



Scriptures and Doctrine :: Defining sin

Defining sin - posted by John173 (), on: 2007/3/1 15:41

When it comes to spiritual matters, I am kind of like the mechanic who must tear apart a perfectly good engine just to see how it works. A good mechanic will be able to reassemble it!

As a result of my delving nature I ask myself questions. On the topic at hand I have queried "what makes sin sin?" Or in other words "what is the nature of sin?"

So let's see if I can define sin in this manner. A definition of sorts is given in Romans 14:23 --

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

This passage is interesting. Could it relate to Paul's statement in Phil 3:9

and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

Does it follow that sin could be defined as anything that falls short of the very righteousness of God?

The Greek word for sin most often used by N.T. writers is Hamartia:

- a) to be without a share in
- b) to miss the mark
- c) to err, be mistaken
- d) to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honor, to do or go wrong
- e) to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin
- 2) that which is done wrong, sin, an offence, a violation of the divine law in thought or in act
- 3) collectively, the complex or aggregate of sins committed either by a single person or by many

This brings us to the definition of sin that I have heard more than any other. Sin is missing the mark. What mark? The total and complete righteousness of God. Another definition of hamartia adds some more light:

to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin.

But we are not under law but rather under grace! Are we? We are most certainly not under the Judaic law of the old testament, yet we are still given commandments to live by in the N.T.

Mark 12:29-31 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' *This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' * There is no other commandment greater than these."

John 15:12 "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

Romans 13:8-10 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

So if sin is to break the commandment of God, and the commandment of God is to love each other, and love does no harm to a neighbor, can we define sin as any action or attitude that causes harm to another?

Any thoughts or comments?

Doug

Re: Defining sin - posted by JaySaved, on: 2007/3/1 15:47

Quote:
-----But we are not under law but rather under grace! Are we? We are most certainly not under the Judaic law of the old testament, yet we are still given commandments to live by in the N.T.

I am glad you brought this to our attention. A lot of people believe that we are not bound to any law, but we are bound to the commandments given to us in the New Testament.

I am reminded of Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

I heard in one of Paul Washer's sermons that 'lawlessness' in this context can be defined as one who lives as if Jesus never gave a law to obey. Anyone else heard this?

Re: - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2007/3/1 16:12

Quote:
-----I heard in one of Paul Washer's sermons that 'lawlessness' in this context can be defined as one who lives as if Jesus never gave a law to obey. Anyone else heard this?

The Greek work for 'iniquity' (Matt 7:23 KJV) is 'anomia.' 'nomos' means law, 'a' negates the word making it 'without law' or lawless. At least I think so! I'm still learning...

We have a law, but it flows forth from within rather than lord above us. As I see it, the old covenant was outward shadows of what the new covenant brings to be inward realities.

Re: Defining sin, on: 2007/3/1 17:21

Hi Doug

I go back to the beginning. What was the root of "original sin" in Eden?

Some suggestions would be pride, arrogance (which apparently means "arrogating" or claiming something one has no right to) and rebellion

The attitude of Satan, with which he infected mankind) was "Who is God that he should tell me what to do? I'm going to be my own boss!"

I think that two of the most tragic and utterly wrong, things written are the song "I Did It My Way" and the poem that ends

'
"I am the master of my fate
I am the captain of my soul"

The first is tragic because it is so "innocent", expressing a harmless, even noble sounding, sentiment. The second is horrifying - the utterance of a man deliberately and defiantly choosing death - eternal death - rather than life.

Jeannette

Re: - posted by John173 (), on: 2007/3/1 19:41

I see what you mean about original sin. It doesn't seem to fit my definition. Yet in some way it might. Is it possible that God Himself was wounded by Satan's desire to set himself on God's throne? What had He done to deserve this? The scripture says that the Holy Spirit can be grieved, so perhaps our pride grieves/causes pain or wounds the very heart of God.

Just some food for thought.

Also, looking at sin from this perspective ties directly into some of the scriptures et al that I mentioned in my last post on the 'pastor referral' thread.

In His Love,

Doug

Re: - posted by Branded4him (), on: 2007/3/1 21:04

God gave me this a little awhile ago. Just for a little input on your discussion. Sin is the unbelief in mans mind and soul that he cannot be fully satisfied with God alone.

Re: - posted by John173 (), on: 2007/3/1 21:35

Branded4Him,

I agree with your post, but this is more the root cause of sins. For instance, physical abuse of a child is a sin (I'm not talking about a spanking delivered in love). The deeper spiritual cause of the outward act could very well be described or defined as unbelief. This definitely lines up with Paul's statement that all that is not of faith is sin, referenced in post #1.

