

# What Everyone Should Know About Sin

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## Introduction.

- A. Some years ago, the comedian George Carlin had a sketch called "Seven Dirty Words," about the seven words that were so filthy, so taboo, that no one was allowed to use them on television. If Carlin were to rewrite that sketch today, and if he were honest about it, he would have to add an eighth word to the list: the word "sin."
- B. In modern America, the concept of sin is just as taboo, and perhaps more so, as the vilest obscenity ever coined. People don't want to talk about sin, they don't want to hear about sin, and they don't even want to admit that sin exists. It's just not part of our cultural understanding to acknowledge that people do evil of their own free will. We want to talk about our uncontrollable urges; we want to blame our failings on our genetic makeup or our bad upbringing, but we don't ever want to say that we ourselves have sinned. And if somebody else dares point out the sin in our life, we get furious. Our culture says that it's just not tolerant to call someone a sinner. Throwing the s-word around is just hate speech, plain and simple!
- C. Of course, the one who defines sin is not man but God. In fact, if we choose to pay no attention to the sin in our lives, the only result we will see is that it will eventually destroy us. This is true for us, and it is true for every person who is capable of choosing between good and evil. That makes it our responsibility as Christians to warn as many people as possible about the dangers of sin, and this sermon is designed to equip us to do exactly that. With that in mind, let's look this morning at what everyone should know about sin.

## I. The Origins of Sin.

- A. When we consider this subject, we first need to know where it is that sin comes from, and the first thing we need to see along these lines is that **IT IS NOT INHERITED**. To someone who doesn't know anything about false doctrine, this might seem to be a strange thing to bring up. After all, how can guilt for wrongdoing be passed along like blue eyes or brown hair? However, this is a point that must be made in reaction to the false doctrine of Calvinism. Calvinism teaches that when Adam, the first man, sinned in the Garden of Eden, his sin didn't die with him. Instead, it was passed down through every successive generation to us, so that from the moment we were born, even though we hadn't had the chance to do anything yet, we were sinners.
- B. This doesn't make a lot of logical sense, and it doesn't make a lot of Bible sense either. In fact, **EZEKIEL 18:20** teaches us quite clearly that the opposite is true. The son doesn't even bear the guilt of his own father, so none of us can possibly bear the guilt of our ultimate grandfather, Adam. Instead, we only have to bear the guilt of our own wrongful actions. This makes complete sense, and it's something that even us fallible humans are smart enough to get right. For example, when somebody's father goes out and murders someone, we don't put the son in the electric chair for it. We know that it wouldn't be just. In the same way, a perfectly just God would never punish us for something that we ourselves didn't do. It just doesn't make sense.
- C. Instead of coming from the sins of our fathers, sin actually comes from a much more logical source. **IT ARISES FROM LUST**. This is the point of James' argument in **JAMES 1:13-15**. He's telling us that we sin when we give in to our evil, lustful desires. It's important here to note that not all desire is lustful. For instance, when I'm sitting in my office, and it gets toward noon, and I start getting hungry, and I say to myself, "Lunch sure sounds good right now," that's not lust. The Bible teaches that God made the body for food. God wants me to eat and give glory to Him for the satisfaction I get from eating. On the other hand, when my desire to eat grows far beyond what I need to sustain myself, and I want to eat in an uncontrolled way without regard for the effect that my eating will have on my body or my life, that's a sign that Satan has twisted my healthy desire for food into an unhealthy lust. Sin appears when we give into that lust.

## II. The Nature of Sin.

- A. Now that we have a handle on sin's origins, we can consider its nature, and the first important characteristic of sin we need to look at is that **IT IS LAWLESSNESS**. In our last lesson, we spent a lot of time looking at the Bible, and one of the most important functions of the Bible is that it warns us against the evil, destructive actions that the devil wants to entice us into. The laws of God's word are set up for our own good, but they are still laws for all that, and when we break those laws, it's sin. Look what John has to say about this idea in **1 JOHN 3:4**. Whenever we sin, we are engaging in lawbreaking behavior.
- B. As a corollary from this, friends, this tells us just how important it is to study God's word to learn what is and is not acceptable to Him. Ignorance of God's law is no excuse for sin. It's just the same thing as is true of human laws. Last February, as I was driving through Kentucky, I got a ticket for speeding in a work zone. I tell you, brethren, I was as innocent in my heart as I could be. I just didn't see the signs that dropped the speed limit down ten miles. You think that Kentucky highway patrolman who pulled me over cared one bit that

I didn't mean to speed? Of course he didn't, and I've got the hole in my bank account to prove it. I was the one who was responsible for knowing the law, and each one of us is responsible for knowing God's law.

