***Christian Indebtedness, No.1  
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Please open your Bibles to the book of Romans, once more, chapter 8, as we begin a new section this morning looking at verses 12-13. Our subject is "The Christian's Indebtedness."

**The Enslavement of the Sin Nature**

As you are well-aware of the news from all the media continues to be filled with the steady stream of human immorality, human brutality, greed, and deceit. The sin nature in American society is obviously on a rampage, victimizing people from children to the elderly. As Biblical morality has been abandoned in American society, the sin nature has become increasingly bolder and more loathsome in its expressions. That is the problem when a society begins to say, "You don't have to legislate the moral principles of the Bible upon society." When that happens, then people break loose from the one restraining constraint upon that sin nature, whether they are believers or unbelievers, and they go berserk.

And that's happening in society today. As we have thought to be more broad-minded and more compromising with the moral principles of the Word of God, we've opened ourselves up to this kind of turmoil so that people are afraid to walk in the streets. People are afraid to be alone. People are fearful in conditions that they would have never thought about being fearful in the past. However, to see the ugliness in the sin nature in unbelievers is not unexpected because he, as an unbeliever, is the helpless victim and the helpless slave of his sin nature. But to see that ugliness pouring out of a Christian is tragic beyond words, and I can assure you Heaven weeps when the angels see that in us.

Romans 8 has proclaimed to us that not only is the born again person forever saved but also forever freed from the enslavement to the sin nature. So, the ugliness of the sin nature does not have to control a Christian and pour out of his life. The enormity of the consequences, both temporal and eternal, to a Christian who lives by means of the urgings of his sin nature are unfortunately not appreciated by most Christians, and the consequences are very great. Some Christians exude the fresh, invigorating quality of life in the Holy Spirit, while other Christians exude the stench of death in life under the sin nature. The battle between these two dominating forces is unending and it is daily, and it is what Romans 8 is all about. The price of spiritual freedom and divine good production is eternal vigilance on the part of the believer to know the Word of God and to apply it by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Christian who is guided by the Spirit of God is the refreshing person who has his eyes on priorities that have eternal consequences.

When I was a teenager, there was a verse of the song. I've long since forgotten the melody, but the song impressed me as such a summary of the objective of a Christian life. It went like this: "Give me a faithful heart, likeness to thee, that each departing day henceforth may see some work of love be done, some deed of kindness done, some wonder sought and won, something for thee." This would be a good poetic expression to put into a plaque that could be reproduced, and we could hang in our homes. It so aptly expresses the beauty of the Christian who is on top of his sin nature in contrast to the ugliness and the foolishness and the disorientation of the one who is not.

**The Christian's Indebtedness**

In Romans chapter 8:12, we read, "Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." The word "therefore" is actually two words in the Greek language. It's "ara oun." "Ara oun" is an expression that Paul likes to use when he is going to introduce something that you should particularly pay attention - a conclusion. And we translate this as "so then." This term introduces a consequence, a conclusion, in terms of what has been stated the previous part of Romans 8. From verses 1-11, he has been making some very important statements.

Now on the basis of what he has said on that context, he is making a dramatic conclusion, a summary point. The context indicates that the indwelling Holy Spirit has freed the Christian from the absolute authority of the sin nature. There is in the believer a new master in the person of the Holy Spirit. That being true, Paul says, "Consequently, here is what we must conclude." These words are actually introducing an exhortation to all Christians relative to our daily lives - very practical material. And to make it clear that he is not talking to that outside, unbelieving world, but he is talking to church Christian people. He uses the word "brethren." The Greek word looks like this: "adelphos." The word for "brother." Here, it is referring to those that are in the body of Christ, the church, so clearly he is speaking to Christians at this point.

