

And the Devil did grin, for his darling sin; is pride that apes humility

the root of an impressive array of sins. Temptations to sin are not limited to our ineffective human ability to control our desires. Our weaknesses can be manipulated, and they are to a degree that astonishes most people when they discover the extent of the machinations. The great manipulator is Satan.

Sin is simply disobeying God. Lying & stealing & such acts go against God & the conscience He has given us & is sin. When we examine the original sin of Adam we conclude that he disobeyed God. God said do not eat of the tree. He didn't lie, didn't steal, didn't blaspheme, he just simply disobeyed.

Chapter 25:71 gives the human being the hope that is necessary to continue to live after feeling the cancerous guilt of sin gnawing at the soul: **"Whosoever repents & does righteous good deeds, then verily, they repent towards God with true repentance."** Do not waste another hour of precious life burdened with the relentless pressure of guilt. Arise anew. Seek forgiveness. You are forgiven. If your sins are as the stars of the sky or the sands of the beach, sincere repentance removes them all. **"And those who, when they commit an indecency or do injustices to their souls, remember God & ask forgiveness for their faults & Who forgives faults but God..."** (3:135)

One of the best explanations of repentance is one offered by Al-Ghazali, "It is a fire raging in the heart, a fissure within that does not heal." The sincere believer experiences both regret and pain in their heart for succumbing to disobedience – the fear of their Lord renders their heart asunder. **"They used to sleep but little of the night. And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness."** (51:17-18)

The mother of all sins is of living as if God does **not** exist. From there, all manner of subtle wickedness takes hold in us, as we deliberately plunge into the very vortex of sin & humiliation. The following Biblical cavalcade of sins reads as things that makes for Box Office hits in Hollywood: "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity & debauchery; idolatry & witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions & envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you as I did before, that those who live like this will **not** inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21) Take that warning seriously. Are your days/nights taken up viewing such filth as entertainment? Is it worth the risk to jeopardize that Inheritance?

Islam does not teach that we are born condemned sinners. Islam has no notion of "original sin," everyone is assumed to be a person of God until

proven otherwise. It does **not** place the blame on Adam & Eve...the first humans to sin. It is human nature to sin and the devil is going to try and trick us into committing sin just like he did with our fore-parents. Then after we sin we do like our fore-parents did and then turn to God in sincere repentance. This is a lesson of **original forgiveness & not** original sin.

The Prophet (p) did not pour fire & brimstone upon our heads as some preachers do. He said: **"If you do an evil deed, do also beside it a good deed, and it will be blotted out."** The Quran lists good works which are sufficient to cancel out one's sins & earn forgiveness. These include giving of alms, fasting, pilgrimage to the Kaaba (Mecca). When such deeds are performed according to the instructions of the Quran, the promise is given, **"God has prepared for them forgiveness & a vast reward."** (Surah 33:35). That is the amazing wonder of forgiveness, that we can find genuine relief from the inner torment of our hearts and are set free.

The Mercy of God is manifested in this verse:

"If God were to punish people for their wrong-doing, He would not leave, on the earth, a single living creature" (16:6)

Not one of us is sinless, and we must look to ourselves when we speak of sin first. **It is an awareness & acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God in all things that is the antidote to sin.**

God says (Quran 17:32): **"Nor come nigh (the sin of nearness) to adultery: for it is shameful & an evil, opening the road to other evils."** Prior to making a sinful decision, a series of circumstances occurs that makes temptation increasingly harder to resist. As temptation starts to build, we do have the power to change direction & avoid letting dangerous circumstances influence us toward sin. When we choose to stick with those tempting circumstances instead of turning away, we are guilty of the sin-before-the-sin...of getting too close, the point of seemingly no return. Think of it as the sin of nearness.

