




FROM THE PASTOR

Weekly Devotional

Aggravations of Sin – Part 4

Pastor Heiple 

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." – Matthew 11:21

Question 151 of the *Larger Catechism* asks, "What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others?" The fourth section (the second under point 3) of the answer says, "Sins receive their aggravations, 3. From the nature and quality of the offence: if against means, mercies, judgments, light of nature, conviction of consciousness, publick or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments; and our prayers, purposes, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God or men: if done deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance."

To sin against "means" is to break God's law while you have multiple opportunities, incentives, and reasons to keep it—like Chorazin and Bethsaida in the verse above. These cities saw the abundant supernatural proof that Jesus was the Son of God. He did many miracles in their presence, each one of which proved Him to be a teacher come from God, even as Nicodemus confessed, "'Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You are doing unless God is with him,'" (John 3:2). That was the point of the miracles, they proved Jesus came from God. So Peter preached at Pentecost, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know," (Act. 2:22). To have seen Jesus give the supernatural proof of His divine mission, and yet to reject Him, was a far greater sin than to have lived in Pagan cities, which never had the chance to see miracles.

To sin against mercy and judgments is another great aggravation of sin. David aggravated his guilt this way when he committed adultery and had Uriah murdered. Thus, God reminded David how He made him king, delivered him from the hand of Saul, gave him wives and great possessions, and then even added, "And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!" (2 Sam. 12:17). David's sin was so great precisely because God had shown him so much favor through the light of His mercies and judgments. God gives us light by revealing Himself or His truth to us in His Word or in nature (the creation itself). The more light we have the more guilty we are when transgress the truth clearly made apparent by the light.

Sins against the light of nature would include incest, homosexuality (sodomy), and all other evils which reality itself tells us are wrong. As the Word of God says, homosexuality is the exchanging of "the natural use for what is against nature" (Rom. 1:26-27). God has created us male and female with corresponding sex organs that naturally join together: one male to one female. Though two people of the same gender are able to give each other pleasure they are not able—as an undeniable scientific reality—to physically join their bodies together by their sex organs designed for that purpose and become one flesh biologically. They can make wedding vows to one another, but they cannot consummate the marriage, nor beget children. Nature itself, in the form of their own bodies teaches them those facts.

Likewise, to transgress my own conscience is to do what I believe to be wrong, which is much worse than being deceived. For if I do something evil that I wrongly believe to be good, I have still sinned, but by mistake as it were. But when I willingly do what I know to be evil, I sin with culpability, indicating a hard heart and a high hand towards God. To sin against admonitions, censures, and punishments shows a determination to even be willing to suffer for the evil we love. So also when I sin against my own promises, vows, responsibilities or duties, my actions are that much more to be condemned. The final items in the list are all self-explanatory: it is one thing to do evil, it is another to boast about it, or to continue in it with frequency or zeal. Everyone gets some initial pleasure out of a sinful act, but most feel some remorse later on. Therefore, it takes a hard heart indeed to actually delight in the evilness of a sin. May God give us the grace to fear His holy hatred of evil so that we would shrink from increasing our already great guilt before Him in any of these monstrous aggravations of sin.



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The Celebration of Worship



Prelude & Welcome

Reflection & Preparation

Psalm 106:1-3

Call to Worship

Psalm 37

Leader Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity.

Aff **For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.**

Leader Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.

Aff **Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.**

Invocation

Hymn

Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken · Trinity 345

Scripture Reading

2 Tim. 6:1-16

Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

Song

The Battle Belongs to the Lord

arr. J. Moser 2007, © 1985 Fairhill Music. CCLI License #173651

In heav-en-ly ar - mor we'll en - ter the land, The bat-tle be-longs
When the pow-er of dark - ness comes in like a flood, The bat-tle be-longs
When your en - e-my press - es in hard, do not fear, The bat-tle be-longs

to theLord. No wea - pon that's fash - ioned a - gainst us will stand, The
to theLord. He's raised up a stand - ard, the pow'r of his blood, The
to theLord. Take cour-age, my friend, your re - demp - tion is near, The

bat - tle be - longs to the Lord. And we sing glo - ry, hon - or,
bat - tle be - longs to the Lord.
bat - tle be - longs to the Lord.

pow - er and strength to the Lord. We sing glo - ry,
hon - or, pow - er and strength to the Lord.

Worship in Giving

Living Water · Lloyd Larson

Based on Psalm 42:1,2,5,8 © 1987 Beckenhorst Press, Inc.

Hymn

Who Trusts in God, a Strong Abode · Trinity 668

Pastoral Prayer

Sermon

The Courage of Living by Faith · Dr. Ray E. Heiple, Jr.*Genesis 43:1-14 NKJV*

- Now the famine was severe in the land.
- And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, “Go back, buy us a little food.”
- But Judah spoke to him, saying, “The man solemnly warned us, saying, `You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’

- If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.
- But if you will not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, `You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.’”
- And Israel said, “Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?”
- But they said, “The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, `Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?’ And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, `Bring your brother down ’?”
- Then Judah said to Israel his father, “Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones.
- I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.
- For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time.”
- And their father Israel said to them, “If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man-- a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.
- Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight.
- Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man.
- And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!”

Notes

Hymn

Call Jehovah's Your Salvation · Trinity 664

Benediction & Postlude

Following the service, the elders will be available to pray with you at the front of the sanctuary.