

715 "What's So Bad about Sin?"

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

For some people the word "sin" is outdated and ought not to be used. One preacher said the worst thing anyone can do is to point out a sin. Well, what is sin; and what's so bad about it? You won't want to miss this important Bible study! Today we're asking the question, "What's so bad about sin?" The word "sin" in its various forms occurs more than 700 times in Scripture. Something mentioned that many times must be significant. American culture, however, wants to get rid of the whole concept of "sin." They want to determine what is right and wrong for themselves. They do not want God or anyone legislating or judging their morality. In 1973 Karl Menninger wrote the book, "Whatever Became of Sin?" In more recent years a popular preacher argued that sin is an "outdated" word and should be removed from our vocabulary. In 1994 John MacArthur wrote about America's "vanishing conscience." Even if sin is not all that important to Americans, we must take some time to see what God says about it.

It is the tendency of people to downplay sin. Men have always thought that the whole concept of sin should be softened. They figure that since all people sin at some point, there should be little consequence to sin. They don't like the word sin and are offended by anyone who calls them a "sinner." It has been the American way to re-label things, when a word or idea leaves a bad taste in our mouths. So...we call sin a mistake, a difficulty, an error in judgment, a disappointment, an inappropriate action, a problem, or a disease. Some people think that by labeling "sin" as something else, they can remove its sting. People also tend to put the blame for sin on someone or something else. We are a society filled with excuses. We blame society, parents, and circumstances and remove the responsibility from the perpetrator. If we can't deny sin exists, it seems that many try to find a way to rationalize it away. We offer so many excuses. We believe making them will take away the stain of our sins. We say things like: "Just once won't hurt." "Everyone's doing it!" "I can quit when I want to." "Get with it, this is the 2000's! Things have changed!" "We were all in on it." Adam said, "She did it first." Saul said, "I had to do it, or I would have lost face." Judas could have said, "I didn't use the proceeds anyway."

Whatever we tell our sins, the fact still remains underneath it all: we have sinned. And sin has consequences, whether we like to admit it or not. Sin has consequences whether we get caught or not. Sin has consequences whether we re-label it or not. Paul said in Galatians 6:7-8, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." You are not going to fool God about sin or to mock Him with it. If you live for the flesh, you will reap the corruption of the flesh. This is an unalterable law of life. It is easy for all of us to think that we can cheat fate and escape the consequences of our actions, but God always knows. David spoke about this in Psalm 50:21, where God says to the wicked, "You thought that I was like yourself." We don't always appreciate the holiness of God. The prophet Habakkuk said of God, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor." Peter tells Christians in 1 Peter 1:15-16, "but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.'"

Sin will affect you in several ways. First, sin will deceive you. The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 3:12-13, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." We should understand that the devil is a liar. He

will make promises he knows that he can only fulfill a short time. He also knows that sinful ways will lead to condemnation in the end. He can only promise short-term pleasure that has eternal consequences. Paul said the devil likes to pretend he is God's servant. In 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 Paul described some phony religious workers of his day, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds." Sin would love to lure you like bait does to a fish. It appeals to our senses and makes us think we are going to get something from it. In the end, it is our sin that gets us.

Second, sin will enslave us. The common thing we hear is that we don't intend to get addicted. No one, after all, sets out to be an alcoholic, a criminal, or a hateful person; but sin has a way of becoming an enslaving habit that is hard to break. Proverbs 5:22 says, "The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin." Jesus understood what sin will do to an individual. He said in John 8:34, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin." When a person gives in to sin, it makes it easier to give in a second and third time, until one is unable to say no. By sinning against God, one forsakes God as his master and serves the sin. Paul explained in Romans 6:16-18, "Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness." If we give ourselves to sin, sin will control our lives. People can certainly get their lives in a mess, but God can help them overcome sin. God can free them through the blood of Jesus. Jesus said in John 8:36, "if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." I'm thankful that through the grace of God, we can become obedient to the teaching of Christ and be freed from sin!

