

The Far-Reaching Consequences of Sin

Rick Railston

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During the Days of Unleavened Bread, it's obvious that sin is on our minds. I remember when I first came into the church, the first holy days I kept were these days. We learned that sin is the transgression of the law—1 John 3:4, one of the first scriptures I ever memorized. We know also that God's law is spiritual—Romans 7:14. So when we sin, we transgress God's spiritual law. We all understand, especially if we've been in the church for any length of time, that sin begins right up here between the ears—that's where it starts. If you think about the first sinner—Satan—at some point Satan had a thought that was ungodly and after that thought, the end result was rebellion. From one thought to rebellion. This being, having rebelled, wants us to follow in his footsteps. Remember, he is the prince of the power of the air who works in the children of disobedience; he works in the minds of the children of disobedience—Ephesians 2:2.

Twice in the past month, we've talked about David and the incident with Bathsheba; Jack Elder covered it one time and I covered it a second time. When you think about the situation with David, the whole process started with a single thought, didn't it? He was standing on his roof, he looked down and watched a beautiful woman bathing herself, he had a thought and it went from there—from a single thought. All too often, as we know, the thought leads to words, and words sometime lead to actions, and now we're off to the races, so to speak. Let's go to James 1:14 and see that process. The point is, sin does indeed begin in the mind. (I'm reading out of the King James unless otherwise noted.)

James 1:14 *But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust [where does lust occur initially?], and enticed. (KJV)*

The lusting and the enticing occur in the mind, in the beginning. Verse 15 begins with a big word, "Then", which introduces the consequences.

15) Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (KJV)

The wages of sin is death. So after David had the thought, he inquired after the woman, and then he took the woman. Then all of this trouble began.

If sin is not stopped in the mind, sin leads to action—words and deeds—and such action then leads to pain and suffering, not only for the one who commits the sins but for those who are influenced by the committing of those sins. That leads us to the title today:

The Far-Reaching Consequences of Sin

We go into the first point, which is fundamental:

1. We cannot sin in isolation.

Some people think they can, but they can't. One cannot sin in isolation. It's true that some sins occur only in the mind. Sin doesn't need to lead to a physical act. You can murder in your mind, you can commit adultery in your mind, you can covet in your mind. These are three that happen to come to my mind. Remember what Christ said in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5—whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery in his heart. It doesn't take a physical act. It happens between the ears.

If the sin is stopped immediately, if the thought is stopped immediately in the mind and repented of, then all is well and good—if it's stopped immediately. If it's recognized and stopped, and God is asked to rebuke the thought, rebuke the picture or the words or whatever, and it's repented of, then it's all good. If the sin is allowed to simmer in the mind or continue in the mind, then there are dire consequences for the sinner, because, as we've noted, the wages of sin is death. I want to make the point that it's not just the sinner who suffers. There are also dire consequences to other people who are influenced by the sinner. I've heard the saying, you only hurt yourself. That is absolutely not true. It's not isolated just to the self. Our sins indeed hurt other people.

Look no further than the recent crisis in the Catholic Church. There are some priests who have abused dozens and dozens of little children or teenagers. That horrible sin affects those children; the consequences of that priest's sins affect the ones who are abused for the rest of their lives. After being on the receiving end of such a sin, those people's lives may never be the same. Very few of them may ever have normal relationships after being on the receiving end of such evil. They may be scarred for life. There are consequences of people's sins that spread out.

Let's take a hypothetical example. Let's say you have a husband and wife. Let's say the husband covets something that he doesn't have; it may be a car, it may be a home, who knows what it might be. Coveting involves jealousy and envy because somebody has something that he doesn't have. So he covets this, then he becomes frustrated over time because he doesn't have what he covets. It hasn't come his way. So because of the fact that he's now frustrated over not having what he wants, he becomes unhappy. Does he keep it to himself? Of course not. He takes it out on his mate. He's frustrated, he's unhappy, he's envious, and it shows in his treatment of his mate. Yes, he is sinning in his mind; he hasn't gone out and stolen something, but the fact is he is sinning in his mind and even the sin in the mind has an effect on those nearby. The point is, those nearest us (if we sin) can pay a price for our sins. I'm making the point that we can't sin in isolation. Our sins affect other people. We're told a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways—James 1:8.

Even if somebody doesn't find out about the sin or it's not become public, the person becomes double-minded, has guilt and all of that, and that, in addition, affects those

nearest that individual. Sin is like throwing a rock in a pond and watching the ripples go all the way out to the edge. That act of throwing the rock affects the entire pond. That is exactly what sin is like. The lesson is, we cannot sin in isolation. Sin can leave terrible scars on the people with whom we interact, those whom we love most, those who are around us. Remember that point, which leads to the second point.

