

From Your Pastor

A Study of the Shorter Catechism

Question: What is Sin?

Answer: Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God. (1 John 3:4)

Scripture memory: "Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." (1 Jo. 3:4).

An explanation: Sin is described in so many descriptively deplorable ways in Holy Scripture. Sin is lawlessness (1 Jo. 3:4); sin is disease; sin is an enslaving master (John 8:34); sin is poison (Num. 21:8); sin is like leprosy; sin is evil; sin is a formidable foe against righteousness (Rom. 7:7ff); sin is a reproach to people (Prov. 14:34); sin is constantly threatening mankind (Gen. 4:7; Rom. 7:18-20); sin brings God's wrath and condemnation upon it (Rom. 5:13); sin brings death (Rom. 6:23). God hates sin (Jer. 44:4; Zech. 8:17).

Everyone in this world does it, and has been tainted by it, but no one knows how to really define what it is. Unless the Holy Spirit regenerates the sinful heart, a person will not even take much notice of it, let alone seek to define it. The Confession teaches us that sin is defined not first in relation to one another as creatures, but is defined in our relation to God the Creator! "**Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God**" means that God makes clear what His perfect righteousness is, and what He demands of every human being in His Most Holy Law, and sin is that which does not conform to this righteous law, and would transgress against it. God defines what righteousness is by His very own character, as the Perfectly, Holy and Righteous God. When a human being does not live up to this righteousness, and actually transgresses God's righteous law, he is guilty of sin, and without grace and hope in a Mediator, will be condemned and eternally damned under God's just judgment (Matt. 5:17-20; 7:23).

The evil of sin is not first in what it does to mankind (although this is unimaginably and heartbreakingly evil!); the evil of sin is that it has the proud audacity to offend a Holy and Kind Creator and God.

The Law of God is "the commands and rules flowing from God's sovereignty, whereby His will is manifested, and the creature bound to obedience" (J. Flavel). We should remember that God condescended to clearly reveal His will, His righteous commands and law to Adam in the beginning, has written that law on all men's consciences (Rom. 2:14-16), and has clearly revealed them in His Word. All creatures are to give perfect conformity (Matt. 5:48; Mark 12:30) to God's Law from the heart, and evidenced in their lives. When we sin, we transgress this Law. The Law is not sin (Rom. 7:7), it reveals sin (Gal. 3:21-24). The Law is good (Rom. 7:12), but it is powerless to change sinful hearts and give them the ability to keep it. That is why Romans 8:3-4 is such glorious news!

"For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit."

Thanks be to God for sending His Son, the sinless Lamb of God, Holy, Harmless, Undeified by sin (Heb. 7:26), to be our sin-bearer (2 Cor. 5:17-21). God the Father condemned sin in the flesh in Jesus Christ on the cross. The crucifixion of Jesus is where the evil of sin is manifested! Jesus underwent death, the terrors of his conscience, and the torments of hell under God's wrath in order for us to be able to live by His Spirit, and so to be justified by faith alone through the righteousness of Christ alone (Rom. 3:21-26), and sanctified by faith in Christ as we seek to live God's law out of love and gratitude in our union with Him.

A Prayer: Dear Father, in Jesus' Name, let me be further rid of sin and conformed more in the image of my Savior, your Beloved Son. Lord, let me be freed from both the penalty and the power of sin. Let me love what you love, O LORD, and hate sin as you hate it! Thank you, Jesus, that you have redeemed me from all lawlessness (Tit. 2:14). Amen.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Biggs