

The Sin Problem

D E Wasake Esq
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What is sin?

Sin is when you and I break the Holy laws of the law giver – There is one God and one Creator and he is the one who defines sin. God the Holy Spirit speaking through the Apostle Paul gives these examples of sin:

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV

We have all sinned and fall short of God’s gloryⁱ. None is good. None righteousⁱⁱ. Even our best - is rubbish.

In our sin, we deserve death - but in his mercy God gives us life, or rather because we have free will, he sets life and death before us ⁱⁱⁱ and even when we sin, he is patient for he sees us as we are, like grass, like a flower: here for a moment and gone tomorrow^{iv}- therefore he is a perfectly just God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands and forgiving ^v

Start

Grow

Mature

How has God addressed the sin problem?

In order to deal with sin once and for all - he sent his son Jesus to come and die in our place - to atone for our sin.

God’s offer for sin was to send Jesus, the 2nd member of the Holy Trinity (The Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit) to come to earth in the Immaculate Conception^{vi} and die for us. A famous verse makes it clear that it was God’s love for us and desire that no one dies that he sent Jesus.

“ For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour. Those who believe in the Son are not judged; but those who do not believe have already been judged, because they have not believed in God's only Son.

This is how the judgment works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. Those who do evil things hate the light and will not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. But those who do what is true come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God.”

^{vii}

Jesus' teaching on sin (compared to the Old Testament)

Jesus when he came, taught as a Great Teacher. He brought to mind teachings about sin which the people had missed for example in respect of the Old Testament's Ten Commandments.

One said – You shall not commit adultery. ^{viii}He clarified it by saying:

"If you look at a woman and lust after her, you have already committed adultery with her in your heart" (Matthew 5:28).

Likewise the commandment- "You shall not murder^{ix}", he reinterpreted it that:
"if you hate someone - you are a murderer" (Matthew 5:21 and 1 John 3:15)

His point being sin really starts in the heart and the physical act is really a manifestation of what was there in the first place. This is what many people had missed about God's laws.

In the Old Testament, people thought they could "earn redemption" by offering sacrifices or similar "work". They likewise thought, "If I offer sacrifices then my sins are forgiven." This was not correct –

Jesus called such people Hypocrites – "white washed Tombs. Clean on the outside but full of dead men bones on the inside" (Matt 23: 27-28).

He was showing that true repentance from sin starts internally, in the heart and this way, any sacrifice was a manifestation of an internal change – not just outer rituals for showmanship.

God was always interested in obedience not sacrifices.x

The bible from the beginning made it clear that "the just shall live by faith" (Heb 10:38) - in other words, it's not our works that bring righteousness with God - works can never meet his standards, it is faith and faith alone. Not sacrificing, not offerings, not penance... Nothing but belief in Jesus saves us from the power of sin.

Jesus therefore came to deal with sin from its core - the human heart, which is deceptive and full of treachery, who can know it? Who can know it except its maker? (Jer 17:9)

He (God) had promised in the Old Testament that he would deal with the heart. He would write his law on people's hearts, this way, they would no longer be slaves to sin. He said it as follows:

"I will give them a new heart and a new mind. I will take away their stubborn heart of stone and will give them an obedient heart. Then they will keep my laws and faithfully obey all my commands. They will be my people, and I will be their God."^{xi}

How did Jesus fulfil God's promise above?

He gave believers the Holy Spirit (at Pentecost)- the one who acts as an "inner witness" to show Christians that "this is the way, walk in it" - it's the Spirit who helps Christians such that as a common phrase puts it: "it's not that they[Christians] are sinless, it's that they sin less."

How does the Holy Spirit help with the sin problem?

1. *He himself teaches Christians all things.*

He is that "still small voice" or "the inner witness" who brings to mind God's Holy Laws and gives you the ability to obey them.

2. He helps Christians exercise self-control

“The sins of the wicked are a trap. They get caught in the net of their own sin. They die because they have no self-control. Their utter stupidity will send them to their graves.” Proverbs 5:22-23 GNT

3. He helps Christians remember God and not test him - through disbelief

“How often they rebelled against him in the desert; how many times they made him sad! Again and again they put God to the test and brought pain to the Holy God of Israel. They forgot his great power and the day when he saved them from their enemies and performed his mighty acts and miracles in the plain of Zoan in the land of Egypt.” Psalm 78:40-43 GNT

So how can we overcome sin in day to day practical ways?

1. Flee from evil desires, pursue good things.

“But you, O man of God, flee these things [evil desires like love of money] and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” 1 Timothy 6:11-12 NKJV

2. Guard your heart!

“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” Proverbs 4:23 NKJV

3. Consider where you go

“Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.” Proverbs 4:26-27 NKJV

4. Other strategies:

- **Keep good company.** “Don’t be deceived, bad company ruins good morals.”^{xii}
- **Guard what you say.** “Your tongue has power over life and death.”^{xiii}
- **Get to know scripture.** Temptation when fully matured eventually leads to sin^{xiv}. Scripture knowledge helps you overcome temptation and hence you won’t sin: “Thy word I have kept in my heart that I might not sin against you”.^{xv}
- **Pray in the Spirit at all times and on all occasions.**^{xvi} God can help! Lack of prayer can be a sin!

“The Lord said, “I was ready to answer my people’s prayers, but they did not pray. I was ready for them to find me, but they did not even try. The nation did not pray to me, even though I was always ready to answer, ‘Here I am; I will help you.’” Isaiah 65:1 GNT

“As for me, the Lord forbid that I should sin against him by no longer praying for you. Instead, I will teach you what is good and right for you to do.” 1 Samuel 12:23 GNT

Your turn...

What will you now do differently? Example to think about include:

1. Have you confessed your sins to God and asked that Jesus come into your life? When he become a Christian, you will receive the promised Holy Spirit to help you.

A prayer of confession you can say if you like is this:

Jesus, I know that I have sinned and am in need of a Saviour. I believe that when you went to the Cross, you went there for me and all my sins. I trust You to save me right now. I give you my life. Today, I know I'm saved and that You forgive me, but help me to understand what it means to live for you every day. Please give me your Holy Spirit as you promised. Amen.

2. What daily habits are increasing your susceptibility to sin? Which ones will you now seek to minimise?

Write here

NOTES

ⁱ Romans 3: 23

ⁱⁱ Romans 3: 10

ⁱⁱⁱ Deuteronomy 30: 19

^{iv} Psalms 103: 15-16

^v Exodus 34: 5 - 7

^{vi} Luke 1: 26 - 35

^{vii} John 3:13-21 GNT <http://bible.com/68/jhn.3.13-21.gnt>

^{viii} Exodus 20: 14

^{ix} Exodus 20: 13

^x 1 Samuel 15: 22

^{xi} Ezekiel 11:19-20 GNT <http://bible.com/68/ezk.11.19-20.gnt>

^{xii} 1 Corinthians 15: 33

^{xiii} Proverbs 18: 21

^{xiv} James 1: 15

^{xv} Psalms 119: 11

^{xvi} Ephesians 6: 18