So to the Christian brethren, he says, "We are something." Our word "eimi." This word expresses the status quo of the Christian in the present tense here because it is something that is always true of a Christian. The Greek present tense tells us that this is something that is continual. It is in the active voice, which means that it applies to each of personally; this is something true about each believer. It's indicative in this mood which means it's a statement of a fact. What is continually true of every believer is concerning a matter of debtedness. He says, "We are debtors." "Atheiletes." "Atheiletes" refers to one who owes something to another. It connotes an obligation. So here, he says, "So then, on the basis of what we have said in the first eleven verses of this chapter, relative to our freedom from the sin nature's control and being under the control of a new master, God the Holy Spirit, you who are fellow Christians, there is something that is true about it: We have an obligation. We are debtors.

And then, he tell us what we are debtors not to. He uses that strong negative "ou." We are debtors NOT to the flesh. The word "flesh" is the Greek word "sarx." This is the word we have had several times here in the book of Romans, and it refers to the sin nature in man. It is the inherent propensity for the evil indulgence of sensual desires in the spirit of self-centeredness. Once the human soul was struck by the sin of Adam, it reproduced in all of his posterity, efficiency of the sin nature which expresses itself as me doing my own thing, self-centeredness. "I'm in, I know what is the thing to do." The Bible says "There is a way unto to man that seemeth right, the ends thereof are the ways of death." [Proverbs 14:12] That self-centeredness, self-confidence, even when we're on the road to death with it. And the expression from then on of human beings was the grossest indulgence of animal sensuality. Now that's what we mean by the sin nature, and that's how it expresses itself.

And the Apostle Paul says we Christian brothers are not under obligation to the sin nature to live "zao." That is our daily conduct that is in view here. That we in our daily conduct are not obliged to live, and this is again, present tense - our continual style in our daily conduct. Active - our personal choices. And this time, it's what we call in mood the infinitive which indicates purpose. It is not the divine purpose that in our daily life as Christians we should live after. And the word "after" is the Greek word "kata," which, a preposition, means "according to." And it connotes here "in subjection to under the enslavement, and again he uses the word for the sin nature, our "sarx." Our flesh.

However, this time, he does not say "the flesh." In the Greek language, that's important, because that tell us that the thing he is stressing is not the sin nature, per se, but the quality that characterizes the sin nature which is the quality of evil. So that he stresses that we Christians don't have to walk out like a bunch of evil dogs; we can walk in the better way. We do not have to live under the subjection of the flesh. So, verse 12, we would translate: "So then, brothers, we are under obligation not to the sin nature to live according to the sin nature." Now the implication of this negative statement, you will quickly see, is that Christians are under obligation before God to live daily under the control of the Holy Spirit. If you are not under obligation to live under the sin nature, you are by implication under the obligation to live according to the leading of the Spirit of God. How inconsistent indeed for one who has been freed from the enslavement to his sin nature to still be in subjection to it. God the Holy Spirit, Paul has indicated again and again, has emancipated all Christians from the sin nature. So we owe that old master absolutely nothing.

**Restricting the Expressions of the Sinful Nature**

Unbelievers, however, in their human viewpoint believe that it is psychologically bad to say, "No," to desires which come naturally from man's sin nature. So, we have songs with the title, "Doing What Comes Naturally," and it is viewed as being a proper and desirable thing to do. We have songs with titles like, "I've Got to Be Me," meaning I'm going to do my own thing. Why? Well, it's psychologically bad. You must not say, "No," to what your sin nature wants to do. All it wants is to spew out is: you mustn't say, 'No,' because it will restrict you. It will inhibit you. And when your children grow up, just because they have a sin nature, you must not say, "No," to them. You must not insist that they do not sock their little brothers and sisters in the nose because that will inhibit them. That will keep them from being a person who takes command of his situation.