"...come not nigh (the sin-before-the-sin) to indecent deeds whether open or secret."(6:151) The sin-before-the-sin involves the little decisions that seem insignificant, and that set us up for temptation leading to the fateful "final step", which is the decision to commit the sinful act itself. If we are to overcome the enemy's strongholds that constantly pull us in the wrong direction, we have to come to a place of obedience. The word we are all afraid of is DISCIPLINE! We all know it's much easier to make a good decision now before the pressure begins to rise. We need to do everything possible to act while we have maximum control, instead

of waiting until our control dwindles, which is when sin occurs. We all know what these occasions look like.

You know what your stronghold is... a substance, caffeine, alcohol, food, work, gossip, sarcasm, control, fear, worry, money, sex, loneliness, feeling overwhelmed or incompetent. If Satan has a stronghold in your heart regarding food, then be aware of how you are feeding the supply lines of that stronghold. When you decide to stop at a fast food place, to walk into the kitchen, or to open the refrigerator door, you make it easier to be tempted to sin. Resisting these earlier steps cuts off the supply lines and weakens Satan's strongholds over time. That is why it gets easier each time you resist temptation.

Failing to eliminate stumbling blocks that lead to sin is a serious issue for many of us. Sexual temptation has presented itself to most of us at some time in our lives. When you get close to sexual temptation, the flesh lights up. With sexual sin, the longer we are in the presence of temptation, the less likely we are to escape without sinning. It is so much better to avoid the sin before the sin ... to run from the sin of nearness. Your smartphone has made you dumb with access to porn 24/7; move that sexual image out of your head; stop fantasizing; look away from cleavage & those tattooed parts; You can apply these "leading-up-to steps" to any area of struggle. The closer we get to the fleshly sensations of the sinful act, the harder it is to resist, especially when we are feeling down, lonely, bored, sad, overwhelmed, out of control, powerless, tired, beaten down, fill-in-the-blank for the feeling that cripples your ability to run from the sin of nearness.

Take notice of the small decisions that lead up to the actual wrong decision. Draw a little map or timeline, so you can see the options you had that would have taken you away from sin instead of staying on the course that led to the sinful decision you chose. Resist the sin of nearness to cut off the supply lines & strangle the strongholds Satan has in your life. At the end of it all there is One strength that we can hold fast to: GOD & He is the Forgiver.

Go & **sin no more**...Jesus' warning command! When sins are dear to us we are too prone to slide into them again. The act of repentance itself is often sweetened with the thought that it clears our account for a repetition of the same sin. For the one that falls into sin is **human**; that grieves at it, is a **saint**; that boasts of it, is a **devil**.

One **unpardonable sin** is to talk discouragingly to human souls, hungering for hope.

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& SIN

Sometimes it takes the **acid of a sin** To cleanse the clouded windows of our souls

We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. But mere time does **nothing** either to the **fact** or to the **guilt** of a sin. The greatest punishment of the unrepentant sinner is the conscience of sin. The mainstream have forgotten that the word **"sin"** actually occurs in the religious scriptures. We enjoy **"sinning"** oblivious to the dire consequences we incur... committing the oldest sins in the newest kinds of ways. True Repentance is repentance of sin as sin: not of this sin nor of that, but of the whole mass, the whole mess of sin. Repent of the sin of our nature as well as the sin of our practice. Bemoan sin within & without. Repent of sin itself as being an insult to God. Anything short of this is a mere **remorse**, & not a repentance which reaches to the bottom of the mischief. **Remorse is impotence**; it will sin again. Only repentance is strong; it can end everything. Whilst uttering your confession with your lips, you must feel the weight & hatefulness of sin on your soul. Repentance of the evil act & **not** of the evil heart, is like pumping water out of a leaky vessel, but forgetting to stop the leak; dam up the stream, but leave the fountain still flowing; remove the eruption from the skin, but leave the disease in the flesh. Sin is not to be ignored, nor minimized. It is the darkest experience in the history of the human race. It is the root of all the world's tragedies. It is that which makes **"conscience a thousand swords,"** **"the torture of an inward hell,"** **"the worm that gnaws at the soul."**

(Quran 39:53)

Say: “O My slaves who have transgressed & sinned against themselves! Despair not of the Mercy of God. Verily God forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

It is easy enough to be prudent, when nothing tempts you to stray, when without or within no voice of sin is luring your soul away; but it’s only a **negative virtue** until it is tried by fire.

