

Lingering Damage of Sin

March 28, 2013

Eve would experience the ‘cost of sin’—up front and personally! Though she had the perfect surroundings and perfect relationships with her husband, the animals and God Almighty, she gave birth to Gnosticism when she wanted to know beyond what God wanted her to know. Seeing the tree was good for food was ‘sin’ because God had said do not eat of it! When God tells us not to do something, as He had told Adam, and Adam told Eve, we must not entertain ways of finding it palatable—that is feeding our temptation—because the lust of Eve’s eyes, with Satan’s acrid aid, prevailed, as will ours. Then, of course, she wanted to know good and evil—so much more than God wanted her to know!

God had never intended for us to know evil, and incidentally we would never recognize good, thoroughly, until we did know evil. What a lure Satan used! The garden was filled to capacity with fresh fruits and delectable vegetables of every kind, but the ‘forbidden’ was what our mother longed for. What that ‘sin’ of willful disobedience to the command of God cost her and her family and the millions of families since, is incalculable! Satan tempts us everyday to get our needs met outside of the will of God. The father-of-lies ‘lies’ to us—no surprise there—telling us that God is withholding something good from us.

On Saturday, January 12, 2013, a cold front was moving into Grove and I had to get out and run just one errand. Trying to make the most of my time out, I also dropped into a consignment shop and made a small purchase. A situation arose which if I’d taken advantage of would have constituted ‘willful sin’, and I’d commented on it to the clerk, when a church-going man I knew piped up, “Just ask forgiveness.” It was as if he was encouraging me to go ahead and sin because I could just ask God to forgive me and all would be copasetic. Woe! It caught me off guard, for sure; but I wondered if that is a prevailing attitude among Christians—including *yours truly*. It is certainly a very dangerous one!

Charles Stanley repeatedly states: “Obey God and leave the consequences to Him; disobey Him and the consequences are up to you.” See, the ‘sin’ we practice today, though forgiven when we ask in true repentance and in humility, will retain consequences that can, and often will, affect the rest of our lives on this earth, especially since Satan will seek to make the most of the lingering damage of our past sins. Satan will hound us with remembering and rehearsing past sins and their consequences, often with guilt and with shame, but sometimes, God forbid, enjoyment and relish; he is so much himself—*Satanic!*
We must know God’s word on the tremendous cost of any ‘sin’!

What the devil talks us into believing ‘we-can’t-live-without’ will often cost us our lives—in more ways than one! Before we step out into any ‘known’ sin, we must realize the consequences—count the cost! The following graphic true story was aired on the Discovery Channel’s *On the Record with Paula Zahn*, on June 18, 2011: On Friday night, September 5, 2003, Rachel Reid, along with three other girls (Kasey Jo, Jaicey, and Mackinsey) died in a horrific car accident in Tatum, TX (pop. 1,175), when her own brother crested a hill and hit their SUV with his pickup truck, traveling 87 miles per hour.

What 18-year-old David Reid had been doing just before the crash would set the stage and ultimately tell the tale. He and a friend had been racing down Texas 149 at speeds of more than 100 miles per hour, and David had won the race as he pulled in front and approached the hill which separated him from tragedy. He survived the impact, but the four girls perished as he smashed into their vehicle. Though sentenced to only 8 years of probation for felony racing and manslaughter, **David will pay the ‘guilt’ price for the rest of his life.**

God’s word is replete with these kinds of true stories—not fictional stories as the world would have us to believe: There was **Eve’s choice** to disobey God; the murder of Abel by his brother **Cain**, and just seven chapters into Genesis the **whole world became so sinful that God destroyed it by flood**, with only eight souls surviving. Afterward, **Ham** looked laughingly upon his father Noah’s nakedness and was cursed forever, and **men began to build the tower of Babel** to reach into the heavens and **God scattered them all and confounded their language forever**. There was **Abram**, who told his beautiful wife, Sarah, to tell the Egyptians that she was his sister, and the Pharaoh almost took her as his wife, and when Abraham’s herds and flocks and those of his nephew, Lot, became too many, **Lot chose** to live in the plain of the Jordan toward the east near Sodom. **And all this ‘sin’ just 13 chapters into Genesis!**

Let’s examine the sin that Lot became entangled in and the devastating results for two cities and Lot’s family forever. In Genesis 13:13 Scripture records:

“Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.”

