

ARE YOU AN ACCESSORY TO SIN?

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **What is sin?**
 - Any crime against God is sin.
 - All ungodliness - all unrighteousness is sin.
 - Sin is the rejection (in any form) of God's words, the rejection of the divine authority of Jesus and consequently of God Himself.
- **What is an accessory?**
 - A thing that is not essential in itself but can be added to something else in order to make it more destructive, have greater negative effect or attractive in a sinful way.
 - A person not actually or constructively present but contributing as an assistant or instigator to the commission of a crime or sin.
 - A person who knowing that a crime or sin has been committed aids or shelters the criminal or sinner with intent to defeat justice or avoid repentance.
 - A partner in crime or sin or a person whose influence is needed for a sin to be committed.

INTRODUCTION

As Christians, the sins that we are concerned about avoiding are not merely against men, but against God. Isaiah states that sin separates man from God (**Isaiah 59:2**). James writes that sin when it is full-grown brings death (**James 1:15**). And Paul states that the wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**).

The Holy Spirit makes it clear through these inspired men that sin can lead to eternal separation from God *and that sin is, therefore, serious and deadly business*.

Legally, if one supplies a murderer with a weapon knowing what the intent of the murderer is, then one will be found guilty of being an accessory to murder. If a person drives stolen car (which was used for a bank robbery), then he will be found guilty of being an accessory to the crime of robbery. There is also the crime of aiding and abetting a known felon that in essence is a crime of accessory. The law clearly makes provision to punish those who may have not committed the actual crime itself, but are involved to such a degree that the crime could not happen without their influence. Such a person is called an accessory to the crime (or partner in crime) and is held accountable and often punished for helping another do something that is wrong.

Just as being an accessory to a crime is in itself a crime, so also being an accessory to sin is in itself a sin. Committing a sin and being an accessory to sin are both equal in weight, such that we cannot blame others for the opportunities they give us to sin.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH SIN SPREAD

As Christians, the sins that we are concerned about avoiding are not merely against men, but against God. Isaiah states that sin separates man from God (**Isaiah 59:2**). James writes that sin when it is full-grown brings death (**James 1:15**). And Paul states that the wages of sin is death (**Romans 6:23**).

Recall, we stated that since sin has the ability to eternally separate man from God, we must deal with it as a *serious and deadly business*. Nevertheless, we need to understand the extent to which sin keep spreading throughout our home, society and lives.

Seneca, one of the purest moralists of Rome, who died in 65 A.D., says of his own time, *"All is full of criminality and vice; indeed much more of these is committed than can be remedied by force. A monstrous contest of abandoned wickedness is carried on. The lust of sin increases daily; and shame is daily more and more extinguished. Discarding respect for all that is good and sacred, lust rushes on wherever it will. Vice no longer hides itself. It stalks forth before all eyes. So public has abandoned wickedness become, and so openly does it flame up in the minds of all, that innocence is no longer seldom, but has wholly ceased to exist."*

We can see the root of Seneca's statement from the book of **Matthew**. **Matthew 24:12**¹² *And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.* Though the world always lies in wickedness, yet there are some times in which it may be said, that *iniquity does* in a special manner abound; as when it is more extensive than ordinary, as in the old world, when *all flesh had corrupted their way*; and when it is more *excessive* than ordinary, when *violence is risen up to a rod of wickedness* (**Ezekiel 7:11**¹¹ *Violence has risen up into a rod of wickedness; none of them shall remain, none of their multitude, none of them; nor shall there be wailing for them*), when iniquity abounds, seducing iniquity, persecuting iniquity, this zeal towards God, the love for God and the grace commonly waxes cold. Christians begin to be shy and suspicious one of another, affections are alienated, distances created, parties made, and so love comes to nothing. There shall be such a great decay of love; this love is grown cold.

HOW WE CAN BE AN ACCESSORY TO SIN

How does the Bible say that we can be an accessory to sin? People do not commit sin often alone. They need the countenance of others. They "join hand in hand," and become confederate in iniquity. Let's consider some cases that reveals how we can be an accessory to sin.

