

# WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF SIN?

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- *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: **for sin is the transgression of the law.** And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.” (1 John 3:4 & 5.)*

**NB:** - The Greek word that is translated in the KJV as *“the transgression of the law,* is the word αἰνομία/α- “anomia” - See Strong’s Concordance; Greek No. 458. It is defined as: - “Lawlessness”.<sup>1</sup>

In VS. 4 John tells us that when we commit sin, we are **also** transgressing the law. You cannot commit sin, without also transgressing the law.

John in VS. 4 gives us the ultimate definition of SIN. And then in VS. 5 after having given us this vital definition, he tells us what Christ’s mission was to this world: - *“he was manifested to take away our sin”.* Substituting John’s definition of SIN from VS. 4, and inserting it into VS. 5, we understand more clearly **WHY** Christ was manifested to come into this world. He was to take away our *transgressions of the law or lawlessness.*

John said that there was no sin in Christ. This was because Jesus stated concerning himself, *“I have kept my Father’s commandments”* – John 15:10. Reinforcing again John’s ultimate definition of SIN in 1 John 3:4.

- The apostle Paul in his prophecy concerning the great falling away that was to arise in the Church, as he recorded in 2 Thessalonians 2, has supplied another New Testament evidence that **SIN** is indeed **Lawlessness.**

The apostle describes the apostasy under the term *“that man of sin”* (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

Then he alludes to the fact that this apostasy was already starting to working in the Church in his lifetime; he uses the expression *“the mystery of iniquity doth already work”* (2 Thessalonians 2:7). The Greek word that is translated as *“iniquity”* in the KJV is the word αἰνομία/α- “anomia”. This is the same word which was used by John in 1 John 3:4, and which we have already found to be defined as *“lawlessness”*. Therefore *“the mystery of lawlessness”* was already working in Paul’s day.

Then in the next verse, he refers to the time when this apostate power would actually come upon the stage of action openly, describing it thus: - *“then shall that Wicked be revealed”* (2 Thessalonians 2:8). The Greek words that are translated in the KJV as *“that Wicked”* are “ho anomos”. The word αἰνομος is a Greek adjective (See Strong’s Concordance, Greek No. 459), and it is defined as *“lawless ... the lawless one ... of the Antichrist 2 Th 2:8”* <sup>2</sup>.

**“The man of sin” = “the lawless one”.**

- Therefore we conclude again that: - **Sin is lawlessness.**

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<sup>1</sup> A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature, by Walter Bauer, page 71.

<sup>2</sup> Bauer’s Lexicon, page 72.

☞ Many professing Christians refuse to accept the above definition of sin from the inspired apostle John, and instead they argue, philosophize and just generally try to explain away this ultimate definition of SIN.

There are a number of plain and unambiguous Biblical reasons that all reinforce the Biblical definition of "SIN" as being Lawlessness against God's Moral Law of Ten Commandments, that is so simply stated in 1 John 3:4.

1. Paul clearly states that if there is no law, then there can be no transgression; sin is not imputed to us if there is no law.

*"... for where no law is, [there is] no transgression."* (Romans 4:15.)

*"...but sin is not imputed when there is no law."* (Romans 5:13.)

**NOTE: -** In light of these plain statements from Paul's pen, the fact that he also testified to the Romans that "all have sinned" – Romans 3:23 proves that God's Moral Law must have been transgressed by all of us, for us to have sinned.

2. Paul also states that the law gives us the knowledge of sin. And he leaves us in no doubt as to which law he is referring to, when he quotes directly from the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment – "Thou shalt not covet".

*"... for by the law [is] the knowledge of sin."* (Romans 3:20.)

*"What shall we say then? [is] the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."* (Romans 7:7.)

3. The apostle James states that when we commit sin the law convicts us as a transgressor. He also leaves us in no doubt as to which law he is referring to, by quoting the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Commandments, "Do not kill", and "Do not commit adultery".

*"But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced<sup>3</sup> of the law as transgressors."* (James 2:9.)

*"For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."* (James 2:11.)

**NOTE: -** See Exodus 20:13 & 14 where the Commandments that James is quoting from are originally recorded in the Scriptures.

