

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, James Gravelle.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Welcome to the Gospel of Christ. We continue in our topical series with this lesson titled, “Sin and Its Consequences.” If there is a definition of sin in the Bible, we find it in 1 John 3:4. From the King James Version we read, “Sin is the transgression of the law.” Of course, this refers to transgression of **God’s law**. That law can be transgressed by thoughts, by feelings, by words, or by actions. Or, as we learn from other portions of God’s Word, there are wicked thoughts, wicked feelings, wicked words, and wicked actions. This definition may not be exclusive, but it is sufficient for our purposes in this lesson.

Have you ever really thought about what it means to “commit sin”? The pleasures of sin have blinded our eyes to the enormous consequences of committing sin. About the only correct gauge with which we can measure the seriousness of sin is the punishment that God has decreed against it. God is infinite in all His attributes, including His mercy, love, and compassion. When we see the punishment of sin—which is meted out by God’s infinite justice—then we will be better able to form a better idea of just how serious sin really is.

There may be a question in the minds of some as to whether or not there will actually be any punishment for sin, either in this world or in the world to come. But there is one thing that is certain: this world has been plagued from its earliest history with a terrible burden of woes, pain, and death. The journey of human life is strewn with these things. The whole Earth has become dotted with graveyards. Death is preceded by tremendous pains of the body. And our lives are filled with interchanging smiles and tears. Anguish of heart is relieved by times of joy and happiness. Such has been the history of humans on Earth. The Word of God tells us that all of our woes, pains, sorrows, and death are the results of sin. The apostle Paul explained in Romans 5:12 how, “through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” As we look through the Bible, we find several words in the original languages that have been translated into English to express the concept of sin. One such word is found in Romans 3:23 where Paul said, “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” The word “sin” literally means “missing the mark.” Picture in your mind an archer fitting an arrow to his bow string. He draws back the string, takes aim, and looses the arrow. But his aim is low, and thus the arrow falls short, thereby missing the target. This is the idea behind the word translated as sin in 1 John 1:10 where John wrote, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

Another word translated into English as “transgression” can be found in Acts 1:25, which speaks of Judas and how he, “by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” The meaning is “to fall or drop from a higher position to a lower position.” The English word

“iniquity” also is found in several passages, including Psalm 51:2 where the psalmist said, “Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.” The meaning has to do with deviating from a straight line or being out of step. In Joshua 1:7 we read, “Be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.” Another word translated as the English word “transgression” actually means “a crossing of God’s boundaries.” King David was one who truly crossed a God-drawn line when he committed adultery with Bathsheba. His prayer regarding this sin is found in Psalm 51:1 where David said, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.”

Another word to consider is the word “lawlessness” from the New King James Version of the Bible, which is translated as “iniquity” in the King James Version. In Matthew 7:23 Jesus said, “Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’” [KJV—iniquity]. James informs us that sin also can be a failure to do good. In James 4:17 he wrote, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

Now, with a better understanding before us of the words used in the Bible to depict sin, let’s take a look at some of the things that God has proclaimed to **be** sin. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Paul wrote, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” John helped us understand more in Revelation 21:8 when he wrote, “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” Paul added more to this list in Galatians 5:19-21 when he wrote,

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Are there consequences for those who commit such acts? Is there any punishment for sin? We have seen in each of these lists from the Scriptures a warning. Notice again: “Those who practice such things **will not inherit the kingdom of God.**” We understand, of course, that this is speaking of Heaven. But what is the alternative for those who do **not** inherit the kingdom of God? We are told in Revelation 21:8 that sinners will “have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” We begin here to understand the true consequences of sin. Hebrews 10:31 tells us, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” In Hebrews 9:27 we are told, “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” To learn more about the judgment, we can examine the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-33,41.

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.... Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

Sin is the only thing that will keep you out of Heaven. That is a profound statement, so I am going to repeat it. **Sin is the only thing that will keep you out of Heaven.** But what is the alternative to Heaven? The only other place where one can exist for eternity is a place that has been prepared for the devil and his angels. It is called Hell. The question comes: Is Hell real? Jesus said that it is, and that it is a place to be avoided at all cost. In fact, if you read through Jesus' words in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, you will find that He speaks of Hell—how terrible it is, and how no one should want to go there—about three times more than He speaks of the wonders of Heaven and how a person ought to want to spend eternity there. Here are some striking facts about Hell.

