

# The Problem of Sin

The Reason For God

Timothy Keller

# The Nature of Sin

*“It is hard to avoid the conclusion that there is something fundamentally wrong with the world. According to Christianity our biggest problem is sin. Yet the concept of “sin” is offensive or ludicrous to many. This is often because we don’t understand what Christians mean by the term.”*

**Many have the impression that the Christian doctrine of sin is bleak and pessimistic about human nature.**

- **Today’s popular culture blames our misfortunes on everyone and everything.**
- **The “medical model” – we are entirely at the mercy of our maladies**
- **The good news is that we are sinners. We are not helpless victims. We can receive the saving grace of God and overcome sin.**

# Doctrine of Sin

- The Christian doctrine of sin, properly understood, can be a great resource for human hope, but what is that doctrine?
- What is Sin? *“Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.”* (Shorter Catechism, Q14)
- *“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness”* 1 John 3:4
- *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* Romans 3:23
- Keller explains how sin is a matter of the heart by explaining: “Sin is the despairing refusal to find your deepest identity. Sin is seeking to become oneself, to get an identity, apart from Him.”

# Identity & Self Worth

- Everyone gets their identity, their sense of being distinct and valuable, from somewhere or something. Human beings were made not only to believe in God in some general way, but to love him supremely, center their lives on him above anything else, and build their very identities on him. Anything other than this is sin.
- Ernest Becker won his Pulitzer Prize for his book *The Denial of Death*. He begins it by noting that a child's need for self-worth "is the condition for his life", so much so that every person is desperately seeking what Becker calls "cosmic significance".
- In more traditional cultures, the sense of worth comes from fulfilling duties to family and giving service to society.
- In our contemporary individualistic culture, we tend to look at our achievements, our social status, our talents, our love relationships.
- Keller argues that grounding our self-worth in anything less than Christ is futile.

# Shalom

- Because of sin, we have lost God's shalom – physically, spiritually, socially, psychologically and culturally . We experience the world as falling apart. In Romans 8, Paul says that the entire world is now “in bondage to decay” and “subject to futility” and will not be right until we are put right.
- Shalom entails peace, harmony, wholeness, completeness, prosperity, welfare and tranquility
- The only solution to Sin (the absence of shalom) is not simply to change our behavior, but to reorient and center the entire heart and life on God.
- If you don't live for Jesus, you will live for something else. That “something else” will eventually fail you.
- If Jesus is your center and Lord and you fail him, he will forgive you.

# Living for Something

➤ Everybody has to live for something. Whatever that something is becomes “Lord of your life,” whether you think of it that way or not. Jesus is the only Lord who, if you receive him, will fulfill you completely, and, if you fail him, will forgive you eternally.