

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL COUNSELING

Week Two: Sin

Summary: Sin brought about a breach between God and humanity, which led to all our sorrows. All good for us comes from our Creator. To be severed from our Creator is to sever us from all hope and life. As a result of that breach, all of creation has become disordered, and we are left in conflict and isolation on all sides.

Two principle consequences of sin are (1) disruption of the relationship between God and human beings; and (2) disruption of the relationship between human and human.¹

The loss caused by sin creates a coveting, a desire for something we do not have (which is ultimately God). That loss and desire attach to all sorts of different things in the creation (often good things which are misused) in an effort to feel better. However, coveting and obtaining anything in all creation will be insufficient to solve our ultimate craving for God.

Two quotations from Augustine's Confession will help illustrate this point. In Book 1, chapter 1, Augustine prays to God, "Thou hast prompted him, that he should delight to praise thee, for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee."

In Book 4, chapter 12, he writes:

If physical objects please you, praise God for them, but turn back your love to their Creator, lest, in those things which please you, you displease him. If souls please you, let them be loved in God; for in themselves they are mutable, but in him firmly established--without him they would simply cease to exist. In him, then, let them be loved; and bring along to him with yourself as many souls as you can, and say to them: "Let us love him, for he himself created all these, and he is not far away from them. For he did not create them, and then go away. They are of him and in him. Behold, there he is, wherever truth is known. He is within the inmost heart, yet the heart has wandered away from him. Return to your heart, O you transgressors, and hold fast to him who made you. Stand with him and you shall stand fast. Rest in him and you shall be at rest. Where do you go along these rugged paths? Where are you going? The good that you love is from him, and insofar as it is also for him, it is both good and pleasant. But it will rightly be turned to bitterness if whatever comes from him is not rightly loved and if he is deserted for the love of the creature. Why then will you wander farther and farther in these difficult and toilsome ways? There is no rest where you seek it. Seek what you seek; but remember that it is not where you seek it. ***You seek for a blessed life in the***

¹ It is interesting to see that this disruption is matched by the essential commands of the law: (1) To love God with one's whole heart, soul, mind and strength; and (2) to love one's neighbor as oneself. Where sin has separated, God commands a law to restore fellowship. The work of restoring fellowship with God takes place by means of the Word and Spirit (love of God) in the congregation of worshipping (love of neighbor). We will examine these aspects in future lessons.

land of death. It is not there. For how can there be a blessed life where life itself is not?

Non-biblical understandings of the human heart and life will focus behavior and sometimes the desire. But only a biblical understanding can bring us to understand that the unhappiness in the human being is ultimately caused due to sin and our loss of God. Anything which stops short of Godward change merely seeks to affect the outflow of sin with addressing the source of sin. Therefore, the solution must ultimately focus on the Godward relationship of the heart.

We must further understand that the troubles which come from the results of sin (sin against, sin generally in the world), likewise find their resolution only in God. Sin causes injury which only God can ultimately heal (Matthew 11:25-30; Luke 12:22-34; John 14:1-7; 2 Corinthians 1:3-10; Hebrews 2:14-18, 4:14-16).

In all these things we must see that sin has caused a separation from God and disorder in the universe. We have become guilty and polluted by sin. Yet, we must remember that is the foreigner, the invader. We must detest sin because we love God and love our neighbor.

I. Introduction

A. The dependency of human beings upon God.

1. Our very existence hangs upon God.

a. Romans 11:36

b. Hebrews 1:1-3

c. Colossians 1:16

2. Life comes from God

a. John 1:3-4. John Calvin writes of this passage:

Moreover this life may either include inanimate creations in general, which do live in their own way though they lack feeling, or life may just refer to living creatures. It is of little consequence which you choose, for the simple meaning is that the Word of God was not only the source of life for all creatures, so that those which had not yet existed began to be, but that his life-giving power makes them remain in their state. For if his continuing inspiration did not give life to the world, everything that lives would immediately decay and reduce to nothing.

