



A Closer Look

Sin: A Closer Look

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DRAFT

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Contents

Preface	iii
Introduction	iv
The Word “Sin”	1
The Verb <i>hamartanó</i>	5
The Noun <i>hamartia</i>	7
Personification	8
Metonymy.....	9
A Tale of Three Sins	12
Regarding the devil... ..	12
Regarding Adam... ..	13
Regarding everyone else... ..	20
Two Deaths	23
The Common Death	23
The Second Death	23
Two Deaths—Two Sins.....	24
Figurative Deaths	25
Sin as a Condition	27
Sin and Separation	32
Sin and Jesus Christ	34
Sin and Law	43
The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.....	50
Under Sin, In Sin, Dead to Sin, Freed from Sin	57
“Under Sin”	57
“In Sin”	59
“Died/Dead to Sin”	64
“Freed from Sin”	66
Flesh is Weak	69
Works of the Flesh	73
The List	77
Summary	78
Sin and the “Helper”	80
Sin and Desire	82
Sin and Enter	87

Sin and Death	90
Sin and Reign	94
Sin and Dwell	99
Sin and Slave.....	103
Sin and Forgiveness	110
Sin and Heart	118
Sin and Blood.....	122
The Ten Commandments	125
The “unforgivable” Sin	130
Sin and Atonement	132
Free Will, Original Sin, Sin Nature	135
Free Will	135
Original Sin	136
Sin Nature	137
Appendix	144
More on “Sin Nature”	144
<i>eiserchomai</i> —“enter”	146
Concrete vs. Abstract	149
The Jewish Perspective on Sin	150
The “Nature” of Man	150
Regarding Romans 7	150
On Sin.....	151
Die/Death/Dead.....	153
Dying You Shall Die	155
Mortal/Corruptible – Immortal/Incorruptible	156
Rulers/Kings	157

Preface

Several years ago, I listened to a teaching series titled, “Sin, Grace, and Newness of Life.” This title serves to summarize the trajectory of being alienated from God to living in unity with God. As the teacher noted, when mentioning to others the topic of sin, they would respond, “Why do you want to dwell on that topic?” Likewise, I might expect a similar response, “Why write a book about sin?” Rather than dismissing the topic as irrelevant, I thought it might actually be foundational to the Christian walk to have a good grasp of the topic. As I began searching the scriptures and reading various commentaries, as well as listening to other teachings that touched on the topic, I quickly came to the conclusion that there was if not “fog” on the topic at least some vagueness. This book is the result of my personal desire to acquire clarity regarding the topic and I consider it to be more of a resource than a book. Early on, I decided that I needed to set aside any preconceived notions that I might be holding and endeavor to just let God’s word speak for itself. With abundant help from God, I believe I have come to some degree of clarity. I would be a fool to think this is the “final word” on the topic and I make no such claim. Hopefully, it provides a sound basis for understanding the topic and provides a serious Bible student the necessary information for exploring the topic further.

Introduction

God is not opposed to the use of rhetoric¹ and figures of speech² to communicate with us humans. Such literary devices are part of effective communication. Such devices can garner our attention and/or encourage “deeper” thought. Sin is first a generic term covering a wide array of intents, attitudes, and behaviors. Sin is also an abstract concept. We can point at a tree and say, “That’s a tree.” We cannot point at sin and say, “That’s sin.” What we see is a demonstration that can be labelled as sin, but we do not literally see sin. There are many other similar terms used in Scripture, e.g., death, life, grace, righteousness, love, etc. Figurative language helps to make such abstract concepts more “real” or relatable. When considering the topic of sin, it is important to bear this basic fact in mind to be better able to appreciate any rhetorical devices or figurative language being used in conjunction with the word “sin.”

The following paragraph, which incorporates figurative language, is a dramatized description of Sin and Death that comports with the Gospel message and could be documented with various scriptures.

Sin and Death entered the world when Adam disobeyed God. Sin and Death reign as rulers of a worldwide empire. All born into this world live in this empire and are subjects of these rulers. God, through Christ, carried out a complete (yet to be fully revealed) victory over these rulers. Those who believe on Christ have been freed from the tyranny of these two although still living in their empire. Complete victory will occur “in the end” when Death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire.³

While it is easy to focus on sin in terms of ungodly or unrighteous behavior, it is important to consider that “sin” in the Church Epistles⁴ takes on an enhanced meaning. However, sin, in both the Old and New Testaments generally represents a lack of, or the destruction of, a vital relationship with the creator of the universe, the One True God who is both all-powerful yet all-loving. Sin also represents the potential damage or destruction of relationships between people.

In the NT, the word sin is used in the following ways: sin refers to an intent, attitude, word, or action that is contrary to righteousness; sin may also refer to a condition alienated from God; or the word sin may refer to the consequence(s) of sin. All of these will be demonstrated throughout this resource.

Throughout, numerous Greek words are identified. These, along with external references, are provided for further investigation. This is not a doctoral thesis and therefore does not generally refer to specific theologians or commentators and argue “for” or “against” their views. This is one person’s conclusions to this point based on personal study and input from numerous resources.

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the NASB.

¹ Speech or writing intended to be effective and influence people ([Cambridge Dictionary online](#)). [R]hetoric aims to study the techniques that speakers or writers use to inform, persuade, and motivate their audiences ([Wikipedia](#)).

² [Is] any intentional deviation from literal statement or common usage that emphasizes, clarifies, or embellishes both written and spoken language ([Britannica online](#)).

³ This is obviously figurative language since neither “Sin” nor “Death” are literal “rulers.” Also, neither “Sin” nor “Hades” are people or spirit beings that can be thrown into any kind of lake.

⁴ “Church Epistles” refers to Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians.

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REV refers to the Revised English Version, which is accessible online at:
<https://www.revisedenglishversion.com>. We frequently refer to the commentary available at this site.

ESV refers to the English Standard Version, which is accessible online at:
<https://www.esv.org>. The ESV Study Bible (print) contains significant commentary.

NET refers to the New English Translation, which is accessible online at:
<https://netbible.org>. Students might find the “Constable Notes” available at this site helpful.

Most citations are pulled from <https://biblehub.com>, an online study tool which provides access to multiple Bible versions as well as numerous commentaries. Another useful online study tool is <https://www.blueletterbible.org>.

Words or phrases in these citations are occasionally bolded for emphasis.

OT refers to what is called the “Old Testament” or the Hebrew scriptures.

NT refers to what is called the “New Testament.” We put this in quotes because technically Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the conclusion of the OT and a transition to the NT.

The Word “Sin”

The usage of “sin” as it occurs in the NT cannot be summed up in one sentence. The word occurs in a variety of contexts that sometimes includes figurative language and rhetorical devices. This overview will hopefully provide some background to aid in an appreciation of the various contexts in which the word occurs. If pressed to provide a succinct characterization of the word sin, we might point to the unique Greek word *atheos* which occurs in Ephesians 2:12 and is generally translated as “without God.” Whatever intent or condition is *atheos* can be considered sin.⁵

We begin with noting an obvious point. No writer of Scripture knew or used the word “sin.” We should, therefore, be cautious concerning any assumptions we might have regarding the meaning of this English word. The writers of the NT knew Greek, and perhaps Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin as well. The fact that the original writings were in Greek speaks to the fact that Greek was widely used in the regions to which the various letters were written and then circulated. It should also be noted that the Roman Empire, which dominated these areas, was strongly influenced by Greek culture. These writers lived in and were influenced by both Jewish culture and Greco/Roman culture. All of them were Jews by birth, but to varying degrees they lived in a Greco/Roman-dominated culture. This is notable in the case of Paul who spent his early years, and another block of time after his conversion, in the city of Tarsus, which he described as follows.

Acts 21:39a

³⁹ But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of **no insignificant city**

Regarding this city...

[Tarsus] was well-known for its culture of Greek philosophy, literature and wealth. Its schools of learning rivaled and excelled even those found in Athens and Alexandria. Around 171 B.C. the city's library held 200,000 books, including a huge collection of scientific works.

...in all that relates to philosophy and general education, it was even more illustrious than Athens and Alexandria ... it is evident that its main character was that of a Greek city, where the Greek language was spoken, and Greek literature studiously cultivated.⁶

We do not know in detail what Paul's early years looked like. We do know that he was born a Roman citizen, which afforded him opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to other residents of Tarsus.⁷ We might presume from Scripture that he was at least somewhat familiar with Greek poets and playwrights. Whether his exposure to Greek literature occurred as a young student in Tarsus, later when he studied under Gamaliel in Jerusalem, or after his conversion when he spent about 10 years in Tarsus we do not know. But we can be confident that he knew some of these writings well enough to quote them.

Acts 17:27 and 28 (Paul at the Areopagus in Athens Greece)

²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ **for in Him we live and move and exist**, as even some of your own poets have said, '**For we also are His children.**'

⁵ In context, this is applied specifically to Gentiles, but it the word could be applied to any intent or condition.

⁶ <https://www.biblestudy.org/biblepic/tarsus-birthplace-of-apostle-paul.html>.

⁷ See “The Early Life of and Background of Paul the Apostle” here: <http://biblicaltheology.com/Research/WallaceQQ1.html>.

The first quotation comes from *The Kretika* by the Greek poet Epimenides of Knossos (6th century BCE). The second quote is the first half of the fifth line, word for word, of a poem of Aratus (c. 310–245 BC)—“a Greek countryman of the apostle, and his predecessor by about three centuries.”⁸

1 Corinthians 15:33

³³ Do not be deceived: “**Bad company corrupts good morals.**”

This saying is directly quoted from the comedy *Thais* by the Athenian comic playwright Menandros (c.342–c.291 BCE).⁹

Titus 1:12

¹² One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, “**Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.**”

This quote also comes from the Cretan poet Epimenides.¹⁰

While Paul did not know the English word “sin,” we can assume from his background that he was familiar with the Greek word *hamartia* and its cognates which were used as early as the 8th century BC. This is the Greek word usually translated with the English word “sin.” We focus here on Paul because of the 170+ occurrences of *hamartia* in the NT 60+ occur in his writings, 48 in Romans alone (the next closest frequency is in Hebrews, 25 times; then 1 John, 17 times). The point here is that it might be of benefit to consider this Greek word as it was understood in the culture in which Paul used it.

The historical secular use of the word *hamartia* and its cognates is summarized below.

...the survey of the evolution of hamartia from c. 8th century BC through Epictetus (c. AD 50–c. 135) has shown it to be a **flexible term** that can cover a variety of human actions: **missing** an intended target in the literal sense, making a **mistake** in logic or argumentation, **harming** or **wronging** another person or oneself due to a lack of knowledge or poor judgment, **behaving** in a manner not fitted to a particular moral standard, being **under the influence** of one’s passions, acting in an **unjust** manner while under the sway of the passions, **offending** the gods, and **deviating** from divine law in a way that brings punishment and suffering upon oneself. [emphasis added]¹¹

Missing an intended target in the literal sense is not used in Scripture except one time in the LXX.¹² However, there are various contexts in Scripture where the other descriptions mentioned above could apply.

Given the flexible nature of *hamartia* and its cognates, we should not force one sense on every occurrence in Scripture. English translators have almost exclusively chosen the one word “sin” (for both noun and verb), but we should be cautious not to think that the word means exactly the same thing every place it occurs. Again, we note that Paul and apparently other writers were not ignorant of Greek, literary or otherwise. Therefore, it is possible that a certain context might communicate a different sense from what the typical English reader would tend to think when encountering the word “sin.”

⁸ See “Greek Writers Quoted in the New Testament” here: <https://talesoftimesforgotten.com/2017/03/09/greek-writers-quoted-in-the-new-testament/>. Re: [Acts 26:14](#) where Paul quotes Jesus, see NET note [45](#); the expression is not from the OT, so perhaps Jesus quoted something familiar to Paul that Paul could relate to, or Paul took the “liberty” of using the quote in consideration of his audience who would have been familiar with the expression.

⁹ Ibid. Menandros, however, may have borrowed the quote from the tragedy *Aiolos* by Euripides (c.484–406 BCE).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “Reconsidering Hamartia as ‘Sin’ in 1 Corinthians” available at <https://philarchive.org/archive/ROBRHA-3>.

¹² See the [Septuagint](#) (LXX) translation of [Judges 20:16](#) where “miss” (*chata* in Hebrew) is a form of *hamartanó*. The LXX was developed in 3–2 BCE.

Regarding the “flexible” nature of the word, here are some examples.

1 Peter 2:20a

²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you **sin** [*hamartanó*] and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience?

In this context, “sin” is something that is irritating or offensive to the slave’s master. This could include any number of possible actions, even something as arbitrary as serving the wrong drink. There is no sense of the servant having deviated from God’s righteousness—the common understanding of the word “sin.”

Matthew 1:21

²¹ “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their **sins** [*hamartia*].”

