

## Lesson 94 – What is sin?

### 1. What is sin? **1 John 3:4**

**EGW:** "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." This is the only definition of sin given in the Holy Scriptures, and we should seek to understand what sin is, lest any of us be found in opposition to the God of heaven. We are required to be in a position of obedience to all of God's commandments. Our salvation cost our Lord too much for us to be found going on in uncertainty when eternal interests are involved, therefore we should open our minds and search the Scriptures, so that we may know for ourselves how we can stand under the banner of Prince Immanuel. God requires at this moment just what he required of Adam in paradise before he fell--perfect obedience to his law. The requirement that God makes in grace is just the requirement he made in paradise. We want to understand the claims of God upon us that we may reach the hearts of men, and teach them what God's word requires of them in order that they may have eternal life. We must live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Our Saviour has told us that in these last days there would be false doctrines and false teachers who would lead the people to accept fables and customs and practices of men, instead of the commandments of God, and that our world would be flooded with heresies. Are we bringing in heresies to turn souls from the truth of God's word? We want the truth of God's word on every point, and we need to practice it. Those who follow the course of error and live in transgression of the law of God, will not follow that course alone; there will be others who will imitate their example. {RH, July 15, 1890 par. 2}

### 2. When we sin, who do we sin against? **Genesis 39:9**

**EGW:** Here is an example to all generations who should live upon the earth. Although they may be exposed to temptations, yet they should ever realize that there is a defense at hand, and it will be their own fault if they are not preserved. God will be a present help, and his Spirit a shield. Although surrounded with the severest temptations, there is a source of strength to which they can apply and resist them. How fierce was the assault upon Joseph's morals. It came from one of influence, the most likely to lead astray. Yet how promptly and firmly was it resisted. He suffered for his virtue and integrity; for she who would lead him astray, revenged herself upon the virtue she could not subvert, and by her influence caused him to be cast into prison, by charging him with a foul wrong. Here Joseph suffered because he would not yield his integrity. He had placed his reputation and interest in the hands of God. And although he was suffered to be afflicted for a time, to prepare him to fill an important position, yet God safely guarded that reputation that was blackened by a wicked accuser, and afterward, in his own good time, caused it to shine. God made even the prison the way to his elevation. Virtue will in time bring its own reward. The shield which covered Joseph's heart, was the fear of God, which caused him to be faithful and just to his master, and true to God. He

despised that ingratitude which would lead him to abuse his master's confidence, although his master might never learn the fact. The grace of God he called to his aid, and then fought with the tempter. He nobly says, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" He came off conqueror. {1SP 132.1}

3. What else is considered sin? **1 John 5:17**

**EGW:** The world's Redeemer declares, "I have kept my Father's commandments." "I counsel thee," saith the True Witness, "to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear." Christ's righteousness will not cover the unrighteousness of any one. "All unrighteousness is sin," and "sin is the transgression of the law," therefore, those who are breaking the law of God and teaching others to break it, will not be covered with the garments of Christ's righteousness. He came not to save men in their sins; but from their sins. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him." These utterances are weighty, and should be duly considered. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned [transgressed the law], we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." We need an advocate with the Father, because it is the Father's law that we have broken. We need to repent of our transgression, and return to our allegiance to God. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins: and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." Here it is plainly stated that whosoever abideth in Christ will not be a transgressor of the law of God. {RH, July 24, 1888 par. 12}

4. What type of activity is usually not associated with sinning but is a sin? **Proverbs 24:9**

**EGW:** (no comment)

5. What other actions are considered sin? **Proverbs 21:4**

**EGW:** (no comment)

6. That is about doing things that are called sin, but what else is called sin that we do not have to do anything to commit it? **James 4:17**

**EGW:** When you truly repent of sin, you will not be satisfied to acknowledge simply that you are sinful, and let the matter rest there. Do you intend to remain sinful while life shall last? Do you mean to violate your conscience? Do you mean to do evil always? What does the Lord say to those who have had light, and yet have failed to live in accordance with it? "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." There is a repentance of sin that needeth not to be repented of. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." {YI, February 15, 1894 par. 4}

