

Sin

By Leon King

Is that a sin?" she asked. The young woman was serious enough about her inquiry. What did she have in mind when she thought of whether or not a certain action was sin or not. Exactly what is sin? What do people mean when they speak of sin? From whence came the meaning of sin?

1. What is sin?

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

∅ *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. -- James 4:17.*

∅ *And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. -- Romans 14:23.*

These verses clearly define sin. Sin is, therefore, the transgression of the law; it is the failure to do good when one knows to do good; and finally, it is whatever is not of faith. For the purposes of this article, we want to focus on the first meaning of the word, that *"sin is the transgression of the law."*

Since sin is the transgression of the law, we ask ourselves the question, "Is there an objective moral law?" In other words, "Is there something outside of ourselves - some sort of constant which defines sin?" Is there a standard of right and wrong? If one breaks a law (standard) set by an authority over him outside of himself, then he becomes a transgressor.

2. Who defined sin?

The Holy Scriptures define sin. The Bible verses quoted in the paragraph define sin for us. Since the Biblical concept of sin is the transgression of the law - and the summary of law is to love God with all of one's mind, soul, heart, and strength and his neighbor as himself - we ask, "What law?" When came this law?

Here is the answer to our question, "Is there an objective moral law?" Where can it be found? It is found in the Bible, God's holy word. We all know from our reading of the Holy Scriptures that God gave a written moral law to the nation of Israel. When God called Moses up to Mount Sinai from Israel's encampment at the lower part of the mountain, he gave Moses two tables of stones with the Ten Commandments. These Ten Commandments are a summary of God's moral law.

Then someone asks, "Well, there are millions and millions of people who have never read the Bible nor have they heard it expounded; what about those people? Are they aware of God's moral law?" The answer is plain. Yes, all men are aware of God's moral law. God gave the standard and has insured that all men know it for he has written it in their hearts - and in their conscience. All men, everywhere, taught or untaught of the Scriptures know dishonor to God, dishonor to parents, and dishonor to neighbors is wrong.

*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: **Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness**, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) -- Romans 2:14,15.*

God defined sin as the transgression of His law. Now, let us think for a minute. What is evil? It is the absence of good. What is faith? Faith is believing what God has revealed in Scripture. So we can see how the

transgression of God's law brings the absence of good and the absence of faith.

God, because He is God, has the right to define what is good. The one who acts in a way, which fails to do good, he transgresses God's moral law. That transgression is sin.

3. When did sin enter into the world?

Eden must have been a wonderful place. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve went about their duties and had fellowship with God. There was no such thing as the absence of God as far as the man and his wife were concerned until Eve took of the forbidden fruit, gave to her husband, and he also ate. We know that Eve was deceived, but Adam ate the fruit willingly and knowingly. Here was the origin of sin in the world.

For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. -- 1 Timothy 2:13-14.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. -- Romans 5:12-14.

We cannot help but notice sin's effect on men at the fall of Adam. "*Sin entered into the world, and death by sin;*" Death was the immediate effect. In the very day that Adam sinned, he died spiritually. (Genesis 2:17) Then he lived a total of nine hundred and thirty years and died physically. (Genesis 5:5) The effects of Adam's sin affected us all. In Adam,

we are spiritually dead and need regeneration (John 3:3). In Adam, we die physically as surely as he died. *"For as in Adam all die,"* -- 1 Cor.

15:22. Since Adam stands for mankind, he stood as the head of us all. We are with him in his transgression, and in him we stand condemned. Thus the meaning of - *"and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"* becomes abundantly clear to all.

We have seen that Eve was deceived and that Adam sinned willingly. So, we ask ourselves, "Was there not a malignant person, which tempted and seduced the woman to transgress God's law?" Yes, obviously. The serpent was in the garden. Who or what is the serpent? Who was this tempter?

*And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, **that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan,** which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.* -- Revelation 12:7-9.

Yes, that old serpent called the Devil and Satan was present in the garden. Satan used the serpent for his devious ends. The first two chapters of Genesis give us no light concerning the origin of Satan, but we do have some insight from other passages, which help us to understand the origin of Satan. The 14th chapter of Isaiah is most likely the key to understanding the origin of Satan.

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be

brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners? -- Isaiah 14:12-17.

