

What is Sin

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A preacher once said, "I would esteem above every other gift that could be bestowed upon me as a preacher the power to adequately conceive what sin is and to adequately set it before the people." Why is it so important for us to understand what sin is?

Because of the consequences of it.

Isaiah 59:1-2, Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

Our sins separate us from God and cause Him to hide his face from us and He refuses to listen to our pleadings.

John 8:21, "*Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come."*

Another consequence of sin is that we cannot go to Jesus as long as we are in our sins.

1 Corinthians 5:5, "*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*".

A consequence of sin is the destruction of our flesh. Since the garden of Eden, man has been denied access to the tree of life and we all grow old and die.

And finally:

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

The final consequence of sin is spiritual death which is eternal separation from the presence of God.

So we have in all,

- 1) Sin separates us from God.
- 2) God hides His face from us.
- 3) God refuses to listen to us.

- 4) We cannot go to Jesus where He dwells.
- 5) We grow old and die.
- 6) We are eternally lost and our souls will spend eternity in the Fires of Hell.

It is my prayer and my goal in this lesson that I will have the ability today to convey to you what sin is, so that it may be avoided and also its consequences.

Sin is a violation of conscience:

Romans 14:23 *“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” The word “faith” in the context of this verse is not referring to a system of faith as it does in Galatians 1:23 and Jude 3.*

It refers to faith in a subjective sense, the persuasion or confidence of an individual. Thus, this passage is teaching us that we must be fully persuaded that what we are doing is lawful; otherwise, to act, is to sin.

We also see that our actions are not to be based on what “the crowd thinks” or “what others do”. We must believe a thing to be right. Our conscience is that moral nature about us that reacts favorably or unfavorably, sanctions or disapproves, as we react to the things we think, the things we say or the things we do.

But we must be very careful about our conscience. Just because we may truthfully think something is ok, it may not necessarily be so. Our conscience must be educated by God’s Word. Paul persecuted Christians in all good conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 26:29) so if our conscience is not according to God’s word, then we need to take those steps to correct our conscience.

The conscience is not an infallible guide – In John 16:2, Jesus said, *“They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”* Those who rejected Christians in that context thought in all good conscience that they were serving God but they weren’t. We need to make sure our conscience is in line with the will of God.

The conscience can be dulled. 1 Timothy 4:1-2, *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;”* These people will depart from the faith, allowing themselves to be drawn away by lies and false doctrines to the degree that their very own conscience will be seared to the point that it cannot be trusted. They will no longer be able to react unfavorably to the wrong things they, or others around them, may think, say or do.

Ephesians 4:19, *“Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.”* We can sin so much that our conscience becomes seared and dulled to the point that we feel that what we are doing is ok when it isn’t.

Do you have any doubts about playing a certain game, going to a certain place, participating in a certain function, or involving yourself in a certain habit? If so, refrain from doing it! Instead of living by doubt, obey the will of God –

Hebrews 10:22, *“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

Sin is knowing to do good, but doing it not. James 4:17, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” This verse emphasizes the fact that sin is not only wrong doing, it is a failure in doing right, failing to do good. I have heard this type of sin referred to sins of omission.

We are not only to be innocent of doing bad, we are to be followers and doers of good. Galatians 6:10 teaches, *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”* Notice the emphasis placed on fellow Christians. But those outside Christ are not in any way excluded from this.

In speaking to the church in 2 Corinthians 9:10-14, Paul wrote, *“Now may He [referring to God here] who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men”*

Our primary obligation as Christians in the body of Christ are to each other, but that in no way excludes us of our obligations to those outside the body of Christ. It would be wrong of us to minister to the needs of someone outside the body of Christ while being neglectful of our brethren in need, but it would be likewise just as wrong for us to be neglectful of those outside the body of Christ if we have the means whereby we can help them. And this obligation falls not just on the individual, but on the church as well. Paul was speaking to the church in Corinth as a group.

Some examples of those doing good. The good Samaritan was a doer of good (Luke 10:30-37); Jesus went about doing good (Acts 10:38). Jesus said that in the final resurrection, those who do good will inherit eternal life (John 5:28-29). Therefore, not doing good, or failing to do good, is sin.

James 4:17, quoted earlier, presents unto us the sin of unused knowledge, the failure to do what we know is right, the sin of knowing how to live right and not doing it.

Yet how often do we hear...

- 1) “I know what’s right, but ...”
- 2) “I know I should teach the lost, but ...”
- 3) “I know that I should not forsake the assemblies, but ...”
- 4) “I know what I should be doing, but ...”
- 5) “I know what I am doing is wrong but...”

We need to consider seriously the words of Jesus in Luke 12:47-48, *“And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.”* Those of us who know the will of God and refuse to submit ourselves to it in obedience will be *“beaten with many stripes”*. God expects more from those who know better.

