

TO FILL UP THEIR SINS ALWAYS

TEXT: I THESSALONIANS 2:14-16

INTRODUCTION:

1. In I Thessalonians 2:16, the apostle Paul uses an unusual expression -- "to fill up their sins always..."
2. It is a strange expression; a terrible and a mysterious expression.
3. In the immediate context, Paul is speaking of his fellow Jews (cf. 2:14, 15).
4. The *Pulpit Commentary* says, "They had accumulated sin upon sin in slaying Christ and the prophets, in expelling the apostles from their communion, and finally in hindering the Gentiles from receiving that gospel which they had rejected for themselves. But there was to come an end to this tale of wickedness. The time was drawing near when the Jews would no longer have power to hurt the cause of Christianity, and when swift punishment for their accumulated iniquities would descend in the destruction of their city and nation. They were hastening to fill up the sins, which must issue in this fearful doom" (W. F. Adeney).
5. The image here is of a cup being filled. For some here today, the cup is not yet full, but for others it is rapidly being filled to the brim. Your time is running out. The Bible says, "for the wrath (God's fierce anger and indignation) is come upon them to the uttermost" (I Thess. 2:16).
6. Not "will come upon them," but "is come" -- present tense.
7. John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath (same word as I Thess. 2:16) of God abideth on him." "Abideth" now.
8. John 3:18 says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."
9. God always judges sin. Sometimes, God delays judgment till the cup is filled (I Thess. 2:16).

I. THE FULNESS OF SIN BRINGS ITS OWN PENALTY

1. It is wrong to say that all sins are equally guilty before God. I have heard people say that, but the Bible does not teach it.
2. For example, adultery is a sin unlike any other sin. Proverbs 6:32 says, "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul."

3. "He that doeth it destroyeth his own soul"! First Corinthians 6:18 says, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."
4. Consider the most popular and politically correct sin in America today -- homosexuality. A few months ago, President Obama called a homosexual basketball player on the telephone "to express his gratitude" after the NBA player publicly announced he is a sodomite.
5. The White House said that the president wanted to "express his support" and tell the homosexual athlete that "he was impressed by his courage." Support??? Courage???
6. The Bible says, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20).
7. The apostle Paul says in I Thessalonians 2:15, "they please not God." I can tell you promoting homosexuality does not please God! And getting rid of "Don't Ask, don't tell" does not please God!
8. The Bible calls homosexuality an "abomination" -- and it is being promoted by the president and the vice-president and most politicians, the public schools, colleges, universities, Hollywood, television, etc.
9. Though some people may believe it, it is foolish to say that homosexuality is no worse than any other sin. God destroyed the cities Sodom and Gomorrah because of this wicked sin.
10. God never destroyed cities because people took His name in vain, or because they disobeyed their parents, or because they were covetous.
11. We often refer to the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, but actually four cities were destroyed. Deuteronomy 29:23 refers to "the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath."
12. The overthrow of Admah and Zeboim is also referred to by the prophet Hosea.
13. Jeremiah 49:18 refers to "the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof."
14. The fulness of sin -- "to fill up their sins always" (2:16) -- brings its own penalty. In the case of homosexuality it is disease, depression, and mental disorder.
15. And death, since many sodomites die from AIDS.
16. Romans 1:27 says, "And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly (shameful), and receiving in

- themselves that recompense (penalty) of their error which was meet (due to them)."
17. Notice they receive this recompense "in themselves"!
 18. Getting back to our text, the specific sins referred to by the apostle Paul in I Thessalonians 2:16 are related to the unbelief of the Jewish people (2:15). They not only had slain their own prophets and killed Christ, but now were trying to keep the Gentiles from getting saved (2:15, 16).
 19. "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved..." These Jews were hindering the Gentiles from getting saved. The Bible says there is a special judgment for those who hinder people from getting saved.
 20. Our Lord said, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6).
 21. They were "contrary to all men" (2:15b). So their cup of iniquity was being filled up. Soon after Paul wrote this epistle, the Jewish Temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed (70 AD), and the Jews were scattered all over the world.
 22. And their judgment will even more severe during the coming tribulation period, which the Bible calls "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7).
 23. Our Lord said in Luke 21:23, "For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people."
 24. We can only wonder how much longer will God be patient with the United States of America, which has become so wicked and godless.
 25. I think America's cup is just about full, and judgment is coming.

II. THE FULNESS OF SIN LEADS TO A FULNESS OF PUNISHMENT

1. God allows the wicked to fill up their sins to the brim before He moves in judgment. Then, "the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (2:16b).
2. This idea of "filling" to the brim is taught throughout the Bible.
3. Way back in Genesis 15:16, we read, "For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."
4. But soon it would be full! Have you ever met an Amorite? In Numbers 21, we read that Israel sent messengers unto Sihon, king of the Amorites, asking permission to pass through his land.