2. Let's look at three biblical examples of the far-reaching consequences of sin.

The first, A, if you like to outline:

2A. Satan.

This is where it all started. Let's go to John 8:44; Christ is speaking to the Jews who are opposing Him, and He is condemning them and telling them who their Father is. How would you like this said of you? I don't think I'd like to be on the receiving end of this condemnation.

John 8:44 *Ye are of your father the devil [wow], and the lusts of your father ye will do. [Remember, lust begins in the mind.] He was a murderer from the beginning [Satan would kill God if he could], and abode not in the truth, [he couldn't stay with the truth, he had to establish his own kingdom of lies] because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: [because he was the originator of lies] for he is a liar, and the father of it. (KJV)*

Speaking of how an individual sins and how it affects other people (as Gordon was pointing out in the sermonette), look at the world today. Look at the result of the thought that started it all, and then Satan's actions, and then his rebellion, and look at the situation we are in today. His sin has affected all of mankind. One can't sin in isolation.

Let's look at a second one, point B.

2B. Adam and Eve.

Let's go to Romans 5 and verse 12—God created Adam and Eve, gave them a beautiful environment to dress and keep, and all was well until this being arrived on the scene as a serpent. Notice what we're told; they made a decision.

Romans 5:12 *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (KJV)*

That choice they made to reject God, and to do what they wanted to do—what seemed right to them or appealing to them—forever changed the course of mankind. That choice has resulted in untold misery for billions of human beings.

Let's now go to a third point, point C; another biblical example of the far-reaching consequences of sin.

2C. David is the poster child for the consequences of sin.

We're not going to go back through what happened in his case; as I said, Jack covered it and I covered it, but let's focus this time on the consequences of what David did that started with one thought. Let's go to 2 Samuel 12, beginning in verse 9; Nathan has confronted David, told him about the story of the little lamb and how he is the man, and David said, I have sinned—he admitted it. After that, Nathan begins to speak, and asks David the question,

2 Samuel 12:9 *Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? [Why did you do that? We would say today, what were you thinking?—not with a godly mind, that's for sure] 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)*

Verse 10 is where the consequences begin.

10) *Now therefore ... (KJV)*

Nathan is saying, because of your sin, here are the consequences. You can't sin in isolation, you're the king; here are the consequences:

10 continued) ... [1] *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 saith the LORD, [2] Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, [that happened for the rest of David's kingship] and [3] I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour [who turned out to be Absalom, his son] and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. (KJV)*

Right in front of all of Israel.

12) *For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. [In broad daylight, God is saying.]*

13) *And David said unto Nathan, [he repeats it again] I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, the LORD also hath put away thy sin [God could tell that he had repented in his heart]; thou shalt not die.*

14) *Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, [4] the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. (KJV)*

Look at the consequences. Uriah was murdered; David and Bathsheba's son died; David, by his actions, caused the nations around—the pagan nations—to blaspheme God; and we are told he had continual war with the Philistines for the rest of his kingship. David's son Amnon rapes David's daughter, Tamar. Then Amnon is killed by Absalom, Tamar's brother. Then David's son Absalom rebels and takes David's wives in front of the whole nation, in plain sight of the people in Jerusalem. Then Absalom is

killed, and then David's son Adonijah rebels and he is killed. I'm just hitting the main events, and these happened because of one thought, because David didn't stop with that one thought, of putting it away and repenting of it. Look at the consequences of one sin—one man's sin.

These three biblical examples show—and the lesson for us today is—we'd better think twice before we allow sin to develop or percolate in our brain. We'd better do that, lest others suffer greatly because of our sin.

Let's go to the third point and ask the question:

3. What are the consequences of sin upon us and upon other people?

We know that the blood of Jesus Christ wipes away our sins. The fact is, even though we are forgiven and that blood wipes away our sins, there are consequences—scars, if you will, if you want to call them that—from the sins that we commit. Those scars, those consequences, remain in this life, as a result of our sins, long after we've repented. God has wiped it away but the consequences remain. David repented but look at the consequences. We can repent but there can be grave consequences for us and for other people.

