

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Does ONE Sin Really Matter?

After the children of Israel conquered the land of Canaan, it was divided amongst the brethren, and they were all sent to their respective territories. The Reubenites, Gadites, and a half tribe of Manasseh had claim to territories east of Jordan, so they returned and began to settle into the land, just as did the other tribes. Being separated, by the Jordan river, from the rest of their brethren, they felt it necessary to erect an altar as some sort of testimony to other people that they indeed had a part with the rest of the nation (Josh. 22:21-29).

The rest of Israel, however, not knowing their intentions, feared that their brethren had already strayed from God's will and, as a result, were about to bring His wrath upon the nation as a whole. Leaders from each of the other tribes quickly gathered together and confronted the eastern tribes regarding what they had done. Fearing the possibility of the eastern tribes having already turned away from God, they were reminded of the sin of Achan and the consequences of

his actions. As part of the warning to the eastern tribes, they asked, "Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? And that man did not perish alone in his iniquity" (Josh. 22:20). They feared that if the eastern tribes were already going into idolatry, as a result of the sins of a few, the rest of the nation would suffer.

God no longer works in the same way He did in Old Testament times, but is not the principle of sin's consequences still the same? Isn't it true that sometimes we are not the only ones who have to suffer for our sins? Don't get me wrong, now. I'm not trying to say we inherit sin from our parents, or anything like that; rather, the results of sin sometimes affect more than just the sinner.

Achan is a good example. Here was a man who, unbeknownst to anyone else, took some of the spoils from the city of Jericho and hid them in the ground under his tent."...Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of

Israel, and this is what I have done: when I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it." {Joshua 7:20,21} His family might have known about it after the fact (it would be hard to dig a hole under your tent without someone noticing), but none outside his family knew about it. Joshua didn't know. The army that gathered to fight against Ai didn't know. The rest of Israel didn't know.

But God knew. "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we give account. {Hebrews 4:13} Nothing gets past the eye of an all-seeing God!

And when the Israelites took just a few men to fight against the small city of Ai, 36 men lost their lives because Achan had sinned against God. No, Achan did not die alone in his iniquity.

And when his sin was discovered, still more joined Achan in death. "Then Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had" (Josh. 7:24) were brought before the whole congregation of Israel and stoned with stones and then burned them with fire (v. 25).

Occasionally, when we hear of others who are determined to live in sin, or sometimes to commit just one particular act, the excuse is given, "It's not going to hurt anyone," or, "It's my choice, and it doesn't affect anyone else," the implied meaning being that we should not try

to stop them from acting out their sinful intentions because "no one's going to be hurt" by it. Do you see the deception in such statements? It sounds as if the devil has again changed just one word, this time from "EVERY" one to "NO" one.

First of all, it is a lie to say "no one" will be hurt, and, second, others may also be affected by the sinner's sinful actions. EVERY sin affects someone in a negative way, because sin separates us from God and, if continued, causes us to no longer be walking in the light as He is in the light. Why would anyone want to knowingly commit an act that would cause spiritual harm? Try walking in darkness for even a short period, and you quickly learn how easy it is to stumble, trip, and fall.

Without going into an extensive or comprehensive list, we should understand that many sins DO affect others and may cause them to die, either physically or --- more importantly --- spiritually. Sins such as drunkenness may cause us to drive while under alcohol's influence and cause an accident, which could literally cause another person's death. Sins such as fornication may lead to pregnancy, which many have ended by abortion, the death of an innocent, unborn child. But EVERY sin presents the danger of causing others to cease from living godly lives or hinders their coming to God in the first place. The two conditions--abandoning God for sin, and never coming to him at all--have the same result--spiritual death.

Yes, sin can --- and often does --- affect others, so we cannot close our eyes to the consequences of our sins, regardless of our positions in life. God brought King Ahaz down because he had encouraged moral decline in Judah. "For the Lord brought Judah low

because Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful to the Lord." (2 Chr. 28:19) His own sins were enough to influence the nation to practice sinfulness, and he will someday have to answer for that. Our national leaders will someday also have to answer for their influence on the nation, but remember that you don't have to be a national leader to affect the rest of the nation. Achan was certainly no national leader in Israel, and look at the effects of HIS sin!

So, if you are simply strolling through life and have not obeyed the words of Jesus Christ, and you think your refusal to obey won't harm anyone, think again! Or, if you have decided you can participate in "just one" sin without causing harm, think again! Your refusal to obey may cause your friends to believe that obedience is not important because YOU do not think it is important. And when you commit even one sin, it may be that someone will die spiritually because of your influence.

I cannot help but think of the husband and father who is now living without Christ, and who has nothing to do with God. He probably thinks he's "OK," and that it's a personal decision that won't affect anyone else. But what about his children? His wife? "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." {Gal.6:7,8}

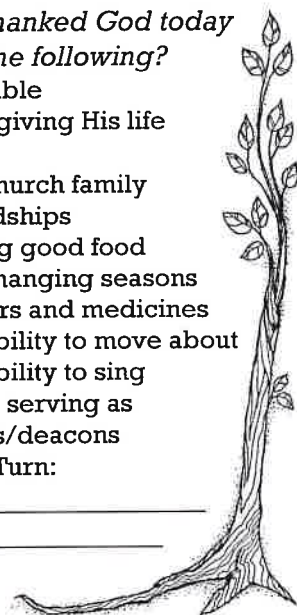
Do you still think you're the only one affected by your sins? None of else lives on an island. Our lives have some effect on others -- good or bad. Think again!

Steve Harper

God gave you a gift of 86,400 seconds today. Have you used one to say **THANK YOU?**

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- Friendships
- Having good food
- The changing seasons
- Doctors and medicines
- The ability to move about
- The ability to sing
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Paul on Trial

Q A C V G V I Y L U D F J U J N U F S I
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DIRECTIONS: Look up the scripture in the Bible, and find the answer in the crossword above.

Acts 21:17, Paul was arrested in this city

Acts 23:1, he addressed them first

Acts 23:23, he was sent here to testify

Acts 24:24, the governor's Jewish wife

Acts 26:1, the king who heard Paul speak

Acts 26:12, Paul told how he went here

Acts 26:17, Jesus said He was sending him to these people

Acts 26:24, Festus said great this was driving Paul insane

Acts 26:26, Paul said these things had not been done in a _____

Acts 26:27, Paul said that he knew Agrippa believed them

Acts 23:11, He would testify also here

Acts 23:24, the governor at the time

Acts 24:27, he was the next governor