

The Scars of Sin

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Recorded May 6, 2017

As we go forward after the Passover and Days of Unleavened Bread, as we continue to examine ourselves and put sin out of our lives, it might be beneficial, I thought, to cover another topic that is related to what we've been through during Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread that directly affects each and every one of us. We know that sin brings a penalty, and that penalty is death.

Romans 6:23. *For the wages of sin is death ... (KJV)*

We also know that we can be saved from that death penalty through the sacrifice, the death, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Let's turn to Romans 5:8 as a reminder. This all centers around, of course, the love of God for us, and that's exactly what this verse says.

Romans 5:8. *But God commends his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (KJV)*

Before we were ever born, before we ever knew Him, He died for us.

9) Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath [the death penalty] through him. (KJV)

So, Christ, indeed, saves us from our sins.

So, to introduce the subject we're going to talk about today, we need to look to the example of David, the situation with Bathsheba, where he made a turn in his life. In this account, we need to remember that David was at least fifty years old, maybe fifty-five. So, keep that in mind as we go through this.

2 Samuel 11:1. *And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle ... (KJV)*

That refers to the springtime, after the winter snow and the bad weather.

1b) ... that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel [the army]; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah ... (KJV)

Rabbah is on the east side of the Jordan, and it's about sixty miles northeast of Jerusalem. David did not go. He sent Joab and the army.

1 continued) ... But David tarried still at Jerusalem. (KJV)

We have to stop here and ask why. Why did he stay in Jerusalem instead of going with his army? Up to that point, he had always been with the army and led the army. You can look back across the page in chapter 10 and verse 17. He was with the army. As anybody knows, an effective, dedicated commander is always with his troops. He is always amongst the troops, checking on the troops, checking their equipment, their supplies, checking their health to make sure they are set for the task at hand. But David was not there.

This tells us there was something wrong with David's attitude. His attitude obviously was self-centered. He was looking at what pleases him and not his duty as king and as the commander of the army.

Matthew Henry's Commentary says this:

Had he been now at his post, at the head of his forces, he would have been out of the way of this temptation.

Then he says something profound, and I put it in the update a couple of weeks ago. He says:

When we are out of the way of our duty (not fulfilling our duty) we are in the way of temptation.

That's exactly what happened to David. It tells us that when we have too much leisure time, we can get into trouble. Kids get into trouble when they have too much leisure time, and so do adults.

2) And it came to pass in an evening tide [Hebrew means dusk], that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house ... (KJV)

The homes then, including the palace, were all flat roofed and people would go up there after the heat of the day to cool off.

But the point is here that he got off his bed before dusk or about dusk. So, we have to ask the question: What is he doing in bed at that time of day? What's going on here? This possibly indicates a lethargic attitude in addition to a self-centered attitude on his part.

Matthew Henry goes on to say:

It indicates a love of ease and the indulgence of a slothful temper. There he had dozed away the afternoon in idleness which he should have spent in some exercise for his own improvement or for the good of others, but instead, he was dozing away.

2b) ... and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. (KJV)

So, at this juncture, you see, this is one of those spiritual forks in the road, and David has a choice to make and here he did not follow his own advice. He didn't follow his own words. Had he followed his own words, we would not be reading this account. Here David tells us:

Psalm 119:37. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity ... (KJV)

We know the Hebrew word "vanity" means *uselessness or ruin*. It can also mean *emptiness*. But the fact is the future of his actions based on not turning away were indeed useless and for ruin and of no value, in fact, very hurtful as we're going to see. He didn't follow his own advice.

2 Samuel 11:3. And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said ... (KJV)

The word "one" is in italics. I believe this is what David said, not what somebody else said.

3b) ... Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? (KJV)

The fact is, if you read the entire life of David, he had to know her. There's no question that he already knew who she was, because she was the granddaughter of Ahithophel, his chief counselor. Also, her husband was one of David's chief soldiers. How could he not have known Bathsheba? Also, he had to know where she lived. If you read the history of middle eastern kings and the history of Israel, it was common for members of the inner court (inner circle) to be provided homes near the king's home, near the palace, so they could be assembled quickly, if necessary. Obviously, he was looking from his roof to where Uriah's home was and they were next door neighbors, otherwise he wouldn't be able to see her. So, he had to know not only where she lived, he had to know her. He knew who she was.

