

# 734 How Does God See Sin

## Phil Sanders

### God's Answers to Life's Questions

Today we're asking the question, "How does God see sin?" People have always thought that the concept of sin should be softened. Preachers have often been criticized and some even fired for preaching out against sin. People don't like to hear anything negative, so they avoid the topic of sin. One well-known preacher says that "sinner" and "sinner" are outdated words and should never be used. He believes that calling anyone a "sinner" is the worst thing any preacher can do. But the Bible uses the word "sin" and its synonyms "iniquity," "transgression," "wickedness," or "error" hundreds of times. People today don't like to think about sin or admit their sin, because they don't like to think that anything is wrong with them. The question however remains, "how does God see sin?" He often sees things differently than we do. He may not excuse or dismiss the errors of our lives so quickly. If God sent Jesus down to this earth to die for "sin," He must take it very seriously.

You can only find someone saying, "I have sinned," a handful of times throughout the Bible, and yet the Bible says in Romans 3:23, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." People don't like to think of themselves as "sinners" or their behavior as sin. In many cases they would rather fool themselves. They call their sin a mistake, an error in judgment, a disappointment, an inappropriate action, a problem, a disease, or an addiction. They think of it as anything but sin. For most people it is hard to admit that we have sinned. We would rather downplay our sin or act like it never happened.

Others take a different approach to dealing with sin. They blame society, parents, and circumstances for their sins so they don't have to be responsible. You'll remember that Adam, after he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, blamed Eve. Adam said in Genesis 3:12, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Verse 13 says: Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Both Adam and Eve pointed to someone else. God was not impressed with their excuses. That very day they were forced out of the garden into an environment where they would undergo hardship and eventually die. Blaming others for your sins doesn't work.

In 1 Samuel 15 Samuel told Saul to go and strike the Amalekites, destroy ever person and all that they have. But Saul saved King Agag and the best of the sheep and oxen for the people to offer. Saul knew he had not kept the command of God, but he was weak to the pressure of the people. Samuel asked Saul, "Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" Then Saul said to Samuel, "I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took *some* of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal." Saul gave in to pressure and blamed the people.

What Samuel said to Saul ought to instruct us too about how God sees things. Samuel said in 1 Samuel 15:22-23, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from *being* king." God has never accepted the excuse of blaming other people. Romans 14:12 says, "Each one of us will give an account of himself to God." Regardless of what others do, say, or think, we are responsible for ourselves. We must learn to take responsibility for our words, our attitudes, and our behavior. You cannot disobey God and blame others. God knows who is responsible.

When blaming doesn't work, people tend to rationalize away their sin. How often do we hear phrases like, "Just once won't hurt"; "Everyone's doing it"; "I can quit when I want to"; or "Get with it, this is 2007! Things have changed!" I have a book in my library subtitled, "37 Ways Not to Handle Guilt." It tells of all the ways people try to justify their sins. The book points out clearly but firmly: not one of these ways work. Some want to change the standards and rules; they make rules for themselves and expect the God of heaven to follow them.

Some think God is subject to our vote and to opinion polls. God and His will do not change. Some over-react to the firmness of God by getting angry. It is often easier to get angry at God than it is to repent. They get angry and charge God with being unfair or unloving to call sin what it is. But God is no fool. God knows how sin hurts. He opposes it because it ruins lives and families. When God makes a law, it is always for the good of His people. When people violate that law, they end up hurting themselves or others. It is an arrogant thing to think we know more than God or are more righteous than God.

People lie to themselves about sin! Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." People cannot continue in any of these practices and still please God. To continue in sin rather than to repent means that one cannot go to heaven. Some people want to look at the sins they don't practice and condemn them. They don't realize that their own sin is just as evil in God's eyes as the sins of another.

Asaph said in Psalm 50:16-22: But to the wicked God says: "What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers. You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you. Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver!" God is loving, but He is not ignorant. He is patient, but there is an end to his patience.

Other people deceive themselves in thinking they can be around sin but sin won't affect them. Many years ago a man who had quit drinking told my dad that he could walk into a bar and never take a drink. It didn't matter that others were drinking or that he would smell the liquor; he was sure he could stay sober. My dad told him, "You can't walk through the mud and not get muddy." Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals." You can't flirt with sin, continually surrounding yourself with it, and not be affected by it. It will corrupt you, even if you have the best intentions.

Some folks think they can sin today and quit tomorrow without any consequences. They are only fooling themselves. There are always consequences to sin. There really is no such thing as a victimless crime. Those who commit crimes always sin against God and themselves. 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." People can hurt themselves in so many ways when they sin. You see, God gave us the rules and laws in this Bible to protect. When we break the

rules, we're saying to God we know better than He does. How foolish!

