



# SHARING GOD'S STORY

## WEEK 3

Last week was about the greatness and perfection of God. Our prayer is that you were overwhelmed by the goodness, love, and righteousness of God. Of course, when we look at our lives and hear the news around the world, we can question where such a God is. We can ponder where things went wrong. We can make excuses and hypothesize. This week, let's see what the Bible says about the problem. The Bible is God's word to us. He was there when things went bad. He shares with us what really happened and what is happening now. The facts don't look too good. We need to understand how bad things really are so we can understand why Jesus is such good news.

**DON'T WORRY, JUST SAY IT**

# OUR PROBLEM: SIN

## DAY 1 / SOURCE OF SIN

God gives the great privilege of sharing the Gospel, His Good News, with others. But the reason there is good news to tell is because there is bad news. The context of the good news is bad news. You can see this in the life of Jesus. His life is bookended by the two events that dominate the celebrations of the Christian calendar: Christmas and Easter. At Christmas we celebrate His coming. But its meaning is only seen when we realize why He needed to come in the first place: our problem. Same goes for Easter. We celebrate the empty tomb and the new life we can have in Christ. But the only reason He needed to be resurrected is that He had to die because of our problem. The Good News can only be in the context of the bad news of our problem.

The source of our problem is clearly defined by the Bible. It is our sin. The Bible is equally clear that this problem is universal, meaning we all have it. It is also personal, meaning that each of us has created the problem for ourselves. It is also inescapable, meaning that each of us has a sinful nature that will inevitably lead us to fall into the bad news of our sin.

Consider these passages:

Romans 3:23, “for all have **sinned** and fall short of the glory of God”

Isaiah 53:6, “we are all like sheep who have gone **astray**, each one to their own way”

Romans 1:28-32 “And because they did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a worthless mind to do what is morally wrong. They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. Although they know full well God’s just sentence—that those who practice such things deserve to die -they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.

As you can see, sin is a universal problem. It is also our personal problem. We are guilty and 100% liable. People even celebrate it

Is “Our Problem” important in understanding and responding to the Gospel? Absolutely. You cannot realize you need a savior until you recognize that you are lost. Before we can be “saved,” we have to be lost! You don’t “save” someone who is safely sitting at home but someone who is hopelessly adrift at Sea. Our faith journey starts with admitting we are “lost” due to our own sinfulness and desperately in need of saving. It is a critical part of the message we are compelled to share. A message that applies equally to all of us. A truth essential to the Gospel.

**DON'T WORRY, JUST SAY IT**

# OUR PROBLEM: SIN

## DAY 2 / EFFECTS OF SIN

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*“We are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)*

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What part of this truth do we usually focus on? In general, we focus on the sin side. What sins do I commit? Am I a worse sinner than others? How terrible a person am I? Often, we begin to “rank” ourselves on the sin scale. We get that we aren’t perfect. But we also know we are not nearly as “bad” as a lot of other people. I mean, just listen to the news and it’s easy to see that others are far worse sinners. Even more, by the world’s standard we are pretty “good” people.

But the world’s definitions are not God’s definitions. And when you consider Romans 3:23 the critical point is that sin, any, and all sin, causes us to fall short of what God demands...His glory. You see, if “perfection” is the standard to be met in order to experience eternal life based on our own merit, it doesn’t matter if we get a 99.99 or a .09 on the “goodness” test. Either way, we don’t pass. No one gets a 100. And since we don’t qualify for heaven on a sliding scale, we are all on the outside looking in. We have sinned. We fall short. We are on the outside looking in. We are separated from God with no way back from our side.

What does it mean to be separated from God? The Bible teaches that as sinners we are disqualified from being in God’s presence, or even of being in a relationship with Him. Further, being separated from God means we will not share in one ounce of His goodness during eternity. We will be barred from heaven and assigned to hell. Consider these passages:

Isaiah 59:2 – “But your iniquities have **built barriers** between you and your God”

Romans 5:12 – “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, in this way **death spread to all men**, because all sinned.” (Death = eternal separation from God).

Romans 6:23 – “And the **wages** of sin is death.” (Wages equals consequence or outcome).

Our sin is a real problem. We are prolific at it for sure, but the biggest issue is what it does to our relationship with God. It kills it. Sin separates us from God in this world and the next. It is definitely not a condition in which we want to remain. Sin indeed is a real problem. Thanks be to God there is hope in Jesus Christ.

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# OUR PROBLEM: SIN

## DAY 3 / CHARACTER OF SIN

We usually avoid dwelling on sin. It's depressing. No one likes to beat themselves up with how awful a person they are. Therefore, let me remind us that we are doing so in a positive sense: understanding our sinfulness is a part of seeing our lostness, which is a God-given catalyst to seeing our need for a Savior. Knowing our problem with sin leads us to the One who can do something about our problem.

In that spirit, let's explore the nature of our sinfulness? The Bible uses a number of words to describe our sin. It falls onto two categories. First, sin is doing what is wrong in the eyes of God. But it is also *failing to do* what is right in His eyes. Sin is the wrong we carry out *and* the good we fail to do. No wonder all of us are guilty.

Some additional concepts that are fruitful for our understanding.

- Iniquity – this is the idea of lawlessness or rejecting God's revealed Will. (Matthew 23:28)
- Trespass – the idea of traversing the boundaries that God has set. We step over the line He has drawn.
- Missing the Mark – this is the idea of us taking our best aim at God's ideal but ultimately being unable to hit the bullseye mark. As an illustration of this, you could try drawing a perfect circle freehand. Despite our best efforts, it won't be perfect. Good maybe, but not perfect. Such is the nature of our efforts to meet God's standard of righteousness.