7. What sin would not suffer the second death (1 John 5:17)? **Acts 17:30**

**EGW:** In these last days there is a call from Heaven inviting you to keep the statutes and ordinances of the Lord. The world has set at naught the law of Jehovah; but God will not be left without a witness to his righteousness, or without a people in the earth to proclaim his truth. The door of the heavenly sanctuary has been opened, and no man can shut it, and the light of the Holy of Holies is shining into the world. The people of God have had their attention called to the ark of the testimony, and the law within it has been revealed with its unalterable precepts. In holy vision, John saw the remnant church on the earth, in an age of lawlessness, and he points them out in unmistakable language: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." They are in harmony with that law that rests in the ark in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. The whole duty of man is summed up in its sacred precepts. In the heart of the law is the commandment enjoining upon man the observance of the Sabbath of Jehovah, which the world and the church have trodden under their feet. For centuries men have walked in blindness concerning the true Sabbath, and the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now is the day of reformation, and he calls upon men everywhere to repent. When the light of God's disregarded commandment shone upon the path of those who sincerely loved God, they delayed not to keep his statutes. They realized that they must come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean, that they might claim the promise, "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." They became the repairers of the breach that has been made in the law of God, because they turned away their feet from the Sabbath, from doing their pleasure on God's holy day, and called the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and did honor him, not speaking their own words or finding their own pleasure. {ST, February 3, 1888 par. 5}

8. What does sin cause God to do? **Isaiah 59:2**

**EGW:** Inspiration declares, "The sacrifice of the wicked is abomination: how much more, when he bringeth it with a wicked mind?" Proverbs 21:27. The God of heaven is "of purer eyes than to behold evil," and cannot "look on iniquity." Habakkuk 1:13. It is not because He is unwilling to forgive that He turns from the transgressor; it is because the sinner refuses to make use of the abundant provisions of grace, that God is unable to deliver from sin. "The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear." Isaiah 59:1, 2. {PK 323.1}

9. After being enlightened to what sin is, if we continue in our old lifestyle, what is not available for our sins? **Hebrews 10:26**

**EGW:** (no comment)

10. If we allow sin to occur in our life, what does it bring? **James 1:15, Romans 6:23, Romans 6:16, Ezekiel 18:4**

**EGW:** The sin of evilspeaking begins with the cherishing of evil thoughts. Guile includes impurity in all its forms. An impure thought tolerated, an unholy desire cherished, and the soul is contaminated, its integrity compromised. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." If we would not commit sin, we must shun its very beginnings. Every emotion and desire must be held in subjection to reason and conscience. Every unholy thought must be instantly repelled. To your closet, followers of Christ. Pray in faith and with all the heart. Satan is watching to ensnare your feet. You must have help from above if you would escape his devices. {5T 177.1}

11. How many people have sinned? **Romans 3:23, Galatians 3:22**

**EGW:** "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," and for this reason the Lord has provided a remedy for sin: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that

whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." The true test of religious experience is here given. He that abideth in Christ is perfected in the love of God, and his purposes, thoughts, words, and actions are in harmony with the will of God expressed in the commandments of his law. There is nothing in the heart of the man who abides in Christ that is at war with any precept of God's law. Where the Spirit of Christ is in the heart, the character of Christ will be revealed, and there will be manifested gentleness under provocation, and patience under trial. "Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." Righteousness can be defined only by God's great moral standard, the Ten Commandments. There is no other rule by which to measure character. "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." It was the refusal of Satan to obey the commandments of God that brought sin and apostasy into the universe. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." {ST, June 20, 1895 par. 6}

12. When we sin, what do we become? **John 8:34**

**EGW:** But the Pharisees took up his words, addressed to those who believed, and commented upon them, saying, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?" Jesus looked upon these men,--the slaves of unbelief and bitter malice, whose thoughts were bent upon revenge,--and answered them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." They were in the worst of bondage, ruled by the spirit of evil. Jesus declared to them that if they were the true children of Abraham, and lived in obedience to God, they would not seek to kill one who was speaking the truth that was given him of God. This was not doing the works of Abraham, whom they claimed as their father. {1Red 102.1}