In this context, “sins” is an example of the figure of speech metonymy and refers to the **consequences** of intents or actions contrary to God’s righteousness.¹³

In both these examples there is a similarity in that both “sins” are something contrary to an authority (a master or God), but to use the same English word in both cases might not accurately reflect the sense of the word in context. Here is another example.

Romans 6:12

¹² Therefore do not let **sin** [Sin] reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,

In this verse, “sin” is being **personified** as if a king or emperor.¹⁴ This carries a very different sense than either of the two examples above.

The intent regarding “sin” is to understand what the word is communicating given the particular context in which it occurs.

It is perhaps worth noting in light of how the words have historically been used that the Greek word *hamartia* and its cognates are composed of the prefix “a” (appears as “ha”) which is a negation and *meros* which means a part, portion, or share. A similar negative prefix can be seen in the English word “atypical” which means “not typical” or “uncomfortable” which means not comfortable.¹⁵ Below are some examples of the word *meros* in Scripture.

John 13:8

⁸ Peter said to Him [Jesus], “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no **part** [*meros*] with Me.”

Revelation 20:6

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a **part** [*meros*] in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Revelation 21:8

⁸ “But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and

¹³ See <https://literarydevices.net/metonymy/>.

¹⁴ See <https://literarydevices.net/personification/>.

¹⁵ Other Greek words with this prefix include: *agnoeó* (negation of *ginóskó*); *agrammatos* (negation of *gramma*); *agrupnia* (negation of *hupnos*); *adapanos* (negation of *dapane*); *adélos* (negation of *délos*).

sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their **part** [[meros](#)] will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

Revelation 22:19

¹⁹and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his **part** [[meros](#)] from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

This is not intended to define [hamartia](#) but to show that the word and its cognates can carry this sense of no part, no portion, or no share. Obviously, deviating from God’s righteousness or failing to achieve God’s righteousness will result in not having or not sharing in the things of God as the cites from Revelation clearly indicate.¹⁶

In 1 John, “sin” is characterized as lawlessness and unrighteousness.

1 John 3:4

⁴Everyone who practices **sin** [[hamartia](#)] also practices **lawlessness** [[anomia](#)]; and **sin** [[hamartia](#)] is **lawlessness** [[anomia](#)].

1 John 5:17a

¹⁷All **unrighteousness** [[adikia](#)] is **sin** [[hamartia](#)]...

The word [anomia](#) (“lawlessness”) is composed of the prefix “[a](#)” and “[nomos](#)” [law]; [adikia](#) (“unrighteousness”) is composed of the prefix “[a](#)” and “[diké](#)” [justice, right]. In these two verses, [hamartia](#) is being characterized by two negative words: lawlessness and unrighteousness. It is important to note that this points to the fact that [hamartia](#), like lawlessness and unrighteousness, is an abstract concept.

[abstract concepts] describe things that exist as ideas, feelings, or qualities, rather than material objects.¹⁷

We would add to “material objects” “spiritual objects” such as God or angels. Though spiritual entities cannot normally be seen or touched like material objects, they are not abstract concepts.

The following well-known verse containing the verb form of [hamartia](#) summarizes the condition or state of every person.

Romans 3:23

²³for all have sinned [[hamartanó](#)] and fall short of the glory of God,

Committing “sin” can be characterized as “falling short of the glory of God.” “Fall short” [[hustereó](#)] in the NASB is translated in variety of ways: come(s) or fall short (3x), destitute (1x), impoverished (1x), inferior (2), lack (5x in various forms), need (2x), ran (1x), worse (1x). We see that “fall short” is only one possibility. Based on the other ways the word has been translated, the sense of this verse might be that “sin” can be characterized as “being in need of” or “lacking” the glory of God.

Along this train of thought, we see the following:

In ancient Greek thought, sin [[hamartia](#)] was looked upon as, in essence, a **failure** on the part of a person **to achieve** his true self-expression and **to preserve** his due **relation to the rest of the universe**; it was attributed mainly to **ignorance**. [emphasis added]¹⁸

¹⁶ Perhaps worth considering “inheritance” and its cognates in this regard.

¹⁷ From the [Cambridge Dictionary](#) online. See also the section “[Concrete vs. Abstract](#).”

¹⁸ See Britannica online here: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/sin-religion>.

This is a secular definition, however, with some slight modifications, this statement could be applied to the sense of [hamartia](#) in Scripture. “Sin” is or results in failure to achieve what should have or could have been achieved, notably due to ignorance. This could easily describe the condition of a person who has not accepted Christ and therefore lacks a true identity and a relationship to the creator of the universe—due to ignorance (intentional or unintentional).

We propose that Paul was not ignorant of how this Greek word and its cognates were used in the culture in which he lived and that God, by way of Paul, intentionally chose to use this particular word to describe the general plight as well as the various kinds of errors, mistakes, or failings of all humans.

An acceptable broad definition of [hamartia](#) as used in Scripture, admitting a couple of deviations, is “not conforming to God’s standard” or “failing to meet God’s standard.” If a person is not conforming or failing, then we might ask, “What does a failure to conform ‘look like’?” We might say that the person has no part, portion, or share with God or the things of God. We might say that their failure means they are “missing out” on what otherwise might have been gained. Or, we might say they are experiencing “loss.” This could also include the idea of forfeiture—if a person fails to achieve a goal or misses the target (the historical, literal sense of the word), they forfeit what they might have maintained or gained. An archer failing to stop an enemy combatant could result in death—the forfeiture of life.

We will now explore in more detail the noun and verb translated as “sin.”

The Verb [hamartanó](#)

The verb [hamartanó](#) is always used in the context of “missing the target” **ethically**, that is, doing something contrary to God or contrary to righteousness. The only two exceptions are cited below.

Acts 25:8 (Literal)

Paul made his defense, “Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar, in anything have I sinned [[hamartanó](#)].”

1 Peter 2:20

²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin [[hamartanó](#)] and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.

In Acts, Paul is quoted as using the word to describe violations against the Mosaic Law, the Temple, or Caesar—not against God. Many versions choose “offended” in this context...one of the few places where [hamartanó](#) is not translated as “sin.” As noted previously, in 1 Peter the word is used to describe an action contrary to a servant’s master. While some versions use “done wrong,” perhaps “offended” is a better choice since the servant’s action may not have anything to do with “right” or “wrong.” These verses can generally be characterized as describing “actions contrary to an authority” and are examples of the possible “flexibility” of the word [hamartanó](#).

Besides those two occurrences, all other occurrences refer to a violation with respect to God’s righteousness, sometimes committed against another person. Below are some typical occurrences.

Luke 15:21

²¹ “And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned [[hamartanó](#)] **against heaven** and in **your sight**; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’”

Luke 17:3 and 4

³ “Be on your guard! If your brother sins [[hamartanó](#)] [against you—implied], rebuke him; and if he

repents, forgive him. ⁴ "And if he sins [[hamartanó](#)] against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

Romans 3:23

²³ for all have sinned [[hamartanó](#)] and fall short of the **glory of God**,

We can see from these examples that [hamartanó](#) is a generic term that covers a variety of possible actions (words or deeds) that are contrary to God. It is perhaps implied in verses like Luke 17:3 and 4 that the "sinning" is something contrary to God's righteousness and not just an arbitrary offence. What is not portrayed in these examples is any distinction between intentional or unintentional.

There are only a few occurrences of [hamartanó](#) where a **specific act** is referred to. In [Matthew 27:4](#), Judas declares that he "sinned" by betraying an innocent man. This was perhaps a later realization when he saw what was going to happen to Jesus. At the time of betrayal, he perhaps thought some good would come of the betrayal. In 1 Corinthians 7:[28](#) and [36](#), the word is used in the context of whether marrying in certain circumstances is [hamartanó](#) or not. In [1 Corinthians 6:18](#) (see v. [16](#)), the word is used in the context of sexual relations with a prostitute. In [1 Corinthians 8:12](#), the word is used in the context of "wounding" a brother's conscience by eating food offered to an idol. In [Titus 3:11](#), the context is a "factious" person. In [2 Peter 2:4](#), "sinned" probably refers to the activity of evil angels and the birth of the Nephilim.

An important way in which [hamartanó](#) is used is demonstrated in the section of Romans below. In this section, [hamartanó](#) may be considered as a **way of life** committed to sinning. All people sin but not all people sin as a way of life, i.e., with intent (see Romans 1:18–32; 2 Timothy 3:1–5).

Romans 2:5–12 and 16

⁵ But because of your **stubbornness and unrepentant heart** you [unbelieving Jews] are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,⁶ who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: ⁷ to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; ⁸ but to those who are **selfishly ambitious** and do not obey the truth, but **obey unrighteousness**, wrath and indignation. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does [[katerqazomai](#)—works, practices] evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does [[ergazomai](#)—works, practices] good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God. ¹² For all who have sinned [[hamartanó](#)] without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned [[hamartanó](#)] under the Law will be judged [[krinó](#)¹⁹] by the Law; ... ¹⁶ on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge [[krinó](#)] the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

We refer the reader to [Ezekiel 33:10–20](#). In that section the sense of "commits sin" (v. [12](#)) is not "commits a sin," but "goes the way of unrighteousness." The word "turn" occurs 7x in that section. The section in Romans cited above points to a similar group who are **willfully** "going the way" of unrighteousness—those "practicing evil" [v. 9].²⁰

¹⁹ See [krinó](#). "J. Thayer comments that "the proper meaning of [2919](#) (*krínō*) is to pick out (choose) by separating"... ("distinguish, judge") typically refers to making a determination of right or wrong (innocence or guilt), especially on an official (legal) standard." Declaring a verdict is applicable because it could be for or against.

²⁰ Per one [commentator](#), "... verses 7 to 10 are not a revelation of the way of salvation, but a general description of the character of those that are saved ... the word 'sinned' must refer to the general choice of sin as against righteousness and holiness."

Generally, the verb is limited to the idea of action.²¹ As such, [hamartanó](#) could be said to be any intent or action (word or deed) contrary to either of the two great commandments—love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself.

Of the 43 occurrences of the verb [hamartanó](#) there are only 7 in Romans, 7 in 1 Corinthians, and 1 in Ephesians, so not much of a presence in the Church Epistles.

The Noun [hamartia](#)

The noun [hamartia](#), like the verb, is also a generic term covering any number of possible intents or actions (words or deeds) contrary to God. Below are several examples of “sin” being used in a generic sense.

Matthew 3:6

⁶and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their **sins**.

Matthew 9:2

²And they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, "Take courage, son; your **sins** are forgiven."

1 John 5:17

¹⁷All unrighteousness [[adikia](#)] is **sin**, and there is a **sin** not leading to death.

Sin(s) in these verses can cover any number of possible intents or actions contrary to God. The point is not the specific violations but that people confessed; that sins are forgiven; and that all unrighteousness is sin.

With the noun [hamartia](#) it is helpful to distinguish the plural from the singular. The **plural** form occurs 77 times and almost always, like the verb, refers generically to an act, or acts, contrary to God. This form often occurs in the phrases “forgive sins,” “forgiveness of sins,” or “confess sins.” The plural also occurs in the following expressions: sins “remain” unless forgiven [[1 Corinthians 15:17](#)]; sins can be “taken away” ([Romans 11:27](#); [Hebrews 10:4](#); [Hebrews 10:11](#)); sins can be “wiped away” ([Acts 3:19](#)); and sins can be “washed away” ([Acts 22 :16](#)). The following three verses refer specifically to Jesus Christ: “...he will save his people from their **sins**” [[Matthew 1:21](#)]; “...offered once to bear the **sins** of many” [[Hebrews 9:28](#)]; “...he himself bore our **sins**” [[1 Peter 2:24](#)].

So, the **verb** and the **noun in the plural form** are generally similar, with a few notable exceptions in that they refer to an intent or action contrary to God or a failure to comply with God or with righteousness. In contrast, when it comes to the **singular form** of the noun (96 occurrences), we find an array of contexts and nuanced meanings. Being aware of a couple of figures of speech can enhance our understanding of some of these occurrences. Knowing the name of a figure of speech is less important than understanding the concept. There are hundreds of figures of speech. The names are man-made and can be useful in discussion but just being aware that all Scripture is not literal is important to understanding Scripture. We will focus on just two figures of speech here that are significant with respect to the singular noun [hamartia](#).

²¹ See “Thirty-Three Words for Sin in the New Testament Part 1” here: <https://bible.org/article/thirty-three-words-sin-new-testament-part-1>.

Personification

Personification is a literary device, a type of figurative language, i.e., not literal. In simplest terms, personification is attributing human qualities to nonhuman things.²² The following are some characteristics of personification.

- imbues nonhuman things with the power **to think, feel and act**,
- used to express **abstract ideas** in a comprehensible and relatable way,
- makes something nonhuman **come to life**,
- encourages the reader to **relate** to the thing being described,
- can add **deeper meaning** to things that do not possess complex human attributes,
- helps create **vivid imagery** in the minds of the readers that is easy to remember and long-lasting.

