

SIN IS MORE DEADLY THAN HIV/AIDS

“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” [Rom. 6:23]

*HIV/AIDS is perhaps the deadliest threat to human lives today. According to the **Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS**, there are estimated to be 36.1 million people who are living with HIV/AIDS [statistics are as of the end of 2000]. Of this number, 34.7 million are adults, 16.4 million are women, and 1.4 million are children under 15 years of age. Since the epidemic was discovered in the 1980's, an estimated 21.8 million people have died from AIDS [Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome]. In the year 2000 alone, AIDS caused the death of an estimated 3 million people, including 1.3 million women and 500,000 children under 15. Today, approximately 95% of people living with HIV [Human Immunodeficiency Virus] are in the developing world.¹ The population of the world is currently estimated at about 6 billion. If 36.1 million people are living with HIV, then we can say that less than one percent of living human beings are HIV-infected.*

*Compare that with sin, which is transgression against the law of God [1 Jn 3:4]. According to scripture, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” [Rom. 3:23], and “there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” [Eccl. 7:20]. Therefore, **all 6 billion of us are sinners that are under the threat of death (both physical and spiritual) “for the wages of sin is death” [Rom. 6:23].** So, why do we spend billions of dollars on HIV/AIDS that threatens less than one percent of the population, while we turn a deaf ear to preachers who are asking us to renounce sin, which is a deadly threat to all of us?*

*In a way, we are living with sin-HIV. If we do not do something about it, it can degenerate into sin-AIDS that kills both body and soul. In today's lesson, we shall examine the subject of sin and show that, while **HIV/AIDS** is expensive to treat and remains incurable (so far), sin is only deadly if we leave it untreated. Yet, sin costs less to treat than the common cold! Let's find out.*

¹ Figures obtained from <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/stats.htm>

1. Sin and HIV/AIDS are alike!

Sin can be defined as any/all of the following:

a) Transgression

When we break any of the *Ten Commandments* [Ex. 20: 1-17], we have transgressed “for sin is the transgression of the law” [1 Jn 3:4]. According to James, “whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” [Jam. 2:10].

b) Unrighteousness

Mere mechanical compliance with the law is not enough. We should also have an attitude to obey the spirit of the law because “all unrighteousness is sin” [1 Jn 5:17].

c) Shirking one’s duty

James puts it aptly when he writes, “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” [Jam. 4:17]. God punished Eli the priest because he neglected to correct his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who were sleeping with female worshippers in God’s house [1 Sam. 2: 12-17, 22-23].

d) Anything done not from faith

Sometimes, we know what to do, based on the word of God, but because of our human failings, especially the fear of man, we act outside of faith, and “whatsoever is not of faith is sin” [Rom. 14:23]. Aaron knew in his heart that it was wrong to make the molten calf, but he did it because he was afraid of the people and “when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation and said, tomorrow is a feast to the Lord” [Ex. 32:1-5]. He could only have said that tongue-in-cheek!

e) The thought of foolishness

A fool is the person who thinks that there is no God, for “the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God” [Ps. 14:1], and “the thought of foolishness is sin” [Prov. 24:9]. The Rich Fool worshipped his wealth instead of using it to glorify God. That night, God struck him dead [Lk 12:16-20].

In fact, anything that God hates is sin, and it includes the following: “a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false

witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” [Prov. 6:16-19].

HIV is transmitted through an exchange of bodily fluids, particularly semen and blood. Therefore, the virus can be transmitted through sexual relations, or from mother to child during pregnancy, or from one person to another through contaminated needles and blood products.² On entering the body, HIV invades the white blood cells that defend the body against infection. Over time, as the virus spreads, the immune system becomes increasingly less able to fight off diseases and infections. Therefore, AIDS is not a disease, but a set of diseases that follows HIV infection, making the body unable to fight off other infections and diseases. It is these secondary infections that lead to devastating death rates among AIDS patients.³

Sin and HIV/AIDS share the following common characteristics:

a) Sources of infection

Just as HIV/AIDS can be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, so has sin been passed to us for “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” [Ps. 51: 5]. Sin came to us through Adam for “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” [Rom. 5:12].

A majority of AIDS patients got infected through sexual relations, a kind of self-inflicted injury. In like manner, we have used our human liberty “for an occasion to the flesh” and “the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these [among others]: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness” [Gal. 5:13, 19]. It was the lust of the eyes that drew Eve into the devil’s trap [Gen. 3:6] and David into adultery with Bathsheba [2 Sam. 11:2-4].