b. Psalm 104

3. Believers have a peculiar dependency upon God for life.

- a. Ephesians 2:1-6
 - b. Colossians 3:4, “When Christ who is your life appears”
- B. Before the Fall, human beings had all things necessary for our life.
- 1. Genesis 2:1-24
 - a. Existence: Genesis 2:7
 - b. Food: Genesis 2:9
 - c. Water: Genesis 2:10
 - d. Work: Genesis 2:15
 - e. Human relationship: Genesis 2:22
 - f. Counsel/Knowledge of God: Genesis 2:16-17
 - 2. Created upright: Ecclesiastes 1:29
 - 3. Created with the potential for life without death. Genesis 2:16-17.
 - 4. Created in a proper relationship with God.
- C. Created as a worshipper. This is a topic we will address in a separate lesson. For this lesson it is necessary to understand that human beings “naturally” were able to glorify and enjoy God in their normal pattern of life.
- D. Before the Fall, human beings lived in a right standing with God such that the life of God was given to us without hindrance and we received without rebellion.

II. The Damage of the Fall

- A. All of the trouble we see in this world and in our lives came about as the result of sin; for sin cut us off from life in God. God makes this point clear when he explains to Adam that eating from the Tree of Knowledge will result in death, “in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17).²

² “Now, let me say one thing at the outset and be done with it. The notion that is so widely spread abroad (sometimes by those who ought to know better), that nouthetic counseling considers all human problems the direct result of actual sins of particular counselees, is a gross misrepresentation of the facts. From the beginning (cf. *Competent to Counsel*, 1970, pp. 108, 109), I have stated clearly that not all problems of counselees are due to their own sins. In *Competent*, I cited the cases of Job and the man born blind (John 9:1ff.).² Those who persist in attributing to me views that I do not hold are culpable. Either they ought to know better before they speak and write (by reading the material available—nouthetic counseling has not been done in a corner!), or they should have investigated on their own what they accepted as fact (but was actually only gossip).

“While all human misery—disability, sickness, etc.—does go back to Adam’s sin (and I would be quick to assert that biblical truth), that is not the same as saying that a quid pro quo relationship between each counselee’s misery and his own personal sins exists. That I as quickly deny. It may be true in one given instance, but not in another. Neither

B. The damage done by the Fall exists and permeates all that we are and do. Every human being knows this world is not right. I just read yet another human being complain of the faults and wickedness of the world and then complain that God must be wrong; therefore, God does not exist. Why do human beings all know that the world is wrong? Who has ever experienced a different world? I remember an anthropology professor try to explain this sensation (we evolved for some other world that none of us have ever lived in). The trouble that we will experience in this life and the problems we will meet in counseling all flow out of the Fall. Therefore, we must understand what happened so that we can rightly understand what to do about it.

C. Guilt and Shame

1. Guilt is the objective status of having violated a standard. Shame is the subjective awareness of being guilty.

2. Genesis 3:7-8

a. The first response of the humans was to see themselves as naked.

b. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Gospel in Fig Leaves*:

They knew that they were in some sense naked; before they had not been naked. What is this? I do not know, but I am inclined to agree with those who suggest, as an exposition of this, that man at the beginning, as he was made perfect by God, had a kind of glory about his body even as there was about his soul. Man, when he fell, not only fell in his spirit, but he also fell in his body. The apostle Paul tells us that at the end, when our Lord comes again, “[He] shall change our vile body”—the body of our humiliation—“that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”—the body of his glorification (Philippians 3:21).

Man, let us remember, was made in the image of God in every respect. He was not only upright with a righteousness that was spiritual, but there was, I believe, a glory pertaining to the body. And when Adam and Eve sinned, they lost that glory and were left with bodies as we now know them, and they were aware that they had been deprived of something. There was immediate consciousness of a nakedness, a loss, an incompleteness. Something had gone. A glory had departed” (47).

c. John Piper makes a different suggestion:

is it true that all the suffering that some deserve they get in this life. Nor is it true that all the suffering that others receive in this life they bring upon themselves. Suffering, in a world of sin, comes to all in one way or another in the providence of God,³ but before investigating each case, that is all that may be said about it. Apparent inequities (not really so from the perspective of eternity) can be resolved only in the purposes of God, who hasn't yet been pleased to reveal to us everything we'd like to know. We have all that we need to know—which is quite sufficient.” Jay Edward Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 139–140.