One more thing I want to add. This attempted definition may not be all encompassing. At least not in the sense that all sin directly cause harm. Though I do believe that most sin has some kind of indirect negative impact on either someone or a some group. An individual's prejudice for example may never directly impact an individual, yet the existence of prejudice does indeed cause harm to a group.

I hope this adds some degree of clarification.

In His Love,

Doug

Re: Defining sin - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2007/3/1 22:10

Here is the best and clearest definition of sin I have found...

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. (1John 3:4)

When I read the surrounding context holiness is definitely in view in that passage and this verse is an introduction to the nature of sin. Sin is the rejection of divine law and divine authority.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (Gal 5:14)

In Christ,

Ron

Re: - posted by death2self (), on: 2007/3/2 7:43

The classical Greek concept of hamartia is somewhat lacking. Here's an interesting explanation of that word here: (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamartia>) Hamartia.

I agree with Brother Ron that 1 John 3:4 is a more accurate definition. It's translated as iniquity, unrighteousness and lawlessness (in the NIV). Sin is volitional and is rebellion against God and says that I can do what I want to do. I can be God. That's the lie from the devil from the garden of Eden that we can be God.

We miss the mark simply because we choose to do so.

Re: Defining sin - posted by beenblake (), on: 2007/3/2 9:26

Dear Doug,

In the bible, sin is not so easily defined. It actually takes on many different meanings given the particular context. In some instances, it means the transgression of the law. However, this would mean that sin is merely an act or something we do. The bible also talks about sin as being a condition or state. For instance, we are sinful. We need Jesus to transform that condition or state. In addition, there are different types of sin. The error of a Christian is different than the error of a non-Christian. Lastly, there is the issue of repentance. A sin that has not been repented for is far greater in measure than a sin that has been repented for.

One of the great misconception that I hope to clear up in this discussion is the idea that sin is the transgression of the moral law as given to Moses, or the law of Moses. This is not true. The law of Moses was given as a testimony to the true "law" or word of God. If you read through exodus concerning the ten commandments, the Lord called it a "testimony." In fact, the bible is called the Old Testament and New Testament. That is because the Word of God is something far greater.

Quite obviously, if anyone breaks the ten commandments they have sinned. However, it is not because they broke the ten commandments. Jesus made this clear by saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The law of Moses was made for man. However, man was created for God. Man was not meant to serve the law, rather, man was meant to serve God. The real sin or problem is that they have transgressed God's Word which embodies God's Will. They have directly defied God's Will. This is the nature of sin.

To understand it in depth, we must consider the purpose for what humanity was created. God created everything with a purpose. This purpose is God's Will. He created everything by His Will. When He created humanity, He had a purpose for humanity. He had a particular desire or will for us.

However, God also gave us the freedom to defy that will. In other words, we could be something different than what God purposed. In the beginning, God created humanity in His image. We were to be a reflection of God. However, when we sinned, we did not reflect God. Instead, we reflected something entirely different.

Imagine it like this....you sit down to make a sculpture of a tree. You are a master artist and your sculpture is perfect. It looks exactly like a tree. However, the sculpture, by its own freedom, decides it doesn't want to be a tree. Instead, it breaks apart and doesn't look anything like a tree. It becomes something entirely different.

In the same way, when Adam and Eve ate from the tree in the garden, they became something entirely different than what God had created them to be. Their "being" was not what God had purposed.

When we sinned, we did this in ignorance. We did not fully understand the ramifications. We wanted to please God, but found that we could not. Instead, we gave into temptation. In this, you could say that we "missed the mark." We were supposed to reflect God, but instead we reflected something else.

In this, we erred. We made a mistake. Sin is a mistake. We disobeyed God. We transgressed His Word. In addition, sin manifested itself in us as a condition. When we sinned, our being changed. We entered into a state of sin. And so, sin is something far deadlier than mere disobedience. We became an enemy of God.

God had a specific purpose for humanity. We defied that purpose and became something else. Because of this, we need to be saved. We need to be saved not only from the act of sin, but the condition of sin. We need to be transformed. W

e need to be born again. We need to be recreated into the "being" God has purposed.

We were created in the image of God. It is important to note the words "in the" here. We were not created to be the image of God. The Word of God is the image of God. We were merely created to reflect God's image and God's Word. This is significant. Satan tempted Eve by saying, "you will be like God." The temptation is that we will be the image of God. However, our true purpose is to be a reflection of God. We cannot be God. We can only reflect Him.

