

REVISED EDITION

TEACH *for* SOULS

AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE
TO EVANGELISM



CLINTON L. TAYLOR

CHAPTER 6

The Problem of Sin



The subject and reality of original sin are documented from the earliest conversations of the Bible (Genesis 3:1-19). Sin explains how humanity became fallen creatures—existing in a perpetual state of ignorance outside of the knowledge of God.

Christianity is not the only belief system that accepts an embedded dysfunction within human nature. In his book “A New Earth,” Eckhart Tolle comments on different groups' ideas regarding the concept of a “*fallen nature*.”

For example, at the core of Hinduism is the belief that a “*collective mental illness*” exists within humanity. Such a concept is described as *Maya*, which is “*a veil of delusion*” placed over the eyes of men. In Buddhism, this delusion is understood as *dukkha*, a simple term referring to human suffering or outright misery. No matter how we look at humankind, he has fallen and needs help.

It is reported that the senseless terrorist attacks on 9/11 claimed the lives of 2,996 people and left 2,977 victims. For sure, the attacks shook the foundation of the world, letting us know there is danger even amid supposed safety. Political scientists and historians will keep this event as a dominant aspect of research for many years, if not centuries to come. For

TEACH FOR SOULS

sure, these attacks revolutionized the politics and policies of the world and brought unprecedented changes to how international relations work.

There have been visible changes in travel regulations, border security, the economy, immigration reforms, and the ways people have sought novel ways for securing their safety. September 11, 2001, changed the world forever. The terrorist marks are left on buildings, legislations, societies, and politics. Although those attacks have changed the world and the behaviours of humans, their impact pales compared to the terrorist attack deployed by Satan through the serpent in the Garden. This attack left God's created children the subjects of sin. Adam and Eve were initially made to experience and enjoy endless companionship with God. However, when they disobeyed the commandment God had given them in Genesis 2:17, they lost their privilege of living in the physical realm forever. Not only did their disobedience cause them to become sinners (people possessing a fallen soul), but they instantly became servants and children of the devil. Jesus alluded to this in His address to the Jews in John 8:44. Here, Jesus told them they were the children of the devil.

Genesis 2:7 explains the unique creation of the first humans.

In the above passage, Moses recaps how God moulded man from the "*dust of the ground*" and breathed into man's nostrils His "*breath of life*," allowing the activation of the body to the soul and the Spirit. At this very moment, man became "*a living soul*."

The Problem of Sin

Then we are informed regarding the creation of women (verse 22). God miraculously used Adam's ribs and formed Eve.

Since Adam was already endowed with the "breath of God," Eve automatically received the continuation of life. They were placed in the Garden of Eden so Adam could take care of it (verse 15). While in the Garden, God communicated to Adam a specific command. Verses 2:15-17 relates God's instruction.

Adam was privileged to eat fruit from any tree in the Garden, except the tree that contained the knowledge of "*good and evil*." He was forewarned of what would happen should he disobey God.

He would "surely die."!

Regretfully, Adam ignored God's warning and, rather than seeking to please God; he participated in disobedience as Satan had done initially when he was removed from heaven. Every individual born into the world has sinned and has failed or another to live up to God's standard of righteousness. To make this point clear, I will ask that you imagine a dartboard game, where the middle or "bull's eye" is surrounded by concentric circles, each farther from the centre and of a less point value. If we think of the bull's eye as 'perfection,' anything outside that mark is imperfection— or sin. Because of our sinful nature, our natural propensity causes us to fall somewhere outside of that desired perfect mark or bull's eye. Every time one tries to do right and fails; it is as if their darts have landed outside of the intended target.

TEACH FOR SOULS

A typical dartboard game has different point values for each successive ring. God does not have different point values for different sins, unlike a dart game. Although we may reap different consequences for our actions, God weighs all sin the same, whether it is a “white lie” or a sinister murder. All sins cause us to miss the target of God’s expectation. Romans 3:23 affirms that “*all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God.*” By this, it is demonstrated that sin is universal! Paul has alluded to the fact that all are sinners, and John also illustrates this when he comments regarding those who claim to have no sins. They, in reality, deceive themselves, and “*the truth of God is not in him*” (1 John 1:8).

We must understand sin, how God feels about sin and its many negative consequences. Initially, when humans walked away from God, they committed two significant sins, demonstrating how depraved they had become once under Satan’s control.

Paul illuminates these two sins in Romans 1:21, where he expressed that when men “*once knew God,*” choose not to glorify Him or honour Him as God. He also stated that these men lack thankfulness to God. These severe acts of negligence took place in man’s mind. Eventually, they manifested in his attitudes, which can be readily observed in the actions of idol worshipping, the practicing of immorality, and other sinful indulgences.

