



“Synonyms for Sin”

Part II

Kevin Presley

Today, we continue our look at one of the most fundamental subjects in the word of God, and the history of mankind for that matter: sin. The Bible teaches that sin is behind every problem. It is the reason for every curse that rests on God’s creation. God hates it. It destroys the relationship that our Holy God desires to have with man. Jesus died to redeem us from it, and we are warned from Genesis to Revelation not to commit it. But what IS it? What IS *sin*? The most basic answer to that question is *disobedience to God; violating the law of God.*

I John 3:4 “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

To *transgress* means to *go beyond or violate* God’s commandment. But is sin merely the act of disobeying a positive command? Is a sin simply doing what God said NOT to do? Or is a sin a broader thing?

Last week, we looked at the two most obvious forms of sin: to do what God has prohibited and to NOT do what God has commanded. So, two words to remember about sin thus far are *prohibition* and *omission*. *Prohibition* means *doing something that God has forbidden*, either expressly or by way of moral or spiritual principle. It should go without saying that to overtly and intentionally disobey the commandment of God is to sin. John told us in our text that *sin is the transgression of the law*. Not just any law—God’s law. That is to disobey the Lord. Moses told the people under the old covenant:

Leviticus 5:17 “And if a soul sin, and commit any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD; though he wist it not, yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity.”

So, intentionally OR unintentionally, to break the law of God by doing what He has forbidden is sin, and makes us guilty before Him. You recall while Moses was up on the mount receiving the Ten Commandments, the people made a golden calf to worship. One of the commandments that Moses was receiving was not to make and bow down to a graven image, not to worship idols. So, when Moses came down from the mountain and found the people worshipping the golden calf, this is what he said:

Exodus 32:31 “And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.”

To do what God has forbidden should be easily recognized as sin against the Lord. Even if a particular behavior is not expressly mentioned and forbidden, if the thing itself--though not mentioned--violates a prohibition in God’s word, then that thing is just as much a sin as if the Bible called it by name. If in doing something, I have to be dishonest or I covet, or I am indecent, or I mistreat another, if it causes me to compromise the principles of righteousness in any way, then it is a sin. It’s just as simple as that. Then we talked about *omission*.

James 4:17 “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”

In fact, many of the sins that deceive and destroy us are not sins of doing something *wrong*, but of NOT doing what is *right*. There will be many morally upright, well-meaning, keep-to-themselves kind of people you might say, who will stand condemned in the Day of Judgment. Not primarily because of what they did, but rather what they didn’t do. **Numbers 32:23** has often been quoted to remind us that our sins will catch up with us.

Numbers 32:23 “But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.”

Haven’t we heard preachers warn us that it is futile to hide our sins? For example, lying and cheating will catch up to us? That sins done in secret and in the darkness will eventually be exposed? Well, true enough, but that’s not really what Moses is talking about here. Go back and look at the verse again. What Moses had been talking about was their cowardice and faithlessness that caused had them to wander in the wilderness for forty unnecessary years and telling them that it was up to them to inherit and conquer the land that God promised to them and wanted them to occupy. Moses said that if they failed to do so, they would be sinning against the Lord. *Your sin will find you out.*

II Thessalonians 1:8 “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:”

To be lost, you don’t have to commit heinous crimes or do mean and unjust things to others—you merely have to refuse to do what God has told you to do. That begins with believing, repenting of your sins and being baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.

There is another synonym for sin and that is the word *substitution*. Here is where the meaning and application of the word *sin* perhaps becomes a little more blurry for many people, because a lot of people don’t see a problem with substituting what God has said for something else. This is not new. We barely get out of the garden of Eden and the establishment of the sacrificial system of atonement for sin before we see man trying to substitute God’s command with something else. The Bible does not

expressly tell us when, but at some point, God decreed that blood be shed as a sacrifice for sin. At some time, God revealed that to man. We know that God commanded it because the Bible tells us this:

Hebrews 11:4 “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain...”

What does that mean? Does it mean that he offered his sacrifice more sincerely or perhaps with more emotion? No, that’s not what the Bible means by the word *faith*. The apostle Paul explains faith this way:

Romans 10:17 “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

How is something done by faith? When it is in accordance with God’s commandments. It’s likely that God revealed His pattern of worship to Adam after the fall, after all, animal blood was immediately shed as a result of Adam’s sin no matter how you look at it. You remember that God rejected Adam and Eve’s meager effort to cover their nakedness with leaves and instead covered them with the skins of animals. So, it’s very possible and probable that animal sacrifice is implied within that.