We used to have a kid in Berean Academy whose father was a psychiatrist, and we have a rule at Berean Academy that you cannot go around using muscle on other kids. And so, this guy got in trouble when he tried to use muscle, and we came down on him with some muscle. And the father came, and he was very distressed because as a psychiatrist, he knew that if you restrict this expression of a person's nature, it will cause him to be timid, and he was afraid that his son would grow up to be a milquetoast. And we told him we're going to milk the toast out of him in a hurry if he goes around beating on our students. And he can't do that here because it's a restriction of his sin nature because it's spewing over into somebody else.

Once in a while, we have a kid in the academy who thinks that it is very dramatic to handle his problem by spitting in somebody's face. I've never been able to get myself quite to the point of letting the kid spit back in his face, but I have in the past got some water guns and lined them up before a firing squad, and upon signal, spat him in the face with a stream of water. And of course, I didn't want to collect a lot of saliva to do that, it was just clean water, but that's what he would deserve.

This insanity that is out in our society - you must not restrict the expressions of the sin nature. Well, the Word of God says that's exactly what you must do. And this verse makes it clear that even though Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they do still possess a potentially powerful sin nature. There is no such thing as the eradication of your sin nature. There is no such thing as coming to sinless perfection. So for the Christian to serve the old sin nature master is, in fact, an act of treason.

And someday, we all will give an account to God the Father for what we did with the provision of the power of the Holy Spirit and the freedom from the sin nature. It's very important that you remember that. We will give an account for the freedom that we were given. We will give an account for the emancipation that we had from the sin nature and how we acted consequently. The neglect of this power in daily living is a downright dereliction of duty as a soldier of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus has gone to the depths of the suffering of Calvary and to the glorious heights of the resurrection to provide us with the power to beat the sin nature at its own game. And God says, "I've given you that, and someday, I'm going to hold you accountable for what you did with that capacity." This is not a capacity that you can just ignore.

So many Christians indeed choose to fight a no-win war with the sin nature, in contrast to the Apostle Paul has always championed and indeed what he could say about himself in his own life. In 1 Timothy 6:12, the Apostle Paul told Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, unto which thou art called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses." This was Paul's way of saying, "Fight the old sin nature! Resist it! You have the capacity."

**Consequences of Living Under the Control of the Sinful Nature**

When Paul is about to be executed, he wrote the book of 2 Timothy, and in 2 Timothy 4:7-8. Having declared in verse 6 that he was ready to go home and be with the Lord, Nero was about ready to cut his head off. Paul says in verses 7-8 as he looks back over his life, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love His appearing." One of the special medals of honor to be distributed in Heaven to certain Christians, the crown of righteousness, for a life of divine, good production. For the Apostle Paul, there was no doubt about it that the sin nature is there. It's a serpent. It will hurt you. It will destroy you. It will poison your mind unless you stay in the Word of God. Unless you get God's perspective, you will suffer the consequences.

What are the consequences? More serious, probably, than most of you have really grasped. Verse 13, Paul says, "For." The word is "gar." It's a conjunction introducing an explanation of verse 12 that we are not debtors to live in subjection of the sin nature. We are not obligated to do that. We are obligated to live under the guidance of the Spirit of God. "For if." "Ei." This is that little particle here introducing a first-class condition, something that really is the case. "For if you live." "Zao" again. This refers to your daily lifestyle. It is present tense, so again, it is the habitual way that you live. It is active; it is your personal choices for living. It is participle; it is a spiritual principle here stated, "For you to have a lifestyle after," again, that same preposition "kata," meaning "according to," and again, according to what? The "sarx" - that same word again for the sin nature, but this time it does not have the word "the" in front of it, so again indicating, stressing the quality of evil of the sin nature.

For if you have a daily lifestyle continually according, under the control of, the sin nature, under the control of the evil expression of the sin nature, "ye shall," and here we have a powerful expression. The word "shall" looks like this in the Greek: "mello." This word means "to about to be" or "to about to do" something, and it is a word indicating compulsion. You are being forced. Not: "This is something that you're kind of maybe going to get to." You have a powerful hand in your back that's pushing you toward something. And this is, again, the present tense, so it's always where you're being shoved. It's active: it is true of every carnal Christian. It's indicative - a statement of fact.