4. The apostle John informs us that the Devil committed sin from the beginning. Jesus has informed us what were the specific sins that the Devil committed from the beginning. He was a murderer and the first liar. Therefore, when the Devil sinned from the beginning in heaven, he violated the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Commandments.

*"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."* (1 John 3:8.)

*"Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."* (John 8:44.)

**NOTE: -** See Exodus 20:13 & 16 where the Commandments that Jesus is describing the Devil as violating are originally recorded in the Scriptures. This POINT of course establishes the truth that God's Law of Ten Commandments existed in heaven in eternity. Just reread the statements of Paul under

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<sup>3</sup> The Greek word that is translated as "convinced" is "elegcho" – See Strong's Concordance; Greek No. 1651. It is defined as "to convict" – Bauer's Lexicon, page 249. Therefore the law convicts us as a transgressor when we commit sin.

POINT NO. 1. If there is no law then there can be no sin. The fact that John tells us that the Devil sinned from the beginning proves that God had a Moral Law by which the angels were required to live by, and which the Devil transgressed.

5. The well known prophecy of Christ's sacrificial death found in Isaiah 53, tells us that Jesus was to be stricken by God because of his people's transgressions. And as Paul has stated under POINT NO. 1: - "... for where no law is, [there is] no transgression" - Romans 4:15; this establishes the truth that Christ, upon the cross, was stricken because of our transgressions of God's Moral Law.  
"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken." (Isaiah 53:8.)
- The apostle Paul leaves us in no doubt that Christ gave himself for us upon the cross, to redeem us from "all lawlessness".  
"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity - lawlessness<sup>4</sup>, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:13 & 14.)

THE DEATH OF CHRIST FOR OUR SINS SEALS FOREVER THE SIMPLE TRUTH THAT: -

**SIN IS LAWLESSNESS – 1 JOHN 3:4.**

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**APPENDIX: - SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED: -**

- "... for whatsoever [is] not of faith is sin." (Romans 14:23.)  
**NOTE:** - Why is a lack of faith sin? Because if we do not have faith, we will not establish God's Law in our lives, and thus we will be guilty of transgressing that law – in other words, we will be committing sin.  
"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." (Romans 3:31.)  
  
We must remember that the patriarchs and prophets "through faith" "wrought righteousness" – (Hebrews 11:32 & 33.) And the psalmist has defined "all thy commandments" as being "righteousness" - (Psalms 119:172.) Therefore through faith the righteous people of old wrought or worked righteousness; in other words, through faith they obeyed all of God's Commandments, which are righteousness. Therefore through faith, we would not be transgressing God's law, which is exactly what Romans 3:31 is teaching us. And if we do not have faith, it is pretty obvious that we will be transgressing God's law, and thus we will be committing sin. This is the true understanding of Romans 14:23.
- Some Christians state that: - "there are other actions that God regards as sin which are not explicitly prohibited by the law of Ten Commandments. For example as the Ten Commandment Law does not explicitly mention fornication and homosexuality, you cannot teach that sin is only the transgression of that law."

**But the Scriptures refute this objection.**

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<sup>4</sup> The Geek word that is translated as "iniquity" in the KJV is the word "anomia", which we have already seen means "lawlessness". See our comments on 1 John 3:4 where this word is defined.

- *“Wherefore the law [is] holy, and the commandment<sup>5</sup> holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” (Romans 7:12 & 13.)*

This righteous, Moral Law of God that Paul has clearly described as being “good”, was not intended for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless, that is, for those who disobey the law. And then Paul lists groups of sinners who are plainly violating the Ten Commandments. For example he lists murderers of fathers and mothers, murderers, liars, perjurers. And among the list of sinners Paul names concerning for whom the law is intended, he lists “whoremongers” (which is the old English word for “fornicators”); and he then lists next those who “defile themselves with mankind” (which is the old English expression for homosexuals). The morally good law of the Ten Commandments was indeed intended for fornicators and homosexuals. Thus demonstrating that this so-called objection has no Biblical foundation.

*“But we know that the law [is] good, if a man use it lawfully; 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, for whoremongers<sup>6</sup>, for them that defile themselves with mankind<sup>7</sup>, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.”<sup>8</sup> (1 Timothy 1:8-10.)*

Paul had not known “lust” except that God’s Law contained the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment, “Thou shalt not covet.” Therefore lust in all its forms is forbidden by the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment.

