

Lies We Believe...About Sin

1. Introduction

- a. I have people do all the time is ask me “is such and such a sin?”
 - i. I always have to take a deep breath after hearing that question.
 - ii. My answer will be similar to going into a restaurant without prices on the menu. If you have to ask...you can't afford it...and if you have to ask if it is a sin, it probably is.
 - iii. What bothers me the most about approaching sin from a list of do's and don'ts is that it reduces my relationship with God to that of a strict parent who is watching his child's every move, waiting for them to step out of line.
 1. I don't believe the bible tells us that.
 2. There are many things that are clearly sin – murder, adultery, lying, stealing, etc.
 3. And there are many things that aren't good for us and that can be “sin” for us, from worrying, to overeating, to watching a disturbing movie, to not coming to worship on Sunday.
 - a. But they aren't sin because they are a list, but because they are a rejection of God's perfect will for us.
 4. Romans 14:23 says “...*whatever is not from faith is sin.*”
- b. What is sin.
 - i. The Hebrew word *Chata* and the Greek word for Sin is *hamartia* which means to “miss the mark” as used for a marksman aiming an arrow at a target.
 1. If the archer was saying he missed the bulls eye, he would say he sinned.
 2. It is the same about us. God has a bulls eye, a target for us to aim for, it is His perfect standard of righteousness. And none of us can hit it. Even our best attempts fall short.
 3. Some churches have tried to deal with sin by making the target bigger because they don't want to hurt someone's self-worth by telling them that what they are doing will destroy them.
 4. But the bible tells us as it is. Sin will destroy you.
 - ii. The Bible has several other words to describe sin such as transgression, disobedience, rebellion, and iniquity.
 - iii. In the New Testament, sin is viewed as a lack of fellowship with God.
 1. The ideal life being one of fellowship with God and anything which disturbs or distorts this fellowship is sin.
 2. The New Testament view of sin is somewhat more subjective than the objective lists of the Old Testament.
 - a. Jesus taught that sin is a condition of the heart and not just our actions.
 - b. *How does a worm get inside an apple? Perhaps you think the worm burrows in from the outside. No, scientists have discovered that the worm comes from inside. But how does he get in there? Simple! An insect lays an egg in the apple blossom. Sometime later, the worm hatches in the heart of the apple, then eats his way out. Sin, like the worm, begins in the heart and works its way out through a person's thoughts, words, and actions.*
- c.

Let's look at some of the misconceptions some of us may have about sin.

2. **Sin will send me to hell.** (I got to be good)

- a. Tell the story from the Plain Dealer, about the man in the church in downtown Cleveland who was one of the few in attendance. Asked why he was so faithful, he replied, “I got to be good, I want to go to heaven.”
- b. This comes about as a fear mentality concerning salvation and sin.
 - i. It comes from a spirit of legalism that uses a desire for reward and the fear of punishment as its motives.
 - ii. Fear and desire for reward are human needs which are easily manipulated by religion.
 - iii. **The truth is that no one is going to heaven for avoiding some sins in their life.**
 - iv. **And no one is going to hell for committing certain sins.**
 - v. But Pastor, what about the “lists” in the bible that say no “adulterer, homosexual or thief” will inherit the kingdom of God?
 1. That is found in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Let’s look at it: *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.*
 2. If no one who has done these things can inherit the Kingdom of God, then that means most of us in this room will never go to heaven either. You see, verse 11 says, “*such were some of you, but you were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.*”
 3. No one is going to heaven based on what they once did or didn’t do, because the bible says “*that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*” (Romans 3:23)
 4. You can have lived a morally pure life and still not get into heaven.
 - a. This is because every one of us has sinned, we’ve missed the mark!
 - b. You can try to do lots of good deeds to change one sin, but it is useless. There are no scales in heaven.
 - c. The bible says that the “*wages or penalty of sin is death.*” (Romans 6:23)
 - d. In other words, every person has sinned and every person is deserving death.
 - e. Avoiding certain types of sin will not get you into heaven any more than committing certain types of sin will become unforgivable.
 - vi. The sin mentioned here in Romans is in the singular tense, describing a state or condition of sin which is at its root, a rejection of God’s rule in our lives.
 - vii. The fact that we can’t pay the debt our sin incurs is why God sent His Son Jesus to pay the penalty of our sin by taking our place on the Cross.
 1. When we place our faith in Him, we receive the forgiveness of our sins and exchange our sin for His righteousness.
 2. John 3:16 “*God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that all who believe on His name shall not perish but have everlasting (eternal) life.*”
 3. **And it is for this reason that it will be for the rejection of God and the gift of His only begotten Son that we will be banished to Hell, not for specific sins in our lives.**
- c. Now there is a truth to be understood here. If you have given your life to Jesus and received His gift of forgiveness in your life, then your life will no longer be CONTROLLED by the principle of sin but instead by the person of the Holy Spirit.
 - i. Sin will no longer be your ruler and master, and your life will not be evidenced by sin’s control.

