

THE WITNESSES AGAINST SIN:

I. GOD HIMSELF BEARS WITNESS AGAINST SIN

- A. All the laws and every command of God are his witnesses against sin.
1. Read 1 John 2:1:
 - a. What is the purpose given by John for writing this letter?
 - b. Compare 1 John 2:1 with 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Can you make a determination as to one of the fundamental purposes of Scripture?
 2. Would God forbid something which would be good for a human being?
 3. Draw some conclusions pertaining to the purpose of the Law of God.
- B. God will not allow us to do evil that good may come
1. Read Romans 3:8 & 6:1-4
 - a. What does God prohibit?
 - b. What false conclusion have some people drawn from God's grace?
 - c. What is the true state of affairs – what is the purpose of God's grace? Titus 2
 2. Consider the argument of Satan as “doing evil that good might come.” Gen. 3:1-6.
 3. *We may not do evil that good may come to ourselves. To gain the world and lose a man's soul has more of loss in it than of gain; and there is not a single sin which does not wrong and hazard the loss of a man's soul. God would not allow Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden tree, even though it was good for food, pleasant to the eye and to be desired to make one wise (Genesis 3). (RV)*
 - a. Give an example of this argument in practice: For example, If I lie on my tax return, I'll have more money.
 4. We may not do evil that good may come to others.
 - a. Give an example of this argument in practice: For example, If I lie

on my tax return, I'll have more money to give to the orphanage.

5. *God will not allow us to sin even though we should professedly do it for his glory. Sin can never directly glorify God, and though he knows how to bring good out of evil, yet he does not wish that we should sin for him. He does not need us, much less our sin. (RV)*
 - a. Read Rom. 3:1-8.
 - b. Read 1 Samuel 15: How did Saul sin as pretense to give glory to God?

- C. *God witnesses against sin by threatening man: In case men sin he makes penal statutes against sin. If thou eatest the forbidden fruit thou shalt surely die. If sin were not an abominable thing, surely God would not have forbidden it on such peril, on pain of death. More will be said of this when we consider the execution of these threatenings and the just judgment of God on sinners. (RV)*

- D. God is angry with the wicked
 1. Find a verse which says, "God hates the sin and loves the sinner."
 2. Read Psalm 7:11: What does God hate?
 3. Read Psalm 95: What did God do in response to sin?
 4. Read Psalm 2: How does God respond to sin?

- E. Read Genesis 6:5-6, 1 Samuel 15, Jeremiah 18:7-10:
 1. What did God do in each of these passages?
 2. Why?

- F. *God witnesses against sin by many great and severe judgments: Since damnation is such a dreadful thing, no less than the pouring out of God's wrath for ever on sinners, we must conclude that sin is extremely displeasing to God because it is contrary to him. That can be no little matter for which God brings on men such grave damnation. The next judgment to this consists in being left alone or given up to a reprobate judgment and a hardened heart. But that, though a present judgment, is invisible, and eternal damnation is future and so I shall not further speak of them, but will show that God has visibly judged this world for sin from age to age. (RV)*

1. What does the Bible say will happen to those who sin without repentance? (Provide reference).
 2. What does the Bible say will happen to believers who sin? (Provide reference.)
 3. How did God respond to God's own Son when he became "sin"? (2 Cor. 5.15)
- G. Why did God send his Son into the world? Rom. 8.3, 1 John 3.8.
1. Read Isaiah 53: Why did the Son suffer?
 2. Read Romans 4.25: Why did the Son suffer?
 3. Read 1 Peter 2.24: Why did the Son suffer?
 4. What connection does your sin have to the Son's suffering?
 5. What is the price which was paid for us? 1 Cor. 6.20, Acts 20.28.
- H. *The greatness of Christ's sufferings is a full witness against the sinfulness of sin. What an odious thing sin must be to God! He will pardon none without blood (Hebrews 9.22). God would accept no blood but the blood of his Son; not that of bulls and goats (Hebrews 9.13), but that of his Son (1 Peter 1.18,19). God would not abate one drop of his blood, but he must pour out his life. His very heart-blood must be spilt and spent for sinners. And, wonder of wonders, all this was a pleasure to God, for it pleased the Lord to bruise him. That it should please the Lord to bruise the Son in whom he was well pleased is to us men an inconceivable mystery. Thus God has borne great witness against sin in that he sent his Son to die for sinners.*

What a hell of wickedness that must be which none but God can expiate and purge! God does not do it except by taking human nature. The God-man could not do it without suffering. No suffering will serve but death. And no death but an accursed one. What an evil odious evil is sin that must have blood, the blood of God, to take it away! (RV)¹

¹ A separate study for a counselee could very well be a detailed look at the degree of suffering underwent by Christ on behalf of our sin. Any person who cannot be broken for sin when they think of the suffering of Christ gives no evidence of being a believer: How can the head suffer and the body not feel the pain?

