

# LET'S TALK ABOUT SIN

Does God treat all sinners alike?  
Are there different degrees of sin?  
Is the punishment the same for every sin?  
What is the “salvation issue?”  
What one thing will decide whether I am saved or lost.

## Sin is Sin

I JOHN 3:5 “Sin is lawlessness.”

ROMANS 5:13 “For until the law sin was in the world,  
but sin is not imputed when there is no law.”

Let's try that again: Before anyone knew about “the law” humans were sinning, but no one is held responsible who has never heard “the law.” (Rachel's Version) Said another way, sin is still sin, even if you don't know it's sin – but you won't be counted guilty because you didn't know any better.

## Sins of ignorance

JOHN 9:41 “Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin, but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains.’”

JOHN 15:22,24 “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin ...” “If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin, but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father.”

*It's all about attitude. If you know that God doesn't want you to do something, and you do it anyway - that's the essence of sin. God only holds you guilty if you know what he expects of you. Even if you did something in ignorance - when you learn that what you did was wrong, you will need to ask forgiveness (and not do that again). Here was the command concerning sins of ignorance, in ancient Israel.*

I TIMOTHY 1:13 Paul writing, “Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.”

LEVITICUS 5:4-6 “When he realizes it, then he shall be guilty in any of these matters. And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing, and he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD for his sin which he has sinned...”

LEVITICUS 5:17 “If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity. And he shall bring to the priest a ram without blemish from the flock, with your valuation as a trespass offering.”

I JOHN 5:16-17 “All unrighteousness is in, and there is sin NOT leading to death.” If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin, not leading to death. There IS sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that.”

*For you students of the word, this verse is about ignorant sin, and sin (with attitude). Sins committed in ignorance do “not lead to death” because God won’t hold you guilty. We can pray for these people, asking God to forgive them. This is what Jesus did, on the cross when He prayed, “Father forgive them--they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).*

HEBREWS 9:7 But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance;”

*The blood of Jesus removes the record of those sins from the heavenly records.*

*And by the way - you cannot just stay ignorant on purpose. Willful ignorance is sin too. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” (Hosea 6:2).*

## **Unintentional Sin: Sins of weakness**

(Without premeditation, thoughtless, careless.)

You lost your temper. You cursed because you have a bad habit. You just recently quit smoking and the craving just got the better of you, and you smoked another one. You lingered a little too long, looking at that girl in short-shorts ahead of you in the check-out line, until you were fantasizing about her in bed. You shared a bit of gossip before it hit you - what you were doing. There are about a thousand examples we could give here - but you get the picture. We just slip up sometimes.

ROMANS 7:15 Paul wrote, “For what I am doing I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do”

*I have heard this type of sin called “missing the mark.” You were trying. You aimed at the target. You just missed. Once again, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).*

LEVITICUS 4 and 5 “If a person sins unintentionally against any of the commandments of the LORD in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them ...”

*He was to bring an animal for a sacrifice – called a “sin offering.” The offering was different depending on who sinned - common person, or ruler, or the whole camp. The blood of Jesus the true “sin-offering” covered the record of the sin.*

## **Sin - with attitude**

This one is different. This person knows what God wants him to do. He just doesn't care. He is rebellious to the core. He sins willfully, with premeditation, with no regard for God's commands. Is there a remedy for this person?

There was no sacrificial remedy for rebellious sin.

HEBREWS 10:26 “For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,”

But what if that person has a change of heart. What if he comes to see that all his sinful pleasures are not worth it. The story of the “prodigal son” is a story of just such a person. He knew that he was not honoring his father. He knew that wasting his inheritance on debauchery was morally wrong. ----- But when his money was gone, and he was left feeding the pigs, he had a change of attitude. And his father forgive him – with great joy! (Luke chapter 15).

**Isaiah 55:7 “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.”**

The story of King Solomon is another such story. Solomon was truly blessed of God, but he squandered those blessings - decorating his palace, throwing wild parties, having sex with hundreds of wives and concubines (pagan ones at that). Only later in his life, when he realized that the sinful pleasures were empty, did he return to the Lord. Then he wrote the Proverbs, which teach that a simple life in harmony with the Lord, is the only one which leads to peace, and joy.

We can return. We can be forgiven, even for sins with attitude - but only if we loose the attitude. We must have true heart sorrow for our sin in order to be forgiven. The danger in the wild lifestyle is that the person will get so far out there - he/she will not WANT to return.

## **It's all about attitude.**

Which brings me to something I call “**the salvation issue**” – the thing that decides whether an individual will live forever with God in the earth made new, or die the second death.

I believe that “the salvation issue” is the response of each person to the Holy Spirit. Christ may convict each of us about something different.

He may come to a native in the jungles of Borneo, who has never heard the name Jesus, with the conviction that it would be wrong to murder his neighbor and steal his pigs. He may come to me with the conviction that I really should treat my body like a temple of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus lived on earth, the Spirit convicted the Jews that HE really was/is the Messiah. He may convict you that the 7<sup>th</sup> day really is the Sabbath, blessed and hallowed at creation.

Whatever the case - the individual response to that pleading of the Spirit, over the course of their life, will determine the relationship with God, for eternity. Will they respond with rebellion, with careless disregard, or with humble submission?