And then, it attaches a word to it which in the Greek language makes a powerful statement when these two words are attached in this way. It's the word for death. "Apothnesko." "To die." Apothnesko is the word which is used in the Bible for death, both physical and spiritual. This word is also present tense: the continual status. One after another of you Christians are being pushed over the edge into death. It is active voice so that it is personally true of those of you who are carnal Christians. And this time, we got that infinitive again that tell us purpose. Here is a divine purpose, and you're not going to beat the rap.

When you have this combination of this word "mello" in the Greek language with another word, it is talking here, and in this way, it is talking about a future event. We call that, for you grammarians, a "periphrastic" future, but what it simply means is that it is a powerful declaration of something that is going to happen. When you use this word "mello" with another verb, it means a powerful declaration of what is going to happen, and it also means it's imminent. It's just at end. Not way down there down the road. It's immediately before you. It is about ready to hit you.

So the potential of death for the carnal Christian is emphasized with this combination of words, and it is viewed as being in your immediate future. No matter what delusions a carnal Christian is operating upon, he is headed full-steam ahead into death. Many carnal Christians think that they are really living, that they are finding fulfillment, that they are anticipating a great personal future when in fact, they are in their death throes. Now that's very sobering, and that's what the first part of verse 13 says. If you pursue a lifestyle after the evils of the sin nature under its domination, you are imminently about to die. Many Christians who think they're on the make and they're really rolling, God says, "You're in your death throes."

So why would one who is saved by Jesus Christ from eternal death so live as, in fact, to invite death upon himself? Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of the principle of sin and death." The principle of life through God the Holy Spirit's regenerating work has made me free from the control of death. Now, why on earth would I pursue a lifestyle that takes me right back on the death track? The consequence of death for living by means of the sin nature cannot be changed even by God, I should point out. The consequence of death for living by means of the sin nature even God cannot change. It is the necessity of His holiness to execute.

So now, that raises the question, "What kind of death are we talking about?" What kind of death - for a Christian who is functioning under his sin nature - what kind of death is he going to face? First of all, the death of broken fellowship with God the Father. As you know the basic characteristic of death is separation of some kind. Physical death means that the soul separates from the body. Eternal death means that the person is separated from the presence of God for all eternity. The carnal Christian experiences spiritual separation from God the Father in the form of broken fellowship because of some subjugation to his sin nature.

In the book of 1 John 1:5-7, we read, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all unrighteousness."

The carnal Christian has broken this fellowship with God the Father because God the Father moves in light. And when we move in darkness through some rebellion, through some violation of the Word of God, through some yielding to the sin nature, we can kid ourselves all we want, but we're not in the light anymore, and we have broken our fellowship. This separation of broken fellowship with God the Father is a type of spiritual death because you have broken your spiritual communication line. So, while you as a Christian are never going to experience the eternal, spiritual death that ends up with putting you into the Lake of Fire, you will in time in your daily life experience the fracture of fellowship with the Father and the break of spiritual death in terms of that broken fellowship.

**The Reversionistic Christian**

Persistent refusal to repent and to confess the sin which has caused the separation results in steady reversionism, downward into increasing spiritual disorientation. Galatians 5:4, Paul says, "Christ is become of no effect unto you," speaking to Christians, "whoever of you are justified by the law." Here, the reversionism they were guilty of was trying to be spiritual by means of keeping rules and by keeping the old system of Moses, "ye are fallen from grace." Instead of being grace-oriented and living by grace principles, you have fallen away from those principles and you've fallen into legalisms. Now, that is what happens when a person goes into reversionism. It is bad enough to say, "Yes," to the sin nature; it is even worse to refuse to admit it and to correct it. And I means just as soon as you wake up to it or somebody calls it to your attention, to back off and say, "That's it; I'm through." You can go ahead and keep on, and the Word of God says that what develops now is a steady, spiritual degeneration. "Backsliding" is another word for reversionism to a lower spiritual status. What actually happens, the Bible tells us, is that the facets of your soul - your mind, your emotions, and your will - become hardened callouses. Spiritual callouses develop upon them so that you become insensitive to the leading of God in any of those areas of your soul.

