

# Have You Considered The Consequences Of Sin?

By [Wayne Jackson](#)

The theme of “sin” dominates the Bible. There are at least eight different terms in the Hebrew Old Testament reflecting some aspect of sin, e.g., “bad,” “wickedness,” “iniquity,” etc. Some thirteen different words in the New Testament similarly depict various shades of sin, e.g., “evil,” “unrighteousness,” “transgression,” etc. (cf. Pfeiffer, 2003, 1594-95).

Sin has left a deadly legacy upon our earth and its inhabitants as we subsequently shall demonstrate. It must be noted initially, however, that “sin” does not exist in a vacuum. Satan was the initial sinner (1 John 3:8; cf. John 8:44), and he seduced our original parents (Genesis 3:6-8). A corruption of the planet earth followed—first with the Edenic curse (3:16-19), later with the devastating Flood of Noah’s day (Genesis 6-8). Additionally, death became the common plague of all biological life (Genesis 2:17; Romans 5:12; 6:23). Because of human rebellion, the entire “creation” was subjected to the “bondage of corruption” (Romans 8:20-21).

Let us consider some of the major categories in which the monstrous “sin” problem has demonstrated its devastating effects.

## Global Consequences

As noted above there was an initial effect of sin that afflicted the newly created earth (e.g., thorns and thistles). It is scarcely realized, however, what a cataclysmic effect the Flood of Noah’s day had upon our planet. Subterranean “fountains” yielded vast and violent explosions of water. Combined therewith was an outpouring deluge from the “windows of heaven” (Genesis 7:11). Megatons of violent upthrusts of water and debris came from the bowels of the earth. Rain descended in unimaginable torrents for forty days and nights.

The composition of the ancient earth was radically affected. Global and continental temperature zones were altered, and varying pressure systems created an environment that facilitated hurricanes and tornados. Land mass arrangements became unsettled and earthquakes followed in their wake. The violent features of today’s earth have their ultimate origins in the catastrophic events of Genesis 6-8.

There is ample geologic and archaeological evidence of an ancient earth significantly different from today’s planet. Geologists testify to the early uniform climate of the earth as revealed by the fossil record—of both plants and animals (Rehwinkel, 1951, 1-54). Even skeptics concede that at a point in the ancient past the earth had a “mild and constant climate” and “the elements of that world were in perfect balance” (Jastrow, 1977, 69).

Archaeological records from ancient Sumer (the oldest known civilization) speak of a land of the ancient past that was “pure,” “clean,” and “bright” — a “land of the living” in which there was “neither sickness nor death” (Kramer, 1959, 144).

Though the geophysical catastrophes that frequently ravage our globe today cannot be attributed unequivocally to the direct action of God, they can be traced ultimately to human rebellion, and the *permissive* will of the Creator.

## National Consequences

History is a record of the rise and fall of nations. There is a moral standard the Creator expects of nations (Proverbs 14:34), and when wickedness prevails sufficiently, the Lord God can remove kings (Daniel 2:21), and overthrow empires (Psalm 22:28; Dan. 4:17).

The ancient Assyrians were subjugated by the Babylonians. The Babylonians fell to the Medes and Persians. The Medo-Persian empire was conquered by the Greeks. The Greeks were overtaken by the Romans. Each of these nations was characterized by accelerating wickedness, and God held them accountable for such (cf. Genesis 15:16; Daniel 8:23).

Read the book of Jeremiah, chapters 46-51, and note the various nations that fell victim to divine justice; likewise, observe the sin indictments with which they were charged, and the reasons precipitating their fall. When a nation becomes corrupt and decays, even the innocent can suffer. There are “national judgments”!

When Jehovah determined it was time to deal with arrogant and wicked Babylon, he declared: “Therefore evil shall come upon you; you will not know the dawning thereof: and mischief shall fall upon you; you will not be able to put it away: and desolation shall come upon you suddenly, which you know not” (Isaiah 47:11). Note the term “evil”; it finds its parallel in “desolation.” God, being absolutely holy, is never the *source* of “evil.” He does inflict righteous punishment, however, when such is needed to deal with wickedness. In this text, “evil” is an example of the figure of speech known as metonymy—the cause (evil) being put for the effect (the punishment); cf. 45:7 where “evil” is contrasted with “peace.”

