

"Understanding Sin"

What do you think about when you hear the word “sin”? Hello, I’m Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study, “In Search of the Lord’s Way.” And today we’re going to explore how God sees sin.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord’s Way. We’re here to explore God’s will. We can count on the Bible to reveal the heart and the will of God. It’s a true pleasure to spend this time with you, and we want to hear from you and be a part of your life each week.

Today we’re exploring sin. People today tend to soften the concept of sin. People don’t like to hear anything negative, so they avoid the topic of sin. One well-known preacher said that “sin” and “sinner” are outdated words and should never be used. He believes that calling someone a “sinner” is the worst thing any preacher can do. And a recent survey revealed many Americans don’t believe there is any such thing as sin.

But the Bible speaks of the “sin” and its synonyms “iniquity,” “transgression,” “wickedness,” or “error” hundreds of times. People don’t like to think about sin or confess sin, because they don’t like to think that something is wrong with them. The question however remains, “how does God see sin?” You see, He often sees and understands things differently than we do. The Lord may not excuse or dismiss the errors of our lives so quickly. If God sent Jesus down to this earth to die for “sin,” Then God must take it very seriously.

The Bible depicts sin as man’s greatest enemy and really the cause of all our troubles in this world. Romans 5 and verse 12 says that physical death entered the world through sin. Romans 6:23 reminds us that the wages of sin is spiritual death. Ezekiel 18:4 says that the soul that sins will die. Well, since God considers sin such a terrible thing, we ought to think seriously about how we think of sin as well.

Now we offer this study “understanding sin” free! If you’d like a printed copy 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. We also have programs and free materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. And you can also see us on YouTube.

We’ll now worship in song with the Edmond church of Christ, we’ll read from Isaiah 55:6 to 9, and examine how God understands sin.

Our reading today comes from the prophet Isaiah chapter 55 verses 6 to 9. And it talks about our need to come to God.

Seek the Lord while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
And let him return to the Lord,
And He will have compassion on him,
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.
“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the Lord.
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways
And My thoughts than your thoughts.

That's a reading from God's holy word. That helps us to understand the greatness and the grandeur of our God. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that we can approach You with humility, with penitent hearts, with ways that have changed and Father we're thankful that You love us and that You care for us. Help us Father to live according to Your will and to love You with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. In Jesus name, Amen.

Everyone of us wrestles with the problem of sin and guilt. We know that we've sinned and that we feel the sting of guilt and shame because of that sin. How we deal with our sin and guilt matters greatly in our relationship with our Father in Heaven. A book in my library has this subtitle: "37 Ways Not to Handle Guilt." And it tells of 37 ways people try to avoid responsibility and justify their sins. Well the book correctly and clearly says that not one of these 37 ways to handle guilt works.

You can find someone saying, "I have sinned," really only a handful of times in the Bible, and yet the Bible says in Romans 3:23 that, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." People don't like to admit they are "sinners"; they would rather fool themselves. They call their sin a mistake, an error in judgment, a disappointment, an inappropriate action, or a problem, or a disease, or an addiction. They're willing to call it anything but sin. Rather than admit they have sinned, people would rather act like it never happened.

Some blame society, parents, or circumstances for their sins. After Adam knowingly ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he blamed Eve. Now Adam told the Lord in Genesis 3:12 why, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." In verse 13 Eve admitted that she was deceived and blamed the serpent. Well, God didn't accept their excuses but held them responsible for their sins. He cast them out of the garden into a world with a lot of pain and suffering.

In 1 Samuel 15 Samuel told Saul to strike the Amalekites, to destroy every person and all that they have. But Saul spared King Agag and the best of the sheep and the oxen. Well, Saul knew that he hadn't kept the commandment of God; he fell weak to the pressure of the people. Well, Samuel confronted Saul asking, "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 well, "I did obey the voice of the LORD, and (I) 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, (he said) 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 blamed the people.

Samuel replied in 1 Samuel 15:22 to 23, "Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king." Saul's explanation didn't excuse him from his disobedience.

Some people presume on God's grace. They commit deliberate sin one day presuming they can get things right at a later time. Offering sacrifices to beg forgiveness does not excuse deliberate sin. Seeking forgiveness is not always better than asking permission. God said rebellion and insubordination was as great a sin as idolatry and sorcery.

The Bible says in Romans 14:12, "Each one of us will give an account of himself to God." And regardless of what others do, say, or think, we're responsible for our words, our attitudes, and our behavior. You can't disobey God and then blame others. God knows who's responsible.

Some attempt to rationalize their sins away. People say well, "Just once won't hurt"; or "Everyone's doing it"; or "I can quit when I want to"; or "Times have changed!" Some think God has changed because society has changed; but God and His will don't change. God's ways are not like our ways; they don't need improving or editing. God's ways are morally and spiritually perfect.

Some get angry with God over what He calls sin. They charge God with being unfair or unloving to call some act a sinful thing. But God is not unfair. God opposes sinful behavior because He knows 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. We need to trust God to lead us in the right way every time.

People deceive themselves about sin! Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6 verses 9 and 10, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God."

People cannot follow sin and still please God. And failure to repent of sin will keep people out of heaven. Some ignore their own sins while they condemn others. They don't realize their own sin is just as evil in God's eyes as the sins of others.

