

**Russell Kelfer**

# **Some Men's Sins**

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**Series: I Timothy**

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## Some Men's Sins

*Father, You have commanded us to give thanks in everything. Some days, Father, we don't feel thankful, and yet, You have commanded us to give thanks. As we do, the miracle of Your grace unfolds and we begin to see the reality of why—why this life allows certain things we do not understand and certainly things we would not plan.*

*Grant us we pray as we study this, another difficult subject, that Your Spirit might be our teacher, Your Word our only authority, and Your precious name the only one to whom glory will be given.*

*In Jesus' name. Amen.*

The scene is a beautiful auditorium in heaven.

The occasion is a welcoming ceremony for Stanley Spiritual, who had just arrived from planet earth, after what many have come to call the most noteworthy Christian life in a generation.

His was a life of fruitfulness, a life of accomplishment, a life worthy of the acclaim he received. A graduate of *the* seminary, Stanley moved up the denominational ladder so quickly he appeared to be on an elevator. His first pastorate was a small one, but the church grew quickly and so did his reputation. He moved on to a slightly larger congregation, but after only two years, one of the largest, most successful flocks in the country heard of Stanley's success as an orator and called him to be their preaching pastor.

He soon became an expert in eschatology and began to write books on Christ's return. He lectured at seminaries and Christian colleges on church government and management. His books on church growth became best sellers, and before long, *no* one in the country was more sought after to speak at Christian gatherings than Stanley. His ministry appeared to be what everyone in Christian service prayed for, and his

faithfulness to give God glory for his accomplishments only further impressed those who viewed his life.

One of the many people affected by Stanley's ministry was Harry Humble. Harry lived in the same city where Sam preached and listened to him often. He was constantly convicted and often awed at the truths God gave this man of God. Harry was an electrician for a local electrical contractor and the father of five children. He never achieved much recognition in his life. Though he worked hard, prayed hard, and quietly shared Christ with those around him, not much of anyone noticed, and it was no wonder. He had very little charisma and no great evidences of what the world calls success.

He taught twelve-year olds in a small Sunday School class at a mission on the far east side of town for some twenty years. The mission never became self-supporting, and somehow most people considered it a financial drain. Nonetheless it kept going, and Harry stayed at his post, quietly, faithfully sharing Christ with those youngsters whose lives seemed to be caught up in such a seemingly hopeless web of despair.

The interesting thing is that both Stanley and Harry were called home to be with the Lord on the same day. And here they were, waiting for the welcoming ceremony to begin. (Granted, this illustration is theologically marginal, but true, nonetheless, to the spirit of the issue.)

As the angelic chorus began to sing, the two men were ushered on stage where, as cherubim fluttered overhead, Gabriel greeted them with open wings. Harry stepped back as though he did not feel worthy to be on stage at the same time as his hero, Stanley Spiritual. He hardly felt worthy of tying the man's shoes, let alone sharing the spotlight with him. But Gabriel, insistent angel that he is, wouldn't take no for an answer. So quietly Harry consented, and soon both men stood there motionless, as an awesome, fiery cloud descended and the brightness that engulfed them rendered them both speechless.

Stanley moved towards the cloud somewhat confidently, awaiting his "well done thou good and faithful servant". But before he could move far, Gabriel reached out and stopped

him. A voice thundered from the cloud, "Thou hast been faithful in the little things; I will make you ruler over many. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord". Stanley smiled somewhat conspicuously. Just then, Gabriel took Harry Humble by the hand, and ushered him into the presence of God. "Sorry, Sam," Gabe said sternly, "first, God wants to honor Harry. His has been a life of faithful servitude. Without acclaim, he has continued to labor. Without visible results, He has laid up treasure after treasure. And almost always...his heart has been pure." Looking at Harry, he said, "that night you sold your car and gave the money to that family who had no food, and led three of them to faith in Christ", Gabriel began, "you received no honor on earth, Harry; but God noticed."

"What about the time I gave that big gift to the missions fund?" Stanley reluctantly complained, "Don't I get a reward for that?" Quietly Gabriel answered, "No, Sam, you told everybody you knew about it. You even used it to get your deacon board to contribute more. Verily, verily, I say unto you; you've *had* your reward."

Again he turned his attention to Harry. "And those times you prayed all night and those times you fasted and prayed for the lost families where you work; God took note of that." Harry's head was bowed. He had no idea that God would notice such a small thing. Gabriel continued, "And Harry, the manner in which you've guarded your heart and kept it pure; God is pleased with that. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart."

