

Sin

**SABBATH—MAY 2**

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Isaiah 14:12–14; Matthew 23:23; Matthew 25:45; Philippians 2:6–8; Hebrews 1:1–5; Revelation 5:9–12.

MEMORY VERSE: “One man’s sin brought guilt to all people. So also one right act made all people right with God. And all who are right with God will live” (Romans 5:18, NlrV).

MOST PEOPLE IN THE PAST believed that everything in the world would get better and better. But this is no longer true today. Even after the cold war, the world is far from a safe place. Terrorism¹ has made us all feel very unsafe. Science, which promised a better world, now warns of many problems to come to that world. Energy is being used up. The ice caps are melting. Crime is a sad fact of life everywhere. Humans (men, women, or children) show little, if any, signs of becoming better over past generations. The separation between rich and poor is becoming wider. Daily news tells us of cruelties and evil in the world. No wonder someone once said that the Christian teaching of our sinfulness is one teaching that easily can be proven true. So, that is one doctrine we do not need to take on faith.

Sin is as bad as it can be. But it is not the end of the story. Sure, sin is real, but so is God’s grace.

A QUICK LOOK AT THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Sin, and the results of sin, are very real in our lives. Thank God for Jesus, who has made a way of escape for us all.

1. terrorism—violent or destructive acts committed by groups to create fear in people or a government.

SUNDAY—MAY 3**SIN IS REBELLION (1 John 3:4)**

What is sin? How does the Bible describe sin? First John 3:4 (NirV) reads, “Everyone who sins breaks the law. In fact, breaking the law is sin.” The New Living Translation reads, “Sin opposes the law.” But the King James Version defines sin as “transgression [breaking] of the law.” But the law does not mean any law that man has broken. It is God’s law. Humans have rebelled (warred) against their God. They do not surrender (give themselves; obey) to the wisdom and love of God.



Everyone who sins breaks the law.

What do Genesis 3:1–7; Isaiah

14:12–14; and Revelation 12:7–9 teach about sin?

Why did God punish Adam and Eve for what seemed to be an unimportant matter? It may have seemed unimportant, but there was an important principle (rule) involved. “There was nothing poisonous in the fruit itself. The sin was not just appetite itself. Adam and Eve did not trust God’s goodness. They did not believe in His Word. And they refused to accept His authority [law]. These made our first parents lawbreakers. These sins also brought into the world a knowledge of evil. These sins opened the door to every kind of lie and error.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 25.

According to Revelation 14:12, what will be an important part of the character² of God’s people in the time of the end? How does the issue of obedience come up here?

God has done for us all that His unlimited love could do. In return, God asks us to love and obey Him. A time will come when the world becomes lawless, and people will claim that good and evil depend on cultural³ events and personal choices. At that time God’s people will strongly defend the Ten Commandments as His standard of holiness.

We like to think of rebellion⁴ as a

2. character—who someone is; all the things that a person does, feels, and thinks that are what a person is made of; a person’s character is the sum of the choices he or she makes, such as a choice to be honest or to cheat.

3. cultural—having to do with the ideas, skills, arts, tools, and way of life of a certain people at a certain time.

4. rebellion—a fight or struggle against any kind of power.

direct attack and refusal of authority (power). But it can come in much more “hidden” forms. How could you tell if you yourself are holding some rebellious (sinful) attitudes toward God?

MONDAY—MAY 4

MISSING THE MARK (Romans 8:6)

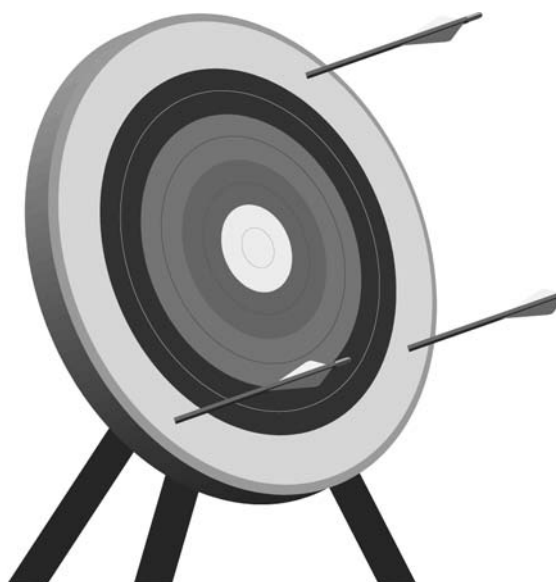
Sin often is made to seem less serious and terrible than it is. “Ah, we cannot all be perfect!” people say. But sin is serious business. “How serious sin can become is clear when we have understood the possible perfectness of human life as created in the image of God.”—Adapted from John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1966), page 238.

