

"Your Sin"

Some people are saying that "Sin is an outdated word" and should be dropped from our vocabulary. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to talk about sin, something that affects all of us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. The Bible is the most important book that you'll ever read. It's the only book that tells you where you came from, why you're here, and what will happen after death. Scripture reveals God's love for mankind and how He's dealt with our problem of sin. God's desire for all men is that they be saved from sin and live with Him eternally. Sin, however, keeps us from eternal life. The Bible reveals the answer to sin and how we can live eternally with God. So thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

Some people do say that "Sin is an outdated word" and should be dropped from our vocabulary. They believe using the word "sinner" is offensive and a hindrance to Christianity. Some claim that Jesus never called anyone a sinner. Several years ago, Dr. Karl Menniger saw this change in attitude in American people and he wrote the book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* More recently John MacArthur wrote the book *The Vanishing Conscience*. You see both of these men realized that many had grown callous about their sin and had decided to ignore the concept of sin altogether.

Does sin really exist? What does the Bible say about sin? What does it mean to be a sinner? And what's the big deal about sin anyway? Is sin really so offensive that a person will spend an eternity lost without God? Should we ever call anyone a sinner? In a politically correct world some have banned the word "sin" as being offensive. But is the word "sin" really so bad that we should never mention it? Well I realize some folks don't want to hear about it, but sin is a real problem! And ignoring sin won't make it go away and it won't turn something that is evil into something that's good.

Now perhaps you want to study more, we're offering this little booklet, *Your Soul*, free. And if you'd like a printed copy of this book or a CD of our study and you live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. Now we also have materials free on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, and then we'll read from James 1:13 to 16, and we're going to explore the concept of sin.

Our reading today comes from the letter of James, chapter 1, verses 13 to 16. "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he's carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren." Those are words from James, in the word of God, and we should take them seriously. Let's pray together. Father we're grateful that You love us and never tempt us. Oh Father help us to keep in check and in control our own desires. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

The word "sin" is certainly a Biblical term. It's used 221 times in the New Testament alone; and the word "sinner" is used an additional 46 times. The Bible also uses other terms when speaking of sin. Sin is sometimes described as an "error," "iniquity," "unrighteousness," an "evil," a "trespass," or a "transgression." Sin is not some small thing that one can ignore or dismiss. You'll never find sin taken

lightly in Scripture. You'll never find Jesus saying that sin is an outdated word. In fact, every time Jesus thought about sin he called for repentance. You see, He recognized that sin was real.

Now you can hardly understand the purpose of Jesus without talking about sin. When Mary was with child, the angel told Joseph, "that she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1 and verse 21). When John the Baptist introduced Jesus, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!" (John 1 and verse 29) More than seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus, Isaiah prophesied of the Messiah who was to come. And he spoke about Jesus and how Jesus would bear our transgressions.

Isaiah 53 says, in verses 5 and 6, "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep, (we've) gone astray; we've turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Jesus died a cruel, ugly death upon a cross so that we might be freed from sin. His suffering brought us forgiveness, grace and peace. To suggest that sin is an unimportant word makes a mockery of what Jesus did on the cross for you and for me. It suggests that we don't need His blood.

Sadly some people don't realize just how tragic sin truly is. Sin has caused much of our greatest pain and has wasted countless lives. Sin, the sin of some sort or another, is at the root of every crime and every violent act; it's brought so much guilt and shame, and so much pain. Calling sin "outdated" doesn't make it outdated. Relabeling sin only shows the attitude of the one who makes this claim. My friend, God takes note of sin whether we do or not. You see, when men sin, they sin against God—they offend God. Sin is not merely a transgression against the law; it's a transgression against God's law and God Himself, and it breaks his heart! There is no "victimless" sin, for God is always the victim.

Now some people think of sin as something somebody else does. Nearly everyone can point to someone that they think is a worse sinner than they themselves. But everyone sins. Paul said, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3 and verse 23). Now every person who reaches the age where he knows about God, and he knows about right and wrong, comes to that point where he acts in defiance of God's law and so sins. We all stand guilty before God.

Some people have categories of sin. They think "big" sins are really bad, but "little" sins are no big deal. Or they figure others commit the big sins, while they themselves only commit little ones. But all sins are bad. All sins transgress God's law and break God's heart. All sins go against His will for our lives. Paul said, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6 and verse 23), and that hasn't changed. Now when he talks about death, he's talking about spiritual death, that is separation from God and from His grace.

Isaiah 59 verses 1 and 2 explains, it says, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear." When people persist in sin, they build this barrier between themselves and God. And this barrier means that God no longer approves, that one doesn't stand in His grace and receive His blessing.

Now some people still don't think they've sinned. But John said in 1 John 1:8 to 10, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, then 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, why we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." People tend to lie to themselves about many things. Some ignore warnings about the weather; others ignore warnings about their souls.

Now when your sins aren't forgiven, they will cost you your soul. Sin is no joke. Jesus said in Matthew 16 verses 26 to 27, "For what a man profit if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds." Some people laugh about sin, but no one will be laughing when Jesus comes again. Then they will weep with regret that they didn't change their lives and come to the Lord.

Sin not only has eternal consequences; it also creates sorrow in this life. Sin deceives and hardens people's hearts. Hebrews 3 verses 12 to 13 says, "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it's *still* called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Most people sin because they think it feels good, or because it's pleasurable; but in the end sin will harden your heart and hurt you. It's deceptive and it's cruel. Sin will make a person desert every member of his family just to feed a habit.