Ephesians 4:17-18 point this out to us. Here he is describing the walk that characterized the Christian before he was a Christian. And Paul says, "Don't let this happen to you again now that you are a Christian." Ephesians 4:18, "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them," ignorance of doctrinal principles, "because of the." The King James says, "blind;" that's bad translation. The Greek word is "hardness of their heart." "Because of the hardness, of their heart: who being past feeling," once they get hardened in their souls, in the facets of their soul, "have given themselves over into lasciviousness," sensual indulgence, "to work all uncleanness," and not only to do it but to do it, "with greediness." They cannot get enough of it.

So, the reversionistic Christian who will not come back who will not turn from the sin nature's leadings is the Christian who is on the downward trend. He is now experiencing spiritual death by separation from the leading of God the Holy Spirit. He has broken fellowship with God the Father, so he has lost that fellowship. He has lost the fellowship of Jesus Christ who indwells him who now cannot walk with him arm-in-arm but must walk with him in rebuke. And what happens is that the Christian then gets out of touch with God and then he gets out of touch consequently with reality. He comes under one of the worst things to happen to a reversionistic Christian, and you'll see this pop up immediately almost. He becomes dominated by the emotions of his soul. He becomes an emotional yo-yo. He gets on an emotional runaway train in his reactions and in his decision making. He becomes insensitive to the Holy Spirit in his mind and his will and his emotions, and furthermore, he engages then in all kinds of mental attitude sins.

And the reversionistic Christian, and I don't care how long he's been a Christian, once he's on this trail of death, becomes a very pitiful sight. This was the trouble in the Laodicean church. This is what they were doing by and large in that congregation, and here's how in the book of the Revelation 3:17 describes them, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." And there you are standing there singing, "Hey, look me over!" And what are you? God says, "You don't know what a pitiful sight you are. You think you're the latest thing. You think you're in style. You think you're Easter parade on Fifth Avenue, don't you." And you're wretched, you're blind, you're pitiful, you're naked. And that's God's way of describing the horrid condition of spiritual death that the sin nature can bring us into.

Well the internal condition of spiritual reversionism - and that's where it begins, first with the mind - becomes externally evident then in time in a variety of ways. It gravitates very quickly toward false loyalties and false affections. The reversionistic Christian is characterized by the fact that he's got loyalty to the wrong objects. And he has affection for the wrong objects. That's why a lot of sexual immorality follows very quickly in the train of reversionism. He loses the sight of his true objects of affection. He tries to find something very quickly to sublimate the death of spiritual fellowship with God to ease his pain. And so he tries other things to sublimate, to make up for that hollowness, that break of that fellowship with God. Just read the book of Ecclesiastes and see all of the things that Solomon went through trying to sublimate. Spiritual maturity in Him rapidly dissipates, and his lifestyle becomes increasingly like that of the unbelieving worldling.

Now as a Christian, he cannot feel comfortable with this. So because the old sin nature is running wild in him, after a while, he pulls back, and he swings over to the good side of the sin nature. (Don't forget - it has a good side; we call it asceticism.) And he tries some self-crucifixion. He tries some self-denial, and he tries to act good and nice. And after a while, he can't stomach that anymore, and then he swings over to the weak side of the sin nature, to lasciviousness, and he goes on an indulgence of the sensual binge, and of the turning loose of the emotions. And after a while, he's had too much of that, and he swings back to asceticism until he can't stand that back and then he swings back to the lasciviousness. And he goes fluctuating back and forth, bouncing between both sides of these elements in his sin nature. When he is at low ebb in his reversionism, he will assume, strangely enough, a pseudo spiritual maturity which he now clothes himself with. He believes he really has, and it serves to blind him even further to his true spiritual condition and the tailspin that he is in tightens into a death throe.

