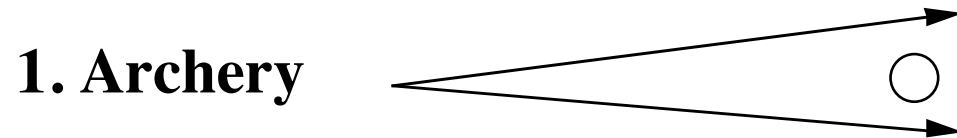


Obstacles to the Life of Grace

SIN = Hamartia
↓
Missing the Mark



2. Bushed : Missing the marked track

- **Active Rebellion**
- **Passive Indifference**

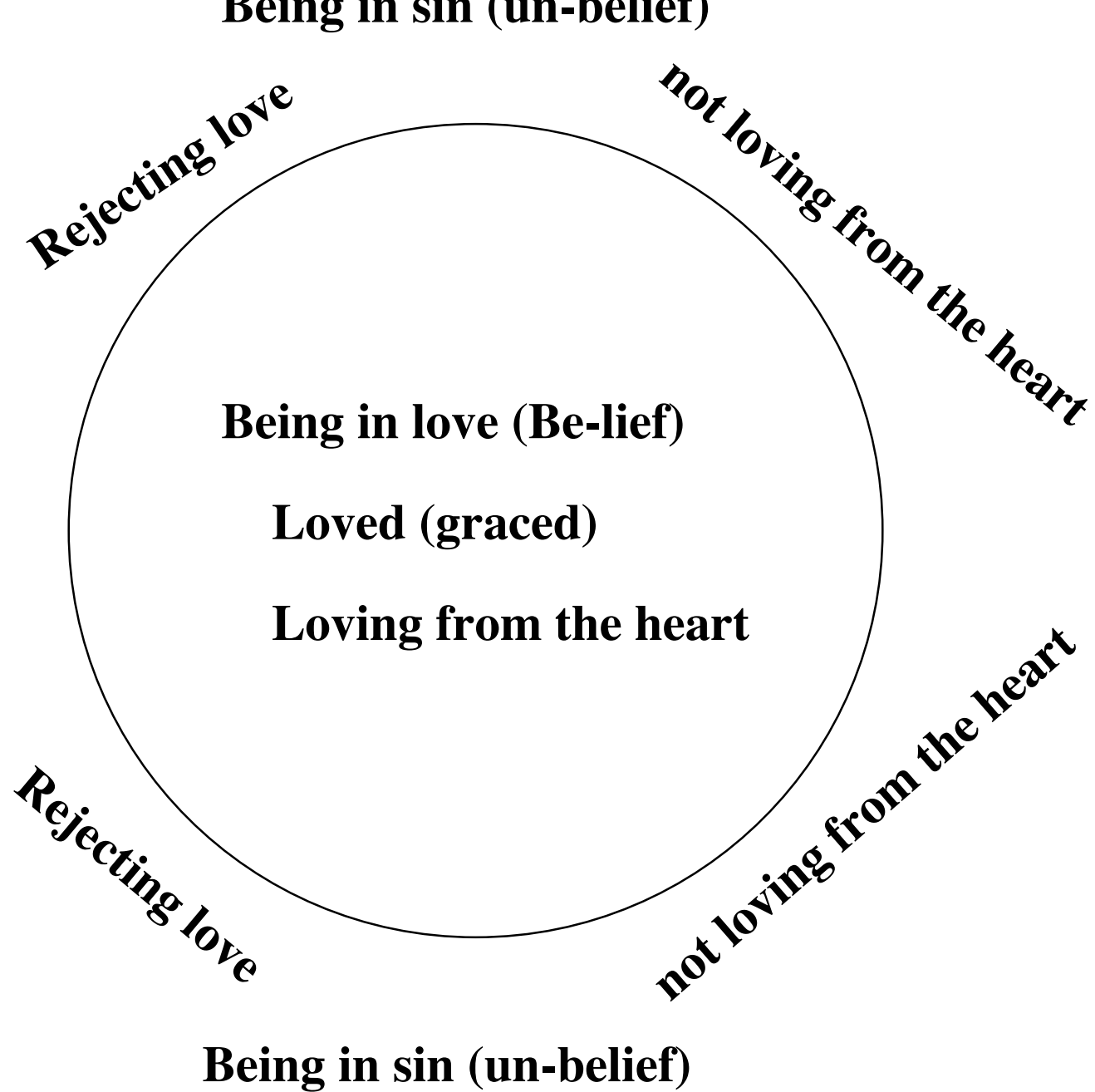
Sin

‘There is no one who does not sin’(1Kings 8:46).