Like many passages in the Old Testament, this one has a dual application. It is descriptive of the king of Babylon, but it has deeper application than to the king of Babylon. This goes back before time to give us understanding that Lucifer, son of the morning, was cast out. No body can doubt that God created Lucifer. The Bible testifies to the omniscience of Almighty God; so we know that God knew what would be Lucifer's lot before he created him. If we admit this to be true, and we must, then we are left with the question of why God created Lucifer in the first place. The answer is found in Revelation 4:11. *"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."* Here is a central problem for most of mankind. Faced with the dilemma of answering such a question, men begin to rationalize about God; trying to make Him something He isn't while denying who and what He really is. God *can* and *does* according to the counsel of His own will. Two other passages give us the same insight into this question.

The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. -- Proverbs 16:4

For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. -- Romans 11:36

If we can believe those verses as we believe other Bible passages, we will come to the end of ourselves and fall at the feet of the great Sovereign God on our face and cry, Holy, Holy, Holy.

So we are left with this question: "Did God know what Lucifer would do when He created him?" Of course, He did. So we must conclude God created him for His own glory. God's creation of Lucifer was all part of God's eternal purpose. There are things our finite mind cannot grasp and must be taken by faith. We have the Bible record that God did it. We also know that He created all things for His own purpose and for His pleasure. So, let us rest our case there believing that God did this, like all other things, in keeping with his purpose. God is sovereign and created Lucifer after the counsel of His own will. Do we have to know every jot and tittle to say this is true? Definitely not.

4. Why did sin enter into the world?

We have seen that the woman was deceived, that the man sinned willingly, and that the serpent was the instrument of deceit in the case of the woman. Let us move to the next question. We know that God created Lucifer for His own purpose; so we must ask ourselves the same question of Adam. Did God know what Adam would do when placed in the garden with the one prohibition? Absolutely, He did. This too, like the creation of Lucifer, and Lucifer's fall, was part of the plan of God.

While God cannot be correctly charged with the origin of evil in the world, we can say that He placed the mutable man in the garden for God's ultimate glory. The characteristics of God would be shown through the fall. That is, the qualities of unconditional love, forbearance, longsuffering, mercy, and forgiveness could only be demonstrated where there was sin. God chose to redeem a multitude out of every tribe, kindred, tongue, and nation to show these qualities of himself. Those qualities of God would be shown toward the vessels of mercy whose names were recorded in the book of life from the foundation of the world.

What of those who know not God? These, God left to themselves to utterly corrupt themselves and perish in their sins to the praise of His righteousness and justice.

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. -- Revelation 4:11

The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. -- Proverbs 16:4

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I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together; I the LORD have created it. Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. -- Isaiah 45:1-12.

In the face of such statements, how can a person bring himself to believe that God cannot do as He pleases in the heavens? – and, in the earth? – and, that it hath pleased God, through His sovereignty, to bring all things to the point at which we find them? Is God in absolute control or not? We answer, Yes, God is in absolute control of all things. So, the problem of sin in the world is not a problem at all once we come to believe that God does after the counsel of His own will. He has created everything and directed everything toward His purpose – His pleasure, and ultimately glory.

5. A Major Question is: Where does sin take a person?

Better yet, what is the result of sin? Man's history is strewn with shame, sorrow, sickness, distress, agony, heartache, despair, wretchedness, – and death, both temporal and eternal.

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like are but the fruit produced from the depraved heart. Depraved men manifest themselves as effeminate, as abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. This is the evidence of a corrupt society where adultery, fornication, blood shed, animosity, lying, war, threatenings, corrupt speech, and treaty breaking are the norms. The unsaved world is looking out for number one; whatever one wants is what one should have according to the philosophy of the world. Unregenerate men fight for what they want and take what they want – they are insatiable, never satisfied, and have eyes that cannot be full. We can see that the whole world lies in wickedness, and we blame the other person or persons for our plight on this earth. All the children of Adam are inherently the same – wicked, depraved, deluded, despicable, horrendous sinners.

We have already seen that sin brings death, both physical and spiritual. Without God's regeneration, all men, women, and children are spiritually dead and are in need of the new birth. Dead in their sins, they move according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air - that is, unregenerate man follows the devil in everything he thinks or plans, and eventually does. He is unrighteous - dead in sins - and at enmity against God. He is not seeking for God and in reality wants no part of God, no part of God's book, nor any part of God's people.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ...Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. -- Romans 3:10-12, 19.

Is there any hope for sinners? Yes, there is. The hope is Jesus Christ. God's Son came into the world to save sinners. His name was called Jesus for He would save His people from their sins.

*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. **He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.** And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. - John 3:17-21.*