Stan was about to interrupt again when Gabriel turned to him, looked him in the eye and said, "Sam, you were a man of great authority in the church. Legions of men looked to you as a spiritual leader. And you loved it. But Sam, *your heart is full of pride; so filled with ambition, so laced with impurity of thought.* The lustful thoughts you often had as you counseled the women who came to you. The anger you felt when one of the other pastors in town received more publicity than you. The selfishness you harbored in your heart when you didn't get your way at Board meetings. The bitterness you felt towards your publisher when he didn't like your new book. You thought no one knew, but God did. When that Christian

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leader up the street from you got into trouble, you gloated and used it condescendingly against him. Yet in your heart where God judges men, you were no better than he. You forgot the one thing God hates the most is hypocrisy.”

“Yes, Sam, you were the star of the show on planet earth. And you got lots of attention. That was your reward. Harry here, kept his heart pure, his motives right, and his labors faithful. In God’s eyes, he must receive the greater reward. God will honor you according to what He has done through you, but you must be seated now while we honor Harry. Yes, you were a hero on earth, Sam, and no one but God saw your heart, *but while some men’s sins are evident, others’ sins follow after.* And while some men’s good works go unnoticed, they will one day be revealed.”

And so the ceremony continued. And this one who had received no acclaim at all in his years of service now was showered with glory at the hand of God...while the one who *appeared on earth to be spiritually invincible, but whose heart retained wickedness, lust, and greed* stood on the sidelines unrecognized. There is justice, you see, with God. And Gabriel obviously had read I Timothy 5. Have you? It says this:

Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.

Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid.

(I Timothy 5:24,25)

Now please don’t get hung up in the theology of the illustration. That was only for emphasis. The basic principles are so true that they ought to cause us to fall to our knees in utter acknowledgment of the righteousness of God and the ultimate judgment that a righteous God must bring about to honor His Name. Paul wants to make *absolutely sure* that young Timothy and the church at Ephesus understands that. And he wants us to understand, as well.

The apostle was in his closing comments to young Timothy. He had carefully instructed him in such basic matters as how to care for the widows and the elderly in the church. Then he explained the relationship that the congregation ought to have with the pastors and elders. He said there was to be

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double honor paid to those whose labors were faithful and whose ministries were in the Word (verses 17,18). Those who needed to be rebuked were to be rebuked in public as a warning to others (verses 19-20). No one must be exalted to spiritual leadership too soon (verse 22), and all this must be done impartially, without any kind of prejudice or favoritism (verse 21). Then comes verse 23, which is a source of great concern for many, but needn't be. It says this:

No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

(I Timothy 5:23 NKJV)

No. It doesn't give the Christian license to drink, if that's what you're hoping for. Neither does it forbid it...that's for sure. We've covered that ground before. Timothy may have been caught up in a somewhat legalistic struggle between doing what his body needed and breaking a Nazarite type vow or yielding to something that he thought might cause a weaker brother to stumble. The issue wasn't alcohol. The issue was obedience. Apparently, young Tim had a problem with a nervous stomach or something similar, and he was instructed to drink a little wine as medication to cure the problem. For one reason or another, he was hesitant to take his medicine. Paul was instructing him to take care of his body and do what needed to be done. It was *not an instruction to drink for pleasure's sake*. It was an instruction to do what he had been counseled to do for the sake of his health, without being bound by some legalistic constraint.

Having said that, Paul moves into the matter of overt and covert sin. And here is an issue that is perhaps not adequately communicated in the Christian community in our age. Whenever it has been properly addressed, revivals have often ensued, and great times of moral transformation have resulted. The matter was not a complicated one, but it was an important one. Simply put, it had to do with passing judgment on ourselves and on those about us, *possibly those in the ministry* (since that's what he has been addressing up until now), based on external evidences only. Soon we begin to feel that, so long as *there is no obvious judgment in the physical realm, God has overlooked the sin...the assumption being that*

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*after all, God understands the wickedness of our hearts, and as long as we keep from affecting other people, he doesn't care.* Not so, Paul reminds us. There are simply two kinds of judgment and two kinds of rewards: those that are visibly seen on planet earth, and those that will not be evident until we stand before God. *Some men's sins will precede them, they will be openly displayed on the stage of life for all to judge. Other men's sins will follow after.* No one but God may know. *But that does not mean that God is looking the other way.* Likewise, some men's works attract great attention, and we assume that if man is impressed, God must be. This passage assures us that is not so. Let's read it again from the Amplified New Testament:

The sins of some men are conspicuous (openly evident to all eyes), going before them to the judgment [seat] and proclaiming their sentence in advance; but the sins of others appear later [following the offender to the bar of judgment and coming into view there].