## Physical Consequences

Death, and all of its preliminary problems, are the consequences of human disobedience to the Creator. In the garden of Eden, the Lord warned Adam that “the day” he ate of the forbidden fruit he would “die.” “Death” is used in several senses in the Bible, yet it always implies some type of “separation.” When the original couple ate of that “fruit” they immediately were separated from their Creator in a spiritual sense. When they were banished from Eden and the “tree of life,” they were subjected to a process of degeneration which eventually would culminate in physical death (Genesis 3:22-24; 5:5), the separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26).

Every disease common to humanity is the result of our remote ancestors’ rebellion against God (Romans 5:12). “Death” is viewed as our “enemy” (1 Corinthians 15:26). When sickness and death stalk us, we must be reminded of the heinous nature of evil and strive to avoid such at all cost. Man born of woman is but of few days and full of trouble (Job 14:1).

Jesus once encountered a woman who was afflicted terribly with a condition that had left her “bent over” and unable to straighten herself. The Lord attributed her affliction to Satan (Luke 13:11, 16). It was not that Satan himself had targeted this lady, and overpowered her with the malady. The devil has no intrinsic power to personally assault a person with disease. This is clear from the case of Job (Job 1:12; 2:6). Rather, because Satan is the ultimate tempter of humankind (cf. Matthew 4:3), there is a sense in which all the damage resulting from his initial malevolence is *attributed* to him. Jesus charges him with being the murderer of the whole human family (John 8:44). Tragically though, it was human “choice” that facilitated the crime!

## Mental Consequences

Unless one is so hardened that his conscience can no longer feel guilt—a potential possibility (cf. John 12:37ff; Ephesians 4:19; 1 Timothy 4:2)—the consciousness of sin will trouble the sensitive soul. It is the sorrow of guilt that leads one to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). It is a reality beyond dispute that many of the maladies characterized today as “mental illness” are the result of consciences laboring under the burden of guilt. Dr. S. I. McMillen declared that “medical science recognizes that emotions such as fear, sorrow, envy, resentment and hatred are responsible for the majority of our sicknesses. Estimates vary from 60 percent to nearly 100 percent” (1963, 7).

The only real solution to “guilt” is forgiveness. (1) Forgiveness is obtainable only through the atoning death of Jesus Christ who sacrificed himself to pay the sin price (Romans 3:21-30). (2) The genuine relief from the burden of sin is accessed only through obedience to the gospel plan of salvation (Romans 6:3-4, 17-18).

Though one intellectually knows when he has received pardon, based upon the testimony of sacred scripture, the “guilt” associated with his sin may linger on, even after the reality of pardon. Note the following cases:

(1) David sinned in an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, and attempted to cover his iniquity with the murder of her husband (2 Samuel 11:1ff). He was rebuked by the prophet Nathan. In deep contrition he acknowledged: “I have sinned against Jehovah.” Subsequently he was informed that the Lord had “put away” his sin (2 Samuel 12:13). Nonetheless, in connection with these sins he would lament: “...I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me” (Psalm 51:3). It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to totally erase the memories of one’s past sins from the mind.

(2) Saul of Tarsus was a bitter enemy of the Christian Way. He persecuted Christians “beyond measure,” and “made havoc” of God’s church (Galatians 1:13). Though he received pardon when he obeyed the commands of the gospel (Acts 22:16), he still labored under the memories of his bloody days as an enemy of the Savior (cf. Ephesians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 15:9; 1 Timothy 1:15b). Do we imagine that Paul never grieved over those whom he threatened with death if they did not renounce the faith? And what of those who *did*—and died *lost*?

## Societal Consequences

There are numerous lingering consequences of sin, both collective and individual, that plague the human family. For example, the refusal of the descendants of Noah to “replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28), and their insistence that they would remain in the land of Shinar, and not be “scattered” (Genesis 11:1-4), caused Jehovah to “confound their language” and scatter them abroad (vv. 7-8). As a result of language isolationism and genetic pool developments, various “races” ultimately sprang up. The sad history of racial rivalry and hostility within the human family is too well known to need documentation. It is a lingering effect of humanity’s disobedience.

