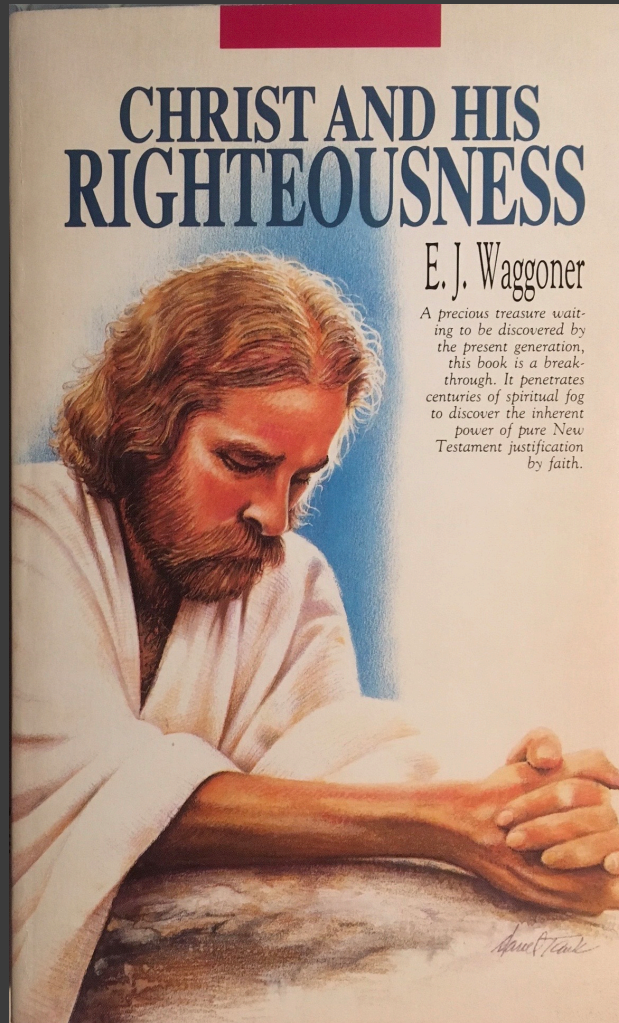


Last Generation Theology and the Nature of Sin

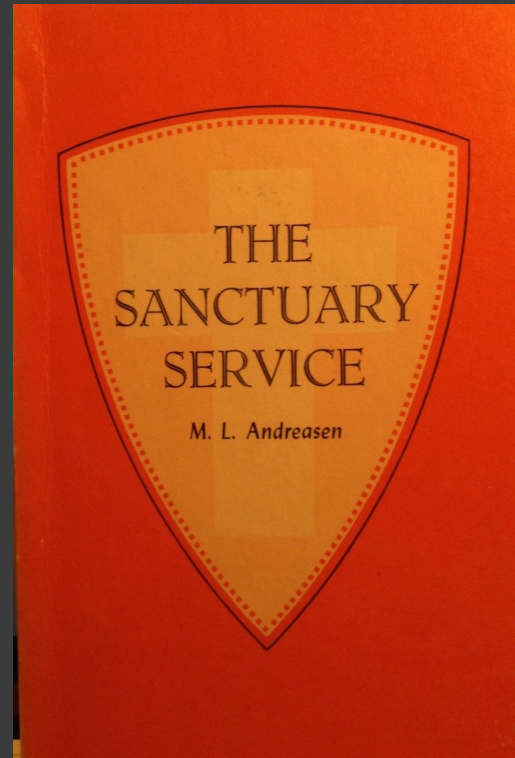
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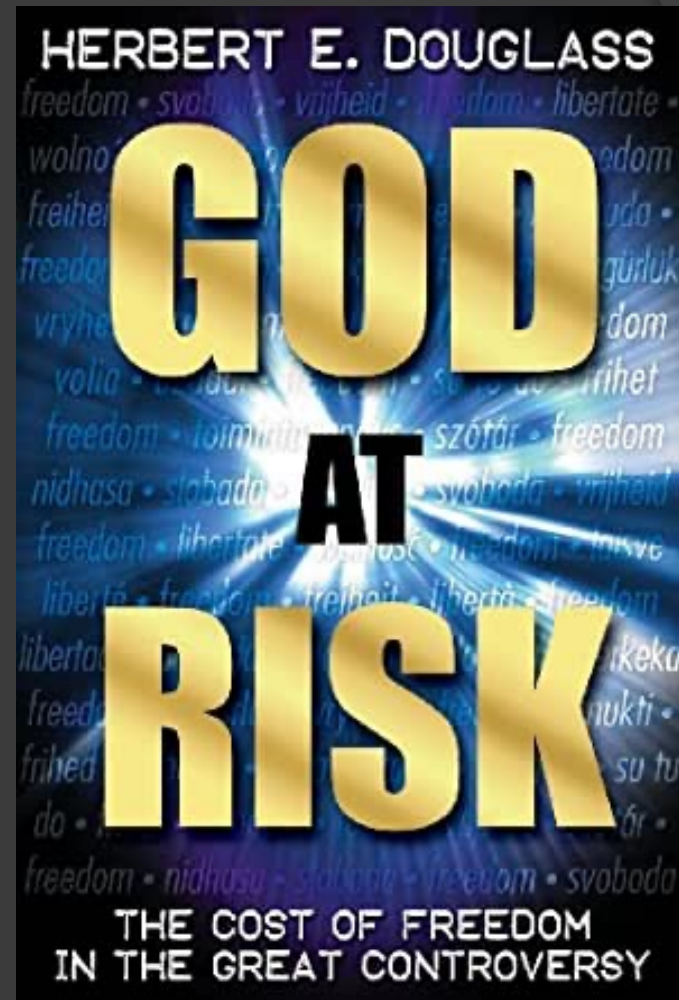
E. J. Waggoner



