

Your Horrifying Sin

Selected Scriptures

The Sinfulness of Sin



PURITAN PAPERBACKS ■ RALPH VENNING

FOREWORD BY ROSANNA BUTTERFIELD



KNOWING SIN

SEEING A NEGLECTED
DOCTRINE THROUGH
THE EYES OF THE PURITANS

MARK JONES

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BIBLICAL DOCTRINE



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VOL. 2

REFORMED SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Man and Christ

JOEL R. BEEKE
PAUL M. SMALLEY

1. What are the benefits of studying sin?

◆ Hate sin more deeply

It cannot but be extremely useful to let men see what sin is: how prodigiously vile, how deadly mischievous, and therefore how monstrously ugly and odious a thing sin is.

—Ralph Venning



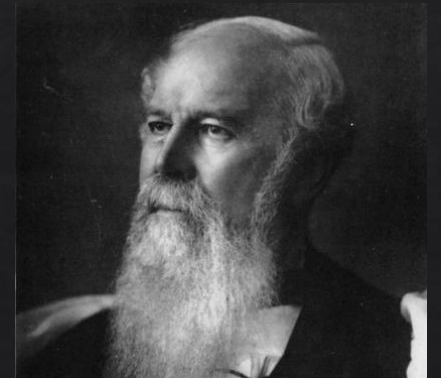
1. What are the benefits of studying sin?

◆ **Fight sin more vigorously**

Humility issues forth from a right judgment of one's self. The humble acknowledge ... that they have sinned and come short of the glory of God.... They are worthy of having been cast into hell long ago. —Wilhelmus A Brakel



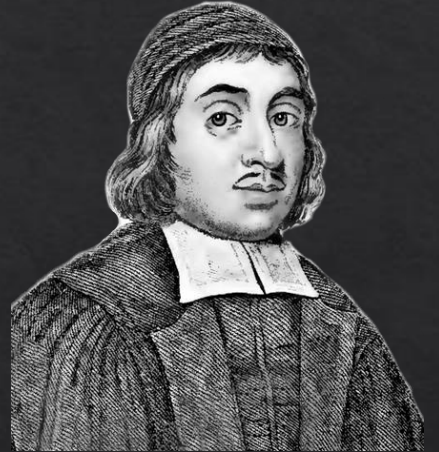
The first step towards attaining a higher standard of holiness is to realize more fully the amazing sinfulness of sin. —J. C. Ryle



1. What are the benefits of studying sin?

◆ **Love Christ more earnestly**

The more bitterness we taste in sin, the more sweetness we shall taste in Christ. —Thomas Watson



2. What is sin?

◆ Sin is a deprivation of what should be.

- God did not create sin as He creates all things good.

◆ Sin is the positive inclination toward evil.

- Sin actively works to destroy

◆ Sin defined

Sin is any lack of conformity to God's will in attitude, thought, or action, whether committed actively or passively. The center of all sin is autonomy, which is the replacing of God with self. —MacArthur and Mayhue

That which sin is accused of and proved to be guilty of is *high treason against God*. It attempts nothing less than the *dethroning and un-god-ing of God himself*. It has unmanned man, made him a fool, a beast, a devil, and subjected him to the wrath of God, and made him liable to eternal damnation. It has made men deny that God is, or affirm that he is like themselves. It has put the Lord of Life to death and shamefully crucified the Lord of Glory. It is always resisting the Holy Ghost. It is continually practicing the defiling, the dishonor, the deceiving and the destruction of all men. What a prodigious, monstrous, devilish thing is sin. It is impossible to speak worse of sin than it really is, or even as badly of it as it really deserves, for it is hyperbolically sinful. There are not enough words; we need more, and stronger ones to speak of its vileness. —Ralph Venning

3. What makes sin so horrifying?

- Sin stands against God's law.

Psalm 19:7–11: The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. ⁹ The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. ¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

- Any violation of God's law is a violation against God Himself since His law is a reflection of His holy nature.
- Any violation of the law is also contrary to man's goodness for in keeping God's law there is great reward.

3. What makes sin so horrifying?

A. Sin in contrary to God.

i. Contrary to God's character

- ❖ Sin is contrary to God's holiness. God is “holy, holy, holy” and by definition, separate from anything evil. It is impossible for Him to be tempted or to tempt anyone due to His holiness (James 1:13).
- ❖ Sin is contrary to God's sovereignty. Sin seeks to dethrone God and fights against His sovereign rule.
- ❖ Sin is contrary to God's goodness. Sin thinks lightly of “lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience” of God (Romans 2:4).
- ❖ Sin is contrary to God's sufficiency. Sin rejects what God offers through obedience and seeks pleasure anywhere but through God.

In short, sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of his mercy, the jeer of his patience, the slight of his power, the contempt of his love, as one writer prettily expresses this ugly thing. We may go on and say, it is the upbraiding of his providence (Psalm 50), the scoff of his promise (2 Peter 3.3-4), the reproach of his wisdom (Isaiah 29.16).

