

LIFEgroup Discussion Questions**August 22, 2010****Sin**

1. What is sin?
2. What is the origin of sin (Romans 5.12; 3.23; Ecclesiastes 7.20; Jeremiah 17.9)?
3. What are the consequences of sin (Romans 6.23)?
4. How do we know about our sin (Romans 3.20)?
5. How can we be saved from our sin (Romans 5.8; 2 Corinthians 5.21; Ephesians 2.1-10)?
6. Even though we are saved from our past, present and future sins as Christians should we keep on sinning (Romans 6.1-13)?

Use the below notes along with thoughts from the sermon to help with the above questions.

The Origin of Sin

The narrative of the Fall in Genesis 3, tells us that man was created in a state of integrity but fell into a state of corruption through an actual event that occurred in time. At this certain time sin entered the world of humankind. Through the first head, Adam we become sinful. Romans 5.12 says, Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. Literally this means we all sinned in Adam when Adam committed his sin in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). So, when born, every human being has original sin and is in a sinful state and condition.

This is where the doctrine of total depravity or pervasive depravity comes in. It means that the corruption of original sin extends to every aspect of human nature: to one's reason and will as well as to one's appetites and impulses; and there is not present in man by nature love to God as the motivating principle of his life. John 3.3; Jeremiah 17.9; Mark 7.21-23; John 5.42; Romans 7.18; Ephesians 4.17-19; and Titus 1.15-16 are good verses to see the reality of this.

We simply cannot understand how we sinned in Adam; the Bible does not tell us. Nor can we understand how the guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to us; the Bible does not answer this question either. What the Bible does tell us is that we sinned in Adam, and that the guilt of Adam's first sin is imputed to us; further than that we should not go. Sin remains a mystery, not only in its commission but also in its transmission. Romans 5.12-21 is a good place to study about this topic.

**It is important to note that the Genesis account of the Fall, describes the origin of sin in the life of the human race, however we must observe that sin originated previous to the fall of man in the fall of the angels. As we see in Genesis 3 Adam and Eve were tempted by a serpent. The serpent was an instrument of or for Satan (Revelation 12.9; 20.2). Satan was previously an angel created by God (Psalm 33.6; Colossians 1.16; Nehemiah 9.6; John 1.3; Romans 11.36; Ephesians 3.9), but rebelled against God and became the leader of a host of fallen angels. Isaiah 14.13-14 seems to be a reference to the fallen angels, which Israel seems to borrow in their taunt against the king of Babylon. So, the temptation from sin came from the outside of the human world. The devil through, the serpent, appealed to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (1 John 2.16).*

What is Sin?

In the Old Testament the most commonly used term for sin is *chattath*, which basically means *to miss the mark, conveying the thought that all wrongdoing is a falling short of the way God intends his children to live. Sin means failing to fulfill the purpose for which God created us.*

Breaking of God's Law (disobedience): *Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness (1 John 3.4).*

Opposition to God or Rebellion against God: David had sinned against Bathsheba and Uriah, yet when he confessed his sin he said to God, *"Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight (Psalm 51.4).* Our opposition and rebellion against God has its roots in hatred of God. Romans 8.7 says, *The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*

Defaming of God's Glory: *All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3.23).* Sin is a glory issue. John Piper says, *Sin is the dragging of God's name through the mud.*

Trying to be our own god

God says in Genesis 3.22: *Man wished to be like 'one of us' (us referring to the Trinity). Man desired to be so by assuming a divine prerogative: that of determining for himself what was good and what was evil. But this is something only I may do. And I had told man what was good and evil in my sight. But he refused to obey my command. Instead, he took it into his own hands to determine what was good. Thus he became, as it were, his own god. He became like me in the wrong way, in the way of sin and rebellion. Man now knows good and evil in the way that I forbade.*

They were becoming "like God" in Satan's way. Man should have known good and evil in the way God knows it: namely, by abstaining from evil. Instead, he now knew good and evil in the wrong way: by committing evil.

Sin at its root is a form of pride. Augustine says, *And what is the origin of our evil will but pride? For "pride is the beginning of sin" (Ecclus. 10.13). And what is pride but the craving for undue exaltation? And this is undue exaltation, when the soul abandons Him to whom it ought to cleave as its end, and becomes a kind of end to itself. [City of God, trans. M. Dods, Bk. 14, Chap. 13, vol. 2 in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series (rpt.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 273.]*

At root sin means refusing to recognize our total dependence on God, and wanting to be on our own. In other words, sin is basically self-interest: wanting things our way instead of God's way. This would be the opposite of poor in spirit which Jesus speaks of as the characteristic of a genuine disciple. To the poor in spirit belongs the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5.3).

The Nature of Sin

The fact that sin is not part of the essence of our nature made it possible for Christ to assume a human nature that was not totally other than that of fallen man and still to be without sin. So, Christ took on a human nature, but not a sinful nature.

Though fallen man still bears the image of God, he now functions wrongly as an image-bearer of God. This, in fact, makes sin all the more heinous. Sin is a perverse way of using God-given and God-reflecting powers. C.S. Lewis has expressed this point in an unforgettable way: Is it still God speaking when a liar or a blasphemer speaks? In one sense, almost Yes. Apart from God he could not speak at all...And indeed the only way in which I can make real to myself what theology teaches about the heinousness of sin is to remember that every sin is the distortion of an energy breathed into us...We poison the wine as He decants it into us; murder a melody He would play with us as the instrument. We caricature the self-portrait He would paint. Hence all sin, whatever else it is, is sacrilege. (Letters to Malcolm, Chiefly on Prayer [London: Collins, Fontana Books, 1966], pp. 71-72)

Actual Sin

Actual sins is the sins of act, word, or thought that human beings commit. Sin has its source in the heart – the inner core of the person: the organ of thinking, feeling, and willing; the point of concentration of all of our functions. Sources supporting such thought: Jeremiah 17.9; Matthew 15.19; Luke 6.45b.

Sin includes thoughts as well as deeds. There are sinful desires as well as sinful deeds. God's law goes much deeper than just addressing deeds. Thoughts may be sinful just as words or deeds. Jesus taught about such an idea in his sermon in Matthew 5.28 addressing adulterous thoughts. Paul speaks of the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5.16, 17, and 24). Flesh means man's total nature under the enslavement of sin.

Actual sin not only springs forth from the pollution involved in original sin, it also intensifies that pollution. Sinful deeds often lead to sinful habits, and sinful habits may eventually bring about a totally sinful kind of life.

How does a Christian learn to know his sin?

From the law of God. Romans 3.20 says, *Through the law we become conscious of sin.* Romans 7.7 says, *Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, 'Do not covet'.* James 2.9 says, *If you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as law-breakers.*

The Personal Consequence of Sin

Romans 6.23 says, *For the wages of sin is death. The deepest meaning of life is fellowship with God, therefore, the deepest meaning of death must be the disruption of the fellowship with God that man enjoyed before the Fall, and this disruption is spiritual death. Hence the death that came upon man and woman at the Fall must have included spiritual death – in this sense one could say that our first parents died immediately when the first sin occurred. As a further consequence, every human being since the Fall is born in a state of spiritual death (Ephesians 2.1-2). At the time of the Fall humankind also became subject to what we call eternal death – that is, eternal separation from the loving presence of God. If the grace of God had not intervened, death in all three senses – physical, spiritual, and eternal – would have been the lot of every human being, including our first parents, Adam and Eve.*

Resources:

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