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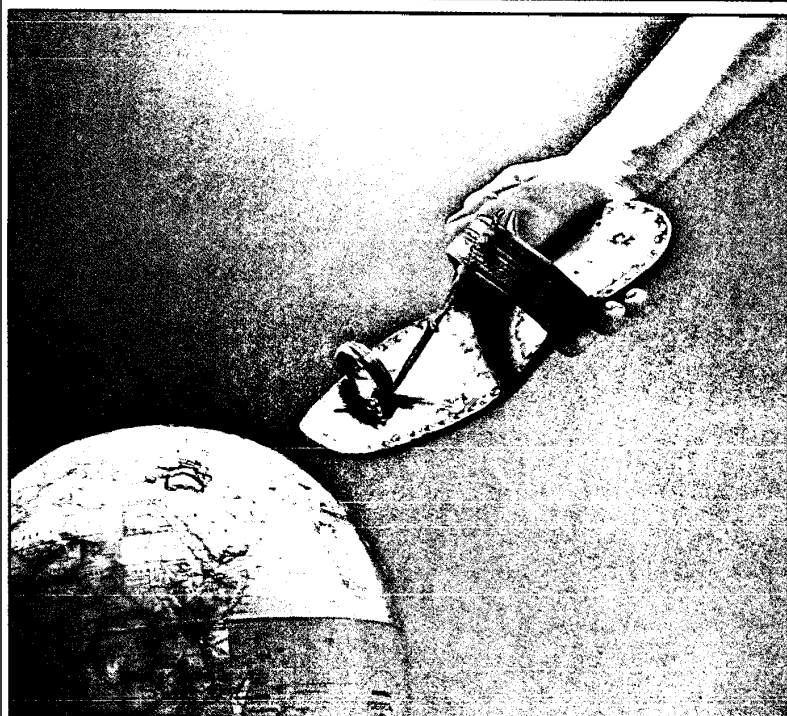
DAYBREAK SERIES



