

THEOLOGY I: Doctrine of Sin (Part 3)

Session 3 - Dr. Jeremy Kimble

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

- **THE NATURE OF SIN**

- There are a great number of terms for sin in the Bible. We will limit ourselves to the three most important, all of which are mentioned in Ex 34:6-7, a verse repeated many times in the OT: **sin**, **iniquity**, and **transgression**.

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation." Ex 34:6-7

English	Hebrew	Greek	Central Idea
Sin	<i>chata</i>	<i>hamartia</i>	To miss the mark
Iniquity	<i>avon</i> or <i>aval</i>	<i>adikia</i>	Twisted, disfigured; action and consequence (distortion of righteousness)
Transgression	<i>pasha</i>	<i>parabasis</i>	To cross a forbidden line (betrayal)

- **SIN**

- These are the most frequent and most general words for sin in the Bible, and the first words used for sin in both Testaments (Gen 4:7, Matt 1:21). Both mean the same thing: **to miss the mark**, usually referring to missing the mark of **God's will**.



Among all these were 700 chosen men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. (sin) Judges 20:16

- We miss the mark for two reasons. At times, we **try** but **miss**, because of the power of sin and the weakness of our fallen nature (Matt 26:41). But the great majority of the time we miss God's mark because we are not **aiming** at that mark. We **reject** God's goal and purpose and shoot at another goal out of **enmity** toward God and His purposes. (idolatry, self worship)

So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Rom 7:17-18, 24

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Rom 3:23

- The greatest problem with a lost person is not that they want to obey God's law but can't; it is that they **cannot** obey God's law because they **do not want to**.

As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." Rom 3:10-12

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Rom 8:7-8

● INIQUITY

- The two Hebrew words are essentially two forms of the same word, and refer to something that is **twisted** and **disfigured**, something that **deviates** from the straight and true.
- As a result of doing twisted, deformed deeds, one becomes a **guilty, iniquitous** person. It carries with it an implication of guilt, as a consequence of sin, and leaves us under the righteous **judgment** of God.

*I acknowledge my **sin** to you, and I did not cover my **iniquity**; I said, "I will confess my **transgressions** to the Lord," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Ps 32:5*

- In the NT, someone who commits iniquity shows that he is not in a right relationship with God, for he lacks **righteousness**. As a result, he is guilty. Acceptance of the justice of Christ results in **liberation** from that guilt, and a new standing before God (justification, which shares the same root in Greek, as does righteousness).

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by this blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's **righteousness**, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the ones who have faith in Jesus. Rom 3:23-26*

● TRANSGRESSION

- Though not as frequent as some of the other words, some scholars think this may be the strongest word for sin in the OT, for it denotes not just crossing beyond a prohibited line, but **rebellion** and **betrayal**, and the breaking of a pact (1 Kings 12:19). In this sense, transgression is a violation of trust and the breaking of a relationship.
- God is described as a **covenant-keeping** God, whose “steadfast love” endures forever, but we are a **covenant-breaking** people.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: “Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled (transgressed) against me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand.”

Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged. Isa 1:2-5

Examples of ultimate betrayal: Robert the Bruce, Braveheart . Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus - sold out his friend for 30 pieces of silver.



The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful - for he cannot deny himself. 2 Tim 2:11-13

When we are faithless, He remains faithful... because he cannot deny Himself.

- **Thus, the essence of sin can be described in the following way. Sin is any lack of conformity, active or passive, to the moral law of God. This may be a matter of act, of word, of thought, or of inner disposition.**
 - This definition thus includes the **external** act and the **internal** attitude (see Ex 20:14 and 17), sins of **omission** and **commission** (Matt 23:23), the motivation behind the acts (Matt 6:2, 5,16), and the idea of sin as not simply isolated acts, but a **state** in which we live (see John 7:14 and Rom 7:14 for sin as a slave master).

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. Matt 23:23

- The most comprehensive idea of the essence of sin is **idolatry**, that which occurs when anything is allowed to take the place only God should take.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.
2 Cor 5:14-15

Resource: *Respectable Sins* by Jerry Bridges

● THE SOURCES OF SIN

- The Bible rejects any suggestion that God is the **source** of sin, and points rather to **human desires** (cf. 1 Cor 10:13). Pursuing gratification of these desires in the wrong way or failure to submit them to God's control is what leads to sin.

