

SIN AND THE SINNER



Sin is missing the mark.

The Greek work for Sin is *hamartia*, meaning "missing the mark." Sin is poor marksmanship, and the sinner misses the mark of wholeness and life due to disease, malfunction, and abuse.

Sin is disease.

When a healthy person becomes ill, we know that he has a disease. Sin is spiritual disease, which afflicts the whole person. This is why Jesus healed the sinner and treated bodily afflictions as parables or symptoms of real, spiritual disease. Even if the sinner has a healthy body and a sound mind, the disease of sin so permeates the entire person that the entire body, the mind, the imagination, and the will of the sinner malfunction and act abnormally. The sinner behaves like a sick person and misses the mark.

Sin is Abuse.

This is when good food is abused as gluttony, and the gift of sexuality results in rape or promiscuity. Stewardship of possessions and talents is changed to greed, and pride replaces thankfulness to God. Persons are regarded as things, and love deteriorates to desire. The sinner becomes a slave to instinct, and serves false gods of power rather than the almighty and living God. Sin expresses itself as disobedience and rebellion, the breaking of God's law, unfaithfulness to God's faithful love. It causes the sinner to aim at the wrong mark, resulting in denial of one's destiny as a child of God. Sin abuses God's gifts because they are accepted without acknowledging the Giver.

Sin leads to death.

Eventually, sin leads to aimlessness and despair, and destroys the sinner. In the process, it also hurts others. It starts as a small lie, a little deviation from the mark, but then becomes a major crime. As the disease spreads, the sinner becomes progressively more destructive, taking aim at everything that moves. Fear sets in, and the sinner seeks more power for self-protection. This in turn alienates the sinner and leads to death, which is total alienation from God and neighbor.

God provides the remedy.

Sin cannot destroy the forgiving and reconciling love of God in Jesus Christ. Sin misses the mark of God's grace, and puts Jesus on the cross. But God has the final word - the world of eternal life. Jesus bears the

ultimate consequence of sin, which is death on the cross. Rather than destroying the poor and frantic marksman, Jesus accepts death to show how much God loves the sinner. In Jesus Christ, God offers the remedy and provides the good news of divine forgiveness and reconciliation. God does not want the death of the sinner in fear, despair, and alienation, but calls the sinner to repentance, trust, and spiritual renewal and wholeness. God does not miss the mark, but aims at salvation of the sinner.

The remedy works.

When the sinner responds in good faith to the good news of God's forgiveness in Christ, the sick person sees the right mark in Jesus Christ, and is on the road to recovery. The forgiven sinner begins to act and feel like a new person. This new person is at home with God and neighbor, and seeks daily to aim right and replace evil with goodness, death with life, selfishness with service, and despair with joy. Not only is the recovered sinner joyful, but there is great joy all around, even in heaven.

Peter B. Doghramji

1. *Sin as Disease* (Signs of Jesus are also parables of healing): Mt. 9:1-6; Lk. 7:47-49; Jn. 5:14; 9:2-3, Rm. 6:13-14.
2. *Sin as Abuse* (It is falling short and leads to death): Rm. 1:18-32; 3:23; 6:1-12; 8:10; I Cor. 15:56; James 1:15.
3. *The Remedy for Sin* Mt. 1:21; Jn. 1:29; 3:16; Acts 2:38; 3:19, 10:43; Rm. 5:12-21; II Cor. 5:16-21; Eph. 2:1-10.

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