4) And David sent messengers, and took her ... (KJV)

The fact is, David had many wives and concubines already. Here God is speaking through Nathan to David, and God says:

2 Samuel 12:8. And I gave thee [David] thy master's house [Saul's house], and thy master's wives into thy bosom ... (KJV)

Not only did he have wives, he also had his master's (Saul's) wives. Then we find out in chapter 5, verse 13 that David took more concubines and wives. We don't know how many he had. It could have been in the dozens for all we know. It wasn't as though he

needed a wife and grabbed somebody, he had plenty. However, he succumbed and he didn't turn his eyes.

In addition to this, we are told nothing of Bathsheba's reluctance. The scriptures are silent. My guess is if she threw a hissy fit about it and got upset, we would read about it, or if she threw a hissy fit, David would have withdrawn and it wouldn't have happened, but there's no record of her showing any reluctance or that she was taken by force.

2 Samuel 11:4. *and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.*
5) *And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.*
(KJV)

Now the fact is that Bathsheba was probably not entirely guiltless in this whole affair. Let me read from the Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary. They bring up a few interesting points.

For in addition to her transcendent beauty, she appears to have been a woman of superior talents in obtaining the object of her ambition, in securing that her son would succeed on the throne, ...

Which she later did. She made maneuvers to make that happen.

... and that promptitude to give notice of her pregnancy. (She didn't delay. She told him immediately.)

... in her activity in defeating Adonijah's natural expectation of succeeding the crown.

He was another one of David's sons. He naturally would have expected to be next in line and she blocked that or had a hand in it.

In her dignity as the king's mother (referring to Solomon's mother), in all this we see very strong indications of the ascendancy she gained and maintained over David.

So, my guess is she wasn't guiltless in this either. But the fact is, now we have a gigantic mess on all sides because he didn't turn his eyes away. Then one chip fell and another Domino fell and another and another, and now we have this mess that leads to murder, deceit and lies.

Then in 2 Samuel, chapter 12, Nathan confronts David, because God appeared to Nathan and said, "You need to go talk to David. Enough is enough." David is confronted publicly with all his court around him, regarding his lust, adultery and deceit and of his murder. This was a public wake-up call to David, out in the open, in front of

everybody to hear and see. Then and only then did he repent, because now the child has been born, so it's probably a year down the road from when this whole thing started. Maybe a little bit longer. When David was confronted by God through Nathan, it was then and only then that he repented. He did so in chapter 12, verse 13.

With that in mind, let's go to Psalm 51, a Psalm that David wrote. Even as the King James says, "A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet came to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba." This Psalm was written at some point down the road from this event where Nathan confronted him. David says:

Psalm 51:1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*

2) Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

...

4) Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight ...

...

7) Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

...

9) Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

...

11) Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. (KJV)

That was his fear. He knew that he had God's holy spirit.

16) For thou desire not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delight not in burnt offering. (KJV)

Now he's coming to realize this.

17) The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (KJV)

At this juncture, David is indeed broken and indeed contrite and fully repentant of what he did.

Now absolutely, looking into the future when Christ died, Christ's blood wipes away our sins. Christ's blood wiped away David's sins. God forgives, removes the death penalty and He forgets as far as the east is from the west, but there are scars that remain after we sin. It's a fact.

It reminds me of an accident I had when I was a kid. I was around 3. I grew up in El Paso, Texas, and it's just desert and dust and rocks and cactus. In the city of El Paso, between houses facing opposite each other, in the back yards there is an alley. That's just the way they did it in the town. The garbage trucks would go down the alley and

you would put your garbage cans in the back of the house, and they would pick it up. You didn't put it at the curb as they do today. My dad was doing something in the alley and I was playing. I tripped and as kids do, I put my hands out and there was a half-broken Coke bottle with a big knife-edged piece of glass and my wrist fell right on that Coke bottle. It cut me almost through. Thankfully it didn't hit the main artery and it didn't hit the tendons going to the hand, but it came to within an eighth of an inch from doing that. It sliced it right open. Dad told me afterward that he saw what happened and put his hand on the wound and ran me into the house and screamed at Mom and got a big towel and put me in the car and took me to the hospital. I think my first memory in my whole life was that mask coming down over my face with the chloroform, because I was kicking and screaming. I was not happy. They put me out and sewed this up. The fact is that the wound healed. Yes, it did, but it left this huge scar, and seventy odd years later, that scar is still there. So, similarly when we sin, there are scars that remain, and you can equate scars with consequences. There are consequences of our sins that still remain, even though God has forgiven, even though the blood of Christ has wiped them away, even though God has forgotten, the scars and consequences of sin are still there.