Sin always hurts those who commit the sin. Sometimes the pain is physical. A man who drinks to get drunk will damage his heart and liver, his flesh. Many diseases are the result of sexual immorality. A man who commits violent crimes opens himself up to violence or imprisonment. Sometimes the pain is emotional. The straying wife will find herself cast out by her husband and children. The compulsive gambler may bankrupt his family. The person who lies will find that no one trusts him or her. A person who sins has to live with the reality of his sin and live with himself. It is difficult to realize that I am the kind of person who would do such a thing.

Some people actually think they have never at all sinned against God. The apostle John dealt with some Christians who thought they had arisen above the ability to sin. He said in 1 John 1:8-10, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." It is hard to admit we have sinned; that's why many people would rather believe a lie than confess their sins. But it is through being honest with God and ourselves that we find healing and forgiveness. It is better to be honest than it is to remain in sin and lose our souls.

God does not look on sin the way we do. What seems insignificant to us is not insignificant to God. People don't understand why in Leviticus 10:1-3 God consumed Nadab and Abihu with fire for offering strange or unauthorized fire. God made it clear, however, that their presumptuous act, which He had not commanded, did not treat Him as holy. God is holy, and no one can worship Him except in the way He commands. People wonder why God struck Uzzah dead for trying to keep the Ark of the Covenant from falling off the oxcart. Well, the priests were to carry the ark in a prescribed manner, not the oxcart. Uzzah was never to touch it, since he was not a priest. This may seem insignificant to us, but it was irreverent and very offensive to God (2 Sam. 6:7).

Why is God offended? Think with me. If you are the victim, your attitude is going to be very different than the one who did the crime. We laugh with Robin Hood when he steals from the rich to give to the poor, but how would you feel if he stole your money? You aren't going to feel the same about stealing, if you are the victim of theft. All sin is an offense against God. If you sin against your brother, you also sin against God. John said in 1 John 4:20-21, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." How we treat people is how we treat God. This is why all sin is against God.

Moses wrote in Exodus 20:3-6, "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." Some folks never think God has feelings.

God created us, and He won't give us up to an idol or to serve Satan. He is a jealous in a positive sense of being unwilling to share what is rightfully His. I feel the same way about my loving wife. I won't share her with anyone. Sin separates us from God, so we

should not be surprised that God hates sin. God often calls sin an abomination. The word abomination means that he abhors sin, hates sin. Solomon said in Proverbs 6:16-19, "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness *who* utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers."

God hates sin; it is an abomination to Him. Now, while He hates sin, He still loves sinners and sent His son Jesus to die for them. God hates sin because He loves you. He hates what sin does to you and to everyone He loves. Sin grieves the Lord. Ezekiel 33:11 says, "As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"

It breaks God's heart to see people sin, to turn away from Him. Jesus said in Matthew 23: 37-39, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" My friend, are you living a way of life that breaks the heart of God? Don't rationalize your sin away. Don't excuse it away. Give the sin up, and give your heart to God.

Paul said in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The word death means separation. Physical death is when our bodies are separated from our spirits. Spiritual death is when we become separated from the love and grace of God. Isaiah said in Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear 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 sin comes between you and God, you lose God's willingness to hear your prayers and answer them. Even children of God can so sin as to lose their salvation. Paul told the Roman Christians in Romans 8:12-13, "So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." 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." My friend, sin will keep you out of heaven, and that is why you need the blood of Jesus to cleanse you. To become a Christian, you must believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ. Out of love for God, you must turn away from the sin that offends Him in repentance. Repentance takes place when you hate sin too and hunger to be righteous, to follow Christ. With your faith, your love and repentance, confess the Name of Jesus before others and be baptized into Christ. When you are baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins, add you to His church, and cause you to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-7). Sometimes Christians get caught up in sin, overcome, and lose their souls. If you as a Christian brother or sister are not living as you ought, you could lose the love and promise of God. You could miss heaven. God doesn't want that for you. He wants you to change your ways and live with Him forever. Jesus went back to the Father to prepare a place for you, after dying for your sins on the cross. Don't let his blood be shed in vain. Come back to God. Get your heart and life right with the living God.

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Concord Road Church of Christ  
8221 Concord Rd., Brentwood, TN 37027  
1-877-226-5747

[phil@God-answers.org](mailto:phil@God-answers.org)

[www.tv.God-answers.org](http://www.tv.God-answers.org)