

Lebanon

Insight Into

July / August 2020



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Insight Into

General Information

Insight Into is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, **Insight Into** seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

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MEDITATION

Blessed Afflictions

*“It is good for me that I have been afflicted;
that I might learn Thy statutes” (Psalm 119:71).*

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg

As fallen human beings, we do not really know in a spiritual sense what a true blessing is. We can be very happy in life, not experiencing many problems, living very comfortably, and as a result we may become very shallow and artificial. And when we die, after living such a “good” life, we may then receive the curse that we never felt was on us, but in actuality was. On the other hand, we may encounter much misery in our lives and benefit spiritually from it. Let me explain.

I do not mean to state the obvious here, that difficulties often make people more mature and that problems can turn out to be a great advantage. We all know that some very fine people are formed by a life full of difficulties. I also do not wish to focus on those who become very religious by their suffering. That is also understandable. People need a god to help them and desire comfort from somewhere. Some may then create their own god and soothe themselves with a religion they can benefit from. We all realize that that does not help in the long term either.

I read in the Word of God that afflictions can do much better things for us. If blessed by God, suffering can really benefit us by bringing us to our knees and letting us feel our sins. That is a good result! It may make us feel unworthy of God’s blessings and cause us to realize that we need more than God’s help. We need forgiveness for our sins. Afflictions can rid us of the shallow Christianity that does not give salvation and does not bring about a true conversion.

We may first rebel and rise up against God when we are in

trouble, but then we begin to see more and more of who God is and who we have been. If that is the case, we will weep more about sin itself than about its consequences. Then we have more hunger for God and forgiveness than we have for help and comfort. King David was blessed with such beneficial afflictions. He was already a child of God, but he learned more about God and himself through the trials God sent him.

Afflictions can also be a blessing in another way. Here I mean the afflictions that came upon the Lord Jesus. People thought He was cursed and deserted by God, and actually He was. But He went through this to save people from the real curse. Dear reader, you need the true faith in this Saviour to be delivered from the curse that is upon you because of your sins. Whether you are troubled by afflictions or not, seek your salvation in an afflicted Lord who suffered and died in order to save death-worthy ones.

“The miseries of our country ought to be very much the grief of our souls. A gracious spirit will be a public spirit, a tender spirit, a mourning spirit. It becomes us to lament the miseries of our fellow-creatures, much more to lay to heart the calamities of our country, and especially of the church of God, to grieve for the affliction of Joseph. Jeremiah had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, and, though the truth of his prophecy was questioned, yet he did not rejoice in the proof of the truth of it by the accomplishment of it, preferring the welfare of his country before his own reputation. If Jerusalem had repented and been spared, he would have been far from fretting as Jonah did. Jeremiah had many enemies in Judah and Jerusalem, that hated, and reproached, and persecuted him; and in the judgments brought upon them God reckoned with them for it and pleaded His prophet’s cause; yet he was far from rejoicing in it, so truly did he forgive his enemies and desire that God would forgive them.”

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714) on Jeremiah 8



Before the Raging Jordan

Rev. E. Hakvoort

There have been two moments during Israel's journey from Egypt to Canaan that they had to move forward but did not know how. The first was at the beginning of their journey when they stood before the Red Sea. There were the rocks on both sides, the Egyptians from behind, and the raging Red Sea before them. And how would they ever be able to cross with these difficulties? Yet, the Lord said unto Moses, *"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward"* (Exodus 14:15).

The second time was at the end of their journey through the wilderness. For forty years they had wandered in the wilderness, due to their own sin and rebellion against the Lord and His leading in their life. The number of people who died in the wilderness on account of rebellion was very great. When the men who could go to war at the end of the 40 years were numbered, then this number was almost the same as at the beginning--about 600,000 men. Apparently the growth in numbers over these 40 years of wasting death remained stagnant, fulfilling the judgment, *"Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness"* (Numbers 14:29). All the people 20 years and older had died in the wilderness as a bitter consequence of their sin. Finally, they came to the river Jordan which they had to cross, the last barrier before they could possess the Promised Land.