‘Surely there is no one on earth so righteous as to do good without ever sinning’(Ecclesiastes 7:20).

‘Can Ethiopians change their skin or leopards their spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil’(Jeremiah 12:23).

‘The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen; with a diamond point it is engraved on the tablet of their hearts, and on the horns of their altars.’(Jeremiah 17:1)



**God graces us to be in communion with him
draws us to our heart**

Problems

- Having unreal expectations of myself/ of others
- Living with unreal limitations
- Avoiding reflection on my behaviour
- Rationalising – finding ‘reasons’ to support wrong behaviour
- Ceasing to strive for integrity/ moral consistency
- Procrastination – leaving it to later

Problems

- Trying to quieten an uneasy conscience
 - by ignoring what I know to be true
 - by denying what I know to be a value
 - by belittling others
- Refusing to go beyond personal bias by opting for superficial self-interest, rather than what I know to be true.
- Content to stay within the bias of a group or sub-group.

Capital Sins – Latin caput (‘head’)

7 ‘founts’ from which sin springs

- pride – thinking, judging and acting in a self-reliant, self-focused way, disdainful of others and inattentive to God and to God’s will.
- covetousness – never satisfied with who we are or what we have but grasping for possessions, prestige, reputation, and for whatever gratifies our self-centred desires.

- lust – using our sexual energy either for our own self-gratification or to exercise power over others without regard to their true happiness.
- anger – not the anger which is an appropriate protection of self against unjust aggression, but the anger that resents anyone who crosses our ideas, our preferences, our comfort, even when they are right and we are wrong.

- gluttony – living so superficial a life that bodily gratification is more important to us than the aspirations of our spirit, or the needs of others.
- envy – when we see someone doing well, instead of experiencing joy we feel ourselves devalued and in overt or subtle ways we find ourselves putting others down, feeling miserable that we do not have their beauty or their possessions or their success.
- sloth – unwilling to commit ourselves and our energy to the noble tasks of life, preferring to hang around waiting for life to deal out fortune to us.

Life experience teaches us that ways of behaving that have their source in such poisoned springs are decidedly dysfunctional and destructive. In baptism we die to these false values, even if they are the values of our mother or father or the social group with which we have been identifying. We have found something, or rather someone, in whom we experience God, and we have discovered a love which is true and liberating. In Jesus we have found a meaning that awakens the energy of our soul. To follow him we have to embrace him on the cross, but we choose to do that and we go down into the tomb with him to renounce behaviour that does not lead to life.

Mark 7

The Pharisees were complaining that the disciples were eating without first washing their hands.

Jesus said: 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside a person that by coming in can defile.

The things that come out are what defiles ... For it is from within, from the heart, that evil intentions come.'

Mark 7:21-23

‘It is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy (the ‘evil eye’), slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.

The list given by Jesus covers a number of areas including

- Deceit

- Envy

- Slander

Calumny

Detraction

Avarice

Ways of indulging greed by grasping at what one does not have just so as to have more. We can grasp for power, prestige, possessions, pleasure ...

‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of avarice; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions’(Luke 12:15).

‘Put to death whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry)’(Colossians 3:5).

‘You must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart. They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. That is not the way you learned Christ!’(Ephesians 4:17-20).

licentiousness

the vice of unrestrained gratifying of sensual desire

‘It is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light; let us live honourably as in the day, not in revelling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarrelling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.’

(Romans 13:11-14).

‘They are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm; for them the deepest darkness has been reserved. For they speak bombastic nonsense, and with licentious desires of the flesh they entice people who have just escaped from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption; for people are slaves to whatever masters them. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overpowered, the last state has become worse for them than the first’(2Peter 2:17-20).

‘People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power’(2Timothy 3:2-5).

