

AN UNDERSTANDING OF SIN FOR AN APPRECIATION OF GRACE

If you do not understand sin, you cannot have the right appreciation of grace and the work of Christ on the cross.

The noun **SIN** is defined in Webster's 1828 dictionary as:

The voluntary departure of a moral agent from a known rule of duty, prescribed by God any voluntary transgression of the divine law, or violation of a divine command a wicked act or iniquity.

SIN is either:

- a positive act in which a known divine law is violated or deliberately disobeyed (sometimes called sins of commission -- because you are committing sin by choosing to by your own will).

OR sin is

- a negative act in which you voluntarily neglect to obey a command or rule of duty (sometimes called sins of omission -- because you are omitting doing something you ought to do).

Sin includes not only actions but all evil thoughts, purposes, words, and desires that are contrary to God's commands or law.

Other words that are used as synonyms (words that have the same meaning) are:

- **iniquity** --- which is injustice, unrighteousness, or wickedness

and

- **transgression** -- which is the act of offending by violating a law passing over a responsibility by breach of command going beyond any moral rule of duty.

1 Cor 15:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Christ died for our sins. He paid for them by His death on the cross.

HOW do we know what sin is?

We know what sin is by knowing what God's law says:

Rom 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: **for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

Rom 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, **I had not known sin, but by the law:** for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.

God put a conscience inside of every person, which works similar to the law. God put a nature inside man to automatically know basic right from wrong:

Rom 2:14-15 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves:

15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

Conscience is internal self-knowledge. It is called the 'moral sense.'

It is the internal perception of deciding if something is right or wrong.

It is the principle within us that approves or condemns our actions and affections.

Sin is not charged to the account where there is no law. If you don't have a speed limit, then you're not breaking the law if you drive 100 miles per hour:

Rom 4:15 Because the law worketh wrath:
for where no law is, there is no transgression.

Rom 5:13 (For until the law sin was in the world:
but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

You are not held responsible if you are ignorant or unable to understand.

For example, God spared the wicked city of Nineveh because of 120,000 people who didn't know which hand was which:

Jonah 4:11 And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Even in our own human government, claiming ignorance to the law does not make you exempt from it. Our civil regulations require that you investigate for yourself whatever you are involved in to find out if you need to pay any taxes, or if you need to get special permits to do a job, or if you need a particular license to drive a certain type of vehicle, etc. It is not unreasonable that God holds man responsible for his actions. **BEWARE**, because willful ignorance is not a legitimate reason to escape the truth:

2 Peter 3:4-7 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

5 For this **they willingly are ignorant of**, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Some people have been exposed to truth, but they refuse it. They are without excuse --- not only because of their OWN conscience inside them --- but also because of creation. Looking at how the world in which we live operates, teaches us about God (like, how the seasons change each year, how each plant and animal reproduces after their own kind, how our eyes see and our ears hear, how the waters run into the sea and are drawn back up into the sky by the sun, in order to rain down again):

Rom 1:18-20 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is **manifest IN them**;
for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen,
being understood by the things that are made,
even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Here is another example of that same principle of people who did not WANT the truth:

2 Thess 2:10-12 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

God defines sin again, using the same words, as we said before:

1 John 5:17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

1 John 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law:
for **sin is the transgression of the law.** (that's sin of commission)

Next we read about sins of OMISSION:

James 4:17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

If your conscience bothers you about something my motto has always been,
"When in doubt --- leave out!"

Rom 14:23 And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith:
for **whatsoever is not of faith is sin.**

Even THINKING can be sin if you don't think right!

Prov 24:9 The thought of foolishness is sin:
and the scorner is an abomination to men.

Remember that Jesus said just LOOKING at a woman with lust is adultery of the heart:

Matt 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her
hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Hating a brother makes one guilty as killing him:

1 John 3:15 Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Even just ONE offense makes you guilty of the ENTIRE law:

James 2:10 For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Next, let's look to see WHO sins?

Rom 3:23 For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God;

Jews -- who had the law and Gentiles -- who did not have the law are both classified as sinners --- because they have ALL sinned:

Rom 3:9 What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that **they are all under sin;**

Now, let's consider some reasons WHY we sin:

Sometimes we sin because it is our NATURE to sin. Sin is our regular course of action and impulse:

Eph 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

We sin sometimes because we are a SLAVE to it:

Rom 6:16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Rom 6:20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.

Sometimes we are deceived by sin:

Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.

We sin because we want to. Sometimes it is FUN to sin. We enjoy it at the time we're doing it! Moses made the right choice in this next verse:

Heb 11:25 Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;

Now, let's look at the consequence of sin:

When we do a job, we get paid. When we work SIN, we earn death:

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The end of sin is death. It has always been the same judgment:

Ezek 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

James 1:14-15 But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

15 Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

God warned mankind about sin's penalty before it ever occurred. Back in the Garden of Eden, God told Adam:

Gen 2:15-17 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Satan told Eve a truth in Gen. 3:5 (saying they would know both good and evil), but in verse 4, he MIXED the truth with a LIE (saying they would NOT die):

Gen 3:4-5 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Gen 3:22-23 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

What can be done about this awful situation?

What is GOD's answer to sin?

The blood had to be shed, and the life given up to death, to pay the wages of sin:

Lev 17:11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to rescue mankind from the penalty of sin:

1 Tim 1:15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

Jesus died for sinners to pay for their sins with His death:

Rom 5:6 For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Rom 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Though Jesus was entirely pure and free of sin, He took OUR sin:

2 Cor 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

He bore the penalty of death that we deserved:

Gal 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

With an understanding of sin

How can we appreciate grace?

What should be our response to God's provision?

When we hear the gospel (that's God's Word) preached we can believe it by faith to be saved:

1 Cor 1:21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

Faith comes by hearing God's Word and believing it:

Rom 10:17 So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The prison keeper asked a simple question, and got a simple answer:

Acts 16:30-31 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?
31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

God made the provision of salvation available for ALL men.

1 Tim 2:4-6 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

6 Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.

Those who believe it will be saved and anyone CAN be if they want to be. The payment is applied to those that believe. Only they will benefit by Christ's death:

1 Tim 4:10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

When we believe God's word, it works for us and is counted to our account:

1 Thess 2:13 For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

Once we have believed unto the salvation of our souls,
How should we deal with sin in our life?

When we believe the gospel, God puts us into the death of Christ, and puts the life of Christ into us:

Rom 6:3-4 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

We realize we are free from sin because we are now 'dead' to it:

Rom 6:6-7 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

7 For he that is dead is freed from sin.

We are supposed to count ourselves dead to sin. The scripture uses a good ole' 'Southern' word "reckon" which means you're to figure it to be so:

Rom 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are not to be under the rule of sin anymore, because we've moved out from under the law (that condemned us) to live under grace:

Rom 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

God sees us as dead in Christ ---- and then as raised to life in Him:

Col 3:3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

Col 2:13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Again, we are dead with Christ ---- and alive with Him:

2 Tim 2:11 It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him:

It is the great exchange. We should tell everyone about it:

Gal 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

This is David Dowell, saying "Think about it!"