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## What Is Your Fatal Flaw?

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“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”  
Matthew 5:48.

All eyes fix upon the young man in the orange jumpsuit as he stands quietly in a California courtroom. Solemnly the judge reads the jury’s verdict, “Guilty as charged.” There is no emotion on the prisoner’s face, although his mother weeps openly. After many painful weeks of testimony, the trial is finally over. Silently the young man leaves the courtroom between two armed guards. But the question that will forever haunt his family, and the family of his victim, is this, “Why did he do it?”

All of us have some tendencies or deficiencies in our characters that, if not recognized and changed, will eventually cause our downfalls. Our flaws can, if left unchecked, damage or destroy all the other good we do with our lives. We each need to know what our potential fatal flaw is, so that, with God’s help, we can overcome them.

What is a fatal flaw? According to Webster’s Dictionary, the word “fatal” is defined as “determining one’s fate, bringing ruin, or causing death.” A “flaw” is defined by Webster as “an imperfection or weakness and especially one that detracts from the whole or hinders effectiveness.” Therefore, by combining these two words, we understand that a “fatal flaw” is an imperfection or weakness that can determine one’s fate, bring one to ruin or even cause



death. In the following paragraphs, we will examine three Biblical examples of fatal flaws—greed, sexual desire, and deceit.

## Greed

Acts 5:1–11 recounts the tragic story of two people who thought they could trick God. Ananias and Sapphira had a fatal flaw that is still very common today: greed. “With others, these



professed disciples had shared the privilege of hearing the gospel preached by the apostles. They had been present with other believers when, after the apostles had prayed, ‘the place was shaken where they were

assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.’ Acts 4:31. Deep conviction had rested upon all present, and under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, Ananias and Sapphira had made a pledge to give to the Lord the proceeds from the sale of certain property.

“Afterward, Ananias and Sapphira grieved the Holy Spirit by yielding to feelings of covetousness. They began to regret their promise and soon lost the sweet influence of the blessing that had warmed their hearts with a desire to do large things in behalf of the cause of Christ. They thought they had been too hasty, that they ought to reconsider their decision. They talked the matter over, and decided not to fulfill their pledge. They saw, however, that those who parted with their possessions to supply the needs of their poorer brethren, were held in high esteem among the believers; and ashamed to have their brethren know that their selfish souls grudged that which they had solemnly dedicated to God, they deliberately decided to sell their property and pretend to give all the proceeds into the general fund, but really to keep a large share for themselves. Thus they would secure their living from the common store and at the same time gain the high esteem of their brethren.

“But God hates hypocrisy and falsehood. Ananias and Sapphira practiced fraud in their

dealing with God; they lied to the Holy Spirit, and their sin was visited with swift and terrible judgment. When Ananias came with his offering, Peter said: ‘Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

“‘Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.’

“‘Whiles it remained, was it not thine own?’ Peter asked. No undue influence had been brought to bear upon Ananias to compel him to sacrifice his possessions to the general good. He had acted from choice. But in attempting to deceive the disciples, he had lied to the Almighty.

“‘It was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.’” AA, 71–73.

Rarely do fatal flaws have such an immediate and obvious effect. But the devastation they cause us can be just as deadly as it was for Ananias and Sapphira. Is greed your fatal flaw? Is it mine? *Counsels on Stewardship*, pg. 314, gives this timely advice: “The number of those who commit the sin of Ananias and Sapphira is increasing. Men do not lie to man, but to God in their disregard of the pledges which His Spirit moved upon them to make. Because sentence against an evil work is not, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, executed speedily, the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil, to strive against the Spirit of God.”

Greed has led many well-intentioned people down the wrong road. When greed is our fatal flaw, we are obsessed with gaining money and possessions, bank accounts and stocks, retirement funds and savings. Have we allowed greed and the love of money to become a fatal flaw in our lives?

Sexual Desire

King David is another example from Scripture of someone who had a flaw that could have been fatal. He lived one thousand years before Christ and was Israel’s second greatest king. Although he was a man “after God’s own heart,” he allowed his illicit sexual desires to rule for a time, and it cost him dearly.

You know the story. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, then murdered her husband so he could marry her. As a result, his wonderful reign as king over Israel was marred and disgraced. He is remembered more for his sin than almost anything else he did or was. Even today, people who have never read the Bible know what great sin King David committed. And, as is the case with us today, one sin quickly led to another.

The Spirit of Prophecy explains: “Every effort which David made to conceal his guilt proved unavailing. He had betrayed himself into the power of Satan; danger surrounded him, dishonor more bitter than death was before him. There appeared but one way of escape, and in his desperation he was hurried on to add murder to adultery. He who had compassed the destruction of Saul was seeking to lead David also to ruin. Though the temptations were different, they were alike in leading to transgression of God’s law. David reasoned that if Uriah were slain by the hand of enemies in battle, the guilt of his death could not be traced home to the king, Bathsheba would be free to become David’s wife, suspicion could be averted, and the royal honor would be maintained....

“Heretofore David’s record as a ruler had been such as few monarchs have ever equaled. It is written of him that he ‘executed judgment and

justice unto all his people.’ 2 Samuel 8:15. His integrity had won the confidence and fealty of the nation. But as he departed from God and yielded himself to the wicked one, he became for the time the agent of Satan; yet he still held the position and authority that God had given him, and because of this, claimed obedience that would imperil the soul of him who should yield it....

