

WHAT IS SIN?

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate (Genesis 3:1-6, NASB).

Genesis 3 explains the human dilemma. All the problems in the universe—physical problems, spiritual problems, moral problems, social problems, economic problems, political problems—have their origin in the events of this historic account. When God completed His perfect creation, it was "very good." There was no evil, no disorder, no chaos, no conflict, no pain, no discord, no disease, no decline, no death. But now we live our whole lives in a perpetual struggle with all of those things. Frankly, everything in our world now is anything but good.

Sin affects us all

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin entered into our world, and everything went from being very good to being very bad. The Bible says in Romans 5:12: *"Through one man [Adam], sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned"*. We've all come from Adam and Eve, so we inherited what theologians call original sin. When Adam sinned, he brought death on himself and everybody else. Romans 3:23 states: *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*. There's another aspect to sin: the affliction. Not only did Adam's sin affect humanity's moral life; it also affected the ground, the material universe. Romans 8:22 says *"For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now."* under this affliction. The reason there is disintegration and death in the universe goes right back to Genesis 3.

Talking About Sin

The public has no interest in talking about sin today. To say that we are corrupt at birth? To say we are all born with an evil bent, a desire to violate the law of God and to dethrone God and replace Him with ourselves? To say we are incapable of doing anything good? Our culture doesn't want anything defined as sin. Everything is simply a lifestyle choice. The idea of guilt is considered medieval, obsolete and unhealthy. Politicians, moralists, educators and sociologists try to fix society, but they can't do it because they don't deal with the reality of what is in the heart. All humanity has a vile, rebellious, corrupt nature. Our thought-life is corrupt; our emotions are corrupt; our will is corrupt; our behavior is corrupt.

Sin starts in the heart

Sin is most simply defined in just three words: **REBELLION AGAINST GOD**. But to define what is rebellion against God, requires some explanation and detail. Whatever is against God's order, His will, His heart, His instruction and commands to us is rebellion against God. God created us to be in perfect communion with Him, completely righteous and in harmony with God in all respects, and this is still what He desires for us.

When we live unto ourselves, thinking we can generate our own happiness, our own destiny, our own solutions to problems, trying to fix ourselves, that is rebellion against God. He wants our provision and sufficiency to be by His hand, and His hand only. Many seek after possessions, fame, power, wives, husbands, children, sex, drugs and music just to name a few, to make them happy or to fill that emptiness inside that they feel. Because we were made to be in constant

communion with God, there is this place in our souls that only God can occupy. When we try and fill that place with anything other than God, this is rebellion against Him. When He does not occupy that place in our hearts, then we become self seekers and transgressors against God, breaking His will, His heart, His laws, His commands, and His instructions

It is then that we act upon our rebellion against Him, and do things that are considered sinful. But God sees the heart more than the action, and whether or not we do the actions of sin, the heart has already taken on the guilt of sin.

The actions of sin

The bible speaks plenty about the actions of sin, and refers to them generally as SINS.

Galatians 5:19-21 is a better example of a list of sins: *"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

Jesus is the only cure for sin

Romans 6:23: *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord".*

Romans 5:8: *"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us".*

John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life".*

1 John 1:9: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".*

We have to understand our own hearts. We have to understand our sin, its severity, its incurable power from the human perspective. We have to understand its pervasiveness, its deadliness. We have to understand sin because it's the defining element in our universe. It's why things are the way they are. It's why the creation is no longer "very good," but very bad. It's why everything dies. We have to understand sin because, most of all, it's why we need a Savior. God has sent Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, to save His people from their sins. And He saves sinners who repent and ask Him for forgiveness.

How do we tell our society about a Savior who will save them from sin when their definition of sin is basically non-existent? You tell them their behavior is an affront to God's holiness and a violation of His law, which is found in the Bible. You stress the truths of God's holiness and His hatred of evil. You point out that God is also just and righteous, which means He cannot simply look the other way and pretend evil doesn't exist. Although He is longsuffering, He must punish sin in the end.

That's what the cross is all about. Christ, the only sinless Person who ever lived, took the full weight of sin's guilt on Himself and bore the punishment for it (2 Corinthians 5:21). He died as a substitute for sinners. Those who trust Him receive forgiveness, not because God simply overlooks their sin, but because Christ has already paid for it. That's why the cross perfectly illustrates both the wrath of God against sin and His unfathomable love for sinners. That's the central meaning of the Gospel.

What an amazing reality! As defiling and corrupting as sin is, as openly rebellious and ungrateful as it is, God still embraces the sinner who comes in humble repentance and asks in faith for forgiveness. May God bring many sinners to repentance and salvation. And may He use us to that end, in the name of Jesus, His Son and our dear Savior. Amen.