

Lesson 2

Sin! What Is It?

For many people sin is doing the wrong thing. But then we must ask, what is the wrong thing? Who decides what is right and what is wrong? Do we let our conscience be our guide or do we let our society decide what is right and wrong for the good of society? In history we know that Indians of South America regularly sacrificed hundreds and even thousands of people so that their crops would be fruitful. Tribes of people in other parts of the world would sacrifice their first born if it was a girl. Other people roasted and ate their enemies, thinking they were taking their courage into themselves. To this day there are people who sell their girl children into prostitution to pay off debts. These things were all done with a clear conscience and in agreement with those particular societies.

We know that we cannot let our conscience be our guide because our conscience can be misguided. A person who steals may feel a conscience against stealing the first time, but will feel it less and less the more times they steal until finally they do not feel any conscience toward stealing at all. The same thing could be said of a society as a whole. The whole of society can train their collective conscience to condone sin to the point where anything goes.

So we must find an absolute standard of right and wrong, a standard which is above the conscience of man and the whims of society. That standard is God, **"Rather, let God be found true, though every man he found a liar, as it is written, 'That Thou mightest be justified in thy words, and mightest prevail when thou art judged' (Romans 3:4).** In other words God is the standard of righteousness. Therefore, things must line up with God in order to be right. Everything that does not line up with the standard of righteousness that God has revealed in the Bible is wrong!

The word "sin" in the Bible is a word which means, "to miss the mark." The mark is the standard or the righteousness of God. The Bible says that everyone has missed that mark, **"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).** This might be illustrated in this manner. Three men, who we will call Jack, Mike and Ben, were staying in a hotel on the tenth floor. They heard the sirens of a fire truck below and the cry of fire throughout the halls of the hotel. They ran to the door of their room to find that it was already hot and they noticed smoke was beginning to seep around the edges. They went to the balcony and looked down and saw the firemen had a large net spread out in a giant circle.

They could hear the fireman yelling to them to jump. The bravest of the three was Ben and he jumped first. He missed the net by three feet. The next one to jump was Mike and he missed by one foot. After seeing what had become of his friends, Jack hesitated, but then saw he really did not have a choice and he too jumped. He only missed by three inches. Now, who had the softest landing?

Of course the answer is that none of them had a soft landing because they all missed. It really did not matter by how much they missed, it only mattered that they missed! This is exactly what God wants us to understand about sin. We have all missed the mark of His righteousness; we have all come short of His glory.

HOW IS IT THAT ALL HAVE SINNED?

The Bible teaches that we sin by nature. How many times does a puppy have to bark to become a dog? Well of course, he does not have to bark to become a dog, he barks because he is a dog. How many times do we have to sin to become sinners? Again, the answer is the same; we sin because we are sinners, not to become sinners. No parent ever took their child to their room to explain to them how to sin. But many parents, who love their children, will take them to their room to give them instruction on how to be good.

HOW DO WE GET THE SIN NATURE?

In the very first book of the Bible we read of the first people God created. Their names were Adam and Eve. They were created in the image of God and they did not have the sin nature. God gave them a command in **Genesis 2:16-17; they were not to eat, "from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."** They could eat of all the trees in the garden that God had planted for them but of this one tree they were not to eat. In **Genesis 3** we read that Satan, in the form of a snake, tempted Eve to eat of the tree. She ate and then gave some fruit to Adam to eat. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, sin entered into the world and death by sin. God had to separate man from Himself because God is holy and cannot have sin in His presence. From that time on man has been born with the sin nature, **"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me" (Psalms 51:5).** The sin of Adam has been passed on to all men, **"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).**

Some complain that it is not fair that we have to pay for what Adam did way back in the garden. But that complaint is easily answered. If any of us had been there, we would have done the same thing. In our next lesson we will learn what the result of sin is.

Bible Reading Romans 1 18-32, 3 10-18,23



Sin is to miss the mark of the glory of God!

Questions for Review

1. Why can we not let our conscience be our guide?
2. What is sin?
3. What is the mark of the standard of righteousness?
4. In the illustration, among the three men, who had the softest landing?
5. When did sin enter the World?
6. Why was it sin that Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
7. Why do we sin?
8. Do we sin that we might become sinners or do we sin because we are sinners?
9. Is it fair that because of Adam, we all are now sinners? Why or why not?