APRIL, MAY, JUNE, 1977

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

JESUS THE MODEL MAN



Adult Sabbath School lessons

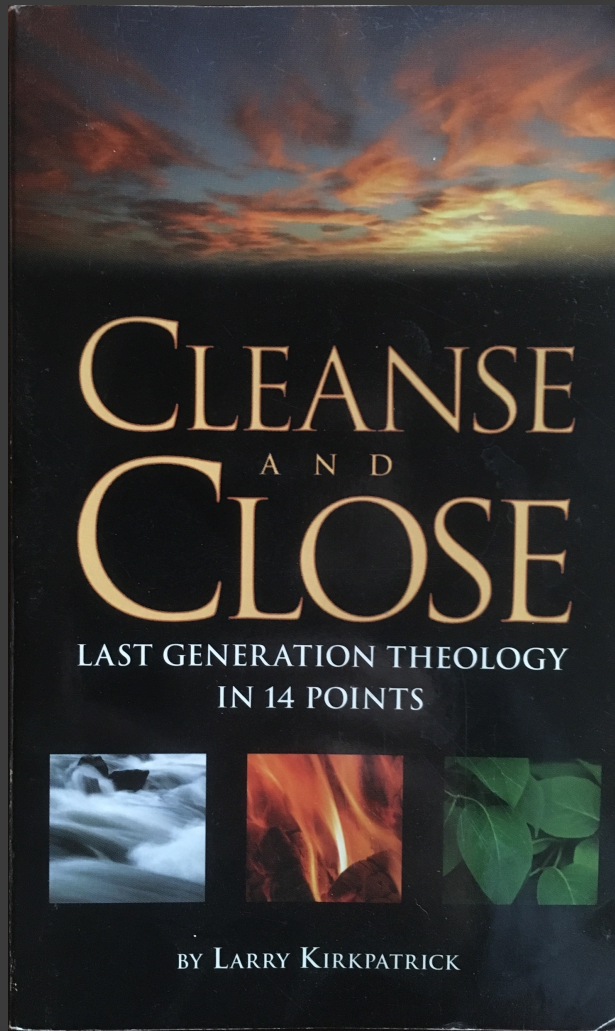
April, May, June
1977

Author:
Herbert E. Douglass

Lectures this week:

1. Last Generation Theology and the Nature of Sin
2. Last Generation Theology and the Meaning of Justification, Sanctification and Perfection
3. The Sufficiency of Christ's Atonement
4. Why the Delay of the Second Coming of Christ?

Key Components of *Last Generation Theology*



Larry Kirkpatrick

Key Components of *Last Generation Theology*

Human nature: limited concept of sin.

Inherited sinful tendencies are not sin or part of a definition of sin; only willful wrong behavior or decisions is sin.

Therefore, concupiscence (inherited sinful tendencies or inclinations) does not deprive someone of salvation.

(Pelagian and semi-Pelagian concept)

George Knight

It is important to recognize that an inadequate doctrine of sin will of necessity lead to an inadequate doctrine of salvation. Edward Vick correctly states that “the first element in Christian perfection [or any other aspects of salvation] is recognizing that we are sinners.” That, he points out, does not merely means that we recognize that we have committed sinful acts *a*, *b*, and *c*. “It means acknowledging that we are the kind of people who do such things. ... To recognize that we are sinners means that we recognize there is a power that lords it over us and prevents us from being what God intends us to be. That power is the power of *sin*.” *Consequently, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of the depths of the sin problem.* When Paul wrote that both Jews and Gentiles ‘are under the power of sin (Rom. 3:19), he meant it. (*Sin and Salvation*, 29)

Some of the foundational ideas of *Last Generation Theology* are concepts similar to medieval *Roman Catholic theology*, i.e., especially the definitions of *sin* and of *justification*.

Council of Trent

Decree concerning Original Sin (June 1546)

- But this holy synod confesses and is sensible, that in the baptized there remains **concupiscence**, or an **incentive (to sin)**; which, whereas it is left for our exercise, cannot injure those who consent not, but resist manfully by the grace of Jesus Christ; yea, he who shall have striven lawfully shall be crowned. **This concupiscence, which the apostle sometimes calls sin, the holy Synod declares that the Catholic Church has never understood it to be called sin, as being truly and properly sin in those born again, but because it is of sin, and inclines to sin.**

Doctrine of Sin

- ⦿ What is sin? What is the essence of sin?
- ⦿ Is a legal and behavioral definition of sin (i.e. missing the mark, transgression of the law) sufficient to describe the full biblical meaning of sin?
- ⦿ How does sin affect human nature? How is our definition of sin influencing our view of salvation, justification, sanctification, and perfection?