Consider a second possibility for why they are naked and not ashamed. My suggestion is that the emphasis falls *not* on their freedom from physical imperfection, but on the fullness of covenant love. In other words, I can be free from shame for two conceivable reasons: One conceivable (but unreal) reason is that I am perfect and have nothing to be ashamed of. The other reason I could be free from shame is that even though I am imperfect, I have no fear of being disapproved by my spouse.

The first way to be shame-free is to be perfect; the second way to be shame-free is based on the gracious nature of covenant love. In the first case, there is no shame because we're flawless. In the second case, there is no shame because covenant love covers a multitude of flaws (1 Peter 4:8; 1 Cor. 13:6). (*This Momentary Marriage*, 33).

d. Counseling:

- i. I think both understandings are correct. First, we were corrupted – not merely spiritually but also physically (Genesis 3:19). When we see human beings in glory, they are *glorious* (Mark 9:3). Our current bodies lack glory and yet we will gain glory at the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:43). We bare the marks of our sin in our physical bodies. Second, we do not live in perfect covenant love with any human beings. Even before God we are prone to feel guilty and ashamed.
- ii. Since we are imperfect, since we are by nature guilty and corrupt, we spend our lives trying to gather glory and protection for ourselves. Think of all the things human beings do to become “glorious” and honorable. Think of how human beings abuse and oppress other humans to gain honor and status from them.
- iii. Since we are corrupt, the accusations and abuse of others cause actual pain. E.g. of hidden versus false accusations.
- iv. The extraordinary pain of abuse of our bodies, such as physical and sexual abuse which cause damage and shame far beyond any mere physical aspect.
- v. The power of Christ to overcome versus the world. 1 Samuel 13:20, “do not take it to heart”. Versus, Romans 8:33, “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies.”

C. The conflict with all creation: Genesis 3:15-19

1. Aspects

- a. Supernatural: Genesis 3:15
- b. Physical: Genesis 3:15-19

- c. Relational: Genesis 3:16b.
 - d. Physical universe cursed/subjected to futility: Genesis 3:17-18; Romans 8:20; Ecclesiastes 1:2.
 - e. Work: Genesis 3:17-19
 - f. One's own body: Genesis 3:19.
2. Counseling considerations
- a. All troubles in this world ultimately flow from sin:
 - i. Our own sin: guilt, shame.
 - ii. The sin of others against us.
 - iii. The effects of sin generally.
 - b. Explanations for human trouble which do not address sin and its affects will be insufficient.
 - i. Example of psychological conditioning. Children of alcoholics. Physical and sexual abuse.
 - ii. Physical troubles: Alzheimer's Disease.

D. Noetic Effects of Sin

1. Sin has damaged the ability of human beings to think correctly. This is called the "noetic effect" of sin.
2. The key passage on this doctrine is Romans 1:18-32. As one works through the passage we see that a distortion in our understanding of God leads to "all manner of unrighteousness" (v. 29).
3. Total depravity (we have said) means not that a person is as bad as he might be (God's common grace restrains sinners from fully manifesting their sinful potential), but, rather, that in every aspect every person is affected by sin. That means (of course) that, among other things, his thought processes have been affected. At every point in the process of thought, breakdowns may—and do—occur. Because of Adam's sin—and their own—human beings do not think straight! That is an altogether important fact for the counselor to keep in view.

In speaking of the effects of sin, Paul put it this way:

... because although people knew God, they didn't glorify Him as God or thank Him. Instead they became involved in futile speculations and their senseless hearts were darkened. Claiming that they were wise, they became fools ... just

as they disapproved of retaining God in their knowledge, so God handed them over to a disapproved mind....