So we conclude the witness of God against sin².

II. THE WITNESS OF MEN

A. The witness of godly men.

1. Read Genesis 18.19: What was Abraham instructed to do with respect to the issue of sin?
2. What did Samuel do with Israel? 1 Sam. 12.20-25.
3. What did David promise to teach? Ps. 34.11, 51.13.
4. What was Paul's instruction? 1 Thess. 2.11-12.
5. What was Peter's instruction? 1 Peter 2.11.
6. What was John's instruction? 1 John 2.1.
7. How are God's people instructed to deal with the issue of sin? Lev. 19.17.
8. For what purpose was the Scripture given? 2 Tim. 3.16-17.
9. What did Paul do when Peter sinned? Gal. 2.11.
10. What are we instructed to do with those who persist in sin? 2 Cor. 6.14, Matt. 18.17.
11. When we other's sin, how are we to respond? Ps. 119.136, Phil. 3.18; Acts. 7.60; Ex. 32.30-32.

B. The witness of godly men against their own sin.

1. Psalm 19.14: What does David seek?
2. Genesis 39.7-9:
 - a. Did Joseph had a chance to sin secretly?
 - b. Did he?
 - c. Why not?

² Venning includes a substantial study concerning the angelic witness against sin. That has been omitted from this study, but can be found in the book, *The Sinfulness of Sin*.

3. Read Hebrews 11.24-28
 - a. What could Moses have had?
 - b. What did he choose?
 - c. Why?
 4. Read Daniel 3:
 - a. What was the command to the three?
 - b. What did they do?
 - c. Why?
 5. Read Daniel 6:
 - a. What was the command to Daniel?
 - b. What did he do?
 - c. Why?
 6. What was their motivation to not sin?
 7. What was strikingly not their motivation to avoid sin?
 8. What were each of these men willing to do? What were they unwilling to do? Why? RV:
 - a. *They would not accept deliverance on ignoble terms but would rather die holily than live sinfully. These all declare that it is better to suffer to avoid sinning, than to sin to avoid suffering.*
- C. Will a believer sin – even though there is forgiveness and God’s forgiveness glories God’s grace? Rom. 6.1-2.
1. What should be the effect of the grace of God upon the conduct of sin? Rom. 6.2, 1 Cor. 5.15, Tit. 2.11-12.
- D. The godly take care and use means to prevent sin.

1. What sort of thing can be done to prevent falling to sin? Ps. 119.11, 133, 161; Job 31.1; Ps. 39.1.
2. Thomas Brooks: *First, Keep at the greatest distance from sin, and from playing with the golden bait which Satan holds forth to catch you; for this you have (Romans 12:9), "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good." When we meet with anything extremely evil and contrary to us, nature abhors it, and retires as far as it can from it. The Greek word that is there rendered "abhor," is very significant; it signifies to hate it as hell itself, to hate it with horror.*

Anselm used to say, "That if he should see the shame of sin on the one hand, and the pains of hell on the other, and must of necessity choose one; he would rather be thrust into hell without sin; than to go into heaven with sin," so great was his hatred and detestation of sin. It is our wisest and our safest course to stand at the farthest distance from sin; not to go near the house of the harlot—but to fly from all appearance of evil (Proverbs 5:8, 1 Thess. 5:22). The best course to prevent falling into the pit is to keep at the greatest distance from it; he who will be so bold as to attempt to dance upon the brink of the pit, may find by woeful experience that it is a righteous thing with God that he should fall into the pit. Joseph keeps at a distance from sin, and from playing with Satan's golden baits, and stands. David draws near, and plays with the bait, and falls, and swallows bait and hook! David comes near the snare, and is taken in it, to the breaking of his bones, the wounding of his conscience, and the loss of fellowship with his God.

Sin is a plague, yes, the worst and most infectious plague in the world; and yet, ah! how few are there who tremble at it--who keep at a distance from it! (1 Cor. 5:6)—"Don't you know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?" As soon as one sin had seized upon Adam's heart, all sin entered into his soul and infested it. How has Adam's one sin spread over all mankind! (Romans 5:12)—"Therefore 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." Ah, how does the father's sin infect the child, the husband's infect the wife, the master's the servant! The sin that is in one man's heart is able to infect a whole world, it is of such a spreading and infectious nature.

The story of the Italian, who first made his enemy deny God, and then stabbed him, and so at once murdered both body and soul, declares the unmingled malignity of sin; and oh! that what has been spoken upon this head may prevail with you, to stand at a distance from sin!