“He whose tender conscience and high sense of honor would not permit him, even when in peril of his life, to put forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed, had so fallen that he could wrong and murder one of his most faithful and most valiant soldiers, and hope to enjoy undisturbed the reward of his sin. Alas! how had the fine gold become dim! how had the most fine gold changed!” PP, 718–720.

We know that God forgave David, as He graciously forgives all of us, but there were sad consequences for his actions. David’s first child with Bathsheba died, the nation of Israel lost respect for their

leader, and his life never became all it could have been for the Lord.

We are warned that “a little time spent in sowing your wild oats,... will produce a crop that will embitter your whole life; an hour of thoughtlessness, once yielding to temptation, may turn the whole current of your life in the wrong direction. You can have but one youth; make that useful. When once you have passed over the ground, you can never return to rectify your mistakes. He who refuses to connect with God, and puts himself in the way of temptation will surely fall....

“Sensuality is the sin of the age. But the religion of Jesus Christ will hold the lines of



control over every species [of] unlawful liberty: the moral powers will hold the lines of control over every thought, word, and action. Guile will not be found in the lips of the true Christian. Not an impure thought will be indulged in, not a word spoken that is approaching to sensuality, not an action that has the least appearance of evil.

“Do not see how close you can walk upon the brink of a precipice, and be safe. Avoid the first approach to danger. The soul's interests cannot be trifled with. Your capital is your character. Cherish it as you would a golden treasure. Moral purity, self-respect, a strong power of resistance, must be firmly and constantly cherished.” *Letters to Young Lovers*, 63–64.

How different might the story of David's life have been if he had heeded this advice and conquered his nearly-fatal flaw sooner.



## Deceit

Abraham is called the “Father of Faith.” Had he not overcome his fatal flaw, however, he could easily have been called the “Father of Lies” instead. The Bible clearly gives record of a man who lied in order to save himself. In Genesis 12:11–20 and Genesis 20:1–5, Abraham declared that Sarah was his sister rather than his wife because he feared he would be killed if the truth were known. Abraham repeatedly resorted to lying as a way to get out of tough spots.

“During his stay in Egypt, Abraham gave evidence that he was not free from human weakness and imperfection. In concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, he betrayed a distrust of the divine care, a lack of that lofty faith and courage so often and nobly exemplified in his

life.... He reasoned that he was not guilty of falsehood in representing Sarah as his sister, for she was the daughter of his father, though not of his mother. But this concealment of the real relation between them was deception. No deviation from strict integrity can meet God's approval. Through Abraham's lack of faith, Sarah was placed in great peril. The king of Egypt, being informed of her beauty, caused her to be taken to his palace, intending to make her his wife. But the Lord, in His great mercy, protected Sarah by sending judgments upon the royal household.” *Conflict and Courage*, 46.

It's so easy, and seemingly harmless, to tell a lie. But how does Heaven view lying? “When a falsehood is uttered, the heavenly angels turn away in sorrow, grieved that Christ's heritage should so dishonor Him. One falsehood spoken prepares the way for another. The Lord desires all to adhere strictly to the truth, to be straightforward in every transaction. Never tell a lie, because thus you hurt your own soul, and disgrace yourself in your own eyes.” RH, January 12, 1911, par. 4.

## Conclusion

If flaws are left uncontrolled, they become worse and stronger with time. A flaw can start out rather innocently but, when left unchecked, soon grows out of control. “From the beginning Satan has portrayed to men the gains to be won by transgression.

Thus he seduced angels. Thus he tempted Adam and Eve to sin. And thus he is still leading multitudes away from obedience to God. The path of transgression is made to appear desirable; ‘but the end thereof are the ways of death.’ Proverbs 14:12. Happy [are] they who, having ventured in this way, learn how bitter are the fruits of sin, and turn from it betimes.” PP, 720.

God calls us to a higher level. In Matthew 5:48, Jesus commands, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” We don't need to be defeated by our flaws. They need not become fatal. Jesus died to give us victory! We must confess our sins and apply His power to our lives to work the miracle of transformation. I pray that all of us will become more like Jesus, that we may shine as lights in the dark world around us.

# Conference Picture from Norwich, CT

Wikler Morán, Skowhegan, ME

**W**e would like to share a picture of those who attended our local conference in Norwich, Connecticut. The conference was held on Sabbath, May 19. We were blessed to have about seventy participants from nearby areas, such as Providence, Rhode Island; Skowhegan, Maine; Bronx and Brooklyn, New York; and Irvington, New Jersey. Our Southeast Field president, Elder Ciro Arevalo, also attended the conference, along with Pastors Neptalí Acevedo and Thomas DHaiti from New York. We thank God for the opportunity to worship Him together.



*Behold, how good and how pleasant [it is] for brethren to dwell together in unity! Psalm 133:1.*

## CALENDAR

- **August 21–23, 2007: American Union Delegates' Meetings, Sebago, Maine**
- **August 23–25, 2007: American Union Conference, Sebago, Maine**
- **August 26, 2007: Bus tour of historical Adventist sites**

The *American Union Newsletter* is the official organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Reform Movement, American Union. It is published monthly, is complimentary for our members and friends, and carries items of interest submitted by church members. We reserve the right to make changes as necessary and to refuse to print certain items. **The deadline for article submission is the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month.**

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