

## THE PROBLEM OF SIN

**TEXT: JAMES 4:13-17**

### **Introduction:**

1. Calvin Coolidge was president of the United States from 1923–1929.
2. He was a quiet man, known as a man of few words. His nickname was "Silent Cal."
3. When asked about this, Coolidge replied, "I've noticed that nothing I've never said has hurt me."
4. On another occasion he said, "If you don't say anything, you won't be called on to repeat it."
5. One Sunday afternoon, someone asked President Coolidge what the pastor preached about. Coolidge said, "Sin."
6. The enquirer said, "Well, what did he say about sin?"
7. To this Mr. Coolidge replied, "He said he was against it."
8. Well, I'm against it too. And I hope you are too.
9. One preacher said, "We preachers should not be so hard on sin. If it weren't for sin we'd all be out of work."
10. Of course he was being facetious. Unfortunately there will always be plenty of sin in this wicked, sin-loving world.
11. Billy Sunday said, "Listen, I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot, I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist, I've butt it as long as I've got a head, and I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old, fistless, footless, and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to glory and it goes home to perdition."
12. A pastor told a friend of mine he deliberately avoids preaching against sin. He never mentions sin, judgment, hell, repentance, etc.
13. Evangelist John R. Rice said, "It is true that preachers ought to preach with love and compassion and tears. But that does not change the fact that we are plainly commanded to rebuke and reprove, that we are to preach the Word about particular sins. The preacher who never has a word to say against drunkenness and adultery and lewdness and covetousness and blasphemy is a dumb dog who cannot bark. He is a Balaam preaching for profit. He is fallen into the snare of the fear of man. We need preaching against sin, against particular sins. It is not honest preaching of the Bible that does not preach Hell. Man is a sinner. If he does not repent, he will die unconverted, forever away from God. Men ought to be warned of the horrible fate of dying without Christ."
14. I am going to preach this morning on the sin problem.

## **I. THE MEANING OF SIN (JAMES 4:17).**

1. The Bible defines sin, explains sin, illustrates sin, and warns us of the dangers and consequences of sin.
2. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
3. There are Christians who know they ought to give more money to support their church, and to support missionaries. They even feel a little twinge of guilt when the offering basket is passed around.
4. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
5. There are Christians who know they ought to have private devotions and family devotions, and they know they ought to read their Bible instead wasting time on the computer or watching television.
6. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
7. There are Christians who know they ought to pass out tracts and try and win souls, but they just won't do it.
8. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
9. There are Christians who know they ought to get up early on the Lord's Day and bring their children to Sunday School, but instead they drag their feet on Sunday morning, and skip Sunday School.
10. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
11. There are Christians who ought to come back to church for the Sunday evening service, but they don't.
12. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
13. There are Christians who used to attend prayer meeting, but now they make excuses for skipping prayer meeting.
14. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."
15. Now that I have some people squirming a bit, let me say a few words to any unsaved here this morning. If you do not repent of your sin you will die and go straight to hell.
16. Our Lord said in John 8:34, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."
17. This means you are enslaved to sin and only the blood of Jesus can set you free.

18. A number of years ago, British historian Arnold Toynbee said, "Of the twenty-two civilizations that have appeared in history, nineteen of them collapsed when they reached the moral state the United States is in now."
19. Mr. Toynbee said that a while back. He died in 1975. Certainly, the moral state of America is in far worse shape since then. And, it is much worse in Toynbee's England.
20. Last month's rioting, rampant looting and violence and arson showed us just how bad things are getting in England.
21. Toynbee said the growing acceptance of sexual sins is one of the evidences of a degenerate society.
22. Galatians 5:19 says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness."
23. The Bible says we can have victory over sin. The apostle Paul deals with this in Romans 6-8. "Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (6:18).
24. People question over the definition of sin. The Bible is clear. Romans 14:23 says, "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (cf. James 4:17).
25. First John 3:4 says, "Sin is the transgression of the law." This is the meaning of sin.
26. I could ask you to turn to Exodus 20, and look up the Ten Commandments, but we do not have time for that this morning.
27. Allow me to give just one example.
28. Exodus 20:7 (third commandment) says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."
29. If you say, "Oh my God" or other such statements you are taking the Lord's name in vain. If you refused to watch television programs that took God's name in vain there would be very few programs you could watch.
30. With that extra time, try reading the Bible and good Christian books!

