

543 What's So Bad about Sin?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

Some people are saying, "Sin is an outdated word" and should be dropped from our vocabulary. They think that using the word "sinner" is offensive and a hindrance to Christianity. Others say that Jesus never called anyone a sinner.

What does the Bible say about sin? What does it mean to be a sinner? And what is the big deal about sin anyway? Is sin really so bad that a person will spend an eternity lost? Should we ever call anyone a sinner? In a politically correct world some people have banned the word "sin." Is the word "sin" really so bad that we should never mention it?

The word "sin" is certainly a Biblical term and is used 221 times in the New Testament alone; and the word "sinner" is used an additional 46 times. The Bible also uses other terms when speaking of sin. A "sin" is sometimes described as an "error," "iniquity," "unrighteousness," an "evil," a "trespass," or a "transgression." Something that has that many words describing it is not some small thing that one can dismiss. You will never find it taken lightly or minimized in Scripture. You will never find Jesus saying it is an outdated word. In fact, every time Jesus called for repentance, it presupposed sin.

In fact, it is very hard to understand the purpose of Jesus at all, without talking about sin. When Mary was with child, the angel told Joseph, "she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). When John the Baptist introduced Jesus, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) More than seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah who was to come. He spoke about Jesus and how Jesus would bear our transgressions.

Isaiah 53:5-6 says, "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Jesus died a cruel, ugly death upon a cross so that we might be freed from sin. His suffering brought us forgiveness, grace and peace. To suggest sin is an unimportant word makes a mockery of what Jesus on the cross for you and me. It suggests that we don't need His blood.

The fact is, some people do not realize just what a tragic thing sin truly is. Sin has caused so much pain; it has wasted so many lives; it has caused so many conflicts, and it has brought so much guilt and shame. Calling sin "outdated" doesn't make it outdated; doing that only shows the attitude of the one who says such things. My friend, God takes note of sin whether we do or not. You see, when men sin, they sin against God—they offend God. Sin is not merely a transgression against law; it is a transgression against God's law and God Himself! There is no "victimless" sin, for God is always the victim.

Some people think of sin as something that somebody else does. Nearly everyone can point to someone they think is a worse sinner than themselves. But everyone sins. Paul said, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

(Romans 3:23). Every person who reaches the age where he knows about God, right and wrong, comes to that point where he acts in defiance of God's law and so sins. Some people have categories of sins. They think "big" sins are really bad, but "little" sins are no big deal. They figure others commit the big sins, while they themselves only commit little ones.

All sins, however, are bad. All sins transgress God's law and break God's heart. All sins go against His will for our lives. Paul said, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). That is spiritual death, separation from God and His blessing. 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 people persist in sin, they build a barrier between themselves and God.

This barrier means that God no longer approves, that one does not stand in His grace and receive His blessing. Some people still don't think they have sinned. John said in 1 John 1:8-10, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." People tend to lie to themselves about many things. Some ignore warnings about the weather; others ignore warnings about their souls.

Sin can cost you your soul. Sin is no joke. It is nothing to flirt with or make jokes about. Jesus said in Matthew 16:26-27, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds." Some people laugh about sin, but no one will be laughing when Jesus comes again. Then they will weep with regret that they didn't change their lives and come to the Lord.

Sin not only has eternal consequences; it also has some very bad effects in this life. Sin deceives and hardens people. The Hebrew writer in Hebrews 3:12-13 said, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Most people sin because they think it feels good; but in the end sin will bite you and hurt. It is deceptive and cruel. Sin will make a person desert every member of his family to feed a habit.

We generally think drugs or alcohol as addictive behaviors that destroy, but the fact is that all sins become addictive and destructive. A person can become addicted to lying, to gossip, to stealing, to anger, to sexual sins, and even to violence. These behaviors not only hurt the person who does them, they also hurt others. How many families have been destroyed or impoverished because someone thought they could sin and get away with it. The prisons are full of

people who thought they could get away with it and people who knew they'd someday get caught but would not give up their sins.

There is an unalterable law in Scripture about the life we choose to live. You can't cheat this law or change it. You cannot wish it away or ignore it. 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." When a writer says, "Do not be deceived," it's usually because people fool themselves and lie to themselves about the lives they are living.

I hope you are not kidding yourself, thinking you can live an immoral lifestyle and avoid any consequences. You simply can't. Sometimes those consequences are physical diseases if you abuse your body. Sometimes they are shortened life, if you commit crimes. Sometimes sin breaks up families and destroys friendships. Sometimes sin enslaves financially with heavy debts as gambling does. The choices you make today may cost you far more than you ever dreamed in health, spiritual drain, guilt, money and friendships. If you continue in sin, you won't be the exception. You reap what you sow. #A

The prodigal son wanted his inheritance to waste it on his pleasures. That's what a prodigal is, one who wastes his resources with reckless living. You remember the story. "And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything" (Luke 15:14-16). When you live a selfish, sinful lifestyle, the time comes when you run out of friends. Selfish people are friends only when they see some benefit. As long as the prodigal son paid the bill, he had friends.

It was only when the prodigal son was desperate and alone that he began to see clearly. Verses 17-19 continue: "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'"" Sin dulls the senses, but reality wakes us up. Sin makes a person feel small in his own eyes. He no longer felt worthy to be called a son of his father.

While sin leads only to shame and guilt, the wonderful thing is how much God loves us even in our sin and guilt. Verses 20-24 reveal, "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and

sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate." God rejoices when his prodigal children come home. He ran to meet his ragged, dirty, but penitent son. He embraced and kissed him. It was a time of celebration, for his son was now alive and found! God wants to find you too. Sin will hurt you and embarrass you; but God still waits for you, because He loves you. No matter what your past has been, God wants to forgive you as you turn away from the old evil life and come home to Him. God's love is greater than our sin.

Paul said in 1 Tim. 1:12-16, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost *of all*."

Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." There is hope for you too, my friend. If you will believe in the Lord, repent of your sins, confess His name, and be baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of your sins, you too will become a child of God and a member of the Lord's church. The prodigal son came home; Saul of Tarsus came home. They found forgiveness, and so can you.

We have seen that *sin is a big deal*. In the end, unresolved sin costs people their souls. Paul said, "The wages of sin is death." That hasn't changed in all the centuries. "Death" here is a reference to separation from God, which can last for eternity. Don't let Satan or the world fool you into believing that sin is no big deal. It is a very big deal and will become the ultimate deal when Jesus comes again. But if sin weren't such a big deal, Jesus would never have gone to such great lengths to atone for your sins by his cruel death on the cross. There is no greater love than that a man lay down his life for his friends.

That, my friend, is what Jesus did for you. He wanted you to have an opportunity to go to heaven and live with Him eternally. "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Forgiveness is a gift from God, and I would hate to see anyone go through life and never know how much the God of heaven loves him and wants to bless his life. If God takes your soul that seriously, shouldn't you? Don't let anything keep you from having all the blessings of the Lord? Love Him, serve Him, and obey Him.

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