

We will use as a working definition the following:

Sin is any transgression of, or lack of conformity to, the law of God (which at any given time is the will of God addressed to the obedience of moral beings).

In connection with this definition there are some specifically relevant Scriptures:

1 John 3:4 -- "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." Sin must always be defined in relation to the Law of God. Sin is rebellion against and transgression of the Law of God.

Romans 3:19-20 -- "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." The Law of God not only tells us what sin is; it also uncovers the workings of sin in us. Thus the Law makes sin known to us, both cognitively and experientially.

James 2:8-11 -- "If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not commit murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law of God." Partiality, or "respect of faces," is a sin. If we regard the wealthy and disregard the poor we show partiality; thus even lack of conformity to the Law of God is sin (in this case, failure to show love to our poor neighbor). And James reminds us that whether we break one or all of the Ten Commandments, we are guilty of transgressing God's Law and thus have sinned.

James 4:17 -- "Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." In this case, boasting apart from an appropriate submission to the will of God is called sin. From this specific instance James moves to the general principle that if we know what is right and fail to do it, we commit sin. This sets up the distinction between sins of commission and sins of omission. If we do what we know is wrong, that is sin. If we fail to do what we know is right, that is also sin!

#### D. Distinctions in the Doctrine

Some important distinctions in the doctrine should be made, including the distinctions between sin as a principle and sin as an action, between sin as guilt and sin as corruption, and between sin as original and sin as actual.

##### 1. The distinction between sin as a principle and sin as an action