Since we're talking about David's life as an example of this, let's look at the consequences and the scars of David's sins. Here God is speaking through Nathan and addressing David and the whole court. Everybody is hearing this.

2 Samuel 12:9. *Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? ... (KJV)*

He says, "Why have you done this? You have despised God."

9b) ... thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. (KJV)

Now notice the series of consequences, the scars that David is going to have to deal with.

10) Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

11) Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor [somebody close by], and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun [in plain sight].

...
14) Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. (KJV)

Now let's look at the long-lasting consequences, the scars of David's horrible series of sins. I will summarize what happened from that point on through the rest of David's life.

These scars lasted until his death about twenty years later, maybe twenty-five years later.

The child died. David's son, Amnon, rapes David's daughter, Tamar. Then Amnon is killed by David's son, Absalom. Then Absalom rebels and takes David's wives in front of the whole city of Jerusalem to shame David and to show him who is boss now that he has taken the kingdom. Then Absalom is killed. Then his son, Adonijah rebels and he is killed. Then during this whole time David is in a perpetual war with the Philistines. Those are the scars of him coming to that crossroad and not turning his eyes away.

Much like an injury leaves a scar, the consequences of our sins are ever with us. They've been forgiven and God doesn't remember them, but the consequences, the scars are still with us.

Now we get to the subject of the sermon. This has all been introduction to prove the point. We're going to answer two questions today:

1. What are the consequences, the scars of our sins? What kind of things are they?
2. What lessons can we learn from the situation with David and from our own sins? What lessons can we carry forward that will help us, particularly at this time of year when we're still examining ourselves and we're trying to put sin out of our lives?

What are the scars of sin? We're going to look at three today.

1. The memories of our sins.

We can approach that in several different directions. The first one we will talk about are the memories by the one who committed the sin. We all have flashbacks about previous sins, don't we? I can be taking a shower and, bam, something will come into my head of something I said or did. How could I have done that, how could I have said that? The memory is there. What can happen is when that flashback or memory comes back, we can dredge the sin up all over again. It has been repented of, God has forgiven us and now it's right back in our face.

Let's go to Psalm 51. This is exactly what David said, because when you consider what he did; he lied, he was deceitful, he committed adultery and murder. How could that not come back in his mind for all those twenty to twenty-five years?

Psalm 51:3. For I acknowledge my transgressions ... (KJV)

That's the first part of repentance is to acknowledge the sin, but notice what he says.

3b) ... and my sin is ever before me. (KJV)

I'm sure he carried the magnitude and the memories of those sins for the rest of his days. What a horrible burden to carry. These are memories by the sinner.

Also, there are the memories by the ones that are aware of the sin, who have seen it, were present when the sin occurred. In David's case, it was the entire nation. Jerusalem knew all about it because of what Absalom did with David's wives. The word got around. You know how gossip goes. It went through the ranks and out into the hinterlands. It went through Jerusalem. We're told that even Israel's enemies knew, because in 2 Samuel 12:14, we were told that David's actions gave even his enemies the occasion to blaspheme, so the enemies knew. Word travelled fast.

In a New Testament example, the occasion of the Corinthian church. The letter of 1 Corinthians was written because a young man was having illicit sexual relations with his step mother. But the fact is Paul had to write 2 Corinthians because the congregation wouldn't let go of the memory of their knowledge of what happened, and they wouldn't forgive him. Paul commanded them to forgive him and brought the man back, but, you see, the memories were still there. They're just out there and they come back to haunt not only the person committing the sin, but those who are aware of the sin.

Then you have the memories of those on the receiving end of the sin. What about Uriah's family, Ahithophel, the grandfather and all of the relatives. They remember. They remembered for the rest of their lives. What a burden to bear. What a scar to carry because of one man's, or maybe both of their actions (David and Bathsheba).