But that would still last another three full days, for we read in Joshua 3:2, *"And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host."* For three days they were encamped before the Jordan with the uncertainty of how to cross that raging river. You might reason that the Jordan was often not that deep and they later crossed it all the time when they went to Jerusalem. But that was certainly not the case at that moment, since the waters of the river were high. At that moment it seemed even

entirely impossible to cross the Jordan, for we read in verse 15 that the *“Jordan overfloweth all his banks at the time of harvest.”* And they didn’t know which dangers were all in the river Jordan. Oh, how would they ever be able to safely cross the raging river with their wives, children, flocks, and possessions?

The Lord had promised that He would go before them, but Israel could only see a raging river whose depth they did not know and whose deadly power they feared. And how then to go forward? It is true that the Lord could have parted the Jordan before them in His omnipotence. But now they had to cross it, based on the word of God.

Are there not touching parallels in these verses for us to make today? Maybe some are also asking that anxious question how to move forward according to God’s word, amidst the raging flood of illnesses and the coronavirus that has hit the shores of the world? There are many questions such as: How will it go? And when will the flood of this virus eventually end?

Yet, there are a few lessons in these verses. The first is that Israel had to learn to wait and watch the flood. That way they would learn to see their own impossibility and unworthiness to ever cross the river Jordan. When they would reflect on that which is past, they could only agree with God’s just judgment if He would let them all perish in the raging river Jordan.

Is that not the same with us in our days? When the Lord sanctifies the serious callings unto the heart, then He gives His people to reflect on the past. By uncovering grace, He then binds it upon their heart to learn experientially, *“Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, it is a people that do err in their heart and they have not known My ways”* (Psalm 95:10).

It is true that the world has increasingly left the Lord and His commandments. Sin is abounding more and more, and the leaders of our countries have even legalized many sins. Woe unto them who dare to stand up against it, calling sin what is now called good. But when the Lord opens the blind eyes, that becomes such a grief. Then I personally become the cause of it. With a broken heart we then may confess our sins and look for the Lord for mercy and help.

And there lies the second lesson. Before the brink of the river Jordan, Israel not only had to learn to reflect on the past, but also to trust on the Lord for the future. Because when they did not know anymore how to cross the Jordan, the Lord would know it. And He is never mistaken. As an unworthy one, in their impossibilities, they had to wait for the Lord. In that way of the wonder, He made a path for Israel, where there was no path

before, so that they could cross the Jordan.

What a wonder when an unworthy sinner may learn to sit still and hope in the Lord. That is only possible when we may look away from the raging waves of sin and its consequences, and to look unto Christ. All the waves and billows of God's wrath were poured over His soul, so that they may turn away from a people who cannot keep their life in their own hand anymore.

There it becomes true: *"My soul in silence waits for God, My Saviour He has proved; He only is my rock and tow'r; I never shall be moved"* (Psalter 162:1/Psalm 62). How then to cross this Jordan? How then to pass the flooding rivers of sin and its consequences? They do not know yet, but they may look unto the Lord for help and find all their salvation in Christ who gave His life for such rebels.

The coronavirus has left us with many questions still to be answered. Many have already tried to provide answers. Conspiracy theories that find the cause in others are like raging waves flooding us. May we seek and find the cause in ourselves, and may we also be given to look away from self and sin unto the Lord for mercy and help. Because only when we are in Christ are we safe. So that it may be true in that way, *"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward."* May the Lord sanctify the serious callings in that way!

"Humility is the great preserver of peace and order in all Christian churches and societies. Consequently, pride is the great disturber of them and the cause of most dissensions and breaches in the church."

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714) on 1 Peter 5

"Justification: God is said to *"cast sin behind His back"* (Isaiah 38:17), *"to hide His face from it"* (Psalm 51:9), which, and the like expressions, imply that the ground of our blessedness is not our innocency, or our not having sinned (a thing is, and is filthy, though covered; justification does not make the sin not to have been, or not to have been sin), but God's not laying it to our charge."

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714) on Romans 4

An Experimental Christian!

Rev. Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

The religion of the true believer is *experimental*--it is the religion of the *heart*. He has no dealings with an unknown imaginary God. He does not know God from the hearing of the ear, or from the reading of books, or from the religious conversation of others merely; but he knows Him from personal acquaintance, from *heartfelt experience*, from close and constant dealings.

There has been a manifestation of God in Christ to his soul, and with Job he can say, "*I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee*" (Job 42:5)! And with the converted Samaritans, "*Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world*" (John 4:42). Oh, to be a true, an experimental Christian!