13. What status do we have when we sin? **Leviticus 5:17, Exodus 34:7** [Looking for a courtroom term]

**EGW:** "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Poor, doubting, discouraged soul, I would address you as one of that world for whom God gave his Son. He loves you, and will save you if you will but receive the gift of his only-begotten Son. Moses prayed that God would show him his glory, "and the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." This is the character of the God in whom you are to put your trust. "God is love." Repeat this sentence whenever temptation presses upon you. Remember that he is just and merciful, true and gracious, and will by no means clear the

guilty. God can be just, and yet be the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. He will accept you just as you are; for there is no hope of your becoming better until you come to Jesus for pardon and sanctification. Mourning and weeping will not purify you. You may mourn your life away in unbelief, and in bitterness of soul, but the power to cleanse the vilest sinner is vested wholly in him who can save unto the uttermost. {ST, April 9, 1894 par. 8}

14. When we live in sin, what are we considered? **Ephesians 2:1, 5**

**EGW:** Today a large part of those who compose our congregations are dead in trespasses and sins. They come and go like the door upon its hinges. For years they have complacently listened to the most solemn, soul-stirring truths, but they have not put them in practice. Therefore they are less and less sensible of the preciousness of truth. The stirring testimonies of reproof and warning do not arouse them to repentance. The sweetest melodies that come from God through human lips—justification by faith, and the righteousness of Christ—do not call forth from them a response of love and gratitude. Though the heavenly Merchantman displays before them the richest jewels of faith and love, though He invites them to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire," and white raiment" that they may be clothed, and "eyesalve" that they may see, they steel their hearts against Him, and fail to exchange their lukewarmness for love and zeal. While making a profession, they deny the power of godliness. If they continue in this state, God will reject them. They are unfitting themselves to be members of His family. {6T 426.4}

15. Whose are we when we sin? **1 John 3:8**

**EGW:** Though disobeying the express command of the Lord, Saul claimed to have performed the directions, that had been given him; and in this day there are those who claim to be the children of God who take a similar course. But John tells us that "he that committeth sin is of the devil." {ST, January 9, 1896 par. 2}

There are those who claim to be wholly sanctified, and yet they persist in keeping up an unrelenting warfare against the law of God. We do not need to specify to what class they belong, for John has plainly declared that "he that committeth sin is of the devil." "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin," that is, is not found in transgression of the law of God. We are not to be deceived by the high pretensions of those who claim advanced piety; for our Saviour has given us a rule by which to measure their claims. He says: "By their fruits ye shall know them." "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." {ST, January 9, 1896 par. 3}

16. When we allow sin continuously in our life, who do we not really know (see)? **1 John 3:6, 1 John 3:1**

**EGW:** Men may talk of freedom, of Gospel liberty. They may assert that they are not in bondage to the Law. But the influence of a Gospel hope will not lead the sinner to look upon the salvation of Christ as a matter of free grace, while he continues to live in transgression of the Law of God. When the light of truth dawns upon his mind, and he fully understands the requirements of God, and realizes the extent of his transgressions, he will reform his ways, become loyal to God through the strength obtained from his Saviour, and lead a new and purer life. "Whosoever abideth in him," says John, "sinneth not; whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him." {ST, February 25, 1897 par. 10}

17. What is the expectation regarding sinning? **1 John 2:1, John 8:11, John 5:14, Exodus 20:20**

**EGW:** Let no Christian seek to excuse himself in sin on the ground that others who have claimed to follow Jesus have committed the same errors. Your sin is none the less heinous because others have been guilty; and your manifest duty is to confess your sin to Jesus Christ, your intercessor. Take the weight of your woe to no human being. You have one mediator, Jesus Christ the righteous. In contrition of soul go to him and tell all your sins. The promise is sure, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." John says: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." "That ye sin not,"--here is where you bring yourself into condemnation when you continue to sin. But in the strength of Christ cease to sin. Every provision has been made that grace should abide with you, and that sin may appear to you the hateful thing it is. But if any man sin, he is not to give himself up to despair, and talk like a man who is lost to Christ. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." {RH, March 21, 1912 par. 1}

18. What type of people do not sin? **1 John 5:18**

**EGW:** "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he can not sin, because he is born of God." {RH, June 30, 1910 par. 9}

To know God is, in the Scriptural sense of the term, to be one with him in heart and mind, having an experimental knowledge of him, holding reverential communion with him as the Redeemer. Only through sincere obedience can this communion be obtained. Where this communion is lacking, the heart is not in any sense a temple of God, but is controlled by the foe, who is working out his own purposes through the human agency. Such a man, whatever his profession or claims, is not a temple of the Holy Spirit. {RH, June 30, 1910 par. 10}

