

## Sin's Contrariness to God and Man from *The Sinfulness of Sin* by Ralph Venning (1621-74)

Being about to treat of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, it is not only expedient, but necessary that I preface and premise certain things:

- (1) That God made all things very good (Genesis 1:31). ....
- (2) Yet of these the two most eminent and principal degrees of creatures quickly degenerated. ...And thus 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned' (Romans 5.12).
- (3) As to the angels that fell, God left them irrecoverable. ...But it pleased God to pity man; his saving grace and loving-kindness have appeared to man, and that, in Christ Jesus (Titus 2.11; 3.4). His delight was with the sons of men...
- (4) This doctrine of God our Saviour, the Gospel-doctrine, supposes that man is a sinner. It is a faithful saying, and worthy of the best and all acceptance and reception, that Christ Jesus came into the world (on this very errand and for this purpose) to save sinners (1 Timothy 1.15)..."

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Romans 7:13, '*Was then that which is good made death to me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good;* [and here's where Venning gets the title to his book, *The Sinfulness of Sin:*] ***that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful!***

**I. SIN IS CONTRARY TO GOD.** Carnal men, or sinners are called by the name of enemies to God (Romans 5.8 with 10; Colossians 1.21); but the carnal mind or sin is called enmity itself (Romans 8.7). Accordingly, it and its acts are expressed by names of enmity and acts of hostility, such as, walking contrary to God

(Leviticus 26.21), rebelling against God (Isaiah 1.2), rising up against him as an enemy (Micah 2.8), striving and contending with God (Isaiah 45.9), and despising God (Numbers 11.20). It makes men haters of God (Romans 1.30), resisters of God (Acts 7.51), fighters against God (Acts 5.39 and 23.9), even blasphemers of God, and in short very atheists, who say there is no God (Psalm 14.1). It goes about to ungod God, and is by some of the ancients called *Deicidium*, God-murder or God-killing. Sin is contrary:

1. *to the nature of God.* God's name is holy, and as his name is, so is he and his nature, all holy... On the contrary, as God is holy, all holy, only holy, altogether holy, and always holy, so sin is sinful, all sinful, only sinful, altogether sinful, and always sinful (Genesis 6.5).

2. *to all the names and attributes of God.* It sets itself in opposition to them all. (1) It deposes the sovereignty of God as much as in it lies. It will not that the King of kings should be on the throne, and govern this world which he has made. (2) It denies God's all-sufficiency. As if there were not contentment and satisfaction enough to be had in the enjoyment of God, but that vanity and wickedness had more of pleasure and profit than he, whose ways are all pleasantness, and whose service is the health of man! (3) It challenges the justice of God, and dares God to do his worst (Malachi 2.17). It provokes the Lord to jealousy, and tempts him to wrath. (4) It disowns his omniscience. Pooh! they say, God does not see, nor does the most High regard. (5) It despises the riches of God's goodness (Romans 2.4). (6) It turns his grace into wantonness (Jude 4) It will make bold with God, and sin because grace abounds.

3. *to the works of God.* It works contrary to God, and it is contrary to God's works, and is called the work of the devil (1 John 3.8). All God's works were good exceedingly, beautiful even to admiration; but the works of sin are deformed and monstrously

ugly, for it works disorder, confusion, and everything that is abominable.

4. *Sin is contrary to the law and will of God*, to all the rules and orders of his appointment. There is not one of his laws which it has not broken, and endeavoured to make void and of none effect.

5. *Sin is contrary to the image of God*, in which man was made. God made man in his own likeness, viz. in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4.24). Now sin is clean contrary to this image, as much unlike it as deformity and ugliness is unlike handsomeness and beauty, as darkness is to light, as hell to heaven. Yes, and there is more too: sin is the Devil's image. When God made man, he made him in his own image; so when the Devil made man sin, he thereby made him his own image and likeness.

6. *Sin is contrary to the people and children of God*. It is true, sin cannot hate them as much as God loves them, nor do them as much hurt as God can do them good. Yet, out of spite and envy, it will do its worst, and hate them because God loves them.

7. *Sin is contrary to, and set against the glory of God*, and all that should and would give glory to him, or has any tendency to do so. Confession of sin and repentance gives glory to God (Joshua 7.19), and sin endeavours to obstruct and hinder this.

8. *Sin is contrary and opposite to the being and existence of God*. (This was hinted at before.) It makes the sinner wish and endeavour that there might be no God, for sinners are haters of God (Romans 1.30).

**II. SIN IS CONTRARY TO MAN.** Communion with, and conformity to God is man's felicity, his heaven upon earth and in heaven too, without which it would not be worth his while to have a being. Now since sin is a separation between God and man, an interruption of this communion and conformity, it must needs be prejudicial and hurtful to him.

**A. IN A NATURAL SENSE** [which is the manifestation of sin,]

1. *Sin is against man's rest and ease*, of which man is a great lover; and, indeed, he needs it as a great part of the well-being of his life. It is a sore travail which the sons of men have under the sun. What hath man of all his labour, and the vexation of his heart wherein he laboured? for all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief (Ecclesiastes 1.13; 2.22,23). This is so whether he increase wisdom and knowledge, or pleasure and riches.