These truths have great consequences for counseling. I shall mention one or two basic ways in which this is so.

The noetic effects of sin upon daily living are quite varied. They creep into all areas of Christian living—the home, work, the church, prayer, etc. Constantly, in the Scriptures, we discover God correcting the results of sinful human thinking. The problem is so serious that He sets it forth in the sharpest terms of contrast when He reminds us, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways.”

Again and again, in the Scriptures, we are confronted with the fact that sinful human thought reverses God’s thought.³

4. Dr. Zemek writes in “The Noetic Malady”, “The noetic effects of the Fall are attested on nearly every page of the Holy Scriptures. If one fails to take seriously God’s infallible diagnosis of this malady, attempts at treatment will be at best directed only to symptoms and the result will be fatal...” (Grace Theological Journal 5, p. 205 (1984)). Fortunately for us, “God specializes in bending man’s perverted noetic inclinations” (p. 221).
5. Counseling considerations:
 - a. The effect of sin upon our own thinking.
 - b. The effect of sin upon the other.
 - c. The need for Scripture to correct our corrupted thinking.

III. The Discontentment of Sin

- A. The basis of temptation to sin: We want something we do not have. There is a manner in which the things we ultimately want (honor, security, love, life) are what we had prior to the Fall.
 1. James 1:12-18
 2. Genesis 3:1-6.
 3. James 4:1-4
 4. Proverbs 5:1-6.

³ Jay Edward Adams, *A Theology of Christian Counseling: More Than Redemption* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resource Library, 1986), 165–166.

5. Proverbs 7:21-23.

6. Coveting

a. Deuteronomy 5:21.

b. Romans 7:7: “Augustine says, that Paul included in this expression the whole law; which, when rightly understood, is true: for when Moses had stated the things from which we must abstain, that we may not wrong our neighbor, he subjoined this prohibition as to coveting, which must be referred to all the things previously forbidden.”(John Calvin, Romans, electronic ed., Calvin’s Commentaries (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998), Ro 7:7.)

c. Covetousness. Strong desire to have that which belongs to another. It is considered to be a very grievous offense in Scripture. The tenth commandment forbids coveting anything that belongs to a neighbor, including his house, his wife, his servants, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to him (Exod. 20:17). Jesus listed covetousness or greed along with many of the sins from within, including adultery, theft, and murder, which make a person unclean (Mark 7:22). Paul reminded the Ephesians that greed or covetousness is equated with immorality and impurity, so that these must be put away (5:3). A covetous or greedy person is an idolator (5:5) and covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5). James warns that people kill and covet because they cannot have what they want (4:2).

Covetousness, therefore, is basic to the commandments against murder, adultery, stealing, and lying. Those who accept bribes are coveting, leading to murder (Ezek. 22:12). Coveting a neighbor’s wife is a form of adultery (Exod. 20:17). Achan admitted to coveting a robe and silver and gold, so he stole them, which was a sin against the Lord (Josh. 7:20–22). Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, coveted the property of Naaman so much that he lied to get what he wanted from Naaman the leper (2 Kings 5:19–25) and was struck with leprosy. Proverbs warns that a covetous person brings trouble to his family (15:27). Thus covetousness is the root of all kinds of sins, so that Jesus gave the warning, “Be on your guard against all kinds of greed” (Luke 12:15).⁴

B. Honor/Shame:

1. Our original creation status.

a. Genesis 1:26-28.

b. Psalm 8

⁴ Walter A. Elwell and Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Baker Reference Library; Logos Library System (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996).

c. Hebrews 2:5-8

2. Shame:

What is shame? Shame is the deep sense that you are unacceptable because of something you did, something done to you, or something associated with you. You feel exposed and humiliated. Or, to strengthen the language, You are disgraced because you acted less than human, you were treated as if you were less than human, or you were associated with something less than human, and there are witnesses. These definitions can get us started. There isn't one mandatory definition or description for shame, but any definition will include certain elements. For example, you can expect images of being an outsider, naked, and unclean. And don't forget shame's public nature. Guilt can be hidden; shame feels like it is always exposed. Once you identify shame, you can find it everywhere.⁵

