

That sin might become utterly sinful

by Hendrik Joubert

So the Bible accuses us of being sinners, but Jesus fixed that problem so let's get on with our lives. Consider for a moment how prevalent this frivolous attitude is, as the love and the grace of God is emphasized at the expense of obedience resulting from total submission. In our *politically correct* society, where the individual's rights are stressed, we are discouraged from making people feel guilty. We are taught to find others, as well as circumstances to blame for our deviant behavior. Talking about sin and how *bad* we are will only cause feelings of guilt.

What constitutes sin, and how terrible could it really be? The individual rights philosophy is evident from the popular idea that I can do whatever I want *as long as I do not hurt anyone*. Our actions are considered wrong (*sinful*) only when, and because they hurt others. Whatever I do privately is none of your business. This attitude reveals the absence of God in one's thinking. Sin is defined by God; our opinion on the matter does not bear any weight at all.

Who did Adam and Eve harm when they ate the fruit? Why was it wrong to eat of this particular fruit, when eating all the other fruit was okay? What made eating some fruit wrong? *Because God said it was wrong.* This seems so drastic that some attempt to make the eating of the fruit symbolic of something more *sinful*. What is wrong with getting drunk even if it is in the privacy of my home? Because God says it is wrong. (1 **Corinthians 5:11**) What is immoral or bad about using a different kind of fire? (**Leviticus 10:1-2**)

The definition of sin is simply **lawlessness: Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.** (1 **John 3:4**) God, *the Creator of the universe*, makes the laws. When David *hurts* his fellow man in order to get his wife, he recognizes the essence of sin as he confesses **Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge.** (**Psalm 51:4**) We may harm our fellow man, but first and foremost we sin against God.

When Jesus begins announcing His law (**Hebrews 2:3; Hebrews 8:7-13; 1 Corinthians 9:21; Galatians 6:2; 2 John 9**) God takes it to a spiritual level. You are not stoned when you actually commit the act, you die spiritually (separated from God, your Creator) when the thought enters your heart. (**Matthew 5:28**)

Let us approach the seriousness of sin from another perspective – *The punishment should fit the crime* is a concept we are familiar with. Punishment should be meted out in proportion to the seriousness of the offence committed. This principle, when properly applied, is true in the reverse also. The punishment reveals the seriousness of the crime. Since we are dealing with the judgment of *The Judge*, there can be no misconceptions as to the validity of this principle. Go back to the beginning. What were the consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve? They were separated from God and, because they introduced imperfection into a perfect creation, it had consequences for all who followed. They could never undo the fact that they introduced sin into the world.

The separation will ultimately result in eternal punishment unless forgiveness is obtained. Eternal punishment for *eating a fruit*... time to rationalize... They must have... Let's interpret the sin so that we may feel more comfortable about our own sins. So we may consider them petty sins not worthy of eternal punishment: ***Or 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 effeminate, nor homosexuals,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)***

Allow me to illustrate another way we tend to deal with sin. When you read the passage above, was there any particular sin (or sins) which stood out? Which were they? Did you think that this is a great text to show to homosexuals? Consider how often we will object to Hollywood trying to make homosexuality acceptable by the way they depict it, while we will watch movies and shows portraying adultery and fornication as acts of *love*.

Our inability to appreciate the seriousness of sin causes us to be superficial in our approach and lacking in our understanding and appreciation of the *love* and *grace* of God. The root of the word humility (The ability to see ourselves for what we are) goes back to the classical Greek where it is associated with rubbish, or the rubbish dump (lowly). Someone once objected when I suggested that we become rubbish, saying that God does not create rubbish. Amen, we *become* rubbish through sin. Herein lies the propensity to make ourselves look better; we will look at what *God* did, and not to what *we* do. The law was given to help people see sin for what it is, *utterly sinful* by affecting the death of those who broke it. **Romans 7:13.**

One final thought – did God overreact when He allowed His Son to be crucified on the cross to make atonement for sin? Or was the crucifixion not caused by people like us...? When we appreciate the seriousness of sin, we will appreciate the amazing love and the grace of God. ***For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)***