Others think that they can flirt with sin but not be affected. A man who quit drinking once told my dad that he could walk into a bar and never touch a drop. He was sure that he had overcome his problem. My dad said, "You can't walk through the mud and not get muddy." 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, "Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals." You can't surround yourself with temptation and sin and not feel its influence. It'll corrupt you, even if you have the best intentions.

Some think they can live it up today, quit their sin someday, and not face any consequences; but they're fooling themselves. Sin always has consequences. Paul said in Galatians 6 verses 7 to 8, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life." People damage themselves when they sin. And God gave us laws in the Bible to protect us. We can't cheat God; we can only cheat ourselves.

Sin always hurts the one who commits it. Sometimes the pain is physical. An alcoholic will damage his heart and liver. Sexual immorality brings on many diseases. Violence leads to more violence, and criminals face imprisonment. Sometimes the pain is emotional. An adulterous spouse alienates the whole family. A compulsive gambler may bankrupt his family. A liar will find no one trusts him. A sinner must live with sin and a guilty conscience. Nothing is more devastating than to wake up with the reality of one's own sin.

Some actually think they've never sinned against God. But the Bible says in 1 John 1:8 to 10, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." You know it's hard to admit that we've done wrong; and that's why many people would rather believe a lie than confess their sins. But it's through being honest with God and being honest with ourselves that we find healing and forgiveness. It's better to be honest than it is to remain in sin and then lose our souls.

God doesn't think about sin the way that we do. What seems little to people really matters to God. People wonder why God struck Uzzah dead for trying to keep the Ark of the Covenant from falling off

the oxcart. Well, the priests were to carry the ark in a prescribed manner according to the Law, not the oxcart. And Uzzah was never to touch it, and since he was not a priest. Well this may seem insignificant to us, but it was irreverent and very offensive to God (2 Samuel 6 verse 7).

Well why is God offended? Think with me. If you're the victim of a crime, your attitude is going to be very different than the criminal. How would you feel if a drunk driver killed your child? You'll never think about drunk driving the same way, if you're the victim of a drunk driver. All sin offends God, because all sin is a violation of God's law an offence to Him. God gave us His laws to protect us and to bless us. When people violate those Divine laws, they become repugnant, an abomination to the Divine Lawgiver.

When people disobey God's laws, they are actually disobeying Him personally. The Bible says in 1 John 2:4 to 5: The one who says, "I have come to know Him (that is I have a relationship with God)," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. Violating God's commands shows disrespect and even hostility toward God.

Proverbs 15:9 says that, "The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves one who pursues righteousness." An abomination is detestable and repugnant to God. Our God is holy in nature, and sin is repugnant to Him. Habakkuk 1:13 says of God, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor."

God created us, and He desperately wants to remain close to us. Since sin separates us from God, we shouldn't be surprised that God despises the sin because it breaks our fellowship with Him. Solomon said in Proverbs 6:16 to 19 that, "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."

While God hates sin, the Father still loves sinners and sent His son Jesus to die for them. God hates sin because He loves you. He hates what sin does to you and to everyone He loves. Sin 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?"

Paul said in Romans 6 and verse 23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The word death means separation. And physical death is when our bodies are separated from our spirits. But spiritual death is when we become separated from the love and grace of God.

Paul told Christians in Romans 8:12 to 13, "So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 3:12 to 13, to Christians, he says, "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any 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 is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

Oh it breaks God's heart to see peoples sin and then turn away from righteousness. Jesus said in Matthew 23: 37 to 38, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! See, your house is left to you desolate." My friend, are you living

a way of life that breaks the heart of God? Don't rationalize your sin away. Don't excuse it away. Give the sin up, and give your heart to God.

Let's pray together. Oh Father we pray that You will help us to see ourselves as You see us. And to give up our sins and to repent and to come back to You. Father we're thankful for Your love and for Jesus, whose death up on a cross pays the price for our sins. Help us to love You and to love Him. In Jesus name, Amen

It's only when we understand how ugly and grievous sin is that we grasp how great the grace of God is. The Father didn't sacrifice His Son Jesus for something trivial. God hates sin, because He knows the tragic consequences of sin. He was willing to give His Son, the ultimate sacrifice, to forgive our sins.

Romans 5:6 to 8 says, "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

God loves you and He wants your heart. To become a Christian, you must believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ. And out of love for God, you must turn away from the sin that offends Him. Repentance takes place when you hate sin and you hunger for righteousness, and you want to follow Christ. And with your faith, your love and repentance, confess the Name of Jesus before others and be baptized into Christ. When you're baptized, the Lord will wash away your sins, add you to the church, and cause you to walk in newness of life (Romans 6 verses 3 to 7). Sometimes Christians get caught up in sin, they're overcome, and they lose their souls. If you as a Christian brother or sister are not living as you ought, you could lose the love and promise of God. You could miss heaven. And God doesn't want that for you or anyone else. He wants you to change your ways and live with Him forever. Jesus went back to the Father to prepare a place for you, after dying for your sins on the cross. Don't let His blood be shed in vain. Come back to God. Get your heart and life right with the living God.

We hope that you've gained greater insight by today's study, Understanding Sin. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send 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 there's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area on www.searchtv.org. SEARCH is also on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do want you to show your love to God by worshiping at church. If you're looking for a church home, we'd like to help you find one. There's probably a church of Christ near you. Remember to watch the program every week and tell a friend about the program. And as always we say to you, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.