A third source of HIV/AIDS infection is through blood transfusion or use of contaminated needles. Jesus has said of unrepentant sinners, “ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do” [Jn 8:44]. Therefore, when we keep bad company, we are susceptible to sin. That is why we are advised:

My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole, as those that go down to the grave...My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path [Prov. 1:10-12,15]

b) Destruction of the immune system

² Jim Parker, *HIV & AIDS: Ending an Epidemic*, <http://www.doitnow.org/pages/h105.html>

³ *ibid.*

Just as HIV/AIDS destroys the patient's immune system, which then opens the body to secondary infections, so does sin open us to spiritual dangers because "whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him" [Eccl. 10:8]. This is how Paul describes the sin virus in our bodies:

I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members [Rom. 7: 18-19, 23].

We see from the foregoing that sin is spiritual HIV/AIDS. That is why, like AIDS, we should not treat sin lightly.

2. Consequences of sin

We inherited sin from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and we add our own sins everyday. When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour and became born-again, we were delivered from both our original sin and those sins that we had added up to our point of baptism. What follows thereafter? Any time we fall, we should get up because "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" [1 Jn 1:9]. When we claim that we have no sins or refuse to confess them, we can face the following consequences:

a) Death

First, we die *spiritually*. That is, we are spiritually separated from God, as happened to Adam and Eve who were expelled from the Garden of Eden (a spiritual abode) after their sin of disobedience [Gen. 3:24]. On Judgment Day, "the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" [Rev. 21:8].

Second, sin leads to *physical death*. When the Israelites believed the evil report of ten of the spies sent by Moses to spy on the Promised Land, God punished their unbelief with death, saying, "as for you, your carcasses they shall fall in this wilderness" [Num. 14:1-32]. A majority of AIDS patients acquired the condition through their lifestyles of sin, such as homosexuality, fornication and adultery. This is how Paul described the end of such people:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature;

and likewise also the men, leaving natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. ... Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death [Rom. 1: 26-27, 32]

b) Other consequences

Sin can bring shame and disgrace to us. A highly respected minister of God in Grenada has just been jailed for strangulating a teenage schoolgirl, a member of his congregation, who was beaten and sexually assaulted [Trinidad *Guardian* of Friday, December 14, 2001; p.11]. After Joshua's spectacular victory in Jericho, his troops were disgraced and defeated by tiny Ai because of the sin committed by Achan in the camp of the Israelites [**Josh. 7:1-21**].

Sin can also turn us into servants where we ought to be masters. During the time of Judge Ehud, the people of Israel "did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, ... So the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years" [**Judges 3:12,14**].

Unconfessed sin can also lead to unanswered prayers because "the Lord is far from the wicked; but He heareth the prayer of the righteous" [**Prov. 15:29**]. After pursuing David for years to kill him, Saul faced the Philistines in battle, and "when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" [**1 Sam. 28:6**].

In deed, just as HIV/AIDS kills by precipitating secondary infections, living in sin can attract both spiritual and physical problems for, "because of the mountain of Zion which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it" [**Lam. 5:18**].

3. Good news: sin is curable!

Although sin is curable, most of us do not rush for treatment "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily; therefore, the heart of man is fully set in them to do evil" [**Eccl. 8:11**]. However, "it shall not be well with the wicked...because he feareth not before God" [**v. 13**].

Happily, sin is simple to treat, for those who want to be healed, because "if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins: not only for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" [**1 Jn 2:1-2**]. In other words, Jesus has shed His blood to destroy both sin-HIV and sin-AIDS, and by His stripes, we have been healed [**Is. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24**].

Therefore, here is the simple course of treatment for sin, and we do not need any doctor to use it:

- a) *Accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Saviour* so that He can introduce you to His Father as His brother [**Jn 1:12**].
- b) *Acknowledge and confess your sins*. David said, “I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” [**Ps. 32:5**].
- c) *Be transformed by renewing your mind*, instead of conforming to the world, so that you “may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” [**Rom. 12:2**].
- d) *Draw near to God and He will draw near you*. Resist Satan and he will run away from you [**Jam. 4:7**].
- e) *Take a daily dose of the following “maintenance drugs”*:
 - ✓ Hide the word of God in your heart so that you do not sin against Him [**Ps. 119:11**], and to serve as a lamp to your feet and a light to your path [**v. 105**]
 - ✓ Guard and guide your tongue, which carries the power of life and death [**Prov. 18:21**]
 - ✓ Walk in the spirit [**Rom. 8:1-14**] and by faith [**2 Cor. 5:7**]
 - ✓ Avoid evil company [**Prov. 1:10-19; 1 Tim. 5:22**]
 - ✓ Exercise love [**1 Pet. 4:8**] and practise forgiveness [**Matt. 18:21-35**]
 - ✓ Cultivate the habit of confessing each moment you sin [**1 Jn 1:8-9**]

4. Conclusion

Sin is deadly and don't be deceived. You had better kill it before it kills you!