

The Nature of Sin

Why is sin such an unpopular subject?

A. Views of Sin

1. *Sin is an illusion.* the idea that our lack of awareness results in the illusion of sin, or that the idea of sin will disappear when we are more fully evolved because it doesn't really exist.
2. *Sin is selfishness:* partly scriptural, but far from the whole story.
3. *Sin is laziness:* this is Scott Peck's suggestion in People of the Lie.
4. *Sin or evil is part of the cosmic yin/yang balance with good.*
5. *Sin is lawlessness:* also scriptural, but inadequate unless the concept of law is expanded to include God's law and personal character.
5. *Sin is anything contrary to the will and character of God:* an all-inclusive scriptural view. Sin comes from discontent, self-deceit, pride and rebellion – thinking we can make better decisions than God about our lives.

B. Biblical Definitions of Sin

Sin has been defined as breaking God's law or "missing the mark" (not achieving the standard God sets for us). Sin can be by "commission" – doing things God told us not to do – or by "omission" – *not* doing things God told us to do (see James 4:17, Proverbs 3:27). Sin can be by thought, word or deed. It is either failure to reach an ideal or a law that we break. Ultimately, it comes down to substituting our values and judgment for God's, thereby rejecting His authority and wisdom. Sin is against God; it is the opposite of God's perfection.

Sin has disrupted our relationships on multiple levels: (1) it has disrupted our relationship with God; (2) it has disrupted our relationships with one another; (3) it has disrupted our relationship with nature (see Gen. 3:17-18).

Sin results in death, but God offers us life through Christ (Romans 6:23, 8:1-2). We need God's forgiveness in order to restore us to fellowship with Him.

C. Why Sin Matters

It matters to *God*, because it saddens Him, it causes adverse consequences for His children, and it separates us from Him.

It matters to *us*, because we are accountable to God for our actions, because sin brings problems into our lives, and because it separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2).

D. Universality of Sin:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

"If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves" (1 John 1:8).

"There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20). See also Psalm 14:1-3.

E. Effects of sin

Every part of our being is tainted by sin: our minds, our emotions, our actions.

With respect to *spiritual and moral issues*,

- Our reasoning powers are dead (Romans 8:7)
- Our conscience is corrupted (Titus 1:15)
- Our will is stubborn, rebellious and defiant (Romans 1:32)
- Our desires are selfish and base (Colossians 3:5)
- Our thoughts are evil (Genesis 6:5)

See also Romans 7:14-21.

Sin blinds us to God and puts us at odds with God (2 Cor. 2:14, 4:4; Rom. 8:7).

The guilt we feel when we sin can further interfere with our relationship with God.

What about the relativity of sin? Aren't some sins worse than others? (Is. 64:6)

F. Sin in the Christian's Life

1 John 1:8-10: God knows we're going to sin.

The standard is to walk in the light (1 John 1:7)

Preventives: The Word (Ps. 119:11), the intercession of Christ (John 17:15), the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). Keep your thoughts on God!

This is why regular prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with other Christians is so important to maintaining our spiritual health. If we quit talking to God, quit listening to God, and quit sharing with other believers, we are much more susceptible to temptation and much more likely to sin.

Penalties for sin in a Christian's life: loss of fellowship (1 John 1:6, 1 Cor. 5:4-5), chastisement (Heb. 12:6), possibly physical death (1 Cor. 11:30).

Remedy for sin: confession -- "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9, see also Psalm 32:5). This is not just a matter of admitting our sin to God, but it also involves repentance and a renewed commitment to avoid sin.

G. God's answer to sin: 2 Cor. 5:21, Rom. 8:1-4a