

died spiritually. He also began to die physically, and now had a dead soul and a dying body. But that was not all. The children of Adam and Eve inherited their corrupt nature and sinful character. From then on, like pollution at the source of a river, the poison of sin has flowed to all of Adam's descendants, and "so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (*Rom 5:12*).

Notice that important word "all." All of us are sinners, and we are dying. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (*1 John 1:8*); and if we claim not to be dying, we're simply being ridiculous. Fooling around with the facts does nothing to change them.

Many of today's newspaper, television, and radio headlines remind us of the fact that the world is in a mess. It's easy to condemn violence, injustice, disorder, and wrongdoing in society, but before criticizing others ask yourself whether you are perfect and living a life pleasing to a holy God. Are you absolutely honest, pure, loving, and selfless? God knows the answers to these questions, and so do you. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (*Rom 3:23*). You are a sinner by birth, by nature, by practice, and by choice, and you urgently need to face the facts, and the consequences.

### IS SIN SERIOUS ?

When disease is diagnosed, it's important to ask if it's serious. It's even more important to ask that about the spiritual disease of sin. Many people will almost cheerfully admit to being sinners, because they have no idea what this means. They treat it as being "just human nature," or they shelter behind the fact that "everybody does it." But those statements dodge the real issue of the serious nature of sin. Here are some of the things the Bible says about a sinner.

**You are debased.** This does not mean that you are as bad as you can be, or that you cannot tell right from wrong, or do things that are pleasant and helpful. But it does mean that sin has invaded every part of your nature and personality: your mind, will, affections, conscience, disposition, and imagination. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (*Jer 17:9*). The root of your trouble is not what you do but what you are! You sin because you are a sinner.

**You are defiled.** "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetous-

ness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (*Mark 7:21-22*). Notice that the list includes thoughts, words, and actions. This shows that in God's sight all sin is equally serious. Some people limit their idea of sin to things like murder, adultery, and robbery, but the Bible makes it clear that sin is anything that fails to meet God's perfect standards. Anything we say, think, or do that is less than perfect is sin. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (*Prov 20:9*). If you cannot say this, you are defiled.

**You are defiant.** "Sin is lawlessness" (*1 John 3:4 NKJV*). No civil law forces you to lie, cheat, have impure thoughts, or sin in any other way. You choose to sin. You choose to break God's laws. You deliberately disobey him, and that's serious. "God is angry with the wicked every day" (*Psal 7:11*). God can never be "soft" about sin, and you can be sure that not even one sin will go unpunished. On the Day of Judgment, "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (*Rom 14:12*).

### WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE ?

There are many ideas about what happens when we die. Some speak of annihilation; some say we all go to heaven. Others believe in a place where sinful souls are purified and prepared for heaven. But the Bible supports none of this. Instead we read: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (*Heb 9:27*). Those in a right relationship with God will then be welcomed into heaven, to spend eternity in his glorious presence. All others will "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (*2 Thess 1:9*). The Bible's most common word for this is "hell." Here are four important truths about it.

**Hell is factual.** It is not something "invented by the church." The Bible says far more about hell than it does about heaven and leaves no doubt about its reality. It speaks of people being condemned and thrown into hell: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (*Matt 23:33*).

**Hell is fearful.** It is described in the Bible as a place of torment: "For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (*Luke 16:28*). "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (*Matt 13:42*). Hell is spoken of as a "devouring fire," "everlasting burnings," and an

"unquenchable fire" (*Isaiah 33:14; Matt 3:12*). It is a place of suffering: "Cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (*Matt 22:13*), and "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (*Rev 14:11*).

**Hell is final.** All roads to hell are one-way streets. There is no exit. Between heaven and hell "there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (*Luke 16:26*). The horror, loneliness, and agony of hell are not in order to purify, but to punish—forever!

**Hell is fair.** It will be "in righteousness" that God "will judge the world" (*Acts 17:31*), and he is perfectly just in sending sinners to hell. After all, he gives them what they chose. They rejected God; he rejects them. They chose to live wicked and ungodly lives; he confirms their choice—forever. God can hardly be accused of injustice or unfairness!