First, Hell is not merely a condition, state of mind, or imaginative evil. Rather, it is the realm of the condemned that is presented in Scripture as a place that really exists. Jesus Himself helped us understand this in Mark 9:43-44 when He said, "If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—where 'the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'" Notice again that Hell is a literal place where no one should want to go. Jesus speaks of Hell as a real place—a place that is just as real as Heaven. In the same breath, Jesus spoke of both Heaven and Hell (in Matthew 25:46) when He said, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." If Hell is not real, then Jesus employed deception. In Luke 12:4-5 Jesus said, "My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!" According to this passage, Hell is something to fear. Hell is something that comes after death. Hell is not the grave. Fear of God will lead to right doing. Consequently, if Heaven is not a real place, then Jesus used deception to motivate right doing.

But what will Hell be like? Hell is depicted in the Scriptures as a place of flaming fire. In Revelation 20:14-15 John said, "Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." Hell also is a place of unquenchable thirst. It is the exact opposite of the blissful place about which we read in Revelation 7:16-17 where John wrote, "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Look at Revelation 22:1—"And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb." Have you ever been so thirsty that you actually craved a drink of clear, cool water? Imagine spending eternity desperately wanting such a drink, yet knowing that you could never obtain it to quench your thirst."

Hell will be populated with the most deeply depraved people of all mankind. Think of spending eternity with the most miserable, merciless, covetous, and greedy of humanity. Suppose we could arrange for every thief, liar, murderer, sodomite, prostitute, gambler, blasphemer, idolater, sorcerer, extortioner, drunkard, addict, hater of God, and braggart to all be put into one city. In other words, suppose we could empty every prison, gambling den, house of sodomy and prostitution, and even Hell with the devil and his angels—and put them all into one city. Would you want to build your dream cottage there and settle down for the rest of your life? I think not. Yet such people will be in Hell.

Hell is a place that is described as being "afar off." It is a place of separation from God. The sinner is now estranged, which means that he is far from God. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:13, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Notice the difference. In sin, people are afar off. But the blood of Christ

and obedience to the Gospel brings people near to God. In Proverbs 15:29 we learn that “the Lord is far from the wicked.” All sinners will remain eternally separated from God in Hell. The text of 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 tells us,

“When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

Death is a separation, as James 2:26 explains. Thus, Hell is spoken of as “the second death” (Rev. 20:6,14; 21:8). Because Hell is far away from God, it is spoken of as a place of darkness, since God Himself is light (1 Jn. 1:5). Hell also is a place of death, since God is the source of life (Rom. 6:23). Hell is a place of misery, since God is the source of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3). Hell is a place of unrelieved pain where a person will be “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10), “punished” (Mt. 25:46), “in tribulation and anguish” (Rom. 2:8-9), “with no rest” (Rev. 14:11), and where there will be “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mt. 25:30).

Heaven is a place where memory lives. Memory can be a blessing. But in Hell, memory is transformed into an eternal, gnawing curse. The condemned will remember every prayer prayed, every plea presented, every privilege provided, and every exhortation extended. Hell is a place where men will pray, but where they will receive no answer. Sinners may mock and scoff at prayer now, but there is a time coming when they **will** pray! There will not be any atheists in Hell. By the time atheists arrive in Hell, they will be thoroughly convinced that God exists. How great will be the desperation of the man whom God answers no more. In 1 Samuel 28:6, when Saul inquired of the Lord, the text indicates that God “did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.” We see how desperate King Saul became when God no longer would answer him. He went to a witch who, under the Law of Moses deserved to be stoned to death, and inquired of her how he might communicate with Samuel, even though the prophet was at that time already dead. God allowed Samuel to appear to Saul. Here is what transpired. In 1 Samuel 28:15 we read,

“Now Samuel said to Saul, ‘Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up? And Saul answered, ‘I am deeply distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God has departed from me and does not answer me anymore, neither by prophets nor by dreams. Therefore I have called you, that you may reveal to me what I should do.’”

Notice the desperation of one whom God will not answer. God’s hear will be eternally closed to those who are in Hell.

