

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the doctrine of sin, in particular, its definition.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is sin?

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.

Q. What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?

A. The sin whereby our first parents fell from their estate wherein they were created was their eating the forbidden fruit.

S.C. 14-15; L.C. 24; W.C. of F. VI; Savoy 6; Young 27-31

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I John 3

**Support Passages:** Leviticus 4; Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Romans 3:9-24; Hebrews 11:4; James 2:1-13

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 4:1-15: Cain sinned against God and against Able his brother.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4, ESV)*

**APPLICATION**

Let us all examine our lives to discover sin in them. God's people must confess "the sin which so easily entangles us" (Hebrews 12:1-2) and those who are unbelievers must also repent, confessing their sins and believing that Jesus is Lord in order to become the Lord's people.

## SUMMARY

This lesson is concerned with the nature of sin which the Bible simply defines as "lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). This correctly translates the Greek word *anomia* which is translated in the Authorized Version (King James) as "transgression of the law." Lawlessness expresses the idea of living as if there were no law or living in the context of despising or disregarding the law of God. How different is this way of life from that of one who has been born again and redeemed by God's own blood. Such a child of God says with the Psalmist, "*In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.*" (Psalm 119:14-16, ESV)

The Westminster Larger Catechism answers the question concerning sin in this manner: "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable (rational) creature" (Question 24). Adam, you see, was a rational creature, whereas all other creatures were irrational. In other words, Adam had the ability to conceive of God, to worship Him, and to comprehend and perform God's laws. Thus are God's moral laws distinguished from the law of nature which would include instinct and natural physical law. Such law operates and exists quite apart from the rational activities of creatures. There is no moral responsibility involved with involuntary obedience to natural law. For example, it is not a moral issue when the heart skips a beat or an animal fails to do what would normally occur by instinct. Sin involves rational disobedience, "*For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.*" (Hebrews 10:26-27, ESV)

Now 1 John 3 contains some hard concepts concerning sin. In verse 6, for example, "*No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.*" (1 John 3:6, ESV) There are two present participles here; the word "abides" and the word "sins" in the second clause. The force of each of these is continual normal activity. So also in verse 9, "*No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.*" (1 John 3:9, ESV) John tells us clearly that we as Christians sin, but that there is forgiveness by confessing our sins to God. Furthermore, He has provided His own Son as our Advocate and Propitiation (1 John 1:8-2:2), but make no mistake, that person who has been born again by God has been changed such that a different life-style is pursued.

Regarding our natural estate of sin Paul notes that it is written, "*What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom*

*of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*" (Romans 3:9-18, ESV) Such is the nature of sin. It is completely enslaving. It renders useless. It is poison. It is cursing and bitterness. It brings death and is death. It is godless and lawless. For the Christian, however, this abysmal estate is not a way of life. Even though the Christian has an abiding proclivity for sin, no one who is born of God practices lawlessness as a way of life.