

Sin - What It Is and What It Is Not

What sin is:

Common definitions are:

- Missing the mark.
- An immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law.
- A word, deed, or desire in opposition to the eternal law of God.

It is also a conscience matter, as we must comprehend "sin" to be found guilty of it.

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another; In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."
~ Romans 2:14-16

The objective of the gospel is to introduce us personally to Jesus Christ so we can be forgiven of our past sins, and to enable us to walk in a new life. A life without having to commit sin anymore.

This is why Jesus told the woman that was caught in the sin of adultery "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." ~ John 8:11

But some would attempt to make avoiding sin an impossible objective. They do this by redefining what sin is. They claim that a temptation to sin: is sin. Or that a mistake: is sin. But what does the Bible teach us about these things?

From the beginning, sin was not a mistake nor a temptation. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were warned clearly what sin was to them (eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) and what the consequence would be: death.

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." ~ Genesis 2:16-17

So when they acted out against this very clearly understood commandment, they sinned.

"Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:" ~ Genesis 3:1-4

The temptation from the serpent was not sin. But their intentional action was a sin. It was not a mistake. They fully understood that they were going against the commandment of God.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." ~ Genesis 3:6

James clearly identified for us when sin takes place.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren." ~ James 1:12-16

So James clearly shows us that "enduring temptation" and being tried by temptation can be a blessing. Because we don't give into the temptation: to do the evil.

And he shows us how we are tempted. When a person "is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." But he goes on further to show that sin only happens when "lust hath conceived." Conception in the physical world happens when the egg is fertilized. Sin happens when the temptation penetrates into the heart's desire, and the person from their heart acts upon the temptation, to do it. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Sin is spiritual death, because it separates us from God, our spiritual source of life.

What sin is not:

Sin is not a mistake

Something can be "legally defined" to be a sin. But if it was done mistakenly, without the knowledge that it was a sin, it is not a sin that separates that person from God. Because the purpose "to sin" never entered into the heart desires of the individual.

In addition, something done without pre-thought, as a sudden reaction to an external happening, is not a sin.

A common example of this is: before salvation, a sinner can form many "reactionary" habits. Things that they do without even thinking about it. For example: the habit of cursing whenever anything goes wrong. Many form this habit over the years. Then they get saved (they ask Jesus to forgive them off they're sins). Then later something bad suddenly happens, and by habit, without thought or intention "to sin" they let out a curse word. Though technically this is a "bad" thing to do, it was not done intentionally, but by reactionary habit. A habit they must now begin to work on to change.

The Apostle John was very aware of this type of situation, so he spoke about it.

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." ~ 1 John 5:16-19

So, technically, there are actions that are defined as sin, but to the one that does it by mistake or by reactionary habit, it does not separate them from God spiritually. It is not a "sin unto death." Another Christian can pray for grace for the "sin which is not unto death." But when someone sins willfully against God, that brings spiritual death, just as it did for Adam and Eve. Another Christian can only pray for that individual to repent themselves. A Christian's prayer cannot bring an exception of grace for the willful sinner. In this case it is the sinner that must sincerely want forgiveness, pray for forgiveness, and stop sinning. That is why John stated for a wilful sin "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he (another Christian) shall pray for it."

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." ~ 1 John 2:1-5

The context of forgiveness, is immediately followed with the purpose to no longer sin again.