

Common Sins -What is Sin?
Rom 14:23; Heb 11:6

A key question for understanding sin is this, "What is Sin?"

As we consider this question, I want to use a relevant illustration...Keep it in mind as we consider the nature of sin.

EX: Husband gives his wife flowers or a gift for Valentines Day. She asks, "Thank you, why did you do this?" (a trick question???)

Two answers: 1) Well, it is expected, and I felt like it was my duty...OR...
2) I love you and wanted to give you a token of my love
Which response honors your wife???

The idea and definition of sin is directly linked with a desire to love and honor God. While there are external aspects to sin, the key or prior dimension is the heart.

In warfare or even in athletic competition, to win you need to know your opponent and his /her tactics. So too, to deal with sin, to defeat it, we need to understand it and know it.

This morning we're going to begin to take a strategic look at Sin – its diagnosis and the Biblical model to avail ourselves of the Great Physician of our Souls.

How does scripture define it or explain it?

There are multiple facets and nuances to the biblical concept of sin.

Romans 14: 22 The faith which you have, have as your own conviction before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. 23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

This verse in Romans 14 is short but extensive. It covers a lot of ground in our lives.

Add to that **Heb 11:6 " Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to Him must believe that He is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek Him."**

1 Jn 3:4 – sin is lawlessness

Heidelberg Cat 4. Q. What does God's law require of us?

A. Christ teaches us this in a summary in Matthew 22: You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

In the teaching of Jesus in which he quotes the OT, we see that the great command is to love God and love our neighbor. So, the great sin would be to fail to love God and our neighbor.

The focus of sin is on the heart , i.e. what we love. Sin is an expression of a disordered love.

Sin is not so much a violation of a rule as it is a violation of a relationship of love for God, then neighbor.

That love is expressed by obedience to the commands of God.

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments" – Jn 14:15

"By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments" 1 Jn 2:3

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome." 1 Jn 5:2-3

Theologians have sought to give summaries of the teaching of sin for the purpose of basic instruction...

Children's Catechism- same as WCFSC

Q. 28. What is Sin?

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God.

Q. 29. What is meant by want of conformity?

A. Not being or doing what God requires.

Q. 30. What is meant by transgression?

A. Doing what God forbids.

Scripture has different words that relate to the issue of bad behavior – two of which are iniquity and transgression.

These words relate to a failure to conform to the standard set by God, a standard that reflects His character and what He prescribes for mankind.

There is Iniquity, which describes behavior that's crooked, while transgression refers to breaking trust by violating the relationship.

The main word is SIN.

EX: Andy Griffith – Barney: “that was a fine sermon preacher. That's one subject you can't talk enough about, sin.”

OT word is “Kata” – to miss, lack, harm, forfeit

NT 'hamartia' – to miss the mark

Those words are not necessarily religious words as they simply mean to fail or miss the mark. So, sin is a failure to fulfill a goal

What is the goal – Deut 6; Matt 22 Love God and neighbor.

1 Cor 10:31 – Whether you eat or drink, do all to the glorify God

Rom 3:23 – missing the mark; “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

In the 10 commandments, the first 4 deal with honoring God and the next 6 deal with relationship with others. Sin is against God and against people.

As David says in Ps 51 “Against you and you only have I sinned”. The real focal point of our disobedience is God, and the root of our sin is mix of PRIDE and unbelief.

We want what we want. We think we know better than God, and we want to determine right from wrong – Gen 3

That can be tricky for us because we can't see God, but we can see others. We can fix our sights on living for them and their approval.

It is easy to become motivated by pride rather than by faith or the glory of God. This is true for adults and children.

EX: a child is misbehaving, and the parent says, “What would your friends say if they saw you acting like this?” And the behavior changes. WHY? The child thinks of how he or she would be embarrassed and begins to act right.

WHAT is the motive of the new behavior? Faith in God? NO

MOST LIKELY IT WAS PRIDE.

What was the root of the child's bad behavior? PRIDE.

We think we've solved the problem when we've only fed the beast.

The temporary 'good behavior' was fruit that was rotten at the root.

The issue of sin is NOT SIMPLY ABOUT GOOD OR BAD FRUIT. It deals with the root issues of the heart.

