

# **The Christian Life**

## **Sin**

Lesson #6 for May 9, 2009

Scriptures: Isaiah 14:12-14; 59:2; Matthew 23:23; 25:45; Romans 5:12-18; 7:18-25; 14:23; Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 1:1-5; James 4:17; 1 John 3:4; Revelation 5:9-12.

1. The purpose of this lesson is to try to help us understand the nature of sin and what it has done to human beings. Sin did not begin here on this earth. It began in the Most Holy Place in the heavenly sanctuary. So, what has sin done to the universe?
2. Sin is all-pervasive in our world. Read the newspaper, watch television, and listen to the radio. Almost everything that happens seems to be sin-related. Hope is diminishing. Wars, economic crises, injustices, and a whole list of personal and corporate sins emerge daily into our consciousness. Surely, no one needs to convince us that sin is real!
3. What really happened to Adam and Eve when they sinned? How were they changed? How has that sin affected us? Are we personally affected by Adam and Eve's sin, or are we only affected by the sins which we commit ourselves? (Compare Romans 5:12 and 5:18) What, if anything, has sin done to human DNA? How has our environment been affected by sin? Considering our sinful natures and our sinful behavior, why does God still love us?

There was nothing poisonous in the fruit itself, and the sin was not merely in yielding to appetite. **It was distrust of God's goodness, disbelief of His word, and rejection of His authority, that made our first parents transgressors, and that brought into the world a knowledge of evil. It was this that opened the door to every species of falsehood and error.**—Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 25.

Why is a little disbelief or a little distrust such a big deal?

4. **Romans 5:12 suggests that every time we sin, we follow their example.** (Romans 5:18) Are we sinners because Adam and Eve sinned or only because we follow their example in sinning?
5. But Adam and Eve were not the first sinners! Read Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:15,17. Genesis 3:1-7 tells us that as an immediate result of their sin, Adam and Eve were "naked." Was that a DNA change? Sin resulted in Lucifer and a third of the angels being thrown "down" to this earth. "War" began in heaven and spread to this earth. (Revelation 12:7-12) How was Lucifer changed? Can you even imagine how incredible Lucifer's ideas were. He was living in the visible presence of God and yet he thought that he could somehow take God's place! Feeble mortal beings actually believed that they could conquer God and that they knew better than God what was good for them. And now, knowing that he is a defeated foe, he continues to profess his first deceptions. At one time, Satan recognized his mistake and asked to be taken back into heaven. But, he was not willing to return his loyalty to God! (See *1SP* 29.2; *SR* 26.1; *ST*, January 16, 1879 par. 9)
6. Were these consequences a punishment from God? Or, was it a natural result of sin? Lucifer, and later Adam and Eve, disobeyed God. Was that their primary sin? Lucifer trusted in his own judgment as superior to God's. Adam and Eve trusted the talking serpent instead of believing God's spoken word to them. Does that give us some clues in understanding Romans 14:23?
7. Read Romans 8:3. In effect, the final words of this verse say that Christ came to this world to "deal with sin," "concerning sin." One of the few things that seems to have been left out of the Bible is an explanation of exactly what sin does to people. What needs to happen in order to deal with sin? Do we need to have the records of our sins "erased" from the "books of heaven"? Do we primarily need a legal transaction whereby the righteousness and merits of Jesus Christ are somehow "substituted" for our sinful records and lives? Or do we need to be truly changed in some way? When we reach the "gates of heaven," will we be allowed in because we have the "legal right" to be there? Or will we be admitted to heaven because it is safe to live next door to us? Would you like to live next door to

Adolf Hitler who had not been changed in any way but had a “legal right” to be there?