Then you think of the New Testament example of Paul. We know Paul had Christians tortured, put in prison and killed. What about the families of all of those who were tortured, put into prison and killed because of Paul and the memories that they had, and even the memories when Paul came to speak in their city or hold Sabbath services. This man is up front speaking to them and now the memories come flooding back of the fact that their son or daughter was either killed or imprisoned or tortured and they have the scars to prove it. So, we have memories of the one who sinned, memories of those who know about it and memories of those who were on the receiving end.

It happens in my life and I know it happens in all of our lives. These memories can haunt us for decades, of things we have done, things we have said, the way we have treated people. The scars of sin are like tentacles of an octopus. They just go everywhere and infect everything. We know God forgives as far as the east is from the west, we're told in Psalm 103. Once we have truly repented of our sins as David did, we need to forgive ourselves if we have committed the sins. We need to forgive others if they have sinned against us, or if we have been on the sidelines and know about it, forgive all the parties involved. Remember, we are forgiven to the extent that we forgive others. Luke 6:37 tells us that. There are many other scriptures too. Because these scars can be so deep and so long lasting, what it should teach us is the utter evil of sin, how horrible sin is. David's sins are the poster child for all of us and they are written for our examples for all people for all time, but the fact is that those scars are so deep and

long lasting, it should be a lesson for us that we want to turn from sin. We don't want to sin again. We don't want to have all of this fallout from sins and the scars. I imagine if you talked to David after the fact, and down the road and you asked him, "When you were on that roof top, do you wish you had turned away?" Oh, I bet he wished he had turned away.

So the first scar of sin is the memories.

2. Weaknesses that have not been overcome.

Weaknesses that are not overcome cause us to repeat the sin again and again. There's a saying that old habits die hard. Old sinful habits die hard too. The Russian novelist, Dostoevsky, said, "The second half of a man's life is made up of nothing but the habits acquired during the first half." That's about true. We're shaped and molded by our parents and our environment and all of that, and if we live to be seventy, things are kind of set by the time we're thirty-five. Then if we're called into the church, our job is to overcome what happened during the first thirty-five, or what happened before conversion.

But, over time in the church, once we have God's spirit, we build up walls against sin. We build up barriers in our mind and actions that help us to not sin again. They shield us from sin. We build that wall higher and higher and thicker and thicker over time. The problem is when we do sin, those barriers get broken down. Then we sin again and the barrier gets lower and lower, and each time it gets lower, we're more apt to sin again because the barrier is not as strong to prevent us from sinning. We get into a habit then where we are more susceptible to repeat the sin over and over. You see, these scars make it easier to give in to sin, to previous thoughts, previous patterns of behavior, previous evil deeds. The scars make it easier for us to sin.

One of my frustrations as a minister is over the years I've dealt with dozens and dozens of brethren who keep repeating the same sins over and over and over. They have the same weaknesses that leads to the same sins over and over. They commit them over and over, year after terrible year. The frustrating thing is, I'm on the phone and we're having this conversation and the person is telling me what's happened, what they've done and what was said and all of that. At the end of an hour-long conversation, I can't tell you the number of times I've said, "You know, five years ago, we had this same conversation, the same sin, different people and different circumstances and different environment, but the same sin, and I'm going to tell you what I told you five years ago. It seems like we have a broken record. We just keep skipping and skipping." Remember the definition of insanity is repeating the same action over and over expecting a different outcome, and that doesn't happen. God knocks us on the head. When are we going to wake up? You're just repeating the same pattern of behavior over and over. So, the message is that we have to overcome our weaknesses. That's why Christ said it so often in the book of Revelation in the first part in the letters to the churches. *He that overcomes*; we must overcome. We have to change our sinful habit

patterns and there's only one way to do that. That is through the holy spirit. That is the only way that happens.

Here he is talking about setting the poles in the ground, and maybe they didn't understand the job. God makes it real clear what our job is here. There is no doubt what our job is.

Ephesians 4:22. *that you put off, concerning your former conversation [meaning conduct - don't repeat it], the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, (KJV)*

David is the poster child for that, and considered an old man at over fifty.

23) and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, (KJV)

How does that happen? We obviously know. It's through the holy spirit.

24) and that you put on the new man which after God is created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

25) Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," [he's giving examples now] for we are members of one another.

26) "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, (NKJV)

Here is something that is so important.

