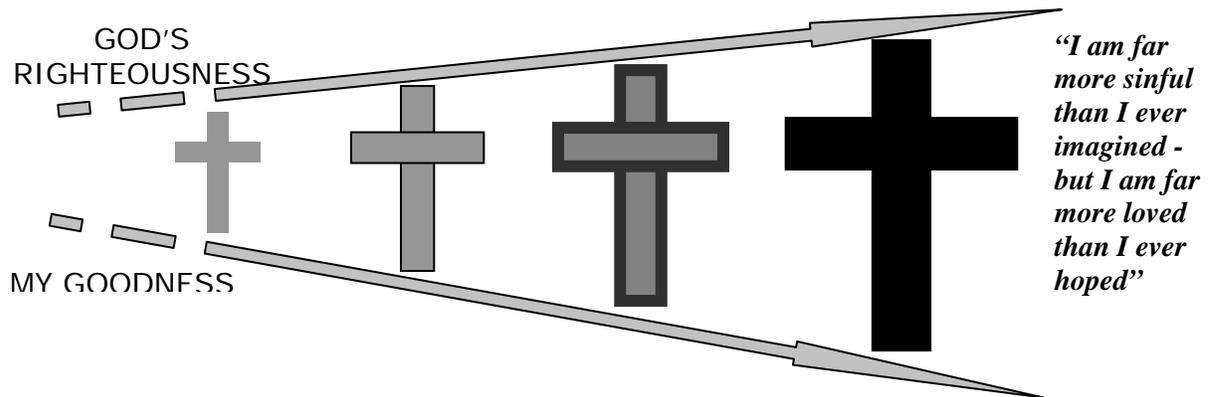


## Christian Growth Week 2: Sin

### Introduction

Growing Christians continue to gain increasing insight into their sin nature as they have a growing awareness of God's grace.

See the pattern in Isaiah 6:1-8.



“God knows who I am: he knows that from head to foot I am full of sin; he knows that I am weakness incarnate; that I can do nothing. The trouble is that I do not know it. I admit that all men are sinners, and that therefore I am a sinner; but I imagine that I am not such a hopeless sinner as some. God must bring us all to the place where we see that we are utterly weak and helpless. While we say so, we do not wholly believe it, and God has to do something to convince us of it.”<sup>1</sup>

### Today's goals:

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### The Biblical View of Human Nature and Sin

Sin is far deeper than isolated acts of \_\_\_\_\_

Sin is far deeper than isolated acts of \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers), pp. 157,158.

The Bible teaches that, *apart from Christ*, we are completely

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ sin.

Eph. 2:1-3\*\* “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.” (NASB)

#### Old Testament view of humanity and sin

Jer. 17:9, 10a – “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? 10 I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind...” (NASB)

#### Jesus in the New Testament

Mark 7:21-23 – “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.” (NASB)

#### Paul in Romans 1:18-24

Romans 1:18-23 – “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.” (NASB)

Note the issues in this passage:

- God reveals Himself...
- Yet many choose...
- Their heart...

### Paul in Romans 2

Romans 2:1-3 “Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. 3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?” (NASB)

“Today's non-Christians, encouraged by popular psychology which accentuates positive thinking and self-acceptance, think of themselves as fundamentally good people trying to do the right thing, but missing the mark occasionally.”<sup>2</sup>

### Paul in Romans 5

Romans 5:12,19 – “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned... 19 For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.” (NASB)

### Paul in Romans 7

Romans 7:14,15,24 – “For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. 15 For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to *do*, but I am doing the very thing I hate... 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (NASB)

### Paul in Galatians 5

Galatians 5:17\* - “For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.” (NASB)

## Summary: What is the Biblical view of sin?

Who is sinful?

Is sin generated externally or internally?