The Fire of Sin probes in contemplation of laying waste the human soul. Sin paralyzes the will. The more sinful pleasures one enjoys, the more **meaningless** life becomes. Through sin the divine likeness is marred & well nigh obliterated. People’s physical powers are weakened, their mental capacities are lessened, their spiritual vision dimmed. Sinners spin into a dark night of the soul.

Man is born sinless, in a state of submission to God. By beginning to understand the nature of sin you can perform your own spiritual surgery & be cured. We do not sin simply because of Satan or because of social deprivation, stressful situations, bad influences, or any other external cause. Those things may tempt us to sin and make sinning easier, but when we commit sin – or even intend to commit sin – it is because we decide to sin. **Sin is an act of the will.**

We all have secrets – deep, dark truths about ourselves that we (rightfully) hide from everyone but God Himself, and that we must struggle daily to overcome. Certain sins have laid a hold of our lives for a discouragingly long time. Recognizing these failings, we erect barriers to conceal them from those around us. Yet the facades that arise from this reality should not always be easily dismissed; often, they are a sign of our desire for self-improvement rather than our need for self-deception. Recognizing our nakedness, we are ashamed of what it reveals. Like the Original humans, our efforts at concealment acknowledge that we are sinful, broken creatures. And that shame is the catalyst for our salvation.

St. Augustine writes with pain about what to many would seem trifling youthful incidents. There is a famous confession of how he and his friends shook the pears down from a pear tree and made off with them, not because they were hungry but for fun. For

(Quran 83:14)

Be careful. God warns: “Their hearts have been sealed by the sins they have accumulated.”

Augustine, the incident becomes a personal symbol of the **depravity of life without a conscience.**

The sinner becomes “worn out by anxieties & fears,” the familiar complaint of someone who lives for external things yet has no inner peace. When sin lets us alone we may let sin alone; but as sin is never less quiet than when it seems to be most quiet, and its waters are for the most part deep when they are still, so ought our contrivances against it to be vigorous at all times & in all ways. Sin will always remain sin even if in today’s world it is called “immature” or “sick.”

A person without shame is one blinded to the reality of their own imperfections. For the rest of us, aware of our own failings, must recognize that this awareness is a gift, not a curse. And so, we struggle onward – praying & hoping for the day when, through the forgiveness of God for those very failings we struggle so desperately to conceal, we will find ourselves no longer reliant on our masks; utterly & unabashedly naked once more.

The Prophet (p) in his Last Sermon left this crystal clear warning: “Beware of Satan, for the safety of your religion. He has lost all hope that he will ever be able to lead you astray in big things, so beware of following him in small things.” Big or small transgressions of the Divine Law: **BEWARE!** The ability to sin is not a power but a defect or infirmity.

Sin is not a private affair, it always touches someone else. Watch the agony in parents’ eyes & see the tears they have shed over the folly into which their children have fallen. Why, O youth, in the spring of your life do you allow the biting, bitter, freezing fingers of wintry sin to clutch at your heart & soul? Why, O youth, do you give up the fragrance of flowers which is an innocent life, for the stink of sin, a stink that makes every garbage dump feel it’s a perfumed garden?

To sin is a human business, to **justify** sins is a devilish business. So said Leo Tolstoy. The fact of sin raises an important question, why do people sin? Why do people act against what they know is right & good? Islam’s answer is twofold. First mankind has been created weak. Second, Satan tempts people to do what is wrong.

