



Universal Crisis

Are You Aware of How Huge a Matter This Is?

When I was a kid, ten or eleven years old, I told one of my best friends that I liked Kim. Boys and girls do that, share their secrets with one another. I never expected he would utter a word about this. Kim certainly didn't know I liked her and no one else did either. Short, brown haired, a new girl in school who I thought was pretty cute; Kim was my girlfriend only in my imagination. The next day, to my horror, everyone in my class knew I liked Kim and at lunch I was teased constantly about it. School could not end too quickly for me, and I rushed home to bury my sorrows in my bed. Dan never apologized to me for what he had done. He just thought it was pretty funny, one big joke. It ruined my life for several weeks but made him a hit in class.. Without making a big deal out of it, what Dan did was wrong. He violated the sacred trust between friends and never seemed to think that was wrong. Yet this is the Bible's take. **A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.** (Proverbs 11: 13 NIV) Was Dan wrong? He promised he wouldn't share what I told him with anyone. Was it a sin?

Sin is universal and anyone who has even a bit of knowledge about the Bible knows that. ...**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** (Romans 3: 23 NIV) Even those who have no insight into sin or are not in the least religious realize that wrong is found everywhere. Yet the Satanic plot is clearly revealed when sin first came into our world. In the Garden of Eden God commanded the first person, Adam to not eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. **And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."** (Genesis 2: 16-17 NIV) The events of the first sin are fascinating to consider and tragic. Satan came to Eve, not Adam and invited her to explore "new opportunities." **Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"** (Genesis 3: 1 NIV) Eve made it clear that Adam explicitly explained to her the command of God. They could eat the fruit from any tree in the Garden; just not what was growing from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they did, they would die. The serpent deviously planted a seed of doubt in Eve's mind of what was really discussed between her husband and God. **"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** (Genesis 3: 4-5 NIV)

Sin is always rebellion against God. It may not seem like it. For Eve, it was just an experiment, seeing if she was missing something great in life. Perhaps, Satan insisted, the cost is not too great, but the benefit is fabulous. The Bible makes it clear that Eve was in fact tricked by Satan into eating the forbidden fruit, but Adam did so with his eyes wide open. He knew what he was doing and the rebellion against God he started. There are two ways sinning is approached. The first is the ludicrous determination, "I have no sin". That is essentially the way Eve saw it. There was nothing wrong in what she did and her eating the forbidden fruit was perfectly fine. The second is a lifestyle practice. You pay no attention to sins you know you are committing because the guilt in them is of no longer significant to you.

The mistaken belief of many, and I just heard someone on the radio make this erroneous claim, is that your conscience is God or more precisely the voice of God. It is not! Your conscience is the highest level of morality you have developed. Adolf Hitler had a great level of affection for his German Shepherd, Blondi. He spoke glowingly of Blondi to all his staff and was kind and generous toward her. Hitler had a longtime girlfriend who he married just before they both committed suicide. Hitler's conscience led to his kindness towards his German Shepherd and to finally marrying Eva Braun. It also allowed him to order millions of

mentally disabled men and women and of course Jews because he deemed them unfit to live. The conscience of Adolf Hitler gave its approval to the horrific genocide he authored which no one could say was guided by God. He saw no wrong in his actions, only the ultimate good as he deemed it. Terrible evil can be justified by conscience and good deeds as well.

For Hitler, sin as determined by God was not even considered, perhaps even unknown to him, much as it was for Eve. Pontius Pilate though is another story. When Jesus was brought before him, Pilate tried to question Christ and discover more of why the Jews, wanted Him dead. When Jesus refused to answer his probings, Pilate was left to his conscience, rather than the Word of God to figure out what to do. But then, in one of the stranger accounts found in the Bible, God intervened through his wife. **While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."** (Matthew 27: 19 NIV) Where the conscience of Pilate failed him, a dream his wife had stirred his sense of sin and the evil he was on the verge of committing. His past sinning, however, limited his ability to be influenced by her warning. Pilate was politically self-serving. He did what was best for himself regardless of whether it was right or wrong. Earlier he had a number of worshippers in Galilee murdered because it served his own interests. We see something in sin quite devious. The more you sin, the easier it gets to keep sinning. The wrongness of sin becomes increasingly harder to spot and guilt over sin diminishes as sin piles upon sin.

Sin is the great force of evil in the world. It destroys lives, families, neighborhoods, and nations. It has wrecked our world. Just one generation of sinning led to the first murder. When Cain killed Abel he did so out of jealousy for the goodwill the Lord showed Abel his brother. Where did jealousy originate? It was passed down from his mother who looked at the fruit that God said she was not to touch, and it was jealousy that God had what she didn't possess, or so she thought, the knowledge of good and evil. Notice carefully the temptation of Satan. **"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** (Genesis 3: 4-5 NIV) Now consider what went on in Eve's mind. **When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.** (Genesis 3: 6a NIV) Do you see what happened? She realized God had what the fruit could give her and it seemed reasonable for her to try and gain it. This willingness to do whatever it takes to gain what she does not have Eve passed along to her son who could not stand the thought of Abel having the favor of God if he did not. So, he killed him.

Sin devours us psychologically. It turns us into versions of ourselves that are miserable caricatures of what God intends. The more you sin, the less capable you are of knowing what is good and best for you and those around you. Sin shrinks your soul and reduces in you the capacity to do what is really good and right. A verse often quoted provides us with profound if routinely overlooked insight. **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** (1 John 1: 9 CSB) Something must be clarified. You are not saved by your confession of sins nor are you given eternal life due to how thoroughly you admit your sins to God. You are saved by Jesus Christ dying on the Cross for the forgiveness of your sins. Speaking of Jesus, the Bible tells us, **In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.** (Ephesians 1: 7-8 NIV) Notice again how our sins are forgiven. **"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses.** (Acts 13: 38-39 NIV) What does 1 John promise confession of sin brings you? The cleansing of sin, the removal of the damage your sinning causes your personality. When you confess your sins to Jesus, "big or small", the power sin has over you is cut away and you become left with the life of Jesus dominating how you live and think. They say confession is good for the soul. Confession to God is the most powerful force against evil you can wield. Confession to Christ purifies you and makes the influence you have over others good.