For a society to exist there must be laws. A society without law will cannibalize itself. Violation of laws must be adjudicated (Ecclesiastes 8:11). Murderers may be executed, lengthy prison terms are imposed, and fines have to be levied. The fact that one may submit to the Lord’s plan for pardon does not nullify the consequence of lawbreaking. Some criminals have obeyed the gospel of Christ on “death row,” yet, as pardoned sinners, had to forfeit their lives to satisfy justice. One who has embezzled funds from his employer may find pardon through the Son of God, but he may have to do “hard time” and make whatever restitution is possible.

Some former prisoners have a difficult time appreciating the fact that even though their earlier crimes have been pardoned through gospel obedience, yet faithful Christians may have some resistance to full association with them under all circumstances. Jeffrey Dahmer was a sexual predator, a murderer (of at least seventeen youths), and a cannibalizer. In his post-trial imprisonment, he studied the New Testament, repented of his sins, and obeyed the gospel of Christ to obtain pardon for his atrocities. Suppose, however, he later had been paroled and identified with a local congregation? Would it have been prudent to appoint him as a teacher of teen boys, or as a chaperone for youth trips? Would some caution and restriction of his activities have been “unforgiving”? There are lasting consequences to one’s conduct.

## Spiritual Consequences

The prophet Isaiah declared: “Behold, Jehovah’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear” (59:1-2).

No human being on earth can appreciate the horror of being separated from the holy God who created the universe and offered up his Son to atone for sin. The plight of the ancient Gentiles, who were “without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12), was dire indeed. Their sordid condition, in part at least, is chronicled in Ephesians 4:17-19, as well as in Romans 1:18-32. Edersheim commented that “the idea of conscience, as we understand it, was unknown to heathenism” (1947, 1.259).

There are millions in the world, many of them “religious” in *their own* way (and *that’s* the problem) who haven’t the slightest idea they are “lost.” Similarly far too many, even in “the church,” have no consciousness of the gravity of sin and the reality that they may be lost. A life that is void of a relationship with God is one that is dismal indeed. Away from the benefits of redemption, estranged from the solace of communicating with God, and from the confidence of being with the Lord at the moment of death—how can such be endured? How utterly foolhardy is the one who disdains, or ignores, fellowship with the loving Father, his holy Son, and the sacred Spirit!

## Eternal Consequences

If an estranged relationship with God in this life is a mental burden too horrible to contemplate, how much more anguishing is the reality of an eternal separation from the sacred Godhead, the holy angels, and the redeemed of the ages? Christ’s warnings, “depart from me” (Matthew 7:23; 25:41), carry with them a horrifying threat scarcely appreciated from our current vantage point. The fact is, *eternal separation is hell!*

Those who have suffered righteously will be rewarded “relief ... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will *suffer the punishment* of eternal destruction, *away from the presence of the Lord* and from the glory of his might...” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

During this present era, called “time,” sandwiched between two “eternities,” even the wickedest are wonderfully blessed beyond their dulled sense of appreciation. They are privy to divinely provided sunshine and rain (Matthew 7:45), and “fruitful seasons” (Acts 14:17). God provides people everywhere with “life and breath” and a host of providential gifts (Acts 17:25). We live in bodies that have been “fearfully and wonderfully” made (Psalm 139:14), and in a universe that is “supported” and “held together” by divine power (Colossians 1:17 ASVfn; Hebrews 1:3).

It is impossible to fathom an environment without the beneficent presence of deity. Professor Edmond Hiebert noted:

“This banishment from the presence of ‘the Lord,’ the glorified Jesus, will be the very essence of eternal punishment. The result will be a ‘negative vacuum’ for them, depriving them of the Lord’s favor and all which gives meaning and blessedness to life” (1971, 292). The opposite side of that equation is—wrath, indignation, affliction, punishment, death, and destruction—though not annihilation (cf. Romans 1:18; 2:5-9; 6:21; Philippians 3:19; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Revelation 14:10-11).

## Conclusion

Sin is a cruel taskmaster. It robs one of much and provides him with nothing. Thomas DeWitt Talmage once wrote:

“No man becomes evil at once; but suggestion brings on indulgences; indulgence, delight; delight, consent; consent, endeavor; endeavor, practice; practice, custom; custom, excuse; excuse, defense; defense, obstinacy; obstinacy, boasting; boasting, a seared conscience and a reprobate mind” (Edwards, 1901, 527).

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