

## What Is Sin?

*I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. NUN. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments (Ps. 119:102-106)*

**Intro:** The Peshitta - Lamsa Translation translates Psalm 119:104 this way: "I have meditated on thy commandments; therefore I hate the way of the wicked." The NIV says, "I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path." A "false way" (KJV) is a "way" or a "path" that goes against God's TRUTH. The only way to understand the truth about sin and its deceptiveness is to know God's Word which is truth (**John 17:17**).

According to the Greek, to sanctify means "to separate from profane things and dedicate to God." It also means, "to purify internally by renewing of the soul." The only way to receive this separation from sin is to gain knowledge of God's truth which removes the blinders (Ps. 43:3; John 3:21). Furthermore, the Psalmist stated that he "hated" every false way. We must learn to hate what God hates. God hates sin and so must we. However, we will only know what to hate as we study His Word.

I. Apart from knowledge of God's Word, people will not know what sin truly is.

1. Judging from the statistics in the USA Online article (attached), people differ on their ideas concerning sin.
  - a. When we lose sight of God's Word then we begin to be like the Israelites. It was said of them, "*but every man did that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 17:1-6; 21:25).
  - b. The Bible says that people who do what is right in their own eyes (or what they personally believe is right) are FOOLS! (Prov. 12:15)
2. Psychology's Influence on how sin is perceived
  - a. In many forms of Psychology, "sin" is no longer seen for what it is. It is referred to as "mental illness."
  - b. Example: Drunkards are now called "alcoholics" and they are no longer held responsible for their actions because they supposedly have an "illness."
  - c. Due to removing the idea of "sin" from our vocabulary we are now deluged with numerous 12 step and self-help programs and books as well as a number of talk shows full of "psycho-babble."
  - d. While sin is seen metaphorically in the Scripture as sickness, we must understand that this is what it is limited to. God still holds individuals responsible for their sins in spite of the metaphorical idea of sin being seen as sickness in certain parts of Scripture.

- e. Medicine is prescribed to cure “behavior” (supposed “chemical imbalances”) but it usually makes the person worse and heavily reliant upon the drugs and the counselors.
- f. We have grown insensitive to the idea of what sin actually is and how God actually feels towards it. In order to truly understand the nature and horror of sin we must move away from the vain philosophies of men and stay strictly with the teaching of Scripture. – Col. 2:4-8, also v. 10

### 3. The Purpose of the Law

- a. Everyone can choose to believe something: They can choose to believe Scripture or to believe modern psychology. However the two cannot be integrated and therefore one cannot believe both.
- b. The law was given by God to help us to understand exactly what sin is from His perspective.
- c. *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: **for by the law is the knowledge of sin*** (Rom. 3:20)
- d. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law* (1 John 3:4).
- e. Any actions on our part that are done in contrast to the law is considered by God to be sin.

### 4. Therefore, only God’s Word can give us a thorough knowledge of what sin actually is.

- a. *The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, **enlightening** the eyes* (Psalm 19:8).
- b. Light reveals what is in the dark. The light of God’s Word will expose the darkness of sin.
- c. The Bible gives about seven descriptions of sin. One description in the Bible (the other six will be dealt with later) is that sin is darkness (**John 3:19-21**; Rom. 13:12-14; **Eph. 5:3-12**; 1 John 1:5-10; 2:7-11).
- d. God’s Word is the only thing that is “right.” God’s Word is our “light.” The only *right* perspective on sin is God’s perspective.
- e. **2 Tim. 3:16** – God’s Word is given in order to instruct us in righteousness.
- f. Unrighteousness is the result of not believing the TRUTH (1 Thess. 2:10-12). God’s Word is truth (John 17:17).

## II. Sin is doing what is not RIGHT from God’s Perspective

- 1. The Bible describes sin as unrighteousness:
  - a. **All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death** (1 John 5:17)