Let me draw a physical analogy. When I was a kid, I grew up in El Paso, Texas, and El Paso is jackrabbits, cactus, rocks and sand, in far west Texas, right on the Mexican border. There it was common to have an alleyway behind the house, where a garbage truck could come by, and the garbage cans were put in the back, not the front. So one time, when I was maybe three years old—and I'm thinking I'm helping my dad out in the alleyway, with its dirt and rocks and gravel, and my dad was doing something, I don't know what—this is my first memory. As an unsteady three year old—two and half years old, whatever I was—I tripped. You know how kids can stumble, and I fell down, and there was a broken coke bottle with a shard sticking up, and it went through my wrist.

The shard missed the tendons and the major artery by about a quarter of an inch, but it sliced the outside of my wrist from front to back. Blood was going everywhere—my dad told me this—then my next memory is being in this 1934 Ford or something, racing like mad to go to the hospital, and I'm in my mom's lap and she's holding this big, bloody towel. They didn't have ambulances like they do today; if you were injured you went to the hospital. Then the next memory was the mask coming over my face; they used ether back then—they didn't have the sophisticated materials they have today.

The fact is, eventually the wound healed, and yet today, there is a big scar there. This is after seventy years, and the scar is still there. It is the visible evidence of the trauma that occurred.

What we're going to do now is look at two long-term consequences—or scars—of sin. I've changed my sermon up so much, I want to make sure I touch on these points; I think I have only two. This sermon—I've been struggling with this all week. I got up this

morning at 4 and kept going; was up late last night and kept going; hopefully God is happy, we'll see.

4. Two consequences of sin.

You could call them scars of sin if you want.

4A. One of the consequences of sin is the memories and flashbacks that we have of our previous sins.

Let's go to Psalm 103, verse 10, and see the point that God does remove our sins, no question about it. God removes our sins. This is something we are so thankful for and can rejoice over at this time of the year because those sins are removed through the sacrifice of our Elder Brother.

Psalm 103:10 *He [referring to God Almighty] hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. (KJV)*

We would all be fried to a crisp right now if He did.

11) *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.* [Those who have reverence for Him—that's a key, obviously.]

12) *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (KJV)*

He has removed them. Then in verse 13 it describes God's nature in removing them.

13) *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. (KJV)*

If you look at the Hebrew word for *pity*, it's Strong's #7355, and it's interesting because it means "to fondle". Like a parent would take a little baby and just fondle that little baby, and hug and kiss and cherish that little baby. By implication it means to love, especially to have compassion. God puts away—removes—our transgressions, because He is a loving, compassionate Father to us all.

Terry Swagerty pointed out last week—it hit a note with me, because I was working on this sermon and then Terry mentioned it last week—that God also forgets our sins, but too often we don't. I think we can all agree on that. God will put away our sins, God will forget our sins but we keep dredging up our old sins. We do so because we have memories, we have flashbacks. Terry also brought out that we do have memories of our sins and we can and do dredge them back up. For me, I have either still photographs or moving pictures in my mind that will suddenly, out of nowhere, come blasting into my mind and I'm seeing myself disobeying God. Or I'm seeing myself saying something that hurts other people—stuff that's happened in the past. Or I can see myself not being respectful to my parents, the list goes on and on—there's an

infinite number. These pictures come back in our minds. David—remember what he said in Psalm 51 after Nathan confronted him and he wrote the psalm? He said, *my sin is ever before me*. You can believe that David kept the pictures of that sin in his mind for the rest of his days, and grieved about it for the rest of his days, because of all the evil that resulted from that sin.

We all have flashbacks and memories of previous sins. Anybody who has God's Spirit and is in a repentant attitude, it's a downer, for me, because I think, how could I have done that? How could I have said that? We all have these flashbacks to previous sins but to overcome them—the flashbacks, the memories—we need to deeply understand what Terry was talking about last week; God not only forgives, He forgets. I'm sure God is weary with me when I repent, re-repent and re-re-repent over something that happened a long time ago, and He says, would you just let it alone? I've already forgiven you, I've forgotten it; you're dragging it back up again. But we do as humans. Let's go to Colossians 2:13. This is something we need to focus on at this time of year and remember that our sins that are repented of are forgiven—they're gone.

Colossians 2:13 *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he [Christ] quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; (KJV)*

God and Christ forgive us. Now notice, let's go to Jeremiah 31:34; these chapters in here are all millennial in nature. I want to make a point that not just applies to the Millennium but applies to us today. The context is the Millennium and as we read these scriptures, we can't help but think about the fall holy days and what will happen in the Millennium.

Jeremiah 31:34 *And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD:*

They are not going to do that anymore. Why? Because it's not necessary.