Abraham, who years earlier, had rescued Lot and his family from captivity **now pleaded with God for the city of Sodom** where Lot and his family now dwelled. Genesis 18:20-21 *“Then the LORD said, ‘The **outcry against Sodom and Gormorrah is so great and their sin so grievous** ²¹that I will go down and see if what they have done is as **bad** as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.’”*

Did God know how bad the sin in Sodom had gotten? Yes, absolutely, God already knew how detestable and destructive their sin had become. This verse shows His mercy to the end: ‘I will give them one more chance to change—to

repent, to return to Me in righteous remorse—so I won't destroy them.' God has always shown great mercy to a man or a nation prior to destruction. In Noah's day God gave the people 120 years—the number of years it took Noah to build the ark—to turn and live, but only eight took Him up on it.

So, the friend of God speaks boldly to Him in Genesis 18:22 *“The men turned away and went toward Sodom, **but Abraham remained standing before the LORD.** 23Then Abraham approached him and said: ‘Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? 25Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! **Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?’**”* What an impassioned plea Abraham made to God—he came perilously close to accusing God of something. But God was merciful to him and heard him out and then began a negotiation process with Abraham in verse 26: *“The LORD said, ‘If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.’”* Now here is a fascinating fact: God knew then and knows today exactly how many righteous people are in every city in the world, and sadly, the number is much lower than we would imagine! Until now, Abraham was addressing the LORD—his Covenant Father.

Abraham took up the negotiations God had begun in verse 27: *“Then Abraham spoke up again: ‘Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the **Lord** (Anointed One), though I am nothing but dust and ashes, 28what if the number of the righteous is five less than fifty? Will you destroy the whole city because of five people?’”* Here Abraham, after addressing the LORD (Covenant Father) before, appealed to the **Lord** (the Anointed One—Jesus) while he acknowledged his boldness and his being from dust and ashes, he humbled himself and then asked boldly again! And God answered: *“If I find forty-five there,” he said, “I will not destroy it.”*

How far will Abraham go in his plea to God for mercy on Sodom? In verse 29: *“Once again he spoke to him, ‘What if only forty are found there?’ ‘He said, ‘For the sake of forty, I will not do it.’ 30“Then he (Abraham) said, ‘**May the Lord** (again, Anointed One) not be angry, but let me speak. What if only thirty can be found there?’ ‘He answered, ‘I will not do it if I find thirty there.’”* God assured Abraham that if He found 30 righteous people in Sodom, He would spare the city.

But Abraham is not finished; he appealed to the Anointed One! In verse 31: *“Abraham said, ‘Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the **Lord** (Anointed One), what if only twenty can be found there?’ ‘He said, ‘For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.’ 32“Then he (Abraham) said ‘**May the Lord** (Anointed One) not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?’”*

*“He (God) answered, ‘For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.’ ³³When the **LORD** (Covenant Father) had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home.”* Scripture does not tell us whether Abraham stopped negotiating because he was afraid of going too far with God, or if he was sure there would be 10 righteous people found in Sodom, and therefore God would spare the city, but we can surmise that the latter is so. But for whatever reason, Abraham stopped his plea with his Covenant Father and His Anointed One at 10 souls—and we already know that only 4 righteous were found in Sodom.