1. **David's adultery with Bathsheba (II Samuel 11:1-4)** - From the roof of David's palace, one evening, upon rising from his bed, he walked on the roof of his palace. On a nearby roof, he saw a woman bathing. Seeing her, David was filled with a lust that overwhelmed his conscience. His inquiries revealed her to be Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, one of David's most loyal soldiers. The Holy Spirit spares us many of the details concerning the motives and the actions that followed. Very briefly, the Scriptures record the facts of his sin. David sent for Bathsheba. *She did not refuse his request*, and they committed adultery together.
 - David was certainly guilty of lust and adultery. (**Cf. Matthew 5:28**).
 - Bathsheba was an accessory to David's sin. She was guilty of provoking a lustful David by our seductive appearance and position.
 - Bathsheba was guilty of not saying no to David's lustful desire and not fleeing from sexual sin (**Cf. Genesis 39: 7- 13; I Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22**).

2. **David and Joab joint act of murder (II Samuel 11:14 - 16)** - Pregnancy resulted from the sin of David and Bathsheba. David attempted to hide his sin. He called Uriah from the field of battle; attempted to get Uriah drunk; *commanded Joab to put Uriah in the hottest part of the battle and then withdraw the army.* As a result of this action, Uriah was killed. Joab's next dispatch told David of the death of his servant Uriah. David and Joab rationalized the death of Uriah as a result of battle which we all know was not.
 - David was certainly guilty of murder.
 - Joab was an accessory to David's sin. Joab was guilty of consenting to David's murderous request.
 - Joab was guilty of murder.
3. **The daughter of Herodias and Herod in the death of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:6 -10; Mark 6:25)** - Herodias desired for John the Baptist to be killed. Her accessories were her daughter and Herod. Herodias instructed of her daughter to request for John's death. Her mother, like some parents, was her counsellor to do wickedly. Her mother instructed her and encourages her in sin. Herodias daughter contrives to harden Herod in murder by engaging him in the murder of John.
4. **Pilate in the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:17-26 ; Mark 15:9-15 ; Luke 23:13-25; John 19:13-16)** - The people desired the death of Jesus. Pilate was their accessory. Pilate proposed to the people to have Jesus *released*; he was convinced of His innocency, and that the prosecution was malicious; *yet had not the courage to acquit him, as he ought to have done, by his own power, but would have Him released by the people's election, and so he hoped to satisfy both his own conscience, and the people too; whereas, finding no fault in Him, he ought not to have put Him upon the country, or brought Him into peril of his life.* But such little tricks and artifices as these, to trim the matter, and to keep in with conscience and the world too, are the common practice of those that seek more to please men than God. Pilate thinks to trim the matter, and to pacify both the people and his own conscience too, by *doing it*, and yet *disowning it*, *acting the thing*, and yet *acquitting* himself from it at the same time.
5. **Paul in stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58)** - *and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*
 - Stephen was stoned by the people.
 - The witnesses were their first accessory.
 - Stephen was their second accessory. Look at the phrase - *at a young man's feet ...* - that is, they procured him to take care of their garments. His whole heart was in this persecution of Stephen; which he confirmed in **Acts 22:20** ²⁰ *And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'*
6. **Christians In Wrong Approach To Restoring One Overtaken In A Sin (Gal 6:1)** - *Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.*

If a man be overtaken in a fault, that is, be brought to sin by the surprise of temptation. It is one thing to overtake a fault through careful or skilful planning and deliberation, and a full resolution in sin, and another thing to be overtaken in a fault. The latter is the case here supposed, and herein the apostle shows that great tenderness should be used. Those who are spiritual, by whom is meant (*elders, deacons, evangelists, counsellors, youths leaders, zonal leaders, committee lead, group leaders, aged women and men, women leaders*); these must restore such a one with the spirit of meekness.

The duty we are directed to—to restore such; we should labour, by faithful reproofs, and pertinent and seasonable councils, to bring them to repentance. The original word, *katartizete*, signifies to set in joint, as a dislocated bone; accordingly we should endeavour to set them in joint again, to bring them to themselves, by convincing them of their sin and error, persuading them to return to their duty, comforting them in a sense of pardoning mercy thereupon, and having thus recovered them, confirming our love to them.