The religion of the *ear*, or of the *eye*, or of the *imagination*, or of the *intellect* will not, and cannot bring the soul to heaven! The abodes of endless woe are peopled with souls who went down to its regions of despair with no better religion than this!

Oh, give me the sincere humility of the publican, the trembling faith of the diseased woman, the flowing tears of the penitent Magdalene, the last petition of the dying thief, rather than the most intellectual religion or the most gorgeous ceremonial that the mind ever invented, or the eye ever beheld.

"Kindness: Though Abner was David's enemy and opposed his coming to the throne, yet David would not oppose the preferment of him to this post of honour, which teaches us to render good for evil."
~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714) on 1 Chronicles 27

The Sin and Suffering of Incest

Rev. A. T. Vergunst

A few of the multiple stories

“Do you think the Lord will understand when I commit suicide? Every night my father comes into my bedroom. First, he prays with me and then tells me it is time to play together. I cannot live on anymore.”

“I hated summer vacation. I was expected to work on our family farm with the rest of my brothers and sisters. I didn’t mind the work, but my brothers made my life miserable. They sexually abused me in farm sheds and fields hidden from view of the house. I feel guilty, defiled, and worthless.”

“I lost my father through an ugly divorce. My uncle volunteered to mentor me and often took me to his house to relieve my mom. But instead of guiding me, he abused me many evenings I spent at his house. No one suspected him as he was a leader in our church until he was exposed.”

These are only a few examples from people I have dealt with over the years of ministry. Never did I expect that the horrible evil of incest is so widespread also in our own circles.

Reasons

Why write about this subject? One reason is to expose the evil that exists among us. Sadly, this evil is done by grandpas to grandchildren, by fathers to daughters or sons, by uncles to cousins, by brothers to younger siblings, sometimes generationally. However, abusers can also be mothers, sisters, or aunts. The raw reality is that only 7% of those abused are abused by total strangers.

Secondly, it is to protect our youth from this evil by clear instruction. Much incest in families begins with curiosity as well as ignorance about God’s boundaries. A third reason is to encourage those who are being

abused or have been abused to seek help. Often the abused are fearful or brainwashed by the abuser, and they feel trapped and totally alone. In this article, we will discuss only the first reason, exposing the sin of incest.

Taboo

The topic of our sexuality and sexual actions is a tender subject. This is even more true when it comes to the subject of incest and abuse. Yet, most of us don't realize that *not* giving clear biblical guidance in the aspects of sexual life *aids* the abusers! A counselor who works exclusively with jailed sex-offenders shared this startling insight: "Hundreds of convicted or exposed sex offenders have repeatedly stated to me that parents who neglect to instruct their children about sexual things are their best allies in their efforts to seduce and sexually molest children."

God doesn't treat the subject of incest as a taboo subject in Scripture. He draws attention to the incest situations that might easily happen among family members in Leviticus 18. He explicitly warns against the sexual sins that are today freely flaunted and promoted as right and good. He recorded various examples of sexual sin in Scripture (David, Amnon, Samson). He also inspired an entire book to set out the beauty and purity of sexuality in the marriage context (Song of Solomon). What God doesn't treat as taboo, we also shouldn't. Rather, we should speak with the same clarity and openness as He does in Scripture.

What is incest?

Incest is any sexual interactions between unmarried family members. God clearly says that such interactions are sinful. He commands: "*None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the LORD*" (Leviticus 18:6). To "*uncover their nakedness*" is referring to any sexual action and interaction between family members. He mentions fathers, mothers, sisters, daughters, aunts, brothers, uncles (Leviticus 18:6-18; Deuteronomy 27:20-23). The list is by no means exhaustive; it is illustrative of what kind of sexual interactions are forbidden and considered incest. When incest involves children and teens, it is child sexual abuse and is not only immoral, but also a criminal offense in most countries around the world.

For clarity's sake, sexual touching, hugging, kissing, caressing, and looking at a child in a state of undress are also forbidden by the Lord's command quoted above. For each of these activities already trespasses the boundary God has drawn to protect the privacy and dignity of each person.