27) nor give place to the devil. (NKJV)

The Greek word for "place," Thayer's says that it means *opportunity, power or occasion for acting*. Don't give Satan the occasion or opportunity to act, meaning to provoke us to sin. Don't give Satan the power to provoke us to act.

28) Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. (NKJV)

What he's saying here is do the opposite. You used to steal and take for yourself, now go work and take of what you've earned and give it to people in need rather than stealing from them.

29) Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.

30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God ... (NKJV)

You see, the holy spirit is what makes it possible for us to change from the old person to the new person, but you can't do that if you grieve God's spirit.

30b) ... by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (NKJV)

Now he goes on to encourage them.

31) Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. (NKJV)

Malice is the motivation for all of that we just read, trying to do harm to other people.

32) And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another ... (NKJV)

As we just talked about from these memories, from what we've seen or heard or done.

32b) ... even as God in Christ forgave you. (NKJV)

God has forgiven us because of what Christ has done. Because of that, we should do it to our fellow human being.

You see, Satan wants to keep our weaknesses alive. He will do anything to keep these weaknesses that we all have alive. That's why self-examination at this time of year, led by the holy spirit, is so important. Depending on what our weaknesses are, we could ask ourselves, am I more or less selfish now than I was a year ago? Am I more or less stubborn now than I was a year ago? Am I better at controlling my temper now than I was a year ago?

You see, we have to kill our weaknesses. We have to slay our weaknesses. God gives us a warning not to give in to these weaknesses, these scars, the second big scar that we're talking about.

We are encouraged that, with God's help, these scars don't have to consume us, and like the scar on my wrist, over time, it fades. It was pretty angry looking when I was a teenager, but now it's bleached out and you have to look carefully to see it. This is what should happen to us with our weakness, way out there in the past, not bothersome.

2 Peter 2:9. *then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, (NKJV)*

God doesn't wink at our sins.

10) But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness ... (KJV)

David was right there in that regard.

10b) ... and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed ...

...

19) While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. (KJV)

He is brought into slavery. If we don't overcome our weaknesses, we become a slave to our weaknesses.

20) For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein... (KJV)

After they've repented, and after they've been forgiven, and they go right back to it.

20b) ... and overcome [rather than overcoming], the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

21) For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. (KJV)

The message is that we cannot allow our weaknesses to take us back into our previous sinful behavior. I'm almost afraid to ask about people that I knew thirty, forty, fifty years ago in the church. "Well, how are they doing?" You're almost afraid because you might get bad news of somebody going back after they received God's holy spirit.

We all know areas where we are weak, and we need to daily pray and ask God to strengthen us against these weaknesses. The key is, the encouraging thing is, that David overcame and he never sinned in that way ever again. There's no record in the Bible. He learned his lesson. He put that sin away, he overcame it and everything that resulted from that whole mess he overcame, and the Bible tells us that.

This should be very encouraging to all of us, because you think of the mess that David created, all the sins, all the memories, all of the things that happened in his life, the consequences and scars after this incident occurred, and this is what God has to say.

1 Kings 15:5. Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from anything that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. (KJV)

We could say that was a blip, a painful, horrible, excruciating blip, but before that and after that, David was a man after God's own heart. That should be encouraging to us.

3. We allow our conscience to be seared to the point that we have no conscience.

This is the ultimate scar, when we allow our conscience to be seared to the point that we have no conscience. I can take a needle and jab it around in the scar that I have on my wrist and I don't feel a thing to this day because the nerve endings are gone, just

severed. The same will happen to us, we won't feel a thing if we don't deal with memories, if we don't deal with weaknesses, if we don't pay attention and overcome that, we will be just as seared as this scar. We won't feel a thing. You see, sinning while professing to be a Christian, leads to scarring and leads to insensitivity and ultimately leads to searing of any feeling at all.

This is prophesied. Paul is telling Timothy to watch out for this and warn the people about this. This came from the holy spirit.

1 Timothy 4:1. *Now the Spirit speaks expressly [plainly, pointedly], that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits ... (KJV)*

Remember, Satan wants us to yield to our weaknesses and get us off track doctrinally.

*1b) ...and doctrines of devils;
2) Speaking lies in hypocrisy ... (KJV)*

If we are hypocrites, meaning we pretend to be Christians on the Sabbath, we go out in the world and behave just the opposite. That is hypocrisy.

