

What Is Sin?

One definition of sin states that sin is everything that is contrary to the will of God. Sin is also described as the falling away of the heart from God. We cannot fully understand or know all our sins. “Sin is a religious concept. It cannot be understood by reason. It becomes apparent only in the light of God’s revelation” (Bible Concepts: Sin *Voice of Zion*, Sept. 1993). Sin is more than doing certain deeds or leaving deeds undone. Prophet Jeremiah relates: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). “Sin continually corrupts man’s soul and body. Man’s reason is blinded and his will inclined to evil” (Christian Doctrine 24).

Inherited Sin and Actual Sin

It is commonly taught that there are two basic types of sin: inherited sin and actual sin. Inherited sin, or original sin, is that which we received from our original forebears, Adam and Eve. Apostle Paul writes: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12) Actual sin is that which we think, speak, or do against God or our neighbor. These are sometimes called sins of commission, sins we commit, or sins of omission, things we should have done or said but did not. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

The powers of sin have been in existence before the earth was created. “God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down...” (2 Pet. 2:4). Adam and Eve felt the effects of the powers of darkness when the enemy came disguised as a serpent and said to Eve: “Yea, hath God said, He shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” (Gen. 3:1). The enemy of souls convinced her to go against God’s Word. Apostle Paul writes, “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (Rom. 5:18).

All people carry this inherited corruption. We feel it in our lives and it effects in our actions toward our families and neighbors. Paul further writes: “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do” (Rom. 7:18,19).

God Provided a Way

God did not condemn mankind eternally in his fallen condition, but provided a way to be reconciled with Him. He allowed His Son, Jesus Christ, to become flesh and blood and dwell on the earth. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Jesus fulfilled the demanding Law and remained without sin. He took mankind’s sin-debt upon himself, and through His suffering, death, and victorious resurrection, provided a way of salvation to all who believe on God’s sure promises. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Eph. 2:8).

However, there still remains in our flesh a tendency to do that which is against God’s will. It affects our relationship with those around us, especially our family and loved ones. It can happen that we treat our family members in such a way that it causes them pain or sorrow. Our corruption is known so closely in our homes. We often lack patience and understanding and say or do things that we know we should not. There, where we are known so well, it is important that we also make amends for our actions. The child of God, possessing the Holy Spirit, feels the admonition of the Spirit to confess sins and faults and ask for forgiveness from our loved ones. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). We are also exhorted to “let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset” (Heb. 12:1). When matters are thus cared for, the home remains a place of security, love, and peace.

The Gospel Cleanses, Gives Strength

The gospel, the joyous message of Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection, also includes the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in His name and blood. It should be an important part of every believing home. Apostle Paul says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. The gospel has power to wash away all sins and errors of the journey and gives strength to remain believing on this way of faith that leads to heaven's glory.

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1. How does original sin effect in the lives of people?
2. Why was it necessary for Jesus to be born in the flesh?
3. Can a believer stay in faith without the gospel? Explain.
4. What is the gospel?