34 continued) *... for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity,*

This is in the future, in the Millennium, and He has forgiven our iniquity, but notice the last part of this verse,

34 continued) *... and I will remember their sin no more. (KJV)*

If God will do that for Israel and humanity in the Millennium, would He not do that for us today? Of course He would. Once we acknowledge the sin and repent of it, then God forgives us and He doesn't remember it. We need to learn from the past. The fact is, if we have learned that lesson, which God wants us to do—and I'm sure David learned a huge lesson, and didn't repeat it—what God want us to do is learn from our past sins and not repeat them. He then wants us to look forward and not backward. I find with

God's people—and I've done it, too—sometimes we dwell in the past and we have misery in the past, and we totally forget about what lies ahead and what God wants for us, going forward. Let's go to Philippians 3, verse 18. Paul is encouraging us, through this epistle, to do just that. Paul is humbly saying,

Philippians 3:13 *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:*

I haven't got it made yet, he is saying—I don't have one foot in the Kingdom yet,

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

If anybody had flashbacks and memories, it would be Paul, of the followers of God and Christ whom he had put to death. Or of the men and women whom he had put in prison, leaving the children without moms and dads. Or the ones whom he watched being scourged for believing that the Messiah had already come. Talk about somebody with flashbacks, as with David, Paul, I'm sure, had a basketful of them. Yet, what he said: I haven't made it, but I have to forget those things because I'm a new person. I'm a different person than I was back then, and God understands that. He called me and converted me and I talked to Jesus Christ face to face, and, he says, I've started on a new path. I'm forgetting the past, I'm looking forward to the Kingdom because now I have a chance. I have a chance not to repeat the sins that I previously committed.

Memories and flashbacks are consequences of our sin. That's just the way it is and I think God designed it that way. They can haunt us and some people never get unstuck from that. But we don't have to be haunted by our past or live in our past. As Paul said, we can go forward. God forgives our sins and He forgets our sins, and so should we, as hard as that is sometimes. We have to realize that God has wiped the slate clean, and we, too, need to go forward from there and not repeat the past.

A second consequence of sin:

4B. We think we can allow ourselves a certain amount of sin.

Over time we can get to accommodating ourselves and allowing ourselves sin, up to a point—a certain amount of sin. We wouldn't go out and commit murder, but we allow ourselves to commit murder in our minds by slandering somebody or thinking evil thoughts about somebody, and we don't repent of that, so we are allowing ourselves a little bit of sin but maybe not the full boatload. After sinning greatly—going back to David's account—Bathsheba was pregnant, and after the mourning period he brought her to the palace. He married her, the child was born, and at some point after that (maybe a few months, we're not told, but prior to the point of Nathan coming to confront David), David thought, it's okay; God knows me and He knows my weaknesses so He allowed me some sin here, and He's not going to condemn me for it. Look what I do for the country; I'm the king. Or one could say today, I'm the minister, I can get away with a few things. Look what happened to David. He didn't get away with anything.

I wonder what happened in that period of time with David. When he was praying, my guess is—this is just my suspicion—that he took that sin, put it in a box, put it on a shelf, in the closet, and wouldn't bring it up before God because that would open up a whole can of worms. He just went on, in his heart of hearts, hoping that God would just give him a pass so he could move on from that. Look what happened. We can fall into the same trap. We can say, God knows my heart is right, I try to follow God, I tithe, I keep the Sabbath, I keep the holy days, but we can, by saying that, accept a certain amount of sin. We're thinking, I'm not perfect and God understands. The fact is, God does understand and we're told it's a scary thing to fall into the hands of the living God. That is a deception from Satan and that is something with which we kid ourselves.

I remember twenty years ago, maybe, I was a local elder in a church area and the minister exhibited some ungodly behavior. It was just wrong by any stretch. So I girded up my loins and went to talk to him, and I did it very mildly and meekly—a soft answer turns away wrath and all of that—but I said, you just can't do this. It's hurting the brethren, it's setting a bad example as a minister; you can't keep doing this. The response I got was, that's just the way I was raised. That ended the conversation. I thought to myself, yeah, but aren't we called to change the way we were raised? Aren't we called to come out of that?—new man versus old man, the scriptures we read in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4. We can fall into that same trap. I mentioned a while back, an evangelist who said, God winks at my sins because of what I do for the work. What does God say? Not what we think, not what we hope—what does God say? Let's go to Ephesians 4, verse 22. This is what God says. This is what we must all be doing. It's a process, God doesn't expect perfection in a week, thankfully, or a month or even a decade or two, and in my case, or three or four or five.

