

Examining Christian Doctrine

Lesson 26: The Doctrine of Salvation Part 3 – Spiritual Death and the Effects of Sin

In this lesson we continue talking about the fall of man, especially in the context of its effects on humanity and what God meant when he told Adam, 'in the day you eat thereof you will surely die.'

The Effects of Sin

1. Spiritual Death

- Spiritual death is the condition of the soul when it is estranged from God. This is the 'state' that lost humanity is in. Sin can be an active verb, in which we can 'commit sins', but 'sin' is also used as a noun (or a 'thing'), an unrighteous state of being that we are 'in'. This has been described as being 'In Adam' as opposed to being 'In Christ'.
 - Adam 'died' in the day he disobeyed God (Genesis 2:17), but not physically. There was a sense of guilt and separation from God.
 - We are told the 'wages of sin is death' (Romans 6:23)
 - Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned
 - Romans 5:16 The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation
 - Romans 5:19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners
 - Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins
 - Colossians 2:13 "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh..."
 - John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
 - The word "perish" here refers to spiritual death, not merely physical death. Jesus contrasts perishing (spiritual death) with eternal life. Those who reject Jesus remain in a state of spiritual death, while those who believe are given eternal life.
- **Separation from God:** Sin causes a rupture in the relationship between humanity and God, leading to spiritual death and being 'alienated from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18). This is the most significant consequence, as it alienates people from the source of life (Isaiah 59:2, Romans 6:23). 1 John 5:12 declares: He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life
- **Condemnation:** Because we are 'in sin' and separated from God, we are under 'condemnation'. John 3:17-18 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (Note the main 'sin' that people are condemned for is 'unbelief'.)
 - 'Condemned' in John is the word 'krisis' meaning 'judgment' or 'verdict'. Those who are condemned are under the 'judgment' or 'verdict' of sin, which is the condition of spiritual death or separation.
- **Wrath:** John 3:36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.
 - The term 'wrath' can mean 'anger, indignation, or divine punishment'. It implies not just an emotional response but a just and measured response to sin.
 - In Romans 1 we see God's wrath, not as an active 'act' of wrath, but as a passive act of 'turning sinners over' to the consequence of sin.
- **Loss of Fellowship:** Sin disrupts the communion with God that humans were created to enjoy, leading to a sense of spiritual emptiness and estrangement from Him (Genesis 3:8, Ephesians 2:12).
- **Loss of Identity:** Sin robs humanity of its righteous identity as children of God.

2. Guilt

- **Legal Guilt:** Sin brings about a standing of guilt before God, the righteous judge, as it is a violation of His law (Romans 3:19-20, James 2:10). This guilt demands justice, which is why Christ's atoning work is necessary for salvation.
- This guilt caused humanity to cease to have 'peace with God' – where through rebellion were defined as 'enemies' of God who need to be reconciled.
- **Internal Guilt:** Individuals often experience a deep sense of guilt after committing sin, an internal acknowledgment that they have done wrong (Psalm 32:3-4, Romans 7:24).

3. Shame

- **Loss of Innocence:** After the Fall, Adam and Eve experienced shame, symbolized by their realization of nakedness and the desire to hide (Genesis 3:7). Sin exposes individuals to feelings of shame, as it reveals their moral failures.
- **Self-Condensation:** Shame can lead to a distorted self-image, where individuals see themselves as unworthy, leading to further alienation from God and others (Psalm 44:15, Romans 10:11).

4. Fear

- **Fear of Judgment:** Sin often brings about a fear of divine judgment and punishment, as seen in Adam and Eve hiding from God (Genesis 3:10). This fear can lead to a life of anxiety and uncertainty (Romans 2:5-6, Hebrews 10:27).
- **Fear of Others:** Sin can cause individuals to fear being exposed or rejected by others, leading to isolation and relational breakdown (1 John 4:18, Proverbs 29:25).

5. Internal Conflict

- **Conscience and Conviction:** Sin can lead to a war within the self, where the conscience convicts an individual of wrongdoing, causing inner turmoil (Romans 7:15-23). This internal conflict often manifests as guilt, shame, and anxiety.
- **Loss of Peace:** The Bible describes how sin disrupts the inner peace that comes from living in harmony with God's will, leading to restlessness and dissatisfaction (Isaiah 48:22, Romans 8:6).

6. Bondage to Sin

- **Enslavement:** Sin is portrayed as a form of bondage, where individuals become slaves to sinful habits and desires (John 8:34, Romans 6:16). This can manifest in various forms of addictions and cycles—whether to substances, behaviors, or harmful relationships—where the sinner is controlled by their desires rather than controlling them (Galatians 5:19-21).

7. Corruption of the Mind and Heart

- **Darkened Understanding:** Sin affects the mind, leading to a darkened understanding and a distorted perception of reality (Ephesians 4:18, Romans 1:21-22).
- **Hardened Heart:** Repeated sin can harden the heart, making individuals less responsive to God's voice and more resistant to change (Hebrews 3:13, Ephesians 4:19).

8. Eternal Consequences

- **Eternal Separation from God:** Sin results in eternal separation from God, known as hell, where individuals are cut off from God's presence forever (Revelation 20:14-15).
- **Divine Judgment:** Sin leads to divine judgment, where individuals will be held accountable for their actions and face the consequences in eternity (Hebrews 9:27, Revelation 20:11-13).