This is important to understand, because what this means is that we can never fulfill God's purpose unless we have God's help. We are not God. We cannot obey His law or His Word. We cannot be God. We are to reflect God.

For example, think of the sun and the moon. The sun radiates light. It produces its own light. However, the moon reflects the light of the sun. Without the sun, the moon is a big ball of dust. It cannot produce its own light. When the sun hits the moon, it becomes beautiful in the night sky.

Likewise, we need God's light to hit us. We need Jesus. We cannot produce our own light. We cannot be good, we cannot follow the law, we cannot be a reflection of God on our own. We need Jesus, the true Word of God, to radiate within us so that we can fulfill the purpose of God.

Unlike the moon, we have freedom. We have the freedom to accept or reject Jesus, the true Word of God. We can submit unto Jesus and fulfill our purpose. Or we can reject Jesus and sin.

Sin really boils down to this. We either submit unto Jesus or we submit unto another authority. When we submit to any other authority than Jesus Christ, we have sinned. We have worshiped an idol. We have put something else before God.

This means that a person who has not been born again, who does not have Jesus inside them, can never do anything good or pleasing to God. They have not been saved. A person who is not saved is continually rejecting Jesus. They have committed the sin that leads to death. People such as these will be judged for this.

This also means that a person who has been saved may still sin, but they do not commit the sin that leads to death. Instead, they do not submit unto Jesus as their authority, they submit unto something else. Of course, when a Christian sins, they are not condemned. However, as God's children, we will be punished. We would be but fools to think that just because we are saved, we will not be punished. If God is truly our Father, and truly loves us, He will discipline us. I know this because I have been disciplined.

When reading the bible, it is important to understand the word "sin" in the context of the scripture. Throughout, the word takes on different meanings depending on what the writer is referring to.

I hope this helps,

In love and in Christ,

Blake

Re: the danger of defining sin - posted by roadsign (), on: 2007/3/2 11:57

Quote:

----- This attempted definition may not be all encompassing.

Doug, Trying to analyze and define something (like sin) can be quite tedious. You get out your diagnostic tools, the dissecting scalpel, the forceps, the microscope. And go at it. Wouldn't it be nice if the Bible laid out one clear definition of sin - just like a medical diagnostic manual defines various diseases - complete with aetiology, divisions and subdivisions, signs and symptoms? Of course, when it comes to diseases, all that information is useless in itself. It doesn't change a thing - other than to help us know what remedy to apply. Really we just need the cure!

In Jeremiah, sin is described as a disease- an "incurable wound." And really, we could stop there, in that this is enough information to help us know what remedy to apply. Also, I think it is more difficult to admit our sin CONDITION than

anything else - even specific wrongs we commit. It defines our utter inability to redeem ourselves. We need God's only remedy: Christ!

Ron Bailey says: "Words don't have definitions; they have histories." Indeed, we learn the meaning of a word through its history. (real life application) "Sin" is a good example.

The Bible helps us to understand sin, not merely by defining it, but by teaching through real life people- stories. These examples help break us out of our lofty and useless theological explanations (that meticulously stay clear of our own hearts.)

Quote:
----- At least not in the sense that all sin directly cause harm. Though I do believe that most sin has some kind of indirect negative impact on either someone or a some group. An individual's prejudice for example may never directly impact an individual, yet the existence of prejudice does indeed cause harm to a group.

Good point! Though, I would be more radical: I say, ALL sin is harmful - eventually-- even if merely by withholding love and goodness when it is in our power to give it. It damages us and others by keeping God at arms length.

Let me share with you my one biggest dread when it comes to attempting to define sin: We typically define it in terms of negative behaviors, and rarely in terms of simply the LACK of good - and can have difficulty seeing that in ourselves.

Quote:
-----The deeper spiritual cause of the outward act could very well be described or defined as unbelief.

I agree, and this is clearly Biblical. Yet, we can get into quite the quagmire even on this definition -- judging every benevolent act as depraved and evil because it may not be a faith response. So, in attempting to fine-tooth our definition of sin, we can actually be committing sin: judging.

I say, if we focus on the cure, we wouldn't need to spend so much time trying to categorize all the various expressions of sin. In other words, by taking the New Life that Christ offers, sin will weaken and dissipate along with the "old Man" -- even if over the course of time -- as God works to bring conviction as HE chooses, and to transform the heart.