Before looking at some occurrences in the NT, let's look at the following passage from the OT.

Genesis 4:6

⁶Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, **sin [*chatta'ah*] is crouching [*rabats*] at the door**; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Here we have the figurative expression, "sin is crouching at the door." This is the first occurrence of the Hebrew word *chatta'ah*, which occurs 294x and is generally translated with the word "sin" but also in many cases as "sin offering." "Sin" does not literally "crouch." Technically, this is not personification because it is not attributing a human characteristic but rather an animal characteristic to an abstract concept.²³ However, it demonstrates the point that God uses "sin," both the Hebrew and Greek words (as will be shown), in figurative expressions.

A fundamental fact is that "sin" is an abstract concept. Consider that when we use the word "tree," we can point at an object and say, "That's a tree." This is not the case with "sin." We can point at something and say, "That's sin," but what we are pointing at is a demonstration that qualifies as sin. In other words, we cannot literally point at sin. It is an abstract concept. There are many such terms in Scripture including righteousness, grace, iniquity, evil, etc. A way of stating this is that we conceive the abstract through our mental processes and perceive the concrete through our senses.

Figurative language, as noted in the bullet list above, can help make an abstract idea "real" or relatable. Sin is obviously not an animal crouching at Cain's door, but it certainly "paints a picture" that is easy to grasp and that carries force. Unfortunately, it didn't carry enough force to dissuade Cain from killing his brother. In a figurative sense, "sin" did "jump on" and "overtake" Cain because he did not "master" or rule over that "animal." This message in Genesis is not unlike the message in Romans, "Do not let sin [Sin] reign" [**Romans 6:12**], which is an example of personification since "sin" is not literally a king or emperor that reigns.

The following is a well-known verse of Scripture.

Romans 6:23

²³For **the wages of sin** is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

²² See <https://literarydevices.net/personification/>.

²³ See "Zoomorphism Defined" here: <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/zoomorphism>.

The figurative expression here is, “the wages of sin.” “Wages” is the Greek word *opsónion*. Per Thayer’s Greek Lexicon: “...as grain, meat, fruits, salt, were given to soldiers instead of pay, [it] began to signify a soldier’s pay, allowance.” Two of the four occurrences of this word are in the context of a soldier’s pay: [Luke 3:14](#) and [1 Corinthians 9:7](#). The personification of “sin” in this verse is clearly indicated in the Weymouth New Testament which reads: “The wages paid by Sin is death.” Leading up to this verse there are numerous occurrences of “sin” being personified.

Romans 6:12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, and 22

¹² Therefore do not let **sin** [Sin] **reign** in your mortal body ... ¹⁴ For **sin** [Sin] shall not be **master** over you ... ¹⁶ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as **slaves** for obedience, you are **slaves** of the one whom you obey, either [slaves] of **sin** [Sin] resulting in death, or [slaves] of obedience [Obedience] resulting in righteousness? ... ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were **slaves of sin** [Sin] ... ¹⁸ and having been **freed from sin** [Sin], you became **slaves** of righteousness [Righteousness] ... ²⁰ For when you were **slaves of sin** [Sin] ... ²² But now having been **freed from sin** [Sin].

In verse 12, “reign” [*basileuó*] is used in conjunction with kings or other Roman magistrates [[Matthew 2:22](#)]. In verse 14, “master” [*kurieuó*] is a verb that means “to rule.” It is used in the context of rulers or authorities. In verses 16, 17, 18, and 22, “Sin” is characterized as a slave owner. We also note that “obedience” is personified in v. 16 and “righteousness” in v. 18. So, whether verse 23 is referring to “Sin” as a military commander, an emperor/ruler, or a slave master, the point is clear: obedient “service” to Sin is rewarded with death.

Why the use of figurative language? The answer might be somewhat obvious. Consider the initial audience of this letter, i.e., residents of Rome. Obviously, these residents (as well as anyone living in the Roman Empire) could relate to emperors/subjects, masters/slaves, officers/soldiers. These concepts would tend to communicate something less than a desirable relationship. The figurative language helps make the abstract concept of sin real and relatable. These figures may be somewhat less impactful for those of us who have not experienced tyranny and bondage, but we can still “get the point” and perhaps recognizing the figurative language can help in that regard.

The use of personification for abstract concepts like “sin,” “death,” “righteousness,” “grace,” etc. can serve to highlight the presence or absence of a person’s **relationship with** either Sin or with God.

Metonymy

Metonymy is a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated.²⁴ Within this figure are numerous variations. This is perhaps the most significant figure of speech relative to the word “sin” [*hamartia*]. “Closely associated” is relative to the person reading. Not everyone will necessarily see the association because of cultural differences or due to a lack of knowledge in a particular area. Following is an example.

The White House announced a new program.

Most people living in the United States understand that “the White House” refers to the current presidential administration in the United States. The “white house” does not literally announce anything. The “white house” represents a place where political authority resides. Obviously, someone unfamiliar with the United States government would not understand this metonymy and, in fact, the sentence would make no sense. Something to note is that the OT scriptures were predominantly written

²⁴ See <https://literarydevices.net/metonymy/>. Sometimes commentaries use the word “tropes” or “tropical” for figure of speech.

within the Hebrew culture but may also include references to other “foreign” cultures. The NT scriptures were written within a Hebrew culture as well as the Greco-Roman culture. In reading Scripture, some attention to such a figure can aid understanding. For the most part, the average reader can make the associations without thinking, but even so, it can be helpful to pause and consider the association.

Here are some obvious examples.

Matthew 15:8 (ESV)

⁸ “This people honors me with their **lips**, but their **heart** is far from me;

“Lips” refers to “words.” These people honor God with their “words.” The association is obvious...lips are used to speak words. “Heart,” which is figurative as it is not referring to a person’s literal physical heart, refers to the innermost intents. The figurative language makes a sharp contrast. Lips are external. They can be seen. The heart is internal and cannot be seen (except by God of course). These people were saying all the right things to God, but their intents were contrary to God.

John 3:16

¹⁶ “For God so loved **the world**, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

“The world” refers to “the people (in the world).” This is made clear in this verse because it refers to “whoever believes.”

Earlier we noted three verses with the word “sins” that differ from the majority of occurrences of the plural use of “sins.” Here are those three verses again.

Matthew 1:21

²¹ “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will **save His people from their sins.**”

Hebrews 9:28

²⁸ so Christ also, having been offered once to **bear the sins** of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly wait Him.

1 Peter 2:24

²⁴ and He Himself **bore our sins** in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

In Matthew 1:21, “save from their sins” is a unique expression, that is, this is the only occurrence of the expression. In this context, “sins” is a metonym for *the consequence of sins*. This ultimately refers to the final judgment and second death.²⁵ Belief in Jesus saves a person from this final judgment and second death. Secondarily, this phrase may include forgiveness of sins, but that implies being saved from the consequence of sins. This phrase may also include the concept of healing as “save” [sózó] can mean “made well” or “made whole.” However, the primary sense of “sins” in this context is “saved from *the consequence of their sins,*” namely permanent death.

Hebrews 9:28 and 1 Peter 2:24 refer to Jesus “bearing sins.” Again, “sins” by metonymy refers to *the consequence of sins*. “Sins” cannot literally be lifted or carried because “sin” is a concept and not a thing that can be lifted or carried, but *the consequence of sins* can be assumed. Jesus, though not having committed any sin himself, accepted the punishment, the humiliation, and the death that is due for sins. In this sense, Jesus “bore *the consequence of sins.*”

²⁵ See the REV commentary for Matthew 1:21 here:
<https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Matthew/chapter1/21>.

It is perhaps worth noting that the Hebrew verb [chata](#) is frequently translated as “to sin” and carries the basic definition of “to miss [go wrong ethically]” as does the verb [hamartanó](#). However, it is also used in the sense of forfeit, lack, expiate, repent, etc. The cognate nouns [chet](#) and [chatta'ah](#) also refer to sin, its penalty, or to the offering for sin. An example of [chet](#) referring by metonymy to the consequences of sin is found in the following verse.

Leviticus 20:20

²⁰ If there is a man who lies with his uncle’s wife he has uncovered his uncle’s nakedness; they will **bear their sin** [\[chet\]](#). They will die childless.

Again, the man and his uncle’s wife cannot literally “take up” or “carry” sin. However, they can experience the consequence of their behavior. In this case, “they will die childless.”

Another important example of metonymy is where “sin” refers to a **legal status**.

Romans 3:9

⁹ What then? Are we [Jews] better than they [Greeks]? Not at all; for we have already charged [\[proaitiaomai\]](#) that both Jews and Greeks are all under [\[hupo\]](#) **sin** [\[hamartia\]](#), n. sing.]

“Charged” is a forensic term.²⁶ This verse is part of a legal argument (an indictment) that began in Romans 1:18. “Sin” in this instance is referring to the **legal status** of the Jews and Greeks who had been indicted in the preceding verses. Both are declared to be “under sin” meaning both are being declared **guilty of sin** as a consequence of their ungodly and unrighteous actions (their sins committed). Being guilty, they are subject to (under) *the penalty for sin*, namely God’s wrath, judgment, and ultimately the second death.²⁷ This phrase would be equivalent to saying, “...both Jews and Greeks have committed various sins, been indicted, pronounced guilty by God, and are subject to just punishment.” This is the sense of being “under sin.”²⁸

These are just a few examples of personification and metonymy used in conjunction with “sin.” Subsequent sections in this resource will note others.

²⁶ [Vincent's Word Studies](#): The reference is not to logical proof, but to forensic accusation. The simple verb means to charge as being the cause (αἰτία) of some evil: hence to accuse, impeach. We also note the preceding context in Romans Chapter 2 where “God’s judgment” occurs twice and reference is made to the “wrath” to come.

²⁷ A similar expression in our courts is “guilty under the law.”

²⁸ Some have taken the liberty of saying, “...under *the power of sin*.” An examination of the word [proaitiaomai](#) does not support this addition.

A Tale of Three Sins

When we consider who has or will commit sin, there are only three main actors. The first would be the “star of the morning,” now known as the devil.²⁹ The second would be the first man, Adam. The third is every other person. The sin of each of these actors has its own set of notable consequences.

The following verses identify these three actors.

1 John 3:8b (ESV)

⁸... for the **devil** has been **sinning** from the beginning ...

Romans 5:14

¹⁴Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not **sinned** in the likeness of the offense of **Adam** ...

Romans 3:23

²³for **all** have **sinned** and fall short of the glory of God ...

Regarding the devil...

Isaiah 14:12a–14

¹²“How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! ... ¹³ you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’

Ezekiel 28:14, 15, and 17

¹⁴You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God ... ¹⁵You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you. ... ¹⁷Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.

There are a variety of opinions regarding these sections of Scripture. Our position is that they are referring to a spiritual being created by God who chose to rebel against God.³⁰ This was a spiritual being of great beauty and power who, through pride and/or arrogance, endeavored to usurp the throne of God Almighty. That spirit being was cast from “the mountain of God” and is now known as the devil. This was a cataclysmic event. We believe that Genesis 1:2 reflects some of the consequences of this event and can legitimately be translated, “The earth became (*hayah*) formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep.”³¹ God did not and does not create anything formless and void, nor filled with darkness. This destruction of God’s initial creation is referred to in Peter.

2 Peter 3:5–7 (REV)

⁵For they willfully ignore this: that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, ⁶and by means of these the world **back then** was destroyed

²⁹ “Devil” is a transliteration of the Greek word *diabolos*, which means slanderous; used as a noun, the Slanderer.

³⁰ See REV [commentary](#) on Isaiah 14:12 and [commentary](#) on Ezekiel 28:12. For examples of spiritual beings referred to as royalty, see also Daniel [12:1](#) and [10:13](#). Note that the devil’s initial rebellion is never identified in the OT as “sin.” Only in [1 John 3:8](#) is there a reference to the rebellion as sin—we might call it the “original sin.”

³¹ Regarding the word “became,” see the REV commentary on Genesis 1:2 [here](#). Also note how many versions translate the word *hayah* as “became” in [Genesis 19:26](#).

when it was flooded with water, ⁷ and by the same word, the **present** heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept until the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly people

The “flood” in verse 6 **preceded** the “**present** heavens and earth” [v. 7]. This “flood” is not the flood in Noah’s day but a reference to “the deep” in Genesis 1:2. “Noah’s flood” occurred during **this present** heavens and earth. God’s initial creation ([Genesis 1:1](#)) became “flooded” — “formless and void” and “darkness was over the face of the deep.” These were consequences of the devil’s rebellion. No more specific details are provided in Scripture regarding what occurred.

Regarding the phrase “star of the morning” [Isaiah 14:12], we note the reference to Christ in Revelation.