Sexual activities among older family members (parents, uncles, aunts) are usually not motivated by sexual attraction. Often it is more about having power and control over the victim. Incest between siblings can

result from the emotional hunger that one or both children have as a result of being emotionally starved in their home by parents who neglect to give appropriate affection and attention, or a child who is consistently put down and belittled and never feels loved.

Incest is a serious sin as it not only trespasses the boundary God has established but also because it is so hugely destructive to the victims.

Is incest common?

Yes, sadly it is. Statistics are limited because sexual abuse in (church) families is vastly underreported. Sexual abuse of children is a problem of epidemic proportions. Of those who do report, statistics show that at least one in three or four girls is sexually abused, and at least one in six boys is sexually abused. In other words, in a catechism class of 20 teenagers, there are likely a few who have (or are) experiencing sexual abuse.

Though we often hear and warn about stranger-danger, the facts tell us something else: 7% of the abused are molested by a stranger, and 93% of the perpetrators are known by their victims. Most abusers are *trusted* family members or authority figures (teachers, church leaders, coaches, youth group leaders).

Incest is harmful

Sexual acts deeply affect our emotions and inner being. Even though society presents sexual interactions as casual and trivial, it is one of the biggest lies we are told to believe. The emotional and spiritual cost paid for any sexual encounter outside the marriage state are like burn wounds in first, second, or third degree. How deeply sexual sins affect the person varies greatly due to the age, nature, extent, and circumstances of the abuse. Yet each act of abuse damages the person who experiences it, will affect them in the remainder of their life, and may complicate a future marriage life. The vast majority of prostitutes are abuse victims. Many drug addicts are abuse victims. Many involved in pornography are abuse victims. Many young people who commit suicide do so to escape the horror of the pain of abuse.

Shattered trust

Incest is especially damaging because it takes place in the context of “safe” family relationships. In most cases the abuser is not a stranger. He or she is trusted by the child and/or the parents. There is no safety or security for a child who is harmed within the family setting. Betrayed trust is not easily overcome and often affects the abused person’s ability to form new and solid relationships. Little recognized is the huge spiritual harm experienced by the abused, especially when abuse takes place in families where God is acknowledged, church attendance takes place, and where the abuser is a “Christian” father or mother or family member, or even a church leader! The survivors of abuse struggle intensely to trust God.

Secrecy

Sexual abuse and/or incest by trusted family members are aided because of easy access and ample opportunities which are guarded by the cloak of secrecy. Secrecy empowers abusers and continues to create the environment in which boundary violations take place, for victims of incest are least likely to tell about the abuse when it involves a family member. This secrecy is often the reason that incest and abuse are generational.

Wounded hearts

Boys and girls who don't receive help to deal with sexual abuse grow up with wounded hearts that affect their personality development, behaviour, and even their future relationships. Here is a partial list of the most common results of incest and/or sexual abuse:

- Due to a sense of low self-worth or inability to stand up for oneself, some are or become re-victimized or trapped in abusive relationships or marriages.
- Many try to escape or numb the inner pain with self-harming behaviour (cutting, eating disorders, porn, or reckless behaviour, to mention a few).
- Anger and bitterness develop which repeatedly ruins relationships and marriage.
- Become an abuser to satisfy the desire for power over others.
- The tough guy/girl who keeps everyone at a distance.
- Others are introverts and live lonely lives.
- Others are partiers, going from relationship to relationship, following the cycle of draw-and-dump.
- Some struggle with revulsion of the gender of their abuser and find gay or lesbian relationships less intimidating.
- Others struggle in their marriages to enjoy God-given intimacy with their husband or wife.

Awareness

As families, are we aware of this silent suffering that could be taking place in your very home, school, and church? Are we aware that among us children and young adults are trampled and traumatized under the hands of abusers? It is not our calling to turn over every stone to see what is under it, but it is our high calling to prevent the vulnerable from being abused!

An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure

Prevention of this horrible evil is everyone's duty. How to prevent incest and abuse, and how to help the abused with this dark reality, will be the focus of a follow-up article.

(To be continued, the Lord willing)

Helplessness

“Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings” (Psalm 17:8).

