



II. THE CATEGORIES OF SIN

A. The Names of the Sin

1. Sin
 - a. In all its various forms, the word *sin* is found 841 times in scripture.
 - b. As stated previously, sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Before applying this definition to every use, one ought to read and consider the context of the passage.
2. Trespass
 - a. In all its various forms, the word *trespass* is found 111 times in scripture.
 - b. Although there is no doubt some overlap between the words *trespass* and *sin*, their distinctness can also be seen (Ephesians 2:1).
 - c. The word *trespass* is an English word borrowed from the French language. It is made up of two parts: *tres* meaning beyond and *pass* meaning to go by.
 - d. Simply put, a trespass occurs when one goes beyond a God-ordained boundary (Leviticus 6:1-7). While every sin may or may not be a trespass, it would seem as though every trespass is a sin.
3. Transgress
 - a. In all its various forms, the word *transgress* is found 179 times in scripture.
 - b. Although the word transgress and sin are tightly linked as shown in 1 John 3:4, there does seem to be times when the two words do not share an exact meaning (Exodus 34:7).
 - c. On the surface, the word *transgress* seems to be an equivalent to the word *trespass*. It certainly matches in basic meaning which is to walk across. However, in some passages, it seems as though a trespass can be done in ignorance, but a transgression is done knowingly and willingly (see Psalm 19:13).
4. Iniquity
 - a. *Iniquity*, in its various forms, appears 334 times in the Bible.
 - b. In many places, iniquity deals with all kinds of sin. However, with iniquity, there is a difference.
 - c. The word, *iniquity*, comes from in-equity and it refers to that which is unequal, unfair, or unjust. That explains why David in Psalm 32:5 referred to “the iniquity of my sin.”
 - d. In earlier English, it was especially used to refer to our unequal dealings with other men. However, with time it came to include our unequal dealings with God and therefore to include all wrongdoing. However, its use in the King James Bible retains some of this earlier distinction. And, whereas the word, sin, emphasizes the wrong action itself; the word, iniquity, emphasizes the true character of that wrong action.
5. Etc.



B. The Offended of the Sin

1. Against God (Psalm 51:4)
 - a. According to scripture, men can sin against:
 - (1) God the Father (Genesis 20:6)
 - (2) God the Son (1 Corinthians 8:12)
 - (3) God the Spirit (Matthew 12:31)
 - b. These sins include such things as:
 - (1) Adultery (Genesis 39:9)
 - (2) Idolatry (Exodus 23:33; Deuteronomy 9:16; Deuteronomy 20:18)
 - (3) Lying to a neighbour (Leviticus 6:2)
 - (4) Disobeying God's commands (Nehemiah 9:29; Jeremiah 40:3)
 - c. A man who chooses to sin against the Lord chooses for himself:
 - (1) Shame (Jeremiah 3:25; Hosea 4:7)
 - (2) Confusion (Daniel 9:8)
 - (3) Distress (Zephaniah 1:17)
2. Against man (1 Samuel 2:25)
 - a. Every sin against man is also a sin against the Lord. Yet, every sin against the Lord is not necessarily a sin against man. The Bible confirms this truth when it says, "when ye sin so against the brethren . . . ye sin against Christ." (1 Corinthians 8:12).
 - b. When a man sins against other men, he sins against man's Creator. For this reason, he is not only accountable to make that sin right with the Lord but also with the man against whom he has sinned.
3. Against the body (1 Corinthians 6:18)
 - a. Initially, we need to define fornication.
 - (1) In its narrow meaning, it refers specifically to physical relations between two unmarried people.
 - (2) However, in its broader meaning (its most common usage in scripture), it refers to any unlawful sexual union.
 - b. 1 Corinthians 6:18 tells us fornication is different from other sins in that the one who commits it "sinneth against his own body." The proper interpretation can only be determined by the context.
 - (1) The text deals with the sacredness of the believer's body.
 - (2) Our bodies are "the members of Christ" (1 Corinthians 6:15).
 - a) Ephesians 5:30 states, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."
 - b) 1 Corinthians 12:27 declares, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."
 - c) We who are saved have a unique and integral connection with Jesus Christ. Our own bodies are members of Him.
 - (3) When we are "joined to the Lord" in salvation, we are "one spirit" with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17).
 - a) Although this deals with the spiritual aspect of our salvation, it is connected to our physical nature.



- b) Our physical bodies take on some level of spiritual significance because they house the spirit that is joined with the Lord.
- (4) Our body becomes “the temple of the Holy Ghost” (1 Corinthians 6:19) by His indwelling. Whatever building the Spirit of the Lord inhabits; that is the temple of the Lord.
- (5) Our body, as well as our spirit, has been bought with a price (Christ on the cross) and truly belongs to the Lord.
 - a) Bringing an idol into God's holy temple and worshipping it there or sacrificing a pig on the altar of the Lord (as done by Antiochus Epiphanes about 200 years before the crucifixion) is about the most defiling attack that can be made on the temple.
 - b) These acts would be seen as direct attacks on God's temple, joining God's holy dwelling place with false gods.
 - c) In like manner, our body is the temple of the Lord and joining it with a harlot is a direct attack on that holy temple.
 - d) It is a spiritual attack directly against the dwelling place of the Holy Ghost.
- c. Perhaps the significance is that no other sin attacks the very concept of our body being the temple of the Lord as this sin.
 - (1) They are outside the body. Some sins, such as drunkenness, may harm the body, but they are still not a direct spiritual attack on the sanctity of the body as fornication is.
 - (2) Fornication defiles the Christian's own holy temple.
 - (3) He attacks himself in a direct and terrible way when he commits this sin.
- d. Sadly, we take our bodies lightly and count them as unimportant. Evidently, God does not.

