

Basics of the Christian Faith
Lesson 7
Sin

Terms for Sin

There are several different words for sin in the original languages of the Bible (Hebrew and Greek). This section lists some of the nuances. The italicized phrases represent the Greek or Hebrew terms that are often translated “sin” in our English Bible. The underlined words and phrases represent the term translated into English.

Missing the mark, deviating from the goal – (Secular usage: Judges 20.16 - Among all these soldiers there were seven hundred chosen men who were left-handed, each of whom could sling a stone at a hair and not miss; as in miss the target).

Lam. 5.7 - Our fathers sinned and are no more, and we bear their punishment.

Gen. 20.9 - How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom?

Breach of Relationship; Rebellion; Revolution – (Secular usage: 1 Kings 12.19 - So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.)

Isaiah 1.28 - But rebels and sinners will both be broken, and those who forsake the LORD will perish.

1 Kings 8.50 - And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offenses they have committed (rebellion) against you, and cause their conquerors to show them mercy.

Perversion; twisting – (Secular usage: Isaiah 24.1 - Behold, the LORD maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof [KJV]). This also describes sin as a deliberate wrongdoing.

Straying away from a correct path (Secular usage: Ezek. 34.6 - My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them.) This also deals with ignorance and going astray.

1 Sam. 26.21 - Then Saul said, "I have sinned. Come back, David my son. Because you considered my life precious today, I will not try to harm you again. Surely I have acted like a fool and have erred greatly."

Job 6.24 - "Teach me, and I will be quiet; show me where I have been wrong."

Be wicked

2 Sam. 22.22 - For I have kept the ways of the LORD; I have not done evil by turning from my God.

Neh. 9.33 - In all that has happened to us, you have been just; you have acted faithfully, while we did wrong.

Missing the mark

John 8.46 - Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?

James 1.15 - Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

1 John 1.8 - If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

Error in measurement or a blunder (misdeed or trespass)

Hebrews 2.22 - For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment.

Ungodliness/impiety

Rom. 1.18 - The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

2 Tim. 2.16 - Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.

Lawlessness/contempt for the Law

Matt. 7.23 - Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

2 Cor. 6.14 - Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and *wickedness* have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

Moral and Spiritual Depravity

Acts 8.22 - Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart.

Rom. 1.29 - They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. Luke 11.39 - Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness."

Wrong doing to one's neighbor/ "injustice"

Rom. 9.14 - What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!

Luke 18.6 - And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says."

The definition of sin is not to be derived simply from the terms used in Scripture for it. The most characteristic feature of sin is that it is directed against God.

Ps. 51.4 - Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,

Rom. 8.7 - the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.

The perspective that sin is essentially directed against God accounts for its diversity of forms and activities.

Origin

Sin was present in the universe prior to the fall of Adam and Eve. The fact that the serpent enticed them to sin implies that the serpent was sinful. This passage also confirms the presence of sin prior to Adam's sin:

2 Peter 2.4 - *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.*

The Bible does not deal directly with the origin of sin in the universe. It is more concerned with sin and its origin in human life.

The account is laid out in Genesis 3. The real thrust of the temptation in this account lies in its subtle suggestion of humanity's aspiration to be equal with the creator.

Gen. 3.5 – your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God...

The attack was against God's integrity and was an enticement to rebel against humanity's proper Lord. Reinhold Niebuhr: "Man's sin lies in his pretension to be God."

Consequences of Sin

Man's attitude to God – the changed attitude to God on the part of Adam indicates the revolution that took place in their hearts. They hid themselves from God's presence. They were made for fellowship in his presence and now they dreaded encountering him. Shame and fear were now the

dominant emotions indicating the disruption that had taken place. (Genesis 2 and 3)

God's attitude to man – God was not pleased by the events that had taken place in the Garden. Now his speech toward the man and woman was filled with reproof, condemnation, curse and expulsion from the Garden (Gen. 3.16-19; 23).

Consequences for the human race – As the story progresses in Genesis, we see a “catalogue of vices.” We encounter Cain’s murder of Abel (Gen. 4.8); Lamech’s murder of a man (4.23,24); the wickedness of mankind (6.2,3,5). The wickedness of humanity becomes so great that God responds with the flood and the virtual destruction of mankind (Gen. 6.7, 13; 7:21-24).

Consequences for creation – The earth was affected by the fall and even became cursed (Gen. 3.17). The earth itself awaits redemption (Rom. 8.20). The catastrophe of man’s Fall brought the catastrophe of curse upon that over which he was given dominion. Sin was an event in the realm of the human spirit, but it has its repercussions in the whole of creation.

The appearance of death – Death is the epitome of sin’s penalty. This was the warning attached to God’s command not to eat from the tree (Gen. 2.17), and it is the direct expression of God’s curse upon man the sinner (Gen. 3.19). Because of sin death contains a fear and terror for man. Hebrews 2.15 - ...*free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

What does this mean to me?

Romans 3.23 – All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Romans 5.12, 18-19 - Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned - ...Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Question: *Am I guilty of Adam’s sin?* Some would say no. They would say that our sin nature is a bias toward sin. It is certain that we will sin but not a

necessity. We all remain responsible for our own sin. I am not held guilty for what Adam did.

Others believe that our sin nature is inherited from Adam; it has been sort of passed down through our DNA. Another approach is that Adam was the representative of all humanity. When he sinned, he was our representative and we are guilty due to our relationship to him. Key verse for me (Bill Victor, that is): Psalm 51.5 – Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

This is a question that Bible believing people disagree about and is not worth breaking fellowship over disagreeing about. You may want to believe that your sin nature and guilt has been passed down through your ancestor Adam. Or you may want to believe that your sin nature develops because the deck is stacked against you and your environment leads you to the inevitability of sin. It doesn't matter, because either way you have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. You do not match up to God's standard of perfection. You have rebelled against him and you are in need of a mediator.