1. Biblical Words for Sin
2. Sin as an Inherent (Ontological)
Power of Evil in Human Nature

1. Biblical Words for Sin

Psalm 32:1, 2

“How blessed is he whose transgression [*pasha'*] is forgiven, whose sin [*chatta'ah*] is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity [*'āwôn*], and in whose spirit there is no deceit [*remiyyah*].”

Psalm 51:1-3, 5

“Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my **transgressions** [*pesha*']. Wash me thoroughly from my **iniquity** [*‘āwôn*] and cleanse me from my **sin** [*chatta’ah*]. For I know my **transgressions** [*pesha*], and my **sin** [*chatta’ah*] is ever before me. ... Behold, I was brought forth in **iniquity** [*‘āwôn*], and in **sin** [*chet*'] my mother conceived me.”

Biblical words about the concept of sin describe three basic meanings:

- ⦿ A bad or evil action
- ⦿ A bad or evil intention or attitude (conscious or unconscious)
- ⦿ The bad or evil consequences of a bad or evil action and/or intention

Chattā'ah

- 293 x in the OT
- Basic meaning: “missing the mark,” “missing the target” as in archery (Judges 20:16).
- Theological use of the word underscores an act, a lifestyle that deviates from what God has marked out.
- Usually, because of a lack of knowledge.

Chattā'ah

Chattā'ah “denotes sin as an act or attitude that causes a person to miss the marks essential and expected to maintain the right relationship between the human being and God. Sin is a break in one's relationship with God.”

(John Fowler, *Handbook of SDA Theology*, 237)

‘Āwôn

- ⦿ 229 x in the OT
- ⦿ Almost always translated as “iniquity” before God.
- ⦿ Carries the idea of crookedness
- ⦿ Also refers to falsehood, deception and vanity
- ⦿ Often used in parallel with *chatta’ah*

‘Āwôn

“Sin [‘āwôn] is that which twists away from God’s straightforwardness and involves perverse behavior. Thus ‘āwôn in its theological meaning goes further than chattā’ah in that **it carries the additional notion of wrongful intention.**”

(John Fowler, *Handbook of SDA Theology*, 237)

Isaiah 59:1, 2

“Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your **iniquities** [*‘āwôn*] have made a separation between you and your God, And your **sins** [*chatta’ah*] have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.”

Jesus' admonitions in the Sermon on the Mount about transgressions of the law of God (Matthew 5:17-48)

- ⦿ Bad/evil actions arise from bad/evil intentions.
- ⦿ Intentions precede actions.

Pesha'

- ⦿ 135 x in the OT
- ⦿ Basic meaning: deliberate, premeditated, willful violation of a norm or commandment.
- ⦿ Also denotes a refusal to submit to rightful authority.

Pesha'

Theologically, it differs from chatta'ah in that the act is not inadvertent, but a deliberate revolt, rebellion, or transgression. The element of **willfulness** is important to remember. It is a much more serious form of sin.

Job 34:37

Elihu says of Job:

“For he adds rebellion [*pesha'*] to his sin [*chatta'ah*] ...”

Other OT words

- ⦿ Remiyyah: deceit, falsehood, duplicity
- ⦿ Chet: fault
- ⦿ Resha: confusion,
- ⦿ Baza: disobedience
- ⦿ Hanep: impiety, profanity

Hamartia

- ⦿ 175 x in the NT
- ⦿ Most common word for sin
- ⦿ Basic meaning: “missing the mark” as in archery
- ⦿ Describes something of a serious magnitude that places the sinner in opposition to God

Hamartia

- ④ Hamartia connotes a deliberate failure to attain God's standard (not only an unintended missing the mark).
- ④ It is a universal condition.
- ④ Paul personalizes hamartia with a power to control and enslave (Romans)

