



Bible Doctrines II - Survey

Sin

I. THE NATURE OF SIN

A. The Definition of Sin

1. A general view

- a. When asked to define sin, men most commonly run to the specifics or examples of sin rather than to a definition. While there is nothing inherently wrong with doing so, it might leave us with a somewhat skewed view of what constitutes sin.
- b. In order to gain some perspective as to the differences being communicated herein, one might consider the implications brought on by a comparison between two Bible phrases.
 - (1) Is sin (Proverbs 21:4; Proverbs 24:9; Romans 14:23; James 4:17; 1 John 5:17)
 - (2) Sin is (1 John 3:4)
- c. While one approach takes more specific categories or individual sins and identifies them as such, the other provides foundational truth of what sin is.
- d. When searching for a good foundational Bible definition for sin, one need look no further than 1 John 3:4 which states, “sin is the transgression of the law.” This simplified definition is expounded and confirmed in many other passages as well.
 - (1) “If a soul sin...against any of the commandments of the LORD” (Leviticus 4:2)
 - (2) “When a ruler hath sinned...against any of the commandments of the LORD” (Leviticus 4:22)
 - (3) “And if any one of the common people sin...against any of the commandments of the LORD” (Leviticus 4:27)
 - (4) “And if a soul sin, and commit...things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD” (Leviticus 5:17)
 - (5) “I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD” (1 Samuel 15:24)
 - (6) “We have sinned against the LORD...and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God” (Jeremiah 3:25)
 - (7) “Ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies” (Jeremiah 44:23)
 - (8) “We have sinned...even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments” (Daniel 9:5)
 - (9) “All Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice...we have sinned against him” (Daniel 9:11)



- e. This truth is clearer when one considers Romans 5:12-14. According to this passage, sin was present before the availability of the Law of Moses and occurred when Adam transgressed God's commandment regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In other words, sin is not simply the transgression of the LAW OF MOSES, but of God's laws, commandments, or statutes at any given time.
- f. Before moving on to the identification of specific sins, consider the following phrases that strengthen and expound our findings.
 - (1) According to Romans 14:23, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." True faith in the commandments of God produces obedience. If sin is the transgression of God's commandments, it would be just as true that that which lacks faith or is void of faith is sin.
 - (2) According to James 4:17, "to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." This certainly matches the simple truth that transgression of God's law is sin.
 - (3) According to 1 John 5:17, "All unrighteousness is sin." The righteousness of God's commandments and adherence to those commandments is clear. Therefore, transgressing God's commandments would be considered unrighteous and anything that is unrighteous would be a transgression of God's commandments.
- 2. A specific view
 - a. High looks, proud hearts, and the plowing of the wicked (Proverbs 21:4)
 - b. The thought of foolishness (Proverbs 24:9)
 - c. Unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful (Romans 1:29-31)
 - d. Fornication, idolatry, adultery, effeminacy, abuse with mankind, theft, coveting, drunkenness, reviling, extortion (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)
 - e. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings (Galatians 5:19-21)
 - f. Fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking, jesting, whoremonger, unclean person, covetous man, idolator (Ephesians 5:3-5)
 - g. Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affections, evil concupiscence, covetousness (Colossians 3:5)
 - h. Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, lies (Colossians 3:8-9)
 - i. Lawless, disobedient, ungodly, sinners, unholy, profane, murderers, manslayers, whoremongers, defiling oneself with mankind, menstealers, liars, perjured persons (1 Timothy 1:9-10)



3. Adding detail to our understanding
 - a. Sin can pile up.
 - (1) According to Isaiah 30:1, some took counsel, but not of the Lord and, in doing so, they added “sin to sin.”
 - (2) At one point, the people of God came to the prophet Samuel in great fear because they had “added unto all [their] sins this evil, to ask . . . a king” (1 Samuel 12:19).
 - (3) At another time, the heads of the children of Ephraim stood up and said, “whereas we have offended against the LORD already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass” (2 Chronicles 28:13).
 - b. Sin has varying degrees.
 - (1) The Bible points to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah as “very grievous” (Genesis 18:20).
 - (2) Joseph indicated that taking the wife of his master would have been a “great wickedness” (Genesis 39:9).
 - (3) Moses declared that Israel’s idolatry in the wilderness was a “great sin” (Exodus 32:31).
 - (4) The sins of Eli’s sons were said to be “very great” before the LORD (1 Samuel 2:17).
 - (5) David confessed that he had “sinned greatly” (1 Chronicles 21:8).
 - (6) And, according to the Saviour, there was one that had the “greater sin” than that of Pilate (John 19:10-11).
 - (7) Although sin is sin, it seems scriptural that some sins are greater than others.

B. The Transmission of Sin

1. Sin began in Satan.
 - a. He was perfect from the day that he was created, “till iniquity was found in” him (Ezekiel 28:15).
 - b. “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44).
 - c. “The devil sinneth from the beginning” (1 John 3:8).
 - d. He said in his heart, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God...I will be like the most High” (Isaiah 14:12-14).
2. Sin entered the world through Adam.
 - a. Adam’s personal sin—“by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin” (Romans 5:12; see Genesis 3:1-6)
 - (1) According to Romans 5:12, it was Adam’s choice that brought sin into the world.
 - (2) Romans 5:14 identifies it as “Adam’s transgression.”
 - (3) 1 Timothy 2:14 declares that “Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”



