

Stairway Of Death

Intro: We get to the top floor of a building that has a stairway by taking one step at a time. The same principle applies when we go from the fourth floor to the basement: we go one step at a time to the third level, then to the second, and continue down till we have gone below the ground to the bottom. That is exactly how it is with the “stairway of death” James presents to us (Jam. 1:12-16 ^{“12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. ¹³ Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: ¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. ¹⁵ Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. ¹⁶ Do not err, my beloved brethren”). While physical death is a separation of the soul and body (Jam. 2:26 ^{“26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also”}); spiritual death is a separation of our soul from God who gave it (Ecc. 12:7 ^{“7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it”}).}

I. LUST IS THE FIRST FLOOR.

A. Lust is inordinate desire or uncontrollable want.

1. There are various kinds of lust mentioned in the Bible.
 - a. Youthful lust; 2 Tim. 2:22 ^{“22 Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”}
 - b. Fleshly lust; 1 Pet. 2:11 ^{“11 Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”}
 - c. Worldly lust; Tit. 2:12 ^{“12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;”}
 - d. Foolish and hurtful lust; 1 Tim. 6:9 ^{“9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”}
2. The lust here is man’s own lust.
 - a. Jam. 1:14 ^{“14 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”}
 - b. Eve
 - (1) Gen. 3:6 ^{“6 And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”}
 - (2) It was pleasant to her eyes.
 - c. David
 - (1) Bathsheba was beautiful to look upon.
 - (2) 2 Sam. 11:2 ^{“2 And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman *was* very beautiful to look upon.”}

B. Lust is a worker (is active)

1. Everyone on this floor is busy.
 - a. Fleshly lusts war against the soul; 1 Pet. 2:11 ^{“11 Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”}
 - b. Some murmur, complain, and walk after their own lust; Jude 16 ^{“16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.”}

- c. Foolish and hurtful lusts drown men; 1 Tim. 6:9 “⁹ But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”
- d. Lust draws one away; Jam. 1:14 “¹⁴ But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”
- 2. Lust has helpers (steps to the next floor down).
 - a. Enticement.
 - (1) From the Greek δελεάζω (deleazo):
 - (a) BDAG: “to lure by the use of bait, then to arouse someone’s interest in something by adroit measures, lure, entice.”
 - (b) Thayer: “to bait, catch by bait...to beguile by blandishments, allure, entice, deceive.”
 - (2) Delilah enticed Samson; Jud. 16:5 “⁵ And the lords of the Philistines came up unto her, and said unto her, Entice him, and see wherein his great strength *lieth*, and by what *means* we may prevail against him, that we may bind him to afflict him: and we will give thee every one of us eleven hundred *pieces* of silver.”
 - (3) Paul warned against this; Col. 2:4, 8 “⁴ And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. ⁵For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. ⁶As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: ⁷Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. ⁸Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
 - b. Conceived from the Greek συλλαμβάνω (*sullambano*)
 - (1) Thayer says of the word here, “metaphorically of ‘lust’ whose impulses a man indulges.”
 - (2) This shows something formed, thought out.
 - (3) *Then* shows that this is a progression and the conception comes afterward.
 - (4) The lust will go one way or another.
 - (a) It can be reined in.
 - (b) It can be allowed to continue.
 - (5) Here we see lust “thinking for itself” and continuing down the steps.

II. SIN IS THE NEXT FLOOR

A. Sin

- 1. It is the Greek ἀμαρτία (*hamartia*) meaning “a failing to hit the mark” (Thayer).
- 2. It is transgression of the law; 1 John 3:4 “⁴ Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”
- 3. It is unrighteousness; 1 John 5:17 “¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”
- 4. It is coming up short; Rom. 3:23 “²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”

B. Consequences

- 1. Eze. 18:4, 20 “⁴ Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.... ²⁰ The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”
- 2. Rom. 6:23 “²³ For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
- 3. Separated from God; Isa. 59:2 “² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear.”

4. Sin is sin, but not all sin has the same effect in our lives.
 - a. We begin to love sin; John 3:19 ^{“19} And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”
 - b. Leading us to walk in that sin; Eph. 4:17-19 ^{“17} This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, ¹⁸ Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: ¹⁹ Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”

C. This kind of sin must be finished.

1. Jam. 1:15 ^{“15} Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”
2. Finished is from the Greek ἀποτελέω (*apoteleo*) meaning, “to bring an activity to an end, bring to completion, finish” (BDAG).
3. This sin results in death; Eph. 2:1-3 ^{“1} And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

III. DEATH IS THE BOTTOM FLOOR

A. We have now walked from the top floor to the bottom.

1. Sin is the sting of death; 1 Cor. 15:56 ^{“56} The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.”
2. Sin earns us death; Rom. 6:23 ^{“23} For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

B. We are now eternally cut off from God.

IV. IS THIS THE END OF THE MATTER?

A. Yes, if left up to man.

1. The sinning soul dies; Eze. 18:20 ^{“20} The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”
2. Man doesn't know the way out; Pro. 14:12 ^{“12} There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death.”
3. Man cannot direct his own steps; Jer. 10:23 ^{“23} O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps.”

B. No, when in God's hands.

1. It is possible with God; Mat. 19:25-26 ^{“25} When his disciples heard *it*, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? ²⁶ But Jesus beheld *them*, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.”
2. Jesus came to save the lost; Luke 19:10 ^{“10} For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
3. We must be saved in His name; Acts 4:11-12 ^{“11} This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. ¹² Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”
4. How we are saved in His name
 - a. Acts 2:38 ^{“38} Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

- b. God makes us alive in Christ, even though we were dead; Eph. 2:1, 5 ^{“1} And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)”
5. Examples of conversion:
- a. Jews; Acts 2
 - b. Samaritans; Acts 8
 - c. Ethiopian; Acts 8
 - d. Saul, Acts 9, 22
 - e. Cornelius; Acts 10
 - f. Lydia; Acts 16
 - g. Philippian jailor; Acts 16
 - h. Corinthians; Acts 18
 - i. Ephesians; Acts 19

Conclusion: God has made a way for man to redeem himself even when dead in sin. Our part is easy since it is a gift to us. Will you let Christ's blood bring you back up the steps to life?