What Is Sin?

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Opening Hymn — Amazing Grace

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

Bible Reading — Luke 15:1–7 (New International Version)

[1] Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. [2] But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

[3] Then Jesus told them this parable: [4] “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? [5] And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders [6] and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbours together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ [7] I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

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Reflection — What Is Sin?

It is a word we do not hear much any more. *(pause)* “Sin.” It sounds old-fashioned, even a little heavy. But it is one of the most important words in the Bible, and it is worth understanding — gently, and honestly. *(pause)*

In the language the New Testament was written in, the word for sin came from archery. *(pause)* It meant *missing the mark* — an arrow aimed at the target that falls short. *(pause)* And that is the heart of it. Sin is not only the dramatic, wicked things we picture. At its root, sin is *falling short* — missing the mark of the good and loving people God made us to be. *(pause)*

So it is not only the headlines. It is also the quieter things. The unkind word. The selfishness. The pride. The good we knew we should have done, and didn’t. The times we put ourselves first, and God and our neighbour second. *(pause)* Sin is as much about the heart as the hands. *(pause)*

And here is the honest truth the Bible tells us — not to crush us, but to level with us: every one of us has it. *(pause)* The Scripture says plainly, *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* And Isaiah put it tenderly: *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray; each of us has turned to our own way.”* *(pause)* That is the real nature of sin underneath everything — a wandering off, a turning from God to run our own lives. Like a sheep that drifts from the shepherd — not out of hatred, just following its own nose, until it is lost. *(pause)*

Why does this matter? Because that wandering puts a distance between us and God. Sin is the barrier between us and the One who made us and loves us. *(pause)* And if the story stopped there, it would be a sad one indeed. *(pause)*

But it does not stop there. *(pause)* Hear how that same verse in Isaiah finishes: *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray… and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."* *(pause)* On *him*. On Jesus. God took the whole weight of our wandering — yours and mine — and laid it on his own Son at the cross. *(pause)*

So I do not speak of sin to frighten you. I speak of it as a doctor names an illness — because there is a cure, and you cannot reach for the cure until you know what is wrong. *(pause)* The whole good news of the Bible is that God has *dealt* with our sin. He does not leave us lost. He comes looking — like a shepherd after one sheep. *(pause)*

And the remedy is as simple as this: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* *(pause)* Not "if we fix ourselves up first." Just — bring it to him, honestly, and he forgives. *(pause)*

So whatever you have carried through a long life — the regrets, the failings, the things you would undo if you could — you do not have to carry them to the end. You can lay the whole load down at the feet of the One who already carried it for you. *(pause)* *"The wages of sin is death — but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* A *gift*. Freely given. *(pause)*

It is never too late to receive it. His grace is bigger than all of it. *(pause)*

May you know yourself forgiven, and held, and loved, this day and always. *(pause)*

Amen.

Closing Hymn — Just As I Am

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!