Revelation 22:16

¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, **the bright morning star.**”

Jesus Christ in this sense replaced and, in fact, has surpassed the devil’s brightness and beauty. Christ was and will be integral in restoring and enhancing God’s original creation that suffered calamity. As it says in Romans...

Romans 8:19–22 (REV)

¹⁹ For the eager anticipation of creation is waiting expectantly for the children of God to be revealed, ²⁰ (for the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of the one [the devil] who subjected it) in the hope ²¹ that the creation itself will also be freed from its slavery to decay and brought into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together and suffering the pains of childbirth together right up to this present time.

The “creation,” here personified, is “waiting expectantly” to be “freed from its slavery to decay.”

Ultimately the devil will be held accountable for his actions and be punished.

Revelation 20:10

¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The previous Scriptures describe some of the events and consequences associated with the devil’s initial rebellion. What activities the devil and the other spirits that went along with the devil were engaged in immediately after their expulsion from the “mountain of God” is not detailed in Scripture. After the “flood” referred to in Genesis 1:2 and 2 Peter 3:5–7, we know that God set out to make the world a habitable place. This activity is recorded in Genesis 1:3ff and began with God not creating (as in Genesis 1:1) but speaking light into existence, e.g., “Then God **said**, ‘Let there be light’” [[Genesis 1:3](#)]. The record goes on to state how God spoke various things into being including space, the sun, the moon, the stars, plant life, animal life, and ultimately a man and a woman.

Regarding Adam...

According to Scripture the original man and woman initially lived in “the garden of God.”

Genesis 2:8

⁸ The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

Eve is brought in in v. [22](#). Here is some of what God told these first residents.

Genesis 1:28

²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Aside from “fruitful,” “multiply,” and “fill,” the notable words here are “subdue” and “rule.” This command from God gave the residents authority. This implies that they were also given the necessary power to carry out the command. At this point...

Genesis 1:31a

³¹ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.

So, despite the expulsion of the devil from “the mountain of God” and the subsequent cataclysm that occurred, God established a place that was plentiful and beautiful where Adam and Eve could thrive. However, the devil was still around.

Sometime after being placed in the garden, Eve was approached by “the serpent”³² and enticed to eat the fruit of the tree that God had forbidden under threat of death. Eve ate then offered to Adam and he ate. The following verses are the only references in Scripture to Adam’s act.

Genesis 3:17a

¹⁷ Then to Adam He [God] said, “Because you have **listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten** from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’ ...

This initial violation is mentioned in Romans.

Romans 5:14

¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not **sinned** in the likeness of the **offense** [*parabasis*] of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

In this verse, Adam’s act is specifically described as an “offense.” In subsequent verses, his act is described as a transgression and as disobedience.

“**transgression**” [*paraptóma*] ([vv. 15, 17, 18](#))

“**disobedience**” [*parakoé*] ([v. 19](#))

The most direct association to Adam and sin is in [Romans 5:16](#) where it says, “...the one [Adam] who **sinned**.”

These verses from Romans along with Genesis 3:17 are the **only** references to Adam’s act in the garden.³³ Based on this information, the expression “original sin” in reference to Adam’s act is not scripturally precise. The expression, if used at all, is more applicable to the devil.

The following are some of the consequences of Adam’s act.

Genesis 3:17b–19

¹⁷ ... Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ By the sweat of

³² This is a reference to the devil. It is unlikely that this was an actual “snake.” The use of the term “serpent” would describe the character of this actor and not his/her physical appearance.

³³ For reference, here are all the occurrences of “Adam” in the OT: [Gen. 3:17](#); [4:25](#); [5:1, 3, 4, 5](#); [1 Chron. 1:1](#) and all the occurrences of “Adam” in the NT: [Luke 3:38](#); [Romans 5:14](#) (2x); [1 Corinthians 15:22, 45](#) (2x); [1 Timothy 2:13, 14](#); [Jude 1:14](#).

your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

Note that God did not say, "I [God] have cursed the ground because of you and, I [God] am making you toil until you die." The statements above can be viewed as consequences rather than God executing a sentence. It is frequently the case throughout the OT that when the children of Israel turned from God, they experienced difficulties. God did personally act in particular circumstances, but most of the difficulties experienced by the children of Israel can be viewed as stepping outside of God's realm of blessing and protection and stepping into the realm of the devil. This is generally true regarding "sin." Examples of God personally acting can be seen in the records of the tower of Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of the Egyptian army, the death of Korah and his family, etc., but in Romans Chapter 1 for example, we see morally corrupt people being left to pursue their corrupt desires and suffering consequences.

We also see in the above verses that Adam was now mortal, "For you are dust, and to dust you shall return." We assume that prior to Adam's disobedience, he and Eve were immortal, i.e., not subject to death. One factor to consider in this regard is "the tree of life."

Genesis 3:22–24

²²Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from **the tree of life, and eat, and live forever** "--
²³therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction **to guard the way to the tree of life.**

We can assume from this that the body formed from the dust of the ground was not capable on its own of immortality but needed "the fruit" from "the tree of life" to sustain it. This death can be referred to as the "common death."³⁴

People do not die the "common death" because of any sin they commit but because Adam's disobedience resulted in God prohibiting access to the tree of life. Living sinfully might hasten this death and righteous living might extend life, but ultimately all are subject to death. This is a consequence of Adam's sin, offense, transgression, disobedience.

With respect to eating, we note that Genesis 3:18 says, "And you will eat the plants of the field" (which may well be different from the plants in the garden). Previously, Adam and Eve could eat the fruit of the trees and the plant life in the garden [[Genesis 1:29](#)]. The word "cultivate" in v. 23 above is the same word used in [Genesis 2:5](#)— "...there was no man to cultivate the ground." Adam would have worked the ground in the garden, but it apparently would have been easier and more fruitful than cultivating the ground outside the garden.³⁵

Besides Adam having to work harder for food, Eve would experience harder work in giving birth. Why that would be is not explained. The same Hebrew word, *itstsabon*, is used to describe how Adam will have to "toil" [[Genesis 3:17](#)] and how Eve will deliver in "pain" [[Genesis 3:16](#)]. That Hebrew word comes from the verb *atsab* which is typically translated in the NASB as "grieved," as in bad behavior "grieved" someone. So, the word perhaps has more of an emotional component than a literal "pain" component. In this sense, the word can carry the meaning of "anxious," "worrisome," or "troubled." Adam and Eve

³⁴ See the section "[Two Deaths](#)."

³⁵ After the flood in Noah's day, the "menu" changed [[Genesis 9:2, 3, 4](#)]. Perhaps that flood had a cleansing effect in more ways than one.

would both experience “pain,” “anxiety,” etc. as they were now vulnerable being more reliant on themselves and being “outside” the original blessing of God.

All of the above might be summed up in the following familiar verse.

Romans 5:12

¹²Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin.

This does not say “through one man’s sin” but “through one man sin entered.” These are two very different statements. What the expression “sin entered into the world” means in this context is worth considering. In other sections, we cover how the phrase “sin entered” can be considered as the figure of speech personification. In that sense, the character Sin, entered or was introduced onto the world’s stage through Adam’s disobedience and the character Death followed close behind.³⁶

If not personification, we note the definite article “the” in the text associated with “sin.” “The sin” can be viewed as the figure metonymy.³⁷ In that case, “the sin” that entered into the world was **the condition or state** that was a consequence of Adam’s disobedience. This condition is characterized by mortality [from dust to dust]. Death is one of the primary separators between God and humans—God is eternal; man is mortal. Because death is contrary to an eternal God, we might view mortality (being subject to death) as a condition or “state of sin.” There are other consequences that can be included in this condition besides mortality.³⁸

Something else significant that should be included in “the sin” that Adam’s disobedience “introduced” into the world is not directly stated in the Genesis record but can be deduced. We mentioned the following verse earlier.

Genesis 1:28

²⁸God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

“Subdue” and “rule” implies that Adam and Eve were given not only authority but the necessary power to carry out this command. It is implied in the following verse that Adam and Eve received spiritual power.

Genesis 1:26 and 27

²⁶Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them **rule** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and **over all the earth**, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷God **created** man in His own image, in the image of God He **created** him; male and female He **created** them.

We have bolded the word “rule” and the phrase “over all the earth.” It would seem obvious that humans have some degree of superiority on the earth, but humans are hardly “rulers over all the earth.” In verse 27, we see the bolded word “created.” This word occurs in Genesis 1:1 but does not occur again until here in Genesis 1:27. In Genesis 1:3ff, scripture says God spoke light, space, plants, fish, birds, etc. into being. “Created” implies bringing something into existence that has not previously existed. We know that God is a spirit being—John 4:24 specifically says, “God is spirit.” If God was going to “create man in His own image,” this at least in part implies that God created spirit within man. This spirit gave

³⁶ See the section “[Sin and Enter](#).”

³⁷ The definite article “the” is in the text but rarely reflected in translations. For a consideration of the definite article “the” as used with “sin,” see https://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_717-20.

³⁸ See the section “[Sin as a Condition](#).”

Adam and Eve a capability of direct communication with God as well as the necessary “power” to carry out the command they were given to “rule all the earth.” This spirit would have given them the capability to gain insight, wisdom, and understanding from God as well as the capability to exercise some supernatural power. This spirit would be inherently righteous just as God is inherently righteous.³⁹ Adam and Eve were not, in and of themselves, inherently righteous as indicated by the fact that they could be tempted with evil whereas God cannot be tempted with evil.

It is important to note that this spirit was given conditionally.

Genesis 2:16 and 17

¹⁶The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

We know that Adam did not die that day but went on to live about 900 years. However, the verse says, “**the day you eat, you will surely die,**” literally, dying you shall die, making it emphatic. If Adam did not physically die that day, in what way did he “die”?

Throughout the OT, only some individuals are recorded as having spirit (not everyone had spirit).

Joseph was filled with the spirit of God (Genesis 41:[38](#) and [39](#)).

The craftsmen who built the tabernacle were filled with the spirit of God ([Exodus 31:3](#)).

Joshua was filled with the Spirit of God ([Numbers 27:18](#)).

The judge Othniel was filled with the spirit of God ([Judges 3:10](#)).

The judge Gideon was filled with the spirit of God ([Judges 6:34](#)).

The judge Jephthah was filled with the spirit of God ([Judges 11:29](#)).

The judge Samson was filled with the spirit of God (Judges [14:6](#), [14:19](#), [15:14](#)).

Saul was filled with the spirit of God (1 Samuel [10:6](#), [9](#), and [10](#)).

David was filled with the spirit of God ([1 Samuel 16:13](#)).

There are others. This spirit was in (or “on”) these individuals conditionally, for example, having disobeyed God, Saul lost that spirit.

1 Samuel 16:14a

¹⁴Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul...

Samson lost that spirit and with it the supernatural strength he had ([Judges 16:20ff](#)).

After being confronted of his sin with respect to Bathsheba, David prayed to God...

Psalms 51:11 (REV)

¹¹Do not cast me away from your presence and **do not take your holy spirit from me.**

We assume that Adam, like these other individuals had a spirit from God on a conditional basis. When he disobeyed God’s direct command, he lost that spirit. This spirit-less condition has been passed on to all of Adam’s progeny and is indicated in the following statement.

John 7:39 (ESV)

³⁹Now this he [Jesus] said about the Spirit [the spirit-gift], whom [which] those who believed in him

³⁹ “Inherently righteous” is meant to communicate that God cannot be tempted with evil [[James 1:13](#)].

were to receive, for as yet the Spirit [the spirit-gift] **had not been given**, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Having a spirit from God has always been something to be desired. It indicated a close relationship with God.

Numbers 11:29

²⁹ But Moses said to him [Joshua], “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that **all** the LORD’S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit [spirit] upon them!”

We note that all people having spirit is something that OT believers looked forward to when the Messiah would reign on the earth.

Joel 2:28 and 29

²⁸ “It will come about after this That I will pour out My Spirit [spirit] on **all** mankind; And your sons and daughters will prophesy, Your old men will dream dreams, Your young men will see visions.

²⁹ “Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit [spirit] in those days.

We can safely say that having a spirit from God is significant and even vital. We can also say that Adam “died” that day in that he lost that spirit due to disobedience, which meant he no longer had that “spiritual” relationship with God. Not having a relationship is described as being “dead” in the record of the profligate son.

Luke 11:22–24 and 32

²² “But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; ²³ and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴ for this son of mine was **dead** and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate. ... ³² But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was **dead** and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’”

This loss of spirit and with it the loss of a direct spiritual relationship with God, figuratively, being “dead” to God, can also be another aspect of the “sin condition.” This loss of spirit can also be viewed as a loss of identity. This loss can be experienced as a sense of internal void. This loss might also be viewed as “darkness,” that is, the absence of light [see [Genesis 1:2](#); [Jeremiah 10:23](#)]. All this can lead to a sense of not knowing “who I am.” The darkness might also be considered “spiritual blindness” [[1 Cor. 2:14](#); [2 Cor. 4:3, 4](#); [John 9:40, 41](#)]. As a result, people endeavor to establish (create) their own “light” and identity to fill that void. This condition also manifests itself in countless self-focused behaviors to compensate. Try as one might, nothing a person does can successfully make up the shortfall.