- b. Adam's provisional sin—"so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12)
- (1) The above verse has often been used to suggest that death passed upon all men simply as a result of Adam's sin, but the last phrase makes the truth a bit more complicated.
 - (2) The scripture is clear that Adam was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). Concerning the birth of his son Seth, the Bible uniquely sets forth that he was born in Adam's likeness and image (Genesis 5:3). It would seem that this emphasis is purposeful and that God was drawing our attention to a change. What is not as clear is that if this is a change in nature, why was it not also said of Cain and Abel?
 - (3) At the same time, a scriptural balance must be sought as the scripture is clear that something changed in man as a result of Adam's sin.
 - a) According to Romans 5:19, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners."
 - b) According to Ephesians 2:3, we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."
 - c) Isaiah declared "we are all as an unclean thing" (Isaiah 64:6).
 - d) David declared, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5).
 - (4) By all appearances, it would seem as though there is a scriptural correlation between this corrupted nature and the "old man."
 - a) At salvation, "our old man is crucified with him [Christ], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Romans 6:6).
 - b) At salvation, we "put off the old man with his deeds" (Colossians 3:9).
 - c) Because of salvation, we are to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Ephesians 4:22).
 - (5) One thought as to the means of transmitting this nature from Adam to his offspring is that it came through the blood.
 - a) A problem with this teaching—The blood of infants is called in Jeremiah 19:4 the "blood of innocents." If blood carries the guilt of sin from birth, then the blood of infants would not be innocent blood.
 - b) Some support for this teaching
 - i) Though Christ in His resurrected body had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39), "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50). By comparing these two verses, we can see that the offending item is the blood.
 - ii) Furthermore, Christ's blood is called "the innocent blood" by Judas (Matthew 27:4).



- (a) Although this phrase is found in other places in the Bible, it seems to be used in a special way here.
- (b) The blood of Jesus was not just innocent; it was “the” innocent blood.
- (c) Acts 20:28 tells us that God purchased the church “with his own blood.”
- (d) That is, it was the blood of God that paid for our sins.
- (e) 1 Peter 1:18-19 tells us that we were not redeemed with corruptible things but with the “precious blood of Christ.”
- (f) Therefore, the blood of Christ was not corruptible. It was evidently divine blood.
- iii) This is how Jesus could be born in the “likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3), but without the sin nature.
 - (a) His flesh came from Adam, but His blood came from God.
 - (b) He experienced all the weaknesses of the physical body, but He did not have the sin nature.
- (6) Even though this sin nature is enough to plague a man and give him a bent toward sin, it is not enough to condemn him eternally.
 - a) Paul testifies of such when he claimed to be alive until the awakening provided through the law of God (Romans 7:9). This seems to be contrary to the thought that we are all born dead in trespasses and sins.
 - b) The fact that this nature is not enough to condemn to hell for eternity is clear from the testimony concerning David and his child that died (2 Samuel 12:23). David vowed that one day he would go to see his son. This would not be true if the sin nature was enough to condemn forever.
- 3. Sin is the personal choice of all.
 - a. Man’s condemnation is based upon his own willful choice to sin. This is even alluded to in our initial verse referenced (Romans 5:12) where the Bible says, “for that all have sinned.”
 - b. The Bible clear and consistent in its accusation against all men.
 - (1) There is not a man that is just and sinneth not (1 Kings 8:46; Ecclesiastes 7:20).
 - (2) All of us have iniquity that was laid upon the Lord (Isaiah 53:6; 1 John 2:2).
 - (3) There is none righteous (Romans 3:9-12).
 - (4) All have sinned and come short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23).
 - (5) The scripture concludes that all are under sin (Galatians 3:22).
 - (6) If we deny sin, we make God a liar (1 John 1:8-10).
 - c. Our personal sin brings forth death (Romans 6:23; James 1:15).



C. The Working of Sin (James 1:14-15)

1. The path to sin
 - a. Sin is not something that man does by accident.
 - b. It is something that man allows or willingly does based upon an unwillingness to stop any act before it becomes sin.
 - c. The scripture offers a process for sin: “Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed” (James 1:14).
 - (1) First of all, one should not the phrase “every man is tempted.”
 - (2) Second, we should note how temptation is defined in the passage.
 - a) A man is drawn away of his own lust.
 - b) He is enticed.
 - d. It appears that temptation in and of itself is not sin, but one’s submission to that temptation is what constitutes sin.
 - (1) Perhaps the easiest way to grasp the distinction between temptation and sin is to consider the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a) Jesus was “led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil” (Matthew 4:1).
 - b) He “was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan” (Mark 1:13; see also Luke 4:2).
 - c) “He himself hath suffered being tempted” (Hebrews 2:18).
 - d) Most importantly, He “was in all points tempted like as we are, YET WITHOUT SIN” (Hebrews 4:15).
 - (2) At the same time, we might struggle to say that Christ was “drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”
 - a) The solution lies in seeing two aspects of the temptation.
 - b) Physically, Jesus could have sinned.
 - i) There was nothing hindering Him submitting to the temptations of the Devil.
 - ii) He had the same opportunity that Adam and Eve had in the garden of Eden.
 - iii) From this aspect, the temptation was real and His victory over temptation was real.
 - iv) He truly suffered in temptation.
 - c) However, there is another aspect.
 - i) Morally, Jesus could not have sinned.
 - ii) In this manner, He was truly impeccable.
 - iii) His very nature would not allow Him to sin.
 - e. The Bible states this truth by saying, “Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin” (James 1:15).
 - f. Although every man faces temptations and many of these temptations are unavoidable, sin is avoidable. When a man gives in to temptation, he chooses to sin.
 2. The fruit of sin—death; Note: This will be discussed in the section dealing with the consequences of sin.