Now the only way to repair the spiritual separation of death of broken fellowship, is by confession and return to positive volition toward the Word of God. All of you know 1 John 1:9, "Confess your sins, God will forgive." And then in Revelation 3:18-20, we are told to turn back to the things of God, turn back to the realities of God, get our nakedness covered, get our eyes opened, and accept the rebuke of the Lord. And then verse 20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice," you who are in carnality, he'll open the door through your confession. "I'll come in, and I'll have fellowship with you. We will sup together." So, that's the only way the Bible says that you can stop the doom that you are on - the runaway coaster, the runaway train that you have boarded with this reversionism. In order for us to come to that, God the Father of course immediately comes in and begins to put pressure in the form of discipline on the carnal Christian to return to fellowship from the realm of death that he has entered.

In Hebrews 12:3-15, you may read in detail how God describes that He treats us as His children, and because He loves us, he puts the pressures of chastisement upon us so that we will be partakers with Him of that which is our right as sons and not as if we were illegitimate children. And he points out that even human, earthly fathers will chasten their sons in order to bring them back to yieldedness and to bring them to the place where once more they can follow what verse 14 says "the path of peace and of holiness without which no one shall see the Lord." Verse 15 of Hebrews 12 says, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and by it, many be defiled." And here is the core expression of the sin nature: that root of bitterness. Let it grow, and it'll defy you, and it'll contaminate a lot of people around you. Now, the confession, of course, brings us back to the control of the spirit from the control of the sin nature.

**Sin Resulting in Physical Death**

The persisting in reversionism and refusing to repent can in time lead to physical death. And that's the other kind of death then that a Christian faces. He will face, first of all, the spiritual death of broken fellowship. But you should be aware of the fact that if you persist in carnality, if you persist in riding with the sin nature, you're inviting a terminal point for your life here on earth. 1 John 5:16-17 point that out, "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death:" a sin, that is, that leads to physical death, "I do not say that he shall pray for it. I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death."

Some sins, John points out, are not sins which leads to death, but he says there are sins that lead to physical death. This is exactly what he is saying in Romans 8:13. If you persist in living under the authority of the sin nature, you are imminently about to die. Immediately, the fracture of your fellowship with God, then persist in it, and you'll move on to your physical destruction. Since salvation is a work of God alone, it cannot be reversed by the believer, so this passage does not refer to eternal death in hell. So God is warning believers that the consequences of living according to the sin nature may be terminal on this earth. God the Father will not allow any of us who are in His family to go on a rampage of spiritual destruction. He appeals for repentance, and then he takes the life.

Example number 1. Turns to Acts 5. A big one. The church has just begun. A new thing is being done. The believers are euphoric with what God has been doing. The body of Christ has been formed. The day of Pentecost is passed. In Acts 5:1-11, you have the story of two believers in that Jerusalem congregation. A man and his wife, Ananias and Sapphira. Some Christians in this New Testament church felt led by the Holy Spirit to sell all of their possessions and to donate them to the local church treasury to be used for the benefit of others who may be in need. Such acts of mercy, you can imagine, were a cause of praise to God, on a part of the other believers, and certainly a cause for esteem for the giver. Ananias and Sapphira, under control of the sin nature, wanted the glory of esteem, but they wanted it at the cheapest price possible. They had this insane obsession to have a little esteem, to have a little glory, to have a little pat on the back. So they sold a certain piece of property and while claiming to be giving the whole amount that they received to the church ministry, they gave only a portion. They, under the guidance of the sin nature, lied about the matter. Under the guidance of the sin nature, wanted a glory. They wanted to be the big people in the church, you know, "Here we are, the big givers. You can count on us to support and to carry you through."