5. Their request was denied, and soon afterwards Sihon's kingdom fell, and the Amorites eventually disappeared.
6. "For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (Genesis 15:16).
7. Our Lord said to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:32 and 33, "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"
8. When the cup of sin is filled to the brim, judgment is inevitable and unalterable. Psalm 75:8 says, "For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them."
9. Picture the LORD pouring this bitter cup of judgment -- dregs and all -- down the throats of guilty sinners!
10. I think of that fascinating scene in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* when Hamlet realizes that his murderous uncle the king has poisoned him, and has inadvertently poisoned his wife, Hamlet's mother.
11. As he is dying, Laertes warns Hamlet, "The king, The king's to blame."
12. Then Hamlet grabs the cup of poisoned wine and forces it down the king's throat, saying, "Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane, Drink off this potion."
13. The Bible teaches the LORD will do the same to all wicked sinners -- "to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (2:16).
14. God allows the wicked to fill up to the brim before He moves in judgment. And then when sin reaches this point the penalty can no longer be stayed.
15. The cup overflows in wrath and ruin. The prophet Jeremiah spoke of the wine cup of God's fury (25:15-17).
16. David said, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup" (Psalm 11:6).
17. The prophet Ezekiel spoke of "the cup of astonishment and desolation" (23:33).
18. The prophet Zechariah spoke of "a cup of trembling" (12:2).
19. In the Book of Revelation, John describes "the cup of his indignation" (14:10).
20. Once this cup is filled, God's judgment pours out. "For the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (2:16). To the last drop!

21. One preacher put it this way, "It is as though forbearance and guilt were in the scales. When guilt is full the balance dips. There is an end to all possible long-suffering. The more men go on in excesses of sin, the faster do they approach the inevitable day of reckoning. The sooner the sin is filled up to the measure which passes endurance, the sooner must the stroke of doom fall" (W. F. Adeney).
22. The LORD told King Belshazzar, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting" (Daniel 5:27). He died that night.
23. The apostle Paul said, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath (same word) against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Romans 2:5).
24. That Scripture used to shock me. In fact, I still shudder when I read it. Years ago I read an explanation from H.A. Ironside. He said a poor old woman was taunted for taking the Bible literally, and she was told it was foolish to believe in a literal "lake of fire and brimstone" (Revelation 20:10), because "no such an amount of brimstone could be found in one place."
25. To the scoffers she replied, "Everyone takes his own brimstone with him!"
26. Ironside said, "Ah, that is it! Each rebel against God, each sinner against light, each violator of his own conscience carries his own brimstone with him! He is making his own destiny."

III. THERE IS A LIMIT TO SIN

1. Evil has limits; but goodness has none. No one can ever say, "I am so good that I cannot get any better."
2. But whereas goodness has no limits, evil is limited.
3. We can trace this throughout Scripture, and throughout human history. In Scripture we read of the untimely deaths of Pharaoh, King Saul, Nabal, Ahab, Jezebel, Sennacherib, Herod, and many others.
4. Genesis 6:5-7 says, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."
5. Then God sent the flood and destroyed the whole world except for Noah and his family.

6. By the way, this new Noah movie is not only unscriptural; it is anti-Scriptural. For example, after the flood, the LORD told Noah and his sons, "Be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth" (Genesis 8:17; 9:1, 7). These were the same instructions the LORD gave Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:22, 28).
7. But in this new Hollywood movie, Noah repeatedly tells his family that they were not to procreate. Then when his daughter-in-law becomes pregnant, Noah vowed to murder his own grandchild. But he finally has a change of heart.
8. The Biblical Noah is vastly different from the Hollywood Noah. Genesis 6:8 says, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." The Noah of the Bible is called "a preacher of righteousness" (II Peter 2:5).
9. But the Hollywood Noah is a weird, crazy environmentalist!
10. The Bible teaches that the earth "was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11). Their cup was filled with corruption and violence and wickedness, so God sent the flood.
11. By the way, our Lord said the same conditions will exist when He returns. In His Olivet Discourse, our Lord said, "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37). Judgment is coming!
12. We read that when the wicked Sodomites filled their dirty cup with lewdness and perversion, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.
13. When Israel's cup was full of idolatry and rebelliousness, God sent them into the Assyrian captivity. Second Kings 17:20 says, "And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight."
14. And the same thing happened to Judah. Second Chronicles 36:16 says, "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy."
15. No remedy! Their cup was full to overflowing. God said, "Enough!"
16. There is a limit to sin. Rock and roll singers boast that they have no restraints and no limits, but they all eventually die and go to hell -- Elvis Presley, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Michael Jackson -- the list goes on and on.
17. Drugs, alcohol, immorality, etc. The Bible says, "For the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (I Thess. 2:16).

18. There is a limit to sin, and God restrains the wrath of the devil. Revelation 12:12 says, "The devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."
19. God restrains the wrath of the devil, and God restrains the wrath of the antichrist. The antichrist will soon rule this wicked world, but his time will be limited. Revelation 19:20 says both he and the false prophet will be "cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone."

CONCLUSION:

1. The city of Pompeii was an ancient Roman city, located south of Naples on the western coast of Italy.
2. Pompeii was a resort town. Many wealthy Romans had "country homes" there. The great Roman orator Cicero had a villa in Pompeii; Julius Caesar's father-in-law owned one nearby. Some villas were so large they took up an entire city block.
3. At its height Pompeii had a population of nearly 20,000 people. Pompeii was so prosperous that, when many of its major buildings suffered considerable damage from an earthquake in AD 62, it refused Rome's offers of assistance.
4. Pompeii was a very immoral city, with public bathhouses, brothels, and houses of prostitution. One worldly writer said, "The citizens of Pompeii have been revealed as sophisticated, cultured people who enjoyed fine art, architecture, and the pleasures of the flesh."
5. Pompeii was situated right next to Mount Vesuvius, a volcano in the Gulf of Naples, a short distance from the shore.
6. Then on August 24, 79 AD, Mount Vesuvius erupted and the entire city of Pompeii was buried under hot lava.
7. Like Sodom and Gomorrah long before it, the city of Pompeii was destroyed. Their cup of judgment was filled to the top, and the wrath of God was poured out upon them to the uttermost (cf. I Thess. 2:16).