

"How God Sees Sin"

For many the subject of sin is dead, but God doesn't see sin the way we do. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." And today we're going to think about how God sees sin. Stay with us.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. Today marks the beginning of my seventh year at In Search of the Lord's Way. And I've enjoyed travelling across the country to meet many of you who watch this program faithfully. I'm so grateful for your prayers and kind words. God is continuing to open up doors for the word to us, and we're grateful for the opportunity to be on WGN America and many new broadcast stations. We take this time each week because we love the Lord and we love you. We realize the most important need of our day is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and we're committed to preaching the truth in love. Thanks for taking time with us today. We want to be a part of your life each week.

The topic for our study today is sin. And everyone who reaches the age of accountability eventually sins. Romans 3 and verse 23 simply says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." 1 John 1 verse 8 says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Verse ten says, "If we say that we haven't sinned, we make him (that is Jesus) a liar, and His word is not in us." Everyone of us must face the reality of our sins. If we ignore our sins, we'll only cause ourselves great grief in this life and in the life to come.

Not everyone takes sin against God seriously. Thirteen percent of Americans say there's no such thing as sin. Nearly forty percent of Americans think sin is an obsolete word. Many today simply don't know sinful behavior is wrong and could cause them to be lost eternally. The wages of sin is still spiritual death. And though society thinks differently, God hasn't changed His mind.

Now if you want to study more about sin, we offer this study free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study and 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 online at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from Psalm 32, the first five verses, and explore how God sees sin.

Our reading today is a Psalm of David, Psalm 32, verses 1 through 5. "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away, Through my groaning all day long. For day and night, Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD'; And You forgave the guilt of my sin." A very, very important from Psalm 32. Let's pray together. Father, we're grateful that Your loving kindness and Your grace is greater than our sin that You can forgive us. But Father, help us to be honest about our sins and to be repentant. And may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

People have always thought the concept of sin should be softened. People today don't talk about sin, because they don't like making judgments. Some think the words "sin" and "sinner" are outdated and uncouth; but the Bible uses the word "sin" and its synonyms "iniquity," "transgression," "wickedness," or "error" hundreds of times. While we don't like to talk about it, sin still exists. So we

ask, "how does God see sin?" God created us; He's our heavenly Father. We need to know what He thinks. The Lord often sees things differently than we do. And He will not excuse or dismiss the errors of our lives so quickly. If God sent Jesus down to this earth to die for "sin," He must take it very seriously. Let's not be too quick to dismiss the concept of sin because God hasn't.

You can only find someone saying, "I have sinned," a few times in the Bible; yet Romans 3 and verse 23 says, "that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." People don't like being called or being considered "sinners." They call their sin a mistake, an error in judgment, a disappointment, an inappropriate act, a problem, a disease, or an addiction. They think of it as anything but sin. We'd rather downplay sin or act like it never happened.

Now others take a different approach. They blame society, parents, or circumstances for their sins so they don't have to be responsible. You'll remember Adam, after he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you remember he blamed Eve. Adam said in Genesis 3 verse 12, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, (why) she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Verse 13 says: Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this, (what is this) that you have done?" And the woman said, "(Well the serpent deceived me, and I ate." Both Adam and Eve pointed to someone else, but God didn't accept their excuses. That very day they were forced out of the garden. Blaming others for your sins doesn't work.

In 1 Samuel 15, Samuel told Saul to go to strike the Amalekites, destroy every person and all they possess. Saul, however, saved King Agag and the best of the sheep and oxen for the people to sacrifice. Saul knew that he had not kept the command of God, but he was weak to the pressure of the people. Samuel asked Saul, "Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD, but rushed upon the spoil and did what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" Then Saul said to Samuel, "I did obey the voice of the LORD, and went on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and have brought back Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took some of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the choicest of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God at Gilgal." Well, Saul gave in to the pressure and he blamed the people.

But what Samuel said to Saul ought to instruct us about how God sees things. Samuel said in 1 Samuel 15 verses 22 and 23, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king."

You see, God has never accepted the excuse of blaming other people. Romans 14 and verse 12 says, "that each one of us will give an account of himself to God." Now regardless of what others do, say, or think, we are responsible for ourselves. We must take responsibility for our words, our attitudes, and our behavior. You cannot disobey God and blame others. God always knows who is responsible.

Now when blaming doesn't work, people tend to rationalize away their sin. We often hear phrases like, "Well just once won't hurt"; or "Everyone's doing it"; or "I can quit when I want to"; or "Times have changed! People don't think that way now!" I have a book in my library subtitled, "37 Ways Not to Handle Guilt." And it tells of all the ways people try to justify their sins. The book says clearly: not one of these 37 ways works. Some try to change the morals and teaching of the Bible; they make rules for themselves and imagine that God will approve them.

Some think God is subject to a vote or to opinion polls. Well God's will doesn't change with the times. Some react to the firmness of God by getting angry. You know it's easy to get angry at God, it's easier to do that than it is to repent. They get angry and charge God with being unfair or unloving to

call their behaviors sin, but God is no fool. God knows how that sin hurts. He opposes sin because it ruins lives and families. When God makes a law, it's always for the good of His people. When people violate that law, they end up hurting themselves or others. And it's arrogant to think that we know more about right and wrong than God does. God has witnessed the cruelties and heartaches of sin for thousands of years.