- ii. Your motive for not sinning isn't to gain heaven and avoid hell...but rather gratitude for what Jesus did for you.
- iii. Unlike the "act of contrition" the Catholic church teaches, "*O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven, and the pains of hell;*
- iv. Your desire to avoid sin is because of your desire to enjoy God and to please the One who has loved you despite your lack of love for Him. Your motive is that of gratitude and love and not fear or reward.

3. **I will be holy if I can avoid sinning.**

- a. While it is true that you cannot be holy if you engage in sin purposefully and willfully, *trying to avoid the possibility of sin is like trying to avoid getting wet on a rainy day.*
 - i. Even with the best intentions, the best coverings of umbrellas, raincoats, overshoes...you will still get wet.
 - ii. The fallacy of the lie "that not sinning will make you holy" is that when you place your emphasis upon avoiding sin you will become preoccupied with yourself instead of God.
 - iii. God is the source of holiness and not us!
 - 1. No amount of not committing sin will make us holy.
 - 2. God alone can and will.
 - 3. Put your attention on Him and not on your failures!
- b. I think of a person who puts his emphasis on avoiding sin as a spiritual hypochondriac.
 - i. You check your pulse, you weigh yourself, you all the doctor and worry over every ache and pain.
 - ii. Most of us walk around and ASSUME our heart is still beating.
 - iii. But if you have palpitations, you become worried it has stopped, because you get this flutter in your chest. (believe me, if it stopped you would know it!)
 - iv. **Spiritual hypochondria is a plaguing insecurity about our spiritual health.** (Jeff Harkin)
 - v. Focus your attention on Godly LIVING and not on your spiritual DYING.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit will point out your sin if you are in fellowship with God.
 - 2. Fix your eyes upon Jesus and not your failures!
- c. Holiness is about our heart not just about our actions.
 - i. Psalm 139:23-24 *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*
 - ii.
- d. Have you ever noticed that the harder you try to "avoid" sin, the more you seem to engage in it.
 - i. This comes from our efforts to "Fix the flesh!"
 - ii. **Have you ever gone for a makeover? Some of you ladies may have gotten one for Mother's Day. As I understand it, you get a complete make up and hair styling, and in some of the extreme cases, weight loss and an image rework that might include a new wardrobe. The person comes home and everyone is amazed at how different and beautiful and attractive they look.**
 - 1. But all of the things inside haven't changed. The person still has their insecurities, they still have their angers, their weaknesses and their lusts.
 - 2. This is what it is like trying to fix your flesh.
 - a. The flesh refers to our lower nature. It is the fallen nature inherited from Adam.
 - b. You cannot fix the flesh by changing a few habits or by getting some counseling.
 - c. How many times have you consecrated your flesh to have it obey God? Hundreds!

- d. The flesh cannot be a servant of God. It is born in Adam and in rebellion to God. It is rotten to the core. God will not FIX our flesh.
- e. Our flesh must be killed.
- iii. **That is why we must be born again.**
 - 1. Only a new creation that accomplishes this goal of breaking the flesh's control over our behavior and our hearts.
- iv. And even then, we must take our old man to the cross and reckon it dead each day.
- e. **I truly believe that God doesn't want you to be feeling condemnation for your flesh.**
 - i. He already knows it is rotten!
 - ii. He condemned it at the cross.
 - iii. God knows what you don't want to admit.
 - 1. Your flesh will always serve the law of sin.
 - 2. Therefore put no confidence in it!
 - iv. Romans 7:24-25 *Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.*
 - v. That is why Romans 8:1-2 says, *"there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus for the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you through Christ Jesus from the power of sin that leads to death."*
 - 1. Stop worrying about your flesh!
 - 2. It has been crucified with Jesus!
 - 3. Rest in what Jesus did at Calvary and set your minds upon Him.
 - 4. If you focus on your flesh, it will not be transformed from a pig to a lamb no matter how long you stare at it. .
 - 5. It will be the same (or worse) 20 years from now as it is today.
 - vi. The flesh is a source of discouragement for so many Christians.
 - 1. Because most of us foolishly put some hope into it that it will get better.
 - 2. That we will someday overcome our lust, jealousy, and our laziness toward prayer.
 - 3. But our flesh will always crave what it wants and not desire what God wants.
 - 4. Do not put your hope in it. It will let you down and discourage you!
 - vii. That is why 2 Cor 5:17 needs to be our truth scripture. *"Therefore if any man in is Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come."*
 - 1. How many years have you wasted trying to fix your flesh?
 - 2. Stop paying attention to the flesh's cries and accusations.
 - 3. Ignore it. It is dead. It is a corpse.
 - 4. Your old desires are dead according to the bible. You are a new creature. Learn to walk in that truth by living it out.
 - 5. Look upon Christ. Trust Christ and not your self
 - 6. Fix your hope on Christ and not a bit of it on self.
 - viii. *"I have been crucified with Christ."* (Gal 2:20) He doesn't say, "crucify yourself." (Gal 5:24) it is a past tense statement.
- f. In dealing with sin, most of us have all heard about the concept of repentance. I need to clear up a misconception concerning repentance as well.
 - i. **Repentance is not a minding or mending of sin but a REPLACEMENT of sin.**
 - 1. The word for repent means to change directions. It is a turning around. We don't just stop walking toward sin. **Repentance is not just turning away from sin.** We have all been taught that it is.
 - 2. Repentance is more than that.