Other words

- ⦿ Parabasis: transgression, violation
 - Romans 4:15
- ⦿ Parakoē: failure to hear, to listen
 - Romans 5:19
- ⦿ Paraptōma: trespass, transgression
 - Romans 4:25, 5:15

Other words

- ⦿ Anomia: iniquity, lawlessness
 - Romans 4:7; 1 John 3:4
- ⦿ Adikia: unrighteousness, wickedness
 - Romans 1:18, 19

Psalm 32:1, 2

“How blessed is he whose transgression [*pasha'*; *LXX anomia*] is forgiven, whose sin [*chatta'ah*; *hamartia*] is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity [*'āwôn*; *hamartia*], and in whose spirit there is no deceit [*remiyyah*; *dolos*].”

Psalm 51:1-5

“Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my **transgressions** [*pesha'*; *LXX anomēma*]. Wash me thoroughly from my **iniquity** [*‘āwôn*; *anomia*] and cleanse me from my **sin** [*chatta'ah*; *hamartia*]. For I know my **transgressions** [*pesha*; *anomia*], and my **sin** [*chatta'ah*; *hamartia*] is ever before me. ... Behold, I was brought forth in **iniquity** [*‘āwôn*; *anomia*], and in **sin** [*chet'*; *hamartia*] my mother conceived me.”

LGT Adventists, at this point, would say emphatically that Ellen White is clear: “the **only** definition of sin is that it is the transgression of the law.” (Ms 8, 1888)

Consequently, it is argued by LGT that a legal and behavioral definition of sin is the only definition to be used. Sin is only the result of wrong decisions.

“If sin is due to free choice, there would seem to be no reason why it should be universal. Its universality suggests an element of necessity, an inborn tendency or bias toward evil, that precedes the exercise of freedom.”

Albert C. Knudson

2. Sin as an Inherent (Ontological) Power of Evil in Human Nature

Romans 6:12-14

“Therefore do not let sin (hamartia) reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires (epithymiais). Do not offer the parts of your body to sin (hamartia), as instruments of wickedness (adikia), but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness (dikaiosyne). For sin (hamartia) shall not be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.”

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Our nature condemns us

Ephesians 2:3 – “Among them we too all formerly lived in the **lusts** of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were **by nature** children of wrath, even as the rest.”

Even evil desires are sinful

James 1:14, 15 – “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own **lust** (**epithymia**). Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to **sin**; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth **death**.”

D. G. Bloesch

“For Paul, **sin (hamartia)** is not just a conscious transgression of the law but a debilitating ongoing state of enmity personalized. It can be thought of as a **malignant personal power** which holds humanity in its grasp.” (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1012)

SDA Bible Commentary

On Rom 6:12 (6:540) –

“Though our ‘old man’ is described as crucified with Christ (v. 6), we are still in our ‘mortal body,’ with its earthly desires and cravings. Sin is still a power. If we so allow, sin may still have dominion over us. Being born again of the Holy Spirit does not eradicate the earthly desires of the flesh.

However, the experience places us in touch with a higher power by which we may ever successfully resist the attempted dominion of sin. But it still rests with us to decide whether we still give our continued allegiance to sin or Christ.”

How are we to understand Ellen White's comment that the only definition for sin is "the transgression of the law"?

Ellen G. White – “The only definition we find in the Bible for sin is that ‘sin is the transgression of the law [Greek: **anomia**]’ (1 John 3:4). [Quotes Romans 3:23, 12.] Many are deceived concerning the condition of their hearts. They do not realize that the natural heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”
(*Signs of the Times*, Dec. 5, 1892, in 1SM 320)

“Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is “the transgression of the law;” it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.” (GC 492)

“Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart. But against these principles there is struggling an **antagonistic power**. The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man's experience. **There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist.** To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ,”
(*Education*, 29)

“A terrible doom awaits the sinner, and therefore it is necessary that we know what sin is, in order that we may escape from **its power**. John says, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). **Here we have the true definition of sin; it is “the transgression of the law.”** How often the sinner is urged to leave his sins, and come to Jesus; but has the messenger who would lead him to Christ clearly pointed out the way? Has he clearly pointed out the fact that “sin is the transgression of the law,” and that he must repent and forsake the breaking of God’s commandments?” (*Signs of the Times*, June 20, 1895 in FW 117)

Sin is not merely wrong acts and thoughts. **Sin** is also an **inherent power**, or **inner disposition** inclining us toward evil.