### Definitions of sin:

Richard Lovelace – “. . . the structure of sin in the human personality is far more complicated than the isolated acts and thoughts of deliberate disobedience commonly designated in the world. In its biblical definition, sin cannot be limited to isolated instances or patterns of wrongdoing; it is something much more akin to the psychological term complex: an organic network of compulsive attitudes, beliefs, and behavior deeply rooted in alienation from God. Sin originated in the darkening of the human mind and heart as man turned from the truth about God to embrace a lie about him and consequently a whole universe of lies about his creation. Sinful thoughts, words and deeds flow forth from this darkened heart automatically and compulsively, as water from a polluted fountain.”<sup>3</sup>

Larry Crabb – “Many pastors preach an ‘iceberg’ view of sin. All they worry about is what is visible above the water line. Like a naive sea captain steering his vessel around the tip of the iceberg with no

<sup>22</sup> Richard F. Lovelace, *Renewal As A Way Of Life*, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 89.

awareness that there is a mountain of ice beneath the surface that could wreck his ship, Christian (leaders) are too often satisfied when their people turn from church-defined sins of behavior.”<sup>4</sup>

John Stott - “Jesus taught the inward origin of human evil. Its source has to be traced neither to a bad environment nor to a faulty education, but rather to our heart: our inherited and twisted nature. (The heart) resembles a very deep well. The thick deposit of mud at the bottom is usually unseen, and even unsuspected. But when the waters of the well are stirred by the winds of violent emotion (or adversity), the most evil looking, evil smelling filth bubbles up from the depths and breaks the surface – rage, hate, lust, cruelty, jealousy and revenge. In our most sensitive moments we are appalled at our potential for evil. Superficial remedies will not do.”<sup>5</sup>

## **Conclusion:**

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<sup>4</sup> Larry Crabb, *Understanding People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), p. 129.

<sup>5</sup> John Stott. *The Contemporary Christian*. InterVarsity Press. Downers Grove. 1992. 41.

# Understanding Our Sin Nature

## 1. Temperaments

DEFINITION: a collection of personality traits that...

Gordon Allport – “The characteristic phenomena of an individual's nature, including his susceptibility to emotional stimulation, his customary strength and speed of response, the quality of his prevailing mood, and all the peculiarities of fluctuation and intensity of mood, these being regarded as dependent on constitutional make-up, and therefore largely hereditary in origin.”<sup>6</sup>

See also: O. Hallesby, *Temperament and the Christian Faith*

WARNING: Don't apply temperaments carelessly:

- Don't use them to \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Don't use them \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Don't use them with the view that some temperaments  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
- Don't throw out the use of temperaments just because  
\_\_\_\_\_

Consider yourself through the lens of the four temperaments.

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<sup>6</sup> G. W. Allport, *Pattern and Growth in Personality* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961). p. 34.

**Active Temperaments: Sanguine and Choleric**

<b>Sanguine Strengths</b>	<b>Sanguine Sins</b>	<b>Choleric Strengths</b>	<b>Choleric Sins</b>
Talkative	Poor Listener	Strong-willed	Angry Outbursts
Outgoing	Weak-willed	Determined	Cruel Sarcasm
Enthusiastic	Unstable	Independent	Domineering
Warm	Undisciplined	Optimistic	Inconsiderate
Personable	Restless	Practical	Resists Correction
Friendly	Undependable	Productive	Self-sufficient
Compassionate	Exaggerates	Decisive	Cold
Carefree	Fearful	Leader	Manipulative
		Confident	Messiah Complex

**Reflective Temperaments: Melancholy and Phlegmatic**

<b>Melancholy Strengths</b>	<b>Melancholy Sins</b>	<b>Phlegmatic Strengths</b>	<b>Phlegmatic Sins</b>
Creative	Unhappily self-centered	Calm	Stingy
Analytical	Moody	Easy-Going	Fearful
Deep Emotions	Negative	Dependable	Indecisive
Perfectionist	Theoretical/Impractical	Efficient	Spectator
Artistic	Unsociable	Conservative	Self-Protective
Idealistic	Critical	Practical	Lazy
Loyal	Vengeful	Diplomat	Self-Righteous
Sincere	Rigid	Dry Humor	Traitors

Conclusions:

- Appreciate temperamental \_\_\_\_\_
- Besetting sins often run along \_\_\_\_\_
- Don't use temperaments to \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Sin as Idolatry

Rom. 1:22,23 – “Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.” (NASB)

Col. 3:5 – “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.” (NASB)

James 4:4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.<sup>5</sup> Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”?