3. Our desire for honor.

a. Leading to sin

- i. Cain: Genesis 4:1-16.
- ii. Tower of Babel: Genesis 11:1-9.
- iii. Saul: 1 Samuel 18:6-9.
- iv. Absalom: 2 Samuel 13-15.

b. Seeking honor from God

- i. Joseph: Genesis 37.
- ii. Hannah: 1 Samuel 1.
- iii. Psalm 3 (et cetera).

c. Pride is the false attempt to make up for the honor lost through sin.

4. Shame/Honor in suffering

- a. 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
- b. 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:14.

⁵ Welch, Edward T. (2012-04-30). *Shame Interrupted: How God Lifts the Pain of Worthlessness and Rejection* (Kindle Locations 142-148). New Growth Press. Kindle Edition.

C. The attempt to make up for what was lost in the Fall. It is interesting matter that human beings attempt to remedy the damage caused by the Fall by selecting some good thing and reveling and distorting the use of that good: such as food, work/rest/, relationship, et cetera.

1. Eating/Gluttony

- a. Genesis 2:9, 3:19.
- b. Deuteronomy 21:20; Proverbs 23:20-21.

2. Work/Laziness

- a. Genesis 2:15, 3:17-19.
- b. Proverbs 6:6-9; 10:26, 13:4, 15:19, 19:24, et cetera.

3. Relationship with God/Power over God and spirits

- a. Genesis 3:13-15.
- b. Leviticus 19:13, 20:6, 20:27; 1 Samuel 28; 2 Kings 21:6.

4. God/Idolatry

- a. Genesis 3:8-10.
- b. Romans 1:18-24.

5. Marriage/Discord

- a. Genesis 3:16b.
- b. Genesis throughout.
- c. Adultery
- d. Contention: Proverbs 19:13, 21:9, 25:24.
- e. Song of Solomon:

One of the main features of the Song is the persistence of alienation between the man and the woman. This alienation is the result of the judgment announced in Genesis 3:16. The intimacy lost in the fall (judgment) is renewed (salvation), and the beauty of God's intention is celebrated (glory)...

His [the king's] efforts toward the renewal of the intimacy lost at the fall culminate in the bride's statement in 7:10, "I am my beloved's and his desire is for me." The use of this term "desire" in Genesis 3:16 was noted above [the desire in that instance was an aspect of the judgment on sin]. Yahweh cursed

the woman with “desire” for her husband, which meant that she would inappropriately seek to take the initiative in the relationship. The Song sings of the righting of the reversed relationship. Overcoming the judgment of the curse on gender relations, the man and the woman find reconciliation and intimacy.⁶

6. It cannot work. Ecclesiastes 2:1-11.

IV. Counseling Considerations

- A. This is not an exhaustive discussion of sin. Included on the website are additional documents/studies on the doctrine of sin.
- B. D.A. Carson has mentioned that a great difficulty in discussing Christianity in the contemporary culture, particularly on college campuses, is that many people have no category of thought for *sin*. If the word is used at all, it is commonly used to refer to something which we like a lot but probably shouldn't. Candies are *sinfully delicious*. A great pleasure is a *sinful pleasure* et cetera.

This thinking is not absent from the Christian church. The ideas of our culture easily make their way into our personal thinking, because it is very difficult to maintain a consistently biblical frame of reference in light of a world which is constantly screaming a very different worldview.

Incidentally, this is often a fruitful area of investigation in any counseling situation. Since continued habitual sin receives support and protection from non-biblical thinking [the various excuses, rationalizations, expectations which drive continued sin], and since popular culture even Christian culture is often decidedly nonbiblical in its presentation, it is often useful to explore what the counselee reads, watches, listens to, et cetera.