Thus, it is not simply that we are sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.

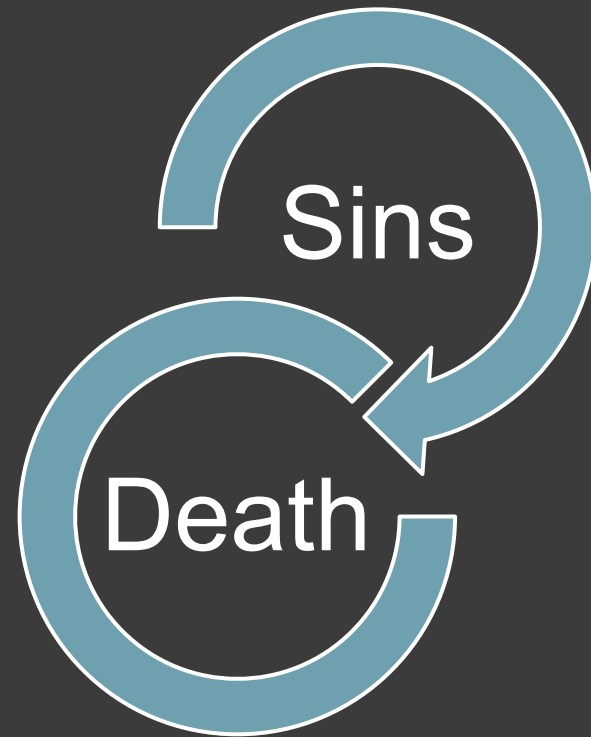
Although Ellen White certainly upholds a legal (behavioral) definition of sin, she also discussed the transgression of the law within the context of other concepts and aspects of what sin includes: a perverted and sinful heart and sin as a power that lives inside the heart. These concepts refer to an ontological nature of sin.

1 John 3:4 KJV

Sins =
transgressions of
the law of God.

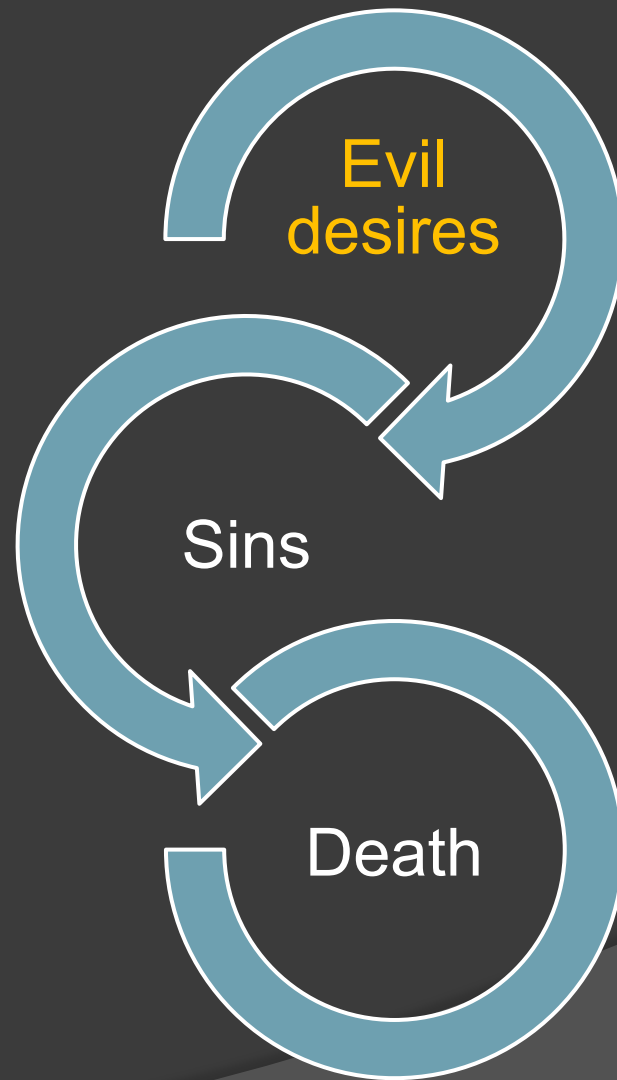
Wages of sin is
death.