When humanity turned away from God, they became *vain* in their *imagination*s, and their “*foolish hearts became darkened*”

The Problem of Sin

by their sins. The higher quality of thinking that man possessed before the fall and the purity of heart they once experienced underwent a significant change. The light in man was replaced with darkness, which came over their hearts, and their actions revealed this darkness day by day.

The Bible defines sin in 1 John 3:4 as any wrongdoings against God's Holy Laws. Furthermore, sin should be understood in terms of one's thought life. Thus, as its best definition, sin is a particular way of thinking. This way of thinking eventually leads the soul and the body into sinful patterns of acting. This, therefore, explains why God's initial act in man's salvation impacts the mind (thoughts) before it eventually affects his physical. My life, and yours, has proven that wrong thinking will always result in sinful actions.

Another way to define sin is as an inward spiritual attitude of rebellion against God's will. This inward attitude against God is eventually expressed in outward actions of disobedience, for example, *lying, stealing, swearing, immorality* and so forth. The Ten Commandments recorded in (Exodus 20:1-17) also illustrate to us a clear picture of what God considers to be sinful acts. These commandments are a list of moral guidelines summarizing how humans are expected to behave towards God and with their fellow men. For instance, God outlaws the worship of graven images. A graven image can be described to be any form of icons, statues, painted portraits of Jesus Christ, and any other object that someone might be tempted to offer

TEACH FOR SOULS

worship onto. Those who partake in idolatrous behaviours show they are out of fellowship with God. Thus, this part of the commandment is God-ward. Another commandment is that humans should not lie. When we lie, we can cause pain for those against whom we lie. Whenever a person obeys none of God's Words, they are sinning, even if they are not conversant with what is written in God's Word.

In our society, it is frequently said, "ignorance is no excuse for the law." The same is true regarding our dealing with the Lord. I find it very sad so many people care little about this universal epidemic of sin. So many people live careless lives and do a good job of ignoring what the Word of God says about sin, even if God's Word is right before their very faces. Some people claim there are no actual or severe consequences for their wrongdoings, but how wrong they are!

Solomon tells us in (Proverbs 16:25) there is a way of thinking that people hold to while believing it is correct, but that the end of that way will ultimately lead these people to destruction and death. The reality is that sin is an awful thing, and it was not in the original plan when He created His angels, the universe, and humans. Not that anything took God by surprise because He is all-knowing. This is because when God had completed designing all things, He stated in Genesis 1:31 that everything was "*very good*." The earth was a perfect place to be occupied by perfect people. So then, where did sin come from if God made all things well?

SATAN BECOMES SIN

Sin entered the universe when Lucifer (who became Satan) forsook his allegiance to God. We are told about this situation in (Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:13-19). Let us look at what Isaiah stated regarding Satan's actions and the consequences. Isaiah explained that before Satan's demotion, he was a beautiful "*shining star*." He was loved by God and was placed second in command in Heaven.

As time progressed, Lucifer manifested his ambition to change his position to "*the utmost heights of the sacred mountain*" (Isaiah 14:13). He did not intend to experience a mere promotion of sorts but to "*raise my throne above the stars of God*", therefore making himself like God (verse 14).

But God would not tolerate such an ambition!

Subsequently, Satan was expelled from Heaven with one-third of the angels he cajoled into joining him. Some commentators have suggested that he deceived the angels who accompanied Satan. But why they would have preferred Satan's leadership is up for debate. Upon being expelled, Satan devised a plan through which he intended to show his anger towards God. Satan's plan was aimed at Adam and Eve, hoping that by tricking them, they too would join him in his eternal home. Matthew 25:41 tells us of Satan's future home— "*everlasting fire*." Satan knew well that both Adam and Eve were the greatest of God's creations, and he was displeased that they had taken the

TEACH FOR SOULS

prominence he had held with God. Therefore, he planned to deceive them into disobeying God successfully.

Satan succeeded in doing just that!

Satan was not only able to deceive the couple, but he would also cause their lives (and ours) to be negatively affected forever! He continues to impede individuals from surrendering their lives to Jesus Christ. Satan has a rather clever way of doing this. He causes people to become exposed to false teachings, besides putting into their minds the desire to question God's Word by exposing them to ostensible theories and immoral lifestyles. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 informs us of how Satan places veils over the eyes of individuals, thus preventing them from having open hearts that would allow them to have open eyes. By doing so, he strives to hinder them from ever perceiving and receiving the gospel's message.