- C. When presented with a counseling situation, it can be useful to think through the issue of sin: whether the counselee's own sin or the sin of some other person against them. Be careful to avoid psychological labels. For example, someone does not have “an inferiority complex”, but they may have “fear of man”.
- D. Notice that sin is very catchy. Sin against a person often results in them sinning in return. Therefore, you have the matter of the damage done by being the recipient of sin and then in turn sinning against someone else (as you will in the attached documents, particularly in the documents “Sin is the Worst of Evils”) it is worse for one to sin than to be sinned against.

APPENDIX: PRIDE

⁶ James Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation Through Judgment*, 307-308.

Be thoroughly convinced of the greatness and sinfulness of this sin.—How that it is a sin of the greatest magnitude, a first-rate sin, greater than theft, intemperance, or uncleanness, or any other fleshly wickedness. It is, indeed, the strength and heart of the old man; it lives in us, when other sins are dead; yea, it will help to kill other sins, that it may boastingly show their heads, and blow the sinner up with a conceit of his own strength and holiness. It is a sin that will take sanctuary in the holiest duties, and hide itself under their skirts; yea, it will pollute our holy things, and turn remedies themselves into diseases. I prefer this direction, and shall be the longer upon it, because when men are convinced of the sinfulness of this sin, that it hath more evil in it than other disgraceful sins, they will then set themselves in good earnest to mortify and subdue it. Then they will put it far away from them, and deal with it as they do with those sins that argue them, in the judgment of all men, to be graceless and ungodly persons. Remember, therefore, what hath been already hinted concerning the odiousness of this sin. It is hateful indeed to men, when it is discerned; but it is most hateful unto God. His nature and his honour both engage him against it; he doth severely punish it, both in this world and in the next. Pride is the forerunner not only of temporal, but of eternal, destruction. (Prov. 16:18.) This one sin, unless it be pardoned and subdued, is sufficient to turn us all into hell; it was the sin and the condemnation of the devil and his angels.

There are two properties in pride which greatly aggravate it, and make it out-of-measure sinful and abominable:—

1. The *antiquity* of it.—It was the first enemy that God ever had. This was the sin of the fallen angels, and also of our first parents; this was the original of original sin. Some have disputed whether pride or unbelief had the precedency in man's fall; ("a question," as one says, "much like that,—whether repentance or faith hath the precedency in his rising;") but all are of opinion that man's pride, if it was not antecedaneous, yet at least it was contemporary with his unbelief; and that pride was the great cause of his apostasy. He proudly affected to be as God, to have known good and evil. (Gen. 3:5.) He fell from what he was, by a proud desire of being what he was not.

2. The *pregnancy* of it.—It is a big-bellied sin; most of the sins that are in the world are the offspring and issue of pride. Let me instance in several other sins that are the genuine spawn of this sin:—

It causeth *covetousness*.—Though covetousness is said to be "the root" of other evils, yet this root itself springs from pride. What is covetousness but the purveyor of pride, and a making provision for the lusts thereof? Why are men greedy of worldly wealth, but for the feeding and maintaining of "the pride of life?" Habakkuk tells us, that "he who is a proud man enlargeth his desire as hell." (Chap. 2:5.)

Again: it causeth *ambition*.—Proud persons have aspiring thoughts, and think themselves the fittest persons to preside in church or state. Haman said, "Whom should the king honour but myself?" (Esther 6:6.) A proud person takes it for an injury if any be preferred before him, though never so deserving; and he bears a secret grudge to any that had a hand in it, though they did it with the greatest sincerity and impartiality. None are friends to proud persons, but those that humour and honour them.

Again: pride causeth *boasting*.—Hence it is that, in two places of scripture, "proud" persons and "boasters" are put together. (Rom. 1:30; 2 Tim. 3:2.) A proud person is ever praising and commending himself; and when he is ashamed to do it by open ostentation, then he doeth it by secret insinuation and circumlocution.