2. *Sin is against man's comfort and joy*. In sorrow shalt thou eat all the days of thy life (Genesis 3.17). Not one whole merry day! It would be some comfort to a man, after he had toiled and moiled all day, if he could eat his bread with joy, and drink his wine with a merry heart. But sin will not allow him to do so

3. *Sin is against man's health*. From it come all diseases and sicknesses; till sin there were no such things. For this cause, in general, many are weak and sickly among you. Let man take the best air he can, and eat the best food he can, let him eat and drink by rule, let him take ever so many antidotes, preservatives and cordials, still man is but a shaky, sickly thing for all this. Verily every man in his best estate is a frail and brittle thing yea altogether vanity (Psalm 39.5)

4. *Sin is against the quiet of a man's natural conscience*. It wounds the spirit and makes it intolerable: 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' (Proverbs 18.14).

5. *Sin is against the beauty of man*. It takes away the loveliness of men's very complexions; it alters the very air of their countenance. 'When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty (or, as it is in the margin, that which is to be desired in him) to consume (or melt) away like a moth: surely every man is vanity (his beauty vain)' (Psalm 39.11).

6. *Sin is against the loving and conjugal co-habitation of soul and body.* They were happily married, and lived lovingly together for a while, till sin sowed discord between them, and made them jar. There is now many a falling out between body and soul, between sense and reason; they pull in different directions; there is a self-civil war. Even in this sense the flesh lusteth against the spirit; the poor man is dragged and pulled this way and that, tossed to and fro as with several winds. Man is full of contradictions...

7. *Sin is against man's relative good in this world.* Man's comfort or sorrow lies much in his relationships; the weal or woe of his life is as his relationships are. That which was made for a help proves only too often a hindrance. Sin has spoiled society, so that one man is a wolf, even a devil to another. Sin will not let husband and wife, parents and children live quietly, but sets them at variance, and many times a man's enemies are they of his own house and bosom; they who eat bread at our table lift up the heel against us, and familiar friends become enemies. Lust makes wars (James 4.1), and from pride comes contention (Proverbs 13.10). It breeds divisions and factions in Church and State, so that there is little union or order, harmony, society or friendship in the world.

## **B. IN A MORAL SENSE [which is the heart of the matter,]**

1. *Sin has degraded man*, by defiling him, and has almost unmanned him; for, as our text speaks of sin as a man, so the Holy Scripture speaks of man as if he were sin, and every man were a man of sin (i.e. a man made up of sin) whether we consider the outer or inner man. Man was a very noble thing, made little lower than the angels (Psalm 8.5). But, alas, by sin he is made almost as low as devils. Man was once a companion for God himself, but sin has separated between God and him, and has robbed man of his primitive excellence.

2. *Sin has darkened man's understanding.* Poor man is wise to do evil, but to do good he has no knowledge (Jeremiah 4.22). There is

none that understandeth, viz, as and what he ought (Romans 3.11). All the workers of iniquity have no knowledge (Psalm 14.4). Poor man is covered with Egyptian thick darkness; he is said to be not only dark, but darkness in the abstract (Ephesians 5.8), and, sadly, he is in love with darkness (John 3.19), and his light is darkness (Matthew 6.23).

3. *Sin has depraved man's understanding*, and made him a fool, a sot, a very brute; ignorant, foolish and beast are joined together in Psalm 73.22. Folly is the common name of sin, and so is fools the name of sinners in the Scripture: 'Ye fools, when will ye be wise?' (Psalm 94.8)

4. *Sin has degraded man and made him a beast.* It is true, he has the shape of a man, but, alas! he is degenerated into a bestial and beastly nature.

5. *Sin has separated man from God in a moral sense.* Though by nature we are his offspring and 'in him we live, and move, and have our being' (Acts 17.28), yet morally and spiritually sinners are separated from God and are without God. This is a great injury; indeed, it is the greatest. For since God is man's chiefest good, to be separated from him must be his greatest evil and loss. It has separated man from the sight of God, from the life of God (Ephesians 4.18), from the love of God, from communion with God, and from the covenant relationship in which he stood to God.

Sin has brought on man that eternal death, damnation. In this life, man, by reason of sin, is in deaths often, but in the life to come he is in death for ever. If sin had only wronged man in this life, which is but for a moment, it would not have been so serious. But sin's miserable effects are everlasting: if mercy does not prevent, the wicked will die and rise to die again, the second and a worse death. There is a resurrection to life for the righteous, the children of the resurrection; and for the wicked a resurrection to condemnation or to death--for this is opposed to life (John 5.29).

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These things being so, beside others which might be considered, it cannot but be extremely useful to let men see what sin is: how prodigiously vile, how deadly mischievous, and therefore how monstrously ugly and odious a thing sin is. Thus a way may be made

- (1) For admiring the free and rich grace of God.
- (2) For believing in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- (3) For vindicating the holy, just and good law of God, and his condemnation of sinners for breaking it.
- (4) For hating sin, and repenting for and from it, thereby taking a holy, just and good revenge on it and ourselves.
- (5) That we may love and serve God at a better rate than we ever did in the little and short time of innocence itself.
- (6) And, lastly, that this black spot may serve to set off the admirable, incomparable and transcendent beauty of holiness.

— Excerpts from Ralph Venning (1621-74), *The Sinfulness of Sin*.

<b>Charles Hodge on Sanctification</b>	
<b>Justification (Salvation)</b>	<b>Sanctification</b>
a transient act [i.e., one occurring in a brief moment of time]	a progressive work, occurring throughout the believer's lifetime
a forensic act [having to do with a court of law], God acting as judge, declaring justice satisfied so far as the believing sinner is concerned	an effect resulting from a divine cause
Objective: changes, or declares to be changed, the relation of the sinner to the justice of God	Subjective: involves a change of character within each individual believer
founded on what Christ has done for us	the effect of what He does in us
complete and the same in all	more complete in some than in others