Sin can be the product of our:

- Ignorance – Hebrews 9:7 indicates that sacrifices needed to be offered for sins we commit in ignorance
- Disobedience – sin is the result of a specific act of our will. The original act of sin in the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve is a prime example. This is why Jesus taught that it is what is inside us, what is in our heart that comes out in our will and our words, that makes us sinful.
- Lack of Faith – Romans 14:23 reveals that whatever we do that is not from faith is actually sin. So pretty much anything we do that comes from "self", even if it isn't something bad, is sin because it is an assertion of independence from God.
- Being Deceived – Titus 3:3 speaks of sin as a result of our being "foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved".

Sin is pervasive. In fact, it is so pervasive we often don't even see it. In this, it is a lot like gravity. Its force had been at work every moment since the dawn of creation, but it was not until the 1600's that it was "seen". And when we can't see it, we can't repent of it and be saved from it. So, knowing the nature of sin can help us and others "see" it and seek redemption from it. It is a necessary part of telling the Good News.

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# OUR PROBLEM: SIN

## DAY 4 / THE POWER OF SIN

There is an old quote that Pastors love to use. It goes like this – “Sin will always take you further than you want to go and cost you more than you want to pay”. We witness this principle at work in the scriptures. Adam and Eve’s sin cost them far more than they wanted to pay and took them far away from the perfection they had known. Moses’ murder of the Egyptian forced him to flee from his home and live in the wilderness for 40 years. When the Israelites rebelled against God, embracing the negative report of the 10 spies and refusing to enter the Promised Land, they forfeited the right to enter the Promise Land and spent 40 years wandering in the desert. You get the idea. It costs more than we want to pay and takes us further than we want to go. This is because sin is powerful.

Consider these scriptures in understanding the power of sin:

- It enslaves us – “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (John 8:34)
- It’s Irresistible - “each person is tempted when drawn away and enticed by their own evil desires” (James 1:14-15)
- It has a life of its own within us – “it is sin living with me...I do not do the good that I want to do, but I practice the evil that I do not want to do” (Romans 7:17-20)
- It kills – we are “dead in your trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1)

Sin is a powerful problem. It is a problem we cannot solve on our own because it controls us rather than us controlling it. It is lethal...especially spiritually. We need to be saved from it because we can’t conquer it on our own. Sin indeed costs us more than we want to pay and takes us further that we wanted to go. We need an answer to this problem. A solution from beyond ourselves.

Spend some time in prayer or journaling. Ask God to reveal some of your sinful thoughts, words, or actions lately. This isn’t a time to beat down on yourself, but to be honest about your sin condition. Remember, we’ve all sinned. But that doesn’t make it okay in God’s eyes. This isn’t a time to compare yourself with someone else. Write next to those sins the character of those sins (willful, unintentional, lack of faith, etc.). Write next to those sins their effects (guilt/shame, relationship conflict, separation from God, anger, etc.). Notice how those sins were automatic, irresistible, and then killed/stole/destroyed joy in your life.

Thanks be to God, He has given us a Savior in Jesus Christ.

**DON'T WORRY, JUST SAY IT**

# **OUR PROBLEM: SIN**

## **DAY 5 / THE PENALTY OF SIN**

Would Easter matter if there had not been a Good Friday? In Easter, we see all the hopes, joys and possibilities that flow from having a new life with God. But none of those things would be possible if the “price” hadn’t been paid to release us from the debt created by our sin. Sometimes we attempt to soften the ugliness of Good Friday by thinking about it in some glorious sense of Jesus “taking a bullet” for us like some hero in a good movie: staying behind to hold off the enemy while we escape to safety.

The truth is nothing like that. Yes, Jesus died in our place. He was our substitute. He was the sacrificial lamb. But there is nothing beautiful about it. Because of the vileness of our rebellion against the loving, sovereign Creator, sin built up an indescribable debt load, warranting the full wrath of God. If He doesn’t take it from us, we must experience that wrath for ourselves, a wrath we cannot survive.

Consider these verses that define the just penalties on our sin...

- Judgment – “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that we each may be repaid for what he has done” (2 Corinthians 5:10). “Everyone who is angry with his brother is subject to judgment and whoever says “moron” is subject to hellfire” (Matthew 5:22)
- Condemnation – “for whoever does not believe is condemned already” (John 3:18)
- Wrath – “we are by nature children of wrath” (Ephesians 2:2). “You are storing up wrath for yourselves in the day of wrath” (Romans 2:5). “God’s wrath comes on the disobedient” (Colossians 3:6)
- Eternal Punishment – “taking vengeance with flaming fire on those who don’t know God and on those who don’t obey the Gospel...these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9)
- Death – “those who practice such things deserve to die” (Romans 1:32)

God is holy, righteous and just. It follows that sin must be judged...God pouring out His righteous indignation in the form of His wrath on sin. That’s the penalty for sin. Eternal condemnation. That was our future. Until Good Friday. In that moment God unleashed all of His wrath on His Son as He hung in our place on the Cross. There was nothing glorious about it. It was brutal, painful, and horrific. It was the price of the penalty of our sin. Thank God we don’t have to pay it. Jesus did. That is the Good News of the Gospel. There is a solution to Our Problem of Sin. This is the Gospel that is our privilege and mandate to share. Share it.

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