



THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM IS THE PROBLEM OF THE HEART



A Call to Action

The Ten Commandments are not only a list of prohibitions. Each of the Ten Commandments includes an implicit call to action: To worship God alone. To resist idolatry. To speak respectfully of God and His Word. To work six days and to rest on the Lord's Day. To honour our father and our mother. To respect life. To protect the sanctity of marriage. To respect private ownership of property. To be people of integrity. To maintain a clear conscience before God and man. Praying the Lord's Prayer demands action: **"Your Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven..."** Matthew 6:10. Jesus taught: **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the Will of My Father in Heaven."** Matthew 7:21

Respect God, People, Creation and Property

The Ten Commandment teaches us to respect God, respect people, respect God's creatures and respect property. We are commanded to: **"Be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."** James 1:22

Judgement Awaits

God will judge each one of us. He will punish the wicked and He will reward the faithful. An eternal hell awaits the unrepentant. A glorious Heaven is promised to all who truly repent of their sins, trust Christ alone for Salvation and follow the Word of God in obedience. **"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!"** Luke 11:28

A Changed Heart

The heart of the Gospel is a changed life in Christ. Regeneration: **"You must be born again."** John 3:7. But each one of us must make a choice. God will change your life and your eternal destiny. You must choose to trust and obey Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ began His public ministry with these Words: **"Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."** Matthew 4:17. Our Lord's last recorded Words to the churches in Asia was to **"Repent"** (Revelation 2 and 3).

The Lamb of God

The first time Jesus Christ came to this earth as a Saviour, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. All who turn in Repentance away from sin and trust in Christ, following Him in obedience are saved.

The Problem of the Heart

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the Blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us." 1 John 1:5-10

A New Covenant

"I will put My Law in their minds and write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be My people." Jeremiah 31:33

The Lion of Judah

But our Lord Jesus Christ will come again... this time as The Judge: The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. All who have not repented and obeyed His Law will be condemned and eternally punished in hell. Either you surrender to Christ as your Saviour now, or you will face Him as your Judge. Is Jesus Christ your Lord and Saviour? Or your Judge?

Where Will You Spend Eternity?

"God commands all men everywhere to repent."

Acts 17:30



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The Heart of the Problem is the Problem of the Heart

Whatever Happened to Sin?

The rampant looting sprees and malicious damage to property that saw 200 shopping malls and warehouses looted with R50 Billion losses and over 370 deaths in KwaZulu/Natal and Gauteng in South Africa has led many to ask: whatever happened to respect for life and property?

God Hates Sin

The Bible makes clear that God hates sin. **"These six things the Lord hates. Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren."**

Proverbs 6:16-19

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God

The Great Evangelical Awakening was sparked by Jonathan Edwards' sermon: **"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God."** For the most of church history, preachers have thundered from the pulpits against the seven deadly sins of lust, gluttony, greed, laziness, anger, envy and pride. Today, few people would be able to even identify the seven deadly sins.

Modern Therapeutic Sermons

Today it may be more likely that one might hear a sermon on **"God in the Hands of Angry Sinners"**, than **"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God!"** The old Doctrines of Sin, Redemption and Repentance are out of fashion and the modern therapeutic language of self-esteem, self-actualization and self-love are in.

What Can God Do for Me?

The emphasis in the average church is no longer: **What Does God Require of Me?** Today it is more common to see the emphasis on **What Can God Do For Me?**

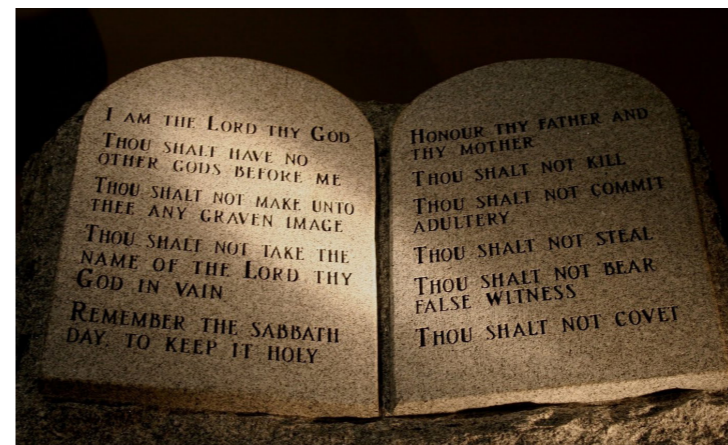
Redefining Sin

The word 'sin' is rarely used in any serious context today. For many, the very concept of sin has become a topic for jokes. Vocabulary and ethics have changed dramatically.