Rev. J. C. Philpot (1802-1869)

How does the Lord, for the most part, show us our helplessness? By allowing us from time to time to come into those circumstances where we find temptation more than a match for us. The Lord is not the Author of sin—God forbid; but He takes care that we shall know by painful experience we have no power to keep ourselves, except He specially interpose by His own miraculous hand. And thus, in His providence, He permits us to come into certain spots and states where we have to learn most keenly our inability to stand for a single hour, unless we are upheld by divine power.

That was the way in which God dealt with Job. He had to teach him a certain lesson, his own helplessness; and to show him also the self-righteousness that was working naturally in his proud heart. But oh, what a way He took to teach Job this lesson! He permitted all those overwhelming circumstances to come upon him, which not only roused up the peevishness of his heart, of which he before was comparatively ignorant; but he shewed him also how completely helpless he was to keep himself, and how unable to stand, except the Lord Himself supported him by His own power. Now if we know anything of ourselves, we know this, that whenever the Lord has left us for a single moment to our own strength, we were unable to stand; that when any temptation presents itself suitable to our carnal mind, and God withheld His power to keep us, into that very temptation we fell headlong. I do not mean to say that it was into some gross outward sin.

We may learn what sin is, without falling headlong into the pit; we may draw near enough to the edge of the sewer to know its noisome smell, without tumbling into it; we may slip and stagger upon the brink without actually falling into the filthy pool. But all God’s people are made to know their natural proneness to evil; and seeing and feeling how infallibly they must fall, and how they always have fallen, when God did not specially preserve them, they come at length to learn their helplessness, not as a matter of doctrine merely, but as wrought in them as a divine conviction, that they cannot stand a single day nor a single hour, except the Lord Himself miraculously and supernaturally support them. A spiritual knowledge, then, of our complete helplessness is one prerequisite, one needful preliminary, before we can breathe forth the first branch of the petition in the text—*“Keep me.”*

The Relationship Between Leprosy and Sin

Exhorter Wulfert Floor (1818-1876)

Between the horrible plague of leprosy and the much more horrible plague of sin, we can find the following similarities:

1. This plague was of a highly contagious nature. It is the same with sin. It is a disease that has excluded the unconverted descendant of Adam from fellowship with the high God.

2. Leprosy was a repulsive and horrible disease. It is the same with sin. It makes man a horrible monster to the high God, as long as he wanders outside of Jesus.

3. Leprosy was of a spreading nature. One day you see it appear, and about seven or eight days later the disease has spread all over the body. It is the same with sin. It began in our first parents and has spread all over the world for six thousand years, because no one is free from it.

4. Leprosy consumed the flesh, so that even limbs fell off the body by mortification. It is the same with sin which continues to attack the body like a cancer. Yes, one sin is often the mother of the other. For example, first the unconverted sinner is a minor thief, and then becomes a greater one.

5. Leprosy was incurable for doctors. Those who had the plague were never sent to a physician but to the priest. However, he could not heal such a person, as that was only God's work. God's law reveals the plague of spiritual leprosy, for "*by the law is the knowledge of sin*" (Romans 3:20). Christ, the "*Emmanuel ... God with us*" (Matthew 1:23), is therefore the only Physician of leprous souls. The punishment that brings us peace was upon Him, "*and with His stripes we are healed*" (Isaiah 53:5).

6. If a leper had any healthy flesh anywhere, he was declared unclean. But if he was completely white with leprosy, then he was declared clean (Leviticus 13:12-13). If the sinner learns to flee to the cleansing blood of Jesus as a whole leper and completely unclean, such a person will be

declared clean.

In the above six cases, leprosy and sin have a very close relationship, but there are also cases in which leprosy and sin are very different.

1. Leprosy only corrupted the body. Sin throws both soul and body into hell.

2. One could be leprous and yet fear the Lord, but where spiritual leprosy is still a prevalent disease, the devil is fully served.

3. One could become leprous in his adult years but was not born with that disease. With spiritual leprosy, everyone has been born with this (Job 14:4; Psalm 51:7).

4. There were only a few lepers, but spiritual leprosy is general and has spread in every heart. Both the king and the beggar are ill with this disease. We will die forever if God's almighty hand does not come to save us by His miraculous omnipotence and grace.

5. One could be freed from his natural leprosy, yet could be lost after death. But those who are delivered from their spiritual leprosy will not perish forever, and no one will pluck them out of the hand of Christ (John 10:28).

