



## THE WAY OF THE TRANSGRESSOR

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Good morning and welcome. It's good to be with you and if you're just discovering our program, we're thrilled you did and hope you'll make it a regular part of your week. We will never ask you for money or try to sell you a product here. We are grateful if you will just take the time to listen and open the bible and study God's truth.

For today's study: Proverbs 13:15 says, "**Good understanding giveth favor but the way of transgressors is hard.**" Some translations say the way of the "unfaithful" and some say, "the treacherous". In any case, it refers to a person who lives an ungodly and sinful life. It means a person who does not deal honestly, morally, and righteously with the people and situations of life. They live by their own code and not the standard of truth and godliness as described in the word of God. Solomon says such a course ends in disaster and is rough in the meantime. How many pitfalls and sorrows would we avoid if we only remembered Solomon's wisdom. But we often don't, and we suffer because of it.

People believe the life of sin and the way of the world is the easy and care-free life. Because sins consequences are often not immediate and because they are sometimes subtle at first, the sinner thinks he sins with impunity and if he's clever enough, he can prove the preachers and the religionists wrong by enjoying his sin and ultimately escaping life without consequence. Such is a delusion, however. There is a payday, someday for sin and it may come in ways you're not accounting for.

One of Satan's most powerful deceptions is that serving God is hard and depressing, but living in sin is easy and leads to happiness. That's also his oldest ploy. In the twilight of time, when the world was new and man was innocent and pure, God instructed Adam to refrain from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, saying that the day he and his wife Eve ate of that tree, death would be the result. Despite how beautiful that tree may have physically appeared, perhaps Adam and Eve shuttered when they passed by; perhaps thought that they should even keep their distance with the warning of

God fresh upon Adam's ears. It was a tree to be dreaded and avoided. Eating its deadly fruit would change everything and God's warning was to be taken seriously and heeded.

Their perception of that tree changed when the crafty serpent, Satan came to Eve and painted that tree in a different light. Genesis 3:1 says: "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" The devil knew good and well what God had said. His purpose was to plant the seeds of doubt in Eve's mind and to ultimately convince her that she was missing out by refraining from that ripe and luscious fruit hanging there waiting to be picked and enjoyed. He pointed to its outward appearance; that it was pleasant to behold and implied that God was withholding something from her and her husband that would mean satisfaction and enjoyment. The woman quickly rehearsed what God had said, unsure in herself if they had really understood God. Perhaps he hadn't meant what they thought He did or didn't really mean what He said. And, of course, many thousands of years later, man hasn't changed very much and still doubts that God means what He says and thinks that to take God literally means to be denied pleasures and opportunities that should rightly be ours. With Eve's mind tainted by doubt, Satan was then able to convince her of His lie when He said "'you will not surely die." For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So, when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." The bible then says "their eyes were opened" but it was too late. The damage was done. The serpent had lured them in and then wrapped his coils around them and sunk his deadly fangs into their souls and the process of spiritual and ultimately physical death began. They learned too late that God is true and Satan a liar. In the years that followed, guilt, shame, pain, sweat, thorns and thistles, and a life of struggle and hardship were their lot. Satan's promises were hollow and empty, and their innocence was forever lost, and God's judgment came.

That's the way sin always works. James much later wrote in James 1:14-15, "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." The story of Adam and the subsequent story of every sinner testifies to the wisdom of Solomon in our text, Proverbs 13:15 "Good understanding giveth favor but the way of transgressors is hard." Many a person turns away from the Christian life because they say IT is too difficult. Christ did teach that the road that leads to life is straight and narrow and requires much sacrifice and dedication. It can even require giving your physical life. The life of discipleship is challenging but is also rich and rewarding. The difference between the way of the righteous and the way of the transgressor is the way of the righteous man leads from death to life, but the way of the sinner is a road to ruin and leads from life to death. Satan is still blinding people to the rewards of righteousness and the dark realities of sin. But the wages of sin have not decreased either and while a godly life is an investment that requires discipline and self-denial, it pays eternal dividends.