2b) ... having their conscience seared with a hot iron; (KJV)

The Greek word for "seared" is Strong's 2743, if you want to check it. It means *to brand* as we would brand cattle. You sear the flesh so that no hair grows in that area and the brand stands out for anybody to see. It means *to cauterize*, and we know that they don't do that much today, but occasionally. Back before we had the current medical technology, if someone had a gunshot wound or a knife wound or something, they would take a hot knife and go in and sear the flesh to seal it. But I guarantee you where that happens, if anybody has had a bad burn, there is no feeling there after that. It also means *to render insensitive*, and that's the spiritual application, having their conscience rendered insensitive. We know when we do something wrong, that little voice in the back of our head says, "You shouldn't have done that. You can't do that. You're going to have to repent of this." If we do that over and over and over, guess what? That voice gets weaker and weaker and at some point, that voice will go away; the conscience is seared.

Notice this. It's the same principle.

Ephesians 4:19. *Who being past feeling ... (KJV)*

They can't feel anymore. They've gone beyond feeling.

19b) ... have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. (KJV)

Because of their hypocrisy, living a double life, they have seared their conscience that it no longer bothers them, it no longer talks to them, and then they don't feel anything, and it says they go into lasciviousness, greediness and uncleanness. The Greek word for "past feeling" (and this is the only time it's used in the Bible), it's Strong's 524, and Thayer says this: *to cease to feel pain or grief*. They're not bothered by what they do. *To become calloused, insensitive to pain, apathetic*. That's exactly what happens. The conscience is seared. We're told that even the mind can be seared as well as the conscience. In other words, people become cynical.

Here in Titus, the first part of verse 15 is what we should all strive for.

Titus 1:15. *Unto the pure all things are pure [those with purity of heart]: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.*

16) They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate. (KJV)

I might add, hypocritical. They pretend to be one thing when they're actually something else. We've had those who have attended with God's Church over the years, and on the Sabbath, appear to be good upstanding brethren and Christians, and yet their deeds in secret or their deeds during the rest of the week when no church members are around, they show a very unconverted mind. I think we've all known people who have done that. I had a man tell me that he had two rules, his church rules and then his own business rules. I said, "What?" He said, "Yeah, you got to compete out in the world, and you have to make compromises, and do certain things to compete, but when I come to church, then I obey a different set of rules." I was stunned, I just had to walk away.

You see, those with seared consciences ignore and diminish their own sins. They're narcissistic in that way. They minimize the damage that they have done to others. Those with seared consciences don't truly repent. A few years ago, there was a woman who created havoc in the church. There are some people wherever they go, there's just a trail of untied knots, a trail of misery and offences. So, I pressed this woman first to acknowledge and then apologize, and I pressed her very hard. I wasn't yelling or screaming, but I wouldn't let go of it. Finally, she said, and I'm quoting. I wrote it down because I didn't want to forget it. She said, "I'm sorry they got their feelings hurt." I said, "Now wait a minute, you're putting the blame on them because of what you did. They got their feelings hurt and therefore it is their fault, their problem. What I hoped you would say is that you are sorry that you caused them hurt by what you did, that you're sorry you sinned and caused them pain." However, that didn't happen. So, you see, continued sin results in a seared conscience. That is the third big scar.

In the remaining time, we're going to talk about three lessons we can learn to overcome these scars, because, believe me, they are there. The scars are there.

Lesson 1: We have to learn from the past, but not repeat the past.

Learn from it. Don't repeat it. Paul said that the entire Old Testament was written for our admonition and our learning. Like with David, it's there and we look at all the pain and suffering that resulted so that we won't repeat that, or if it's some other sin, we won't have the same kind of aftermath that David had. We learn from the examples in the Bible.

***1 Corinthians 10:11.** Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (KJV)*

We learn from our past experiences, the pain and hurt that we caused, and we look back at it as we examine ourselves, and hopefully we say, "I'm never going to do that again. Look at the grief it caused, not only to me but other people. I will never do that again." We learn from the pain, and pain is an effective teacher. We don't want to go through that pain again. God has designed pain to teach us lessons. Some of us, thick-headed that we are, and I'm speaking to myself, pain is such a great teacher. It is awful, but it's a great teacher because once we go through it, we don't want to do that again.