Regardless, at some point, God had decreed and made known to man that atonement for sin was to be of a bloody nature because when Abel came to worship the Lord, he brought an animal sacrifice and he did it *by faith*. If God had not revealed it, it could not have been done *by faith*. Consequently, God accepted his worship because it was *by faith*.

Cain, on the other hand, did not do what God said. Notice that he brought an offering. He had a sacrifice. And he may have brought it with all of the sincerity and love with which Abel brought his, but it was wrong because it was a vegetable offering. Cain was a tiller of the ground, a farmer, and it might naturally occur to him to bring the best of his crop to give to the Lord. But God rejected it. When the fire fell upon the altar, it consumed the sacrifice of Abel but passed by the offering of Cain. Why? because Abel’s was *by faith*. Cain’s was not.

Later, God accepted other kinds of offerings, as offerings of praise and thanksgiving, but NEVER—then nor now—has anything but blood been accepted by God to atone for sin. Any other sacrifice—no matter how bountiful, beautiful, well-intentioned, expensive, impressive—no other would do. And no other thing will do besides what God has commanded today.

Someone says, *What harm would it do if we substitute things in our worship today? After all, isn’t worship worship?* That’s a common idea that people have—*isn’t worship worship?* If it comes from our hearts, won’t God accept it? The answer to that, from God’s word is *No*. because worship must not only be in spirit, but also in truth.

John 4:24 “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

God’s ordinances must be carried out in the way that God revealed them.

I Corinthians 11:2 “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.”

For example, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He said, "*This do in remembrance of Me.*" Do what? Well, what He had just done. *This do*, He said. What He had just shown His disciples. What did He do? He took a loaf of unleavened bread and called it His body.

Matthew 26:26 "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body."

Someone says, *Can we take several loaves? Or can each person have his own individual cracker or piece of bread to consume? Can we use something besides unleavened bread?* Think about where the argument leads. Could we just as well remember the Lord with steak or some other meat? Would that do? Of course not, because Jesus used a loaf of bread and He told us to do what He did. He likewise took a cup containing fruit of the vine and called it His blood that ratified the new covenant.

Matthew 26:27-29 "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

You can search **Matthew 25, Mark 14, Luke 22** and **I Corinthians 11**, and you will never, ever, ever find the letter 's' appended to the word *cup*. He took a cup containing fruit of the vine, He called it His blood that ratified the new covenant, and He told all of His disciples gathered there to *drink of it*.

Mark 14:23 "And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it."

What did they all drink of? It. What Jesus took, blessed and gave to them. So, can everybody have his own cup? Can we practice "individual communion?" Is that following Jesus' example? No, you see, it's substituting what Jesus said to do with something else.

So, I ask is your worship by faith or is it by sight? Is it according to God's will or is it according to your will or someone else's? That's the real question. It's a serious thing, friend. Much more serious than people give it credit, to substitute what God says for something else.

The Bible also teaches that baptism is a burial in water. It is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and correspondingly, our death to sin and resurrection to new life in Him. The Greek word that has been transliterated *baptism* means originally *to immerse, to submerge*. Nowhere does it mean to sprinkle or to pour. So, is it just as well to sprinkle water on someone and call it baptism as it is to immerse them? Will God accept that for baptism when He commanded believing, penitent sinners to be immersed for the remission of their sins?

I remember that the leper, Naaman, was told to go to the Jordan River and dip seven times to be healed of leprosy in **II Kings 5**. Do you remember the story? The Bible says that when Naaman heard that, he got angry.

II Kings 5:12 "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage."

It almost kept him from being healed! Suppose he HAD gone down to the river Abana, as he mentioned, and dipped seven times. Isn't water water? Isn't a river a river? Isn't dipping dipping, no matter where you do it? What would he have been had he gone and dipped in Abana instead? You know what he would've been: a wet leper. Because God said *Jordan*. Friend, *substitution* is another synonym for *sin*. Another synonym for *sin* that we want to talk about is *addition*. That is another dangerous word when you're talking about the word and the will of God.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

How do you keep the commandments of God? He says that it is by doing what He says to do; not doing something else and then claiming that God didn't tell us NOT to do it. That's the rationale that we hear today. That's the new hermeneutic: if God didn't expressly forbid it, then it must be all right. We're even hearing that said from the pulpits of churches of Christ where people will tell us, *Since the Bible doesn't specifically say that this is not to be done, then God's silence permits it*. But does God's silence permit or does God's silence tell us something? Some will say, *In order for it to be a sin, God would've said for us NOT to practice it*. But, is that how God intends for His word to be interpreted? Has that every been how God intended for His commandments to be interpreted? Remember, Moses said, *Don't add to nor diminish from the command of God*. Yet, there were those who did just that and they met with God's judgment for it.