Romans 6:23



James 1:13-15

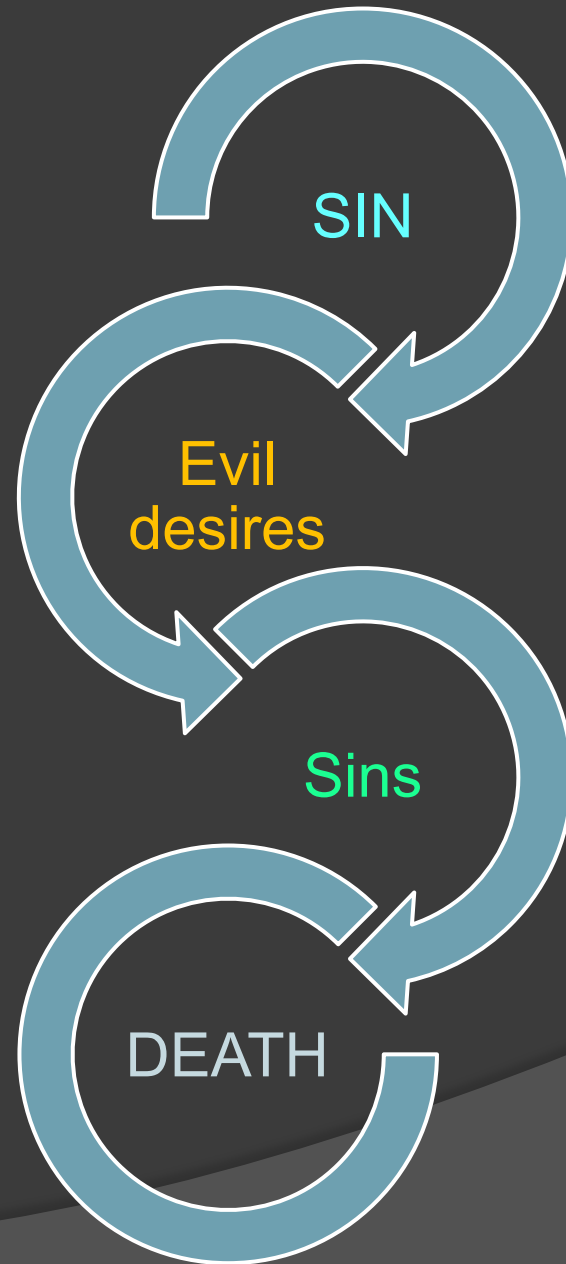
Temptations
come from **evil**
desires and
then give birth
to sin, and then
to death.



Romans 6:12-14

There is a presence of **SIN** in our own person (nature, being) and it naturally rules over us.

This power gives birth to **temptations** and **evil desires**.



Philippians 2:3 – “Do nothing from **selfishness** or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”

Selfishness as an ontological power and principle in human nature.

Summary

1. The Bible does not brush over sin. The many references to sin indicate that sin is a grave problem.
2. Sin is a complex phenomenon. The vast array of words and images used to communicate its identity indicate the multifaceted and devious nature of sin.

Summary

3. The biblical composite picture of sin confronts us with the realization that sin is not an occasional visitor in human nature. It intends to stay and to conquer. **It is an integral part of human nature.**
4. **Sin** is a selfish and egotistical power in human lives.

Last Generation Theology teaches an incomplete theology of sin and consequently teaches a distorted understanding of salvation which relies on human achievements (perfection) to be saved.

“Domino Effect”

What we believe regarding the nature and essence of sin will influence other doctrines:

- ⦿ The human nature of Christ
- ⦿ Atonement
- ⦿ Salvation by grace
- ⦿ Justification by faith
- ⦿ Sanctification and Perfection
- ⦿ Life in the last days