- E. Even ungodly men admit that sin is loathsome. Explain how this is so.

IV. THE WHOLE CREATION WITNESSES AGAINST SIN

It witnesses that sin has deprived it of its privilege, so that it is not now as when it came out of God's hand and was made by him. When God looked on all that he had made, behold it was very good (Genesis 1.31). But how are things altered since sin came into the world! The angels he has charged with folly (Job 4.18). The heavens are not clean in his sight (Job 15.15). Man in his best estate is altogether vanity (Psalm 39.5). The earth is under a curse (Genesis 3.17,18). Indeed the whole creation groans (Romans 8.21,22). By the whole creation the learned Grotius understands the whole universe, as do many others. The apostle had three times spoken of the creature (verses 19,20,21) and yet now speaks more fully in verse 22: the whole creation, or every creature, is subject to vanity and under the bondage of corruption, which makes it groan and puts it to pain as a woman in travail. It is as if it cried out, O sinful sin! I was freeborn and though under dominion, yet not under bondage. Once I served man freely but now from fear (Genesis 9.2). Every creature which is under the power of man may say to him, I did nothing of myself to make me liable to bondage, but being your goods and chattels, I suffer a part of the penalty of your treason. If you had not sinned, I would not have suffered. But now I groan and wait to be delivered from the bondage of your corruption. O sinful sin! (RV)

V. THE LAW WITNESSES AGAINST AND CONDEMNS SIN

- A. What as the purpose of the law? Rom. 7.10 & 12.
- B. What does the sin do with the law? Rom. 7.7-13.
- C. What compels my conduct? Rom. 7.7.-19.
- D. What is the sting of sin? 1 Cor. 15.56.
- E. What is the power of sin? 1 Cor. 15.56.
- F. What is the effect of not obeying the law? Gal. 3.10.
- G. Additional considerations:
1. The law will not pardon the least sin. It allows us no favour.
 2. The law cannot justify any man.
 3. The law makes sin abound and aggravates it greatly.

4. *The law has become as a schoolmaster to us (Galatians 3.24). We would scarcely ever have looked at Christ had not the law whipped and lashed us like a severe school-master. For this, not to exclude other meanings, is as I conceive it, chiefly the meaning of this text. The law kept us in awe and bondage by its severity until Christ came. Compare this text with Galatians 4.1-3): 'The heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant but is under tutors and governors... so we were in bondage.' To be under tutors is the same as to be under a school-master and that is to be in a condition of bondage. Many go to school with an ill will, for they go to the rod, the whip, to bondage, to fear and torment. The law does nothing but frown upon us, gives us hard tasks and lashes us for not doing them, till Christ comes or until we come to Christ, just as the Egyptians did to the Israelites (Exodus 5.14). The law is the state of bondage and fear; the very children are all subject to bondage through fear of death (Hebrews 2.14-15).*

This shows the sinfulness of sin, that it made the law such a dread and terror to us. For so it is to all till Christ come, who is the end of the law for righteousness (Romans 10.4). He takes away the terrors of the school-master by taking us into the University of a higher and better state, that of believing on him for righteousness. By this we come to have a spirit, not of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind, as St. Paul says (2 Timothy 1.7). (RV)

5. The law silences man from making any complaint, however great the judgment of God upon him.
6. The law leaves a man without hope.

VI. THE GOSPEL ALSO BEARS WITNESS AGAINST SIN

Truly it is the greatest and purest testimony against sin. Though sinners find favour from the Gospel, sin finds none. The Gospel is not in the least indulgent to the least sin. The whole voice of the Gospel is, 'These things are written that ye sin not'. The Gospel is the declaration of the life and death, the design and doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was and is wholly against sin. The design of Christ was indeed to save sinners (1 Timothy 1.15) but to destroy sin (Romans 8.3; 1 John 3.5,8). He came to save his people from their sins; not from the petty and contemptible evils of reproaches and afflictions, but from the great and formidable evil of sin; from the guilt for time past, and from the power for time to come. He came to redeem us from all iniquity (Titus 2.14). And this is the blessing with which he blesses us: to turn us every one away from every one of our iniquities (Acts 3.26). Thus whoever names and calls upon the name of the Lord, that is, makes a profession of being a Christian, is thereby obliged to depart from iniquity (2 Timothy 2.19). How the life and death of our holy and blessed Saviour witnessed against

sin I showed before. I shall now deal with the doctrine of the Gospel which so fully comports with and is adequately fitted to his aim and design, which is the taking away of sin.