Their calculated sin was a lie to the Holy Spirit who they thought would ignore it. After all, you can't even see the Holy Spirit! Why should you be worried about Him? That's the caution that Paul is giving us. He is there. You will experience spiritual death. You will experience - you push it far enough - your physical death.

Well Peter brought the whole deception into the open. He pointed out that there was no need for lying about the matter. It was their money to do with as they pleased. Ananias and Sapphira did not mind lying about their gift because they saw it merely as deception of the congregation, but Peter pointed out, "You made a terrible mistake. You didn't lie to us; you lied to the Holy Spirit. Don't you understand that He is the one you deal with? You don't deal with Sam and Joe and Mary and Sue. You deal with the Spirit of God!" So what you sell, what you say to people is irrelevant. It is God who is the person that you deal with.

So, the divine disciple for obeying the sin nature was physical death for both of them. And you're all acquainted with the story, and they fell down one at a time. They carried them out, and they buried them. And they had both connived together to say the same story. They had worked out their lie so that even separately, they told the lie the same way. Ananias and Sapphira went immediately into Heaven, somewhat embarrassed as they walked in, but the tragedy was that they lost years of opportunity of storing treasures in Heaven. All those years they would have lived, served God, divine good production, storing treasures in heaven - ripped away from the in one blow because the sin nature takes you to death. As a matter of fact, they didn't even get credit for the money they did give for the part of the property they did give because they gave it not unto the direction of the Spirit of God but under the direction of the sin nature. So what they gave was zero in terms of rewards. The loss was total. God our Father stops the corruption and the disrupting influence of a Christian's sin nature at some point with death.

Case #2. 1 Corinthians 5. There was a church in a great metropolitan center that was not very good about keeping up its spiritual status, a church in which carnality was rampant. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, you have the record where Paul is pointing out a complaint that he has against this church where there was a member of this congregation who was guilty of sexual immorality, and everybody knows about it. In fact, it's the worst kind imaginable; it's a case of incest - sexual immorality with his father's wife. Now though the sin was public knowledge, the congregation ignored the carnality, and Paul rebukes the church and directs that the man should be excommunicated. 1 Corinthians 5:13, the last part says, "But put away from among yourselves that wicked person." This sinning church member, Paul directed, was to be delivered for physical death. Verse 5: ".To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh," his body, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus." The spirit, the soul - the man is going to be saved. But to preserve him from any further deterioration, to preserve him from the further guilt of deteriorating what is around him, God says, "Hand him over the devil. Satan will finish him off."

Well when the man heard this, and I don't know when he heard this, it may be the first time he heard it was when the pastor teacher at Corinth sat up and said, "I have a letter here from the Apostle Paul which I'm going to read to you this morning." And that may have been when he first jumped up in the congregation, startled to realize that Paul knew and Paul was bringing the sin into the open and directing the church in this action.

When the congregation took appropriate action, which it did against this heinous sin, the man responded in the right way. Amazing. Serious as the sin was, he hadn't crossed the line. Ananias and Sapphira, they crossed the line; there was no return for them. It was death. This man was on the road to death, but he had not crossed the line. There was still opportunity for repentance for him. 2 Corinthians 2 reports to us that that's exactly what he did. He repented, turned around, made his confession to God the Father, ceased and desist from what he was doing. 2 Corinthians 2:5, Paul says, "But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not burden you all. Sufficient to such a man," referring to this man, "is this punishment, which was inflected by the many. So that on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him." Having repented and ceased, forget it. He's back in good standing. God's grace deals with our failures, and it turns our chastening into blessing when we repent.

Example number 3. 1 Corinthians 11. The sin nature takes you to death if you let it have its way. 1 Corinthians 11:17-22. Here, the Apostle Paul is speaking to this church concerning the way they're conducting the Lord's supper. They were gathering for the Lord's supper, and usually in those days, they did it in the evening. And some of them were coming ahead of time. They were bringing their food, they were having their own meal, and some of them were bringing alcoholic beverages. They were drinking; by the time the service started, they were stone drunk. And furthermore, their carnality was so evident that they were quite happy to sit there, those who were better off, eating but curiously while other Christians didn't have much or had little. There was no community of sharing.