There is much, much more: God will destroy, not just Sodom, but its neighboring city Gormorrah, and He will send His angels ahead to get Lot out. To understand the gravity of the ‘sin’ of Sodom, Genesis 19:1-5 explains: *“The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. ²‘My lords,’ he said, ‘please turn aside to your servant’s house. You can wash your feet and spend the night and then go on your way early in the morning.’* *“‘No,’ they answered, ‘we will spend the night in the square.’* *³“But he insisted so strongly that they did go with him and entered his house. He prepared a meal for them, baking bread without yeast, and they ate. ⁴Before they had gone to bed, **all the men from every part of the city of Sodom—both young and old—surrounded the house. ⁵They called to Lot, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.’”***

Lot is so much a part of his city’s ‘sin’ that he offers his two virgin daughters to these men to do with as they please, if they will leave the two ‘men’ alone. What would prompt a father to do such a thing? Even Lot understood what vile ‘sin’ that these men regularly committed, and now wanted to engage in with God’s own messengers. Offering his daughters would be a lesser ‘sin’ in Lot’s mind. **Do we see that depravity readjusts our ‘right’ thinking, and causes even believers to compromise?** It’s important to note, here, that Lot’s daughters had young men *pledged to marry them*, and when Lot spoke to them about the destruction coming and how they must leave immediately, the last line of Genesis 19:14 reads: *“But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.”* **Lost in the culture of Sodom, Lot had lost all influence for God with his own family!**

And there’s more: the messengers of God warned Lot, his wife and two daughters not to look back as they were led from the doomed city, but Lot’s wife did and she became a pillar of salt. Why she looked back is not important: **that she disobeyed the warning of God through His messengers and chose to look back is the critical ‘sin’ that cost her life!** And what did that choice cost her family? With no men around to father children for them, the daughters got their own dad drunk and engaged in sex with him—incest: Lot fathered his own grandchildren! And what about all the people in Sodom and Gormorrah?

Genesis 19:24-25 *“Then the LORD rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the LORD out of the heavens. 25Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, including all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land.”*

America, today, has immersed herself, through government legislation and her ‘sin’-willful people, in the same immoral, sexual ‘sin’ that took these two cities from the face of the earth—remnants have never been found, but thought to be under the Dead Sea. Called ‘the best preacher in the family’ by her father, Billy Graham, and born in the very month and year that Israel became a nation again—May 1948—Anne Graham Lotz has so rightly stated: “If God does not judge America soon, He will need to apologize to Sodom and Gormorrah.”

Our nation needs God’s mercy, yes, and we have already had the benefit of that mercy for some 200 years—and His mercy hasn’t moved us to fully repent. Puritan pastor, Jonathan Edwards, said, “God will never bestow mercy on you because you deserve it, but only because you need it.” We need continued mercy, but we must make change: we must have revival, repent, we must have a return to ‘right’ living and right relationship to God through Jesus Christ, or God’s judgment, as promised, will fall on even us! Something to think through very carefully is that when Jesus returns to earth and touches down on that mount in Jerusalem to defend Israel from her many enemies gathered for the final battle—Armageddon—the western hemisphere is not present. The Americas are not there: **What has happened to us?**

Christ-followers must be daily prepared for spiritual warfare; we must put on the armor of God as described in **Ephesians 6:10-18**. Scripture calls Satan the tempter, the father of lies, the accuser of the brethren and anti-Christ. For believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, the devil will not sit by and allow us to ‘smooth’ through the Christian life without a battle. He can’t take our salvation from us, but he can shake the bolts of our faith, and he will tempt each of us specifically—this is spiritual warfare! Romans 7:22-25 *“For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; 23but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. 24What a wretched man (woman) I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? 25Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”*

Christ has overcome Satan, and will cause us to overcome if we allow Him to be our *Rescuer*. Billy Graham exhorts Christians: “Don’t let anything or anyone—stand in the way of your growth in Christ. ...Becoming a Christian is the work of a moment, being a Christian is the work of a lifetime.” Isaiah 30:21 *“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, This is the way; walk in it.”*