Again: it causeth *scorning*.—Disdain of others comes from men's overvaluing of themselves. Compare two scriptures: you read, James 4:6, how God hath said, that he "resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace unto the humble." Now where hath God said this? You will find it, Prov. 3:34: there it is said, "Surely he scorneth the scorers: but he giveth grace unto the lowly." You see, the same persons that are called

“scorners” in the Old Testament, are called “proud” in the New; so that scorning is the immediate fruit and effect of pride.

Again: it causeth *lying*.—Proud persons are great liars. Most of the lies and falsehoods that are told in the world, are to avoid disgrace and shame, or to purchase applause and esteem.

Again: it causeth *contention*.—The scripture is express in this: “Only by pride cometh contention.” (Prov. 13:10.) Ay, that is the greatest makebate in the world: “He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife:” (Prov. 28:25:) he is a very firebrand in the place where he lives; he is like an unpolished stone, that will never lie even in any building.

Again: pride causeth *unthankfulness*.—Hezekiah’s pride and ingratitude are coupled together in scripture. (Isai. 39.) Proud persons,—instead of prizing, they despise, the mercies of God, and think diminutively of them; they look upon God’s gifts as due debts, and, instead of being thankful for what they have, they are ready to think [that] they have not what they do deserve.

Again: it causeth *selfishness*.—Pride makes men prefer themselves, not only before others, but before God himself. Proud persons idolize themselves, and make self their principal end. They love themselves more than God, and they live to themselves more than to God; they are not so zealous for his honour as for their own. Their estates and parts are more at the command of their pride, than at the command of God.

Again: it causeth *carnal confidence*.—Proud persons are fearless persons; they are so persuaded of their own strength and the goodness of their hearts, that they can walk in the midst of snares, and venture upon temptation, and fear no harm. “The fool rageth,” says Solomon, “and is confident.” (Prov. 14:16.) Pride makes men insensible of their danger, till it be too late.

Again: pride causeth *self-deceit*.—Proud persons “think themselves something, when they are nothing;” and so “deceive themselves.” (Gal. 6:3.) They take gifts for grace, and the common, for the saving, works of the Spirit. Presumption goes with them for faith, and a little sorrow for sin is repentance. They do not distinguish between the form and power of godliness, betwixt a blockish stupidity and true peace of conscience.

Thus I have told you many, but not one half, of the evil effects of pride. Let me proceed a little farther in this discovery.

Pride makes men *ensorious and uncharitable*.—Proud persons are very prone to judge and censure others, especially if they differ from them in opinion; a little matter will make a proud person to count and call such “hypocrites,” or “heretics.” He no sooner espies a mote in their eyes, but he thinks it a beam; he would have others to think the best of him, but he himself will think the worst of others.

Again: it makes men *whisperers and backbiters*.—Such are joined by the apostle Paul with “proud” persons. (Rom. 1:30.) Those who are proud do not only censure others in their hearts, but they reproach and defame them with their tongues: they hope [that], by speaking evil of others, they shall be the better thought-of themselves; they endeavour to build their own praise upon the ruins of others’ reputation.

Again: it makes men *dislikers and haters of reproof*.—Proud persons are ready to find fault with others, but they do not like to hear of their own faults. Solomon says of “a scorner,” (that is, a proud person, as we heard before,) that he doth “not love one that reproveth him;” (Prov. 15:12;) and in another place he says, that he “hates” him. (Prov. 12:1.) Though the reprover was his friend before, yet now he counts him as his

enemy. Herod imprisoned John for telling him of his sin, though, before, he revered him. (Mark 6:17–20.)

Again: pride makes men *heretical*.—One says of pride, that it is “the mother of heretics.”* Simon Magus, that great heresiarch, was a very proud man: the Gnostics, the Manichees, the Eunomians, were all noted for pride; the latter vainly and blasphemously boasted that they knew God as well as he knew himself. Experience teacheth, that if any infection of heresy comes into a place, those that are proud do soonest catch it. “Mark those,” says one, “that are turned anywhere from the way of truth; and see if they were not proud and conceited persons.”