Sin is a violation of God’s law. And 1 John 3:4 teaches us without question that there is law, *“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”* It is impossible to commit lawlessness where there is not any law to break.

Paul wrote in Romans 4:15, *“because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.”* If there was no law for us to follow, then it would not be possible for there to be sin. If there were no law, there would be no transgression. There would be no sin.

Where did this law come from? In the old testament, Isaiah 33:22, *“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.”* They had law in the old testament, no doubt about it. But what about the New Testament? Do we have a lawgiver? In writing to Christians James says by inspiration in 4:12, *“There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy...”*. Why would James tell fellow Christians there was a lawgiver if there was no law? Of course there’s law, Paul called it *“the law of Christ”* in Galatians 6:2.

Our lawgiver is Jesus Christ. Where did He get it? John 12:48-50.

“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.” Jesus received the law from God the Father and spoke it to those on earth. And this law which has been recorded for us by inspiration is what is going to be used to judge us in the last day.

According to 1 John 3:4, Sin is breaking God’s law.

For example:

God tells us not to lie (Ephesians 4:25, Therefore, putting away lying, *“Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,”* for we are members of one another. Therefore to lie is a sin.

1 John 3:4 teaches that sin is a personal refusal to be governed by God. Jesus Christ not only is our law giver, he is also our king, our governor if you will. Paul taught the Ephesians that He was *“Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church”* (Ephesians 1:21-22). Paul taught the Christians in Corinth that Jesus was indeed reigning in 1 Corinthians 15:25: *“For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”*

When we refuse to be subject to our King, then we are refusing to be governed by God. This is called rebellion toward God in scripture. King Saul learned this the hard way in Old Testament times when he allowed the people to keep some of the cattle and the spoil from the destruction of the Amalekites. When Samuel confronted Saul about this he said:

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD” (1 Samuel 15:23). When we fail to obey God, we reject His word. Sin is rebellion against God, rejection of His will, and refusal to be governed by His word.

Sin is a failure to keep God’s commands

“All unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17). Everything that is not righteous or rightful is sin. All of God’s commandments are righteousness (Psalm 119:172). John teaches in 1 John 3:7, *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.”* He then went on in the same context to say in verse 10: *1 “whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.”*

Thus, those who obey God’s commands are righteous, but those who do not obey God’s commands are unrighteous. John 5:17 teaches us that to fail to keep God’s commands is to sin.

Sin is to trespass against God.

2 John 9 ((NASB)

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

When we go somewhere today where we are not allowed to go, it’s called trespassing. We can go beyond the teachings of Christ and thereby fail to abide in His teachings. Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians wrote in 1 Corinthians 4:6 (NASB), *“Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written...”* We can go too far, we can exceed or go beyond what is written. We can go where we are not authorized or permitted to go. We can trespass against God and to do this is sin.

THE BIBLE’S EPITHETS FOR SIN

Webster defines epithets as “a characterizing word or phrase accompanying or occurring in place of the name of a person or thing”

One epithet for sin is “transgression”. Acts 1:25, “That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

“Transgression” means to rebel or set one’s self against. Thus, sin is treason against the Most High. A sinner is a rebel. Sin is a clinched fist and its object is the face of God. Sin is the refusal to submit ourselves to the authority of God.

James 4:7-10 *“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”*

Another epithet for sin is “iniquity” “Iniquity” has reference to perversity or crooked dealings. The Greek word for iniquity is often translated as lawlessness. Iniquity is that which is twisted, or bent out of line or not in harmony with the law of God. God’s word draws a line, and it is our responsibility to walk along that line without departing from it.

The Bible uses word pictures to illustrate sin.

1. Sin is pictured as a “putrefying” disease in Isaiah 1:6
2. Sin is pictured as a “heavy” burden in Psalm 38:4-6
3. Sin is pictured as “foolish” insanity in Numbers 12:11
4. Sin is pictured as “defiling” filth in 2 Peter 2:20-22
5. Sin is pictured as a “binding” debt in Matthew 6:12
6. Sin is pictured as a “blemishing” stain in James 1:27
7. Sin is pictured as an “impenetrable” darkness in 2 Corinthians 6:14
8. Sin is pictured as “slavery” in Romans 6:17

CONCLUSION:

Sin is no laughing matter. Sin is:

- 1) Rebellion against the will of God
- 2) Lawlessness
- 3) Perversity
- 4) Failure
- 5) Trespass
- 6) Enslavement leading to spiritual death.

Furthermore, sin is:

- 1) a disease needing curing,

- 2) a burden needing lifting,
- 3) insanity that needs curing,
- 4) filth that needs cleaning,
- 5) a debt that needs paying,
- 6) a stain that needs removing,
- 7) and darkness that needs light

And finally, sin is expensive. Sin carries with it a great cost. When we sinned, we forfeited our souls. When we sinned it cost us our spiritual lives with God forever. When we sinned, we lost our place in heaven with God the Father forever. The cost of sin to us cannot be overstated. It cost us everything that really matters.

