

It's Worse *and* Better Than You  
Think

- Have you ever had the experience where you swore blind that you understood something only to realise later that you had it totally wrong?
- I know. I understand. This is the best way to go ... we say. But are we really seeing things clearly?

It's Worse ... sin that is

# Structure

- Biblical Anthropology
  - Interpreters
  - Wisdom gatherers
  - Revelation receivers
- Sin Enters
- The nature of sin – corruption of the good
- Not just high handed evil acts but noetic effects – people are simultaneously brilliant and benighted (state of intellectual, moral, or social darkness)
- Sin is not just a mistake, not just an action but condition
- We live in sin and misery

# Sin is Not Just What We Choose

First, people tend to think of sins in the plural as consciously willed acts where one was aware of and chose not to do the righteous alternative. Sin, in this popular understanding, refers to matters of conscious volitional awareness of wrongdoing and the ability to do otherwise. The Bible's view of sin certainly includes the high-handed sins where evil approaches full volitional awareness. But sin also includes what we simply are and the perverse ways we think, want, remember, and react.

# David Powlison

Most sin is invisible to the sinner because it is simply how the sinner works, how the sinner perceives, wants, and interprets things.

# Scripture and Our Condition

Once we see sin for what it really is—madness and evil intentions in our hearts, absence of any fear of God, slavery to various passions then we will see the amazing blessing of the word.

- The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Ge 6:5
- Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes. Ps 36:1
- ... the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. Ec 9:3
- For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. Tt 3:3

# David Powlison

People do not tend to see sin as applying to relatively unconscious problems, to the deep, interesting, and bedevilling stuff in our hearts. But God's descriptions of sin often highlight the unconscious aspect.

Sin—the desires we pursue, the beliefs we hold, the habits we obey as second nature—is intrinsically deceitful. If we knew we were deceived, we would not be deceived. But we are deceived, unless awakened through God's truth and Spirit. Sin is a darkened mind, drunkenness, animal-like instinct and compulsion, madness, slavery, ignorance, stupor.

People often think that to define sin as unconscious removes human responsibility. How can we be culpable for what we did not sit down and choose to do? But the Bible takes the opposite tack. The unconscious and semiconscious nature of much sin simply testifies to the fact that we are steeped in it. Sinners think, want, and act sin like by nature, nurture, and practice. We instinctively return evil for evil. All psychological processes are sin-kinked.



- The worst thing is to be left in this condition
- To be left in deception is a tragic thing
- But God speaks – he brings clarion (loud and clear) truth into the situation
- For one part of history he was quiet for 400 years – between the old and new testaments
- Imagine the relief when Jesus arrived – also imagine the degradation

It's Better

# Hebrews 4:8–11

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

# Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- Not just Jesus ... all of it
- He speaks into the madness
- He speaks into the heart corrupted by sin and brings moments of crystal clear clarity
- A clarion call
- Discerns the thoughts and intentions of the heart
- The writer gives an analogy: it's like dividing joints and marrow. Joints are the thick, hard, outer part of the bone. Marrow is the soft, tender, living, inner part of the bone. That is an analogy of "soul and spirit." The word of God is like a sword that is sharp enough to cut right through the outer, hard, tough part of a bone to the inner, soft, living part of the bone. Some swords, less sharp, may strike a bone and glance off and not penetrate. Some swords may penetrate part way through the tough, thick joint of a bone. But a very sharp, powerful double-edged sword (sharp on each side of the point) will penetrate the joint all the way to the marrow.

# Hebrews 4:13

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- The mercy of spiritual nakedness
- Ever thought you could do something without anyone knowing
- Ever thought you could do something before God knew
- Never – he always knows
- Everything is obvious to him and laid bare
- Same Greek word as: the soul being without the body (2 Cor 5:3), of a bare kernel of grain (1 Cor 15:37), or of a body without clothing (Acts 19:16).
- The idea of vulnerability

# The Purpose of the Word ...

- The word goes in and it either finds faith/trust or unbelief
- The intention of the word is to inspire faith and trust



# Three Examples of How the Word Divides Between Faith and Unbelief

- ... fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10
- But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things (food, drink and clothing) will be added to you. Matthew 6:33
- ... in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11

# The Word Is Your Greatest Hope

- Unbelief was the reason why they couldn't enter rest – not trusting on the news they had heard
- Squares up the deception
- Diagnoses
- Don't put a band aid on a blocked artery – cut me deep
- The greatest weapon you have in your fight to enter God's rest is the word
- A compassionate surgeon

# Practical Suggestions

- Audio Bible in The City – to come
- Commentaries – Logos Expositors Bible Commentary (android and iOS apps)
- Spurgeon's Morning and Evening (available free on the net and free in the Logos app)
- Kindle

- Fighter verses (iOS and android app)
- Solid Joys app (Piper)
- New City catechism app (iPad)