We see also that Hell is a place men want to leave. In life, we can disassociate ourselves from undesirable company or exit undesirable locations. But in Hell that will not be possible. In 2 Peter 2:4 Peter wrote of how “God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment,” thereby indicating that there is no escape. Hell is a place where men plead for mercy, but receive none. A man can go beyond the point of God’s mercy. Hell is the ultimate and eternal state where that takes place. From Hell, no one can ever escape. Hell is inescapable in that it is impossible for a person to “serve out his time” there. Hell is eternal. The same words that are used in Scripture to describe the everlasting, eternal nature of Heaven are used to describe Hell. Thus, we must either admit the endless misery of Heaven, or give up the endless happiness of Heaven. The doctrines of a second chance (purgatory), or of ultimate annihilation, are false. Hell is a place where men always die, yet never cease to exist. Hell is a place where men live, yet without true life. Hell is a place where men live forever, but where there is no hope for which to live.

Before we close this lesson, it is fitting to mention some of the arguments that men have made in an attempt to disprove the reality of Hell. First, the argument has been made that Hell would be inconsistent with the nature of God, reflecting up and conflicting with His goodness, kindness, and mercy. There is no doubt that God is good, kind, and merciful. In Titus 3:3-5 we read,

“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

However, God also is just. In Deuteronomy 32:4 we read, “He is the Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He.” The point with which we need to be impressed is the fact that if such a loving and compassionate Father will thrust into Hell a rebellious sinner, how heinous sin must be!

A second argument suggests that the punishment inflicted in Hell is disproportionate to the infraction of the law (sin) that occurred. But who is the “reasoning person” here? Who is offering this argument? Humans are! We are the sinners! Does a rebellious child get to suggest what punishment his father will inflict? Are law breakers law makers? Why, then, should the sinner be so presumptuous as to question the penalty of sin?

A third argument suggests, “If I got to Heaven and my loved ones were not there, but were instead experiencing the horrors of Hell, I would not be happy, and Heaven would become Hell.” We know that while on Earth, Jesus wept tears of sympathy (Jn. 11:35) as well as tears of compassion (Lk. 19:41). But now He is in Heaven, looking down on similar circumstances—yet without weeping. Cannot God thus enable us to do likewise? Family ties on Earth are necessary to our existence. But in Heaven they are no more.

In this lesson we have talked about sin and its consequences. But it would be unthinkable to close this lesson—even though the next lesson in this series deals with God’s plan for man’s salvation—without mentioning how a person may be saved from sin. In John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” By keeping Christ’s commands, and by obeying His Word, we can be saved from eternity in Hell. Is it, then, too much to do to turn and be obedient to God? We must hear and believe His Word. In John 8:24 Jesus said, “If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” We must confess Christ’s name before others, as Christ said in Matthew 10:32, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.” We must repent of our sins (Lk. 13:3). And, we must be baptized, as Jesus said in Mark 16:16—“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Then we must live a faithful life “even unto death” (Rev. 2:10) so that the power of the second death cannot harm us (Rev. 20:6). Hell will be avoided, and Heaven will be our eternal home.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES”

1. What, according to 1 John 3:4, is sin?
2. According to 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, what will sinners **not** inherit?
3. According to Romans 5:12, what entered into the world through “one man”?
4. According to Romans 3:23, who has sinned?
5. According to 1 John 1:10, what are we if we say that we have never sinned?
6. What does the word “sin” mean (as used in passages such as Romans 3:23)?
7. What does the word “transgression” mean (as used in Acts 1:25)?
8. What does the word “iniquity” mean (as used in Psalm 51:2)?
9. In James 4:17, what did James have to say about sin?
10. According to Revelation 21:8, where will sinners spend eternity?
11. In Matthew 25:41, how did Jesus describe Hell?
12. How did Jesus describe Hell in Matthew 25:46?
13. How does 2 Thessalonians 1:9 describe Hell?
14. How does Matthew 25:30 describe Hell?
15. According to 2 Peter 2:4, what did God do to the angels who sinned against Him?
16. What is another word for sin (as used in Matthew 7:23)?
17. According to Revelation 20:14-15 and Revelation 21:8, what is “the second death”?
18. In Jesus’ account of the Day of Judgment in Matthew 25:31-33,41, who are the “goats” who are at God’s left?
19. In Jesus’ account of the Day of Judgment in Matthew 25:33-40, who are the “sheep” who are at God’s right?
20. In Mark 9:43-44, how did Jesus describe Hell?
21. Of whom was Jesus speaking when He said, “My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!” (In Lk. 12:4-5)?
22. What will Hell be like, according to Revelation 20:10?