## **II. THE MISERY OF SIN**

1. Sin always brings misery.
2. Like the prodigal son, sooner or later the sinner winds up in the hog pen. And if he does not repent and climb out of the hog pen, he will wind up in hell.
3. A miserable end to a miserable life! Oh, the misery of sin!
4. Jonathan Edwards, in his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," said, "Sin is the ruin and misery of the soul; it is

- destructive in its nature; and if God should leave it without restraint, there would need nothing else to make the soul perfectly miserable."
5. James 4:13-16 describes life without God. People make their plans, and go on their trips, and buy and sell, but they don't ask God about it.
  6. They do not seek God's will for their lives. James 4:15 and 16 says, "For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil."
  7. God says it is evil.
  8. James is not speaking here of murder or adultery or homosexuality or stealing or lying.
  9. He is speaking here of people who go about their daily business, day after day, week after week, month after month -- and they leave God out.
  10. James 4:4 refers to the misery of a worldly life.
  11. James 4:14 refers to the misery of a wasted life. I remember preaching a funeral in Brooklyn many years ago. The deceased was a young man caught up in the rapper lifestyle. He was shot dead on his front doorsteps in a drive-by shooting.
  12. He was laid out in the coffin with his fancy rapper suit, his heavy gold chains and jewelry, and bowler hat.
  13. I preached from James 4:14, and as I looked at the casket and the room full of lost souls, I thought -- the misery of a wasted life!
  14. The misery of a worldly life!
  15. And the misery of a willful life (James 4:15)!
  16. I remember the words to that old song:  
Wasted years, wasted years, oh, how foolish  
As you walk on in darkness and fear  
Turn around, turn around, God is calling  
He's calling you from a life of wasted years.
  17. James 4:16 says, "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil."
  18. It is evil to go on with your life without God. Psalm 10:4 says, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts."

### **III. THE MASTERY OVER SIN**

1. We can have mastery over sin. Romans 6:14 says, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

2. The phrase "have dominion" literally means, "to have power over." This is why some of the new translations say, "For sin shall not have mastery over you."
3. Now there are several ways to approach this. First of all, in order to have mastery over sin, a sinner needs to repent and ask the Lord for forgiveness.
4. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
5. The lost sinner needs to acknowledge that it is only the grace of God that is keeping him from being cast off into hell.
6. Jonathan Edwards, in "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," said, "The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire...and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment."
7. When a sinner repents and calls upon the Lord he receives forgiveness and pardon from sin, and everlasting life.
8. The first step -- deliverance from the penalty of sin (hell).
9. The second step -- deliverance from the power of sin.
10. Someday we will be delivered from the very presence of sin.

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Adoniram Judson was a Baptist missionary, who served in Burma for almost forty years. In 1834 completed a translation of the whole Bible into the Burmese language.
2. Judson entered Providence College (now Brown University) at the age of seventeen. Despite the fact his father was a Congregational preacher, and in spite of his mother's "tears and pleadings," Judson was not saved until he was 20 years of age.
3. He had become a confirmed deist (denied the supernatural). This was largely due to the influence of a brilliant unbeliever in college who successfully converted Judson to his deistic views.
4. Interestingly, Judson's conversion to Christ was due in large measure to that same deist. After he graduated from college, Judson left home to do some traveling.
5. One night in a country inn his room was adjacent to the room of a dying man. The moaning and groaning of that man kept him awake all night.
6. Throughout the night, Adoniram Judson wondered: "Was the dying man prepared to die?" "Where would he spend eternity?" "Was he a

- Christian, calm and strong in the hope of the joys of Heaven?" "Or, was he a lost sinner only minutes away from the torments of hell?"
7. Judson thought how his brilliant college friend would rebuke him if he learned of these worries.
  8. The next morning, Judson learned the man died during the night. But when Judson inquired of the proprietor as to the identity of the dead man, he was shocked by what he heard: "He was a brilliant young person from Providence College."
  9. And then he heard the man's name. It was the very same unbeliever who had destroyed Judson's faith.
  10. Judson realized, "Now he was dead. And he was lost! Was lost! Was lost! Lost! Lost!"
  11. Those words raced through his brain, and rang in his ears, and roared in his soul — "Was lost! Lost! Lost!"
  12. There and then Judson realized he too was lost! He repented of his sin and asked the Lord to save him.
  13. Sin deceives and sin destroys.
  14. There is only one remedy for sin. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7).