Ephesians 4:22 *That ye put off concerning the former conversation [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; (KJV)*

Thoughts in the head that later lead to sin.

23) *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;*

24) *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. (KJV)*

The new man mimics God—the mind of God. We're also told in Philippians 2 that we should have the mind of Christ. The same mind, by the way.

25) *Wherefore [because we want to put on the new man and reject the old] putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.*

26) *Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:*

27) *Neither give place to the devil. (KJV)*

Regarding the Greek word for *place*, [Thayer's Lexicon](#) says, in addition to place, it can mean an opportunity—don't give Satan an opportunity. It can also mean power—don't

give Satan power over you. Or, it can mean, occasion for acting. Don't give the thought an occasion for action because the thought is either lustful or comes from Satan. God always provides a solution. We won't turn there, but James said, submit yourselves to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you. That is a promise. Let's go to verse 28.

28) *Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.*

29) *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth [we've all been guilty of that], but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.*

30) *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

31) *Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, [what does God say—allow a little bit of it, or it's okay?] be put away from you, with all malice: (KJV)*

Malice is a motive behind the words and the thoughts. Satan wants to deceive us into accepting some sin. We see here, and in many other places, God says, no, you don't accept any sin; you put it away. I'm going to give you time to put it away and I'm going to allow you to learn some painful lessons, as I did with My servant, David, but you have to put it away. At this time of the year, we should ask questions about ourselves.

Things that come to mind: How do I react to criticism? Is it with humility or do I get my hackles up? How do I react to not getting what I want? Do I get snarky (my wife is laughing over here) or do I get my tail in a knot because I don't get what I want? We ask questions—am I less selfish today than I was a year ago at this time? That's a good question to ask. Am I more stubborn today than I was a year ago? Another good question to ask. Am I controlling my temper better today than a year ago? Another good question to ask. Going on in verse 32, notice what Paul goes on to say:

32) *And be ye kind one to another ... (KJV)*

Gordon was talking about that in how we approach things—through kindness.

32 continued) *... tenderhearted, forgiving one another [why?—because God has done the same for us], even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. (KJV)*

We have to resist Satan, who whispers in our ear, oh, God will allow a little bit of sin; you can eat that apple, that's okay, then you'll be gods. Those kinds of things. We have to follow the example Christ set for us when He walked this earth. We study it at this time of year especially. What was Christ's mind like? What did He say? What did He not say? What did He do? What did He not do? If we accept a certain amount of sin in our life, then our conscience becomes seared and that is the ultimate scar.

To this day, where the scar is on my wrist, I can take a pin to an area about the size of a silver dollar, and I can poke it in there and not feel a thing; I can't feel a thing, even if I poke it in deep. Similarly, if we don't deal with our sins and repent of our sins, over time

we become permanently scarred—our conscience does—regarding those sins. We've accepted them for so long, we haven't dealt with them, they have become part of us, and we think, that's just the way I was raised. Then the scarring of the conscience occurs and there's no guilt anymore, there's no remorse. That is a guaranteed trip to the lake of fire.

Being in a pattern of sin while professing to be godly—allowing a certain amount of sin and professing to be godly—leads to 1 Timothy 4:1. Paul is saying to this young minister, giving him some advice, and to us, today,

1 Timothy 4:1 *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly [plainly, clearly], that in the latter times [we're a lot closer to the latter times than Paul was when he wrote this] some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*
2) *Speaking lies in hypocrisy;*

Have we seen that in the church? Lies and hypocrisy? I think we have.

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

The Greek word for *seared* is Strong's #2743 and it means "to brand" or "to cauterize"; it also means "to render not sensitive". So he's saying the conscience is rendered insensitive. The conscience doesn't bother the person anymore because they've ignored it for so long. Then let's go to Ephesians 4:19, which talks about people who have had their consciences seared and have ignored the issue of their sins and weaknesses for so long—they just haven't dealt with them.

Ephesians 4:19 [Paul is saying] *Who being past feeling [meaning they are cauterized; their conscience is seared or cauterized] have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.* (KJV)

They've just given themselves over to Satan and the world. It's interesting the Greek word for *past feeling* is Strong's #524, and Thayer's says, "To become callous; insensitive to pain; apathetic; all toward one's sins, because they haven't been addressed"—just ignored, swept under the rug. This is the huge danger because the conscience is gone; their conscience doesn't bother them. No guilt, nor remorse, is possible, and, as I've said, the only future they have is the lake of fire.