God cannot just overlook our sin. His righteous nature demands the punishment of death which we owe for our sin. So He paid that debt for us so that we could have a hope of eternal life after sin. He paid that debt by sending His only Son down here to earth to suffer and die the death we deserved. God paid our sin debt for us in order to set us free of the slavery, the bondage of sin. Our sin cost God a lot. Our sin cost God the life of His only begotten Son. He paid that debt because we can't. We have nothing to offer for it. We're dead in our sins. What does a dead man have to offer? What does a dead man have to give as payment for a debt? Does a man's creditors go to his gravesite to try and collect unpaid debts? No. Why? Because the dead man has nothing with which to pay that debt.

Similarly, those who are dead in their sins have nothing to offer as payment for their sin debt. Our deaths, both physical and spiritual, are what is due for our sins. When we die, there is nothing left to offer. Our sin cost us everything. Jesus Christ came down here and offered His life in the place of ours so that we could have a hope of life. Without the sacrifice of Jesus, we have no hope. Jesus Christ left heaven, and came down to earth to die, so that when we die, we can leave earth and go live in Heaven with Him forever.

So how do we free ourselves from the slavery of sin? How do we cure the disease? How do we lift the burden? How do we cure the insanity? How do we cleanse the filth? How do we remove the stains? How do we shine light on the darkness? How do we free ourselves from the slavery of sin? In short, what do we have to do in order to take advantage of the offering of Jesus Christ and live?

Romans 6:15-23

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you

presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul's answer was that we become slaves to God if we want to be free from the slavery of sin. Slavery to God sounds a lot better than slavery to Sin. Slavery to God ends us up in eternal glory and Heaven with God. Slavery to sin ends us up in Hell with the devil and his angels and everybody else who are liars, cheaters, drunks, thieves, adulterers, murders, fornicators. The company we would have to keep in Hell would be bad enough all by itself, but add to that the wrath of God in eternal punishment and the consequences become dire indeed. So.

How do we become slaves to God? How do we become slaves to righteousness like Paul said? Easy, by doing what he said to do in verse 16 of the passage we just read. "*Obedience leading to righteousness*". Obedience. Well, what are we supposed to obey? First of all, we have to be "*in Christ*". An American is someone who lives in America. Likewise, a Christian is someone who lives in Christ. We have to be a Christian in order to be a slave of righteousness. Non-Christians are not slaves of righteousness. They have not submitted to the authority of God. So then how do we come to live in Christ?

First we have to hear Jesus. This means more than just hearing passively. We are to listen attentively and heed the message. Paul said "*Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*" (Romans 10:17).

Then we have to believe. Jesus said "*He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God*" (John 3:18). We must have faith but that is not where it stops. As Bobby taught us in the past weeks, faith without obedience is dead and we are not saved by a dead faith. We are saved by a living, active, complete faith.

Then in Mark 1:15, Jesus said, "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" In Luke 13:3 Jesus said Luke 13:3

"except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Repentance is extremely important in that without it, we cannot be saved. Repentance is best defined as a sorrow of heart that leads to a change of behavior. We are sorry for the sin in our life and we resolve to live better. We resolve to be a slave of righteousness living according to what is good and right and shunning that which is wrong and evil. Repentance is not a one time thing. Rather, repentance is a commitment that takes a lifetime of resolve with a daily recommitment for the rest of one's life.

Then Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33, "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.*" We have to confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God. This is another thing that is not a one time thing. We confess Jesus as the Son of God before men for the rest of our lives. But the initial confession precedes one's baptism just like with the Ethiopian Eunuch who said that he believed Jesus Christ was the son of God.

Then finally, Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" He also told Nicodemus in John 3:5, "*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*" Those who wish to become Christians and be a slave to righteousness must submit to the command to be baptized. It is at this point that we are immersed into the death of Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3). Jesus death was by the shedding of His blood, therefore when we are immersed into His death, we are immersed into the means of that death; His blood. It is at that moment in time that the cleansing blood of Christ is applied to us and our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16). We are immersed/buried into Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:27, Romans 6:3). We are then reborn to a new life in Christ. We are then freed from the slavery and bondage of sin and have become a slave of righteousness. We have become a Christian, added to the church of Christ by God (Acts 2:47).

From that moment on, Christians are commanded to walk in the light, meaning we live faithfully and obediently like the first century Christians were instructed. We serve the will of God by serving each other, spreading the the good news of salvation and worshipping in spirit and in truth. Confessing our sins, asking for forgiveness and keeping on keeping on trying to live our lives as slaves of righteousness. Jesus said, "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

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