The flip side of the coin of pride is UNBELIEF. This is not a refusal to accept God's truth, but rather a functional failure to trust and rest in God's character and His truth. This is sort of like temporary spiritual truth amnesia. We forget or don't act on what we hold to be true.

It is a failure to love God with ALL our heart, soul, mind, and strength. If we don't believe Him, then we aren't loving Him, and vice versa.

Remember Romans 14:23, "Whatever is not from faith is sin."

Add to that Heb 11:6 "Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to Him must believe that He is and that he is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

Is this breadth of understanding of sin depressing? It can be because it reveals that we are bigger sinners than we dare admit.

But it can also be inspiring when we acknowledge the amazing grace that covers our sin, and we embrace that we are more loved and forgiven than we dare imagine.

It gets to the root of sin which is a failure to trust God – not just His Word, but His heart. We saw that back in Genesis 3.

It is extensive because it gets us away from a set list of do's and don'ts i.e. don't drink, smoke, and chew or go with girls that do.

When the bottom line is faith and trusting the heart of God, then everything is on the radar..

Preaching, service in the nursery, tithing, not serving, not tithing, coming to church, not coming to church, your routine at work, at school, at play, or at home all fall under the question, "Is this from faith?"

Scripture does give us some clarity as to which things are the opposite of a life of faith.

How do we know what those things are?

When actions, attitudes or behaviors fall under the revealed moral law of God, such as the 10 commandments, then they are opposed to a life of faith.

When scripture says "Put off" these things, then we know that they are opposed to of a life of faith. Eph 4, Col 3,

When things are listed as the deeds of the flesh which are opposed to the fruit of the Spirit, then they are opposed to the life of faith – Gal 5

Even in our doing or not doing those things spelled out, the key issue is the heart. Are we acting out of faith or fear or a sense of earning our place with God?

Satan loves to get us to replace faith with morality, to replace one list of do's and don'ts with another.

What about things that are not expressly forbidden or commanded in scripture?

Along with Rom 14:23, consider 1 Cor 10- Whether you eat or drink, Do all for the glory of God

Paul is showing that sin is not just mainly defined by outward acts, but biblical obedience flows from a heart rooted in the desire to glorify God by faith.

Even our human virtues NOT done from faith and the glory of God are sin.

In the context of Roman 14 Paul is addressing the question of eating meat sacrificed to idols. Basically, he is saying, "If you have a doubt about it, then it is best to avoid it. But if you go ahead and indulge in what you think might be sin, then you are guilty." Whatever is not from faith is sin.

Why do we do things that we aren't sure about? We convince ourselves that it will make us happy or that our life will be better. We convince ourselves that we can construct a life for ourselves that does not

depend on a reference to what God says or to what might tend toward the glory of God.

EX As a young believer in college I learned the simple principle: “When in doubt, leave it out.” If I’m trying to build my happy life at the risk of doing wrong or harm, then am I really trusting God to lead me according to His path?

Rather than moving toward what is doubtful, faith rests in God’s plan and His ways.

Biblical faith is more than believing that our sins are forgiven. It is about believing in Christ and drinking from the living water. It is about feeding on Jesus, the Bread of life. It is about believing that He IS working all things together for good to those who love him. It is about believing that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

EX: so, when you or I overreact in anger, in sulking, in eating, drinking, spending, looking at the wrong stuff, vegging to Netflix, or even exercising, we are saying, “I will reward myself with what makes me feel good at the moment.” THAT IS THE OPPOSITE OF FAITH.

In the book, Future Grace by John Piper, I was rocked by a sentence in the second paragraph...

“Sin is what you do when your heart is not satisfied with God.”

That statement hit me like a ton of bricks in 1997. I remember where I was when I read it, and it has stuck with me ever since.

That is Piper’s way of saying, “Whatever is not from faith is sin.”

Sin is what you do when your heart is not satisfied with God. No one sins out of duty. We sin because it holds out some promise of happiness. That promise enslaves us until we believe that God is more to be desired than life itself (Psalm 63:3).

Friends, the Biblical solution to Sin is not found in a ‘what’ or a ‘program’, but a PERSON – WHO came to save His people from their sin, who came to save for Himself a Bride to be presented at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

THE TABLE before us is a foretaste of that which is to come.

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