



What is Sin?

Today we're going to discuss what the scriptures define as sin.

Now, if you're watching this teaching, most likely you're a believer who is trying to do their best at following God and not sin.

But that begs the question, "What is sin?"

The short answer to what sin is can be found in James and 1 John.

[James 2:9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.](#)

Let's read that again.

[James 2:9 But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.](#)

Thus, when you break the law, you sin. John says the same thing.

(show both verses together.)

[1 John 3:4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.](#)

Please, let this sink in of a moment. Don't just glance over it.

Yeshua was asked what the greatest commandment was in Mark 12. It reads.

Mark 12:28-31 He asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

So then, by the words of Yeshua Himself, we are to love the Lord with all our being and not just our actions. And please note that He is quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5 here.

Yet, how do we love the Lord? After all, if it’s the greatest command, maybe we should know how it’s done. 1 John chapter 5.

1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

Let’s read that again.

1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

So, to love YHWH is to obey His commandments. Again, please let that sink in. To love YHWH is to obey His commandments.

And it says His commands are not burdensome. Just as Yeshua said, His burden is light.

But again, to love YHWH is to obey His commandments.

But note that we are not to just love Him in what we do (our strength) but in every aspect of our life. We are to love Him (obey His commands) in our hearts (in that we hold dear), our soul (which is our will) and our

mind (which is our thoughts). This is why Yeshua expounded so much in Matthew 5 when he said things like:

Matt. 5:27-28 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

He's saying that just because one may not be committing adultery in the physical, the strength, that doesn't mean they aren't doing so in their heart. And notice Yeshua said "You have heard that it was said" and not "You have seen that it was written." Meaning what? He's correcting what's been taught. That which was "said" and He's bringing clarity to what was written. The eternal Word. The Torah.

This was the purpose of the Law from the beginning; that we would obey it with all of our being. That's why Yeshua named and defined the greatest commandment as He did. Yeshua didn't make the commandments harder as some suggest; He merely clarified the issue on the original meaning.

Now, it must be noted that one can't be saved by observing the Law. Let me repeat that. One can't be saved by observing the Law.

However, though we don't keep the law for salvation, we are supposed to pursue the law as a result of our salvation. Romans 3:28 says:

Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Then three verses later:

Romans 3:31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.

Uphold it. Not do away with it. Not neglect it. Not avoid it. Not deem it as old and useless. Rather, uphold it.

As we've said before, faith is the root and obedience is the fruit. In fact, James speaks directly to this very topic throughout his book.

James 2:19-24 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend.

Many stop reading here but the verse closes out by saying.

You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.

Did you catch that.

“A person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.”

Faith and obedience are to be together. Then, two verses later:

James 2:26 As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

But what deeds is James talking about? What is the premise that James is basing all of this on? Well, what’s the context just before all these verses? Please consider how James tells the believers not to show favoritism at the beginning of this chapter 2.

James 2:1 My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don’t show favoritism.

Let’s pick up from verse 8.

James 2:8-11 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture,

Now, let's stop here for a second. I have two questions. What is the royal law and what is the "Scripture" James is referring to. As I've said before, there are two things the NT church didn't have. A NT and a church. So the scripture James is referring to here is the OT. If someone wishes to debate that, please know that scholars across the board agree that this book, the book of James, is the first book of the NT to be written. The book of James was the first book of all the NT to be written.

So it's the OT James has to be referring to. Let's continue.

["Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.](#)

Now let's hit pause again. So the law James is referring to here says "Love your neighbor as yourself." So what law says this? It's the Torah.

[Lev. 19:18 "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am YHWH.](#)

Remember, James instructed them not to show favoritism. He's saying if they do, they're breaking the law. So he's instructing them to keep the law as found in the OT. The scriptures they had. The Torah.

He then continues.

[For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.](#)

So he just instructed them to keep the law as found in the OT. James knew that if you break the law, you'll fall under the curse of the law. But if you obey the law, you'll walk in the freedom and blessings of the law.

Thus, his words in chapter 1.

[James 1:25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.](#)

It's why the author of PS 119 even said...

Psalm 119:45 I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.