People lie to themselves about their sin! And they don't realize how sin can deceive, enslave and harden them. Hebrews 3 verses 12 to 13 says, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it's called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

Some criticize and condemn other people's sins but they ignore their own. They forget God sees their sins too. "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15 and verse 3).

Now other people deceive themselves by thinking they won't be tempted to sin. Many years ago a man who had quit drinking told my father that he could walk into a bar and never take a drink. Well it didn't matter that others were drinking or that he would smell the liquor; he was sure that he could stay sober. Well my dad told him, "You can't walk through the mud and not get muddy." The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 33, "Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals." Associating with evil will corrupt you, even if you have the best of intentions.

Now sin always hurts. It damages us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Galatians 5 verses 19 to 21 says, "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. (And he says) I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

Sometimes the pain is physical as we mentioned as with assault, or rape or murder. But some damage themselves by their sins, that is their heart and their minds and their bodies. Drunkenness and drug abuse have killed and ruined more than a few lives. Many diseases come from sexual immorality. A man who commits violent crimes opens himself up to violence or imprisonment. Sometimes the pain is emotional. Broken homes, those hurt everyone. The compulsive gambler may bankrupt his family. The liar will find that no one trusts him or her. People who will avoid the gossip and the complainer, they don't want to be around him, they don't want to hear it. One cannot escape the pain, the guilt and the regret of sinful behavior.

Now God doesn't simply look on sin the way that we do. What seems insignificant to us, isn't insignificant to God. Perhaps you remember Uzzah who tried to steady the ark of the covenant when he was in the oxcart, and the ark nearly upset. You remember that God struck him dead. Well people wonder why? Didn't Uzzah have good intentions? Well, the priests were to carry the ark in a prescribed manner, not the oxcart. And Uzzah was never to touch it. Now this may seem insignificant to us, but it was irreverent and very offensive to God according to 2 Samuel 6 and verse 7.

Well why is God offended? Well think with me. If you're the victim of a crime, you see that crime differently than the one who committed the crime. How would you feel if someone robbed you at gunpoint? Well the robber may laugh, but you aren't laughing. He's pointing the gun at you. He's stealing your money and threatening your life. And that makes this matter incredibly dangerous and offensive!

Now we have to understand every sin that we commit is also a crime against God. If you sin against your brother, you also sin against God. John said in 1 John 4 verses 20 to 21, that "If someone says, 'I

love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also." Now how we treat people is how we treat God. This is why all sin is offensive to and a crime against God.

God said in Exodus 20 verses 3 to 6, "You shall have no other gods before Me (that is in My presence). You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing loving kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." You know some think God has no feelings, but God grieves when we sin. It breaks His heart.

God created us, and He won't give us up to an idol or to serve Satan. God is a jealous in the sense that's positive in that sense of being unwilling to share what is rightfully His. Now I feel the same way about my loving wife. I won't share her with anyone. Sin separates us from God. We shouldn't be surprised that God despises sin, because sin robs Him of the people that He loves. God often calls sin an abomination. Solomon said in Proverbs 6 verses 16 to 19, "There are six things which the LORD hates, Yes, seven which are an abomination to Him: Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that run rapidly to evil, A false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers." Yes, God hates sin.

Sin ultimately destroys us. Romans 6 and verse 23 says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Death is a separation. And in physical death our bodies are separated from our spirits. Spiritual death takes place when we're separated from the love and the grace of God. Isaiah said in Isaiah 59 verses 1 and 2, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor is 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 will not hear." Our sin will separate God from us, and it's a barrier that blocks our prayers and will cause us to be lost eternally.

When it comes to right and wrong, good and evil, moral and immoral, we must understand the Lord will have the last word, and the only word. What He says will last to eternity. We may like what theologians, church leaders, opinion polls, or our society thinks is right and wrong; but the Lord Jesus has the last word and the only word that counts in eternity. Will you listen to Him? Let's pray together. Father we're thankful that in Your word You have taught us right and wrong, good and evil. And You've helped us Father to be able to avoid the things that hurt and the things that are wrong and evil. Help us heavenly Father to do Your will on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen!

We all commit sin that offends God, every one of us; but because God is rich in love, mercy and grace, He makes His forgiveness available to us. He loved us by sacrificing His son Jesus for our sins. God knew how sin would destroy our lives here on earth and would keep us out of heaven, so Jesus bore the punishment for our sins, so that we could die to sin and live for righteousness. God doesn't want us to continue in sin, but to turn from wickedness and live Godly lives. Punishing people for their sins grieves the Lord. Ezekiel 33 and verse 11 says, "As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?"

God has always called people to repentance. The opportunity to repent is a great gift that blesses everyone. Repentance means that we can change our lives. That we don't have to be trapped in sin but

can become people who live for righteousness. Don't ever let anybody tell you that you cannot change; of course, you can! God can and will help you change. God didn't create you for sin; He created you for righteousness. 1 Timothy 2 and verse 4 says God wants you "to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Will you come to the Lord?

To become a Christian, believe in the Lord Jesus, repent of every sin and turn to the Lord, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You see, baptism into Christ is an immersion in water. Philip baptized the Eunuch in water (in Acts 8:38), and Saul of Tarsus was told in Acts 22:16 to be baptized and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord. Won't you respond today to be saved from sin?

Well we hope that today's study about sin has stirred you to consider your soul. Now if you live in the United States and want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, then 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 toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. Now you can 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 of Christ in your area. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not here to get your money. We're here to help you get to heaven.

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. Well we'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us, tell a friend about the program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.