So also, good deeds are evident and conspicuous, and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden [indefinitely]. (I Timothy 5:24,25 AMP)

The subject is sin. The object is judgment. The question is *when*. The secondary subject is good works. The object is rewards. The question is *when*. Our outline for this lesson looks like this:

I- The Seriousness of Sin

II- The Silent Sentinel

III- The Silent Voice Within

### THE SERIOUSNESS OF SIN

If you were to ask the question, "What's missing in the Christian world today that was present in the first century?" I think you might have to answer "sin". No, there's no shortage of the commodity. Sin abounds. But there is a shortage of preaching about its consequences. The word "sin" has almost become extinct. And even when we talk about "sins" we don't call them "sin". The reason is that the word sin is a black and white word with no grey area. If something is "sin", it's serious. We'd rather assume that there are relative offenses in life, and if we haven't murdered anyone or committed a crime



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worthy of either punishment by society or church discipline (which is almost extinct as well), that God probably isn't too offended. And if we can do what we do and still be accepted by the church, then surely God understands. And besides, as the world's values change, no doubt God bends with the times. Anyway, the word "sin" alienates people, and we don't want to run them off before they hear the Gospel.

Beloved, that *is* the Gospel. Sin is what makes salvation necessary. Sin is what caused Jesus to leave the courts of heaven and come to earth to die. Sin is what separates man from God and gives man no hope apart from redemption. And if it offends man, it is because it creates guilt, and man does not like guilt. Psychiatrists today will often tell you that sin is relative. (You may say, "I'll buy that; all my relatives sin".) What they mean is that it may be okay for you, even if it's not for someone else. Nothing is absolute. That's a lie.

Here's an absolute:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,  
(Romans 3:23 NKJV)

Here's another:

For the wages of sin is death, (Romans 6:23a NKJV)

Here's another:

The soul who sins shall die. (Ezekiel 18:20a NKJV)

Here's another:

...unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3c NKJV)

Here are some more.

A lie is an abomination to the Lord.  
(from Proverbs 6:16,17)

You shall not commit adultery. (Exodus 20:14 NKJV)

You shall not steal. (Exodus 20:15 NKJV)

Be anxious for nothing, (Philippians 4:6a NKJV)

In every thing give thanks; (I Thessalonians 5:18a NKJV)

And on and on and on it goes. Those are all absolutes. They will never change. They will *always* be the will of God. And to violate any of those is (here's our word) *sin*.

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The issue is that *all have sinned*. The Bible says “there is none righteous; no not one”. And the issue that each and every man, woman, boy and girl who ever lives or will live must face is not whether or not they want to accept Christ and find a better life, or whether or not they want to get to heaven. Those are by-products. The issue is whether or not they understand that *they are sinners*, and because they are sinners, *they have sinned*. They are not alone. *All have sinned*. But there is only one solution. That solution is found in the person of Jesus Christ. Some men's sins are evident. Others will follow after. But all have sinned. You say, “How do you know? Can you see men's hearts?” No. But God can. And God does. And God said it. That ought to settle it forever.

Until and unless the pulpits of the world return to preaching the reality of sin (*all are guilty*) and the result of sin (*total separation from God and eternity in hell*), we will be offering men and women a chance to join another club or cast their lot with another group and thus determine themselves to be “Christians”. Christians are those who have had their sins forgiven. Christians are those who recognized their utter depravity apart from God and their utter helplessness to save themselves, and so they accepted a gift that God gave them, that did for them what they could not do. It saved them. Why is that gospel so seldom preached? Because “to the Jew it is a stumbling block; and to the Gentile it is foolishness.” Man will buy any gospel but the Cross and accept any cause but sin. And so we make our message easy under the guise of reaching more people. But we don't reach them, and if we did, we wouldn't save them. Only the gospel saves. It is the power of God unto salvation. It is God dying for the sins of man. And it is man coming to a place where he knows nothing else will save him. Today's gospel offers man salvation as an alternative. Beloved, Christ is not an alternative. He is The Way. Apart from Him, *there are no alternatives*.

So the missing ingredient is sin. It wasn't with Paul. He never stopped preaching it. He said of himself “the greatest of sinners”. There appear to be two great things lacking in today's Christian message: “heaven” and “hell”. And there appears to be one word lacking: “sin”. Because of sin, every

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man or woman who has been born or will be is bound for eternity in hell. “H-E-L-L,” Not a pretty word. Not a pretty place. But ignoring it does not make it go away.