Galatians 5:19

‘The works of the flesh are obvious:

fornication, impurity, licentiousness

Paul offers a list of conventional vices, described here as ‘works of the flesh’. These are typical ways in which we behave when we are enslaved by desires that have not been purified by the Spirit of Jesus. He begins with ‘fornication’(porneia): a word covering a whole range of morally irresponsible behaviour in matters of sexuality. He puts it first because the way we relate sexually is central to who we are and to the way we express or fail to express love. He then speaks of ‘impurity’: the pollution of our physical environment bears no comparison with the harm caused when we pollute the mind and heart. He goes on to name licentiousness: the vice of unrestrained gratifying of sensual desire.

Sexual sin

Being a Christian means living in a certain way. It concerns the truth of who we are as persons.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Paul moves immediately to speak of sexuality, for where else do all the dimensions of being human meet more intimately and more mysteriously than in our identity as man or woman?

Sexual sin

It is traditional Jewish and Christian wisdom that sexual relationships are meant to be sacraments in which we encounter the divine at the heart of another person cherished in love. There are divinely mysterious depths in every person. Sexual experience invites us into this mystery in which two people enjoy, encourage, heal, forgive and create each other in loving trust.

Sexual sin

There is a restlessness and a mysterious yearning at the heart of sexuality, for we know that we are not sufficient of ourselves. We need the other; we long to be in communion with the other. It is common human wisdom, born of experience, that when we give expression to our sexual desire we should do so in a way that recognises the sacredness and the dignity of our own person and of the other. Paul speaks of sexual behaviour which ignores all delicacy, by-passes love, and uses, even abuses, another person in a selfish attempt to assert one's own power or gratify one's own misdirected passion.

Galatians 5:19-21

Paul lists the kinds of behaviour that result from our failure to live by the Spirit of Jesus. His list includes:

- Enmities
 - Strife
 - Jealousy
- ‘Enmities’ and ‘strife’ are found where people are defined by any quality other than their being in the image of God.
- ‘Jealousy’(zēlos) is a form of ‘zeal’ motivated by self-interest. We hold on to what we have so tightly that we treat people as objects and are unwilling to share with others when love requires it.

Galatians 5:19-21

- Selfishness The many different ways in which ‘selfishness’ finds expression lead to ‘dissensions’, and create ‘factions’.
- Dissensions
- Factions
- Envy We are ‘envious’ when we are unhappy with the prosperity of others, or the freedom they have in Christ. Being dissatisfied with who we are or with what we have, we want what others have.

Galatians 5:20

idolatry, sorcery

Paul moves on to name the vice of worshipping false gods. For Paul, this is any god other than the God revealed by Jesus. Linked with this is the vice of sorcery. Rather than accepting human limitations and the mystery of our own being and of the world of which we are part, rather than placing trust in a loving God, we seek false assurances from people who claim to know the future or to be able to control spirits.

Galatians 5:20-21

anger

Paul lists 'anger' among the vices. He is not speaking of appropriate anger when we defend ourselves or others against unjust aggression. Rather, he is speaking of the unreasonable and spiteful passion that can come over us when we fail to get our own way or have our own whims gratified.

drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.

‘The Lord knows how to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment – especially those who indulge their flesh in depraved lust, and who despise authority ... These people are like irrational animals, mere creatures of instinct ... They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their dissipation while they feast with you. They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed’(2Peter 2:9-14).

‘Sin is an offence against reason, truth and right conscience. It is a failure in genuine love for God and neighbour caused by a perverse attachment to certain things perceived as good. It wounds human nature and injures human solidarity.’(Catechism n. 1849)

‘Sin creates a proclivity to sin. It engenders vice by repetition of the same acts. This results in perverse inclinations that cloud conscience and corrupt the practical judgment of good and evil.’(Catechism n. 1865)

‘We have a responsibility for sins committed by others when we cooperate in them:

- by participating directly and willingly in them
- by ordering, advising, praising, or approving them
- by not disclosing or hindering them when we have an obligation to do so
- by protecting those who do evil

Sin : Reflections in Genesis I-II

1. Desire to 'know' = be autonomous, a law to oneself
naked ('erom) – cunning ('arum) – ashamed
But God clothed them (Genesis 3:20).
2. Brother kills brothers – fugitive
But God protects him (Genesis 4:15).
3. Mankind sinks into corruption – reversal to chaos
But Ark & Rainbow (Genesis 6:14 & 9:13).
4. Mankind strives to build itself up to the heavens
disruption. disharmony. But God calls Abram (Gen. 12:1).