The bible says of the great Moses in Hebrews 11:24-26, "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward." (NIV) Moses had the wisdom when he was relatively young and at a crossroads in life to choose the path that led to lasting reward and not temporary pleasure. He realized that Satan only pays in counterfeit money, and he could see far enough down the road to know that a life of sin would leave him bankrupt. He looked

past today and laid up treasures in an eternal tomorrow. He knew, as Solomon much later said “The way of the transgressor is hard...”

I want to point five things about the life of sin that we need to know before we take that path. First, the way of the transgressor is THE WAY OF DELUSION. The irony of sin is the same today as it was in the Garden of Eden: that the way of sin is the way of enlightenment, the way of sophistication, and those who choose God’s path are ignorant fools. That’s what the devil implied to Eve. Eve’s sin began with deception. And operating under that deception, Eve believed that she could sin without consequence. But no sinner sins without consequence! No person breaks the laws of God with impunity. But the delusion of sin is that the sinner gets away with his or her sin and proves the preacher, the church, the bible, and God Himself wrong. However, as he continues in sin, he begins down a hole that grows deeper and darker and the noose slowly tightens.

Jesus told the famous story of the prodigal son who was lured to the far country by the promise of a fun, exciting, and rules-free life. He was tired of the boring life at home and living by the moral and spiritual principles his father had taught him to live by. There was a better life awaiting him out in the world and his father didn’t know what he was talking about. He received his inheritance and with a spring in his step and glad to be free of the shackles of a godly life, he went to that exciting place he had heard of where the wine freely flowed, the parties were endless, and the fun never stopped. Surely there was pleasure, money, opportunities he would have never known anything about back at home. But Jesus shows that that young man soon learned the way of the transgressor is hard. The parties DIDN’T last. The fun times DID come to an end. And sin left a hangover that wouldn’t go away. His inheritance wasted, his supposed friends gone, in time, he was reduced to the embarrassment and humiliation of slopping pigs and was hungry enough to eat the slop he was giving them. He realized what a fool he had been, and he needed to go home. But what did Jesus say happened before he resolved to get up and go home and beg his father’s forgiveness? Jesus said in Luke 15:17, “when he came to himself...” He had been living under a delusion. That’s the way it is with the sinner. That’s the way of the transgressor; the way of deception and delusion.

But the way of the transgressor is also THE WAY OF DEPENDANCY. It promises freedom but ends in spiritual slavery. That’s one of sin’s delusions: that the sinner has the autonomy to live as he pleases, always remaining in control, and able to stop when he wants to. But that’s not the true picture of sin. Proverbs 5:22 says, “His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, And he is caught in the cords of his sin.” That’s a powerful and vivid picture. Sin wraps its cords around the sinner. It entangles him or her. It weaves a web that becomes more and more tangled until he can’t get loose. That’s exactly what the apostle Peter said about the false teachers of his day who were leading people into sin. He said in 2 Peter 2:18-20, “For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.” That’s how the first drink to impress friends, to fit in, turns into a lifetime struggle with alcoholism and all the heartache it causes. That’s how the first hit, the first line, the first injection, turns into a lifetime struggle with addiction and its destructive effects. That’s how the first time watching a filthy movie turns into a lifetime struggle with lust and immorality. Marriages destroyed, children’s future’s shattered, career’s ruined... If a person never takes a drink, they’ll never become an alcoholic. I can promise that. If a person never accepts a

joint, or experiments with drugs, they'll never become an addict to cocaine or heroin or meth. Sin is enslaving and the way of the transgressor is the way of DEPENDENCY.