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. James 1:13-15

● There appear to be three sources for sin dominating us.

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the desires of the flesh, and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life - is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. 1 John 2:15-17

- **Satan.** The devil is the being that is behind the deceiving and tempting attacks made upon humanity. Yet he cannot force us to sin. (1 Pet 5, 2 Cor 4:4)
- **The Sinful Nature.** Without that capacity called the sinful nature, or flesh, that came to life when Adam sinned and has been passed down to us, temptation would find little welcome. Our fallen nature leaves us open and attentive to the voice of temptation (Jer. 17:9).
- **The World.** The word "world" (*kosmos*) can mean simply this earth, or the people on this planet. In this sense, God loves the world (John 3:16). But in 1 John 2:15-17, we are commanded not to love the world. In Eph 2:2, we are no longer to follow the ways of this world. In Rom.12:2, we are not to conform to the pattern of the world. In this sense, the world is not neutral, but actively opposed to God and God's purposes (John 15:18-19).

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. John 15:18-19

Pilgrims Promise by John Bunyan

- **HOW DO WE RELATE TO THE WORLD AS CHRISTIANS?**

- Avoidance? Acceptance? Involvement? Transformation? Evangelism?
- Richard Niebuhr wrote a book entitled *Christ and Culture* (see also Carson's follow-up) to answer this question.
 - (1) Christ **against** culture (the monastic model of fleeing a wicked culture)
 - (2) Christ **of** culture (the medieval unity of church and state or the liberal tendency to reduce Christ to culture)
 - (3) Christ **above** culture (the idea of Thomas Aquinas where culture has an independent sphere, but Christ's influence should be felt in and over it)
 - (4) Christ and culture in **paradox** (the answer of Luther that sees a Christian as a citizen of two kingdoms living in a tension of the demands of both kingdoms)
 - (5) Christ **transforming** culture (the answer of John Calvin)

- **The Results of Sin.**

- **Godward.** We have already spoken of guilt and death, two of the results of sin, in our discussion of the results of the fall. But it is only later in Scripture that we see the full results of sin in making us liable to the **wrathful punishment** of God, including both possible temporal punishment and, for the unrepentant, certain eternal punishment.

We see **temporal** punishment as early as Genesis 6, with the flood, and the plagues upon Egypt (Ex. 7-12), the destruction of Israel by Assyria (2 Kings 17), and the exile of Judah by Babylon (2 Chr. 36) are further examples of God punishing sin. And the NT teaches the awful truth of **eternal** punishment of the lost (see Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:8-9).

*since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer **the punishment of eternal destruction**, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. 2 Thess 1:6-10*

And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. Rev 14:9-12

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Rev 20:14-15

- **The Results of Sin.**

- **Outward.** We mentioned already the **broken relationships** that resulted from the first sin. Not only does sin result in a broken relationship with God, it spills over into every area of human life. Rom. 1:21-32 paints a picture of human devolution. Turning away from God produces not only idolatrous worship (vv. 22-23), but also sexual perversion (vv. 24-27), and a whole cluster of further sins that destroy any possibility of community.
 - Many people today attach little importance to a relationship with God, but few want to live with no close human relationships. Cain & Abel, Jacob & Esau, David, Hanhan and Peniel, Egypt & Israel - all had relational issues.
- **Inward.** Sin causes us to engage in **self-deception** (Ps 36:2), **dulls** the conscience (1 Tim. 4:2) and **hardens** the heart (Heb. 3:12-13). In fact, every faculty within human nature is weakened by sin. This is the meaning of the much misunderstood phrase "total depravity." It does not mean that humans are as bad as they can possibly be; rather, that the effects of sin extend to every **aspect** of human nature.

- For example, because of sin the body has become an instrument of wickedness (Rom. 6:12-13), the mind has become **darkened** (Eph. 4:17-19), the conscience is **impure** (Titus 1:15), the heart is **deceitful** (Je7 17:9), emotions are at **war**, (James 4:1), and the will is **enslaved** to Satan and sin (John 8:34).

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. John 3:36