The missing ingredient is sin, and the missing element is that there are two kinds of sins: those that others can see, and those that only God can see. The lie is that the ones no one knows about are less of an offense to God. Not so. Sin is an offense to God—all sin. And impure thoughts, greedy thoughts, anxious thoughts, angry thoughts separate you from a holy God.

That's why Jesus was so clear in the Sermon on the Mount. He said lust in the heart was adultery to God. He said anger in the heart was murder to God. A holy God who cannot tolerate sin has placed in every believer's heart His own Spirit, and that Spirit “searches” the heart; it acts like a scanner looking for impurities. Some men's sins are evident. Everyone knows. Others are not so obvious...except to God.

But the day is coming when the sins of the heart will be exposed as clearly as if they had been done in the open. The day is coming when the microfilm of the heart will be developed and projected on the screen of heaven in full view. And it is according to *that slide slow* that we will be judged.

### THE SILENT SENTINEL

You and I are the guilty parties. We live in a world saturated by sin—overt sin and covert sin. All sin. We are the custodians of the trumpet described in Ezekiel, which is designed to warn men of the judgment. It says: “If we blow not the trumpet, their blood is on our hands.”<sup>1</sup> Our silence makes their alienation from God *our responsibility*. Because we know what is causing it and are unwilling to blow the trumpet, *their blood stains our fingers for eternity*. The trumpet blows only one note. It says “sin”. It tells men that they are lost because they are sinners, and they can only be saved by a Savior. And there is only one Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. The absence of personal evangelism in our day is the result of the absence of a clear understanding in the church that sin is the issue and Christ is the answer. The issue isn't changing society. The issue is

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<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel 33:6

changing lives. The issue isn't Christian living. The issue is living Christians. You and I are part of a band of believers who are by and large becoming "silent sentinels". We talk about everything but sin, and invite men to trust everything but a Savior. Their *blood is on our hands*.

### THE SILENT VOICE WITHIN

But there may be an even greater sound of silence within the Body of Christ today. It is the silent voice within. It is the absence of a holy hatred for sin in the life of the Christian. It is the absence of preaching on "holy hearts". It is the stifling of the "still small voice" that whispers "As He who has called you is holy...so be ye holy in *all...*"<sup>2</sup>

It is the unspoken assumption that what no one knows hurts no one. It is the redefining of holiness according to *external behavior*. When a great Christian leader is caught in some act of immorality or greed, we gasp (and well we should). But *never in a million years do we equate that sin with the revelation of our hidden thoughts that will one day be revealed*. One day the New Jerusalem Journal will have a picture of us on the front page and the headline will read:

CHRISTIAN'S THOUGHTS REVEALED: HE (OR SHE)  
IS NOT WHAT THEY PRETENDED TO BE...  
JUDGMENT MUST COME

The Spirit of God does not tolerate coddling sin in the mind and in the heart. He has told us "the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked". He has also told us "while man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart". In Psalm 90:8 (Amplified Bible) He said this:

Our iniquities, our secret heart and its sins [which we would so like to conceal even from ourselves], You have set in the [revealing] light of Your countenance.

In Romans 2:6, He writes that on that day, God by Jesus Christ will judge men in regard to the things which they conceal—their hidden thoughts.

Ecclesiastes 12:14 adds,

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter 1:15

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secret thing, whether it is good or evil. (AMP)

I Corinthians chapter 4 says it best.

So do not make any hasty or premature judgments before the time when the Lord comes [again], for He will both bring to light the secret things that are [now hidden] in darkness, and disclose and expose the [secret] aims (motives and purposes) of hearts. Then every man will receive his [due] commendation from God.

(I Corinthians 4:5 AMP)

Which brings us back to Paul's warning to Timothy.

Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later.

(I Timothy 5:24 NKJV)

Don't try to judge spirituality by popularity or prosperity or even productivity. And most of all *don't ever be satisfied with the level of purity and transparency in your own heart.* And don't ever get enamored with how vital you are to God because of how active you are in the kingdom. You and I are going to get to heaven and some of us are going to have to wait in the wings a long time while the Harry Humbles *we never knew*, quietly and with heads bowed, accept their "well done thou good and faithful" honors from a Holy God.

If our hearts are filled with lust and selfishness; if our motives are to be seen or blessed, if our inner thoughts would look more like the script to a soap opera than a tribute to a Holy God, then we have no business being impressed with our spirituality. God isn't. And we won't be when we stand before Him on that glorious day.