Now, the Apostle Paul says, "This is an abhorrent condition. You people don't have the foggiest notion as to what's going on when you come to this table. And you have no idea the danger into which you have placed yourself with this." Paul says, "Can't you do your eating and your drinking at home? Can't you come to God's house and not act in such a shameful way?" And for this reason, 1 Corinthians 11:28, the Apostle Paul tells them that they should examine their status of fellowship with God the Father before they prepare to come to the memorial feast of the Lord's supper. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Examine relative to your control under the sin nature. Those who partake of the Lord's supper while in the status of carnality are inviting upon themselves, Paul says, divine discipline. 1 Corinthians 11:29, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." The status of carnality disqualifies one for participation in this ceremony until confession has been made to God the Father.

Now, it is possible to come to the Lord's supper and be in the status of carnality when you think you're in a status of spirituality because of what you're planning to do as soon as the Lord's supper is over. Ah, you've got some hot scoop, you've just got some very wonderful tidbit of gossip. You called Mrs. So-and-So up on the phone. You couldn't get her before church. You tried several times. Finally, she got there, the service started, you're sitting there and you're just waiting for the Lord's supper to be over so you and lay it on her, this thing that you know. And you're going to slander, and you're going to gossip, and you're going to get some hot scoop. And this is true of whether you're an older person or a younger person. And I've heard of some young kids around who are the "hot scoop" type.

Don't think you can sit there and come to the Lord's table and not think that you have introduced into your life the potential of death. You better believe it; you have, because you are as much in the status of carnality holding contempt for these elements as if you were deeply conscious of a currently operating sin. You're able ready to get into sin. Your intentions. Your mental attitude has created the evil. You're about to get out there to steal, to cheat, to con, to deceive, to be sexually immoral - who knows what. Your plans for evil bring you in a status of carnality.

Now the discipline for carnality at the Lord's table is a series of steps that take you into physical death. 1 Corinthians 11:30 describe those for us, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The steps to death for the carnal Christian who participates in the Lord's supper under that condition, and I mean persistently participating that way, is that the first thing that hits him is he gets weak. He is emotionally unstable, and he is emotionally distraught, and he finds himself low on energy. He begins just to find himself low on energy. It takes him forever to get something done. Something is draining. The second step is to be sick. Now, the physical organs of the body get attacked by disease, and they break down in some way so that the second state of death is now established. And finally, when there is no turning around, and of course, at any stage, you can turn around and stop the process, if you refuse, then Paul says, it goes to those, it goes to sleep, which is euphemism for "death" for a Christian. And in that conversation at Corinth, they found all three: being emotionally distraught and physically weak; those who were suffering organic problems, physical breakdowns; those who were actually dead. And the consequences that here again, the sin nature will take your life. All such agony and eternal loss from the sin nature control is unnecessary if we but admit the sin and confess it to God the Father.

1 Corinthians 11:31-32 say, "But if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened with the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." God will chasten you. It will be unnecessary; if you confess it, he will stop it. And even if the chastening does not stop, which happens sometimes. You know, sometimes the consequences of our sin in response to the sin nature, doesn't stop. We've got it. It's there. You can't walk away from it. But that chastening will then be turned to blessing.

So, we gather at the Lord's supper table in the Holy Spirit-like manner so that once life is strengthened, so that our lives are ennobled, so that we are inspired to God's glory. We close with 1 Corinthians 11:33-34, "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto judgment." So that you come for blessing, for ennobling for the Lord's glory. How much better that is than being subject to that thing which can only lead to death. First, our spiritual separation, and if we persist, our life itself.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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