to the development of pseudo-love in the life. It does not allow for other peoples’ areas of weakness, does not exhibit true love for others. It leads to a failure to forgive, which in turn makes it impossible for the Christian to be in a position to help through example or exhortation.

The solution to all sin problems of this type is edification, spiritual growth through a daily walking in fellowship and the intake of Bible teaching. Also required is a thorough knowledge of the doctrine of Grace, the application of God’s gracious assets to the life, and the development thereby of a gracious mental attitude and outward disposition toward other people.

THE PLACE OF CONFESSION IN SOLVING THE SIN PROBLEM

The presence of the Sin Nature in the soul guarantees that the Christian believer will have a problem with active personal sin for the rest of his life on earth. This personal sin causes a deep disturbance in the believer’s personal relationship with the Lord. The Holy Spirit is said to be personally “grieved” by a Christian’s sin, and His work “quenched” by a Christian’s human good. While the believer does not lose his salvation each time he sins, his personal growth and effectiveness are stifled as long as there is a rift in his fellowship with God. This rift is healed by means of the act of personal confession to God of the sin which caused the breach.

Confession of sins is not the basis of salvation. Jesus Christ was judged once for our sins, on the Cross; and He does not need to be judged repeatedly for our sins. The basis of salvation is the individual’s personal trust in Christ and His work, rather than confession or any other act which a person might perform to try to win the favor of

God. Acts 16:31; John 1:12; Eph. 1:13,14; 2:8,9; 1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21.

A Christian is always “in Christ”. Eph. 1:3,5,7. So confession of personal sin is extremely important to the personal spiritual relationship that he has with God. God requires confession of sin as the means of maintaining a close personal walk with Himself. He requires, that is, a continual acknowledgement of His rulership; and confession of sin is the means by which the believer expresses his yieldedness and surrender to the sovereign will of God on a moment by moment basis. The Lord wants the Christian to have a very useful and happy life, and part of His plan for providing this sort of life is confession of sin.

God Encourages the Believer to Confess Sin

A believer may not be aware, initially, that he can live out of fellowship and that he needs to confess sin. 1 John 1:6; 2:9,10; 2 Pet. 1:9. God both commands and pleads with us to judge ourselves, to confess, and then to forget sins. Isa. 43:26; 1 Cor. 11:28,31; 1 John 1:9; Phil. 3:13,14; Prov. 1:23. Any person who reads the Bible quickly becomes aware of God’s intentions in this matter.

Some Christians willfully ignore the commands to confess, leading God to employ more persuasive measures to encourage compliance. These methods include (1) loss of inner peace, Phil. 4:6,7; (2) chastening (discipline), Heb. 12:6; (3) pricking of conscience, Heb. 13:18; and (4) sorrow for sin, Psalm 32. A few Christians manage to ignore even severe chastening for a long time, leading to God’s administering the “sin unto death”, described in a previous section. The alternative to confession is discipline. Heb. 12:1-5.

The Mechanics of Confession of Sin

Confession does not provide the believer with a license to sin. The attitude that says “I can sin and confess repeatedly because God will always forgive” is sinful in itself because it indicates that the believer does not actually think the same about his sin that God does. That is, there is no real repentance or confession. Nor does confession of sin remove the buildup of callousness or hardness in the soul of the person who has lived apart from God for a long time. This removal of scar tissue is

accomplished through edification, the Biblical system for understanding and applying the Word of God.

Confession of sin does not provide an emotional experience, not is it accompanied by an emotional reaction. God’s forgiveness is based on His promise to cleanse, not on how a person feels. And, confession does not always remove the pain or suffering which is the result of the sin itself or which came as a result of divine discipline. Although the cursing is turned to blessing, the suffering may continue; but the suffering may be endured to the glory of God instead.

Some Christians try to get on God’s good side through some means other than the confession which is prescribed by God. Sometimes a person thinks that a demonstration of sorrowfulness is called for, or that weeping will impress God with one’s contrition. Others “compensate” for their sin by increasing their religious activities.

Some will pray more often and longer and read their Bibles more. Some will try to bribe God with additional tithes and offerings, or with acts of self-denial, sacrifice, or service. Some will present themselves in re-dedication services and attend church functions more often. But these things cannot be substituted for confession of sin. God is interested only in a person’s mental attitude toward the sin.

The word “confession” in the New Testament is taken from the Greek word *homologeo*, meaning “to cite”, “to name”, “to classify in the same manner”, “to agree with”, “to say the same thing as”. Confession acknowledges God’s rulership in the matter and agrees with His judgment. This is a method of dealing with the disharmony caused by sins which causes no merit to accrue to the person who confesses.

Confession is strictly a Grace provision in which God makes a promise and carries out the function of cleansing. The Christian must (1) confess the sin, 1 John 1:9; (2) forget the sin, Phil. 3:13,14; and (3) isolate the sin, Heb. 12:15.

Since prayer is made only to God the Father (Mark. 2:7), confession is made only to God the Father. Upon the condition of confession, forgiveness is guaranteed and cleansing from all unrighteousness is administered (1 John 1:9). The word “cleanse” refers to the removal of the guilt of the sin. Therefore, the cleansed individual is removed from the condition of discipline, chastening is no longer being administered, and the hindrances to the min-

istry of the Holy Spirit are removed.

There are several synonyms in the Bible for the word “confess”, as follows“:

- To “yield” means to confess. Rom. 6:13.
- “Putting off the old man”, is tantamount to

confession. Eph. 5:14.

- Judging oneself is confession, or leads to it. 1 Cor. 11:31.
- Presenting one’s body is analogous to confession. Rom. 12:1.