Psalm 78 is rich in descriptions of sin

- missing the mark (verses 17, 32)
- disobedient (verse 10)
- unbelieving (verses 8, 22, 32, 37)
- wavering heart (verses 8, 37)
- untruthful (verse 36)
- grieving God (verse 40)
- rebellious (verses 8, 17, 40, 56)
- stubborn (verse 8)
- untrusting (verse 22)
- testing God (verses 18, 41, 56)
- unfaithful (verse 57)
- provoking God (verses 41, 52)
- speaking out against God (verse 19)

Letter to the Hebrews is rich in images for sin

- missing the mark (many times)
- rebellious (1:9)
- disobedient (2:2)
- drifting (2:1)
- enslaved (2:15)
- deceived (3:13)
- hardened heart (3:8)
- embittered (3:16)
- irreverent to the sacred (9:13)

Sin : Reflections in Matthew 4

1. Journeying in the wilderness – wants to be self-sufficient.

Tempted to return to the fleshpots of Egypt

‘Human beings live on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’

2. Tempted to manipulate God, make God in man’s image
Get God to fit into our definitions

– ‘Come down from the Cross!’

‘Your will not mine be done.’

‘You must not put the Lord your God to the test.’

3. Tempted to worship what we have made

‘Worship only Yahweh, your God.’

‘I am of the flesh, sold into slavery under sin.

I do not understand my own actions.

For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate ... I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it.

For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

Sin : Romans 7:14-25

When I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand.
For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self,
but I see in my members another law at war with the
law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin
that dwells in my members ...

With my mind I am a slave to the law of God,
but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.'

Mortal & Venial Sins

‘All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not mortal’(1John 5:17). • ‘Mortal’ (Latin mors – ‘death’)

Breaks/kills off our communion with God
and so with the community

For a sin to be mortal,
three conditions must together be met:

- What is done • is a grave matter
- is done with full knowledge
- is done with deliberate consent

Responsibility is diminished by unintentional ignorance, and can be diminished by passion, external pressures and pathological disorders

‘Although we can judge that an act is in itself a grave offence, we must entrust judgment of persons to the justice and mercy of God.’

‘Venial sin’ (Latin venia – ‘pardon’)

Wounds but does not break communion

- weakens our love-communion with God
- manifests a disordered attachment to creatures
- impedes our progress in the exercise of virtue and living a moral life
- has effects that make our behaviour to some extent dysfunctional.

‘Venial sin’ (Latin *venia* – ‘pardon’)

‘While we are in the flesh, we cannot help but have some light sins. But do not think lightly of these sins which we are wont to call ‘light’: if you take them for light when you weigh them, tremble when you count them! A number of light objects makes a great mass; a number of drops fills a river; a number of grains makes a heap. What, then, is our hope? Above all, confession ...’ (Augustine on John’s Letters I.6).

John-Paul II. The Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and the world, 31§2

‘Conversion requires convincing of sin. It includes the interior judgment of conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in our innermost being, becomes at the same time the start of a new grant of grace and love: “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Thus in this convincing concerning sin we receive a double gift: the gift of the truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Consoler.’

Cleansed from sin

- Noah's Ark
- Crossing the Red Sea
- Crossing the Jordan to enter the Promised Land

‘Peter said to them: Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’(Acts 2:38).

‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith of the Son of God, loving me and giving himself for me’(Galatians 2:19-20).

‘I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh’(Ezekiel 36:25-26).

‘You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God’(1Corinthians 6:11).

‘Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word’(Ephesians 5:25-26).

Dying to a way of “living” dominated by sin
and rising to share in Jesus’ life.

- Freed from “Original Sin” - the sin of our origins.
We are given a choice, not locked into hereditary
and environmental “sin”.

‘Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life’(Romans 6:3-4).

‘My friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit’(Romans 7:4, 6).

‘When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour’(Titus 3:4-6).