With respect to a personal “void,” God, through Christ, has made it possible to fill that void. Those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ receive a gift of spirit. This gift is available and received on the basis of Christ’s righteousness and not their own. Because this gift of holy spirit is based on Christ’s righteousness it is permanent and not contingent on what the person might do or not do. This spirit is described as “power from on high” [[Luke 24:49](#); [Acts 1:8](#)]. It is also described as “Christ in you” [[Colossians 1:27](#)]. “Christ” is the “identity” that God would have for all.

Adam’s sin of disobedience brought about the “common death” (physical death) as well as “spiritual death” due to the loss of the spirit from God. The consciousness of mortality and the sense of “something missing” or the sense of an internal “void” plays no small role in the decisions people make and how they live their lives. People seek to find peace and relief from a sense of vulnerability and uneasiness. For some, it means, “Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die;” for others it is a motivation to look for something more beyond this life that might make it “meaningful.” As Ecclesiastes implies, “It’s all vanity if it all ends in death” [[Ecclesiastes 3:19](#)].

Significantly, not having a spirit from God means a person is limited to their senses (see, hear, taste, touch, feel) and whatever other capabilities are built into a person (reasoning, emotions, etc.). This typically means being senses dominated. What a person sees, hears, tastes, touches, and smells impacts thoughts, emotions, reasonings, etc. Being spiritless and limited to these capabilities is a form of bondage that is added to the “bondage of death.”

Romans 7:24

²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will **set me free** from the body of this death?

While all this is certainly significant, there is one more aspect associated with Adam’s disobedience.

Luke 4:5 and 6

⁵And he [the devil] led Him [Christ] up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

Adam had the power and the glory in the garden. When he disobeyed God, he lost the power and the glory. It’s not that Adam literally handed something to the devil. Rather, Adam “gave up” or “forfeited” at least some of the authority and power he had. This is especially true with respect to his loss of spirit. The devil is a spirit being. A person without spirit is at a loss to effectively deal with or counter the activities of a spirit being, especially a wicked spirit being.

What happened in the garden might be described like this. You live in a nice house with nice furnishings. Your neighborhood is nice but not too far away live some questionable characters. So, typically, when you leave the house, you lock the windows and doors to secure the premises. One day, however, you are in a hurry and race out of the house without locking up. When you return home, all your furnishings are gone. You didn’t “hand them over” but you relinquished control over them, so someone came in and took control of them. Adam gave up (lost or forfeited) power and control and the devil was then “free to roam.” This is why the devil is now referred to as “the god of this age” and “the prince of the power of the air.”⁴⁰

2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4

³And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴in whose case **the god of this world** (age) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Ephesians 2:1 and 2

¹And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to **the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit** that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Indirectly, “the sin” that entered into the world is the devil who is the embodiment of “sin.” The devil promotes nothing but sin and death. However, to equate “the sin” that entered and the devil would limit the otherwise broad sense of “the sin” that entered.

Something else that comes up in conjunction with Adam and Eve is “knowing good and evil.” This is described as one of the results of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Given the context in Genesis, “knowing good and evil” could certainly be considered a consequence but exactly what that expression means has been difficult to pin down. At a minimum, it certainly represents a change of condition, that is, before Adam and Eve ate, they did not have this “knowledge of good and evil,” but after they ate, they had this knowledge. There are numerous thoughts on what the phrase

⁴⁰ See also John [12:31](#); [14:30](#); and [16:11](#).

means especially in conjunction with God's statement that they (Adam and Eve) have become "like one of us" because of gaining this knowledge. It is possible to take the expression in two parts. Before eating, they had "knowledge of good," after they ate, they also had "knowledge of evil." In their case, this "knowledge" was at least in part experiential. They experienced consequences of doing what God told them not to do. God does not have experiential knowledge of evil, as in having personally experienced the consequences of it, but He certainly has knowledge of the consequences of doing evil.

Being mortal ("the common death"), being spiritless, and living in a world dominated by the devil are the major consequences of Adam's disobedience and this can be described as the "sin condition" or "sin state" that Adam introduced directly or indirectly into the world.

Regarding everyone else...

As previously noted...

Romans 3:23

²³ for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God ...

Also...

Ecclesiastes 7:20

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who **never sins**.

1 Kings 8:46a

...for there is no man that **sins not**...

It is clear from these Scriptures that no matter how righteous a person may want to be, or think they are, they still sin. We have previously noted that the "common death" is a consequence of Adam's disobedience not of one's own sin; however, Scripture speaks of a "second death." This "second death" is a consequence of one's own sin.

Revelation 20:14b and 15

¹⁴ This is **the second death**, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The "common death" is temporary—at some point all who are dead will be brought back to life to face judgment. The "second death" is permanent—"eternal," "everlasting," "forever." Some believe in "everlasting" torment for the wicked. Scripture does not support this belief. Fire, in Scripture, is not a preservative. Fire consumes. There may be some extended period of torment for the wicked but eventually all the wicked will be consumed. With respect to fire consuming, consider Sodom and Gomorrah.

Jesus referred to this resurrection and judgment event.

John 5:28 and 29 (ESV)

²⁸ Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice

²⁹ and come out, those who have done good to the **resurrection of life**, and those who have done evil to the **resurrection of judgment**.

In this context, "judgment" means found guilty and sentenced to death. Not only will all the dead be brought back to life, but all who are alive at that time will also be judged. In other words, no one will escape.

Daniel also spoke of this event which follows a period of great distress on the earth.

Daniel 12:1 and 2

¹"Now at that time Michael (an angel), the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. ²"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

"To disgrace and everlasting contempt" is referring to what is identified in the Book of Revelation as the "judgment" and "second death."

The Book of Revelation further elaborates on this future event.

Revelation 20:11–15

¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and **books** were opened; and another **book** was opened, which is **the book of life**; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades [the grave] gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴Then death and Hades⁴¹ were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

There are "books" and a "book." The "books" are the records of those who will experience the "second death." The "book" is the record of those who will be granted life—everlasting life.

Some may be satisfied that this life is "all there is"—you live then you die. Surely, many do not believe that there will be a "reckoning" for how they have lived their lives. However, no matter what they believe, this judgment is going to occur, and all will have to "answer" for how they lived. There are certainly numerous opinions about this matter even among those who do believe there will be an ultimate reckoning. But the point being made here is that the primary consequence of each person's own sin is facing judgment before a righteous judge and being sentenced to a second, permanent, death.

Surely, living a sinful life can have day-to-day consequences both for the individual and those around them. Life can be made miserable because of sin. But the more significant consequence is a permanent death which means that whatever life was lived, it was its own reward and in the end was essentially meaningless [[Ecclesiastes 3:19](#)]⁴²—death makes life meaningless. There is a common expression, "You can't take it with you." However, you do take your life "with you"—what you did and how you did it—and it will be viewed by a righteous judge favorably or unfavorably.

This is the major consequence of every individual's own sin, i.e., permanent death.

Fortunately, this second, permanent, death can be avoided.

⁴¹ The word "hades" can be taken as "gravedom," that is, where the dead "reside" until brought back to life for judgment. The word "grave" can be used if understood that not all the dead are in literal graves, e.g., those "lost at sea" are in a "watery grave." Here in Revelation, "Death" and "Hades" are being used figuratively, as if people or spirit beings. See [Ecclesiastes 9:5](#), [6](#), [10](#) regarding the dead.

⁴² Some philosophers believe that death "gives meaning" to life. This can be true but, in our view, it is shortsighted.

Ezekiel 33:11a

¹¹ "Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways!

What this means to those of us living in this era of grace (that will come to an end) is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, believe that God sent Jesus to “pay the price” for everyone’s sins; that Jesus, who committed no sin, died a “sinner’s death” as a substitute for all. As a declaration of Jesus’ righteousness, God raised him from the dead to eternal life. This is summarized in the following.

Romans 10:9 and 10

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth **Jesus as Lord**, and believe in your heart that **God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved**; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in **salvation**.

Those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved from the wrath to come. This would include the period of tribulation and ultimately the second death.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 and 10

⁹ For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, ¹⁰ and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, **who rescues us from the wrath to come**.

And as a “bonus,” the one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ will at that moment of belief receive a permanent gift of holy spirit.

Ephesians 1:13 and 14 (REV)

¹³ in whom you also, when you heard the message of truth—the good news of your salvation—and when you believed in him, were **sealed with the promised holy spirit**, ¹⁴ which is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of God’s own purchased possession, to the praise of his glory.

Some of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ will not experience the “common death.”

1 Thessalonians 4:15–17

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are **alive and remain** until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep [died]. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are **alive and remain** will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

Two Deaths

There are two literal deaths identified in Scripture: the “common death” and the “second death.”

The Common Death

Genesis 3:19

¹⁹By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And **to dust you shall return.**

Numbers 16:28 and 29

²⁸Moses said, "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these deeds; for this is not my doing. ²⁹"If these men **die the death of all men** or if they suffer the fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. ⁴³

1 Kings 2:1 and 2

¹As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, ²"I am going **the way of all the earth.** Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man.

Ecclesiastes 3:19 and 20

¹⁹For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. **As one dies so dies the other;** indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity. ²⁰All go to the same place. **All came from the dust and all return to the dust.**

Hebrews 9:27

²⁷And inasmuch as it is **appointed for men to die once** and after this comes judgment [*krisis*],

Being barred from the tree of life meant that Adam and Eve became subject to death—they became mortal (dust to dust)—and so to all their progeny.

Genesis 3:22–24

²²Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and **live forever**"--
²³therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate [*abad*] the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

This death is the result of Adam’s disobedience. This death is common to all. Being mortal is a permanent condition. The only escape from this death is if a person has believed on the Lord Jesus and is alive when he returns. This common death is temporary since all the dead will eventually be brought back to life—some to the second death and some to eternal life.

The Second Death

The “second death” is spoken of in the Book of Revelation. This death is a consequence of a person’s own sin, not Adam’s sin as is the case with the common death.

⁴³ “suffer the fate of all men”—some take this to mean, “public calamities, such as pestilence, famine, and sword.”

Revelation 2:11

¹¹ 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the **second death** [[thanatos](#)].'

Revelation 20:6

⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the **second death** has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Revelation 20:13–15

¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and **they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds**. ¹⁴ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the **second death**, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. ⁴⁴

Revelation 21:8

⁸ "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the **second death**."

There are verses in the Gospels and Church Epistles that allude to this second death though it is not specifically labelled as such. An example would be the familiar verse from John.

John 3:16

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not **perish**, but have eternal life.

"Eternal life" is juxtaposed to "perish" [[apollumi](#)], which is defined as utterly destroyed. Judgment and a second death are absolute for all who reject God and/or reject Jesus Christ. This second death is **permanent** ("everlasting" or "eternal"). Some believe in "eternal torment" but "fire," as in the "lake of fire," is not a preservative. Fire consumes. ⁴⁵

This second death is the "ultimate reckoning" that many inherently feel is necessary to fully address the evil in the world.

Two Deaths—Two Sins

The "common death" and the "second death" are the consequences of two different sins. The death that is common to all men is a consequence of Adam having disobeyed God [[Romans 5:12ff](#)]. ⁴⁵ People do not die the death common to all because they commit sin but because Adam introduced death to all mankind. Death, or being subject to death, is a condition contrary to an eternal, everlasting (never dying) God. As such, being mortal can be considered to be a state of sin. This death occurs to each person without a personal violation of law [[Romans 5:13](#) and [14](#)]. Being subject to death (and whatever else might be involved or associated with being subject to death) is one of the big "separators" between God and humanity—God is eternal; people are not.

Consider [Isaiah 57:15](#) and note the word "contrite" [[dakka](#)]; a different Hebrew word for "contrite" occurs in [Isaiah 66:2](#) [[nakeh](#)]. These verses highlight the difference between God and human beings but

⁴⁴ In [v. 10](#), the devil was thrown into the lake of fire.

⁴⁵ See an excerpt from "The Fire that Consumes" here: <https://www.edwardfudge.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/excerptTFTC3.pdf>. The book is available on Amazon.

⁴⁶ [Meyer](#): "... physical death ... is a consequence not of individual sins, but of the sin of Adam."

also highlight that God gives heed to the one who is “contrite,” which in part means a person who recognizes their condition, i.e., not eternal—cannot overcome death—not capable of creating anything—recognizing their own impotence. A contrite person is a humble person.