—Ralph Venning



ii. Contrary to God's existence

Sin is contrary and opposite to the being and existence of God. It makes the sinner wish and endeavor that there might be no God, for sinners are haters of God (Romans 1.30). As he who hates his brother is a murderer (1 John 3:15), so, as much as in him lies, he who hates God is a murderer of God. —Ralph Venning

- ❖ **Romans 1 reminds us that all men know that God exists since it has been made evident in creation. Yet sinners “suppress the truth in unrighteous,” and “exchange the glory of the incorruptible God” for idols.**

A. Sin in contrary to man.

- i. Sin is against the blessings of obedience to God.
- ii. Sin is against one's body and one's health.
- iii. Sin is against man's conscience.
- iv. Sin is against peace between individuals.
- v. Sin is against understanding.
- vi. Sin is against eternal peace in heaven.

Sin is both contrary to God and to man. It works to dethrone God and destroy us in every way.

4. What evidence is there of sin's horror?

- A. **God's punishment of the wicked on the earth.**
- B. **God's discipline of His children.**

God has executed judgment on his own people when they have sinned, to show how hateful sin is, even in those he so dearly loves. One would think that if God would spare any, he would spare his own; and indeed, he pities them and spares them as a father pities and spares the son who serves him. But though he forgives them, yet he takes vengeance on their iniquity (Psalm 99.8). —Ralph Venning

c. God's punishment of the wicked in eternity.

God often punishes less than iniquity deserves, but never more. The greatest sufferings are neither more nor less than sin deserves. . . God damns no man except for sin. Damnation is a punishment (Matthew 25.46), and all punishment presupposes guilt and transgression. . . Death is but sin's wages (Romans 6.23); that which sin has merited. Man's undoing is only the fruit of his own doing.

—Ralph Venning

- **Hell is the complete lack of any good thing:**

- Hell is complete loss of all relationships.
- Hell provides no peace even after years, decades, or even millennia.
- Hell lacks any measure of comfort, any pity, or any mercy.
- Hell is the loss of any relief or any hope (Matthew 12:32).
- Hell is separation from the presence of God (2 Thess. 1:9).

This damnation-state of sinners will admit of no relief. It will be punishment without pity, misery without mercy, sorrow without succor, crying without comfort, torment without ease. The sinner can look for no relief from God, for God judges and condemns him; none from conscience, for that accuses and upbraids him; none from the devils, for they torment him; none from hope, for that is departed from him; none from time, for this state is forever.

—Ralph Venning

- **Hell is described as:**

- A place of exceeding sorrow where there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12).
- A place of fiery flames, an unquenchable fire where the soul never dies (Mark 9:43-48; Matthew 3:12).
- A place of outer darkness (Matthew 8:12). To be in complete darkness and yet be engulfed in flames is unknown in this world, but the constant reality of hell.
- A place of excruciating pain beyond what we can imagine. It is a place of continuous and unrelenting torment (Revelation 14:10-11).
- It is the unmitigated cup of God's wrath poured upon the sinner (Romans 2:5). God's righteous judgment upon those who have committed the high treason of sin.

The punishment that sinners must undergo will be such a state of misery that all the miseries of this life are not to be compared with it. They are nothing to it. . . . The gripings and grindings of all the diseases and torments that men do or can suffer in this life are like fleabites to it. To pluck out a right eye or to cut off a right hand would be a pleasure and recreation in comparison with being damned in Hell (Matthew 5.30)

—Ralph Venning

D. God's crushing of His Son.

- Christ endured separation from the Father, became sin on our behalf, and endured the full measure of God's wrath against sin.

Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive what Christ suffered. . . The greatness of Christ's sufferings is a full witness against the sinfulness of sin. What an odious thing sin must be to God! — Ralph Venning

Oh depth of the evil of sin! If ever you wish to see how great and horrible an evil sin is, measure it in your thoughts, either by the infinite holiness and excellency of God, who is wronged by it; or by the infinite sufferings of Christ, who died to atone for it — and then you will have deeper apprehensions of its enormity. — John Flavel

5. Application to the horror of sin

A. **Hate sin more deeply.**

- We must learn to hate sin even more than suffering. No suffering is pleasant, but consider what Scripture says of suffering:
 - It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes. (Psalm 119:71)
 - For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison. (2 Corinthians 4:17)
 - Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (James 1:2–3)
 - Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Corinthians 1:3–4)

And now indeed no affliction seems to be joyous for the present (Hebrews 12.11); although they are not to be desired yet they may be endured. Sin on the contrary is neither to be desired nor endured. Any sin is worse than any suffering, one sin than all suffering, and the least sin than the greatest suffering. What then? Is sin worse than to be whipped, to be burnt or to be sawn asunder? Yes, by a great deal! It is clear from what our Savior says: 'Fear not them that can kill but fear him that can damn' (Matthew 10.28). That is, it is better to be killed than to be damned. You may more easily suffer from man than sin against God. One may suffer and not sin, but it is impossible to sin and not to suffer. They who avoid suffering by sinning, sin themselves into worse suffering. —Ralph Venning

5. Application to the horror of sin

B. **Fight sin more vigorously.**

- i. Confess it more regularly. Our hatred toward sin must lead to disgust of sin in our own lives.

Brethren, it is easier to declaim against a thousand sins of others, than to mortify one sin in ourselves. —John Flavel

- ii. Refuse it more faithfully. We cannot not stop at confession alone but must repent from our sin (2 Corinthians 7:10).

5. Application to the horror of sin

c. **Love Christ more earnestly.**

- i. Marvel at Christ's sacrifice more profoundly. He paid the awful penalty that was meant for you and for me!
- ii. Wonder at His grace more deeply. The God whom we have despised and sought to dethrone reached out in grace to save sinners.