For centuries, Satan has taken people of all sorts as his captives, keeping them in an abyss of sin. He does this by lying and telling them that their life of sin is how life was intended to be lived out. Satan is not only successful in deceiving many people, but he also imposes various strongholds on their minds, which makes it hard for them to choose the right path of life to salvation. I understand strongholds as an incorrect thinking pattern, which can potentially mould itself into our way of thinking over time. Strongholds can affect our feelings and, ultimately, our actions. These strongholds vary from mental to sexual to religious bondage. John 10:10 tells of Satan's primary

The Problem of Sin

aspiration for us. He says that the “*thief*” (Satan) only comes to do three diabolical things, which are “to steal, to kill, and to destroy.”

Satan hates God, and because of his hatred for God, he equally hates God’s children. His hatred for God is so intense that Peter tells us in 1 Peter 5:8 we should seek to understand the adversary’s strategies. The enemy “*prowls around like a lion looking for someone to devour.*” If we do not know how he functions, we’ll never be positioned to gain victory over his schemes. The reality of Satan is serious, and it is imperative we not only understand how he operates but that we know that he is a part of the reality of life.

ADAM’S ROLE

Who is to be blamed for introducing sin to the human race? Is God to be blamed? What about Satan? Is he to be blamed? Satan is responsible for sin’s entrance into the universe; however, Adam introduces sin to the world. This is made unequivocally clear in Romans 5:12, where Paul singles out Adam, stating that sin entered the world through him. The term “*world*” should be understood as the sphere of humanity.

A great example of this can be noticed where Jesus stated, “*for God so loved the world*” ... (John 3:16). The world, therefore, is in direct reference to people and not the physical cosmos. Thus, it was because of the sin of this one man that all other men have

TEACH FOR SOULS

sinned even before their physical birth. The reason for this is that we are biologically the descendants of Adam. Since we are connected to Adam, we inherited sin and death from Adam.

THE EFFECTS OF SIN

There are several fundamental truths about our existence. We know that since the fall of man, the birth process has been marked by extreme pain (Genesis 3:16). Because of birth, life is hard, as it requires us to work the earth for our survival (Genesis 3:17-19). To make the situation even worse, death is inevitable for all—young and old. Sin's effects are powerful and numerous.

Three main deaths follow Adam's act of sin:

1. Spiritual death:

Essentially the earliest definition for death is separation! In more precise terms, spiritual death resulted from the "*darkened understanding*" of the unchanged mind (Ephesians 4:17-24). This unchanged mind leads an individual in the "*futility of their thinking*" and away from a positive connection from God. The futility of one's thinking describes the empty and purposeless lives one leads. These lives manifest the gap between them and God. Thus, they continue to be spiritually dead and void of the reality of God's knowledge.

The Problem of Sin

Although some might often claim to be religious, for the mere fact they have not been “*born again*,” they are aliens in the sense that they cannot reach out from themselves into the realm where the divine exists. So, their natural states hold them as dead men, not having their spiritual side activated so they can freely interact with God (Ephesians 2:1-5). This explains why Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:10-16 argues that the natural person (the unsaved) cannot understand the Spirit's things; knowledge regarding spiritual things requires a unique connection with the Spirit.

By understanding this truth, we can see how Christians exist in a very different realm from those in the world. However, since they have transitioned into the church realm, they have gained access to God and can see the reality of human experience from a very different perspective from those who are not saved. They can see both sides of a story. They can readily observe the realm filled with darkness while embracing the realm illuminated by the light of Christ.

God told Adam, “*You will certainly die*”; yet when Adam sinned, he still possessed the mobility of his limbs. However, instantly he experienced the feeling of not being connected to God—this is spiritual death.

Adam died in the Garden!

Genesis 3:7 sets the stage for this truth by informing us that their eyes were both opened. Then the creatures who prior had intimacy with God hid were afraid and naked (verse 10). They

TEACH FOR SOULS

were dead, as God exclaimed! A different one compromised their spiritual, geographical location. Instead of being in the presence of God, they heard the voice of God echoing, “*where are you.*”

Spiritual death occurs in three ways.

All of humanity enters the world in a state of darkness due to the sin of Adam. We entered the world needing to be “*born again.*” Second, because of the ignorance that prevails in man, alienation from God is inevitable. Finally, the hardening of the heart continues this experience of being lost through separation. These make the case that the human soul, without Christ, is unenlightened (Ephesians 2:12).

2. Physical death:

Physical death transpires when the soul is separated from the body. Knowing of the creation of humans might make this clearer.

Man’s creation is complex!

He was made in three stages: *soul*, *body*, and *spirit* (Genesis 2:4-7). When we observe another human, we can only see their body. The core aspect of man’s creation is his soul. The soul consists of his *emotions*, *desires*, *decision-making*, *personality*, and *will*. Briefly, man is a soul that wears a body. Therefore, each of the intangible sides of man is expressed via the usage of the physical. We serve the soul with our bodies, and with the soul we serve God, the spirit gives mobility to the soul and the

The Problem of Sin

body. Thus, physical death is the withdrawal of the spirit that ultimately comes from God.

