

What is Sin?

Whenever you use the word "sin", people look at you in amazement. "What do you mean, "sin"? Are you calling me a sinner? I live a decent life. I do an honest day's work, I'm entitled to enjoy the good things in life. I donate a little to worthy causes, and I try to give everyone a "fair go". I even go to church every so often."

"Sin" isn't very real to most of us. The term suggests too much for our comfort: accountability, judgement, Our world prefers to avoid it... perhaps because it comes from another; it comes from God, He speaks to us of sin.

The Bible tells us how sin came into the world. God, the Almighty Creator, made Adam perfect, without sin. Adam was even given the honour of representing God - he was holy, devoid of evil. There was complete harmony between God and Man. God cared for His creature and surrounded him with absolute love, and Adam knew and honoured his Creator in absolute purity.

Man's destiny was to live on this earth, which had been prepared especially for Him. God had endowed it with incredible wealth and energy: minerals, air, water, fertile soil, plants, animals; and heat, light, electricity, and nuclear power. He had also given Man the insight and ability to put the earth's potential to work; to achieve a rich and diversified culture. Furthermore God had allowed Man an infinite capacity to reproduce and thus to play an active role in fulfilling the great plan of life.

Adam's life was completed by receiving a woman to stand beside him. With her, Adam could live in joyful love. She would be a help to him, and "the mother of all living." This incomprehensible wonder of God's creative power - the first human partners - received this mandate: "Be fruitful and increase; fill the earth and subdue it."

Obviously, this could only happen under God's guidance and in conformity with His laws. As gifted as he was, Man could never complete the job without the great Architect. On the other hand, Man would also never be merely a tool, he received a mind, a will, perception, and responsibility. Of his own volition, Man had to place his gifts in service of God. To test Man's allegiance God gave a command: "I am giving you every plant and fruit tree for food, except one. Of that one tree alone Man was forbidden to eat... upon pain of death - the loss of communion with God.

God's demand was wise and just. But still the catastrophe occurred: Man ignored God's command and listened to Satan's temptation. Genesis 3 describes this sad occasion. This is the origin of sin.

Sin is the breach between God and Man. Man rejected God's love, and embraced God's great adversary, Satan. The consequences were infinitely terrible. There was an immediate punishment for Adam and Eve. God's curse struck them and all of Creation. They would have to struggle to survive: sickness, pain, and all sorts of trill would come upon them. The final separation, death, would be total.

But worst of all was the break in communication with God. They were now under dominion of Satan, and he would do everything to keep them away from God. Ultimately, he would drag them into eternal damnation.

And if that had been all ...

These two people represented the whole human race...we would be born from them, and so we fell with them. Sin is like a hereditary disease which has infected Man's core and is irrevocably inherited by all his descendants. The fall in Paradise was an event which irreversibly changed the direction life on earth. We are all born sinners and are inclined by nature to transgress God's commands. And we can never find our own way back to God.

If this is hard to believe, just read the Ten Commandments. (Exodus 20:1ff) God has given them to protect our broken lives. ..

Is there even one that you can satisfy completely? Also in the light of Christ's summary of these laws in Matthew 22:37-40? Do you love God above all else and your neighbour as yourself.' Do you even want to? Does anyone?

All of life disintegrated, literally, when the breach with God occurred. Look at all the misery and distress around you: sickness, poverty, hunger, hate, disasters, war. You experience it every day. And after suffering through it all there is not one person who can avoid the final agony of death itself.

And how do we stand in relation to sin? Most of us would like to avoid the issue. If we are worried we tend to try and solve it in our own way, but that rarely achieves real results. Be honest, don't we all have things we'd rather not give up, even though we know they're wrong? Or we avoid facing up to the depth of our corruption: we put on a brave front, try to appear unconcerned and pleased with ourselves. There's always time to change later, if we need to.

But we can't expect God to swallow that! He knows us to the bottom of our souls. And when God speaks of sin, He has specifics in mind. He points to very real things in our lives, and says, "This, and that too, proceeds out of your evil and sinful heart ... get it out of My sight!" "Everything you do and say reeks of corruption. You don't reckon with me, you go your own way!" "You are wasting your days, and if there is no change, in the end you will lose your life!"

Is there no way out, then?

Yes, for God was so deeply moved by our fall away from Him that He reached out to us, and to all of creation. He did not desert us. He wants to see depraved sinners return to Him. He calls them back, like the lost children they are. He has even provided a way by which we can return - Jesus Christ, Who took the guilt of our sin upon Himself. He has made payment for all our debts. Our only hope of salvation is with Him. Read what God's Word says:

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that 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 that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:5-10).