For example, there were two priests whom we read about in **Leviticus 10** who seemed to think that if God didn't forbid it, then surely, He would accept it. Their names were Nadab and Abihu. In fact, if you look up the name *Nadab* in Hebrew, you'll find that it means *liberal*. He was certainly generous, liberal or loose in how he handled God's commandments, you might say. Just like many liberals in the church and in religion today. There is very little difference. Nadab and his brother seem to have embraced the same hermeneutic that is driving much of the change in religion and the church today.

Leviticus 10:1 "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not."

You see, God told them earlier what fire to use when they came to worship. God had already prescribed that they were to take live coals from beneath the altar, but instead they used fire from their own source. After all, isn't fire fire? I mean, that's what we want to think. But no, fire ISN'T fire when God tells you what fire to use. Had God simply said *Use fire*, then it would've been up to them to offer whatever kind of fire they saw fit, as long as it was fire. But God DIDN'T just say *fire*; He said what kind of fire to use. He didn't have to say what kinds of fire NOT to use or where NOT to get it; He simply told them where TO get it.

Well, they offered fire, but notice now: God forbade them from using it—not because He expressly mentioned the kind of fire that they offered, but because He specified the kind of fire that they were to offer. They used fire which, as the Bible puts it, *the Lord did not command*. It was strange or foreign to the pattern and the sanctuary, therefore it was wrong.

Was that really that big of a thing to God? I mean, didn't God just look at what was in their hearts? Look at the next verses.

Leviticus 10:2-3 “**And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD. Then Moses said unto Aaron, This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace.**”

God made an example out of them and that example still stands throughout the ages and shows to us today that we dare not infringe upon the will of God and add to the service of God those things which God has not sanctified. Friend, it is dangerous to offer something to God that He didn't ask for. Our worship is to be pure and holy today.

John 4:24 “**God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.**”
Colossians 3:17 “**And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of (or by the authority of) the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.**”

You might use an aid in rendering the kind of worship that God requires, that doesn't change the worship that you offer. For example, you might sing out of a songbook. But if you do that, you're still just singing; you're not changing what you're doing. You're simply using a book as an aid to fulfill God's command. But when you offer to the Lord another *kind* of music than that which He commanded in the New Testament (**Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16**), which is *singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord*, you are offering *strange fire which the Lord commanded not*. That's the difference: one is an aid, another is another form of worship. *Addition* is a synonym for *sin*.

Finally, I want to talk about the word *presumption*.

The psalmist prayed thus:

Psalms 19:13 “**Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins...**”

That is, sins of pride and arrogance, as opposed to sins that maybe he wasn't aware that he was committing. Sins where one presumes to know as much as God, and therefore forges ahead and usurps God's authority. That's the kind of proud spirit that leads one to think he knows enough to decide matters for himself, rather than humbly trusting what God has directed and admitting that God knows best.

There is a tragic example of that given in **II Samuel 6** involving the ark of the covenant. It was being brought back to the house of God from the possession of the Philistines. The whole thing was not exactly on the up and up; they had crafted a new cart, the Bible says. They were not carrying the ark exactly like it was supposed to be carried, but instead put it on this new cart and, in a great procession were bringing it out of the house of Abinidab.

II Samuel 6:6 “**And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it.**”

Now, on one hand, you feel a little sorry for Uzzah because he obviously was concerned about the precious ark falling off the cart. There are a lot of well-meaning, good-intentioned people in religion today who are doing a lot of things that you don't read in the Bible. They are very sincere in what

they're doing. The problem with Uzzah was, he wasn't allowed to touch the ark. It was not to be carried by their hands, but rather by rods run through rings in the sides of the ark. It was sacred, and not to be profaned. But Uzzah thought that an exception must be made, so in the interest of the safety of the ark, he touched it to steady it. Did God commend him? Did God need Uzzah's "quick thinking" and help?

II Samuel 6:7 "And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."

God made an example out of Uzzah. That is this: nothing takes the place of humble, sincere obedience to God's word, just as it is written. But, oh! Don't we have a hard time understanding that? Don't we have a difficult time doing that? But, we MUST.

Sin is a serious thing and it's not just a matter of doing exactly what God has expressly said not to do. Oh, no. There are, you might say, synonyms for sin. Sin is leaving undone what God said to do, it is adding to the word of God, it is substituting what God has required and specified with something else, and it is usurping the authority of God and doing what is according to our will instead of God's will. Sin is the transgression of the law of God.

©2017 BibleWay Media. All rights reserved.
BibleWay Media grants permission to copy this material for personal use. Permission is also granted to distribute this transcript as long as it is reproduced in its entirety, used solely for its original purpose of spreading the gospel, and attribution is given to the author and Let the Bible Speak.