

THE PROBLEM OF SIN

Genesis 3:1-19

INTRODUCTION

“The problem of sin”¹ in our world does not come as a shock to any of us. We certainly can agree that there is something fundamentally wrong with the world.

According to Christianity the biggest problem that the world faces is sin. The concept of sin is offensive to some. What does Christianity mean when it speaks of sin?

We often think of sin only in terms of forbidden actions and activities, but the problem of sin goes much deeper. The problem of sin is as much an internal problem as it is an external one.

I. THE MEANING OF SIN

A. There is hope

1. We are not a victim and that gives us hope! The medical model tells us that we are at the mercy of our maladies, the legal model tells us that the primary essence of sin is the violation of God’s law.
2. God tells us that the essence of sin is a “wrecked relationship with God, one another and the whole created order.”²
3. Pride is the enemy of hope!

When we offer excuses by pointing a finger of blame for our problem somewhere else we shut the door for finding a solution to the problem.

Until we can admit that we are flawed human beings, i.e. sinners, we will be caught in a hopeless cycle of bondage to sin.

B. How do we define sin?

1. “The primary way to define sin is not just the doing of bad things, but the making of good things into ultimate things. It is seeking to establish a sense of self by making something else more central to your significance, purpose and happiness than your relationship to God.”³

¹ This Bible study is taken from Chapter 10 of *The Reason For God* by Timothy Keller.

² *The Reason For God*, Timothy Keller. p166

³ *ibid.* p169

2. “Sin is the despairing refusal to find your deepest identity in your relationship and service to God.”
3. Every person is seeking for identity - the sense of being distinct and valuable. God calls us to love Him supremely and to build our identity upon Him. *Anything other than this is sin!*
4. The first commandment in Exodus 20 says, “*You shall have no other gods before Me.*” (v.3). Whatever it is that we look to in hopes of finding significance in life becomes deity to us.

C. Examples of How People Seek To Justify Their Existence

1. **Sports.** In the movie Rocky, the girlfriend asks Rocky why it's so important to him to “go the distance” in the boxing match. He replied, “Then they will know I'm not a bum.”

Some people look to athletic achievement as the defining force that gives meaning to their life.

2. **Work.** Some look to their work as a means of bringing significance to their life, of justifying their existence. When this happens the person “lives the fantasy of the control of life and death, of destiny.”
3. **Love.** “The self-glorification that man needed in his inner-most nature he now looked for in a love partner. The love partner becomes the divine ideal within which to fulfill one's life. Spiritual and moral needs now become focus on one individual.”⁴

“No human relationship can bear this burden of godhood... if your partner is your “ALL” then any shortcoming in him becomes a major threat to you...”

4. **Addictions.** Whatever person or thing we use to give us identity, significance becomes an addiction. We are in bondage to that thing.

The boat, the bottle or the babes! But all of this only sets the stage for continual disappointment.

There are many ways people get their identity, but everyone is building their identity on something!

II. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

A. Personal Consequences of Sin

⁴ ibid. p.169

1. A life not centered upon God leads to fear. Whatever threatens your identity causes you fear. If you lose your identity through your own failure, you hate yourself. If you lose it through the actions of others you hate them. Only if our identity is built upon God can we face anything that may come.
2. A life not centered upon God leads to forms of addiction. If we take meaning for life from our family, our work, our cause or some other achievement other than God, these things enslave us. A misplaced love creates uncontrollable anguish if anything goes wrong with the object of our greatest hopes.
3. A life not centered on God leads to emptiness. Even when we achieve our goals and dreams we will find that they do not bring us fulfillment. Look at how many successful celebrities, sports stars and successful business people thought they would find happiness and peace with success but found it empty. (Ill: Biography of Steve Jobs)
There was a man like this who wrote of his journey. (Ecc 2:1-11)
4. A life not centered upon God ultimately leads to physical & spiritual death.

B. Social Consequences of Sin

1. Sin has a devastating effect on the social fabric of society. British writer Dorothy Sayers after WWII wrote: *“People who are most discouraged, are those who cling to an optimistic belief in the civilizing influence of progress and enlightenment.”*
2. Human society is fragmented when anything other than God is our highest love.
 - If our highest goal is our family then we will tend to care less for other families
 - If our highest goal is the good of our nation, tribe or race, then we will be racist or nationalistic
 - If our highest goal is our own happiness then we will put our own economic and power interests ahead of those of others.

Only when God is at the center of our life and our ultimate good will we find our heart drawn out not only to people of all families, races and classes but to the whole world in general.

C. Cosmic Consequences of Sin

1. A perfect creation intended for perfect fellowship between man and God. A place of perfect peace of heart and mind.

When I visited Israel, often I would be greeted by the word: “Shalom!”

The Hebrew idea of Shalom is a harmonious relationship between all parts of creation. (Gen. 1-2)

2. However this peace (Shalom) and unity with God and one another was lost in (Gen. 3).

The choice by Adam & Eve to rebel against God and seek their own way resulted in loss of innocence.

The human race was plunged into bondage and decay. (Rom. 1:16-2:1)

3. As soon as our parents determined to live for themselves instead of God the entire created world became broken. (Rom 8:20-22)

III. THE SOLUTION TO SIN

How can we put things right?

A. The solution to sin is NOT reformation

1. God does not ask us to do a better job or to give him a bit more attention, time or effort. God demands our ALL. He demands that we hand over all of our desires, dreams, goals... all of our natural self. In turn He will give us a new life.

John 10:10

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

2. The solution to sin is not simply to change your behavior, but to reorient and center the entire heart and life on God.
3. *“If I am a grass field - all the cutting will keep the grass less but won’t produce wheat. If I want wheat... I must be plowed up and re-sown.”* CS Lewis
4. If I don’t live for Jesus I will live for something else.

B. The solution is repentance and saving faith in Jesus Christ

1. Jesus Christ died for your sins so that through His death the justice of God against sin could be fulfilled **and** He could reconcile you to His Father thus bringing back Shalom (peace).

Ephesians 2: 12-18

“that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

2. If Jesus is your Creator-Lord, then by definition nothing could satisfy you like he can, even if you are successful.
3. Repentance is the turning away from sin and rushing into the arms of God. Saving faith is God’s work whereby the truth of the gospel moves from your head to your heart. You surrender to Him your ALL!

Acts 2:21

testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

A Roman official in Acts 16:31 fell before Paul and cried out: *“What must I do to be saved?”* Paul replied, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, and your whole house!”*

CONCLUSION:

Everybody has to live for something. Whatever that “something” is becomes the Lord of your life. Jesus is the only Lord who, if you receive him, will fulfill you completely, and if you fail Him, will forgive you eternally.