Riots and looting are called **"protests."**

Censorship is called **"fact checking."**

Drunkness is now described as **"chemical dependency."**



Gossip is frequently referred to as **"sharing."**

Pride has become **"a superiority complex"**, or **"an inflated ego."**

Corporate executives no longer steal, they commit **"fraud."** People are no longer said to be living in sin, but **"living together."**

Fornication has become **"free love."**

They are no longer adulterers; they are having an **"affair."** Perverts are described as preferring **"an alternative lifestyle."**

The Bible declares: **"Fools mock at sin."** Proverbs 14:9 and **"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."** Proverbs 14:34

Newspeak

What God calls sin, man now often call **"sickness"**. What the Bible describes as evil, has now been redefined as **"error"**. What God calls an abomination, men today are more likely to call **"an alternative lifestyle!"**

"Against Me, Myself and I, Have I Offended"

Sins against God are now seen as **"moral failures,"** or **"mistakes"** that keep us from realising our own individual potential and expectations.

The Goodness of Man

The historic Christian doctrines of original sin and actual sin which look at our nature, **who we are** and our actions, **what we do**, have been replaced with the concept of the goodness of man and **"we are victims of circumstances."**

"It's Not My Fault!"

One of the most frustrating aspects of undertaking evangelism, these days, is that most people seem to have no idea of sin. They do know how to sin well enough, but they have no idea of what actually constitutes sin. The very concept of personal responsibility is even in question.

Revolution

The two World Wars left many questioning the worth of traditional values. The communist revolutions rejected private ownership of property. The sexual revolution rejected the Biblical principle of marriage itself. Today many justify hate and intolerance in the name of **"tolerance!"** Conformity is demanded in the name of **"diversity!"**

What is Sin?

The Bible defines sin as **"lawlessness"** (1 John 3:4).

Violating God's Commandments

Every one of God's Ten Commandments are under relentless and systematic attack in the secular humanist media. Much of Hollywood, most of the public universities and much of the news media attack our Creator God, exalt idolatry, promote political idols, rock idols, film idols and even have T.V. programmes called **Idols**. Blasphemy is promoted as entertainment. Sabbath desecration is considered an essential part of any week. The undermining of the authority of parents is incessant. The sanctity of life is undermined by the promotion of abortion and euthanasia. A culture of death is celebrated in many blood-splattered horror, 'slasher' films. The sanctity of love and marriage is undermined on every side.

The sanctity of private property is eroded and undermined to the point where massive looting sprees called “*protest actions*.” There is a relentless war against truth itself and the sanctity of conscience is undermined at every turn. With every one of the Ten Commandments under such ceaseless attack, it is no wonder that the very concept of sin is being questioned or even rejected.

Celebrating Sin

Contemporary culture is celebrating what was once condemned. Pride is now lifted up as “*self-esteem*.” Envy is the engine of tabloid culture. Lust is an advertising strategy. Anger is the acceptable expression of those who claim to have been aggrieved.

Mass Marketing Selfishness

Many pastors feel that they are competing in a “*buyers market*” and that they cannot afford to alienate potential parishioners. At church conferences organised by seeker-friendly churches, pastors are warned that people do not want to hear that they should cultivate humility, self-discipline and virtue. Or that they need to listen to their conscience and repent of their sins. As a result, a religious culture is promoted that defines God in purely selfish terms. Churches are no longer to be focused on God and what He requires, but on man and what will increase his self-esteem.



Pandering to People’s Personal Peace and Passivity

People will embrace any religious faith, just so long as it makes no real moral demands. Churches are encouraged to accept people for exactly who they are, without making any moral demands on them. Churches must console, but not judge. The style of praise and worship now seems to be more to please man, rather than to please God. Church songs with meaningless, mindless repetition of choruses that focus on our feelings, rather than His power and glory, are commonplace. The pleasure of worship has been replaced with the worship of pleasure.

Tickling Ears with What They Are Itching to Hear

The Apostle Paul warned that such a time would come: “*For the time will come when they will not endure sound Doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.*” 2 Timothy 4:3-4

UnBiblical Testimonies

At a Biblical Worldview event in Colorado, America, I heard a number of testimonies where individuals claimed that God spoke to them and told them: “*I love you just the way you are. You don’t need to change a thing!*” That is clearly not the God of the Bible. Friends don’t let friends drive drunk. It is not loving to encourage people to continue on a self-destructive path.

Self Deception

Frequently we see the truth that we are our own worst enemies. It is self-deception to assume that the Creator of the universe, the Eternal Judge, our Holy God, has no higher standards than we have. God calls us to Repent, to renew our minds and to be transformed in every part of our attitudes and actions.