Look at it in this light. The soul belongs to man, while the spirit and the body are trusted as a loan to man. Although man (the soul aspect of the complex creation) cannot die, the body in keeping with God's Word will return to the dust (Genesis 2:17). Death marks the existence of the soul without the body. To better understand this concept, visit the graveyard, and you will see the visible reality of the end of life.

3. Eternal death:

The results of disobedience to God's Word and failure to trust in Jesus' work to experience a better life lead to death. The consequences of sin indicate that God sincerely hates sin. Do we know why God hates sin so much? God hates sin because sin makes it impossible for Him to enjoy uninterrupted fellowship with the people whom He loves so dearly. Isaiah tells us of this in chapter 59:1-2, where he affirms that people's sins have separated them from God and thus blocks their ability to communicate with Him freely.

Before Adam and Eve's rebellion, they did not know sin or sin's harsh effects. However, the moment they insisted on disobeying God by eating the forbidden fruit, they instantly became sinners. When Adam first sinned, humans in his loins, and thus all people became sinners even before their birth. This

TEACH FOR SOULS

leads me to understand that humans are not sinners because they have sinned at various times during their lives, but we were born with sin in our blood.

We were born into a state of sin!

Therefore, in the same manner in which an unborn baby can contract a disease from its parents, humanity contracted the disease of sin from Adam, their first father. The Psalmist David, in Psalm 51:5, tells us we are all born into sin. Therefore, Adam and Eve's sin went way beyond their act of disobedience; it changed their entire genetic structure. They were automatically placed under Satan's rule, which Paul points out in Romans 6:16 that if we yield ourselves to anything or anyone, we will become their slaves.

This was true for Adam and Eve!

So now, all can see it was not the day we might have first stolen the "cookie from the cookie jar" that we first became sinners; our fate was sealed long before that. Sin is in all of our genes, and only Jesus Christ can remove it. Because of this (which I will discuss later in this book), all people need to be born-again (John 3:3-5).

MY SINS ARE GONE!

When a person repents for their sins during their lives, what happens to those past sins? Are they forgiven? Does that individual stand a chance of becoming a newly created soul? In

The Problem of Sin

my experience working with various individuals, I have found that many are not always sure if their past sins are forgiven. Those sins will never be used against them if they continue to trust Jesus Christ for their salvation.

Any in-depth research on the life of David will prove interesting. He is depicted as a great conqueror, subduing the physical world. From killing lions and bears to defeating Goliath, David was a champion in his own right. But he had a life of contrast! Though he was a man who sought for the heart of God, David had experienced a life marred by sin. He struggled with his flesh, Satan, and even with his broken past. However, he bounced back from many shameful moments to embrace the grace of God for him.

One day he gained a more precise knowledge of God and God's unfailing love. In Psalms 103:8-14, he found his liberty in God's power to make him new. He concluded that because he would turn from his past sins when God convicted him, his sins were taken from him as far as the east is from the west.

This is a powerful truth that each believer should seek to understand and appreciate. The beauty of this truth is that the east and the west never meet the same way the north and the south poles do. Therefore, David sought to clarify that he had been separated from his past and the sins reflected. He cried out to God, and God helped him by forgiving him (Psalms 34:6).

God has this same experience for people today!

TEACH FOR SOULS

He does not lie; (Numbers 23:19). Therefore, if God promises something, He will not deliver something different. You can trust in His every word. Jesus Christ has taken all of your sins and has put them in a place where they have no more power to control any aspect of your life. They have all been cast into “*the depth of the sea*” (Micah 7:19). For our discussion regarding what happens to a person’s sin when they approach Jesus for forgiveness, I would also consider Isaiah 43:25, where God says that He “*blots out*” the transgressions of humans. He states He will remember their sins no more in the same breath. Here is something to think about for a moment, if God is all-knowing and nothing can escape His knowledge, how is it possible for Him not to recall our sins? Does God remember human sins but just does not allow them to bother Him?

No, that is not the case!

God means just what He said when He stated that He remembers our sins no more. This is very difficult for us to understand as individuals. For example, if someone hurts you, you can often not forget what they have done to you, although you forgive that person for their wrongdoing. So, you may hold a grudge against that person. This is not the case with God. When God forgives, He forgets!

Amazing, is it not?

It doesn’t matter what sins have manifested in your life, whether those sins were anger, lying, stealing, worrying, adultery, homosexuality, pornography, or any other vices. The

The Problem of Sin

sins of a sinner who has repented are covered under the blood of Jesus Christ, and the sinner has been washed in that blood, making it as if they have never sinned a day in their lives (Isaiah 1:18). In this passage, God says to the sinner that, "*though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow, though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.*"