The point ending up—this last point—is that there is a huge danger, a very huge danger, in allowing our conscience to be seared, and we must not be deceived by Satan into accepting a certain amount of sin in our lives, allowing a certain amount of sin into our lives. What God wants in us is purity and cleanliness of heart and mind—there are many such scriptures that support that, and they are a whole sermon unto themselves. He wants purity and cleanliness in us—that we be unspotted from the world.

Let's go to the fifth point now.

5. There is a solution to avoid these consequences of sin.

God has given us a solution and we focus on that this time of year. I know you know this, but just as a reminder, the first one, point A, is:

5A. We have to acknowledge our sins.

Back in Numbers 32, verse 23—we won't turn there—but Moses is speaking to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and he says, you've sinned against the LORD and your sin is going to find you out, and sure enough it did. That's a principle for us today. It applies to all sin; our sins will eventually find us out—God will see to that. He will bring circumstances to pass such that we are confronted with our sin, as David was by Nathan, and then you either deny it, blow it off, or you say, as David said, I have sinned, it's on me—which David did. The point is, we have to acknowledge our sins, and we can't solve a problem if we don't admit we have a problem. The first part is acknowledging the problem. We can't repent of a sin that we refuse to acknowledge—oh, that's just the way I was raised; that's a way of deflecting it and not acknowledging the situation or acknowledging the sin.

Today, as we see in the world, denial is a huge problem, from our president on down—it's an enormous problem. I'm sure David was in denial, that year or so, before Nathan confronted him: It's not so bad, I'm the king; look at what I do, God winks at my sin—He's given me a pass. Denial is a huge problem. We dare not ignore our sins. When is the most critical time? When we pray. That's the time we're talking to God and that's the time we can repent of our sins and acknowledge our sins, and if we ignore it, if we just sweep it under the rug, then we never go to God with it and get it cleared up. It's always hanging there, it's always the 800-pound gorilla in the room. David had that for a year or so—can you imagine? We don't want that. None of us want that.

Once David was confronted he quickly acknowledged his sin. He threw the switch, he realized what he had done, and he said, I have sinned against the LORD. I have sinned, it's me, it's on me—nobody else. In addition he wrote Psalm 51 as a psalm about this account. Remember, he said, I acknowledge my sins, I acknowledge my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. He said, against You and You only have I sinned. Once confronted he acknowledged his sin quickly. Too bad he didn't do it before, or too bad when he had the thought originally, he didn't turn and get off the roof and go back in, and kneel down before God, and say, I had a bad thought, I'm repenting of it right here and right now; let's just stop it right here.

We must not let anything come between us and God, and acknowledging our sins to God, especially pride, because pride prevents us from doing so. Pride prevents us from admitting we're wrong. Pride prevents us from admitting our shortcomings and our faults. It can keep us from acknowledging our sin to God in prayer because of our own pride. God already knows. So it's not like if we don't pray about it and don't ask Him about it that somehow He's not going to be aware of it. No, He's always aware of it—He

knows, so we're just bringing something to God that He's already aware of, and He's waiting for us to do it. In our pride, we think, no, I just can't admit I did that. Shame on us—we've all done it. It can keep us from acknowledging our sins.

We have to keep the goal in mind. What is the ultimate goal? It is the Kingdom of God, and this sin or this incident will keep me from achieving that goal. Matthew 6:33—put first the Kingdom of God. David finally realized that if he didn't get clean, he wouldn't be there, in God's Kingdom. Too often our pride is so great that it will not allow us to admit our sins. Too often we deflect blame on others.

The poster child for that is Saul. We won't turn there—it's a long story in itself, in 1 Samuel 15—you can go look at that. Remember Samuel told Saul, these Amalekites have done evil against Israel and I want you to go wipe them out. I want you to kill every man, every woman, every infant, and every animal. For us today, we would cringe at that—killing infants and all. But God said if you don't wipe away every one of them, they're going to come back to haunt you, I guarantee it, so you go do this. Obviously we know Saul did not. Samuel came before Saul, and Saul told him, I've performed the commandment of the LORD. That's denial, and remember Samuel said, if you've done that why am I hearing sheep bleating in the background, making noise? You haven't done that. Then Saul said, the people spared the best of the animals. Saul, who is king? You were given a commandment, you were given an order, and you let the people decide whether or not the animals were going to be kept? Saul refused to acknowledge his sin, he deflected the blame onto others, and look what it got him. Ultimately he was rejected from being king.

The good thing, the joyous thing about it, is the deep freedom that comes when we acknowledge our sins. It's like taking a bath. It's like going under the water at baptism. When you come up, you're a new person. You're just as white as snow. When we go before God and give it all up, then we're free. The sin has no more hold on us. Our job then is to not repeat it. God says, I forgive and I forget; get up on your feet and let's go forward; let's keep going. Only by acknowledging our sins can we deal with them.

