

Viruses and Sin: An analogy?

We are in the middle of a pandemic—a virus called COVID-19, and it has been cropping up everywhere in the world, like weeds in a lawn. However, and by analogy (metaphor, simile as well), SIN is like the virus in some remarkable ways. Of course, all analogies break down at some point, so this one is hardly exact, but bear with me.

I read that viruses are classified according to the structure of their genome and how they replicate, not simply corresponding to the diseases they cause. There are hundreds of different ones that infect humans, transmitted in various ways: sexually, by blood transfer, mucus, shaking hands, by sweat, puncture from an infected needle, kissing your dog, eating hamburgers at a drive-in, waving at politicians, and so on. Viruses are found worldwide, and some have been latent for a long time while others, like hepatitis or malaria, are chronic.

What about classifying sins? If it is according to the severity of their nature, consider the ten commandments: murder, adultery, stealing, false accusations, and improper desires are listed as major sins. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic church divides sins into two major types: mortal ones and venial ones. If you commit a mortal sin you will go to hell, not heaven, because you have done so with full knowledge and deliberateness. However, when you sin, venial sins are the best kind because you can commit one without thinking about it. In other words, not all sins are equal and, according to the Catholics, and there are ways to get rid of the both kinds.

In the same way, there are serious viruses (we are going through one now with COVID-19) and there are minor ones, such as the common cold. Both are highly contagious and easily spread. Influenza is another virus that is common to humans, and it, too, can be serious.

Some sins are highly contagious as well. Paul said that *“What human nature does is quite plain. It shows itself in immoral, filthy, and indecent actions.”* He said that *“people fight; they become jealous, angry, and ambitious...they are envious, get drunk, have orgies, and do other things like these.”* (Galatians 5.19...21). These are common sins and we are well acquainted with them.

However, societies and cultures differ on what actions are immoral, filthy, and indecent. For example, sodomy was once considered a crime, but now is legal and at least tolerated in many countries. The same can be said for certain sexual sins, adultery, and drunkenness. However, we should remember that there is no one-to-one correspondence between what is “legal” and what is “sinful.”

I read that a virus like COVID-19 does not want to kill you because the virus would die with you. It wants you to be sick and spread the virus to unsuspecting people around you. It is the same way with Satan and sin. He is happy to have sin breed in us, grow, and govern our lives, but he would like us to infect others with it as well.

Of course, a disease can be spread intentionally, as some settlers did with smallpox when they gave American Indians infected blankets and other materials. Sin can be spread deliberately, too: people can use greed, bribery, and corruption to infect our society. Infections can be battled with the proper medicines or they can gradually harm others. Sin can likewise be overcome with prayer and the Spirit of God within us.

Our bodies have a “natural” immunity system to fight infections and viruses, but sometimes the system goes haywire and begins to destroy its own organs and body. There is, however, no natural immunity against sin, and an injection of the Spirit is necessary to overcome it.

It seems, then, that many analogies are relevant about viruses and sin. Sometimes severe “lockdowns” and self-isolation may be necessary. We may need to confess our virus to the doctor and our sin to the Savior, but both need to be dealt with.

Karl and Joice Franklin

Thankful there are cures for both viruses and sin