8. Surely, we would recognize that getting rid of sin—dealing with sin—is more than we can handle by ourselves. So, what has God done to deal with sin? What does the death of Jesus do to deal with our sins? Or with our sinful nature? If we could somehow manage to stop committing sins, would we still have a sinful nature? How has Adam’s sin affected the rest of us? Do we need to see the bad consequences that result from sin? Do we need to see that sin killed Jesus? Do we need to see that the Devil would kill God if he could? There is a long list of accusations that Satan has made against God. There are many questions that Satan has raised about God. Christ’s life and death dealt with the accusations and answered the questions. Do we need to understand those? Do we need to understand the issues in the great controversy? We know that God had said that sin leads to death. (Genesis 2:17) Satan claimed that what God said was not true! (Genesis 3:1-4) Satan claimed that he was on an equal level with God. Christ rose from the dead “in” His own power. (John 10:18) Satan knows that he could never do that. So, who is telling us the truth?
9. The Bible gives us four definitions of sin. The most common definition of sin that people remember is found in 1 John 3:4, “Sin is lawlessness” or “rebelliousness.” The *King James Version* says, “Sin is the transgression of the law.” That is a very free translation. Another type of sin is mentioned in James 4:17 (*GNB*), “So then, those who do not do the good they know they should do are guilty of sin.”
10. But the essence of sin is probably better represented by two other verses. Isaiah 59:2 (*GNB*) says, “It is because of your sins that he doesn’t hear you. **It is your sins that separate you from God** when you try to worship him.” Romans 14:23 (*GNB*) says, “But if they have doubts about what they eat, God condemns them when they eat it, because their action is not based on faith. **And anything that is not based on faith is sin.**”
11. What do those definitions of sin imply? **If sin separates us from God and destroys our faith relationship with Him, what needs to happen to “deal with sin”?**
12. There are two basic words used in Scripture for sin. The most common word is *hamartia* which suggests “a missing of the mark.” We try to hit the “bull’s-eye” and do what is right, but we fail. The other word, *parabasis*, is often translated “transgression.” *Parabasis* means to “intentionally deviate from the way” or “to pass along side the correct path.” What do these two terms imply about the basic essence of sin?
13. When we say that sin is “the transgression of the law” or that sin is “rebelliousness” or “lawlessness,” what law are we talking about? Is that the Ten Commandment law? Is it God’s law of love? How much is included in the “Law” that John spoke about? Or, could it mean a violation or disobedience of any of the directions God has given us for living a healthy, happy, holy life? God does not want us to destroy ourselves!
14. Look at Paul’s discussion about the reality of sin in Romans 7:21-24. Does this describe your own experience? Think of the life that Paul lived. Wouldn’t we agree that someone who was so dedicated to spreading the gospel must be a “saint”? Why does Paul seem to suggest that his life was full of sin? Ellen White described the law, the Ten Commandments, God, and sin in some very revealing words.

**The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience.** As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. **To the obedient it is a wall of protection.** We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression.

**We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The**

**sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.**

The law is an expression of God's idea. When we receive it in Christ, it becomes our idea. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin. (*Letter 96*, 1896); *1 Selected Messages*, p. 235

This letter was a response to the discussions that took place in 1888. That was in the days when Seventh-day Adventist pastors challenged pastors of other churches to debates. And we were good with our proof texts. We almost always won such debates. At least, we thought so. Ellen White said, "As a people, we have preached the law until we are as dry as the hills of Gilboa that had neither dew nor rain." {*RH*, March 11, 1890 par. 13} In what sense is the law a protection? What is the mercy side of the law? The law is like an owner's manual for human beings. The Sabbath protects us against all sorts of wrong ideas. "If man had always observed the Sabbath, there would never have been an unbeliever, and infidel, or an atheist in the world." {*ST*, February 13, 1896 par. 7}

15. In effect, sin is a deadly poison that separates us from God, our only source of life. God is keeping us alive on "artificial life support" here on earth despite our sin. The only solution to this problem is to recognize that **instead of fearing God and loving sin, we must learn to love God and fear sin. It is sin that kills people.**
16. Our Creator, Father-God has given us a kind of owner's manual telling us how to live. If we ignore His instructions, what is the result? Do we really believe that our "Father-God knows best"? In our everyday behavior, do we accept as truth the fact that in every opportunity that we have to make a free choice, God's way is actually better for us than our own selfish choice? **Do we recognize that each time we choose to sin, we are in essence saying, "I believe that I know what is better for me to do right now than God does"?**
17. We are told in Revelation 14:12 and elsewhere that God's faithful, trusting people at the end of time will obey His commandments. How can human beings succeed in keeping God's commandments? Does that require a lot of human effort? Does it require a different relationship with God? How do we get rid of rebellion?
18. Salvation comes through getting to know Jesus Christ and through Him, getting to know the Father. If we can develop a faith relationship with Them that eventually leads us to trust Them implicitly and follow Their directions because, in fact, we find them to be the best way to live, and we become fully convinced that in every aspect of our lives God's word is true, then we will truly experience the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23), the last word of which is "self control." When we learn to do right because it is right, then it will be safe to live next door to us. (*COL* 97)
19. Read Matthew 5:28 and Romans 8:6. In a world filled with temptations and lures to sinful thoughts and behaviors, is it possible for us not to "fall into" sin? Would we be willing to have our most secret thoughts made public? What things do we fantasize about on a day-by-day basis? Is it even possible for us to control our thoughts?
20. Human beings are a unique order of being. Unlike animals, we can think and plan for the future. Satan has discovered many ways in which to tempt us and to pervert our thoughts. How can we keep our thoughts pure? (Matthew 5:28; 15:19; Psalms 19:14; James 4:8; Philippians 4:8) In the days of Jesus, there was a group of very strict Pharisees known as "the bruised-and-bleeding Pharisees." Those men thought that it was sinful for a male to look on a female that was not his wife. So, they would wear veils—so they would not see any other woman—and walk down the street "running into" things. Thus, they become bruised and bleeding!

