

## Of Sin and Salvation

God is holy, righteous and pure. Sin cannot exist in his presence, because it is a rejection of all that God is.

God created us to be a reflection of his moral nature - that is why Scripture says he created us "in his image." He also made us fully capable of doing this. However, we, the human race, have *chosen* to reject God, and to go after ways that are a rejection of his moral nature.

Sin is "missing the mark." We could compare it to a target that we are shooting arrows at; and sin is like missing the bull's-eye. However, it's not that we try hard and accidentally miss the bull's-eye; rather, we *deliberately* aim the wrong way. God created us, the human race, fully capable of hitting the mark 100% of the time, but we *deliberately* chose to not do so. By doing this, sin has become a part of our nature, *influencing even our values and our perspective of right and wrong*, so that we have *lost* the ability to hit the mark.

We tend to ignore the fact that sin against other people is also a sin against God.

- When we defy authority (including parental authority), we have rejected God's authority in our lives. Until we humble ourselves and submit to his authority, we cannot be saved.
- When we are filled with hatred and anger, we have chosen a lifestyle of death, and have rejected the God of life. We cannot have a part in the "kingdom of life," until we have chosen the way of life.
- When we choose to indulge in sexual sin, to flirt with it, or even to daydream about it, we have rejected the God of purity. Nothing impure can stand in God's presence.
- When we choose to take what is not ours, or keep what others have a right to, we have rejected the God who is generous and who freely gives to others. In doing so, we have forfeited the free gift of salvation that he offers us.
- When we choose to distort the truth, we have rejected the God of truth, and have chosen to serve the "father of lies," the Devil. We cannot serve two masters, and will have to reject the one before we can follow the other.
- When we are filled with cravings and desires for things we do not have, or when our lives are preoccupied with *anything* that is a part of creation, we have rejected the God who deserves to have *first* place in our lives. Only those who love God *first* will spend eternity with him. We cannot reject the God of salvation and be saved.

We cannot stand in God's presence, as long as we are determined to cling to sin. We have to *reject* our lifestyles and values, and cling to the lifestyle and values that Jesus taught. This is what it means, when Scripture tells us to "repent" and to "follow Jesus."

False teachers may say, "Jesus loves you just the way you are"; for what they say often contains *fragments* of truth. But until we repent of our ways - until we reject our own lifestyle and values, and go after the lifestyle and values taught to us by Jesus - we are *rejecting* God's love, and cannot become recipients of it.

If we *do* turn to God, it will be like aiming once again toward the target. Because of sin's past effects on us, we won't always hit the bull's-eye; *but we will be aiming for it*. Sinless perfection will not occur until we are in Jesus' presence. But as we grow in Christ, we will get closer and closer to the 100%. And it will be the reflection of our heart's desire to follow Jesus, not just a pretension we live-out on Sunday mornings.