C. The Awareness of the Sin (Numbers 15:22-41)

1. The law that was given to the children of Israel by Moses made a clear distinction between sins of “ignorance” (Numbers 15:24, 27; see also Leviticus 4:2, 22, 27; Leviticus 5:15) and sins that were committed “presumptuously” (Numbers 15:30; see also Psalm 19:13).
2. Both are still sins; yet:
 - a. The sin of ignorance, whether committed by the whole congregation (Numbers 15:24-26) or by an individual (Numbers 15:27-29), was easily forgiven after bringing the proper offerings.
 - b. But the man guilty of presumptuous sin, because “he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken the commandment” (Numbers 15:31), shall have his soul “cut off from among the people” (Numbers 15:30).
3. To illustrate the principle, the story is immediately told of finding “a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day” (Numbers 15:32). Since they did not know what to do with him, Moses asked God directly. The



Lord answered, “The man shall surely be put to death” (Numbers 15:35). Such was the severity of the law! God had clearly told the Israelites not to work on the Sabbath day and this man had directly (presumptuously) disobeyed that command.

D. The Severity of the Sin

1. Sin unto death

- a. Examples of sins “unto death”
 - (1) Moses and Aaron (Numbers 20:12)
 - (2) Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)
 - (3) Lord’s supper (1 Corinthians 11:30)
- b. Common thoughts as to the identity of this sin
 - (1) Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Mark 3:28-30)
 - (2) Any great sin (i.e. murder, or idolatry)
 - (3) Any sin punishable by death under the law
 - (4) Partaking of the Lord’s supper unworthily (1 Corinthians 11:29-30; see Numbers 20:8-13)
 - (5) A different sin for each person. One sin might be the sin that is “unto death” for one person, but may not be so for another person.
 - (6) Taking the mark of the beast (Revelation 14:9-10)
- c. Common assumptions, though not taught in scripture
 - (1) The sin unto death is a specific sin.
 - (2) The sin is unable to be forgiven.
- d. What we know
 - (1) It is a generic sin
 - a) At first glance, we might assume that it is a specific sin because the Bible says, “There is a sin unto death.”
 - b) However, the next verse shows that it is speaking of a category rather than a specific sin, because the Bible uses the same terminology when speaking of the sins that are not unto death.
 - (2) It was common knowledge the sin was unto death. A person had to know whether to pray or not to pray.
 - (3) The life given by prayer is physical.
- e. John did not say that the brother who witnessed the sin shall pray for the sin unto death.
 - (1) The Bible does not say that the innocent shall not pray for the guilty person.
 - (2) Rather, the Bible says there is no need to pray for it (forgiveness of the **sin**).
 - a) Paul admonished the Corinthians to deal with a physical fornicator in this manner (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).
 - b) Paul dealt with Hymenaeus and Alexander after this manner when they committed spiritual fornication (1 Timothy 1:19-20).



2. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:31-32)
 - a. What is the sin against the Holy Ghost?
 - (1) This sin is mentioned in only three places and these are all records of the same incident (Matthew 12:22-33; Mark 3:22-30; Luke 11:14-20 with Luke 12:10).
 - a) In each record, Christ cast out devils and was accused by the Pharisees of casting them out by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils (Matthew 12:24).
 - b) In return, Christ gave His warning about blaspheming against the Holy Ghost.
 - c) In fact, according to Mark 3:30, He made His statement about this sin “[b]ecause they said, He hath an unclean spirit.”
 - d) Jesus told them that they had just blasphemed against the Holy Ghost and it would not be forgiven them.
 - (2) How did these Pharisees blaspheme the Holy Ghost?
 - a) They saw Jesus cast out devils by the power of the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:28).
 - b) They knew that it was the work of God.
 - c) Consider the testimony of Nicodemus in John 3:2 where he said, “...we [Nicodemus and the Pharisees] know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can to these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”
 - (3) The Pharisees did not oppose Jesus because they doubted that He was from God.
 - a) They opposed Him because they knew He would take their position from them (see John 11:47-48).
 - b) It was with this clear knowledge of who Christ was that they attributed His works to the Devil.
 - c) That was the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost—to knowingly attribute the miracles of Jesus Christ, which were done by the Holy Ghost, to the Devil.
 - b. Who can commit this sin?
 - (1) This sin could only be committed by someone who had seen the work of Jesus, known it was done by the power of God’s Spirit and yet attributed it to the Devil for personal gain or hatred.
 - a) Most likely this sin could only be committed when Jesus was present on the earth.
 - b) This would explain why the sin is never mentioned again in the New Testament.
 - (2) But even if it could be committed today, it could not be committed by a true believer in Christ.
 - a) If someone truly believes in Jesus, he will not knowingly accuse Jesus of doing His work by the power of the Devil.
 - b) The very act of saying such a thing would be proof that He did not know Jesus as his Lord and Saviour (see 1 John 2:19; 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 1:9).