Associated with mortality is the truth that every person’s life on earth is very short.

Psalm 39:4–6

⁴"LORD, make me to know my end And what is the extent of my days; Let me know how transient [[chade!](#)] I am. ⁵"Behold, You have made my days as handbreadths [[NET](#)], And my lifetime as nothing in Your sight; Surely every man at his best is a mere breath [[hebel](#)]. Selah. ⁶"Surely every man walks about as a phantom [[tselem](#)]; Surely they make an uproar for nothing [[hebel](#)]; He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them.

Job 7:16

¹⁶"I waste away; I will not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath [[hebel](#)].

James 4:14

¹⁴Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor [[atmis](#)] that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

Our time is short on this earth. We are encouraged in other parts of Scripture to “make the most of it” [[Ephesians 5:16](#)].

Contrary to the common death, the second death is the result of every person’s own sins [[Ecclesiastes 7:20](#)]. Mankind’s awareness of mortality (whether acute or not) and an awareness of an inner “void” is lived out in sins committed as people endeavor to respond to these realities [[Hebrews 2:15](#)]. This may take the form of “eat, drink, and be merry,” or building legacies, or developing doctrines that deny the reality of death (e.g., reincarnation). Living out a spirit-less, senses-dependent, and mortal condition is primarily characterized by a focus on self: self-preservation, self-interest, self-promotion. This generally results in searching for peace and meaning in life in all the wrong places. [See also [Mark 8:35](#) and [36](#).]

Distinct from the common death which occurs no matter how a person lives, people will face judgment based on their own actions. Those who have rejected God and His Son will be thrown into the “lake of fire,” which is the second death [[Revelation 20:14](#) and [15](#)]. This final judgment can be avoided by accepting Jesus Christ as savior and lord. Those who believe on Jesus Christ have the assurance of eternal life, as well as the guarantee of that eternal life through receipt of the gift of holy spirit.

There is no escape from the first death unless a person has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and is still alive when Jesus Christ comes for the saints [[1 Corinthians 15:51](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:15](#) and [16](#)]. For those living prior to or after this current period of grace, escape from the second death was, is, and will be contingent upon a person believing God.

As an aside, there are two figurative deaths.

Figurative Deaths

That Adam and Eve had spirit when they were first created is not specifically stated. It can be deduced from the statement that the man and the woman were created in God’s image [[Genesis 1:27](#); [John 4:24](#)]. It can also be deduced from the responsibility given them in the Garden [[Genesis 1:28](#)—“subdue” and “rule”]. This spirit would have been a “direct connection” with God, which included supernatural power. That they had spirit can also be deduced from the fact that spirit was given to Jesus Christ [[Matthew 3:16](#)], and after he ascended to God’s right hand, he gives a gift of holy spirit to anyone

who believes on him [[Acts 1:4,5; 2:33](#)]. This was, and is, at least in part, a return to Adam and Eve's original state. Adam and Eve were 3-part beings when they were first created—they had bodies formed of the dust of the ground, God breathed soul life into those bodies (breath-life), and God gave them spirit.

When God warned Adam that he would die **the day** he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God meant that very day, not some day in the future [[Genesis 2:17](#)—the Hebrew text indicates certainty]. Obviously, Adam and Eve did not physically die that day. They still had bodies and breath-life. What they no longer had was spirit. They lost their spirit connection with God and the power/authority that came with that spirit. This loss of spirit meant they experienced “**spiritual death**.” This expression never occurs in Scripture. This loss of spirit meant they were “dead to God” in the sense that a person who has breathed their last breath is “dead to the living.”⁴⁷ At this point, Adam and Eve were limited to the capabilities built into their body and soul. This spirit-less, senses-dependent condition has been passed on to all their progeny. While the capabilities of body and soul are significant, they are lacking where spiritual matters are concerned. Being spirit-less and senses-dependent is a condition as permanent as mortality. A person can no sooner acquire spirit through their own efforts than avoid death. This condition has nothing to do with a person's behavior. Every person is born into this.

Another figurative death besides “spiritual death” is in the sense of “**dead man walking**.” This expression is applied to a convict who has been given a death sentence and is walking towards their execution. According to Scripture...

John 3:17 and 18

¹⁷ "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not judged; **he who does not believe has been judged already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

A person's way of life is figuratively described as death. Living according to the “flesh” is a “**life of death**” because all that the person can look forward to is death (common and second) [see [Romans 8:6](#); [Ephesians 2:1](#)]. We might use the expression, “as good as dead.”

⁴⁷ Another example of “dead” being used figuratively can be found in the parable in Luke 15:11ff (v. [24](#) and [32](#).)

Sin as a Condition

It is generally understood that “sin” refers to an intent (a focused desire⁴⁸) or action (word or deed) contrary to God.⁴⁹ This is the common usage of the word and the following verse is an example.

Matthew 3:5 and 6

⁵Then Jerusalem was going out to him [John the Baptist], and all Judea and all the district around the Jordan; ⁶and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, as they confessed their **sins** [[hamartia](#)].

In this verse, “sins” is a generic term for any number of possible intents or actions that the people were confessing or acknowledging. A similar use occurs in the following verse.

John 8:24

²⁴"Therefore I said to you [religious authorities] that you will die in [*en*] your **sins** [[hamartia](#)]; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in [*en*] your **sins** [[hamartia](#)]."

While both occurrences of “sins” in this verse refer to intents or actions contrary to God, detailed in other parts of Scripture,⁵⁰ the phrase “die in your sins” adds a slightly different sense. A person can literally “die **in** a bed,” but a person cannot literally “die **in** their sins.” In this case, “in” can be understood to have the sense of “with,” that is, they will “die **with** their sins.” However, a person cannot literally die **with** their sins like a person can literally die with their pajamas on. The sense here is that God remembers their sins. When they are brought back to life in the resurrection of the unjust, they will be held accountable for their sins and suffer the appropriate condemnation and punishment due their sins, which includes, as Jesus told them, “Where I am going, you cannot come,” (v. [21](#)), i.e., into the Millennial Kingdom and beyond. In a figurative sense, they will take their sins *with* them to the final judgment after which they will die *with* their sins.

Both the verses above highlight the fact that “sins” is an abstract concept and not a thing. Certain intents and actions fall under the generic concept of “sins,” e.g., lying, stealing, committing adultery, being covetous, etc. This is the common usage of the word. However, this is not the only way in which the word “sin” is used in Scripture. Consider the following verse.

John 8:21

²¹Then He [Jesus] said again to them [religious authorities], “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in [*en*] your **sin** [[hamartia](#)]; where I am going, you cannot come.”

Note the following commentaries regarding this verse.

“Sin” is emphatic, and is singular, not plural, meaning “**state of sin.**”⁵¹

The ἐν [“in”] here indicates rather the **condition** in which they should die than the cause of their death. “In,” not “of” He did not say, “perish by reason of this sin,” but “die in this sin.”⁵²

⁴⁸ A “bad” thought/desire is not sin. Having “intercourse” with that thought/desire develops into sin [[James 1:15](#)].

⁴⁹ See [1 John 5:17](#). “Unrighteousness” [[adikia](#)] broadly equals whatever is contrary to God’s standards. These standards have been revealed in Scripture.

⁵⁰ See [Matthew 23](#):13, 15, 16, 23, 25, 27, and 29.

⁵¹ <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/john/8.htm>.

⁵² <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/pulpit/john/8.htm>.

Here we see that “sin” is not referring to an intent or action but to a “state” or a “condition.”⁵³ In this verse, the word “in” can be understood in the sense that we might say to someone in the ICU after an accident, “In your current condition, if you don’t do such and so, you are going to die.” In other words, the person has physical injuries that are life-threatening—that’s their condition. The religious leaders in John 8:21 were not suffering from a life-threatening physical condition but from a life-threatening mental state. Because they did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah [v. 24], we might describe them as being **in** a mental state of unbelief. Since genuine believing comes from “the heart,” we might say that they had a “heart condition.” In [Matthew 23:16, 17](#), and [19](#), Jesus describes them as being blind, that is, spiritually blind, which is a life-threatening condition. Out of their unbelief and spiritual blindness came the desire to kill Jesus.

We might refer to these religious leaders as having a “sin condition” or being in a “sin state.” This is something more than a particular intent or action. Before moving on, we emphasize the point that out of such a condition or state came various negative intents and actions.

Another example of a “sin condition” is brought forward in the following verses.

Romans 7:15, 17–20

¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what **I would like to do**, but I am **doing the very thing I hate**. ¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but **sin which dwells in me**.

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for **the willing is present in me**, but **the doing of the good is not**. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but **I practice the very evil that I do not want**. ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but **sin which dwells in me**.

These verses are describing something different from the religious leaders in John 8 who had their minds set against God and Christ. Here, the person wants to do what is right but ends up doing what is evil.

To get a sense of how “sin” is being used in this section of Scripture, we first note the figurative language that runs throughout Chapters 6 and 7.

Chapter 6: v.6 **slaves** to sin; v.7 **freed** from sin; v.12 do not let sin **reign**; v.14 sin shall not be **master** over you; v.17 **slaves** of sin; v.18 **freed** from sin; v.20 **slaves** of sin; v.22 **freed** from sin.

Chapter 7: v.8 sin **taking opportunity**, sin is **dead**; v.9 sin became **alive**; v.11 sin **taking an opportunity**, sin **killed** me; v.14 sold into **bondage** to sin.

These are all examples of the personification of sin, that is, attributing human characteristics to an inanimate object or, as in this case, to an abstract concept. “Sin” is an abstract concept and cannot literally “take opportunity,” “come alive,” “kill me,” or “hold me in bondage.”⁵⁴

We should also consider the word “dwell” in the expression “sin dwells in me.” “Dwell” is a translation of the Greek word [oikeó](#). Literally, this word means to occupy a house or to reside somewhere. It comes from the Greek word [oikos](#) which is most frequently translated in the NASB as “home(s)” (20x) or “house” (79x). With this in mind, a literal use of the word [oikeó](#) would be something like, “John lives (or resides) at 123 Main Street.” We understand that John has a home or a house at 123 Main Street...that’s where he lives...that is where he dwells.

⁵³ The “sin condition” is also addressed in the subsection “[Regarding Adam...](#)”

⁵⁴ Perhaps of interest is that the first occurrence of the Hebrew word typically translated as “sin,” which occurs in Genesis 4:7, contains the figurative expression “sin is crouching at the door.”

Here are all the occurrences of this Greek word and the expressions that accompany it:

sin dwells in me ([Romans 7:17, 20](#)); nothing good dwells in me ([Romans 7:18](#)); the spirit of (from) God dwells in you ([Romans 8:9, 11](#); [1 Corinthians 3:16](#)); to live with (dwell with) husband/wife ([1 Corinthians 7:12, 13](#)); God dwells in unapproachable light ([1 Timothy 6:16](#))

“Sin” is not a spirit (like an angel or holy spirit); nor is it a person (like a husband or wife); nor is it like some form of virus. In this respect, “sin” cannot literally “dwell” anywhere. One way of considering the word “dwell” in all these various contexts is that it emphasizes **permanence**—to dwell implies permanence. The sense of these verses in Romans 7 is not that “sin” is somehow something (or some “thing”) that “lives” in a person but rather that there is a permanent condition, referred to simply as “sin” or, per the text, “the sin,” that figuratively “dwells” in a person. This “sin condition” is permanent and active in the sense that it negatively impacts the person’s ability to do what they want to do.

By way of a physical example, we might consider a person who is blind or deaf. These conditions impact the person’s ability to do what they might otherwise want to do. These conditions impact the person’s considerations, decisions, and actions. These conditions can be characterized in terms of lack, i.e., a lack of eyesight or a lack of hearing, or in terms of inability, i.e., an inability to see or an inability to hear. In Romans 7, the person lacks the ability to do what they want to do. “Sin” in this context is being used to describe this permanent condition of lack or inability that results in unwanted behavior.

The Greek word translated as “sin” in “sin dwells” is [hamartia](#). This word is comprised of the negative prefix “a” (“ha” in this instance) and the word [meros](#), which means a part, share, or portion. This is not an uncommon prefix in Greek. A similar negative prefix can be seen in the English word “atypical” which means “not typical.” The literal sense of [hamartia](#) is having no part, no share, or no portion.⁵⁵ The word historically was used literally in the context of missing a target, or, metaphorically, to miss out or go wrong or fail.⁵⁶ The person in Romans 7 is failing to do what they really want to do. The “problem” lies in what is referred to in Scripture as the “flesh [[sarx](#)].”⁵⁷ As Jesus declared, “the flesh is weak [[asthenés](#)]” [[Matthew 26:41](#)]. This same Greek word [asthenés](#) is used to describe every person’s condition in [Romans 5:6](#) (“helpless” (NASB), “weak” (ESV)).⁵⁸ This accurately describes Peter and the others with him on the Mount of Olives who couldn’t stay awake to pray although we’re sure they truly wanted to. It also describes the person in Romans 7 who wants to do what is right but does what is evil. In this context, the word “weak” can be taken to describe a person who lacks the “strength,” the ability, to be and do what righteousness expects. The partial resolution to this “weak” condition is presented in Chapter 8 where the gift of holy spirit provides a missing enablement for the person to be able to live out righteousness and holiness (see [Romans 8:10](#)). This enablement provides the “strength” to be and do what is pleasing to God.⁵⁹ A person without spirit is just “flesh” and is therefore limited to the “flesh” and tends to be motivated by the “flesh.”