5B. After acknowledging our sin, we must repent.

We have to say, God, this is what I did, and we must say so in detail, not minimizing it; this is what I did and I'm sorry, and I don't want to do it again. Give me the strength so I don't do it again. Let's go to Luke 13, verse 1. There were people in Christ's presence who told Him about a horrible incident that happened to the Galileans—they were sacrificed, killed. It was a horrible thing that somebody had asked Him about.

Luke 13:1 *There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. (KJV)*

They killed human beings to take their blood.

2) *And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? (KJV)*

Is that what you're thinking? We've done that in the church; somebody gets sick or has cancer—it's because they are sinning. That happened years ago, hopefully that doesn't happen today.

3) *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*

4) *Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? (KJV)*

Somehow they're bad folks, more so than everybody else?

5) *I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (KJV)*

One of the best examples I can think of is when Job said, when it was all said and done—all the misery, all the suffering—God confronted him and he replied, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. That's the point that God wants us to get to. Acknowledge and then repent. You can check Job 42 for that.

Repentance is one of the areas that we focus on this week, and in baptismal counseling, we focus on the whole concept of repentance.

The third point—this is again one that we focus on this time of year:

5C. The deep realization that our sin has caused Christ's blood to be shed.

Not mankind's sins, not my neighbor's sins, not my church brother's or sister's sins—my sins. It's a personal thing. Because of what I've done, Christ had to die. Let's go to Matthew 26, verse 27. We will cover this on Passover evening.

Matthew 26:27 *And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them [the disciples], saying, Drink ye all of it;*

He gives the reason in verse 28.

28) *For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many [why?] for the remission of sins. (KJV)*

Sins that we have personally committed. Then let's go to see what the apostles did in Acts 32, verse 36. It was the day of Pentecost; there was the noise, the flames of fire above everybody's head, and Peter started talking to the crowd that heard all of this and saw all of this.

Acts 2:36 [Peter says] *Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.* (KJV)

Obviously the vast majority of people weren't present when Christ was crucified, nor did they drag him to the crucifixion, nor turn Him in to the authorities, but Peter is saying, by your sins, Christ was crucified. So the message is, I have to take personal responsibility for the fact that Christ had to die for what I have done and what I have thought and what I have said. Verse 37.

37) *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, [they took it seriously] and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?*

38) *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ [why?] for the remission of sins [so that they are put away], and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* (KJV)

The fact is, the only solution is God's Spirit. The only solution to the problems of mankind is God's Spirit. Without that, nothing changes. We don't change without God's Holy Spirit. We realize at this time of year, that our sins, and even our ongoing sins from this year past, make us responsible for the death of Jesus Christ—we personally, nobody else. We have to realize that—serious stuff. Realize that the only way we can stop that is through God's Holy Spirit. The only way that pattern of behavior can be terminated is through the power of God. So when I deeply realize that my sin led to the death of my Elder Brother, it is an incentive to me never to repeat that sin again—never, ever. How can I repent of it, knowing that my sin caused Christ to die, and then I go do it again? How can I do that? What does that say about me and what does that say about my love for God and what Jesus has done for me?

Let's now wrap it up. When parents sin, it affects the children—we know that. When children sin, it affects the parents. Parents grieve over their children. When ministers sin, it affects the church, the entirety of the church. When brethren sin, it affects other brethren—families and other brothers and sisters in the church. The list goes on and on and on, the point being we can't sin in isolation—it's impossible. The solution to that is immediate acknowledgment of the sin and the immediate repentance of the sin. Let's go to 2 Corinthians 7 and read one verse, verse 9. The subject is the fellow who was misbehaving with his stepmother, and Paul had him kicked out of the church, then later told them they needed to let him back in because he had obviously repented.

2 Corinthians 7:9 *Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance:* (KJV)

The sorrow made you repent. So when we hurt somebody or we commit a sin, and we know God is not pleased with us, that should give us sorrow that leads to repentance. The Greek word for *repentance* is interesting; it's Strong's #3341 and it comes from a root of #3340, just one digit away. In #3341, the words that are used here mean *to feel*

shame because of guilt, including reformation (meaning reforming oneself, changing) *and by implication, reversal*. That means doing a 180, going in the opposite direction. The root word for *repentance* (this is one I like because it hits the nail on the head) means *to think differently*. When you think differently, when the wrong thought comes in and you have a different mind, you shut it off—you just stop it in its tracks.