- b. The Bible speaks about two kinds of righteousness. There is the “right-standing” that every believer has before God as the result of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21; See also Jer. 23:5-8 to see “Jehovah Tsidkenu) who is the “Lord our righteousness).
  - c. There is also the walk of righteousness in which we are to do righteousness or perform righteous acts. Unfortunately many have focused on the “right-standing” part and have often neglected this aspect. However, those who fail to do righteousness are labeled children of the devil (1 John 3:8-10)
  - d. Rom. 6:11-15
  - e. Forgiveness cleanses us from our unrighteous acts (1 John 3:8-10).
2. Sin is described in the Bible as *disobedience* to God and *rebellion* against Him
- a. Rom. 5:12-14, 19
  - b. 1 Sam. 15:22-16 – What was it that Saul rejected? He rejected “the Word of the Lord.” Sin is *rejecting* God’s Word and transgressing His commandment.
  - c. Eph. 5:1-6; **Col. 3:1-12** – A list of what God considers to be “disobedience”
  - d. Notice that those who live in consistent disobedience are considered to be it’s “children” and to be controlled by Satan “the prince of the power of the air). A child has the nature (or DNA) of its parent.
  - e. The purpose of the law is for those that are disobedient – 1 Tim. 1:8-10
3. Sin is doing what God considers evil rather than what He considers to be good
- a. James 4:11-17
  - b. Sin and evil are synonymous terms (1 Kings 15:26, 34; **16:19**; 2 Kings 13:2, 11; 14:24; 15:9, 18, 24, 28; 21:16)
4. Sin is missing the mark and coming short of God's glory
- a. Rom. 3:23; Heb. 4:1; Heb. 12:15
  - b. Sin is a failure to meet God’s standard (Greek word - *harmartia*)
5. Works and lusts of the flesh is sin
- a. Gal. 5:13-21
  - b. Rom. 7:18, 25; 8:8, 13; Gal. 6:7, 8; Eph. 2:3
6. Sin is described as an offense:

- a. Mat. 5:29, 30; 13:41; 18:8, 9; Rom. 5:14-18; James 2:10; 3:2
  - b. Sin is both an offense against God but also against the person committing the sin as well as the victim of one's sin (Acts 24:16).
7. Whatever is not done in legitimate faith is sin
- a. Rom. 14:23 (1 Thess. 2:10-12).
  - b. Unbelief is a sin that displeases God, makes Him to be a liar, and hell is the destination of those who live in it (Heb. 11:6; 1 John 5:10; Rev. 21:8)
  - c. Unbelief produces reprobate works – Titus 1:15, 16
  - d. Disobedience is the antithesis to faith and hinders the will of God for our lives (1 Pet. 2:7; Rom. 10:21)
    - *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 (1 Pet. 2:7)*
    - Notice that through their disobedience they disallowed God in their lives. Our disobedience hinders God and His destiny for our lives. God does NOT force His will for us upon us.

### III. Understanding Holiness, Unholiness, godly and ungodly

1. Apart from a life of holiness we cannot expect to see God (Heb. 12:14-17)
  - a. Holiness is the exact opposite of sin – Rom. 6:22; Psalm 89:34, 35
  - b. Unholy - having committed unrighteous acts; "a sinful person" [syn: sinful] (WordNet® 3.0, © 2006 by Princeton University.)
  - c. 1 Tim. 1:9; 2 Tim. 3:1-6
  - d. We are responsible for being holy – Lev. 20:7; 1 Pet. 1:15, 16
2. Sin is also described as ungodliness
  - a. According to Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, © 1996, ungodliness is, "Not godly; not having regard for God; disobedient to God; wicked; impious; sinful; Polluted by sin or wickedness. "
  - b. The Hebrew word "rasha" is translated in other parts of Scripture as wicked
  - c. Jude 1:4, 15, 18

- d. Ungodliness, unholy, and sinners are used synonymously and contrasted with righteousness – 1 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 1:18; 1 Pet. 4:18; Prov. 16:27
- e. It is only by meditation on God's Word do we avoid the practice of ungodliness – Psalm 1:1-6.
- f. The true grace of God, and not the greasy grace taught by some, teaches us to abstain from ungodliness – Titus 2:11-14

From USA Today Survey Online

**WHAT AMERICANS CALL SIN**

- Adultery: 81%
- Racism: 74%
- Using "hard" drugs, such as cocaine, LSD: 65%
- Not saying anything if a cashier gives you too much change: 63%
- Having an abortion: 56%
- Homosexual activity or sex: 52%
- Not reporting some income on your tax returns: 52%
- Reading or watching pornography: 50%
- Gossip: 47%
- Swearing: 46%
- Sex before marriage: 45%
- Homosexual thoughts: 44%
- Sexual thoughts about someone you are not married to: 43%
- Doing things as a consumer that harm the environment: 41%
- Smoking marijuana: 41%
- Getting drunk: 41%
- Gambling: 30%
- Not attending church or religious services regularly: 18%
- Drinking any alcohol: 14%

*Source: Ellison Research, August 2007, based on 1,007 adults through a representative online panel ad adjusted to be demographically representative of the USA  
Margin of error: ±3.1 percentage points.*