

UNDERSTANDING SIN

Lesson 3

Laws, all laws, are made to control people - individuals, groups, nations - makes no difference. They tell us what we can and cannot do. Usually, we don't look at laws as a way of expressing love, even if they are good for us.

However, God's law is another matter. The law that God gives us is for much more than either controlling us or an expression of concern for the way we live our lives. God's law is and always has been an expression of His great love for us - His children.

The laws written and enforced by humanity are basically there so we can live together. They exist because there are some things which are, by nature, the right way to live and relate to other people, just as there are some things which are plain wrong.

God's laws are a lot like this. He wants us to know the difference between right and wrong. Since God made the universe and all that exists, He has a plan so that everything will run smoothly, as He intended from the beginning. However, in order for everything and everyone to get along and operate at peak efficiency, it's necessary that we follow the rules or laws that God has given us.

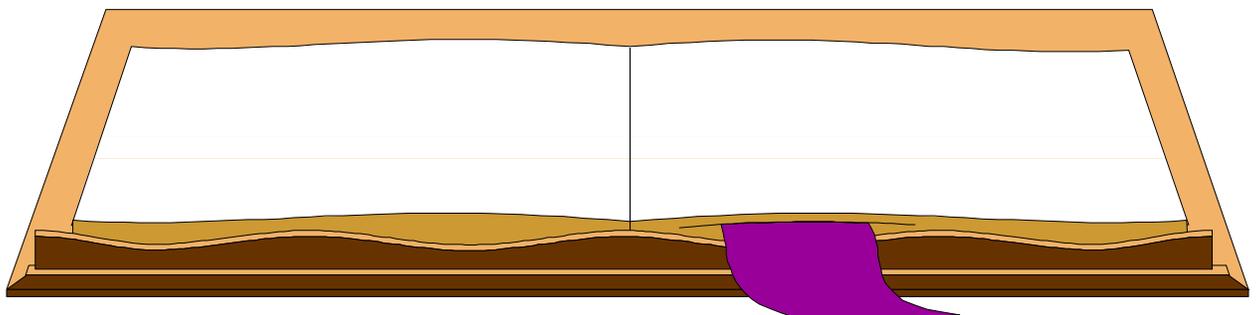
When we look at the Bible, we can see that all the laws found there fall into one of two kinds.

1. Ritual or Ceremonial

This law is only found in the Old Testament. They were used by God to get His people to understand how they disobeyed Him and needed His help to save them from themselves.

A good place to see examples of these laws is in the Book of Leviticus. They are rules and regulations about sacrifices, what the people could and could not eat, how to dress, etc.

They also served the purpose of reminding the people whose people they were - God's - called to be holy!



2. Moral Law

These are laws that apply to all people, in every time, in every place. The Ten Commandments are a good summary of these laws.

When we break these laws, we destroy the relationship God wants to have with Him and with each other.

Sin occurs when we break God's laws. Yet, even if we would obey all of God's laws, as if we could, this still would not save us.

What Is Sin ?

Nowadays, we don't spend much time in church, either in worship or education, talking about sin. It seems that hearing about sin makes us feel uncomfortable and we don't like to feel bad in church or anywhere else for that matter. We would rather hear about how much God loves us than about how we have done wrong in God's eyes and betrayed Him. Yet, that won't make the reality of our sin go away.



We need to understand that sin is a whole lot more than just a bunch of actions we did wrong like cheating, stealing or killing. Sin is the condition we live in. It is a state in which each of us exists. "I am a sinner."

What does it mean to be a sinner? Well, in simple terms, it means I've chosen to do things my way instead of God's way. I do what I want and not what God wants. In addition, it means I live in a world that rebels against God. Because I am a part of this world, I rebel against God.

How do I sin? To be blunt, we sin in a lot of different ways. First, let's talk about the *kinds of sin* that we ALL engage in when we sin.

1. **ORIGINAL SIN** - This is the sin I inherit. Since I am born into a world of sinful people, I am a part of that world and, as a part, I share in its sin. When we baptize infants, this is the sin that they are forgiven for in Baptism. It's not that babies are guilty of any sin, they aren't. No, original sin is what I am, not what I do.
2. **ACTUAL SIN** - This is what I do when I disobey God's Law. The sins I commit, whether I know I did them or not, because I have chosen a sinful life. All sins are equally bad in the eyes of God. There's no such thing as a little "white lie." Sin is a sin in the eyes of God and **ALL SIN IS EVIL.**
3. **PERSONAL SIN** - This is the sin I alone am responsible for. I originate it. It's mine and mine alone to bear.

4. **CORPORATE SIN** - Because I am always a part of a larger group, I share in the sin that group is guilty of committing. For example, I am a part of a family, I am a part of a community like a town or a congregation, I am a citizen of a nation or I am a part of humanity. Whatever the case, I share in the sins committed by that group, even if I opposed them and the action that resulted in sin. I still bear their weight and burden.

In most of our Lutheran churches, an important part of the worship liturgy on Sunday morning is an order of confession and forgiveness. In this part of worship, often at the start of worship (LBW p. 56, 77, 98) in many congregations because of the cleansing effect it has, we remind ourselves and tell God that we have sinned against Him in three different ways.

1. **THOUGHT** - No one else may know what we're thinking, but God does. I can commit sin in my mind just as easy as I can by my actions, sometimes easier. Just because I didn't actually DO the sin I thought about doesn't make it any less a sin. Evil thoughts mean we consider a sinful act as a possible action to take. In God's eyes, we are guilty of sin just as if we had done the deed.



2. **WORD** - When I speak evil against my neighbor causing them hurt, I am guilty of sin. The old expression "Talk is cheap" doesn't hold any weight in God's eyes. The fact we speak evil indicates to God we consider it a possible course of action. Again we sin as much as if we had inflicted pain by the actual deed.

3. **DEED** - This is what I do, the sin I commit against God or my neighbor. I know I've done it.

Another important thing for us to realize when talking about sin is that we can sin by NOT DOING something. It's not only what I do, it's also what we don't do.

1. **SINS OF COMMISSION** - These are the sins we are doing against the will of God.

2. **SINS OF OMISSION** - These are the sins we are guilty of because we failed to do what God wants us to do.

When one starts to look at all this sinning, it's easy to see that, indeed, **we are sinners!** In fact, there isn't anything we can do that can get us away from the consequences of sin. We can't do enough good to make up for our sins. God wants us to be perfect - period. So, even the good we do is only doing what God expects of us. That won't cancel out any of our sins.

This means we are totally and completely dependent on God to pay the price for our sins. And the God who made us and loves us will forgive us and pay the price of our sinful disobedience.

UNDERSTANDING SIN

1. Why do we have laws? _____

2. What are the two kinds of laws that we find in the Bible?

1. _____ Give an example of this
kind of law from the Bible. _____

2. _____ Give an example of this
this kind of law from the Bible. _____

3. What does it mean when we say the **“Sin is really a state of being, a condition in which I exist, rather than a list of the things I do”**?

4. What are the different kinds of sin that exist. Describe each in your own words.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. What are the different ways that we sin?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

6. Define the following:

1. **Sins of Commission** _____

2. **Sins of Omission** _____