But then, the way of the transgressor is also THE WAY OF DRUDGERY. The excitement of sin wears off. That's why the bible says that Moses chose to suffer temporary mistreatment with the people of God in order to gain lasting reward instead of the pleasures of sin that last only for a season and then lead to ruin. The fun wears off and sin becomes a hard and hopeless life. Las Vegas, Reno, and Biloxi may glitter and glow, and you may see the ones who flock to those places for a few days and nights of sin and think it's not that bad but look a little closer and see the expressionless faces of people who over and over dump their money into a machine and pull the handle and almost can't stop. Or see the person who the next day is desperate because the bills are due, the bank account is drained because they gambled it all away. Our society has essentially decided to embrace the drug culture and wants you to believe that everybody's doing it and it is no big deal but look a little close and see the homeless person who is insane because of drugs have fried their mind and stolen their life. Look at that 25- or 30-year-old person with no teeth and hollow eyes because of meth. Look at the squalor and the filth and the horror of where little children are made to live and grow up while their parents are strung out on drugs. That's what the devil doesn't want you to notice. The television show, or the commercial or the movie portrays the satisfying sound of that can of beer opening or they show the good times rolling as the liquor is flowing – but they don't usually cut to the scene a few hours later of the twisted metal of a car wrapped around a tree and the bodies covered in sheets ready to be carried away to the funeral home. They picture promiscuity and sexual sin as no big deal – but they don't show you venereal disease, the emotional nightmare of a women who went through with an abortion and had enough conscience to later think about the fact she extinguished a life from inside her body. Sin suddenly isn't fun anymore. The way of the transgressor is the way of drudgery.

But it's also THE WAY OF DISGRACE. Sin eventually leaves in its wake shame and regret. It leads to embarrassment and a ruined name. Many a once respected name has become a hiss within a community because of the sins of a cheating businessman or woman, or because of the scandal that a person has created through low living. And the time may come when bitter tears of regret and even repentance may be shed but the respect of others is hard to win back. Perhaps even more terrible is how hard it is to reclaim the self-respect the sinner once had before he or she ruined their life. Preachers and elders have counseled countless people who live with regret and never forgive themselves when the realization and weight of their sin comes crashing down. God is willing to forgive but the shame of sin is so great that it leaves a lifetime of sometimes physical, but even more so, psychological and spiritual effects for that person and others to deal with.

There's a sordid story recorded in 2 Samuel 13 of how David's lust-driven son Amnon raped his own half-sister, Tamar. He defiled this beautiful young woman for his few moments of pleasure and gratification. Do you know what the bible says about him after that happened? It says in verse 15: "Then Amnon was filled with utter hatred for her; his hatred was stronger than the love he had felt." Was she any less beautiful after the deed was done? No, but sin had done its devastating work not only to her body to this man's heart and he could never look at her the same again. Verse 17 says "He "Then he called his servant who attended him, and said, "Here! Put this woman out, away from me, and bolt the door behind her."" He wanted her out of his sight. He didn't want to be reminded of the reality of his sin. But no matter how hard he may have tried, I doubt he could ever erase from his mind the horror on her face and the disgusting scene of what he did. And as for her, when Tamar was sent from his presence, the bible says she put ashes on her head and "went away crying bitterly." What a terrible picture. But that's the picture of sin. The way of the transgressor is the way of disgrace.

And then, the way of the transgressor is THE WAY OF DAMNATION. Every sinner who doesn't repent will meet the end of their sins in judgment. Sin leads to eternal ruin and condemnation. Remember, James said, "and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death." "The soul that sins will surely die." (Ezekiel 18:20) "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) Those who ignore the laws of God and live godless and immoral lives "will not inherit the kingdom of God", said Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:10. Are a few fleeting moments of pleasure worth an eternity of suffering in hell?

I have never heard of a person on their deathbed express regret for living a clean and moral life. I've never heard of a person transitioning to the next world moaning and trembling because they never stepped out on their husband or wife, or never tried drugs and alcohol, or never lied, swindled, and cheated other people. I've never even heard of a person who left this world groaning over the riches they never acquired and the life of fame and wealth they never achieved. But I've known of plenty who were ushered into that other world desperately trying to cling to life because they knew they'd foolishly wasted their days and years on things that didn't matter and now they had to meet God.

The way of the transgressor is hard. It's hard in this life and it's hard in judgment and eternity. Why not choose the path of life? Why not trust Christ to do what He said He would do and that is lay up a reward for you in heaven because you were willing to forego a few fleeting pleasures of earth to seize the everlasting prize. The pleasures of sin may be only for a season, but the psalmist said that pleasures at God's right are forevermore.

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