B. Consider:

1. How does the doctrine of repentance testify that sin is a detestable thing?
2. How does the doctrine of faith testify against sin?
3. How does the doctrine of penal substitutionary atonement [if you don't know what this phrase means, find out] testify against sin?
4. How does the doctrine of the last judgment testify against sin?
5. What is the summary of the preaching of Jesus? Mark 1.15. How does this testify against sin?
6. What is the promise of the Gospel in this life? How does this testify against sin?

VII. THE WITNESS OF SIN ITSELF

A. Sin's names. These it cannot deny, but confesses that they belong to it. I shall give only two examples:

1. It is called the work of the Devil (1 John 3.5,8).
 - a. To sin and to live in sin is to do as the Devil does.
 - b. He who sins works for the Devil. . . . Though sinners defy the Devil in words, yet they deify him in works, and at last he will devil-ize them and bring them into the same nature and misery as himself. Sinners are led by him at his will: they are like his dogs on the end of a string.
 - c. He who sins is a devil.

Excursus: Let me here take the opportunity to show you some sins which are especially said to be the Devil's sin. They who do them are of the Devil, work for him, are like him, and are called devils:

- a. Murder, especially soul-murder.
 - b. Lying is the second sin that calls the Devil father, and marks out those who do it as his children.
 - c. Deceivers and seducers are of the Devil.
 - d. Tempting man to sin.
 - e. False accusing. Slandering, evil speaking and back-biting others is of the Devil and like him.
 - f. Hindering others from believing and closing with the truth of the Gospel.
2. Sin is all filthiness of flesh and spirit (2 Corinthians 7.1). This denotes its loathsomeness and its infectiousness.
- a. Read 2 Timothy 2.17, Prov. 14.30, 1 Kings 8.38-39, 2 Peter 2.22, Matt. 23.27-28, Rom. 3.13.
 - b. Sin is a polluting and infectious thing. Since sin is of a pestilential and poisonous nature, it has caused not only corruption, but pollution and defilement (2 Peter 2.20). Many things may make a man foul and loathsome, such as leprosy and ulcerous tumours, and yet the soul of a man may be still pure and fair, as Job's was when his body was all over a scab or sore, and he sat on the dunghill. But as we suggested before, sin defiles the man, and soaks into his very spirit and infects that.
 - i. List ways in which sin spreads (in ourselves and others – both while we live and after).
 - c. If sin is a disease, then how is it cured?
- B. Thus we have seen the names of sin and how they witness against it. There remains only a second aspect--the witness of sin against itself, namely,
- 1. The arts that sin uses to disguise itself. If sin were not an ugly thing, would it wear a mask? If it did not have evil designs, would it walk in disguise and change its name?

- a. Sometimes sin persuades us that such and such a thing is not a sin, though it looks like a sin.
- b. Sin would persuade that what may be sin in another cannot be sin in you, all things considered, because you are necessitated. For example, a poor man is forced to steal. But no man is necessitated to sin, even though under necessity; sin is sin in any or in all. Though temptations may mitigate and excuse somewhat, yet they cannot excuse totally from its being a sin, and they cannot un-sin sin.
- c. It is one sin only, and this only once, says Sin. But if sin is good, why only once, and if evil, why once?
- d. It is only a little one, says Sin. But that which is against a great God and deserves so great a punishment as death cannot be a little sin; for the wages of sin and of every single sin is death (Romans 6.23).
- e. It is in secret and no-one will see it, says Sin. But this is a cheat, for it is impossible to sin so secretly but there will be at least two witnesses. God and conscience know all the sins that man can commit.
- f. Yes, but you will hate it and dread it ever after, says Sin.
- g. But I promise you that you shall gain by it, says Sin.
- h. But others do it, says Sin, and why may not you?
- i. But you have only to repent, says Sin, and God will forgive you.
- j. Yes, but you have escaped well enough hitherto, says Sin. No evil has befallen you.
- k. It is only your infirmity, says Sin. You cannot help it.
- l. Now if these and other arguments do not succeed, then Sin speaks more openly. It says, there is no such thing as sin. There is no difference between good and evil. As all things come alike to all, so all things are alike. And also, says Sin, evil is good in God's sight, or he would judge it (Malachi 2.17); his silence makes you think that he is such an one as yourself (Psalm 50.21).

Conclusion: 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. And if we were to say that it is worse than death and the Devil, the very Hell of Hell, this would not be to rail at it, but tell it only the truth about itself. Sin is the quintessence of evil; it has made all the evils that there are and is itself worse than all the evils it has made. It is so evil that it is impossible to make it good or lovely by all the arts than can be used. A poison may be corrected and made medicinal, even if it is not nourishing. But sin is sin, and can be nothing else; its nature cannot be changed, not even by a pardon. It is not only ugly but ugliness, not only filthy but filthiness, not only abominable but abomination. There is not a worse thing in Hell itself; it has not its fellow there.