Third, sin will corrupt and defile us spiritually and physically. A person sold out to sin doesn't think like a person who loves and serves the Lord. Sometimes Christians just cannot understand how people can do some of the things that do: kidnapping children, raping old women, selling addictive drugs, or stealing from the helpless. It never occurs to good people to do such things. Sin has a way of corrupting our thinking, so that when people get enslaved by sin they do horrible and hurtful things to others. Paul said in Titus 1:15-16, "To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work." You've probably known people who just could not stay out of trouble but caused ruin everywhere they turned. When sin gets inside of us, it grows like a cancer and corrupts our hearts and lives. Paul urged the Christians in Corinth in 2 Corinthians 7:1, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." If we are ever to find the joy and peace of Christ, we must get rid of the sin in our lives. Some people don't like to hear the word "repent," but repentance is God's gift for a better life. We can change and become the people God wants us to be. J.W. McGarvey said, "I wonder if any of us has ever realized what it is to commit sin. I have prepared sermons designed to set forth the enormity of sin: but I have every time felt that I made a failure. The pleasures of sin have blinded our eyes to its enormity. The journey of human life is strewn with tears; the whole earth on which we live has become dotted over

with graveyards. The Word of God tells us that all this woe, pain, sorrow and death result from sin."

Fourth, sin will bring spiritual death. The word death does not mean that one ceases to exist, but that one is separated. Physical death separates the body from the spirit. The body decays, but the spirit of a person continues to exist. When a person sins, he continues to exist; but he separates himself from God. He no longer has the blessing and favor of God but lives as an enemy of God. The prophet Ezekiel said in Ezekiel 18:4, "Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine. The soul who sins will die." When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden, they were cast out and began to die physically. When they left the garden, they left also the blessing of God and brought pain, death, and evil to everyone who has ever lived. Because of the sin Adam brought into the world, people have learned to sin, to act in rebellion to God and have driven a wedge between themselves and God. Isaiah said in Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, the LORD'S hand is not so short that it cannot save; Nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear." When people separate themselves from God in this life, they also lose their hope of being with God in the next life. Paul said clearly in Romans 6:23, "the wages of sin is death."

Please don't deceive yourself into thinking that you can live your life here anyway you wish and be able to go to heaven when you die. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." There are some places in the world that ministers cannot quote this verse, because the world is so hardened in sin that they consider it "hate speech." But preaching against sin is not "hate speech" any more than telling a person to get out of his burning house is hate speech. If sin really leads one to be lost eternally, the only loving thing a person can do is warn others of the dangers of sin. It seems that some in our world today would rather label what the Bible calls sin as something else rather than submit to God's teaching to repent. What if the Bible is right? What if committing these sinful behaviors means that one is lost?

How could anyone sit quietly and not warn others of this danger? Before anyone decides that preaching the truth is somehow unkind, he should consider how unkind it would be for a preacher to

remain silent about the sin that separates him from God. A truly kind person humbly speaks the things a person needs to hear not just what he wants to hear. A doctor is not unkind because he warns us of disease; he is being honest. The only way we can deal with disease or sin is to admit that it is present and find the cure. Our healing today is in the blood of Jesus and in repentance. It will never be found in deceiving ourselves about our sins. We can't wish sin away; we can't excuse it away; we can't rationalize it away; and we can't ignore it and expect it to go away. There is only one hope for the curse and consequences of sin. That hope is found in the blood of Jesus Christ. If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. That, my friend, is the hope we have only in Jesus Christ.

If it takes the blood of Christ to heal us and free us from sin, how do we come into contact with that blood? We can only come into contact with the blood by the obedience of faith, my friend. Hebrews 11:6 says, "without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him." Faith in Christ as our Savior, as the Son of God who died for our sins and rose again on the third day, is a must. If we don't believe in Christ, talking about healing in his blood is useless. Faith is necessary. Further, repentance is necessary. Paul said in Acts 17:30-31, "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." God won't accept anything less than a change in our hearts and lives, if we are to find healing. Third, we must be baptized. It is in baptism that we come into direct contact with that blood. Paul said in Romans 6:3-7, "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin." Jesus shed His blood on the cross, and baptism unites us with Him in his death, so that His blood washes away the sin from our souls. It is in baptism that God kills the old man of sin, washes us clean from sin, unites us with Christ, and raises us up with Christ to walk in newness of life. My friend, that is the best reason I know to be baptized into Christ today. Would you?

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