

The Cross: The True Nature of Sin Revealed

Intro: Before we can understand the cross, we must first understand something about sin.

1. The Deceptive Pleasure of Sin

A. **Illus:** Setting mousetraps. A tasty morsel of pecan turns very deadly.

B. Gn 3:6-7 – Though God warned that Eve would die (Gn 2:17), she was allured by sin. This is the beginning of a pattern to be repeated *billions of times over*.

2. Destroys the Entire Well-being of Man

A. Physical health, even life itself, is destroyed by sin:

1. Alcoholism/drug abuse cause malnutrition, theft, murder. Hatred, greed, jealousy, ambition leads to discord or violence. Sexual sins cause disease, deviancy and death. **Illus:** a man contracted AIDS, later married (not knowing) and infected his wife.

2. In fact, *most* of the world's ills are self-inflicted. Storms, earthquakes, accidents wreak havoc, but if we could remove willful injury, how much suffering would disappear?

B. Such behavior is totally ruinous to the human spirit:

1. Peace of mind is destroyed by insecurity, anxiety, doubt, guilt. It even causes “collateral damage” in those we love (divorce/effect on children; suicide).

2. Joy is replaced with anger, fear, depression. Meaningful purpose gives way to emptiness, aimlessness.

C. Summary: Sin destroys the very fabric of society, beginning with the destruction of the individual, continuing to the family, business, government, *even the church*. It is degenerate, debilitating, degrading.

3. Sin Destroys Our Relationship with God

A. The essence of sin “lawlessness” (1 Jn 3:4), violation of God's will. But also *rebellion*.

1. Sin is a repudiation of the authority, character, blessings of God.

2. But what does that mean? Sinners are “alienated,” “enemies” of God. We may be physically alive, but spiritually we are separated from God – Rom 6:23.

3. This death is the consequence of cutting ourselves off from the source of life. **Illus:** Spacewalking astronaut – cuts umbilical to spacecraft to be “free.”

- B. This effect is *universal*; it has destroyed every single individual's relationship with God in the history of mankind. **Contrast:** The world panicked recently when a man with tuberculosis flew on international flight. But what about *sin*??

4. Accepting the Guilt of Sin

- A. Once committed, man goes to great lengths to avoid the guilt and consequences of sin.
1. We deny it; rationalize “why” we did it; shift blame to others (society, parents, genetics).
 2. As a society, we simply remove “sin” from the language. “Sin is a brat that nobody is willing to own” (Matthew Henry).
- B. But even when recognized, sin continues to be a powerful master that seeks to hold dominion over us. **Illus:** “Intervention” programs; even after confrontation, many are unchanged.
- C. But until we understand and accept that **we have all** “sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” the cross will be an meaningless, ancient relic.

5. Sin and the Cross

- A. The true nature of sin was manifested when God's Son came into the world. Jesus did only good for man but was slandered, ridiculed, rejected.
1. But the cross brought out the worst in man: Judas' greed; Pilate's cowardice; the Pharisees' envy; the soldiers' cruelty all *built the cross*.
 2. The cross tells us that Satan will do everything within his power to destroy God and those who belong to Him. He will destroy those you love; he is trying to destroy *you*.
- B. Why was the cross necessary?
1. Because God is holy. The cross says that sin is horrible, repugnant and offensive to God. The blood of Jesus cleanses us – Heb 9:12-14.
 2. Because God is just. The sins of mankind had to be *paid for*. God's justice simply couldn't be ignored – Rom 3:24-26.
 3. Because God wants peace with man – Col 1:20. *He* had to make the peace, for we are helpless to save ourselves.
- C. While the cross brought out the *worst* in men, it brought out the *best* in God. The cross says that sin has been defeated, **all sin can be forgiven** – Heb 10:11-14. If all the sins of mankind are forgiven by the cross, *will God have any trouble forgiving your sins?*