

## LESSON 2

# SIN THWARTS GOD'S PURPOSE

How can the world of material things be good and yet be a source of danger to man? The answer is sin. What God made good, man in his sin perverts and corrupts.

Man's technology is often corrupted by his sin. For example, on March 27, 1977 two giant 747 airliners smashed into each other in the Canary Islands. Five hundred eighty-two people were killed in the accident. The two aircraft were built by man's best technology. But in spite of superior technology, an investigation showed the tragedy happened because of human error.

Only sin would cause man to withhold medicine that could cure fatal diseases. Only fallen man could enjoy an abundance of food while millions in other parts of the world starve. God's good is perverted and corrupted when headlines tell of the shooting of a president or another leader.

God designed a perfect world for man. It was totally good and perfectly fitted for man's needs. The great tragedy that thwarted this perfection was man's wilful revolt against God. This was a sin so grievous that man was cast from the perfection of Eden and left to face life in a world tarnished and corrupted by his sin.

Man's sin brought about his Fall. The story of man's revolt against God is recorded in Genesis 3. God had placed man in the Garden with free access to everything except "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat" (Gen. 2:17). But the next chapter reveals, "And he did eat" (Gen. 3:6). All that follows for man is related to his rebellion against God.

Some question what kind of God would allow man to hurt himself and disrupt the whole created order. Some even suggest that man's sin is a failure on God's part. This logic, however, misses the true meaning of God's creative purpose and of man's being created in God's image. God made man to be like Himself, and this involved freedom. God did not want a robot that would parrot love when commanded. Instead, he desired a man free to choose to love Him and to have faith in Him. This responsible freedom required that man also had to be free not to love God. Man also had to live with the consequences of his decisions. This lesson explores what sin and the resulting Fall meant to man and to the physical world.

### Sin Brings Disorder

#### Sin challenges God's order.

God created the world in perfect order. The good of material things and their intended blessings to man de-

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*Strike through the incorrect words.*

*God designed a polluted, perfect world that was not suited to man.*

*(polluted, not)*

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*In Genesis 3 we find the story of man's \_\_\_\_\_ against \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(revolt, God)*

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*Is the following statement true or false?*

*God wanted man to parrot love when commanded.*

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*(false)*

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*Complete the following statements.*

ended on this order. Man's sin was a direct challenge to this plan designed by God. In the plan man was responsible to God and for the world. Sin challenged this. God gave man abundant material goods for him to enjoy and to serve God's purposes. Sin challenged God's purposes. God made man to be like God—not to be a god. Sin caused man to think he could be God. God made man the responsible caretaker of a beautiful world. Sin caused man to become an irresponsible manager.

### **Sin distorts God's perfect order.**

The study of what God created and what man in sin did to that creation is a study of contrasts of "beauty" and "ugliness." God placed man in a perfect world. Man's sin takes this beauty and soils it. He changes the good into bad. This contrast can be visualized best by looking at the "before" and the "after." Before the Fall, man enjoyed God and creation; after, he is estranged from God and struggles with creation. Before man's sin, the world was held in perfect relationship; after, there is an unbalanced order of abuse and destruction. Before, man finds his security in God; after, he seeks his security in things. Before, man knows no fear of death; after, death becomes the reality for man.

God intended better things for man, but man through sin chose a life much inferior. His choice cast him into a life characterized by toil, adversity, hurts, and disappointments.

### **Sin brings conflict between God's good and man's evil.**

Sin started with man's choice to follow his own will and reject God's will. Ray Summers described this choice:

Sin entered into human experience when man chose to follow his will rather than God's will. Whereas God said, "Thou shalt not," man said, "I will." The continuing tragic story of sin's thwarting God's purpose for the total of his creation is man's "yes" to God's "no" and man's "no" to God's "yes".<sup>1</sup>

The consequences of this self-will choice of man are described all through the Scriptures. It is evident in man today. God's purpose for material things was the good of man, but man abused this purpose and turned things to his own hurt. A life filled with hurt is man's doing—not what God wanted. God wanted good for man, but man chose evil. Evil though he is, man is still God's steward and manager. His management task is made more difficult because of his sin.

### **Sin Resulted in a Curse on the Land (Gen. 3:1–19)**

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles

*Man challenged God's \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Sin caused man to become an \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Man changes the good into \_\_\_\_\_.*

*After the Fall, man \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Man chose an inferior \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Man's choice to follow his own will and reject God was \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(Compare your answers with the text.)*

shall it bring forth to thee" (Gen. 3:17-18). What man's sin did to the material world is the unfolding story of history, a history of tragedy and hurt. This study of the curse will look first at the close tie between what happened to man and to the world, then at the hostile world that man must face as a result of the curse, and finally at what is meant by the curse itself.

