

## **Cyber-Sin: Sins Involving the Internet**

The internet is one of the most phenomenal blessings in the advanced age of technology. Through this medium families can stay in touch. The internet allows loved ones fighting the war in Afghanistan to keep current with their family through email and the amazing gift of Skype, which allows you to see the person with whom you are talking. Through this medium evangelism and spiritual enrichment can be attained. You can go online and read articles and listen to sermons and Bible studies. You can further your education with greater ease. I think about the number of people who are unable to go to a distant university, yet with the click of a mouse you can be ready to advance your learning. I remember the old days of using the unabridged dictionary and the cumbersome Encyclopedia Britannica and World Book. Oftentimes when I exhausted my research, I would pack up my things and go to the public library. I still use these wonderful reference materials and I believe in going to the library, however, through Wikipedia, Google and other search engines much of the same information is available. Through the internet you can access the entire twenty-volume set of the Unabridged Oxford English Dictionary for a fraction of the cost of the hardback or leather bound volumes. Even as I write this article I am indebted to the internet for the writing and distribution of these words.

We could go on listing the benefits and blessings of cyberspace. But for the rest of this article I would like to talk about the dangers and remedies that we are now dealing with in this age of what I shall call “cyber-sin.” There has been a steady rise of counseling in pastor’s offices across the country dealing with people, especially men, in an overwhelming battle against lust gone wild. Let me be quick to say that although it doesn’t yet seem to be as rampant among women, there are heart-breaking encounters women have experienced with other people (often with complete strangers) they have met over the internet that has led to the dissolving of homes. And time would fail to discuss the escalating problem we are having with juveniles that have gone into moral decay and ruin through the internet. The Apostle John reminds us there is nothing new under the sun when he said, *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world”* (I John 2:16).

As pastor, I am not content to sit idly by while this demise takes place. I would like to give glory to God that in Christchurch I do not see this as a catastrophic calamity. One reason for addressing this subject is because I do not want it to become a one.

### **1. Sin is a sin no matter who does or who does not know it.**

In the secret of this evening somewhere someone will be tempted to click themselves to a place they have no business being. I used to give statistics, naming the thousands and then millions of available pornographic websites available to Americans. I was getting so many updates on how many that I was not able to keep up, neither do I want to keep up with exactly how many bad websites are out there. Suffice it to say, they are legion. With this easy access to sin, many will say to themselves, “I am by myself, who will know it? What harm does it do if I am the only person involved?”

There is the old philosophical question, “If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?” The answer is yes; just because you are not there to hear it, the sound is made. The same kind of logic is used when people become involved in secret sin. And yes, it is still sin, even when you are the only person who knows. I can promise you something else: you are not the only person who knows -- God knows! Ezekiel said, *“Then said he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The LORD seeth us not; the LORD hath forsaken the earth”* (Ezekiel 8:12). The Lord most certainly knows what you are up to; don’t pretend that He does not. *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do”* (Hebrews 4:13).

## **2. Sin, if not forsaken and dealt with, shall be eventually exposed.**

The Bible says, *“...Be sure your sin will find you out”* (Numbers 32:23). I am thinking, as I write these words, of a pastor who was also the school administrator of the Christian school associated with their church. In their school computer lab they had a way of checking to see if any students had attempted to visit the bad websites. The pastor told someone who was in charge of doing this that he would check for them. A few weeks had gone by when someone in the school came to the pastor’s office and said, “We have an update for our computers; would you like us to update your computer while we’re at it?” He replied, “Sure.” To make a long, sad story short, soon the pastor was confronted with several pages of websites that he had been visiting. He confessed his curiosity was soon inflamed by lust that, like a wild fire, got out of control. He was a married man with three children, out of a job -- and not only a job, but also a ministry and nowhere to go and no recommendation to follow him. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”* (Galatians 6:7). *“For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind...”* (Hosea 8:7).

## **3. Confess, forsake and become accountable.**

The Bible teaches us to confess and forsake all sin. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (I John 1:9). *“...If I have done iniquity, I will do no more”* (Job 34:32). To help keep us from re-entering into the trouble zone, establish accountability with some godly person whom you love and they love you. An excellent person is your spouse. There are many different methods out there. One system (I was informed) tells your wife’s or husband’s computer or smart phone immediately when you have accessed a questionable website. If you balk on this and do not want accountability, then I highly question your sincerity to be right and stay right. If I am not ashamed of where I go, I should not fear what anyone should discover from an open computer.

## **4. Live in the fear of the Lord.**

*“Let not thine heart envy sinners: but be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long”* (Proverbs 23:17). The puritan, John Brown said, “The fear of the

Lord is when God's smile is our greatest delight and His frown in our greatest dread." God is Holy. "...*Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts...*" (Isaiah 6:3). God intends that we not only become recipients, but "...*partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.*" (II Peter 1:4). The holiest man of his times, Job said, "*I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?*" (Job 31:1). May God help us all male, female, adolescents, married and unmarried to make a similar covenant promise to keep ourselves pure. May we pray in the fear of the Lord, "Father, help me today to '*...set no wicked thing before mine eyes...*' (Psalm 101:3). I covenant with You to be under Your control in everything I see and everything I do. May I love You supremely and obey in even the smallest matters."

-Pastor Pope-