However, the Lord, who has declared them clean here, will one time relieve them of all their diseases, and then take them up in complete salvation.

“Frequently, those that need reproof most, and deserve it best, though they have wit enough to discern a “tacit” one, have not grace enough to bear a “just” one.”

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714) on John 9

“If the scorner will not be recovered from his sin, the disease being inveterate, yet the simple will beware of venturing upon the sin which exposes men thus. If it cure not the infected, it may prevent the spreading of the infection. The reproof of wise men will be a means of good to themselves. They need not be smitten; a word to the wise is enough.”

~ Matthew Henry (1662-1714) on Proverbs 19

Fear Comes from the Invisible World

Elder Steve Timmer

Although the coronavirus (COVID-19) is too small to be seen, it should not be taken lightly. The devastating power of this virus has knocked out normalcy in society. It seems like the pause button has been pressed. Lockdowns have halted everything. Churches are closed, many businesses are closed, the roads are empty, and fear prevails.

The coronavirus is scary because it is invisible. Where is it hovering? To what is it attaching? We have no idea. The air, the people, and the objects in public areas are all possible viral carriers. Hobbies, interests, schools, weddings, and even funerals have to change due to fear of spreading the virus in this pandemic. What we used to consider essential and schedule our entire life around, we now see differently.

When all the visible people and objects around us are potentially shrouded by this invisible virus, we suddenly realize all our professed prosperity is fragile, and that we as creatures are frail. Food or essential items on the shelves at the grocery store can disappear in a matter of days. Our countries may be heading into a recession and even a depression. Many are suddenly out of work. For some, the reality of life and death comes closer when we hear of many in our own countries or maybe even our relatives who have succumbed to the virus.

Lessons from the invisible world

For instance, we come home after grocery shopping and wash our hands and our food, even though they look clean. During this pandemic, hand washing is common sense and also a prudent act. We cannot neglect it and thus risk being infected. **Wise people act not by sight, but by faith—faith in the truth.** COVID-19 is unseen, but it truly exists. Have you ever thought about how Scripture teaches us there is something more deadly than the coronavirus that we are to avoid?



<https://www.photocase.com/photos/3396465-fear-of-the-virus-man-with-mouth-guard-corona-virus-photocase-stock-photo>

Solomon warns us to stay as far away from sin as possible. *“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away”* (Proverbs 4:14-15). The virus may lead to physical death, but paths of wickedness lead to eternal death. Many significant things in life are invisible. However, we cannot ignore or deny their existence. Otherwise, we may be struck down by them in the end.

Symptoms of the virus

Each day in our local COVID-19 call center at the hospital, the following questions are asked: Do you have shortness of breath? Do you have a fever? Do you have a headache and sore throat? Have you been near anyone in the last month with confirmed COVID? Are you experiencing chills? Muscle aches? Do you have loss of smell or taste?

But what are the symptoms and effects of sin? **Sin is like a virus. Sins of the heart are invisible to the eye, but can be sensed by their effect on infected people.** Its power is devastating and we are all infected from conception (Psalm 51:5). The symptoms of a sinful heart are obvious according to the Bible. *“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers. Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents. Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them”* (Romans 1:29-32).

All these sins are common and prevalent in our days. These sins also live in our hearts. None of us dares to say that we are without any of these sinful deeds. The best of men are sinners. Sin has devastated human kind and all the creation; it groans in travail because of sin.

The invisible enemy

Unlike sin, COVID-19 is not universally fatal. Though its true mortality rate is a matter of debate, it is estimated by most experts to be about 1-3%. Have you ever thought about how sin that is not forgiven or repented of has a 100% fatality rate? Though we need to respect this virus, we ultimately should fear sin above everything else. *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren”* (James 1:13-16).

Though COVID-19 may lead to physical death, sin leads not only to physical death but also to spiritual death and eternal death. Its mortality rate if not cured is 100%. Part of the deadliness of the coronavirus lies in the fact that it is quite contagious and spreads rapidly through infected people coughing, sneezing, or

even talking. In the same way, sins like swearing spread rapidly and are extremely contagious. Evil communications corrupt good manners and the contagion of sin spreads most quickly where the fear of God is not known. Israel was commanded to be a separate people partially for this reason. When Esau chose Canaanites for his wives, it was to the grief of Isaac and Rebekah. They knew the result would be that their grandchildren and descendants departing more and more from God.