Idolatry and Blasphemy

Worse than self deception it is actually idolatrous and blasphemous. People who claim that God spoke to them and told them they do not need to change are guilty of having created a false God, an idol. Such a God does not exist. It is blasphemous to claim that God has spoken to us when we are plainly listening either to our own feelings, or to a world in rebellion to God and then presenting that culture as “*God spoke to me!*”

“It’s All About Me!”

Many churches seem to have become therapeutic, pragmatic and utilitarian, even narcissistic. “*It’s all about me!*” and the Gospel has been left out. In the early 1980’s there was a prominent news report in the Sunday Times concerning the Miss South Africa of that time. She said that she was a “*born-again Christian*” and she liked her church because “*they don’t teach any Doctrine*” and they did not condemn her for living with her boyfriend!

Mercy

“*He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.*”

Proverbs 28:13

God’s Law Remains in Force

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught: “*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till Heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these Commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, you will, by no means, enter the Kingdom of Heaven.*” Matthew 5:17-20

“I’m a Good Person!”

The Bible emphasises the depravity of man. We are sinful and personally responsible for our actions and attitudes. However, modern antinomian and egalitarian society emphasises the goodness of man. Frequently when one is witnessing on the streets one hears: “*I’m a good person!*”,

yet when you question them closer, the same people who are adamant that they are “*very good people*” admit to lying, stealing, blasphemy, lust and even hatred in their hearts!

Desensitised to Sin

To a large extent, this self-deception can be attributed to the entertainment industry which has popularised and justified lust, pride and greed in so many attractive heroes and heroines that many have come to accept and justify what they would have previously condemned.

Feel Good Religion

Compounding the problem, most religious messages pass over the uncomfortable realities of sin and focus on “*feel good*” themes. As a result, conviction of sin is rare. Religious leaders who excuse sin, deny its existence and tickle the ears of their hearers by telling them what they want to hear, instead of what the Bible proclaims, are actually doing their people a grave disservice.

The Heart of the Gospel

The holiness of God, the Law of God, the sinfulness of man, the sacrifice of Christ and the need for Repentance and Faith are central to the Gospel.

Rejecting Reality

A sick man cannot prove that he has no fever by breaking the thermometer! Similarly, rejecting the Law of God and ignoring so much of what the Bible says on the subject of sin will not solve the problem. A Biblical picture of sin is leprosy. Leprosy destroys the nervous system and disfigures the body. It is ugly and loathsome. The Bible is clear “*The wages of sin is death...*” Romans 6:23.

Separated From God

“*Behold the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity.*” Isaiah 59:1-3



Sin Withers the Soul

Christ taught us that He is the Vine and we are the branches. He that abides in Christ will bring forth much fruit. But those who do not abide in Him will wither, dry up and die and be cast into the fire (John 15:5-6).

Sin Hardens the Heart

“*Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, ... therefore I was angry with that generation...*” Hebrews 3:7-10

Sin Darkens the Mind and Breeds Futility

“*Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*” Romans 1:21

Sin is Serious

If sin is not serious, then why did Jesus Christ have to come to this earth and suffer such a horrendous death on the Cross of Calvary? The Doctrine of sin may not be a popular message, but it is vitally important. It is worth noticing that the middle letter of sin is “*I*”. The middle letter of lie is also “*I*”, as is the middle letter of pride. Selfishness is at the heart of our problem. We are our own worst enemy.

Missing the Mark

The Bible defines sin as missing the mark. Violating the Law of God. Augustine defined sin as every work, word or wish contrary to the Law of God. Sin is not only the bad things we do, but the good things we fail to do. “*Therefore, to Him who knows to do good and does not do it, to Him it is sin.*” James 4:17

Pollution

The environmental destruction caused by months of crude oil gushing out of the depths of the sea shocked and horrified millions worldwide. This is a picture of the disruption, degradation, and destruction caused by sin gushing out from the hearts of rebellious men and women. “*Out of the heart the mouth speaks.*” It’s not what you say you are it’s what you say that reveals what you are. What do you talk about? What do you text about? The reality of sin should cause us to turn to God and kneel at the Cross of Calvary. We dare not live in denial and tolerate sin.

A Warning

Over a century ago General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, warned that a time may come when churches will preach a Saviour without a Cross, Salvation without Repentance, Heaven without Hell and Christianity without Holiness. Plainly that time has come.

Repent

On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter proclaimed: “*Repent and let every one of you be baptised in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins: and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” Acts 2:38