### CAN RELIGION HELP ?

Man has tried to satisfy his religious longings in hundreds of ways. He's worshipped the sun, moon, and stars; earth, fire, and water; idols of wood, stone, and metal; fish, birds, and animals. He's worshipped countless gods and spirits which have been the products of his own perverted imagination. And he's attempted to worship the true God through a vast variety of sacrifices, ceremonies, sacraments, and services. But "religion," however sincere, can never solve man's sin problem, for at least three reasons.

**Religion can never satisfy God.** Religion is man's attempt to make himself right with God, but any such attempt is futile because even man's best efforts are flawed and as such are unacceptable to God: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (*Isaiah 64:6*). God demands perfection; religion can't measure up.

**Religion can never remove sin.** Your virtues can never cancel out your vices. Good deeds can never remove bad ones. If a person gets right with God, it is "not of works, lest any man should boast" (*Eph 2:9*). No religious efforts or experiences—christening, confirmation, baptism, holy communion, church-going, prayers, gifts, sacrifices of time and effort, Bible reading, or anything else—can cancel out a single sin.

**Religion can never change man's sinful nature.** A person's behavior is not the problem, only the symptom. The heart of man's problem is the problem of man's heart, and

by nature man's heart is corrupt and depraved. Going to church and taking part in religious ceremonies may make you feel good, but they cannot make you good. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one" (*Job 14:4*). Some religious activities are obviously "good" in themselves. For example, it's right to go to church, to read the Bible and pray, because God tells us to do these things. But you dare not rely upon them to make you right with God. Not only are they powerless to do so; trusting in them actually adds to your sin and condemnation.

### IS THERE AN ANSWER ?

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (*John 3:16*). A just and holy God must punish sin; but the Bible also says that "God is love" (*1 John 4:8*). But how can a sinner be justly pardoned when God's law demands eternal death? This is a problem only God could solve: "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (*1 John 4:14*).

God the Son became a man by taking upon himself human nature. Although Jesus became fully man, he remained fully God—"In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (*Col 2:9*). He remained as completely God as if he had not become man. He became as completely man as if he were not God. Jesus Christ is therefore unique and the Bible confirms this in many ways. His conception was unique: he had no human father but was conceived in a virgin's womb by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit. His words were unique: people were "astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power" (*Luke 4:32*). His miracles were unique: "Jesus went about...healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (*Matt 4:23*), and on several occasions he even raised the dead. His character was unique: "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (*Heb 4:15*). God the Father said of him, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (*Matt 3:17*).

Notice that last verse! This means that as a man Jesus kept the law of God in every part and thus was not subject to sin's penalty. Yet he was arrested on a trumped-up charge, sentenced on false evidence, and crucified. But his death was no accident. It was all part of God's set purpose: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked

hands have crucified and slain" (*Acts 2:23*). The Father sent the Son for the very purpose of paying sin's death penalty, and Jesus willingly came. In his own words, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (*Matth 20:28*). His death, like his life, was unique.

## WHY THE CROSS ?

The whole Bible points to the death of Jesus. Neither his perfect life nor his marvelous teachings nor his powerful miracles are the focus of the Bible's message. These are all important, but above all else Jesus came into the world to die. What makes his death so important? The answer is that he died as a Substitute, a Sin-bearer, and a Saviour.

**Jesus the Substitute.** This demonstrates the love of God. Sinners are guilty, lost, and helpless before God's holy law, which demands punishment for every sin. How can they possibly escape God's righteous wrath? The Bible says: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (*Rom 5:8*). As part of an amazing rescue plan God the Son volunteered to take the place of sinners and bear the just penalty for their sin. The sinless Son of God willingly suffered and died for them: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (*1 Peter 3:18*).

**Jesus the Sin-bearer.** This demonstrates the holiness of God. The penalty for the sins of others was paid in full by the death of God's sinless Son. As he hung on the cross he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (*Mark 15:34*). At that terrible moment God the Father had turned his back upon his well-beloved Son, as he endured the penalty of separation from God when our sins were laid upon him (*Isaiah 53:6*). Notice how this shows God's perfect holiness. All sin, every sin, must be punished; and when Jesus took the place of sinners, he became accountable for their sins, just as if he himself was personally responsible for them. The one man who lived a perfect life suffered a double death penalty for the guilty.

**Jesus the Saviour.** This demonstrates the power of God. Three days after his death, Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (*Rom 1:4*). "To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking

of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (*Acts 1:3*). "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (*Rom 6:9*). In raising Christ from the dead, God powerfully demonstrated that he accepted his death in the place of sinners as the full and perfect payment for sin's penalty, and as the basis on which he now offers a full and free pardon to those who would otherwise be doomed to spend eternity in hell.

