

## CHAPTER 7

# What Is Sin?

In the last chapter we considered the sinless One, the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a Man who did no sin, knew no sin and had no sin. How different we are from Him! We are sinful from head to toe (see Isaiah 1:4,6). Christ was the **sinless One**; we are the **sinful ones**. Sin was totally absent from the life of Christ; sin is ever present in our day-by-day life.

Sin is something that we have all personally experienced. Just as we know what it is like to breathe, to eat, and to walk, so also we all know what it is like to sin. Not everyone understands breathing (how the lungs and diaphragm work, etc.), but we all breathe. Not everyone understands what sin really is, even though everyone sins. The question we will seek to answer in this chapter is **WHAT IS SIN?**

### Important Old Testament Words

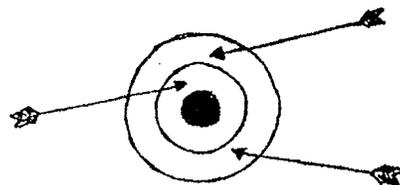
There are three common words found in the Old Testament that describe sin. All three of these words are found in Psalm 32:5: 1) my \_\_\_\_\_ 2) mine \_\_\_\_\_ 3) my \_\_\_\_\_ . Let us consider each of these words and see what they mean.

#### 1. Sin--Missing the Mark

The word *sin* (the first word for sin in Psalm 32:5) means "to miss the mark" or "to come short of some standard." For example, suppose a basketball coach gave this requirement in order to play on his team: "You must be at least six feet tall, or you will not even be considered." All those under six feet would "come short" of the coach's standard, and they would miss out on being able to make the team.

This word is used in an interesting way in Judges 20:16. The children of Benjamin were very skilled at using the sling. These men were left-handed, and they could sling a stone at a hair and not *miss*! A hair is a very small target to try to hit, but they could do it and not *miss*! This word *miss* is the word *sin*. A sinner is one who MISSES! A sinner is one who does not hit the target (God's target). A sinner is one who misses the bull's-eye:

**ALL THE ARROWS HAVE MISSED  
THE MARK!**



What is God's target (or bull's-eye) that He tells us to shoot for? It is found in Matthew 22:37,39: "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all*

*thy mind....Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."* Have you hit this target perfectly or have you missed? When it comes to loving God with all your heart and loving others as yourself, have you done this perfectly every day of your life, or have you come short?

The New Testament teaches us that we have *ALL* missed the target: "For \_\_\_\_\_ have \_\_\_\_\_ and come \_\_\_\_\_ of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The GLORY OF GOD refers to all that God is in His perfect character:

## The GLORY OF GOD

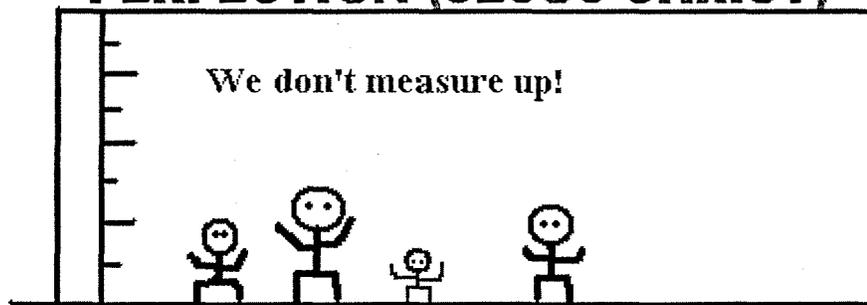
*All That God is:*

- God is holy. *Am I as holy as He is? \_\_\_\_\_*
- God is righteous. *Am I as righteous as He is? \_\_\_\_\_*
- God is loving. *Am I as loving as He is? \_\_\_\_\_*
- God is good. *Am I as good as He is? \_\_\_\_\_*
- God is truthful. *Am I as truthful as He is? \_\_\_\_\_*
- God is kind. *Am I as kind as He is? \_\_\_\_\_*

**DO I MEASURE UP TO THE GLORY OF GOD,  
OR DO I FALL SHORT? \_\_\_\_\_**

There is another way to see whether we measure up or fall short of the glory of God. Suppose you were to stand next to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (the sinless and spotless One whom we studied in the last chapter). How would you measure up to Him? Would you measure up to His righteousness, or would you come short of it? Would you come short of His goodness? His love? His holiness? Jesus Christ is God's standard of perfection for what every man or woman ought to be.

## ALL HAVE COME SHORT PERFECTION (JESUS CHRIST)



Compared to Christ, we do not stand very tall! Remember the basketball coach. He said that no one could be on the team unless he measured up to six feet tall. God says that no one can go to heaven unless he measures up to Jesus Christ! This means that none of us should go to heaven because we have ALL failed to measure up! (God knew that all men would all fall short, and so

He devised a plan of salvation which makes it possible for *believing* sinners to be **just as righteous as Christ**, to be righteous "even as **He** is righteous" (1 John 3:7).

