What is the Essence of Sin?
Scripture: 1 John 3:4; Romans 8:7; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Genesis 3:1-7
Code: QA141

What is the Essence of Sin?

Essentially, sin is any transgression or violation of God's law. This is seen in 1 John 3:4 where John wrote, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." The New American Standard says, "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." In other words, any lack of conformity to the perfect moral standard of God is sin.

But our problem with sin goes much deeper than simple acts of disobedience, which are merely outward manifestations of inner fleshly compulsions. The basic inclination and orientation of man toward self-gratification-however religious or moral we may appear on the outside-is directly hostile to God. Even the good deeds of an unbeliever fail to fulfill God's law. Why? Because they are produced by the flesh, for selfish reasons, and from a heart that is in rebellion toward God.

Romans 8:7 tells us that the natural man is at enmity with God-meaning that he has a positive hatred toward God and stands in opposition to Him. Sin seeks to dethrone and depose God, usurp His authority, and put self in His place.

At its core all sin is an act of pride. Pride says, "Move over, God, I'm in charge, I'll do what I want." Therefore all sin at its core is blasphemy because it attacks God. When we come into this world we love sin, and so we love our rebellion and we love our pride and we love our blasphemy. We delight in it and we seek every opportunity we can to manifest it.

Jesus taught that the central demand of God's law is to "love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31).

Thus, the essence of all sin is the failure to love God. That is the primary violation. And the essence of sin is most clearly seen in unbelief. This shows up in John 16 where Jesus said He would send the Holy Spirit who would "convict the world of sin...because they do not believe in Me" (John 16:8). In other words, any failure to love and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is a failure to love God. Thus, the apostle Paul wrote, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be damned" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

So, the ultimate sin, the epitome of sin and the summation of sin, is any lack of love for God and His Son Jesus Christ. "And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23).

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2016 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).