*“What shall we say then? [is] the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” (Romans 7:7.)*

<sup>5</sup> The Commandment that Paul calls “good” he quotes for us in VS. 7, “Thou shalt not covet.” This is the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment which is found in Exodus 20:17.

<sup>6</sup> The Greek word that is translated as “whoremongers” in the KJV is the word πορνος – “porvos” - See Strong’s Concordance, Greek No. 4205. It is defined as: - “fornicator, one who practices sexual immorality.” – Bauer’s Lexicon, page 693.

<sup>7</sup> The Greek word that is translated as “them that defile themselves with mankind” in the KJV is the word αρσενικοι/της - “arsenokoitēs” – see Strong’s Concordance; Greek No. 733. It is defined as: - “a male who practices homosexuality, pederast, sodomite.” – Bauer’s Lexicon, page 109.

<sup>8</sup> All of God’s Commandments are righteous.  
*“My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments [are] righteousness.” (Psalms 119:172.)*

Those people who know righteousness have God’s Law within their hearts.  
*“Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart [is] my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.” (Isaiah 51:7.)*

A righteous person is defined as someone who does righteousness.  
*“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” (1 John 3:7.)*

Therefore a righteous person will do or practise all of God’s righteous Commandments. And we have the Biblical example of this truth concerning the parents of John the Baptist, Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth, whom Luke defines as being righteous before God, being blameless commandment-keepers.  
*“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife [was] of the daughters of Aaron, and her name [was] Elisabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” (Luke 1:5 & 6.)*

Clearly when Paul states that the law was not made for a righteous man, he is not teaching that a righteous person is free to transgress that good law; because as we have just established from the Scriptures, they will in fact be obeying that law. As has been established from the example of Zacharias and Elisabeth.

Paul has also taught us concerning the Law of God, that one of its functions is to act as a “schoolmaster” to bring a person to Christ so that they can experience justification by faith.  
*“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster [to bring us] unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:24.)*

For a righteous person, who has already come to Christ in repentance and has then experienced justification by faith, the Law is not intended to continue to act as a “schoolmaster” for them.

The Greek word that has been translated as “is made” in the KJV in VS. 9 is the word κειμαι – “keimai” – See Strong’s Concordance, Greek No. 2749. It is defined as: - “to lie, to recline; or be appointed, set, destined; be given, exist, valid of legal matters (in this case it is a Greek legal technical term).” – Bauer’s Lexicon, pages 426 & 427. And in the context of this passage concerning the Law, it clearly has this meaning. What Paul means in the context of the passage is simply summed up based on the Greek as follows: - *“the law is not intended for a law-abiding man”* – Bauer’s Lexicon, page 195.

But for those who are violating the law and living in open rebellion against its principles, as Paul lists in 1 Timothy 1:9 & 10, the law is indeed intended to act as a “schoolmaster” to bring them to Christ, so that they can be justified by faith.

Earlier in this same epistle to the Romans Paul refers to those who had rejected the worship of the Creator God, and who gave themselves up to the lusts of their own hearts, women after women, and men lusting after men. In other words, they were indulging their lusts by engaging in homosexuality. Clearly these sins are a violation of the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment, which points out and forbids **lust** in all its forms.

*“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: ... For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.”*  
(Romans 1:24, 26 & 27.)

- Some Christians teach that “sin is being separated from God by a broken relationship”. But it is our sins and iniquities that have separated us from God, and that have caused the broken relationship with our Maker.

*“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid [his] face from you, that he will not hear.”* (Isaiah 59:1 & 2.)

- Some Christians teach that “sin is missing the mark”. There are two insurmountable problems with this theory.

i.) Nowhere in the Bible is this sentiment even stated once. On one occasion a person stated this teaching to us, and when we asked him, “Where do you read that in the Bible?” His reply was, “I don’t know”. And that is because no such statement is contained within the pages of Holy Writ.

ii.) And we pose the question: - What is “the mark” that we have missed when we sin? Again, there is Biblical silence from those who advocate this theory.