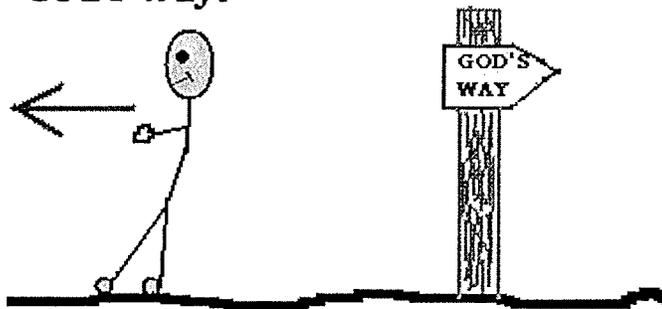
Men might be skilled at using a sling or shooting arrows, but when it comes to hitting God's target, WE HAVE ALL MISSED! We have all come short! We have fallen short of God's standard of perfection, and therefore WE ARE SINNERS!

## 2. Iniquity--Crookedness

The second word for sin found in Psalm 32:5 is the word "iniquity." It means "crookedness" or "something that is bent or twisted." God wants things to be straight and right, but we tend to bend and twist everything in the wrong way.

Think of a train that has been derailed (it has run off the railroad tracks). Instead of going straight and staying on the tracks, the train has turned OFF and gone the wrong way. Men do the same thing. We bend and turn away from what is right, and we get off track. We have "all gone out of the \_\_\_\_\_" (Romans 3:12). We have all been derailed! Instead of going God's way (the straight and right way), we have deliberately chosen to go our own way (the sinful and wrong way): "All we like sheep have \_\_\_\_\_; we have \_\_\_\_\_ every one to his \_\_\_\_\_; and the LORD hath laid on Him [Christ] the \_\_\_\_\_ [crookedness, wrongness] of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

**"I want my way, not  
God's way."**



## 3. Transgression--Rebellion

The basic meaning of the third word for sin found in Psalm 32:5 is "rebellion." It refers to those who refuse to obey and listen to God. They refuse to be under God's authority. They refuse to be under God's rule. They refuse to be under God's law. They refuse to have God as their King. They refuse to do what the King says.

A transgression occurs when a person rebels and revolts against God with the attitude: "No God in heaven is going to tell me what to do or how to live. God is not the boss of my life; I am. I refuse to bend or bow my knees before Him!"

### Sin is Lawlessness

The Bible says, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for SIN IS THE

\_\_\_\_\_ OF THE LAW" (1 John 3:4). Sin is lawlessness (rebelling against and breaking God's holy laws).

There are many laws which have been established by our nation and state. There are laws against driving too fast, stealing, murder, etc. When a person breaks any of these laws, he has committed a *crime*. God also has certain laws which He has revealed in His Word the Bible and which He has even written into the hearts of men (Romans 2:15). When a person breaks any of these laws, he has committed a *sin*. Crime is punishable by the government. Sin is punishable by God.

A person does not need to break all of God's laws to be a lawbreaker. Consider the following illustrations: If only one link in a chain is broken, the chain is broken. If a rubber band is broken in only one place, it is a broken rubber band.

Suppose you were dangling off the edge of a cliff and you were held only by a rope. Suppose five hawks land in five different places on the rope above you and these birds start pecking away at the rope in these five different places. All five hawks break through the rope at the same time. Since the rope is now broken in five places, you would fall to your death. Would you be any better off if there had been only one hawk and if the rope had broken in only one place?

Suppose you read a sign which said, "NO TRESPASSING PAST THIS FENCE." If you were to walk a mile past the fence, would you be trespassing? \_\_\_\_\_ If you were to just take one step over the fence, would you be trespassing? \_\_\_\_\_ Is the same thing true with God's holy law (James 2:10-11)? \_\_\_\_\_

### All Unrighteousness is Sin

The Bible also says, "All \_\_\_\_\_ is sin" (1 John 5:17). God demands RIGHTEOUSNESS: right thinking, right acting, right speaking and right living! Anything that comes short of this standard is sin! Do any of us really measure up to the righteousness which God requires (Romans 3:10)? \_\_\_\_\_

### Failing to Do Good is Sin

Sin is more than doing what is wrong. Sin is also failing to do what is right: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do \_\_\_\_\_, and doeth it \_\_\_\_\_, to him it is \_\_\_\_\_" (James 4:17). It is sin whenever we fail to do what we know is right! There are sins of COMMISSION, and there are sins of OMISSION:

<p><b>Sins Of Commission</b></p> <p>Doing what I know is wrong.</p>	<p><b>Sins Of Omission</b></p> <p>Failing to do what I know is right.</p>
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Read 1 Samuel 12:23. Samuel did not want to SIN against the Lord by \_\_\_\_\_. Would this be a sin of commission or a sin or omission? \_\_\_\_\_.