John Calvin said: “The human heart is a factory of idols . . . every one of us is . . . expert in inventing idols . . . The evil in our desire typically does not lie in what we want, but that we want it too much.”<sup>7</sup>

Definition of an idol:

Contemporary idols:

The New Testament frequently refers to this compulsive idolatrous worship as *epithumia* (literally “inordinate” or “over-desires”)—wanting a good thing too much (Rom. 1:24-25).<sup>8</sup> Such idolatrous over-desires may be discerned by:

- Chronic willingness to \_\_\_\_\_
- Inordinate negative emotions \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>7</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes*, I, xi, 8.

<sup>8</sup> See also Eph. 4:22; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; 2 Tim. 2:22; 2 Pet. 1:4. Interestingly, *epithumia* is also used in a positive sense about our desire for God and his grace (cf. 1 Pet. 1:12). We regard many of these over-desires negatively, calling them “compulsions” or “addictions.” But we regard others positively (e.g., “He is driven to excel in his career.”).

Why did Alex Rodriguez use steroids?

“With an outsized craving for approval and status, his identity firmly woven into his numbers, Rodriguez felt the need to justify a contract . . . (criticized) for its excess. As (a) former teammate . . . explained . . . the scrutiny left A-Rod with ‘the mentality of needing to hit a three-run homer with nobody on base.’ It is that pressure, Rodriguez says now, that drove him to experiment with banned substances.”<sup>9</sup>

Consider common areas of over-desire

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OTHERS?

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<sup>9</sup> Selena Roberts and David Epstein, “Confronting A-Rod,” *Sports Illustrated*, February 16, 2009, p. 28.

## Understanding our Sin Nature: Conclusion

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- I will gain increasing insight into my sin nature as \_\_\_\_\_.

We see this pattern in Paul’s experience:

1 Cor. 15:8-10 – “And last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 9 For I am the **least of the apostles** and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.” (NIV)

Eph. 3:8 – “To me, the very **least of all saints**, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ . . .” (NASB)

1 Tim. 1:15 – “It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world **to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.**” (NASB)

C.S. Lewis’ experience of his sin: "Burrowing into his past, he was appalled at what he found . . . 'I have found out ludicrous and terrible things about my own character. Sitting by, watching the rising thoughts to break their necks as they pop up, one learns to know the sort of thoughts that do come. And, will you believe it, one out of every three is a thought of self-admiration: when everything else fails, having had its neck broken, up comes the thought "What an admirable fellow I am to have broken their necks!" I catch myself posturing before the mirror, so to speak, all day long. I pretend I am carefully thinking out what to say to the next pupil (for his good, of course) and then suddenly realize I am really thinking how frightfully clever I'm going to be and how he will admire me . . . When you force yourself to stop it, you admire yourself for doing that. It's like fighting the hydra . . . There seems to be no end to it. Depth under depth of self-love and self-admiration . . . *Pride* . . . is the mother of all sins, and the original sin of Lucifer.'"<sup>10</sup>

## Understand your sin, but don’t focus on your sin.

We need to hold these two perspectives in tension:

- Psalm 139:23,24 “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.”
- Phil. 3:13b,14 “Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

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<sup>10</sup> Green and Hooper, *C.S Lewis: A Biography*. p. 105.

**John Newton**

Author of the famous hymn, “Amazing Grace,” was a slave ship captain, turned pastor.

“I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am” — John Newton

The following quote was from the end of his life as his memory was failing.

“Although my memory's fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior.” — John Newton

**This week’s study is only part of the picture.**

Over the next two weeks, we will see how our New Identity and the Holy Spirit give us the basis for progressive victory over the power of sin, so that we will no longer be slaves to sin. These provisions through our union with Christ, rather than our sinfulness, should be our main focus!

**Memory Verses**

Eph. 2:1-3\*\* Apart from Christ, we are completely enmeshed in, deceived by, and enslaved to sin.

Gal. 5:17\* All Christians face this internal struggle: the Spirit leads toward righteousness and the flesh (or sin nature) leads toward sin.

**Assignment**

Reading: John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian; The Human Paradox* (follow the directions at the top of the reading).

Complete the Discovering Idols Project.