### Man's sin hurts himself and the land.

There is a close connection between man and material things. This was established in the divine order of creation. It is clearly seen in the consequence of sin. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake" indicates this close tie. Man's sin brought great loss and hurt to himself but also to the material world. What happens to man happens to his environment.

The Scriptures reflect this relationship. The Flood (Gen. 6:5-7) is an example. "And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (v. 7). The curse pronounced on Cain for his sin of murder is another example. "And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth" (Gen. 4:11, 12).

Excerpts from the prophets' messages reflect the agony of the land caused by Israel's sin. "Therefore shall the land mourn" (Hos. 4:3). Jeremiah said: "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge . . . For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black" (Jer. 4:22-28). Again he cried, "How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of every field wither, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein?" (Jer. 12:4; see also Joel 1:5-20; Ezek. 6:1-7; Amos 4:6-11).

### Man's sin cast him into a hostile world.

The first evident result of man's sin is that he must live in a hostile world. It is now a world that fights back. Instead of unlimited joy in the Garden, man knows a world of thorns and thistles. He must labour for a living from a physical universe that resists. As a result he experiences fear, toil, suffering, and disappointment.

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I

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*There is a close connection between man and*

*(material, things)*

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*Israel's sin caused agony of \_\_\_\_\_*

*(the, land)*

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*List four results of the curse that man's sin produced.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Gen. 3:14-19).

The curse that man's sin produced places him in a world that

1. is hostile and alien and in which he must toil for a living,
2. requires woman to know the privilege of motherhood at the cost of pain,
3. is filled with a constant war between man and the forces of evil,
4. makes death the great certainty for man.

### Man's sin brought a curse on the land.

A curse as used in these references means "consigned to destruction." For the earth this curse means that a process of destruction or decay has set in. "This idea has nothing to do with the occult area of spells, hexes, or black magic."<sup>2</sup> It is one further realization of the death promised if man sinned. The cursed world is a dying and decaying world.

The curse is also the hurt man brought to the physical world. This brought about Paul's reference, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Rom. 8:22).

It is hardly possible for man to understand all the disorder that came upon the world "for his sake." All the turbulent and rebellious nature of the universe is in some way tied to man's rebellion against God. Man now lives a fallen life. This fallen life finds man (1) knowing to do right but doing evil; (2) knowing what war will do, yet going to war anyway; (3) realizing that he will destroy the world if he continues to abuse and pollute, but continuing anyway; (4) realizing that he has the technology to achieve great good for all men, but using it for his own selfish interest.

### Sin Sets Man at Odds

Sin caused man to be discontent with his God-given place as the responsible representative of God and the responsible manager for God. When man sinned, he rebelled against this relationship to God and to the world. In so doing man set himself at odds with everything. Man's

4.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Place a tick (✓) by each true statement.

Man's sin affected man's relationship:

\_\_\_\_\_ with God

\_\_\_\_\_ with men

responsibilities were directed towards God, other men, and material things. Since sin was a rejection of this responsible life, each of these relationships was affected by sin.

\_\_\_\_\_ with material things

(Compare your answers with the text.)

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### Sin set man against God.

Created in the image of God, man enjoyed a unique relationship to God. Only man was given mastery over the world, but this was to be a mastery under God. He was made like God to represent God. Man was made like God—but not a god. His sin aimed at this very point. Satan tempted Eve by promising that if she ate the forbidden fruit “ye shall be as gods” (Gen. 3:5). Both Adam and Eve did eat the forbidden fruit. Instead of being in the image of God, they wanted to be god. Sin corrupted and cursed man’s most important distinction—his relationship to God. “There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.” (Read Rom. 3:10–18.) This description by Paul reveals how seriously sin destroyed man and his relationship to God. Sin caused man to (1) turn a good life to evil (v. 12), (2) speak with corruption (vv. 13–14), (3) turn from peace to war (vv. 15–17), (4) lose his fear of God (v. 18). As a result man sees only his own concerns and desires. In sin he no longer is concerned about what God wants but only with what he wants.

Summarize how seriously sin destroyed man according to Romans 3:10-18.

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Man’s sin was an attempt to usurp the place of God. Man failed, but in rebelling he became a fugitive from God. As a fugitive he knows God but flees from Him. He knows to do right but does evil. Paul lamented, “When I would do good, evil is present with me” (Rom. 7:21).

(Compare your answers with the text.)