Sin is not connected with doing wrong acts only. It also includes the desire and the fantasizing (imagining) about things that we know are wrong (Matthew 5:28).

What have you fantasized (imagined) about in the past 24 hours? Would you be ashamed to have those thoughts made public? According to Romans 8:6, what should your answer tell you about where your heart is?

There also is a group of sins called “sins of omission.” This means failure to do one’s duty or refusing to do something that should be done.

In Matthew 23:23 and Matthew 25:45, we find Jesus’ sayings that deal with sins of omission. Read these verses to understand what they mean. What do these sayings really mean?



Sin is missing the mark.

Also in chapter 25 of Matthew’s Gospel,⁵ we find the parable (story) of the talents (verses 14–28). What happened to the servant who had hidden his one talent? What does this story really mean?

We all have been given talents. Stewardship⁶ calls for us to manage our talents fully and wisely. We must answer to God for what we fail to do with what He has given us. Let us remember the words of Peter: “Each of you has received a gift in order to serve others. You should use it faithfully” (1 Peter 4:10, NIV).

5. Gospel—one of the first four books in the New Testament that tells the story of Jesus’ life and His teachings. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are called the Gospels.

6. stewardship—how we manage our health, money, time, talents, and property.

Sins of omission, sins of thought—who has not been guilty of them all? Think about the promise of forgiveness that we can have in Jesus. Why should this promise mean so much to us?

TUESDAY—MAY 5

“ORIGINAL” SIN (Romans 5:12)

Religious leaders often point out the difference between the *sinful acts* that we do and the sinful nature⁷ that we have. We all have been stained by Adam’s fall. We all are called sinners even before we sin. The practice of baptizing babies is closely connected with this belief: a newborn child who dies without having been baptized will be lost eternally (forever) because the child is a sinner. If the child is not baptized, he or she loses eternal life.

There is no support from the Bible for this practice. The Bible also does not show that a child who dies is to be destroyed. Now, it is true that the “original” sin of Adam and Eve has led to results that influence⁸ everyone. Sin entered the world through one person. And through this sin, death came to “all men” (Romans 5:12, NIV).

How does Paul in Romans 8:7, 8 and Romans 7:21–24 describe the powerful influences (effects) of sin on all of us who are born with

them? How have you experienced the real influences of sin in your own life?

Through the ages some Christians have declared that they reached a state of perfection. But those who claim perfection really fool themselves. The Bible says that this is not true. Paul quotes Psalm 106:6, saying: “ ‘There is no one righteous [without sin], not even one!’ ” (Romans 3:10, NIV). John is just as strong: “Suppose we claim we are without sin. Then we are fooling ourselves” (1 John 1:8, NIV).

“Sanctification [righteous living] is not the work of a minute, an hour, or a day. It is a continual [nonstop] growth in grace.⁹ We do not know one day how strong our next struggle will be. Satan lives, and is active. Every day we need to cry to God for help and strength to refuse Satan. As long as Satan rules, we shall have self to control and temptations [the desire to sin] to overcome. And there is no stopping place. We will never in this life be able to say that we no longer need to worry about sin.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7, page 947.

Suppose you reached a point where you truly had victory¹⁰ over sin. Suppose you were not doing any known sin. More so, you were always kind, loving, generous, and following all the light you had. Suppose your

7. sinful nature—any of the fallen qualities or aspects of humans (men, women, or children) that we are born with. Without God, our natures are sinful, fallen, selfish, proud, unkind, and so on.

8. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

9. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

10. victory—the act of winning the battle over, or winning the struggle against something.

life “perfectly” showed Jesus to others. But why, then, according to Romans 8:1, would you still need a Savior?

WEDNESDAY—MAY 6

GROUP VERSUS PERSONAL SIN? (Ecclesiastes 9:10)

Ever since the Fall, the world has been stained by sin. The results of sin can be seen in nature. They can be seen also in wars, in the evil of slavery, and in the ways in which we abuse nature. The world of the past and of the present is full of unfairness and self-centered people.

These facts raise many difficult questions. Should we as people carry any responsibility for these things? Should we accept any guilt for this group condition of sinfulness? The following points may help us to deal with this problem.



The results of sin can be seen in nature.

1. Think how group sins in our world may be seen against the background of the great controversy (war between Christ and Satan). “Behind the rise and fall of nations and the history of humans lies the unseen struggle between the Godhead [the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit], with the loyal angels, and Satan with his hosts of fallen angels. This has been a struggle that directly influences [affects] all human activities.”—Adapted from Frank Holbrook, “The Great Controversy,” in Raoul Dederen, editor, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology* (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 2000), page 995.