- C. Likewise, we need to recognize that **IT MAKES US GUILTY**. This is something that people often don't understand because they don't want to understand. In our pop-culture world, nobody is exactly sure what it takes for someone to be guilty in the eyes of God, but they are sure that it's worse than anything they do or their loved ones do. They want to believe that their sins don't have any consequences attached.
- D. Once again, when we transpose this idea to the realm of human laws and human courts, we see how little sense it makes. Just imagine some dude who's on trial for theft who tries to defend himself by saying, "Well, yeah, I did steal some stuff, but at least I didn't kill anyone, so find me not guilty." If you were on the jury, how would you vote? For 99 percent of us, a defendant who makes that argument had better be picking out some orange jumpsuits. And yet, this idea that is so clear on earth is an idea that 99 percent of people find confusing with respect to God's law. They defend their sin by saying, "At least I didn't do anything worse."
- E. James tells us what God thinks of this ridiculous defense in **JAMES 2:10-11**. Basically, it doesn't fly any better in heaven than it does on earth. God groups people into two categories: those who keep His law and those who break it. If we break God's law even once, that moves us from the category of the law-keeper to the category of the law-breaker. In order to become unrighteous people in the eyes of God, we don't have to murder Mom or anything else equally horrifying. We just have to violate one commandment. That's it.
- F. Obviously, this is an extremely exacting standard for sin, and as a result, in the human experience, **IT IS UNIVERSAL**. We see this revealed plainly in **ROMANS 3:23**. All of us have sinned, even though it was possible for all of us not to sin. It was possible for all of us to do what God wanted. The life of Jesus shows that if we chose, we could have been completely righteous. However, none of us have followed in the steps of Jesus. Instead of choosing to do good, we chose to do evil. We chose to let our lusts entice us into sin.

### III. The Consequences of Sin.

- A. This decision that all of us make, this decision to sin, has some dreadful consequences. In the first place, **IT SEPARATES US FROM GOD**. Isaiah says so in just as many words in **ISAIAH 59:1-2**. As has been true of all of these things, it makes sense that God would react this way to sin. As we saw a couple of weeks ago, God is perfectly good. He is the opposite of everything that is evil. He hates sin. That means that when we sin, He reacts the same way to us as my mother would if I dragged a dead skunk into her house and plopped it down in the middle of her living room carpet. Sin is an insurmountable obstacle in our relationship with God. As long as the sin is there, we can't have a relationship. God still loves us, but He can't have anything to do with us. Every prayer we pray just hits the ceiling and bounces back. Sin is that big a deal to God.
- B. Likewise, we need to recognize that **SIN EARNS DEATH**. Americans love to make a lot of noise about justice and what's fair and how they ought to get what they deserve, but sin is one area where we absolutely DON'T want to get what we deserve. Just as the punishment for violating the laws of the US is defined in our state and federal legal codes, so too the punishment for violating God's law is defined in His word. We see it in **ROMANS 6:23**. This tells us that from the moment we first sin, we are under sentence of death, and unless we repent, it is inevitable that our sentence will be carried out. Our sin puts us on spiritual Death Row.
- C. This seems terribly unfair to some people. They cry out against a God who would condemn them to death for one little sin. There are two things we need to understand about this. In the first place, what, exactly, is unfair about it? God defined sin in His word. He warned us what would happen if we committed it, but we stuck our tongues out at Him, went ahead, and did it anyway. Why don't we deserve to be punished? Second, though, who among us can claim to have committed only one sin, only 10 sins, or even only 100 sins? I don't think of myself as an especially bad person, yet I must admit that I have likely committed thousands of sins in my life. I'm the worst kind of repeat offender against God, and I, and all of us, deserve punishment.
- D. When we consider that punishment, it makes us spend a long, sobering moment thinking about how bad our sin truly is. The Bible tells us that **IT ENDS IN ETERNAL DESTRUCTION**. The worst sanction that our human courts can mete out is the death penalty, but once the offender is dead, it's over. By contrast, the death that God assigns to sin is never over. Look at what Paul tells us about this in **2 THESSALONIANS 1:7-9**. Hell is another thing that people in our country don't like to think about or talk about. If an American even believes in it at all, he's likely to think it's for Adolf Hitler and the BTK Killer and a small, small group of similarly evil people. The problem is, folks, that the devil is a lot more democratic than that. He doesn't just want dictators and serial killers; he wants all of us, and if we sin and go to the end of our lives without the help of God, the devil will have us. Hell isn't just for mass murderers. It's for you, it's for me, and it's for everyone unless we put all of our energies into avoiding it. The sad thing is, friends, that most people won't. The Bible tells us that most people will follow the broad path to eternal destruction. They will be so blinded by the devil that they will not see the utter folly of the path they're on until it's too late. Let's be smarter than that.

**Conclusion.** We see the way out in 2 Thessalonians 1:8—obey the gospel. If you haven't, you must do so now.