From this perspective, not having spirit can be viewed as a “fatal flaw” (a [hamartia](#)). This use of the word was popularized by Aristotle and is still in use in literary circles today.⁶⁰ Spiritually speaking, every person is

⁵⁵ See John 13:8. , Peter said to Him [Jesus], "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part [[meros](#)] with Me." There are other similar Greek words with the negative prefix.

⁵⁶ See “[The Word ‘Sin’](#).”

⁵⁷ The “flesh” has several different usages. See [Ephesians 5:31](#); [Luke 24:39](#); [John 1:14](#), etc.

⁵⁸ Note the “a” prefix on the word [asthenés](#). The word is literally “not strong” or “without strength.”

⁵⁹ The Greek word [arrabón](#) occurs in 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5, and Ephesians 1:14 referring to the gift of holy spirit. Per J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*—the [arrabón](#) is “a part given in advance of what will be bestowed fully afterward.”

⁶⁰ See Wikipedia entry for [hamartia](#) [here](#).

born into this world with this “fatal flaw,” i.e., being spirit-less, which results in people falling short of God’s righteousness. This “fatal flaw” also tends to obstruct people from achieving what they would otherwise be capable of achieving if they had spirit. This lack, along with a lack of knowledge of spiritual realities (available only to those who have spirit), results in many forms of failure spiritually speaking. The concept of sin [[hamartia](#)] as “failure” was understood in the Greek culture in which and to which Paul was initially speaking.

The following excerpts may add some helpful background on this topic.

Now here is where the definition of Sin as used in Romans 5–8 might be a bit confusing. First note that "sin" is singular, so it is not "sins" but "sin" the significance of which becomes more apparent from the next fact. In many (most) of Paul's uses of hamartia in Romans 5-8, Paul places the definite article "the" before "sin" (even though the "the" is not translated in most English versions for it would be somewhat difficult to read). In this way Paul is speaking of "Sin" figuratively, in what is referred to as a metonym (derived from "meta" = with + "onym" = name") which describes the substitution of a word referring to an attribute for the thing that is meant (eg, the use of the word "crown" to refer to the entire "monarchy"). ... what Paul is doing with the Sin (he hamartia) is to use this word not to describe the actions or results (i.e., the specific sins we commit in thought, word or deed) but to describe the **underlying root cause** ... ⁶¹

Where we might differ from the above is that we do not view the “underlying root cause” as some do as something (or some “thing”) living in a person that somehow inclines them to sin. We consider the “underlying root cause” to be the **condition** of being spirit-less. We might also add being mortal. Being spirit-less means, among other things, having an inner “void,” an inability, a handicap, a lack of identity, etc. A person may desire to find “fulfillment,” but body and soul (“flesh”) on its own cannot “fill the void.”⁶² Not having spirit means being senses-dependent. Being spirit-less and mortal tends towards a focus on self: self-preservation, self-glorification, etc. These facts describe the separation from God (the “sin condition”) that every person is born into.⁶³

The following excerpt provides an overview of the historical use of [hamartia](#).

The pagan Greeks used it [hamartia] of a warrior who hurls his spear and fails to strike his foe. It is used of one who misses his way. Hamartia is used of a poet who selects a subject which it is impossible to treat poetically, or who seeks to attain results which lie beyond the limits of his art. The hamartia is a fearful mistake. It sometimes is employed in an ethical sense where the ideas of right and wrong are discussed, but it does not have the full significance of the biblical content of the word. In the moral sphere, it had the idea of missing the right, of going wrong. In the classics, its predominating significance was that of the failure to attain in any field of endeavor. Brought over into the NT, this idea of failing to attain an end, gives it the idea of missing the divinely appointed goal, a deviation from what is pleasing to God, doing what is opposed to God's will, perversion of what is upright, a misdeed. Thus the word hamartia means a missing of the goal conformable to and fixed by God. It is interesting to note that in Romans the word dikaiosune which means "conformity to the standard" appears as the

⁶¹ https://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_717-20.

⁶² It is obvious that people try all sorts of things to “fill the void,” e.g., seeking power, seeking money, drugs, sex, sports, entertainment, etc. At best any of these is a “band aid” over a fatal wound.

⁶³ This “condition” is characterized in [Jeremiah 10:23](#), “...the way of man is not in himself.” See also [Proverbs 20:24](#), [21:2](#), [3:5](#) and [6](#); and [Jeremiah 17:9](#) and [10](#). See also the subsection “[Regarding Adam...](#)” for more on this topic.

opposite of hamartia, a missing of the standard set by God (Ro 6:16, 17, 18). (Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Eerdmans)⁶⁴

Paul would have been well-versed in the meaning of *hamartia* as it was used in the Greco/Roman culture.⁶⁵ It was a word that could suit a variety of contexts and be helpful in delivering the message of the Gospel. From our perspective, “sin,” as previously noted, can refer to an intent (a focused desire) or action (word or deed) contrary to God, but, perhaps more significantly, “Sin” can refer to the **condition** of every person born into this world that “misses,” “fails to conform to,” or lacks what God originally determined and designed for all mankind, as well as the subsequent consequences associated with that failing, i.e., a tendency towards satisfying “self.”⁶⁶ Again, not every occurrence of “sin” falls into the usage described here, but the “sin condition” should be considered to be a significant part of the “picture of sin” in Scripture.

⁶⁴ Quoted from: https://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_520-21#s.

⁶⁵ We base this statement on the fact that Paul quoted several classical Greek authors (see Acts 17:[27](#) and [28](#); 1 Corinthians 15:[33](#); and Titus 1:[12](#)), as well as the fact that he was raised in a Greco/Roman culture.

⁶⁶ “The Sin that ‘entered’” in Romans 5:12 might be considered from this perspective. See “[Sin and Enter.](#)”

Sin and Separation

There are the only two Greek words translated “to separate.”

The Greek verb [aphorizó](#) is translated in the NASB as follows: hold...aloof (1x), ostracize (1x), separate (2x [Matthew 25:32](#); [2 Corinthians 6:17](#)), separates (1x [Matthew 25:32](#)), set...apart (1x), set apart (2x), take (1x), took away (1x).

The Greek verb [chorizo](#) is translated in the NASB as follows: leave (5x), leaves (1x), left (1x), separate (4x [Matthew 19:6](#); [Mark 10:9](#); [Romans 8:35, 39](#)), separated (2x [Philemon 15](#); [Hebrew 7:26](#)).

These two verbs never occur in conjunction with the word “sin.” So, “sin” is never specifically characterized as being “separated.” There is no Scripture that says, “sin has separated you from God.”⁶⁷ However, as we generally use these words in English, the concept of separation is implied. In the following verses, it is understood that sin in some form was the cause of a separation.

1 Peter 3:18

¹⁸ For Christ also died for sins once for all [only once, not to be repeated], the just for the unjust, so that He might **bring us to God**, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

Romans 5:10 and 11

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** [[katallassó](#)] to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been **reconciled** [[katallassó](#)], we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the **reconciliation** [[katallagé](#)].

2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19

¹⁸ Now all these things are from God, who **reconciled** [[katallassó](#)] us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation [[katallagé](#)], ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ **reconciling** [[katallassó](#)] the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses [[paraptóma](#)] against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation [[katallagé](#)]. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be **reconciled** [[katallagé](#)] to God.

Colossians 1:20–22

²⁰ and through Him to **reconcile** [[apokatallassó](#)] all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. ²¹ And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, ²² yet He has now **reconciled** [[apokatallassó](#)] you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--

“Bring us to God” and “reconciled to God” imply that there was “separation” between God and mankind. The “bringing” and the “reconciliation” were necessary because of sins (as directly stated in 1 Peter above). However, perhaps “separation” does not carry the weight required to describe the situation between God and mankind.

The word [aphorizó](#) mentioned at the outset has to do with making boundaries, whether literal or figurative. The word [chorizo](#) is what we generally think of as separation, namely, putting space between

⁶⁷ This is an accurate statement regarding the NT. In the OT, see [Isaiah 59:2a](#), “But your iniquities have made a separation [[badal](#)] between you and your God.”

people or things. In [Colossians 1:21](#) (cited above), people prior to new birth are not described as separated but as “alienated [*apallotrió*] and hostile [*echthros*] in mind.”⁶⁸ In [Romans 5:10](#) (cited above), people are also described as “enemies” [*echthros*]. In [Ephesians 2:1](#), people are described as “dead in trespasses and sins.” In the parable of the “Prodigal Son,” the father described his wayward son as being “dead” and “lost” [*apollumi*] [[Luke 15:24](#)]. So, “separation” may be a convenient term to use in conjunction with “sin,” but there is more to the lack of relationship between God and mankind than just “separation.”

In Romans 5:10 and 11, “reconciled” is in the passive voice. This means that being reconciled is something that happened to mankind; mankind did not play a part in the reconciling. Christ’s death, his action, “paid for” the sins of mankind (1 Peter cited above). All sin was “paid for” before anyone chose to believe on and accept Christ’s work. In 2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19 and Colossians 1:20 and 22, “reconciled” and “reconciling” are in the active voice emphasizing that God did the reconciling through Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:20, “reconciled” is again passive. Because of what Christ did, God is “not counting their trespasses against them” (v. 19). While the necessary action to institute reconciliation has taken place, a person needs to accept what God has done through Christ to receive the benefit of the reconciliation.

We note that the word “forgiveness” is not used in conjunction with “bringing to God,” “reconcile,” or “reconciliation.”

⁶⁸ NET: Colossians 1:21 And you were at one time strangers and enemies in your minds as expressed through your evil deeds.

Sin and Jesus Christ

This section contains a collection of verses around the topic of sin and Jesus Christ.

The name “Jesus” by itself and the word “sin” only occur in conjunction in the following two verses.

Matthew 1:21

²¹ “She [Mary] will bear a Son; and you shall call His name **Jesus**, for He will **save** [[sózó](#)] His people from their **sins** [[hamartia](#)].”

John 1:29

²⁹ The next day he [John the Baptist] saw **Jesus** coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who **takes away** [[airó](#)] the **sin** [[hamartia](#)] of the world!

As indicated in Matthew, Jesus is a name. Jesus, [lésous](#) in the Greek, is a transliteration of the Hebrew [Yehoshua](#) which is contracted in English to Joshua in the OT. The name means Yahweh saves. This does not mean that either Joshua or Jesus is Yahweh—that is just what the name means. It was not an uncommon name among Israelites.

In Matthew 1:21, “sins” refers to *the consequences of sins*—Jesus “saves” people from *the consequences of their sins*.⁶⁹ In this context, the primary consequence is the wrath of God—the final judgment and permanent death. Christ accomplished this salvation by leading a sinless life and then accepting the punishment due for sin, primarily death. Since he was righteous throughout his life, God raised him from the dead never to die again. As Scripture promises, the righteous shall live, primarily meaning, “live forever” [[Ezekiel 33:15](#)].

In John 1:29, “sin” is again put figuratively for *the consequence of sin*. “World” is figuratively put for *the people in the world*.⁷⁰ Jesus would “take away” the consequence of sin for people by personally accepting that consequence to himself.

Sin is an abstract concept not a thing, therefore a person cannot literally be “saved” from sin; nor can sin literally be “taken away” as if it is some sort of physical object. People can be spared the consequence of sin. This would be like a convict having a death sentence commuted—the convict would be “saved from death”—“saved from” *the consequence of the crime* (the sin).

A similar message occurs in the OT in Leviticus 10:17.

Leviticus 10:17

¹⁷ “Why did you [Eleazar and Ithamar] not eat the sin offering [[chatta'ah](#)] at the holy place? For it is most holy, and He [God] gave it to you to **bear away** [[nasa](#)] the guilt [[avon](#)] of the congregation, to make atonement [[kaphar](#)] for them before the LORD.

The word [nasa](#), “bear away,” is used in a wide variety of contexts both literally and figuratively. It carries the sense of to lift, carry, or take. In this context, it would correspond to the Greek word [airó](#) (“takes away”) in John 1:29. The word [chatta'ah](#), “sin offering,” is most often translated as “sin” but depending on the context may be translated figuratively as “sin offering.” The word [avon](#), “guilt,” is most often translated as “iniquity” but depending on the context may be translated figuratively as *guilt* or

⁶⁹ This is the figure of speech metonymy (see “Literary Devices” here: <https://literarydevices.net/metonymy/>). “Sin” is put for *the consequence of it*.