2. Think about how destructive sin is. Sin wants to destroy everything that has any value. Sin and death are the same, and they are everywhere. There is no hope for this world without God’s action. This is true because the power of sin and death go beyond our human abilities to deal with them.

3. But also think that we all have some influence. We can all make small decisions (choices) that at times may increase or lessen the evil in this world. We can work for peace and justice. We can do acts of mercy. We can choose to work with all who want to protect the environment. How do such verses in Ecclesiastes 9:10; Luke 16:10; and Philippians 4:8, 9 help us better understand this issue?

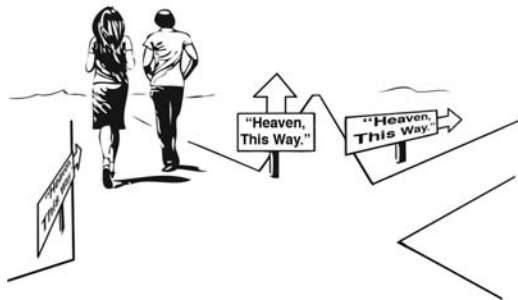
It is so easy just to give up and say, “The problems are too great. I am so little. How can what I do make

a difference?” But how should the examples of Jesus (healing the sick and comforting the poor) influence our decisions to try to make the world a better place?

THURSDAY—MAY 7

THE ONLY ANSWER TO THE SIN PROBLEM (John 10:7)

There is no easy or cheap answer to the sin problem. Sin cannot be overcome by human efforts. Sin is larger than we are. The answer is salvation¹¹ in Jesus. There is a lot of confusion among people about the issue of salvation. Many claim there are many different roads to the kingdom. They claim that the roads may be different, but they all lead to the same place. But they are wrong.



Some people claim that there is more than one road that leads to heaven. But they are wrong.

What does the Bible say, in John 10:7; John 14:6; and Acts 4:12, is the one and only road toward salvation?

We do not know who will enter through the gates of the kingdom. Thank God, that decision is in the hands of Jesus, the One who is love and justice in person. But we do know one thing: those who receive eternal life do so only because Christ died for them. Some may never have had the honor of learning about their Savior. But no one can deny the fact that if people are saved it will be through the name of Christ.

According to Philippians 2:6–8; Hebrews 1:1–5; and Revelation 5:9–12, why was Jesus the only One who could save fallen humanity?

“The Son of God was the only Sacrifice¹² that could fully satisfy the claims of God’s perfect law. . . . Christ was not required to be our Sacrifice. He had power to put down His life and to take it again. He really did not have to accept and do the work of forgiveness. But He volunteered to make this sacrifice. His life was of more than enough value to rescue man from his fallen condition.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, page 24.

Think of just how bad sin must be that it cost so much (the death of Jesus Himself) in order to pay for it. How can remembering this amazing truth help you in your own struggle with sin?

11. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.

12. sacrifice—someone or something of value, such as life, that is given up to save or to help save someone or something else.

FRIDAY—MAY 8

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Fall of Satan,” “The Fall of Man,” and “The Plan of Salvation,” pages 145–153, in *Early Writings*. These three short chapters are about the origin of sin in heaven and on earth and about the plan of salvation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ As Seventh-day Adventists, we know that the world is not going to get better but worse—much worse, in fact. The question is, How are we to relate to the world’s problems? Do we just shrug them off, saying, “Well, God said that things were going to be bad, and they are, so what can we do about them?” Or do we get so involved in trying to solve the world’s problems that we forget our calling to point people to the only solution: that is, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and is coming back? How do we strike the right balance?

❷ Should our church be clearer in criticizing (attacking) group evils in this world? Or would this have little influence and prevent us from the work of taking the gospel to every person? At the same time, if we keep quiet about many of these big issues, how will our silence negatively affect our ability to

share with others about Jesus?

❸ Of all the horrible effects of sin, death has to be the worst. But there is nothing we can do to stop it. Sin has had such terrible results that only God’s action can solve it. Does this not show us how important it is for us to work against sin with all our God-given strength?

❹ As Seventh-day Adventists, we understand the whole question of sin and evil as part of the great controversy (war between Christ and Satan). Now, imagine that people from other worlds are watching what is happening here and understanding how God will deal with sin and its results. Imagine yourself as a sinless being from another part of the universe¹³ who has seen what sin has done to us. What would they see? What might they be thinking? What lessons might they be learning from what they see us going through here? Imagine how senseless some of our actions must seem to them.

SUMMARY: Sin has infected all parts of life. We are faced with something that we cannot fight alone. But sin is not greater than the power and the love of God. God has solved the sin problem once and for all time through His Son, Jesus Christ.

13. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.