The crucial cure

There is no known cure for COVID-19, but (similar to other viruses) in many people the immune system may fight off the infection and they may recover. Sin is an infection we cannot overcome on our own. It's absolutely impossible. No human willpower, resolution, or decision can cure us from sin.



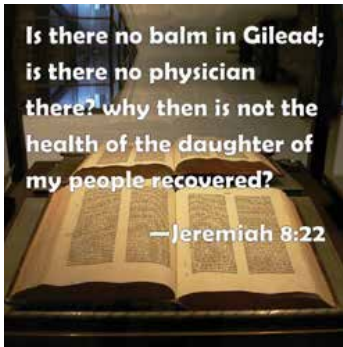
<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-51048366>

The good news is that there is a cure for sin that is freely available, outside of ourselves. God has sent His Son, the great and heavenly Physician, to cure sinners once and for all from the deadly power of sin. He breaks its dominion over their lives and the condemning power of guilt is removed. He is so willing to apply this cure. He gives repentance and faith to receive it. This cure in the heart takes place by an invisible miracle in the heart (regeneration), but the effects can and will be seen. It has already been received by millions who can testify to its cleansing power. As the woman with the issue of blood (likely a bleeding disorder), we must go to this heavenly Physician. Have you already received this free gift? Are you trusting in Him and looking unto Him as your only hope? Shouldn't this be the most important concern of your life?

A balm in Gilead

Jeremiah asked a very relevant question, *"Is there no balm in Gilead?"* (Jeremiah 8:22). It appears that he is referring to a sticky substance that was produced from some trees that had healing properties. (We find in creation some natural drugs such as willow tree bark which contains Salicin that reduces pain and swelling. This is the main ingredient in Aspirin). The implication is that—Yes--sin can be healed with one medicine!

"Is there no physician there?" (Jeremiah 8:22). Apparently, there were physicians in this area where medicine was to be found. There were prophets, like Elijah, who are sent of God to teach about a way of reconciliation with God. Matthew Henry comments: "These are instruments of healing of men, by showing them their evil, calling them to repentance, and directing where



<https://biblepic.com/jeremiah/8-22.htm>

to go for healing or pardon of sin; namely, to Christ, THE physician, and to His precious blood, shed for the remission of sins.”

“Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?” (Jeremiah 8:22), seeing there is balm in Gilead, and a physician there (the Lord Jesus Christ). Then how is it possible that such medicine is not made use of, and such a physician not applied to, that health might be restored? Jeremiah desired the eternal wellbeing of his hearers as do all true servants of God. Should we not flee to

Him in this world of uncertainty and death as God calls to us through this same prophet Jeremiah, *“O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD”* (Jeremiah 22:29)?

Matthew Henry also points to this Physician at the end of the dark chapter of Genesis 3: “Sin brought death into the world: if Adam had not sinned, he had not died. He gave way to temptation, but the Saviour withstood it. And how admirably the satisfaction of the Lord Jesus, by His death and sufferings, answered the sentence of death passed on our first parents and is given to all His children graciously!

1) **Did travail pains come with sin?** We read of the travail of Christ’s soul (Isaiah 53:11); and the pains of death He was held by, are so called (Acts 2:24).

2) **Did subjection come in with sin?** Christ was made under the law (Galatians 4:4).

3) **Did the curse come in with sin?** Christ was made a curse for us; He died a cursed death (Galatians 3:13).

4) **Did thorns come in with sin?** He was crowned with thorns for people like us, for ungodly ones.

5) **Did sweat come in with sin?** He sweated for us, as it had been great drops of blood.

6) **Did sorrow come in with sin?** He was a man of sorrows; His soul was, in His agony, exceeding sorrowful.

7) **Did death come in with sin?** He became obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8).

Thus is the plaster as wide as the wound. Blessed be God for His Son our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Are we one of His? For only those united to Him in an eternal covenant have the blessings mentioned above.

Editor’s note: Parts of this article came from a tract written by a Chinese house church leader in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Source: <https://www.chinapartnership.org/blog/2020/5/fear-comes-from-the-invisible-world-an-evangelistic-tract-from-a-chinese-house-church>)