The experience is perfected by fruit-bearing. He who does not bear good fruit in words and deeds, in the strength of elevated, ennobling principle, is like a bad tree. The fruit that he bears is unpalatable to God. His professed knowledge of Christ is a falsehood, a deception. {RH, June 30, 1910 par. 11}

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he can not sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." {RH, June 30, 1910 par. 12}

19. If we say we have never sinned, what are we calling God then? **1 John 1:10**

**EGW:** The apostle testifies that those who profess to know God, and to be living without sin, and yet break the divine law, give the lie to their profession. His epistles breathe a spirit of love; yet when he comes in contact with this class, he does not hesitate to reprove them sharply, and to warn them of their fearful deception. He says: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." "Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning." {ST, January 29, 1885 par. 12}

20. Why will many Christians be lost? **Matthew 7:21-23 [End of 23]**

**EGW:** The men of the world do not wish the light of truth, and they are one in spirit with those who, while professing to be children of God, do not let their light shine in words of truth and deeds of holiness. Unconverted men who claim to be Christians only encourage the sinner to continue in his sin. In the place of seeking to save the souls that are ready to perish, they live for self. Their vessels are empty, and therefore they can not keep their lamps replenished. To these Christ says, I know



you not. You have not taken me as your counselor. You have not walked in the light of my word. You have not come under my yoke. Your light is darkness, because you have walked in the sparks of the fire of your own kindling. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. {RH, October 31, 1899 par. 14}

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven,"--the will made known in the Ten Commandments, given in Eden when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, and spoken with an audible voice from Sinai. "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Many mighty works are done under the inspiration of Satan, and these works will be more and more apparent in the last days. {RH, May 7, 1901 par. 5}

21. What happens if we simply try to cover up our sins? **Proverbs 28:13**

**EGW:** "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." [Proverbs 28:13.] If those who hide and excuse their faults could see how Satan exults over them, how he taunts Christ and holy angels with their course, they would make haste to confess their sins and to put them away. Through defects in the character, Satan works to gain control of the whole mind, and he knows that if these defects are cherished, he will succeed. Therefore he is constantly seeking to deceive the followers of Christ with his fatal sophistry that it is impossible for them to overcome. But Jesus pleads in their behalf his wounded hands, his bruised body; and he declares to all who would follow him, "My grace is sufficient for thee." [2 Corinthians 12:9.] "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." [Matthew 11:29, 30.] Let none, then, regard their defects as incurable. God will give faith and grace to overcome them. {GC88 489.2}

22. What sins are still found out despite all our efforts not to allow others to know of them? **Psalms 90:8**

**EGW:** We sustain a most solemn relation one to another. Our influence is always either for or against the salvation of souls. We are either gathering with Christ or scattering abroad. We should walk humbly, and make straight paths, lest we turn others out of the right way. We should preserve the strictest chastity in thought, and word, and deportment. Let us remember that God sets our secret sins in the light of his countenance. There are thoughts and feelings suggested and aroused by Satan that annoy even the best of men; but if they are not cherished, if they are repulsed as hateful, the soul is not contaminated with guilt, and no other is defiled by their influence. Oh, that

we each might become a savor of life unto life to those around us! {RH, March 27, 1888 par. 15}

23. What type of sins do we need to be careful not to commit thinking we shall easily be forgiven later?

**Psalms 19:13**

**EGW:** Again and again God has stretched out His hand to save you by showing you your duties and obligations. These duties change in character with the increase of light. When the light shines, making manifest and reproofing the errors that were undiscovered, there must be a corresponding change in the life and character. The mistakes that are the natural result of blindness of mind are, when pointed out, no longer sins of ignorance or errors of judgment; but unless there are decided reforms in accordance with the light given, they then become presumptuous sins. The moral darkness that surrounds you will become more dense; your heart will become harder and harder, and you will be more offensive in the sight of God. You do not realize the great peril you are in, the danger there is that in your case the light will become entirely obscured, veiled in complete darkness. When the light is received and acted upon, you will be crucified to sin, being dead indeed unto the world, but alive to God. Your idols will be abandoned, and your example will be on the side of self-denial rather than that of self-indulgence. {5T 435.3}