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God’s nature is to give, but man in sin has the nature to grasp. The New Testament describes this corrupt nature as, “being evil” (Matt. 7:11). This verse portrays man as a selfish being constantly grasping everything for himself. His is a life radically contrasted to the God he was made to be like and to represent.

God \_\_\_\_\_; man \_\_\_\_\_.

(gives, grasps)

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The Old Testament depicts man as a tragic fugitive from God. This is seen in the account of the Flood (Gen. 6–8). “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). Again the tragedy is illustrated in man’s desire to build the Tower of Babel. He shows his sinful desire to be a god: “Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name” (Gen. 11:4).

### Sin sets man against man.

The student body of a Baptist school was stirred by the testimony of a noted “Christian businessman.” His zeal for his church and the cause of Christian missions was exciting to the students. In a discussion that followed, their feelings changed abruptly as a student accused the businessman of unfair treatment of employees. How could a Christian justify such low wages and poor working condi-

tions for his employees? he was asked. The businessman answered, "I see no connection between my Christian life and the giving of my money and the wages I pay!"

The Fall corrupted man's dealings with his fellowman. The Scriptures abound with accounts of man's mistreatment of man. These become a horror story of man's revolt and his abuse of man. Injustices in the form of fraud, theft, enslavement, physical abuse, and even murder head the list of man's fallen ways with man.

Cain murdered Abel (Gen. 4:1-16). This murder came as the result of their effort to use material things in an offering to God. Abel's gift was acceptable and Cain's was not. The rage that drove Cain to murder suggests many reasons why his gift could never have been acceptable to God. The outward act revealed the darkness within.

Not even the choicest of men, David was left untouched by the corrupting hand of sin. He had been chosen by God. Yet few men revealed more tragically the fallen ways of man. David's sin included lust, greed, and murder (2 Sam. 12:1-14). Ahab and Jezebel added covetousness and murder to the unfolding story of man's fallenness. Ahab wanted the property of Naboth, who would not sell to him. Jezebel plotted Naboth's murder and subsequent seizure of his land (1 Kings 21:1-16).

The New Testament tells of further ugly deeds of man that include devouring widows' houses (Luke 20:47), pretentious acts of religion while neglecting justice and love (Luke 11:40-41), the selfishness of the rich fool who could see no solution to his abundance but bigger barns for himself (Luke 12:16-21), and the rich oppressors of the poor who held back wages by fraud (Jas. 5:4). James shows the consequences of man's sin as it produces war. "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (Jas. 4:1).

### **Sin sets man against nature.**

*Man becomes greedy.*—Everything man touched felt the tragic consequences of his sin. When man is right with God, everything is right; but when man is wrong with God, everything is wrong. The abuse of material things is really the outgrowth of what happened between God and man. The Fall separated man from God. Man no longer finds security in God and turns to find a new security in material things. He grasps greedily, only to be disappointed at the absence of security. In his disappointment he grasps for more and more, always thinking that the next treasure will bring the good life of security. His grasping ways compound his sin until his abuse of the world becomes unbearable.

Man's sinful greed for things leads him to make possessions his god. This is idolatry. Idolatry is man's making anything or anyone but God the source of security. Twentieth-century citizens do not need the Bible to know the consequences that man's against the material world produces. We need only to look at the dirty streams, or

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List five forms of injustices of man towards man.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answers with the text.)

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When man makes anything or anyone but God the source of his security, it is \_\_\_\_\_.

smell the foul air, or experience the energy crisis and the food shortages. All can see the results. The Bible tells what causes it and also offers the only solution.

*Man practises abuse.*—The Bible records wrong after wrong in man's sinful ways with the material world. The prophets condemn the rich who oppress the poor to gain wealth. The writer of Proverbs shows the superficiality of the "miserly man [who] hastens after wealth, and does not know that want will come upon him" (28:22, RSV). The Gospels warn of man's obsession with things that drive him from God. "The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word" (Matt. 13:22), and the love of riches prevents one from entering the kingdom of heaven. Jesus explained, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23). The Bible cautions, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15), yet man's sinful way leads him to attach his affections to things and not to God.

The account of the Fall (Gen. 3) shows man expelled from the Garden and having to earn his living by the sweat of his brow. Work was not a curse of sin. Prior to the Fall man was the keeper of the Garden; this was his work. The difference is that in a sin-dominated world, a fallen world, man's work becomes toil. He now must contend with the world that also has been cursed by his sin.