Let me give a practical example: We can go on and on and on about the sins of rock music, the selfishness, the danger of addiction, the blah blah blah associated with it. But I doubt that doing so changes its fans. I say: present the Good News for all its worth - not merely with typical formulas and words, but through relationship, redirecting thoughts, etc - in other words: doing the GOOD that is needed, as we are able. In fact, our focus on pointing at a sin symptom may be a sin in itself, simply because we are failing to do the GOOD we should be doing.

I say, the GOOD NEWS is where to go -- through and through!!!

Diane

Re: - posted by Logic, on: 2007/3/2 18:33

The word "sin" describes an abstract concept.

Romans 14:23b ...and whatever is not of faith is sin.

James 4:17 Therefore, to anyone knowing to do good, and not doing it, it is sin to him.

1John 5:17a All unrighteousness is sin,

Re: - posted by Christinyou (), on: 2007/3/2 19:41

There is only One that no sin was found in Him.

The only reason was He loved the Father and obedience was The Only Way Love is defined. Jesus Christ was the only man that had the Love of the Father as His nature. Adam did not, he was created, Satan did not he was created. Jesus Christ did, He was birthed by the Father's Seed, miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit in Mary. No created being can have the Nature of the Creator. A Chevy cannot have the nature of the creator of Chevys'. Who is GM? Even the CEO cannot make a Chevy Have a baby Chevy. God can, He did it in Mary. Christ is the only One, by birth, that could love God as God needed and intended as a birthed man to love Him.

Sin is simply not loving God the way He needs and wants to be loved. No created man can do it. That is why we need to be born Again. Birthed by God with the same Seed of Jesus Christ. The Born Again are birthed by God the Father and the old created man is past and the New Man being now Born Again with the Nature of God in us, "Old things are passed away behold all things have become new." Why is the first commandment not don't sin? That is not what God wants. "Love the Lord Thy God with all that you are", that is what God wants. He God it by His only begotten Son, then by placing Him in those that believe that "Jesus Christ Is the Son of the Living God." Without believing this, it is worthless to put Jesus Christ in a person.

By believing this, it is possible for our Father to put us in His Birthed Family and we now can love the Father by the Nature of Jesus Christ in us, this is, "The Hope of Glory".

We can have all there is that all the angels have and have all the gifts of the Spirit and move mountains and all else, it all is nothing. There is only one way and that is by Love, "I show you another way". 1 Corinthians 12:31 and desire earnestly the better gifts; and yet a far excelling way do I shew to you:

Who is "The Love" or "Charity"? It is Christ and only He in us can give us the nature to love God as He does, did and always will.

This Love is Christ, This Christ in us is Love.

Let us substitute Christ for "The Love" or "Charity" and we see what takes away sin and how we sin no more because of His Seed that is in us.

1 Corinthians 13:4-13 The love is long-suffering, it is kind, The love doth not envy,

The love doth not vaunt itself, is not puffed up, doth not act unseemly, doth not seek its own things, is not provoked, doth not impute evil, rejoiceth not over the unrighteousness, and rejoiceth with the truth; all things It beareth, all It believeth, all It hopeth, all It endureth. The love doth never fail; and whether there be prophecies, they shall become useless; whether tongues, they shall cease; whether knowledge, it shall become useless; for in part we know, and in part we prophecy; and when that which is perfect may come, then that which is in part shall become useless. When I was a babe, as a babe I was speaking, as a babe I was thinking, as a babe I was reasoning, and when I have become a man, I have made useless the things of the babe; for we see now through a mirror obscurely, and then face to face; now I know in part, and then I shall fully know, as also I was known; and now there doth remain faith, hope, Love--these three; and the greatest of these is Love.

Now we are face to face with Christ and now we can fully know this Love of Christ that is in us. So what remains? Now, Now, remains faith, which is of God in Christ Jesus, Hope which is in Christ Jesus, and Love which is Christ Jesus in us. Even above Faith, and Hope, the Love of Christ in us is the Greatest of all, for by this Love we can learn to Love His Father as He Loves, "our Father."

1Jo 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His Seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

In other words: Born Again by the Christ in us we Love God the way He wants and needs us to Love Him, and His Seed remains in us, and by this Love we cannot commit sin, because we are born of God.

The lie of Satan is; it is us that are still sinful and cannot be without sin. Lie, Lie, Lie.

Obedience is Love, sin is disobedience. The Christ in us is Love, it is His Obedience God sees in us and that is how God the Father can accept us as son's also, because of His Seed that is in us.

In Christ and learning to love the Father by the Mind of Christ that is in me, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who liveth in me". Amen, continually and praise God and thank You Father always for the Love You have birthed in me. Phillip