

# What is Sin?

In society today we allow ourselves great latitude for sin. To begin with, most people don't know or realize what sin is. We have our own definition of sin and what we perceive to be right or wrong. Most of us are as those who lived in Israel of old when, "...every man did *that which was right in his own eyes*" (Judges 21:25).

Many of us have set our own standards for decency and morality. Our attitudes of what we comprehend to be right and wrong have been established by those around us. From very early in life, we develop our sense of values through the instructions of our parents, teachers, authority figures, and society as a whole.

But have you ever asked yourself, "What is sin"?

Who has the right to say what constitutes sin? God is the creator of this earth and all mankind. God has set the parameters for the way we should conduct our lives. God has given us an instruction book called the Holy Bible so we can know how to operate this human life. In the Bible, God spells out what comprises sin.

Let's discover together what sin is. God has set guidelines by which humans are to live. John was inspired to write, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law**" (I John 3:4). But we also come to realize that, "...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). Paul further explained that, if there was no law, there would be no transgression (Rom. 4:15).

When the apostles John and Paul spoke of the law, they were referring to the Ten Commandments. So the law shows us right from wrong. Paul went on to explain this. "...I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet'" (Rom. 7:7).

Christians, under the New Covenant, are to live by faith in Jesus Christ and to follow His example. They are to live by the spiritual intent and the magnification of those laws. James, the brother of Jesus, said, "Therefore **to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin**" (Jas. 4:17). And the Apostle Paul, speaking to Christians said that, "...**whatsoever is not of faith is sin**" (Rom. 14:23).

There is a price to be paid for sin, and that cost is death, "...the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

Jesus went on to say, "The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in Me" (John 16:9 NLT).

Let's summarize the Bible definitions for sin:

1. It is sin to not believe in Jesus Christ as being the savior of the world, "The world's sin is that it refuses to believe in Me" (John 16:9 NLT).

2. Sin is disobeying the Ten Commandments of God. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law (I John 3:4). In Romans 3:20 we are told, “...for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.” And in Romans 4:15, “...for where no law is, *there is* no transgression.” Paul summed it up with, “...I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet’” (Rom. 7:7).
3. It is sin to knowingly refuse to do what we know we should do. James said, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth *it* not, to him it is sin” (Jas. 4:17).
4. A Christian must live by faith. Anything that goes against your conscience, what you know to be right and is not in your better judgment, is sin for you. “...For whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). This chapter of Romans shows that you can cause others to sin by forcing your liberty in Jesus Christ on others before they have had time to prove the doctrine for themselves, thereby going against their conscience.

By the above descriptions of sin, we come to realize we can sin by omission - not doing as we should, or by commission - doing the things we should not.

When we sin, it is against God. As King David said, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight...” (Psa. 51:4). Only God can forgive our sins. We must repent and accept Christ’s sacrifice for our sin!