As man places the premium of life on possessions, he moves into almost every abuse imaginable. He begins to measure all values of life by his possessions. He even begins to count God's favour in terms of material blessings. Job wrestled with the issue of sin and material prosperity. His peers saw his wealth and then his loss of wealth as the sure index of God's favour or disfavour. This drive for security in things merited the outcry of Isaiah (5:8), "Woe unto them that join house to house"; and of Micah (2:1–2), "They covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away; so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage" (v. 2).

Man, sinning against the land, refused God's instruction to allow the seventh-year rest (Lev. 25:1–7; Ex. 23:10–11). This was the beginning of a crop rotation plan to protect the productivity of the soil. It also involved man's need to acknowledge God's ownership. His sin flaunted both God and the good of the land. Judgement upon Israel came in the form of the Babylonian captivity. The land had its rest even though man would not give it.

The current dilemma in the ecology crisis can be understood only by seeking to understand man the sinner. Technology has finally given sinful man the capacity to destroy his environment. The search for the solution to this ecology crisis must begin with the problem maker. Man in sin got the world in trouble. What hope can there be that the same sinful man will suddenly use his skills unselfishly to remedy his wrong? Unless the sin issue is dealt with, there can be no real solution for man or his world.

(idolatry)

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*Since the Fall of man, his work has been*

(toil)

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*To understand the current dilemma in the ecology crisis, we must seek to understand \_\_\_\_\_ the*

(man, sinner)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Ray Summers, "Christian Stewardship in the Light of Redemption," *Resource Unlimited*, ed. William L. Hendricks (Nashville: The Stewardship Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1972), p. 22. Used by permission.

<sup>2</sup>J. Morris Ashcraft, "A Theological Rationale for Christian Stewardship," *ibid.*, p. 13. Used by permission.

## Home Study Exercise

**Basic activity** (Levels 1, 2, and 3). Read the study guide text and answer the following questions.

1. Describe the kind of world God designed for man. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What happened to God's perfect world? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What did man's sin and fall do to his responsibility as caretaker of a beautiful world? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How did sin start? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Why does man's sin also affect the world of material things? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. What do excerpts from the Old Testament prophets show concerning Israel's sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. List four results of the curse that man's sin produced. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. What areas of man's responsibility were affected when he rejected God's plan and sinned? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. After reading Romans 3:10-18, list four things that reveal how seriously sin destroyed man and his relationship to God. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Compare the nature of God and man in sin concerning giving. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Describe how the Fall corrupted man's dealings with his fellowman. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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12. How does the author define idolatry? \_\_\_\_\_
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13. What is the difference in man's work before and after his fall? \_\_\_\_\_
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14. How can the current dilemma in the ecology crisis be understood? \_\_\_\_\_
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15. Prepare a sermon or Bible lesson outline on one of these subjects:
- "Sin Brings Disorder"
  - "Results of Sin"
  - "Giving God — Grasping Man"
16. Read pages 9-24 in *God's Miraculous Plan of Economy*.

**Supplementary activity** (Levels 2 and 3). After reading pages 9-24 in *God's Miraculous Plan of Economy*, do the following:

1. Write a development for the sermon or Bible lesson outline assigned in Basic activity.
2. Upon what premise does Taylor base the theme of his book? (See pages 9-13.)
3. What are the three questions asked by Taylor that are essential to understanding God's plan of economy?
4. What does the author mean when he states: "Our plan of economy must have the 'God point of view.' "? How may one exchange a "self point of view" for a "God point of view"?

**Advanced activity** (Level 3).

1. Choose one of the following projects:
  - a. Prepare a sermon or Bible lesson outline based on one of the three questions posed by Taylor: What is Reality? Why Are We Here? What Is God Up To?
  - b. Write a paper of at least one page on this subject: "What Man Lost in the Fall, Christ Restores!" Be sure to show how it relates to God's plan of economy.
2. Contrast the world's view of reality with God's view of reality as described by Taylor.

3. Write a brief paragraph to explain each of the three questions raised by Taylor.
4. Justify this statement: "His blessings come to us, not just to make life enjoyable but to make us employable to his glory."

### **Seminar Discussion**

1. Discuss how sin distorts God's perfect order.
2. Discuss the curse on the land because of man's sin.
3. What are some evidences to prove that man's sin set man against man?
4. How did man, "made in the image of God," become greedy?
5. Discuss how sinful man abuses the physical world. Suggest ways to correct man's abuses.

(Note to Leader: Since this lesson is the last one to limit Level 1 students to just a sermon or Bible lesson outline, a demonstration of the completed sermon or Bible lesson assigned to Level 2 and Level 3 students might be helpful. Beginning with Lesson 3, all levels will be asked to prepare a complete sermon or Bible lesson based on the lesson studied.)