

## **What is Sin?**

Sin is defined as falling short of the glory of God – missing the mark of God's standard of holiness. Sin is the common human condition. Even Paul the apostle sinned as he wrestled with his sin nature (see Romans 7:14-20). If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you can relate to Paul's struggle with sin.

As believers, when we sin, we are convicted of sin. In fact, if we don't sense the conviction of the Holy Spirit, there is a good chance that we are not saved, we don't know Jesus (see 1 John 1:10).

If we know sin is missing the mark, what is the mark?

## **What is the Law?**

We have the Ten Commandments, as clear, concise set of regulations for relating to God and to our fellow man. But Jesus took the Law and raised the bar in the Sermon on the Mount (see Matthew 5:21-28). Jesus stated that sin is born in our hearts; we are all guilty of thinking and saying things about other people that are sinful.

Romans 8:3 states, *"For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh."*

The nation of Israel was given the law of Moses. Remember, Paul is writing to a mixed audience. Some Jewish believers grew up with the law of Moses, while Gentile believers knew very little about the feasts and the sacrificial system.

Paul didn't say that the Law was bad or that it failed; it was weakened because human beings could not do what the Law required. We may follow all the rules and regulations, but our thoughts will still drift into sin, and we break the law.

## **What is the Gospel?**

The law couldn't save, but God provided a way: He sent His own Son, born of a virgin, who lived a common life as a carpenter. Jesus looked and spoke every bit like a Jewish boy growing up in the first century. Paul wrote this to combat a heresy that taught that Jesus was fully God, but he was never a human; he only appeared to be human. Jesus had to be fully man to be the perfect sin offering for our sins. If he were not a human, the cross would have been meaningless.

But Jesus was perfectly human, and he was the final and perfect sin offering for the sins of mankind. The verse clearly states that Jesus died for sin. But more than dying for sin, God the Father condemned sin in Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

God not only made Jesus to become sin; God made Him bear our sin. He also condemned that sin; Jesus was judged and punished for our sin. It was a transfer of guilt, a sentencing, and an execution by God the Father.

But why did Jesus have to die? Paul explains in verse 4, “in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

When laws are broken, there are consequences. The Law of God points out sin, and when we sin, the righteous requirement of sin is death. But the Good News is that Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law. We who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ as our savior will never die; we will live eternally in the presence of Jesus.

### **Walking in the Spirit**

Verse 4 ends with the phrase, “...*in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*” If the only purpose was for Jesus to fulfill the requirements of the law, the final phrase of the verse would be meaningless.

This phrase is where we live today. Paul reminds his readers that just because Jesus paid the price for our sins, it does not mean we can live however we want. The moral law of God has not been removed, rather as we walk in the Spirit, we are able to fulfill the law (see Matthew 5:17).

The law of God does not go away because we believe in Jesus. When we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to fulfill the law, to follow the righteous requirements of the law. Not perfectly, but as we grow in our relationship with Jesus, we grow in being led by the Spirit, our sensitivity to sin grows, we begin hating the things that God hates, and we are being transformed into the image of Christ.

Our human sinful flesh makes the law weak because it does not lead to holiness. The Law does not have the power to produce holiness; it can only reveal and condemn sin. But the indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to walk in obedience to God’s will. And as Paul writes in Romans 7, we wrestle with our sin nature and being led by the Spirit.

So how do we know the law, fulfill the law, and walk in the Spirit? When God gives us his Spirit, he writes his law in our hearts (see Jeremiah 31:33 and Ezekiel 36:26-27). This is such an important part of living as a Christian.

Being Christ's ambassadors in our community, as the law bearers of God, empowered by

the Spirit of God to live holy lives for the glory of God. Law abiders, but only because of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

What is holiness? Holiness is Christlikeness, being set apart for Christ.

*“The Moral law was not abolished for us; it is to be fulfilled in us.”* John Stott.

As we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us, as we walk in the Spirit, we fulfill the righteous requirements of the law, we love God above all else, and we love our neighbor as ourselves.