Because of this, James then continues in verse 12:

James 2:12-14 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment! What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?

The whole context to the deeds that James is proclaiming is based on obedience to the law.

He then later mentions in chapter four:

James 4:11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

James tells us right here we should be keeping the Law. The Torah.

Many times we hear people refer to the book of James in defense of saying we aren't to follow the law anymore. They specifically refer to verse 10 of chapter 2.

James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

They'll say "See? You can't keep the Law perfectly. That's why Jesus came to show us a new way outside of the law."

Yet, these same people, in a completely different conversation, will say how no one is perfect and we sin every day.

They'll quote verses like ...

Rom. 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

They'll quote...

1 John 1:8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

They'll quote...

Matt. 6:12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

So they have no problem saying they sin every day, but the second we say we are to follow the law, they turn around and say we can't because we'll sin. What?! It's the Law that defines sin.

This is usually where people will say the Law was too difficult. That's why it can't be kept. However, the scriptures say otherwise.

Deut. 30:11 Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.

Have you ever asked them what part of the law they deem too difficult to follow? Seriously. What part was too difficult to do? Is there anything in the Law that was like that? No. But that's what they imply.

So the next time you see them up against a hard time, and you hear them quoting Philippians 4:13. It says.

Philippians 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength,"

Ask them to define "everything.

Shouldn't that include the Torah as well? Of course, it should. And it does. We can do everything through Him who gives us strength.

I want to re-read a couple of other verses from James chapter 2 again because of how some like to use them.

James 2:12 Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, 13 because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

Some have said “There you have it. Mercy triumphs over judgment. The Old Testament is all about Judgement and the New Testament is all about mercy and grace.”

First, if you have not seen our teaching “This is Grace?” Please do. I believe you will find it interesting. However, to say there wasn’t grace in the OT is not true at all. Over and over again YHWH showed grace and mercy. The mere fact that there were sacrifices shows forgiveness was given.

But not only that, please consider what is said in the book of Exodus.

Ex. 34:6 And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “YHWH, YHWH, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,

This is the Old Testament remember. So do you believe this is the kind of God He was in the OT? Or do you believe YHWH was lying to Moses here.

The like is found in Num. 14:18.

Num. 14:18 ‘YHWH is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.’

Psa. 86:15 But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

Psa. 103:8 YHWH is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

Psa. 145:8 YHWH is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

Joel 2:13 Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to YHWH your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity.

So YHWH has always been merciful. He doesn't change. His character has, and will, always be the same.

He wants us to choose His ways still today. The Torah. That being Life. Otherwise, we will walk in death.

Paul discusses this in the book of Romans.

Rom. 8:5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Paul brings out the two options that have always been. Life and Death. These two options have been from the garden. The tree of life and the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. If they ate from the tree of life, it brought constant healing to their bodies. But they chose the tree that brought death.

And Paul is showing how those same two choices are what we have to this day. Nothing has changed in that light. It's always been Life or death.

Deut. 30:15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.

Deut. 30:19 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live

Deut. 11:26 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse — 27 the blessing if you obey the commands of YHWH your God that I am giving you today; 28 the curse if you disobey the commands of YHWH your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.

So then, though we don't keep the law for salvation, we are to keep the law as a result of our salvation.

In fact, as mentioned before, we are told to love the Lord is to keep his commandments. Again:

1John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

The law can't save. It never could. It wasn't designed to save. The law was given for three purposes.

- 1) To reveal what sin is.
- 2) To bless us if we keep it.
- and 3) To curse us if don't keep it.

So, 1) To reveal sin.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law.

AND 2) to Bless us if we keep it and 3) Curse us if don't keep it.

Deut. 11:26-28 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse; the blessing if you obey the commands of Yahweh your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of Yahweh your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.

Knowing that sin is breaking God's law, I will conclude with these words from John.

1 John 2:1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

We pray all of God's people will come to the realization that when we break His law we are offending Him. We are thankful for His grace and mercy as He teaches us to walk in His ways.

We'll, that's all I have.

Think about it. Pray about it.

But more than anything, be a doer of the word, and not a hearer only.

Until next time, Shalom

