

Lesson Two

How Bad Is The Problem?

Basic Studies in the Good News of Jesus Christ

By Dr. Bill Denton

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah put the problem into perspective for us. He said:

Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear (Isa. 59:1-2, NASU)

Sin separates us from God. Did you know that the Greek word for "death" means "a separation"? When a person dies physically, there is a separation of the soul from the body (James 2:26). In a similar way, we die spiritually when we are separated from God.

Without our connection to God, we're left not only to die spiritually but to suffer condemnation. Basically that means God looks at our sin and judges us. He pronounces us guilty and imposes a sentence on us. Not everyone understands the true meaning of condemnation. Many people do not seem to think it means much, but it affects our entire future, including eternity. When we speak of someone being "lost," we are also talking about a condemned person, guilty of sin and separated from God.

In the book of Romans, Paul knew it was important that his readers understand the problem of sin and the far-reaching consequences of breaking God's law. In the first three chapters, he deals with three groups of people. The first are pagans. These are either godless people or those who have become worshipers of idols. The second group is made up of people who still may believe in the true God, and we might even call them "morally minded." The third group is made up of the Jews, those God had chosen to be His nation out of all nations, to whom He had given the Law of Moses and the prophets. Read the first three chapters of Romans before going further in this lesson.

Here is the basic message that Paul wanted the various groups of people to understand: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

The pagan had abandoned God, turned his back on God, and ignored and refused to think about God. The result was a steady decline into worse and worse sin.

The morally-minded man might have avoided many of the terrible sins practiced by the pagans, but he still had the same basic problem. He was inconsistent in his own life, with what he, himself, believed to be true and right. He accused others and yet practiced the same sins.

The Jews had the Law and the prophets, yet they constantly violated the Law and ignored the prophets. They would have easily seen their own sins if they had been honest with the Law of Moses.

Why is this such an important point? Because you need to know that sin is a problem for all of us. There is no one who avoids sin. "There is none righteous, not even one," Paul wrote to the Romans. Sin brings God's condemnation. We are guilty, judged to be so, and sentenced to eternal punishment. The problem is truly bad.

Below are some other verses from the Bible on the problem of condemnation. Read the verses and answer the questions.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23, NASU).

There are two things mentioned in the verse that are set in opposition to each other. The first is death. How is death described? In other words, how does a person "earn" death?

The other thing mentioned is a free gift. First, what is the free gift?

Second, where is this gift found?

Which would you rather have: death earned by sin or the free gift found in Jesus Christ?

To the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul wrote about the Lord returning with mighty angels and flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Thess. 1:8-9, NASU).

What kind of destruction did Paul say would be dealt out to those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of Jesus?

Perhaps the way to best state the truth about sin and condemnation is to read one verse from Hebrews: It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31, NASU).

What message do you think the writer was trying to send to the readers of the Hebrew letter?

When you think about your sins, what do these verses tell you about your problem with God?

When a person begins to think about his or her need to become a Christian or when he has specific questions about being baptized, it is often because that person is beginning to understand about sin, condemnation, and God's punishment of sinners. If you have had thoughts or concerns recently, especially fears about God punishing you for doing wrong, make a list of the things that worry you. Talk about them with a spiritual mentor or email us and we will try to provide more direct guidance.

It's quiz time again! Remember that though we may not know you personally, we love you and care about you. These verses on sin, condemnation and punishment are verses that we have already faced. We know all about concerns, worries and fears. Remember that these lessons on sin and its consequences are necessary in order to understand just how very good the news is concerning Jesus Christ.

Take the quiz.

Go to the next page to begin the quiz for lesson two.

Bad is the Problem?

How Basic Bible Studies in the Gospel of Jesus Christ



Answer True or False to each of the following

The Problem of Sin

T F

1. Sin separates us from God.
2. Death basically means "a separation."
3. God will judge sinners.
4. "Lost" people are sinners, separated from God, and condemned.

Help From Romans

T F

5. In the first three chapters, Paul shows how everyone is a sinner.
6. Rom. 3:23 tells us that only some people have sinned.
7. Rom 3:10 says that none are righteous.
8. The reason that sin is so bad is that it leaves everyone condemned.

Hope

T F

9. Rom 6:23 says there is a free gift called "eternal life."
10. That free gift is found in Jesus Christ.
11. 2 Thess 1:8-9 tells us that nobody will be punished because of sin.
12. Heb. 10:31 says that it is a terrifying thing to fall into God's hands.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the quiz. You can score your own results by checking the correct answers on the next page.

Bad is the Problem?

How Basic Bible
Studies in the
Gospel of Jesus
Christ



Answer Key For Lesson 2

1. T
2. T
3. T
4. T
5. T
6. F
7. T
8. T
9. T
10. T
11. F
12. T