

THE CHARACTER AND NATURE OF SIN

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The outline for the following study titled “The Fact Of Sin” is taken in its entirety from “Landmarks Of Baptist Doctrine”; Book III, pages 431-434, by Pastor Robert J. Sargent; Bible Baptist Publications; 1219 North Harns Road; Oak Harbor, Washington 98277. We have used their Bible Institute material for decades now and highly recommend it for training men for the ministry. It also makes for outstanding Sunday School material.

In *Psalm 51:1-3* (and also in *Isaiah 59:12*), there are three words which are used most often in the Word of God to refer to ‘sin.’ They are:

- Transgression
- Iniquity
- Sin

¹ Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. ² Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I acknowledge my transgressions: And my sin *is* ever before me. *Psalm 51:1-3*

¹² For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, And our sins testify against us: For our transgressions *are* with us; And *as for* our iniquities, we know them; *Isaiah 59:12*

This lecture studies the full nature of sin as it relates to God, God’s Law, and to man.

I. “SIN” DEFINED: *Romans 3:23.*

²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; *Romans 3:23*

The word “*sin*”, means to “miss the mark”, to “deviate from the standard of moral rectitude.” It is a term associated with ‘marksmanship’ —see: *Judges 20:16.*

¹⁶ Among all this people *there were* seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair *breadth*, and not miss. *Judges 20:16*

With God, everything that is not absolutely perfect is sin. In the Old Testament, the Law was God’s perfect standard, and the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ (Who fulfilled the Law) is God’s perfect standard.

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God's demands are very exacting — *James 2:10; 1 Peter 1:16*. One sin makes a man a sinner. A man may live an extremely 'good' life, but he will fall short of God's holy demands.

¹⁰ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all. *James 2:10*

¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. *1 Peter 1:16*

The term "sin" relates to the holy character of God.

II. "TRANSGRESSION" DEFINED: *1 John 3:4*.

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

The word "*transgression*" means "to go beyond," "to exceed the limits." It means a violation or breach of the law. It is a failure to conform to the will of God.

See: Numbers 14:41; Joshua 7:11,15; 1 Samuel 15:24; Isaiah 24:5; Daniel 9:11; Hosea 6:7; 8:1; Matthew 15:3

⁴¹ And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper. *Numbers 14:41*

¹¹ Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put *it* even among their own stuff. *Joshua 7:11*

¹⁵ And it shall be, *that* he that is taken with the accursed thing shall be burnt with fire, he and all that he hath: because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly in Israel. *Joshua 7:15*

²⁴ And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice. *1 Samuel 15:24*

⁵ The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; Because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, Broken the everlasting covenant. *Isaiah 24:5*

¹¹ Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that *is* written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. *Daniel 9:11*

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⁷ But they like men have transgressed the covenant: There have they dealt treacherously against me. *Hosea 6:7*

¹ Set the trumpet to thy mouth. *He shall come* as an eagle against the house of the LORD, Because they have transgressed my covenant, And trespassed against my law. *Hosea 8:1*

³ But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? *Matthew 15:3*

The term relates to the holy Law of God.

III. **“INIQUITY” DEFINED:** *Isaiah 59:2-7, Isaiah 59:12.*

¹ Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; Neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, And your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear. ³ For your hands are defiled with blood, And your fingers with iniquity; Your lips have spoken lies, Your tongue hath muttered perverseness. ⁴ None calleth for justice, nor *any* pleadeth for truth: They trust in vanity, and speak lies; They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. ⁵ They hatch cockatrice’ eggs, And weave the spider’s web: He that eateth of their eggs dieth, And that which is crushed breaketh out into a viper. ⁶ Their webs shall not become garments, Neither shall they cover themselves with their works: Their works *are* works of iniquity, And the act of violence *is* in their hands. ⁷ Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood: Their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; Wasting and destruction *are* in their paths. *Isaiah 59:1-7*

¹² For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, And our sins testify against us: For our transgressions *are* with us; And *as for* our iniquities, we know them; *Isaiah 59:12*

The word “*Iniquity*” means “lawlessness,” “wickedness,” “crookedness,” “perverseness.” It as a distortion of what is right.

See: *2 Samuel 19:19; 2Chronicles 19:7; Psalm 53:1; 66:18; 106:6; Matthew 7:23; Acts 8:23; James 3:6*

¹⁹ And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. *2 Samuel 19:19*

⁷ Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do *it*: for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts. *2 Chronicles 19:7*

¹ The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *There is* none that doeth good. *Psalm 53:1*

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¹⁸ If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear *me*: *Psalm 66:18*

⁶ We have sinned with our fathers, We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. *Psalm 106:6*

²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. *Matthew 7:23*

²³ For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity. *Acts 8:23*

⁶ And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. *James 3:6*

The term relates to the creation of God — including man—which has been perverted by sin.