Again: it makes men *separatists and schismatical*.—There are such persons amongst the professing people of God, though all are not such that go by that name. “These be they,” says Jude, “who separate themselves.” (Jude 19.) “They went out from us,” says the apostle John, because “they were not of us.” (1 John 2:19.) Proud, conceited Christians are not contented to come out and separate from the unbelieving, idolatrous world, but they will separate also from the true church of Christ, and cast off all communion with them who hold communion with Him. They will say to those that are holier than themselves, “Stand off; for we are holier than you.” (Isai. 65:5.) O, it is pride that is the chief cause of all churchrents and divisions. We may thank pride for all the factions and fractions that are in the churches of Christ at this very day.

Again: pride makes men *hypocrites*.—It prompts them to put on a vizard and mask of religion, and to be in appearance what they are not in reality. Proud persons “love the praise of men more than the praise of God;” (John 12:43;) and therefore they are more careful to *seem* religious, than to *be* so indeed; they more study to approve their ways to men, than they do their hearts to God.

Again: pride makes men *malicious and wrongful*.—Proud persons are forward to do wrong, but backward to bear or endure it. They expect that others should forgive and bear with them, but they will not forgive or bear with others: they require “an eye for an eye,” and “render evil for evil,” nay, sometimes evil for good. A proud person careth not whom he wrongs or betrays, so he may accomplish his own ends. He makes no bones of falsehood, slander, oppression, or injustice, if he apprehend it necessary to his own honour or ambition.

Again: it makes men *murmurers and complainers*, μεμψιμοιροι.—Proud persons “find fault with their lot,” and are “discontented with their condition.” They think themselves wiser than God himself,—that in some things they could mend what he doeth or hath done. They suppose they could guide God’s hand, and “teach him knowledge;” (Job 21:22;) if they were of his council, they could give him direction for the better governing of the world in general, and for the better ordering of their own conditions and concernments in particular.

Again: pride makes men to *slight the authority and command of God*.—Proud persons do not only oppose their wisdom to God’s wisdom, but their wills, also, to God’s will. They not only disobey, but despise, the commandment of God, and say, (at least in their hearts,) as that proud king, “Who is the Lord, that we should obey his voice?” (Exod. 5:2;) or as those proud ones in Jeremiah, “We are lords, we will come no more unto thee.” (Jer. 2:31.) The prophet calling the Israelites to “hear and give ear,” he immediately subjoins, “Be not proud;” and by-and-by he adds, “If ye will not hear, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride.” (Jer. 13:15, 17.)

* *Hæreticorum mater superbia*.—AUGUSTINUS.

Again: it maketh persons to *establish their own righteousness, and to set that up in the room of Christ's righteousness*.—Proud persons will “not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God;” so it is expressed in the epistle to the Romans. (Chap. 10:3.) God hath provided a righteousness for sinners of the children of men, such as is every way sufficient to justify and save them; and that is the righteousness of his Son. What he did and suffered, may by faith be imputed and made over to them, as if they themselves had done and suffered it; so that, “as by the disobedience of” Adam they “were made sinners, by the obedience of” Christ they might “be made righteous;” (Rom. 5:19;) and as Christ was “made sin for” them, so they may “be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Cor. 5:21.) But such is the pride of man’s heart, that he will not submit to this way of justification and salvation; he will not be beholden to another for that which he thinks he hath in himself; he will not go abroad for that which he thinks he hath at home. A proud sinner sees no need of a Saviour, and thinks he can do well enough without him. Thus I have set before you two decades of the evil effects of pride; I might have given you as many more. May all serve to show you the sinfulness of this sin!⁷

⁷ “What must we do to prevent and cure spiritual pride” by Rev. Richard Mayo, A.M, in James Nichols, *Puritan Sermons*, vol. 3 (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts, Publishers, 1981), 382–387.