There is a solution. You and I can start with ourselves. We can begin today. We can get alone with God in the quiet place and examine our hearts in the secret place and begin to call sin, sin. We can see the anger we harbor as murder of the heart. We can see the lust we cling to as adultery of the heart. We can see the bitterness we so enjoy hiding in the recesses of our secret thoughts as a sin against a God who has delivered us and who has said "a bitter spirit, who can bear it". We can see the selfishness that motivates our relationship with the church in the light of a God who said "The Son of man has not

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come to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many". The same God who said, "As the Father hath sent Me, so send I you".

Every day we live, our concept of sin ought to become more intense. Things we tolerated a year ago in our lives ought not to be acceptable today. But we so often work in reverse. We come to Christ convicted of sin and wanting to be pleasing to a holy God. But the Christians around us seem to tolerate sin and make light of sin and overlook sin, they *seem happy*. The battle gets hard, and the enemy gets vicious; the flesh wins a few skirmishes, and we get discouraged. And so, instead of falling on our faces before God in abandonment, *we lower our standards, as though God had lowered His*. And little by little, we only look at the Scriptural absolutes that deal with *behavior*, and we ignore the ones that deal with the secret thoughts of the heart. And as we do, we *break the heart of God, and we lose spiritual power, the kind of power that God would use to change the world*.

We become satisfied with moral mediocrity. We watch things that we know contaminate our minds because *everybody else is doing it*. We read things that corrupt our thoughts and think nothing of it because *everybody else is doing it*. We go places we ought not to go *because everybody else is doing it*. We assume that God, in an effort to be relevant, has simply redefined holiness...that it is somewhere between what the Scriptures originally called sin and what the world has come to accept today. And because the church is uncertain and often quiet, we use that as our final excuse. "Did God really say that?" I think we've heard that line before? I think it was in a garden. And I think it was a snake who coined the phrase.

There is a missing word in society today. It is called "sin". As unpleasant a word as it is to the Christian, there is no more important word, because it is this word that separated us from God and caused Christ to die for us, and it is this word that separates us from His abiding presence in our lives and causes us to operate in this world in our own strength.

There is one more somewhat antiquated word that needs to be revived. It is the word "repent". It was the first word out

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of the mouth of John the Baptist. It was a word Jesus used often. It was a word Paul was not afraid of. It means to “turn around”. It means to “stop moving in a direction that offends God *and, whatever the cost, throw yourselves into the arms of your God and be willing to do whatever pleases Him.* It is a total change of direction. It is a word that preceded the great transforming revivals of days gone by. It is not a current word in Christianity. But it *is in God's vocabulary.*

And that's what the apostle was warning Timothy about. Some men's sins are the kind that everyone sees and knows about. And we can all stand in judgment and say, “I'm glad I'm not like those guys.” But one day, *unless we repent*, we will stand before a Holy God with a garbage can tied around our necks filled with the stuff we allowed to fill our hearts while we paraded around the Christian world, Bibles in hand, with super-spiritual looks on our faces. We will still be saved; but the blessing of holiness will not be ours.

Some men's sins are public, but some *follow after*. And make no mistake about it, God's computer won't malfunction and lose the information. It will be there, *and we will be judged accordingly*. Unless we repent and begin today to fast and pray and meditate on God's Word until we have gained the victory in those areas of our lives *no man sees*, we will one day stand in shame before a Holy God and His angels because we *were not what we pretended to be*.

Here, then, was Paul's warning paraphrased:

Some men's sins are obvious in this life. [You can count on it.]

But secret sins will one day be revealed. [You can count on that, too.]

And the good works men do in secret will one day be rewarded as well. (1 Timothy 5:25 paraphrase)

Because our God does not see as man sees. Man looks at the outward appearance, God looks on the heart.

Let's pray.

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*Father,*

*We stand before You convicted, sentenced by Your Word to a fresh understanding of how You view sin. We live in a world, Father, that soft pedals sin, and we're doing our part to do the same. That level of holiness that inhabited so many, in days gone by seems to have been lost to many of us. As long as we're accepted in society and being accepted in the church, we think we are okay, but it doesn't matter what we think. May we be reminded that some men's sins are evident, but others follow after, ours included. May we fall to our knees this day in holy repentance and ask You to purify our hearts, purify our motives and set us free.*

*In the name of our holy God we pray. Amen.*

**dtm** DISCIPLESHIP TAPE MINISTRIES, INC.

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10602 Mossbank, San Antonio, TX 78230

210-226-0000 or 1-800-375-7778

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