The manner wherein this is to be done: With the spirit of meekness; not in wrath and passion, as those who triumph in a brother's falls, but with meekness, as those who rather mourn for them. Many needful reproofs lose their efficacy by being given in wrath; but when they are managed with calmness and tenderness, and appear to proceed from sincere affection and concern for the welfare of those to whom they are given, they are likely to make a due impression.

A very good reason why this should be done with meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. We ought to deal very tenderly with those who are overtaken in sin, because we none of us know but it may some time or other be our own case. We also may be tempted, yea, and overcome by the temptation; and therefore, if we rightly consider ourselves, this will dispose us to do by others as we desire to be done by in such a case.

What if we use wrath and pride to attempt to restore such a one? What if we use a kind of passion to attempt to restore such a one – a passion as those who triumph in a brother's falls? What if we do not consider that we could also be tempted as such a one? Then we have become an accessory to the further increase in the sin of such a one.

From these cases we have considered, we can draw a list of things we do that makes us accessories to sin. However, this list was created from the picture drawn in the book of Romans. **Romans 1:18, 21, 29 - 32** ¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ²¹because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, ³⁰backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³²who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Let's have a look at the list:

1. We take pleasure in seeing others take the same path to ruin. Men of the world universally approve the spirit of the world, and are pleased to see one another act it out without the least reserve; though they know it is infinitely displeasing to God.
2. Those who are worldly minded love to see others worldly minded. Those who despise Christianity - love to see others despise it. Those who disbelieve the existence of God are pleased to hear others say that they believe there is no God. Those who disbelieve the inspiration of the Bible are pleased to hear others say that they believe it is a cunningly devised fable. Those who disbelieve the doctrine of Jesus Christ are always pleased to hear others say that they disbelieve He has a doctrine (**II John 9 - 10**).
3. Those who teach doctrines directly tending to a sinful course (**Cf. Matthew 15:5-6**). But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received

from me is a gift to God”— 6 then he need not honor his father or mother.’ Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.

4. Those who endeavour to allure men to sin, either by formal persuasions or by administering objects and occasions fit to draw forth a man’s corrupt affections; such as the provoking of a lustful person by seductive dressing and appearance, filthy discourse, books, and pictures even displaying such on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Whataspp, Twitter....).
5. Those who encourage men in their sins - Those who take pleasure in mocking others in their time of crisis and ruins. Consider case of Hannah (**1 Samuel 1:1-28**). In a time when a woman’s ability to bear children was held in high esteem, Hannah was barren. Several burdens came from this affliction. In those days barrenness brought a stigma. We can imagine how some women who knew her made cutting remarks about her. If Hannah had given in to those cutting remarks and become depressed, she would have lost faith in God and thus had sinned and those who made such remarks would have become an accessory to her sin. Can we say we are not caught in this web today?
6. Those who take pleasure in other men’s sins and thus cause many men to sin to do them a pleasure.
7. Those who knows the truth but cover it up.
8. Those who do not pray for someone in sin.
9. Those who do not approach someone in sin, in the pattern of godly restoration.
10. Those who do not make efforts to build their homes (*spiritually and physically*) to reflect the transformation which God’s words has brings (**Romans 1:16**).
11. Those who take pleasure in spreading “intentionally-harmful-rumors” about a person, you're telling people things that will hurt his/her feelings or ruin his/her reputation.
12. A congregation or her leaders who refuse to, by deep godly research, convicts the members of what is the truth towards holiness and establish a firm stand and solution towards it. Consider the case of immodest dressing, drinking of alcohol, smoking, marital violence and so on.

Reviewing the cases and list stated, we have a question to ask ourselves - *are we this kind of person being described?* We all are to individually answer this.

CONCLUSION

Gill John’s Commentary puts an accessory to sin in this way: *that no man is suspected of a thing but he has done it; and if he has not done the whole of it, he has done part of it, and if he has not done part of it, he has thought in his heart to do it, and if he has not thought in his heart to do it, he has seen others do it, and has rejoiced.*

To be an accessory to sin is also an act of sin. As detailed in **Romans 1**, those who were capable of knowing the will of God, yet take delight in those who commit sin; and hence, encourage them in it, and excite them to it has made themselves an accessory to sin. Such is a grievous aggravation of the sin. It greatly heightens guilt when we excite others to do it, and seduce them from the ways of innocence.

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