

We cannot begin to understand WHY God demanded that Jesus die on the cross until we explore the “problems” God was working to solve. What would you say is your biggest problem? Might it have something to do with “money”? That is what the majority of people list as number one. Others feel that everything would be all right in their lives if they only had their “health.” Some are mostly burdened by “relationship problems” with spouse, or children, or work-mates, or friends. Indeed, these are all legitimate problems; but, they are not your BIGGEST problem. In fact, the problem which is your “biggest” problem might just be the reason you are having problems in these other areas. The Bible defines your biggest problem in one word - “SIN.”

In the Greek New Testament, the word translated “sin” is the Greek word “hamartia.” It was an archery term which meant “to miss the mark.” When we conduct our lives in a way which is different from the way God intended for us to live, it is like a marksman who misses the target with his arrow. “Sin” is the missing of God’s “standard.” I John 3:4 defines sin as “lawlessness.” You see, if God says not to do a certain thing, but we do it anyway, that is sin. In James 4:17, we find that just the opposite is also true. It says, “... to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.” It seems that we don’t have to do anything at all to be a sinner. No wonder the apostle Paul declared that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” in Romans 3:23. He went on to confess that temptations were a constant struggle, even for him. He wrote, “For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate ... for the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish” (Romans 7:15,19). Have you ever felt that way?

Obviously, sin is a universal problem shared by all. But the reason it is a problem is because of the consequence we suffer as a result of our sins. In Romans 6:23, Paul said, “For the wages of sin is death ....” Paul’s meaning is demonstrated in Genesis 2:16-17. There we learn that God commanded Adam not to eat of a certain fruit. The first and only negative commandment of God carried a penalty if violated. God said, “for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” Of course, as is the nature of humans, they ate it. But did they DIE in that day? As we follow the story, we see that they were indeed banished from God’s presence; but Adam lived on to be 930 years old. Eventually, he did die a physical death. But, what kind of death did he suffer “in the day” that he sinned?

To answer that question, let us look to the book of James for a biblical definition of “death.” James 2:26 defines physical death as a separation of the spirit from the body. In truth, this is what death always is . . . a separation. “In the day” that Adam sinned, some sort of separation took place. What was it? Isaiah 59:2 answers this question and also explains the consequences of sin. It says, “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.”

You see, the “death” that Adam suffered “in the day” he sinned was a Spiritual Death. His relationship with God was severed. Since God is the source of eternal life, it is said that Adam was cut off from the “Tree of Life” (Gen 3:22-24). All of us, who are descendants of Adam, share not only in physical death, but also in the consequence that sin separates us from God. When we sin, we become separated from God. If we should die in this condition, then we shall be forever separated from God throughout all eternity.

Well . . . this is certainly a staggering contemplation. Compared to the problem of SIN and its consequences, all other problems in our lives pale into insignificance. As we think about this, we obviously want to avoid this fate if at all possible. Is there any way out of this? Is there a solution? Of course, we have already seen that a death on the cross was one of the reasons that God became flesh. But why? Why does my forgiveness come at such awful cost? Why did Jesus have to die for my sins to be forgiven? There is a logical and reasonable answer to this question, but it can only be seen when we understand that ours was not the only problem solved at Calvary. “God Had a Problem Too.” And that is the subject of the next Bible Talk.