What are the sins that throw you into remorse & regret. Let’s pull back the logs of our everyday lives to

(Quran 4: 31)

Be hopeful. God says: “If you shun the great sins which you are forbidden, We will do away with your small sins & cause you to enter an honourable place of entering.”

control our appetites makes them good or evil. Without desires, our lives would be boring & practically useless. Desires serve as motivating forces in our lives. That is why God created the bodily mechanisms that stimulate desires within us. They are much needed. Sin takes our desires and makes liars out of them. They promise satisfaction and happiness, and they deliver cheap, fleeting, shallow stimulation that leaves us less content and less peaceful and less hopeful and more guilty, more restless, more discouraged, more enslaved. Sin is fighting for the throne of your soul; it is using your desires as betrayers; and it is turning your members into weapons of unrighteousness.

Our challenge, then, is to manage our desires. God expects us to seek & use His help to direct them into legitimate channels. The need to maintain self-control is one of the major teachings of Islam. Of all religions. We must properly control our desires so they do not become sinful lusts.

To summarize the scope of the “sin” problem: “The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, & the pride of life.” Improperly managed, unrestrained desires stimulate these basic categories of sin. Lust is nothing more than misdirected or improperly controlled desire. All lust is desire, but not all desire is lust. Lust is harmful desires that break the principles of God’s law. The law of God defines proper limits, for our behavior as well as for our thoughts. Laws forbidding us to steal or commit adultery place boundaries on our behaviour. The command not to covet places limits on how we think, how we control our desires.

Our human nature affects far more than do our conscious desires. It stimulates powerful feelings or emotions, some good, some evil. For instance, we are capable of intense love or bitter hatred. Emotions can be beneficial & wonderful, or they can be destructive & sinful. Feelings such as bitterness, envy, malice & jealousy are listed among the sinful works of the flesh.

Pride, the feeling or perception that one is superior in some way to others, destroys human relationships. The desire for **self-exaltation** lies at

expose the wormy underworld of the sins we so often tolerate in ourselves & those close to us. But is there a need to list sins? Prophet Muhammad (p) helps us to decipher what sin is: “**Righteousness is good morality. Sin is that which causes discomfort within your soul & which you dislike people to become informed of.**” It’s **anything that pricks your conscience.**

Humanity believes that God is very forgiving & accepting of sincere repentance, but should **not** take that Mercy for granted or assume that their sinful behaviour will be forgiven. God is not a joker. Got it?

All of us have to deal with sin & its tragic consequences in our lives. Understanding why we sin is a first step in overcoming & avoiding sin. Sin is a universal human problem. It’s something we all do. But have you ever stopped to ask why? Why can’t we make a studied decision not to sin & then never again disobey God?

We may be willing – have the desire – to do what is right, yet we fail because our resolve is weak; our flesh is susceptible to temptation. We capitulate to sin when inappropriate enticements are sufficiently appealing. What is the nature of our “flesh” (our physical existence, including our mind) that makes us so weak, that stimulates us to cave in to those desires?

Sin is generated through our human desires, because each one is tempted when they are drawn away by their own desires & enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. Sin springs from **uncontrolled** desires. Sin is the enemy, the rebel, the pretender to the throne. The main way sin does battle against us is to turn servants into traitors. It turns servant-desires into conspirators against the throne. Desires which were appointed by God to serve us – like desire for food, desire for drink, desire for sex, desire for rest, desire for friends, desire for approval – are attacked by sin and captured & corrupted & turned into betrayers. Then these desires – now in the service of sin instead of God – lure us to obey them. When that happens we hand over our members – eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, sexual organs, vocal cords – to serve these desires & their master, sin, and our members become weapons of unrighteousness. Our only hope for deliverance is the help & strength we receive through belief in God.

Even our own observations should confirm that the appetites & needs that are natural to our bodies have good & healthy purposes. If we felt no hunger for food, we would die of starvation. But that same desire, when **not properly controlled**, can lead to **overindulgence & gluttony.** The natural desires or appetites of the flesh are not in themselves sinful; the way we direct, manage or

Sin springs from UNcontrolled desires.