## HOW CAN I BE SAVED ?

Do you genuinely want to be saved? Do you want to be made right with God, whatever the cost or consequences? If not, you have not grasped the importance of this tract. You should read it again, slowly and carefully, asking God to show you the truth. If you do see your need, and you do want to be saved, then you must turn to God; and the only way to turn to God is through the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (*John 14:6*). When the jailor asked, "What must I do to be saved?" the apostle answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (*Acts 16:30-31*).

To believe in Jesus is to receive him as "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (*Matth 16:16*) who "died for the ungodly" (*Rom 5:6*). It means to believe in the power and love of Christ that he is able and willing to save you. Believing in him means actually putting your trust in Christ, relying upon him, and him alone, to make you right with God. To believe in Jesus is to see his shed blood as your only cleansing before God, and to trust his righteousness alone as your only hope of standing pure and righteous in God's holy presence. Your proud, sinful nature will fight against abandoning trust in your own "goodness" or religion. Yet you have no alternative. You must stop trusting in "the best that you can do" and trust only in Christ, who "is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (*Heb 7:25*). This is truly what "looking unto Jesus" is; you cease looking at self (*Isaiah 45:22; Heb 12:2*).

If God has shown you your need of Christ, then turn to him. Confess that you're a guilty, lost, and helpless sinner; and with all your heart ask Christ to save you. Plead with him as did the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner" (*Luke 18:13*). Surrender your whole self to him as Lord of your life, that he may enable you to turn from sin and live for him. The Bible teaches that all of those who

truly believe in Christ repent of their sins. He is the "author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (*Heb 5:9*). He said, "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (*Luke 19:27*).

Those who know Christ as Savior, know him as Lord. Breaking free from the enslavement of sin is a task greater than you (*Jer 13:23*). Christ is able to set you free (*Jer 31:18*). He has been exalted a Prince and a Savior "to give repentance" (*Acts 5:31*). "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (*John 8:36*). He says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (*Isaiah 45:22*). "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (*Rom 10:9*). ■

— John Blanchard

## TOMORROW!

"Boast not thyself of **TOMORROW**; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth"  
— Proverbs 27:1

He was going to be all that a mortal should be  
**TOMORROW.**

No one should be kinder or braver than he  
**TOMORROW.**

A friend who was troubled and weary he knew,  
Who'd be glad of a lift and who needed it too;  
On him he would call and see what he could do  
**TOMORROW.**

Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write  
**TOMORROW.**

And thought of the folks he would fill with delight  
**TOMORROW.**

It was too bad, indeed, he was busy today,  
And hadn't a minute to stop on his way;  
More time he'd have to give others, he'd say,  
**TOMORROW.**

The greatest of workers this man would have been  
**TOMORROW.**

The world would have known him, had he ever seen  
**TOMORROW.**

But the fact is he died and faded from view,  
And all that he left here when living was through  
Was a mountain of things he intended to do  
**TOMORROW.**

## ULTIMATE QUESTIONS

**L**ife is full of questions. Some are trivial, others are important. But the greatest, the ultimate questions, are about God and your relationship to him. Nothing in life is more important than this. Good health, financial stability, secure employment, a contented family, and a hopeful future are all things that people want. Yet even these are temporary and eventually pointless unless you have a living relationship with God, one that is clear and certain, and will last forever. The questions that follow are the most serious and important that anyone could ask. The answers are those that everyone needs.

## WHAT WENT WRONG ?

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (*Rom 5:12*). The first man and woman (Adam and Eve) were given great freedom, but also one serious warning: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (*Gen 2:17*). This was an ideal test of man's willingness to obey what God said simply because God said it. But the devil tempted Eve to disbelieve and disobey God's words, and she did. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (*Gen 3:6*).

At that moment "sin entered into the world." By his deliberate disobedience, man cut himself off from God. His relationship with his glorious Creator was severed. Instead of loving God, Adam and Eve now were terrified of him: "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden" (*Gen 3:8*). Instead of being assured, confident, and happy, their sin had made them ashamed, guilty, and afraid. God had said that man would die if he disobeyed, and he did. Death means separation, and in one terrible moment man became separated from God. He