

Introduction

In order to answer the question why people are content to live without God, we need to examine what the Bible calls 'sin'.

We shall do that under five headings:

- What sin is (chapter 1)
- Why it is so wicked (chapter 2)
- How we may know that sin's nature is so wicked (chapter 3)
- Why it is so necessary to understand the real harmfulness of sin (chapter 4)
- What we can learn from all this (chapter 5)

Before looking in detail at these headings, we will remind ourselves of four basic facts explained in the Bible.

a. To begin with, we know that God originally made everything perfect and good. 'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good' (Genesis 1:31). Nothing of all the variety of things which were created at the dawn of history could find fault with its Maker, or complain at being defective in any way. So how has our present situation come about?

b. The Bible tells us, secondly, that the two most glorious of the creatures which God created, angels and human beings, lost their perfection. Some of the angels rebelled against God and were therefore thrown out of heaven (Jude 6). Persuaded by one of them (Satan), the first man Adam (who was the representative of all mankind) disobeyed God's clear command, and with his wife Eve was ejected from the Paradise in which they had been living (Genesis 3).

Therefore, just as *sin* [i.e. disobeying God's instructions] entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because *all sinned* [i.e. in their ancestor and representative, Adam] (Romans 5:12)

c. God punished the fallen angels permanently (Jude 6), but has shown great mercy toward mankind by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as the God-Man to be the Saviour of those who acknowledge their disobedience of God, by offering the perfection of his own obedience to his Father on their behalf. 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' (1 Timothy 1:15).

d. Finally, the fact that it was necessary for God to do this implies that we need someone to save us from our sinful disobedience of God; why else need Christ have come? So because we have disobeyed we need to repent. Christ is God's appointed way of calling people to repent: 'I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Luke 5:32). Therefore we need to have faith in Christ as our Saviour. The Bible insists that the Holy Spirit came into this world to give repentance and faith to the people. Why need he do this if we have no need of them?

In the light of these four basic Bible facts, we can begin to see how bad a thing sin really is, and the seriousness of the deadly effect that it has on our lives. Realising this helps us to see

by contrast how wonderful the merciful grace of God is – that he should so love us as to want to redeem us. That in turn should draw us to exercise faith in Jesus Christ. We also understand how right and good God’s laws – which we disobey – must be, for him to send his own Son as our Redeemer. Sin is an ugly disease in us, contrasting with the incomparable health and beauty of God’s perfect holiness.

We cannot argue that God is not good when his laws condemn us as guilty and worthy of death because we disobey them. Both God and his laws are perfect and good, with no fault in either of them. The reason why God’s good laws condemn us is because of what we are – we, bring condemnation on ourselves because we do not follow them. A condemned person standing in front of a judge may claim it is cruel to condemn him, but the judge will justly say, ‘No, you condemn yourself – you have broken the law! If we do not disobey, we will not be condemned. ‘We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious’ (1 Timothy 1:9). It is the wrong the person did, their sin, which brings them into condemnation.

We can conclude by this summary;

- The law of God is good in every part. It is perfect and just, teaching us how we should live.
- When God’s law is violated it justly condemns us as law-breakers and sinners.
- The law condemns both the person who sins and the sinful act, and the guilty can find no reason to blame it.
- We die because we break God’s law – unless God’s grace intervenes.
- God uses his good law to condemn the sinner! Yet sin, which causes the sinful act, afterwards condemns to death.
- The nature of sin is so deceitful it uses a good law to bring a bad end, like turning food into poison.
- God’s law shows sin to be vile and deadly – harmful to us.

We now continue to show what sin is – what it consists of.