

4 REDEMTIVE PURPOSES OF SIN

(from a teaching over Skype with pastors in Iran)

I want to give you the 4 purposes of sin – after the sin, that is. Romans 8:28 tells us that God can use anything for His glory and to help us. So how does He use sin? Something even as terrible as sin can be used by God. Here are four ways he can use it in our lives. Even after we have sinned we can trust God to teach us and help us.

1. WE KNOW GOD'S GRACE AND FORGIVENESS

When we sin, God pours out His love, grace and forgiveness. Paul talks a lot about this in Romans. In fact, he talked so much about God's grace that people accused him sometimes of being soft, of being too nice and not talking enough about sin. But Paul kept talking about grace.

Think about the woman who anointed Jesus' feet with oil. She loved much because she was forgiven much. Her sin didn't define her life. It wasn't the last word on her life that she was a sinner – it was only the beginning. That's what I love about Jesus – our failings and sins are **never** the end; they are only the beginning. They are a place to start, to get closer to him and to know his love and grace. So the first way God uses even our sin and the sins of others is that we can more deeply know His forgiveness and love.

2. IT KEEPS US HUMBLE

Is very easy to look at other people and see their struggles and temptations and be judgmental and critical. I personally have never struggled with wanting to get drunk. It is not a temptation for me – never was. And it would be very easy for me to look at people who drink a lot and judge them and think I am better than them. But then I remember that I am a sinner, too. Maybe not with alcohol, but in other ways. I have struggled all of my life with anger and depression and wanting people to like me. I can act in ways that hurt people because of these struggles. For example, I try so hard to get people to like me that I end up pushing them away instead. When I was younger I struggled with pornography. God has given me victory in this, but as a young Christian I struggled with this a lot. I believe God will sometimes remind us of our sin, not to judge or shame us, but to keep us humble. So don't judge others just because you don't struggle in the same way as them. Remember your personal struggles and allow God to pour out His grace through you.

3. GOD USES SIN TO TEACH US HOW TO HELP OTHERS WHO HAVE THE SAME STRUGGLES AS WE DO

One of the things that will happen to you as you help more people, is that as they will be telling you about their struggles and temptations you will begin to hear some of your own struggles and temptations in what they say. This happens to me a lot. Sometimes I know about these struggles inside of me and sometimes I

am surprised because, as they talk, I realize that they are describing something in me that I wasn't aware of. But when you go through something tough, especially after you come out the other side in victory, then you understand better what they are saying. You know how to help them because you went through it, too, or are going through it now. For example, many of you have told me that you thought I could understand you because I told you about my father and the anger he had and the anger inside of me for him. Because I have had to fight this anger myself and God has helped me, I am able to help others better than ever before. So even the terrible things that we've done God can use for His glory and to serve his people. You see, sin is never the last word to God. There is always grace on the other side – always. Always grace!

4. TO TEACH US ABOUT OURSELVES

I talked a little bit about this earlier. When you see other people's' sins, they sometimes reveal your own sins. Or maybe there is something deep down inside of you that God wants to bring out and heal. But you have kept it down for so long that it is hard to see. And the only way God can reveal it to you is to allow you to do something bad. Now you can see it clearly. This may sound very strange, but it happens all the time.

For example, I didn't really admit I had a problem with anger until one time I became very angry at my wife. I walked outside of the house so I wouldn't yell at her and then I went back inside and I told her to leave right now. I was tired of being the one to go outside all the time when I was angry and she should go outside this time. In previous times of my anger, my wife would just cry and ask me to forgive her. But this time she said OK!! She would leave. That scared me! I didn't know what she meant. Did she mean she would leave for a few minutes? Or forever?

And it was the first time that I really realized how bad my anger and rage was and it began my healing journey with anger. I don't think I would have ever really faced how deep my anger was unless something big like that happened. I had to sin really big before God could get through to me, so he allowed me to do so. It was a hard lesson to learn, but I am so happy I did because I am so much better now and have never done that same thing again.

I know these may be very hard examples for you to hear but you need to know that God can take even the worst sinners and set them free and use them to help others – even people like me; even people like you. You don't have to pretend that you are not terrible sinners. That is not what is important. What is important is that God's grace is even bigger than any sin you can commit. Much bigger!

Remember, sin and temptation and struggles are never the last word with God. They are only the beginning; a way that he can show you grace and set you free. A way to help you help others. There is no need to live in shame. Relax into your Daddy's arms and receive his love. Amen!