IV. OTHER BIBLICAL TERMS MEANING “SIN”

A number of other terms are used in the Word of God to convey the range and intensity of sin — *1 Timothy 1:9*. For example:

⁹ Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, *1 Timothy 1:9*

A. Unrighteousness: *Romans 6:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 2 Peter 2:13; 1 John 5:17*

¹³ Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. *Romans 6:13*

⁹ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, *1 Corinthians 6:9*

¹³ And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, *as* they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots *they are* and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; *2 Peter 2:13*

¹⁷ All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death. *1 John 5:17*

B. Trespases: *Matthew 6:14,15; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13.*

¹⁴ For if ye forgive men their trespases, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: ¹⁵ But if ye

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forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. *Matthew 6:14–15*

¹⁹ To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. *2 Corinthians 5:19*

¹ And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; *Ephesians 2:1*

¹³ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; *Colossians 2:13*

C. Offenses: *Romans 4:25; Romans 5:15-18.*

²⁵ Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. *Romans 4:25*

¹⁵ But not as the offence, so also *is* the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, *which is* by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. ¹⁶ And not as *it was* by one that sinned, *so is* the gift: for the judgment *was* by one to condemnation, but the free gift *is* of many offences unto justification. ¹⁷ For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) ¹⁸ Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. *Romans 5:15–18*

D. Faults: *Galatians 6:1*

¹ Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. *Galatians 6:1*

E. Wickedness: *2 Chronicles 6:37.*

³⁷ Yet *if* they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly; *2 Chronicles 6:37*

F. Ungodliness: *Romans 1:18; 5:6; 2 Peter 2:5; 2 Peter 3:7; Jude 4; Jude 15,*

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; *Romans 1:18*

⁶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. *Romans 5:6*

⁵ And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness,

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bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; *2 Peter 2:5*

⁷ But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. *2 Peter 3:7*

⁴ For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly *men*, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. *Jude 4*

¹⁵ to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all *that are* ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all *their* hard *speeches* which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. *Jude 15*

G. Rebellion: Rebellion is an affront to God: *1 Samuel 15:23; Isaiah 1:2; Job 34:37.*

²³ For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from *being* king. *1 Samuel 15:23*

² Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: For the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against me. *Isaiah 1:2*

³⁷ For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, He clappeth *his hands* among us, And multiplieth his words against God. *Job 34:37*

H. Unlawfulness: *2 Peter 2:8.*

⁸ (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;) *2 Peter 2:8*

I. Treachery: This means the “betrayal of a trust”, “unfaithfulness”, to act deceitfully: *Hosea 6:7.*

⁷ But they like men have transgressed the covenant: There have they dealt treacherously against me. *Hosea 6:7*

J. Indebtedness: *Matthew 6:12.*

¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. *Matthew 6:12*

K. Disobedience: *Jeremiah 3:25; Romans 2:8; Romans 10:21; Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 3:6; 1 Peter 2:7-8*

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²⁵ We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God. *Jeremiah 3:25*

⁸ But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, *Romans 2:8*

²¹ But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. *Romans 10:21*

² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: *Ephesians 2:2*

⁶ For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: *Colossians 3:6*

⁷ Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, ⁸ And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. *1 Peter 2:7–8*

L. Unbelief: *John 16:9; Hebrews 3:18-19; Hebrews 4:6; Acts 14:2; Acts 19:9*

⁹ Of sin, because they believe not on me; *John 16:9*

¹⁸ And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? ¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. *Hebrews 3:18–19*

⁶ Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: *Hebrews 4:6*

² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. *Acts 14:2*

⁹ But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. *Acts 19:9*

V. CONCLUSION: We thus arrive at the following statements concerning sin:

- SIN IS insubordination to God, rebellion against God, insisting upon living our lives as we want to, willful disobedience.
- SIN IS refusing to allow God to have His way in our lives: *Luke 19:14*.

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¹⁴ But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this *man* to reign over us. *Luke 19:14*

- SIN IS a wrong relationship to God. It is primarily an offense against the Living God, the Creator and Sovereign of heaven and earth.
- SIN IS every abuse or perversion of God-given powers; every indulgence in the lusts of the flesh; every encroachment upon the rights, interests, or feelings of others.
- SIN IS essentially a departure from God.
- SIN IS unlikeness to God, the want of conformity to the holy standards of God.
- SIN IS SELFishness; the positive preference of self to God, the exaltation of self above God.
- SIN IS —A STATE — unlikeness to God — *1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:15-17.*

⁷ But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart. *1 Samuel 16:7*

⁹ The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? *Jeremiah 17:9*

¹⁵ For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. ¹⁶ If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. ¹⁷ Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. *Romans 7:15-17*

A PRINCIPLE — opposition to God.

AN ACT — transgression of God's Law. ¹

DOCTRINAL VERSE MEMORIZATION: #18: 1 John 3:4

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

¹Some of this material is derived from: Melton, J. H. **What The Bible Teaches and Fundamental Baptists Believe**. Springfield, Missouri Crescendo Publications, pp. 33-35