3. We turn around, we turn away from sin and we turn toward God.
 4. **Repentance is about turning TO God FROM Sin and Self.**
4. **I will not be forgiven of my sins unless I do something.**
 - a. I am distinguishing here between sin (singular) which is the state of all humanity before we trust Jesus Christ to take our sin upon Himself –
 - i. **sin in its singular case refers to the alienation between man and God** - and
 - ii. **sins (plural) which is speaking about the individual acts in which we choose to serve self instead of God.**
 - b. I may be playing semantics with this one, but you don't need to ask God to forgive your sins.
 - i. The bible doesn't command us to ask forgiveness for our sins, but it does command us to confess them.
 1. In fact, in 1 John 1:9 we are told to confess our sins.
 2. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
 - a. Do you see the requirement to experience forgiveness and cleansing?
 - b. It is confession!**
 - c. You don't need to do penance for your sins to have them forgiven.
 - d. You don't need to beg.
 - e. You don't need to grovel.
 - f. You don't need to beat yourself up until you feel badly about your sin!
 - ii. But you do need to "confess."
 1. **Confess means to "agree with God."**
 2. It means to acknowledge what He already knows...that we sinned.
 3. It means to tell Him that we exerted our self-will in defiance of His will.
 4. **When we confess our sin, we are not asking for forgiveness**, rather we are **appropriating the forgiveness** He has already given us at Calvary.
 5. Prov 28:13 *"People who cover over their sins will not prosper. But if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy".*
 - c. Confession:
 - i. If God has forgiven us for our sins because of Christ's death, why must we confess our sins?
 1. Psalm 66:18 says, *If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened.*
 - a. Do you want your prayers heard? If you hold on to sin in your heart you have a broken relationship with God. Confess it. God already knows your sin. He wants to know that YOU know it as well!
 - b. We are agreeing with God that our sin truly was sin and that we are willing to turn from it,
 - c. We are ensuring that we don't conceal our sins from him and from ourselves.
 - d. We are recognizing our tendency to sin and relying on his power to overcome it.
 - ii. **Forgiveness is complete even when confession isn't.**
 1. Confession frees us to enjoy fellowship with Christ.
 2. It should ease our consciences and lighten our cares.
 3. But some Christians do not understand how it works.
 - a. They feel so guilty that they confess the same sins over and over; then they wonder if they might have forgotten something.
 - b. Other Christians believe that God forgives them when they confess, but if they died with unconfessed sins, they would be forever lost.

- c. These Christians do not understand that God wants to forgive us.
- d. He allowed his beloved Son to die just so he could pardon us.
- e. When we come to Christ, he forgives all the sins we have committed or will ever commit.
- f. We don't need to confess the sins of the past all over again, and we don't need to fear that God will reject us if we don't keep our slate perfectly clean.
- g. Of course we should continue to confess our sins, but not because failure to do so will make us lose our salvation.
- h. Our relationship with Christ is secure.
- i. Instead, we should confess our sins so that we can enjoy maximum fellowship and joy with him.
- d. Repentance is complete when guilt is gone and we are walking freely in the Spirit before God.
 - i. Psalm 103:12 *“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”*
 - ii. Want to talk about eternal, infinite forgiveness? It is described in this verse!
 - iii. East West vs. North South (infinite vs. finite)