We generally think of taking drugs or getting drunk as addictive and destructive behaviors, but actually all sins become addictive and destructive. A person can become addicted to lying, to gossip, to stealing, to anger, to sexual sins, and even to violence. These behaviors not only hurt the person who does them, they also hurt other people. How many families have been destroyed or impoverished because somebody thought they could sin and get away with it. The prisons are full of people who thought they could get away with their sins, or people who knew they'd someday get caught but wouldn't give up their sins.

There is an unalterable law in Scripture about the life we choose to live. And you can't cheat this law or change it. You can't wish it away or ignore it. Galatians 6 verse 7 and 8 says, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." Now when a writer says, "Do not be deceived," it's usually because people fool themselves and lie to themselves about the lives that they're living.

Oh I hope you're not kidding yourself, thinking that you can live an immoral lifestyle and avoid any consequences. You simply can't. Sometimes those consequences are physical diseases if you abuse your body. Sometimes they are shortened life, if you commit crimes. Sometimes sin breaks up families and destroys friendships. Sometimes sin enslaves us financially with heavy debts like gambling does. The choices that you make today may cost you far more than you ever dreamed in your health, or the spiritual drain, in guilt, in money and friendships. My friend, if you continue in sin, you won't be the exception. You will someday reap what you sow.

The prodigal son wanted his inheritance, and he wanted it so that he could waste it on his pleasures. That's what a prodigal is, one who wastes his resources with reckless living. You remember the story. "And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into the fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one was giving him anything" (Luke 15 verses 14 to 16). Well I tell you, when you live a selfish, sinful lifestyle, the time comes when you run out of friends. Selfish people are friends only when they see some benefit. And as long as the prodigal son paid the bill, he had friends.

It was only when the prodigal son was desperate and alone that he began to see clearly about sin. Verses 17 to 19 continue: "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!' He said, 'I'll get up and I'll go to

my father, and I'll say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; and I'm no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'" Sin dulls the senses, but reality wakes us up. Sin makes a person feel small in his own eyes. He no longer felt worthy to be called a son of his father.

Now while sin leads only to shame and guilt, the wonderful thing is how much God loves us even in our sin and guilt. Verses 20 to 24 reveal, "So he got up and he came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion *for him*, and he ran to him and he embraced him and he kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this my son was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate." God rejoices when his prodigal children come home. And he ran to meet his ragged, dirty, but penitent son. He embraced and kissed him. And it was a time of celebration, for his son was now alive and found! God wants to find you too. Sin will hurt you and embarrass you; but God still waits for you, because He loves you. And no matter what your past has been, God wants to forgive you as you turn away from the old evil life and come home to Him. God's love is greater than our sin.

Paul said in 1 Timothy 1 and verses 12 to 16, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus. It's a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, (and he says) among whom I am foremost *of all*. And yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life." My friend, there is hope for you. If you'll believe in the Lord, if you'll repent of your sins, if you'll confess His name, if you'll be baptized (that is immersed in water) for the forgiveness of your sins, you too will become a child of God and a member of the Lord's church. The prodigal son came home; Saul of Tarsus came home. And they found forgiveness, and so can you, so can you, so can you. Let's pray together. Father, we're so grateful that Your love and grace is more than abundant and greater than our sin. And Father help us to come to You, to be obedient to Your word, and to love You with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength. And Father may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

We've seen that sin matters; it's not trivial. Scripture tells us that unresolved sin costs people their souls. You remember Paul said, "The wages of sin is death." Well that hasn't changed in all the centuries. Now "death" here is a reference to separation from God, which can last for eternity. Don't let Satan or the world fool you into believing that sin is no big deal. It's the critical threat to your soul and will cost you everything when Jesus comes again, if it's left un-forgiven. Now if sin weren't such a big deal, Jesus would never have gone to such great lengths to atone for your sins by his cruel death on the cross. Sin is not trivial when you consider the cross of Christ. Jesus didn't die for a petty, unimportant problem. He died for you, because your sins are the greatest problem that you face.

Now when you consider the Lord's suffering, you can readily see His love. There's no greater love than a man can have than to lay down his life for his friends. That's what Jesus did for you. And he wanted you to be free from sin and to live with Him eternally in heaven. "The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6 and verse 23). Now forgiveness is

a gift from God, and I would hate for you never to know how much God loves you and wants to forgive you. If God takes sin and your soul that seriously, shouldn't you take it seriously? Don't let anything keep you from having all the blessings of the Lord? Love Him, serve Him, and obey Him.

To become a Christian, believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, repent of sin that separates you from God, confess Jesus before others, and be baptized into Christ. Now baptism is an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. My friend, you'll never, never regret obeying the Lord. And so do it today!

Well we hope that today's study has stirred you to consider your soul and the consequences of sin, that is your sin. Think about these things. We're offering this free book entitled Your Soul. And it deals with the messages that we're giving during this month. If you'd like a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or you can call the Search office, it's toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. You can also download these lessons or a newsletter online at our website: www.searchtv.org. There's also a schedule of our programs and a map with the location of churches in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now if you get a hold of us, don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

So we ask that you please get involved with a church of Christ. And if you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll be happy to help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.