

Theme: Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God's law perfectly.

I. What Is Sin?

- A. Recent article encouraging using the word 'sin' – but they wanted to redefine what it means!
- B. A lot of people today redefine words for their own purposes – this is a huge danger!
- C. What does the Bible mean by sin?
- D. Q78 What is sin? Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God's law perfectly.

II. Sin and God's Law

Q12: What is sin? - Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God's law perfectly.

- A. Sin is defined by God's Law
For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since **through the law comes knowledge of sin**. Romans 3:20
 - 1. The Law is how we understand both sin and righteousness!
 - 2. The Law cannot give righteousness, nor can it deliver from sin – but it gives us the proper understanding of both!
 - 3. This is because God's Law reflects God's character, which is perfect in holiness, love, and integrity without a trace of sin.
 - 4. Every human has this law stamped onto our very nature, which is why our consciences accuse us of sin.

For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.
¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them... Romans 2:14-15

- a. The Gentiles did not have God's Written Law – but the Law was written onto their nature.
 - b. This is why their conscience reacts to their behavior.
 - c. However, we can sear the conscience so that rather than convicting us, it excuses our sinful behavior!
 - d. This is why God gave us His written Law – it stands outside of us to reveal true righteousness and sin.
- 5. Q13 - How do you come to learn of your sin and guilt? - **The law of God shows me my sin and guilt.**
 - 6. Thus, it does not matter if I think or "feel" something is sin, for that is an unreliable guide. Sin is defined by God's Law given to us in Scripture.
- B. Sin is the breaking of God's Law

Q12: What is sin? - Sin is **disobeying or not conforming to God's law** perfectly.

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also **practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness**. 1 John 3:4

- 1. John also relates sin to the Law of God.
- 2. Sin is lawlessness – a reckless breaking of God's Law.
- 3. Disobeying - by doing what we are commanded not to do or by not doing what we are commanded to do.

4. “We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done” – BCP confession of sin

5. Conforming – sin includes both external actions and internal desires.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.” Matthew 5:21-22

- a. Jesus, the Greater Moses, is giving God’s Law
- b. He shows us the Law is not just external actions (murder) but internal attitudes and desires (anger)
- c. He does the same thing with adultery and lust (Matthew 5:27-30)

6. Conforming with the full intent of God’s Law

Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. Ephesians 4:28

- a. The thief must stop the sin of stealing.
- b. But the thief must also positively work hard and share with others!
- c. This is because God is not a thief, but gives and blesses abundantly – and we are called to do the same!

C. Sin – failing to obey God’s Law PERFECTLY

Q12: What is sin? - Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God’s law **perfectly**.

For **whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.**¹¹ For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. James 2:10-11

1. To break one law is to be guilty of sin before God!
2. We do the same thing – I can’t say “I stole a million dollars, but I did not kill anyone!”
3. Because the Law is not arbitrary but rather a reflection of God’s own character, to break the Law is to violate God’s very character – it is cosmic treason!

III. Applying the Word

A. Do I have a biblical understanding of sin?

Q12: What is sin? - Sin is disobeying or not conforming to God’s law perfectly.

1. Every part of this is critical to properly defining and understanding sin
 - a. Sin is defined by and related to God’s Law – not human standards or feelings.
 - b. Sin occurs when I break God’s Law either positively (doing what is forbidden) or negatively (not doing what is commanded)
 - c. Sin includes conforming to God’s Law in both my external actions and my internal desires.
 - d. Sin is the breaking of God’s Law even a single time – only perfect obedience avoids sin.
2. Any attempt to restrict or reduce any of these parts is ultimately an attempt to “define sin down” to assuage a guilty conscience and to justify myself.

3. Do I hold to a biblical understanding of sin, or to a modern re-definition of sin?

B. This is why we need the Law and the Gospel!

1. I need the Law to reveal my sin!

- a. Our culture has its own definitions of righteousness and sin – and these are often diametrically opposed to actual righteousness and sin!
- b. I need to hear God's Law so it can define sin and righteousness for me!
- c. Furthermore, we are all experts at self-deception and self-justification!
- d. Only God's Law can crash through our defenses to reveal our sin.
- e. This is why it is imperative that a Church consistently proclaims God's Law and not just things that make me "feel good"!

2. But the Law cannot remove sin and save – only the Gospel can lead me to Christ for salvation.

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: Romans 3:19-22

- a. The Law does not save – it merely reveals sin.
- b. The Law does not save – it shuts off my attempts at self-righteousness.

- c. Righteousness does not come from the Law but rather through the Gospel that points me to the righteousness that comes from God.
- d. If I only have Law, I either despair and give up, or I attempt to justify myself – and both are deadly!
- e. Through the Gospel I hear the amazing news that God offers to give the perfect righteousness of Christ to me – as a gift!
- f. Through the Gospel I learn that I am justified not by works of any sort – religious ceremonies, moral behavior, ethnic inheritance – but rather by grace, and this is received by faith alone!

3. This is why it is imperative that a Church does not stop with the proclamation of the Law, for this leads to the creation of Pharisees, not Christians!

4. A Church must stress and end with the Word of the Gospel, which alone can stir up faith in the heart of those who hear, causing them to look away from their own works, efforts, and merits to Christ, who alone has perfectly kept God's Law and Who offers His righteousness to us as a gift.

C. The Table

1. At this Table we confess our sin

- a. No one comes to this Table by their own merit!
- b. To come to this Table is to admit I have no merit!
- c. We will confess this truth together

2. At this Table we confess the Gospel

- a. Thank God it does not stop at the Law!
- b. Hear we see the same Gospel we have heard – Christ broken and poured out for us!

c. We will confess His atonement together

3. Come, confess and receive!

4. 1 John 1:5-2:2

What Is Sin?

1 John 3:4; Romans 3:20

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Communion

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Teaching keywords: Catechism; Sin and temptation; Law and Gospel;
holiness

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely,
and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless
at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ He who calls you is
faithful; he will surely do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:23-24