

### **NOTE FROM PASTOR JIMMY;**

This is another lesson you should take extra time to understand. The topic of sin as revealed in the bible and which confronts us daily has temporal and eternal consequences if understood and dealt with improperly. As Christians we must train ourselves to 'put off sin and put on Christ.'

**Romans 13:14:** *"Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh."*

I encourage you again in this lesson, read all the accompanying scripture references to better help you identify the origin, cause and effect, as well as the magnitude of sin as encountered in every life.

## **Understanding Theology in 15 Minutes A Day for 40 Days**

### **Day 15**

### **What Is Sin?**

This topic of theology can be unappealing because it is not enjoyable to think about and is so unflattering (to put it lightly) to us. Nevertheless, it is critical because it speaks to our perspectives on God, ourselves, the world around us, and the need for salvation based on God's grace alone.

### **Deviating From God**

**The most fundamental thing about sin is that it is whatever is contrary to God.** He is perfect holiness; sin is anything that deviates in any way. **Romans 3:23 says it best:** *"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

God created us in his image to reflect his glory. However, due to sin, we can no longer perfectly or adequately do that. The divine mirrors that we were created to be have been distorted by sin.

## **Disobeying God**

Another way of saying the same thing is that sin is disobeying God in any way. The commandments he has given to us are a reflection of his holy character. When we break them, we are acting contrary to who God is: “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness” **(1 John 3:4)**.

**Another very fundamental truth about sin** is that it is first and foremost something that happens inside us and only secondarily something we do or do not do on the outside. This is what Jesus was getting at when he said, “The things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” **(Matthew 15:18–19)**. The biblical concept of the heart includes our thoughts, attitudes, and motives. And these reflect who we truly *are*, from which comes what we *do*.

This is also what Jesus meant when he said that if you are angry with someone you are guilty of murder, because anger is the motive for murder **(Matthew 5:21–22)**. If you lust after someone you are guilty of adultery, because lust is the motive for adultery **(Matthew 5: 27–28)**.

This is why the first sin was probably committed, not when Eve and then Adam took the fruit from the forbidden tree and ate it **(Genesis 3:6)**, but earlier when Eve seemed to question or doubt God’s goodness **(vv. 2–3)**. It was as though she were saying, “If God really loved me, he wouldn’t restrict me; he would let me have whatever I want, and what I want is that fruit.”

This becomes explicit a few chapters later, when the state of the world just before God’s judgment through the flood is assessed in breathtaking terms: *“The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time”* **(Genesis 6:5)**. Notice this is entirely about “inside stuff”—*inclination, thoughts, and heart*. Note also the universal terms: *every, only, and all the time*. No wonder God had to deal with it as he did.

So the biblical emphasis is not “we are sinners because we sin,” but rather “we sin because we are sinners.” It all begins with our fallen nature, what the Bible calls our “flesh” or, as the NIV renders the term, “sinful nature” **(Romans 7:18; see also Galatians 5:16–24)**. My problem is not my sin; my problem is me! It is *fundamentally* who I am, not what I do. I have an inclination, a propensity, a “default setting” for sin.

This is why it is possible for God to assess “good” things as evil. Jesus strongly condemned the Pharisees for giving money to the poor, praying, and fasting—all good things in and of themselves. *Why*, then, did Jesus condemn them? Because their *motives* were corrupt: They wanted the recognition and praise of people, not the glory of God (**Matthew 6:1–2, 5, 16–17; see also Romans 1:21**). Paul wrote, “*Everything that does not come from faith is sin*” (**Romans 14:23**). For our actions to be pleasing to God, to glorify him, we must do them in dependence upon him.

Further, that is why sinful acts are not only bad things we do (sins of commission) but also good things we do *not* do (sins of omission). Regarding the latter, **James 4:17** says that if anyone “*knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.*”

### **Rebelling Against God**

Sin likewise can be thought of as rebellion against and replacing God, in the place he alone deserves, by anything or anyone else. “[Sinners] *exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles*” (Romans 1:23). To this list of “images” we could add reputation, fame, relationships, money, material goods, and much more. Read what Paul says in **Romans 1:18–25** for an eye-opening description of sin’s utter sinfulness.

### **What Sin Has Done**

What has resulted from sin? Regarding ourselves, our experience is now dominated by death: “*The wages of sin is death*” (**Romans 6:23**). This is what God warned Adam about in **Genesis 2:17 (compare Romans 5:12)**. *Death* means separation. So because of sin, our destiny is *physical* death—the separation of our immaterial being from our material bodies (**Genesis 3:19; Hebrews 9:27**). But it also includes something we experience every day: separation from God, or *spiritual* death. He is holy, and we are unholy: “*You were dead in your transgressions and sins*” (**Ephesians 2:1; see also v. 5**).

Spiritual death, however, is more than separation from God. It also includes “spiritual inability.” Dead people can’t do anything, and spiritually dead people can’t do anything spiritual. The term *total depravity* is also used for this terrible situation. “*The mind governed by the flesh ... does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so*. Those who are in the realm of the flesh *cannot please God*” (**Romans 8:7–8**). Nothing within the sinner can impress or please God in any way, and the sinner can do nothing to solve the sin problem. *Only* God can do this.

Another result of sin is that we are slaves of our sinfulness (**Romans 6:17–21**). This means we are not free to do anything other than sin. Also, we live in deception (**Jeremiah 17:9; Ephesians 4:17–18**) because we think that our sinful state and actions are all right and even good, and that good and godly things are not bad. This is because sinners hate God and are hostile toward him and what he says in:

**Romans 8:7-8;** *The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.*

**James 4:4;** *You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.*

These are just a few of sin's devastating results on all people.

What results from sin in terms of God? Not only are people separated from God in their unholiness, but they also exist under his wrath (**John 3:36; Romans 1:18; 2:5**). This wrath will eventually result in God's judgment of lost sinners and their final, ultimate, eternal separation from him (**Matthew 25:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9; Revelation 20:11–15**).

#### **INTERESTING FACT**

In anticipation of later chapters, we have just answered the question "Why does anyone need to be saved?" The answer is for all of the reasons mentioned above and more. Through Jesus Christ, God has addressed *all* these results of sin and solved *all* of sin's problems, and he has done it for free!