One of the examples in the Bible is that Ancient Israel never learned. They kept repeating it over and over. Even at this time of the year when we look back at the exodus, how many times did they want to go back to Egypt? How many times did they accuse Moses of dragging them into the desert to kill them? How many times did they prefer the leeks and the onions and all of that back in Egypt, but not the manna that God provided them? They never learned, and the lesson for us is we cannot let that happen to us. We must learn from the examples in the Bible and from our own experience.

Here, David made this request of God, he beseeched Him.

***Psalms 51:9.** Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. (KJV)*

And God did that. However, it's not enough to have our past sins forgiven, that is not enough.

10) Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (KJV)

When he said, "Renew a right spirit," David was admitting that he had a wrong spirit. That's why he did what he did. He said, "Create in me a clean heart." It's not enough just to have our past sins forgiven, we have to have, through the power of the holy spirit, a new heart, a new mind, to be a new person, so we don't repeat our past sins and behavior. A clean, pure heart is the key to not repeating our past sins. Then we can go forward and not repeat those sins over and over and over. If we do that, the scars will diminish, just like the scar on my arm. Over the years, it diminishes and over the years,

the scars that we talked about a little while ago, will begin to diminish and the solution is a pure heart, a pure mind through the holy spirit of God.

Lesson 2: Don't dwell on the past. Look forward to the future.

Now this assumes we've already repented. Once you repent, then that's garbage that can be flushed down the toilet and we can look forward. But if we haven't repented, we are still in the muck. We're like Christ said, the pig went back to rolling in the mud. No, this assumes we've already repented as David did. Then we can look forward.

That is what Christ meant when He said these words:

Luke 9:62. *And Jesus said unto him, no man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back ... (KJV)*

Meaning looking back to previous sins, previous behavior, all the memories and wallowing in it.

62b) ... no man, having put his hand to the plough is fit for the kingdom of God. (KJV)

Just speaking personally, this is particularly hard for me because I continue to beat myself up over things I've done in the past. I just do. That's something I've tried and tried and worked and worked not to continually bring them back up and then repent over them and then re-repent over them, etc. As far as God is concerned, they're gone and I need to do a better job of realizing that.

Here, Paul admits that he hasn't obtained God's kingdom yet and he could fail.

Philippians 3:13. *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ... (KJV)*

He's saying, "I don't have my hands on God's kingdom yet."

13b) ... but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, (KJV)

If any man had a reason to forget the past, it's Paul. He murdered, persecuted, threw in jail men, women, and separated children from their mothers and fathers, destroyed families. He did all that, and if anyone wanted to forget about that, it would have been Paul.

That is why David said the following. Not to dwell on the past, but to look forward.

Psalms 51:12. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation ... (KJV)*

In the middle of his sins, he had anything but joy. When his child died, he had anything but joy.

12b) ... and uphold me with thy free spirit.

13) Then will I teach transgressors thy ways ... (KJV)

He's looking to the future. He said, "you created in me a clean heart. I will go forward and teach, by my example and my words."

13b) ... and sinners shall be converted unto thee. (KJV)

None of us can ever make up for our sins. It's not a report card in the sense that the scale balances and more good stuff will weigh the scales in our favor. We can't make up for our sins, but what we can do is prove to God that we will not commit them again. We prove that by what's going on in our head and by our actions. Every day we need to prove to God that we've overcome our weaknesses. I'm going to prove to God that I'm not going to do that sin anymore. I'm going to prove it to Him today. If we do that, it will help diminish the scars from our sins. It will help greatly because they will just fade away.

Lesson 3: God's way is not to sin in the first place.

That is the most important lesson, not to sin in the first place. David succumbed to a common belief. We see it in politics, in our government. We even see it in the military. David succumbed to it. We've even seen it in the church. People in high positions think they are above the law. The law doesn't apply to them. Look at this example with David. Nobody can despise God's law and break His law without penalty. Remember God said, "Because you have despised Me, this is what's going to happen to you." Nobody can get away with breaking God's law and think that God is going to wink at it and it's alright. You see, pride is at the core of that. As one Worldwide Church of God evangelist said, and I'm quoting, "God winks at my sins because of what I do for the work." That is pride. God says, "I can raise up stones to replace any of you. Any time I want, I can raise up stones. Nobody here and nobody back then is so essential that I, God, can't get along without you. I can raise up a rock in the desert to take your place." Pride is at the core of that. David had that pride.