When we sin, we sorrow—it's mentioned here, sorrow to repentance—because we have displeased our Creator and our Father. We don't want to go there, we don't want to be in that situation. If we say, God (first commandment), I love you with all my heart and then we go sin, what does that say? Were we serious when we said, I love God with all my heart, and we go and commit some horrible thing, or say some horrible thing, or have some horrible thought? I've had to confront myself—how can I disobey God if I really love Him? How can I say this or do this if I really love Him? Finally, we come to the point of, if I really love Him I'm not going to do that, I'm not going to entertain it for a nanosecond—I'm going to get rid of it.

In 1 John 3:22 (we won't turn there) we are encouraged to do those things that are pleasing in God's sight. That's where we should all be. If David had in mind that he was standing on the roof—I want to please God—would he continue to stand on the roof or would he do a 180 and walk back into the palace? He wouldn't have stood there. If we want to please God, we will not entertain sin. We will not watch something we shouldn't watch, we will not think something we shouldn't think, we won't say something we should not say. That's why David said—let's go to Psalm 51, verse 9—one more scripture after this. You see, our goal is to please God, not disobey God. That's why David said,

Psalm 51:9 *Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.*

David knew the solution; the implication is, through God's Holy Spirit,

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

He wanted to be made right with God and he wanted once again to start pleasing God, and be the man after God's own heart that he is famous for.

All that we think, that we do, that we speak, should have one purpose—to please God. Everything I do, everything I think, everything I say, is it pleasing to God or is it not? We've talked about how we sorrow because Christ had to die for our sins. This time of year it's impressed upon us, at Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, that we put sin out of our lives, that we should sorrow enough to change who we are—fundamentally change who we are, from the old person to the new person, and the new person is in the image of Jesus Christ. The new person has the mind of Christ. The new person wants to please God.

We need to sorrow enough to change, to be like our older Brother, the very Son of God. He set the path. All we want to do is walk in His footsteps. He was perfect. That just

blows my mind; every second that He was alive, He never sinned once. He set the perfect example, and what we have to do is just walk in His footsteps, not going to the right, not going to the left, but in every way pleasing God. God's way is not to continue this cycle of sin, acknowledgment, repentance; sin, acknowledgement, repentance; over and over and over, sometimes for the same sin—over and over and over. That is not God's way. What God wants is to change our minds to the point that we prevent sin from occurring in the first place—our mind is so Christlike, our behavior so pleasing to God, that we don't sin in the first place. We evolve from what we were when we were dunked at baptism, at the beginning, into the fact that we now don't even contemplate sin—it doesn't even come to us, some of the thoughts, some of the actions, some of the deeds. That's God's way and that's the perfect example Christ set—He never sinned in the first place.

If we do that, we don't have to experience the consequences of sin and those around us don't have to experience the consequences of sin. In Hebrews 12, verse 1—we won't turn there, you can look at it later—we are told to lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets us. In the New King James, *the sin that so easily ensnares us*. The New International Version says, *the sin that so easily entangles us*. We have to set aside these weights that drag us down, coming from Satan, coming from our human nature. God wants us to run the race that's set before us, without these weights.

You can run a lot faster when you don't have weights dragging you down. We do this by changing who we are and the fact that we're not the same person who committed those sins. We're a different person, a different being—more like Jesus Christ. God is giving us time—and, as we get older, we don't know how much time we have left—to do one thing, to prove to God and Jesus Christ that we love Almighty God with all our heart, we will put Him first, we will do our best to never sin and disappoint Him. If God sees that, over time, in us—that we put Him first and we fight sin like mad, and we don't want to be displeasing to our Father—that's what He is looking for.

Just remember the two great commandments. It's so simple, really, when you think about it. If we love God with all our heart, we will never want to displease Him, never want to disappoint Him, we will want to be like Him. And if we love our neighbor as ourselves, which includes our mate, and our brothers and sisters in the church, and people out in the world, we will never want to sin and have those consequences of our sin hurt them—like the ripples in the pond.

Going back to the two great commandments, we have an incentive not to sin because of the consequences of that sin. So let's remember, as we go forward, the next time we are tempted to sin, remember the far-reaching consequences that we've talked about today. Those far-reaching consequences—remember them, because we don't want to go there. We don't want to disappoint God. We want to please Him and we don't want to harm our neighbor, our brothers and sisters, or our mates. We want to please God, and this is the time that we come to a confrontation with this in our lives. So let's go forward and remember the far-reaching consequences of sin.