5. **I can sin and get away with it.**

- a. “You will not surely die” is the lie that Satan whispered in Eve’s ear.
- b. Psalm 10:11 NLT: *The wicked say to themselves, “God isn't watching! He will never notice!”*
 - i. What this lie implies is that:
 - 1. There will not be judgment upon my sin
 - 2. I won’t reap what I sow
 - 3. The choices I make today won’t have consequences
 - 4. I can play with fire and not get burned.
 - ii. Galatians 6:7 NAS: *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*
 - 1. You need to know that Sin will demand payment. You will pay its price. You will reap what you sow. You cannot continue to sin and not bear consequences.
 - a. Whether or not you are a Christian, rejection of God’s standards bear consequences.
 - b. If you are a Christian, you will suffer the discipline of God. He will not let His children destroy themselves. He cares too much for us. You will feel the heat of His hand on your life!
 - c. If you are not a follower of Jesus, you can be sure that sin will eat you up like cancer on your soul. The wages of sin is death, and we are speaking of both physical and spiritual death. A self-indulgent life will reap a terrible cost.
 - 2. It was reported recently that an enormous pine tree in the mountains of Colorado had fallen victim to a pine beetle and died. According to locals, up to that point the tree was thought to be indestructible. It had survived fourteen lightning strikes and many years of Colorado winters, including avalanches and fires. But it was eventually brought down from within by a tiny insect that did its work silently.
- c. Consequences of sin:
 - i. Sin steals joy (Ps 51:12)
 - ii. Sin removes confidence before God (1 Jn 3:19-21)
 - iii. Sin brings guilt (Ps. 51:3)
 - iv. Sin gives Satan power over us (2 Cor 2:9-11)
 - v. Sin quenches God’s Spirit (1 Th 5:19)
 - vi. Sin causes an ache in our soul (Ps 32:3-4)

- vii. Sin breaks God's heart (Eph 4:30)
- viii. Sin breaks fellowship with God (Isa 30:1)
- ix. Sin opens the door to more sin (Isa 30:1)
- x. Sin produces fear (Prv 28:1)
- xi. Sin makes me its slave (Jn 8:34, Ro 6:16)

6. Sins have Sizes

- a. There are lots of ways to describe sin: wrong, disobedient, and painful to God.
 - i. There are also ways that you **can't** describe sin: big, little, major, minor, unimportant.
- b. Some Christians can describe what they believe is the 'worst' sin.
 - i. It may be homosexuality, abortion, murder, or divorce.
 - ii. The reason we put them on a sliding scale is because these are evidence of extremes, of a calloused conscience, and the effects of some sin on others are so grievous and serious.
- iii. **But we say, "My sin isn't really that bad."**
 - 1. We are talking about our "pet" sin, our favorite sin that we have learned to tolerate and keep in the closet, hidden away from sight.
 - 2. Jeremy Taylor said, "no sin is small. *No grain of sand is small in the mechanism of a watch.*"
 - 3. Don't forget *Prov 28:13 "People who cover over their sins will not prosper*
 - 4. Puritans – developed a commitment to holiness and obedience. Outwardly, they looked very holy. Yet their writings reveal that they thought of themselves as weak, sin prone people.
- c. This is because as one grows nearer to God, your illusion of personal holiness is exposed.
 - i. If you have were to lay a white sheet outside next to freshly fallen snow, you would discover that it the sheet isn't really all that white.
 - ii. When the standard is perfection, our tendency toward comparison is blown apart.

7. God can't/won't use me until I am free of my sin.

- a. God hits straight with crooked sticks.
- b. The issue of getting rid of sin is not about trying to stop a work of the flesh but rather allowing a work of grace upon your will.
- c. We must beware that our battle isn't to overcome our flesh or achieve sinless ness. Our focus must be upon fulfilling the call of God on our lives.
- d. One of the church fathers wrote, "*if I die, carve me up and look into my heart. There may you find the name of my Savior written on every surface.*"
 - i. To have such devotion to our Savior is to understand grace.
 - ii. We don't pay attention to our sin but to our Savior.
- e. When our eyes are upon Him, then we experience the kind of victory and freedom we need instead of condemnation that our flesh receives.
- f. **Truths;**
 - i. Every act of sin is an act of rebellion toward God.
 - ii. No sin is small. All sin is sin in God's eyes. He is our only standard of comparison.
 - iii. Something that ought to be a part of our prayer meetings and worship services is a time of asking God to search our hearts as in the psalm I read earlier (Psalm 139:23-24) *Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*
 - iv. We need to be open to God cleaning us up! God desires we be free of Sin's grip, not through our efforts, but by a breaking of our will before Him.
 - v. I pray that today, you will say to God... **"I will let you clean me up! I'm willing to let you change my heart!"** Even if your heart says, **"I love my sin, but because you loved me first, I ask you to change my heart so that I will love You more!"**

vi. Won't you begin by coming to Jesus.

1. "Father, I know that I have broken your laws and my sins have separated me from you. I am truly sorry, and now I want to turn away from my past sinful life toward you. I believe that your son, Jesus Christ died for my sins, was resurrected from the dead, is alive, and hears my prayer. I invite Jesus to become the Lord of my life, to rule and reign in my heart from this day forward. Please send your Holy Spirit to help me obey You, and to do Your will for the rest of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."
2. Change my heart O God. In Jesus Name Amen.