

Word Study Sin

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Sin is the greatest weapon of mass destruction the world has known. The master strategist behind it is, of course, Satan himself. Satan is a personality (a fallen archangel), who is out to lead all men and women in the path that ends in hell or everlasting destruction. Actually, hell was created by God for the devil and his angels. (Matthew 25:41). The Adversary knows that his days are numbered and his end is certain, and he is determined to destroy as many human beings as he can. It is not a game to him, but a genuine war. The spiritual struggle is a matter of eternal life or eternal death for all human beings everywhere.

SIN DEFINED

The Bible teaches that, **"all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."** (Romans 3:23). But what exactly is sin? 'Sin is any thought, word, action, or desire contrary to the law of God.' (Cruden's Concordance). 'A transgression against the Divine law and an offence against God.' (Oxford English Dictionary). 'The verb means to depart voluntarily from the path of duty prescribed by God to man; to violate the Divine law in any particular' (Webster's Dictionary). An examination of the Hebrew and Greek words for sin reveals that sin is a missing of the mark; rebellion against God; transgression; lawlessness; ungodliness; unrighteousness; failure of duty to God; disobedience; iniquity; wickedness; wrongdoing; etc. The apostle Paul, for example, saw sin as a very real power that has seized the hearts of men and women. He talked of sin reigning like a king over subjects; ruling like a master over slaves; and acting like an enemy over conquered people. One writer put it this way: 'Sin is not simply an influence or a force; it is a kind of personal demonic power which invades a man and takes up residence within him.'

In the past, I have pointed out to audiences that sin is the enthronement of self and the dethronement of God. Sin is saying to God: 'Not thy will, but mine be done,' instead of **"not my will, but thine be done."** Sin is imperfection. Who can say that he or she is the perfect father or mother, husband or wife, brother or sister, son or daughter? Sin is deliberately refusing to see God in the universe and deliberately refusing to hear Him in His Son. So sin is the revolt against God of an accountable being, the result of a deliberate choice to do one's thing without reference to the will of God. W. Carl Ketcherside has written: 'Sin is flint-hearted and treacherous. And one of its potent weapons is rationalisation. It uses this for self-preservation, seeking to hold captive those who are in its malign grasp and upon whom it feeds as a vicious parasite. Sometimes it approaches delusion from the negative side, sometimes from the positive, but always it has the black hood at hand to drop over the eyes of the victim, while the gallows starkly waits in the background.'

THE INROADS OF SIN

Sin has been watered down in our generation until it is no longer considered as an offence against the Majesty on high, but merely anti-social behaviour. The sinner is regarded more of an eccentric in our culture than an enemy of God. Let me emphasise that sin is rebellion and the word 'rebellion', comes from the Latin *bellum*, war. Sin always creates war. In fact, it creates a war within every rational human being on earth. Paul wrote: **"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin"**

which is in my members.” (Romans 7:23). He went on to provide the answer to the problem. **“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”** (7:24-25). No human system can address the problem of sin. The remedy can only come from God Himself.

The word ‘flesh’ is closely associated with sin. The flesh is the bridgehead through which sin invades the human personality. W.E. Vine says: ‘The flesh stands for corrupt human nature, the dominating element in unregenerate man.’ In his epistle to the Galatians, Paul compares the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. He writes: **“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness (impurity of mind), lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (a contentious temper), emulations (jealousies), wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not enter the kingdom of God.”** (Gal. 5:19-21) This is a terrible list. Someone wrote: ‘Sin evermore increases its power, until all that is noble and excellent is crushed under the tyranny of lust and passion. The Spirit is subjugated by the flesh, reason is perverted, conscience is blunted, the affections are all corrupted and, if this is unchecked, it reaches a point of degradation from which there is no return.’

SIN’S PENALTY

The penalty of sin is death. Death is separation. Sin separates people from God. Adam and Eve died the day they ate the forbidden fruit. God had warned them that this would happen (Genesis 2:17). The world has never been the same since. But Jesus came to save the world, and He did. However, sinful men and women have to respond to His gospel call. Salvation is conditional upon obedience: otherwise all would be saved no matter what.

It is clear from the Scriptures that a minority of mankind is saved. (Matthew 7:14) The vast majority is in the broad way that leads to destruction or eternal death. The minority has found a new life in Jesus. Life is union. Life is union with God. Jesus said: **“I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”** (John 10:10b). Jesus spells LIFE!

I recall a brother in Christ once saying that if he were granted one wish in the world then it would be to make all sinners see they are sinners in the sight of God. Universal recognition would produce universal reconciliation. Sadly, his wish will not come to pass. In any event, mankind is without excuse because of all that God has done, especially in the person of His Son, Christ Jesus. Men and women are special. They are made in the image of God. But there is something clearly wrong with their make-up. That something is sin. G.K. Chesterton once said: ‘Whatever is true of man, man is not what he was meant to be.’ Sin has marred the beauty and symmetry of his character. There is much more that could be written on this subject, but let me close with some words by Alexander Campbell: ‘To limit contagion of sin, to prevent its recurrence in any portion of the universe, and to save sinners from its ruinous consequences, are the godlike purposes of the common Father of all.’

(One of my earliest Sunday School memories at Albert Street, Wigan was being led by the late Bro. Jack Parker in singing that simple chorus that had the words, ‘S-I-N is a very little word, but it always spells disaster; I must leave it very much alone, or it will become my master.’ They don’t write them like that any more!! Editor.)