**Consider Ephesians chapter 4, verses 25, 28 and 29:**

We should not commit the sin of lying; instead what should we do? (v.25)

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We should not commit the sin of stealing; instead what should we do? (v.28)

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We should not commit the sin of saying filthy things with our mouth; instead what should we do? (v.29)

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### The Seriousness of Sin

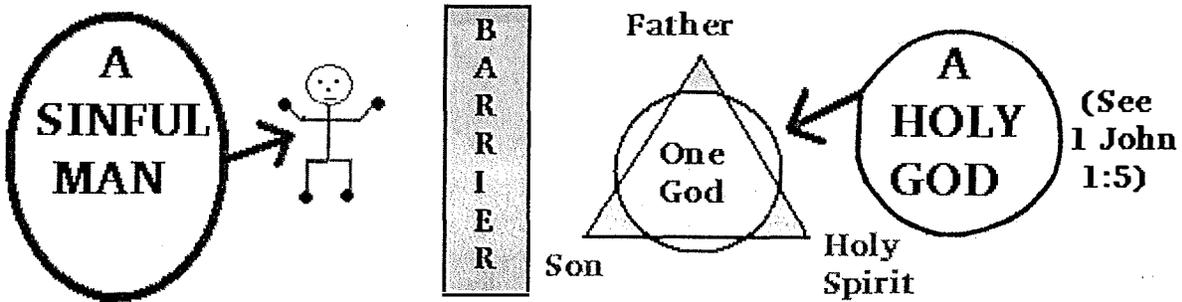
Sin is serious business. Too often people take sin too lightly and make jokes about sin. People may say that sin is nothing more than "mistakes" or "errors," but to the holy God of heaven, sin is very serious. May we never forget that when we sin, we are sinning against \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 51:4; 1 Samuel 12:23; compare Luke 15:18).

The awfulness of sin will never be fully understood by men. If we could fully understand how HOLY God is, we would begin to understand how terrible sin is. As we study the Bible, we find that there are three things which prove that sin is a very serious and terrible thing:

1. **Angelic Proof**--Just "one little" sin was committed by an angel called Lucifer (see Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:15,17) and as a result he was condemned and sentenced to an eternity in the lake of fire (see Matthew 25:41 and Revelation 20:10). Sin is serious business! In addition to Lucifer's fall, countless numbers of other angels also fell and became demons. All of this happened because one creature had some proud thoughts and decided to rebel against God!
2. **Human Proof**--Adam ate some fruit that he was told not to eat (Genesis 3). Today people often make fun of "Adam eating the apple." (Note: It was not an apple tree; see Genesis 2:16-17). What Adam did seemed like such a harmless act. What could be so terrible about eating fruit? And yet because of this one, single, sinful act, sin and death came upon the entire human race (Romans 5:12).
3. **Divine Proof**--A great proof of the awfulness of sin is the fact that the Son of God suffered to an infinite degree because of man's sin. The fact that Jesus Christ went to the cross proves that sin is very serious to God. God cannot overlook sin or pretend it is not there. If the cross is no laughing matter, then sin is no laughing matter either!

### The Separation Sin Brings

Man was created to have fellowship with God and to enjoy a close relationship with his Creator. Sin breaks this fellowship and causes a terrible separation: "But your iniquities have  
S \_\_\_\_\_ between you and your God" (Isaiah 59:2).



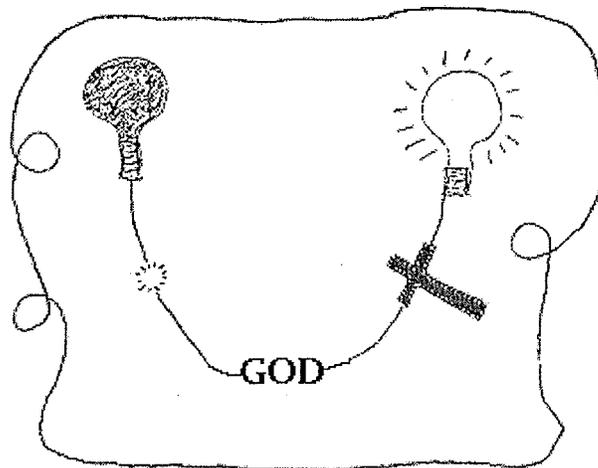
**No fellowship (2 Cor. 6:14)**

**No relationship**

**No connection**

**Only separation (Isaiah 59:2)**

Just as the electric light bulb has light only when it is connected with the electric source, so man can have spiritual life only when he is connected with God. If there is no connection, then the person is dead (separated from God and having no right relationship with God):



As long as the connection is broken, the bulb is out. When sin is present in the life of an unsaved person, he is said to be **dead** in sins (Ephesians 2:1). The only remedy is to mend the break so that there can be a right connection. Christ is the only One who can mend this break between the sinner and God because "Christ died for our \_\_\_\_\_" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

"The wages of sin is \_\_\_\_\_ (awful separation from God), but the gift of God is \_\_\_\_\_ (a wonderful relationship with God forever) through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).