The most pregnant example of that is a woman named Leona Helmsley. This goes back into the 80s and 90s. She was called "the queen of mean." She was a Jewish woman who married a very wealthy real estate developer. He owned very expensive properties in Manhattan, including some very high-end hotels. She became the self-styled queen of one of the premier New York hotels. She viewed herself as the queen of this whole establishment. She barked orders at people and ordered people around, firing people for the slightest infraction, and underpaying people. When they built renovations or something, she would do her best not to pay the contractors at all. When she was in court for tax evasion, one of the witnesses said that she said (it was

corroborated by others) “Only the little people pay taxes.” That is pride. We see it in our current government today.

David felt for a time that, “I can get away with this.” Remember, from the time that he committed the sin, there was over a year that God was silent. Nothing happened. David thought God winks at his sins, just like this evangelist, but David finally learned after the year was out, maybe a few months longer, that “a broken contrite heart God, You will not despise.” He learned that.

Pride un-repentant of will keep us out of God’s family. David learned that a broken and contrite heart is the exact opposite of pride. So, we must learn this lesson from David, that humility is the exact opposite of pride. When we develop a purity of mind, a purity of spirit, then we won’t sin anymore. Not to say we will never sin, but we won’t sin in that area and our sins will be fewer and fewer and farther and farther apart and less and less severe if we have a purity of heart and mind.

Let’s go back to Psalm 51. David said:

Psalm 51:10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. (KJV)*

Remember Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount, *blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.* Purity of spirit prevents sin in the first place, and that’s the key.

This is what we have to establish in our lives. Paul is saying:

Titus 2:7. *In all things shewing thyself a pattern [a habit pattern] of good works: in doctrine shewing un-corrumpness, gravity, sincerity, 8) Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. (KJV)*

This is our goal, purity of spirit and nobody can say evil of us. The Greek word for “pattern” means *a model for imitation.* What God wants us to do is to have such a pure spirit that our thoughts, our deeds, our actions are models of imitation for others.

You see, all of this suffering, all of the scars, all of the consequences of sin is so unnecessary because God’s way is to prevent sin from occurring in the first place through His holy spirit, through examples in the Bible, learning from our own experiences, and learning from the experiences of others. This is what we hope to teach our children, when we raise our kids. You say to them sometimes, “I did this and this was the result, and I’m telling you now because I don’t want you to repeat the suffering that I went through.” Look at how much grief David could have avoided if he never sinned in the first place, not only for himself, but his family, for Uriah and his family, for the nation of Israel. If he had just not sinned in the first place and had turned his eyes away.

The only way that can happen is we come back to the holy spirit, God's spirit in us. This is the key to not sinning again and avoiding all this misery and all these scars.

1 John 4:4. *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. (KJV)*

That is the key. We have to ask for more of God's spirit. We have to exercise more of God's spirit. We have to have the mind of Jesus Christ, and if we do that, we won't sin in the first place, and this is all by God's power, not our power.

Okay, we've seen that the scars of sin can be memories, they can be weaknesses, and the worst scar is when we become past feeling because our conscience has been seared. This is why we don't want our children to go there, and we teach them accordingly.

We've seen three lessons of how we can overcome our scars.

1. By learning from the past and not repeating it;
2. By not dwelling in the past and looking forward to the future; and
3. By preventing sin from occurring in the first place.

When we're tempted to sin, we're thinking something sinful, we want to get back at somebody or someone did us wrong and we're having bad feelings toward someone. Just remember David and what he went through. We just pull up the reins and say, "I'm not going down that road. God, just wipe it out of my mind. I'm going to go over here and think of pure things, positive things and good things and not dwell on that.

One of the greatest things we can do, parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters in the church, is to teach the next generation so that they will learn and they will not have to experience the scars of sin.

What we need to do going forward, after the Days of Unleavened Bread, after Passover, is to confront our sins, repent of our sins, and overcome our sins and continue the process of evaluating ourselves, and thereby exercising God's holy spirit so we can diminish the scars that we already have and not create new scars as we go forward.