21. Read James 4:17; Matthew 23:23; 25:45; and 1 Peter 4:10. Do these verses set an impossible standard? Isn't there always more that we could do? Could we ever feed all the hungry, visit all the prisoners, clothe all the naked, etc.?
22. What is implied by the parable of the talents? (Matthew 25:14-28) If we truly want to serve God and do our very best for Him, will our talents increase? Are we using the talents that God has given us to the best advantage? Or, are we "burying" some of our talents?
23. From very early in its history, sections of the Christian church have taught and practiced infant baptism. The rite of baptizing infants is intended to remove the sin that we have inherited from Adam. Some believe that if that is not done and the child dies, he will be lost eternally. Our problem is not Adam's sin. Instead, it is the fact that we all follow his example! (Romans 5:12)
24. Read again Romans 7:21-24; 8:7,8. These verses suggest that by sinning, we become enemies of God! God recognizes that when we go our own way (*parabasis*) and choose to separate from Him (Isaiah 59:2; Romans 14:23)—our only source of life—we are committing suicide. He does not want us to die. In both the Old Testament and in the New Testament, it is stated in many ways that we are sinners. (1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:9-18,23; 1 John 1:8)

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to earnestly cry to God for help and strength to resist him. As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place. There is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained (*RH* May 6, 1862)—Ellen G. White, *SDA Bible Comm.*, vol.7, p. 947.

That may sound very scary to us. But stop for a moment and think. If a child stops growing physically, we become concerned. If he stops growing mentally, we become alarmed. But if he stops growing spiritually, should we say, "How wonderful. He has become like a little child"?

25. Could we as human beings ever reach the place where we live a sin-free life? Could we come to live so close to Jesus in our human lives that we would—like Him—despise sin?

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. {*DA* 668.3}

Would that make us savable? Or, does something more need to happen to us or "in us"? What did Paul have in mind when he stated that we would be able to stand in God's presence with "no condemnation"? (Romans 8:1) In effect, in Romans Paul stated that if we have the right kind of relationship with God, we will grow to become more like Him. If we do not have such a relationship, we will grow apart from Him. And if we are becoming like Him, we have the rest of eternity to finish the job.

26. **Remember that every time we "commit" sin, in effect, we are telling God that we do not need Him because we can do better by ourselves!**
27. Is there a gene or a DNA change that gives us a sinful nature? Or, is it an environmental change?
28. To what extent are we responsible for corporate sins affecting all of mankind or even a large percentage of mankind?
  1. Are we personally responsible or involved in the corporate sins of humanity—war, slavery, injustice, climate change, etc.? What can we do about the great controversy?
  2. Do we clearly recognize the totally destructive nature of sin? Do we recognize that without God's help, we are hopelessly lost?
  3. While we may feel insignificant, we still have some influence. As much as possible, we can avoid

polluting our environment. We can work for peace and justice. We can practice the compassion of Jesus. The Bible clearly says that it is our responsibility to do our very best. (Ecclesiastes 9:10; Luke 16:10; Philippians 4:8,9)

4. It takes ten times as much space and effort to produce one pound of animal protein than it does to produce one pound of vegetable protein. While many Adventist young people especially seem anxious to give up the Adventist lifestyle, the world is flocking to vegetarianism and even a vegan lifestyle. Seventh-day Adventists who carefully follow the Adventist lifestyle live ten years longer. And those are the best years of that person's life, not ten years at the end living in an old folks home!

29. However, having considered all these possibilities, we must remember that **it is impossible to stamp out sin; it can only be "crowded out."** If we fill our lives full of pure and biblical thinking about God, and if we are acting, as far as possible, like Jesus did, sin will be left without any place to inhabit in our minds and our actions. Is that possible?

Those who reign with Christ in his kingdom must have a fellowship in his suffering. Every defect in character condemned by the law of God, must through the grace of Christ, which is freely given to every soul who desires it, be overcome. **Every hereditary and cultivated tendency to evil must be seen, subdued, and cleansed**, that the soul temple may become fit for the indwelling of the Spirit of God. The divine will must be accepted, and the human will brought into harmony with God, though it cause bitter agony and tears. Traits of character that are offensive to God are often very dear to man, and are cherished as virtues. *Signs of the Times*, July 18, 1895 par. 7.

30. It has sometimes been suggested that real saints are ones who avoid "doing" any kind of evil. The only people who qualify as never doing anything wrong are the ones buried in the cemetery!
31. So, what is the final solution to all of this? Are there many ways to solve this problem? Or, is there only one way? (John 10:7; 14:6; Acts 4:12)
32. Read Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 1:1-5; Revelation 5:9-12. What do these verses imply? Clearly, God intended for the life and death of Jesus to be the final solution to the "sin problem." How does that actually work? Did He pay the "legal price" for sin? We know that He lived a sinless life, thus proving that it was possible for a human being to do so. Have any of us done the same? How did "His own divine perfection of character" atone for man's sin?
33. How should we respond to the life and death of Jesus? Should it make us discouraged? Should it make us thankful? Is it an inspiration? Does it challenge us to live better lives? God has won the great controversy. Don't you want to join Him on the winning side?

© 2009, Kenneth Hart, MD. **Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials and we might even want to share good ideas with others, so let us know.**

[Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)

Last modified: April 12, 2009

F:\Documents\WP\ISSG-Hart\Christian Life\SS-6-Christian Life-2009\_05\_09-2009\_03\_21-Fin+.wpd