

Mortal and Venial Sin

"Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils, and he tempt no man. But every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bring forth sin. But sin, when it is completed, begets death." (James 1:13-15)

Sin is any thought, word, desire, action, or neglect (omission) prohibited (forbidden) by the law of God.

1. When are you guilty of sin?

To be guilty –

- i. You must know that you are breaking God's law, and...
- ii. You must freely choose to do it.

2. How many kinds of sin are there?

Two – mortal sin and venial sin.

3. What is mortal sin?

A "big" sin, a serious violation of God's law. Examples: Getting drunk, adultery, stealing something expensive.

4. What does mortal sin do to the soul?

It drives the Sanctifying Grace out of your soul. "What fruit had you then in those things, of which you are now ashamed? For the end of them is death." (Romans 6:21)

5. Where will you go if you die with mortal sin on your soul?

You will go to Hell forever. "They shall have their portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." (Apocalypse 21:8)

6. Can all mortal sins be forgiven?

Yes, if you are truly sorry for them and do everything necessary for forgiveness. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity." (1 John 1:9)

7. What is venial sin?

A "small" sin, a less serious violation of God's law. Examples: Impatience, ordinary anger, stealing something cheap, getting slightly drunk.

8. What does venial sin do to your soul?

It does not drive out the Sanctifying Grace from your soul, but it does make you less pleasing to God.

9. Where will you go if you die with venial sin on your soul (and no mortal sins)?

You will go to Purgatory.

10. Can a number of venial sins become a mortal sin?

No. (Except that a series of similar small, recurring thefts from the same person amounts to one large theft and therefore can be a mortal sin.)

11.If you do something wrong, but do not know it is wrong, are you guilty of sin?

No, if it is through no fault of yours that you do not know it is wrong. Example: If you eat meat on Ash Wednesday, completely forgetting that it is Ash Wednesday, you are not guilty of sin.

(Ed. note: There are some things, though, that you know are wrong, even though somebody may never have told you that they are wrong, such as birth control or homosexuality. Even though you may not have been told that they are wrong, common sense or the natural law tells you that they are wrong.)

12.Are you guilty of sin if you intend to do something wrong, even though you do not actually do it?

Yes, because even the intention to offend God is a sin. Example: If you intend to rob a bank, but are frightened off by the guards, you still commit just as bad a sin as if you had robbed the bank.

13.What should you do if you do not know whether something is mortal or venial sin?

You should not do it; otherwise, you will commit a mortal sin, because you show yourself willing to offend God seriously. Example: You do not know whether eating too much is a mortal or venial sin, but you go ahead and eat too much anyway.

14.What is temptation?

Temptation is an attraction to commit sin.

15.Can you always overcome temptation?

Yes, because no temptation can force you into sin, and God will always help you. "And God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able: But will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

16.What should you do when you are tempted?

First, ask God to help you, and then, get busy doing something else. "And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

17.How can you avoid temptations?

Avoid all persons, places or things that may lead you into sin, and ask God for actual graces.

18.What are actual graces?

They are "helps" from God which enlighten the mind and strengthen the will to do good and avoid evil. "My grace is sufficient for thee: For power is made perfect in infirmity." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Actual graces come and go, but Sanctifying Grace remains in the soul. Sanctifying Grace is LIFE; actual grace is HELP.

19.Can you resist actual graces?

Unfortunately, yes, for you are free, and God does not force you to use them. "And we helping do exhort you, that you receive not the grace of God in vain." (2 Corinthians 6:1)