

## How to Think about Sin in a Christian's Life

Intro: Do we really have to talk about this?

Search on sin\* in NT: 440X, in 235 pages (not in Philemon, 2-3 John, but the idea is there)

A. Definition of sin: "Any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature."

Sinful nature: Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:3: "we ... were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind"

-- We grow in our understanding of what is and is not sin, throughout our Christian lives (and I hope in this class!)

B. Are there greater and lesser sins?

- In terms of legal standing before God: No. Any one sin makes a person a "sinner" before God  
Galatians 3:10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."  
James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.  
Genesis 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."
- In terms of results? Yes (Example: coveting vs. stealing)  
Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.  
Matthew 5:19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Also: Ezekiel 8:6, 13, 15)  
1 Peter 4:8: Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.
- In terms of the degree of responsibility entrusted to us, or degree of knowledge we had, or how long God has been patient with us  
Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. (James 3:1)  
John 19:11 Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin." (Also: Luke 12:47-48 )  
Jeremiah 7:26 Yet they did not listen to me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck. They did worse than their fathers.  
Proverbs 29:1 He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.

C. If all our sins have been forgiven by faith in Christ, why do we still pray for forgiveness?

Luke 11:4 and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation." (a daily prayer)

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

- We are praying not for right legal standing before God (justification), because we already have that: Rom 8:1; 5:1-2
- We are praying for a restored personal relationship with God (fellowship) that has been disrupted by sin  
And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30)  
Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; (1Jo 3:21)  
Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-12) (also Isa 59:1)
- We do not need to remember every specific sin when we ask for forgiveness  
(note "all unrighteousness," 1 Jn. 1.9, above)  
Psalm 19:12 Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.  
but also note: 1 Jn. 1.9: If we confess our *sins* (plural): this means specific sins

D. Are there any consequences of sin in a Christian's life?

- Our justification – unchanged: Rom 8:1
- Our adoption - unchanged (still God's children)  
1 John 3:2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is.
- Our fellowship with God: disrupted (see C.2 above)
- We can experience God's "fatherly displeasure"  
Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

*Westminster Confession of Faith* (1643-1646): God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and, although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may, by their sins, fall under God's fatherly displeasure, and not have the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their faith and repentance. (11.5)

5. We can experience God's fatherly discipline:

Revelation 3:19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

Hebrews 12:6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Hebrews 12:10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

6. Our Christian life is hindered by sin, and we can go "backwards" in our growth (sanctification)

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

1 Peter 2:11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.

7. Sin tends to make us unfruitful in our ministries and our Christian lives

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

8. Sin results in some loss of heavenly reward

2 Corinthians 5:9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. <sup>10</sup> For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

1 Corinthians 3:15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

E. How should you think of sin in your own life? (if you have trusted in Christ for forgiveness)

1. Forgiven Rom 8:1

2. Still present (until you die): If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

3. A defeated foe (Rom. 6:11, 14) – but one that still has some power to trip us up

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (Heb 12:1)

4. Your image of yourself: Mostly positive and hopeful and joyful, not mostly negative, discouraged, and downcast

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: (Ephesians 1:1)

To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: (Colossians 1:2)

5. Aware of remaining sin, but not beaten down by this

6. You should always seek to live with a clear conscience: Ac 24:1`6; 1 Tim 1:18-19; Heb 9:14; 13:18

having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. (1 Peter 3:16)

→ I want you to have the great joy of having a clear conscience! This should be the normal situation of our lives.

F. What if your conscience is bothering you?

1. Like the "warning" light on your car's dashboard: don't ignore it!

- perhaps a faulty light: "However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled" (1 Cor 8:7)

- or perhaps something is wrong, and God is getting your attention!

2. Pray for forgiveness 1 John 1:9

3. If you have wronged someone else, go and make it right: Matthew 5:23-24

4. If your conscience is still not clear, talk and pray with someone else

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

5. But beware: the enemy (Satan or demons) can throw false accusations against us

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. (Rev 12:10)

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. (Zech 3:1)