⁷⁰ Based on [Romans 8:19–22](#), “world” might be considered to be the “creation;” however, that seems unlikely in this context.

punishment for iniquity. “Iniquity” connotes “crookedness” and therefore implies intent or behavior contrary to righteousness.⁷¹ An *avon*, an “iniquity,” is not something that can literally be carried away like a bale of hay, but *the consequence of iniquity* can be withdrawn. The “sin offering” was intended “to make atonement for the people before Yahweh.” The word “atonement” carries the sense of “to cover.” Figuratively, this meant that Yahweh would not see their sin and, therefore, would not hold their sin against them—they would no longer be subject to the consequence of their sin.

In John 1:29, the expression “Lamb of God” only occurs here and in [John 1:36](#). This may be referring to the “Passover lamb.” On the eve of the children of Israel escaping from Egypt, they were to kill a lamb and put some of the blood on the door of their house. When the “angel of death” saw that blood, it “passed over” that house and the first-born was saved from death. Jesus, as the “Lamb of God,” would shed his blood to spare from death those who believe on him [[John 3:16–18](#)].

These verses indirectly highlight that death, either the “common death” and especially the “second (permanent) death” is the ultimate “problem” for every person. If this life is all there is, life is meaningless. No matter how many great exploits a person accomplishes or how many awards they amass or how much fun they have, it all means nothing if death is the final end.⁷²

The following verse contains the word “sins” and the title “Christ.”⁷³

1 Corinthians 15:3

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

The five words highlighted above are part of the bedrock of the Christian faith, along with the subsequent declarations of Christ being buried and raised on the third day. It might be surprising to learn that the highlighted words are unique, that is, this is the only place in Scripture where this exact phrase occurs. This does not mean that the sense of the phrase is not otherwise supported.

The expression “Christ died for our sins” could be taken as Christ was *held accountable* for our sins. In this sense, “for” would mean “because of,” i.e., Christ died *because of* our sins. Though feasible because of the word “for,” this would not be an accurate sense of the phrase as subsequent verses will show.⁷⁴

Following are other verses where the phrase “Christ died for” occurs.

Romans 5:6

⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time **Christ died for the ungodly**.

Romans 5:8

⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us**.

2 Corinthians 5:14 and 15 (Berean Literal)

For the love of **Christ** compels us, having concluded this, that **One** [Christ] **has died for all**, therefore

⁷¹ See <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/avon-iniquity/>.

⁷² Regarding the “common death” and the “second death,” see the section “[Two Deaths](#).”

⁷³ “Christ” means the anointed one and corresponds to “Messiah.” “Jesus” is a name; “Christ” or “Messiah” is a title.

⁷⁴ The expression “according to the Scriptures” in v.3 can be documented by [Isaiah 53](#) and [Psalm 22:6ff](#). The same expression in v.4 can be documented by [Psalm 16:10](#); [Isaiah 53:10](#); Jonah [1:17](#) and [2:10](#) (see [Matthew 12:40](#)).

all have died. And **He** [Christ] **died for all** that those living no longer should live to themselves, but to the *One* having died for them and having been raised again.

The following two Greek words occur in each of these verses: “died” [*apothnέskó*] and “for” [*huper*]. The Greek word *huper*, like the English word “for,” can carry the sense of “*in place of*.”⁷⁵ For example, “I’m going to lead the meeting **for** (*in place of*) Mary.” In this sense, Christ accepted the consequence for sin *in place of* “the ungodly,” “us,” and “all.” All are subject to God’s wrath and the second death because of sins committed (no one is exempt—[Ecclesiastes 7:20](#)). Christ died *in place of* all so that those who accept him will not have to experience God’s wrath and the second death.

1 Corinthians 15:3 cited above is different in that “sins” is not a person or a group of people. There is no sense of “for” that easily explains the relationship between “Christ died” and “our sins.” The phrase could be considered shorthand for “Christ died *to atone for* our sins.” “Atonement” would carry the sense of “to cover” (figuratively speaking). This expression would draw from verses like Leviticus 10:17 cited above where the priest makes a sin offering which makes atonement for sin. However, the word atonement in that context implies the “covering” of sins whereas the NT indicates a complete “wiping away” of the indebtedness associated with sins. The following verses may shed light on the phrase.

Colossians 2:14 (REV)

¹⁴ He [Christ] has **wiped clean the record of debt** that was against us, along with its obligations that were hostile to us, and He has taken it away, having nailed it to the cross.

Hebrews 2:17 (REV)

This being the case, he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect in order to become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, so that he could **wipe away the sins** of the people.

We see from these verses that the sense of “for” in 1 Corinthians 15:3 could be “*with the intent of eliminating the consequences of*” sins. Christ did this by giving up his life to “pay the debt owed” for sins, i.e., death.⁷⁶

An expression similar to “died for” is the phrase “gave himself for.”

Galatians 1:4

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the **Lord Jesus Christ**, ⁴ who **gave** [*didómi*] **Himself for our sins** so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the **Son of God**, who loved me and **gave** [*paradidómi*] **himself for me**.

Ephesians 5:25

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as **Christ** also loved the church and **gave** [*paradidómi*] **Himself up for her**,

1 Timothy 2:6

⁶ **who** [Christ] **gave** [*didómi*] **Himself** as a ransom **for all**, the testimony given at the proper time.

⁷⁵ See “for” in Merriam-Webster online: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/for>.

⁷⁶ The title “Christ” may carry the sense of “high priest.”

In each of these verses, “gave” or “gave up” highlights that Christ (the Lord, the Son of God) chose to offer himself. The word “for” in each verse is again *huper*. In these verses, the sense of *huper* could be “on behalf of.” As an example, we might say, “The representative accepted the award **for** (on behalf of) the organization.” Or, if a soldier dies in a war, we could say he gave his life on behalf of his country. Similarly, Christ gave (up) himself **for** (on behalf of): “me,” “us,” “her,” and “all.” This could imply that Jesus “gave himself” throughout his entire life and not just gave up his life on the cross. The expression “gave himself for...” is also a relational expression with respect to the fact that he did what he did **for** others. This emphasizes the sacrificial nature of what he did. The occurrence of “love” in a couple of the verses would validate this point.⁷⁷

Galatians 1:4 is different from the other verses in that “sins” is not a person or a group of people. Again, like 1 Corinthians 15:3, the sense of the phrase is “Christ gave himself *to address the consequences of* sins.”

Like 1 Timothy 2:6 above, other verses speak of Christ being a “ransom” or of us being “redeemed” by him.

Matthew 20:28

²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give** [*didómi*] **His life a ransom** [*lutron*] **for** [*anti*] **many**.

Titus 2:14

¹⁴ **who** [Christ] **gave** [*didómi*] **Himself for** [*huper*] **us to redeem** [*lutroó*] **us** from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

1 Peter 1:18 and 19

¹⁸ knowing that you were not **redeemed** [*lutroó*] with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile [*mataios*] way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but **with** precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, **the blood of Christ**.

Revelation 1:5b

⁵ To Him [Christ] who loves us and **released** [*luó*] **us from our sins by His blood--**

Several, perhaps all, of these verses point to the OT sacrifices that were put in place to make the point that blood had to be shed in order for sins to be “covered” or eventually to be “wiped away.” The sacrifices of the OT pointed to the coming Messiah and the necessity of his blood being shed, i.e., him dying, in order for sins to truly be “wiped away” since he was the one and only “unblemished and spotless” sacrifice.⁷⁸

According to Greek usage, a “ransom” [*lutron*] was the payment of a price in order to purchase the freedom of a slave.⁷⁹ Romans 6:18 and 22 indicate being freed from “Sin” as if being “slaves” of “Sin”—“Sin” being personified as a slave owner. In this sense, Christ paid the “ransom” of his blood figuratively to Sin, who “demands” death to free the slaves.

⁷⁷ It might be noted that none of these verses say, “Jesus gave up himself.” The expressions “Lord Jesus Christ,” “Son of God,” and “Christ” can be viewed as emphasizing his “lowering” or “humbling” himself to accomplish God’s plan. See [Philippians 2:8](#).

⁷⁸ See [Leviticus 4:32 and 33](#) regarding a sin offering.

⁷⁹ See NET [note 39](#) on Matthew 20:28. The concept of ransoming or redeeming can be seen in the use of the Hebrew word [padah](#). Note: there are varying views on the nature of Jesus Christ being a ransom and its result.

Other verses point to the daily sin offerings or to the once a year Day of Atonement prescribed by the Law.⁸⁰

Romans 3:25a (REV)

God put him [Christ] forth to be an **atonement sacrifice** [*hilastérion*⁸¹] through trust in his blood...

Ephesians 5:2 (ESV)

² and walk in love, just as **Christ** also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an **offering** [*prosphora*] and a **sacrifice** [*thusia*] to God as a fragrant aroma.

Hebrews 7:26 and 27

²⁶ For it was fitting for us to have such a **high priest**, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, like those high priests, to **offer up** [*anapheró*] **sacrifices** [*thusia*], first for His own sins and then **for the sins of the people**, because this He did once for all when **He [Christ] offered up** [*anapheró*] **Himself**.

Hebrews 9:28

²⁸ so **Christ** also, having been **offered** [*prospheró*] **once to bear** [*anapheró*] **the sins of many**, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.

[See also Heb. [9:26](#); [10:5](#), [8](#), [10](#), [12](#), [14](#), [18](#).]

1 John 2:2 (REV)

² And he [Christ] is the **atonement sacrifice** [*hilasmos*] **for our sins**, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.

1 John 4:10 (REV)

¹⁰ This is what love is: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent **his Son** to be the **atonement sacrifice** [*hilasmos*] **for our sins**.

Jesus Christ was the appropriate and necessary “offering” and “sacrifice” because he himself had committed no sin during his ministry. These verses highlight that God, being righteous and just, could not just overlook or forgive sin for no reason. God is loving but also righteous/just.

Regarding Jesus Christ not committing any sin, see the following.

1 Peter 2:22 (ESV)

²² He [Christ] **committed** [*poieó*] **no sin**, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize [*sumpatheó*] with our weaknesses [*astheneia*], but One who has been tempted [*peirazó*] in all things as we are, yet **without sin**.

Hebrews 4:15 is the only occurrence of the expression “without [*chóris*] sin.” There is no Greek word that can be translated as “sinless.” This may be due to the fact that the Greek word *hamartia*, typically translated as “sin,” has the negative prefix “a” (“ha” here), so the word already has a negative construction.⁸² Christ was “sinless” in the sense that he committed no sin as declared in 1 Peter 2:22.⁸³

⁸⁰ See Leviticus 16:[29](#) and [30](#); [23:28](#). The Day of Atonement was a yearly feast instituted by God to completely “cover” all the sins of the people of Israel.

⁸¹ See REV commentary [here](#).

⁸² See the section “[The Word ‘Sin’](#)” for a consideration of this Greek word.

⁸³ Some have said that Jesus had “sinless blood” because God was his Father. This is unscriptural. The genetic makeup of blood comes from both the mother and the father. For Jesus to literally be of the bloodline of David, as

The following verses also address sin and Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:24

²⁴ and He Himself [Christ] **bore** [*anapheró*] **our sins** in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

1 Peter 3:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ For Christ also **suffered** [*paschó*] **once for** [*peri*] **sins**, the righteous for [*huper*] the unrighteous, that he might bring [*prosaqó*] us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

“Bore our sins” in 1 Peter 2:24 is figurative language since “sins” are not something that can be “borne” or “carried away.” Christ “bore” our sins in the sense that he “bore” the consequences of sins, i.e., he accepted humiliation, punishment, and death. Subsequently, he was “made alive by spirit.”⁸⁴

Regarding the word “suffered” in 1 Peter 3:18, MSS vary on whether the original word is *epathen* [from *paschó*—suffer] or *apethanen* [from *apothnésko*—die]. “Died” certainly fits the immediate context because of the phrase at the end of the verse, “...being put to death.” However, it is noted that Peter was more likely to use *paschó* [see [1 Peter 2:21, 23; 4:1](#)]; also, *apothnésko* does not occur in either of Peter’s letters. Most modern versions side with “suffer.”

In 1 Peter 3:18 we see the words “*peri*” and “*huper*” both translated with the word “for.” These Greek words are sometimes used interchangeably but can also carry different meanings. In the first phrase, *peri* could be taken as *concerning* (or *with respect to*) sins; in the second phrase, *huper* could be taken as *on behalf of*.

One thing these verses highlight is that Christ suffered and died ONCE. He will never have to go through that again. The purpose God laid out for him was accomplished, i.e., removing the threat of permanent death. What was also accomplished was reconciling people to God.

Romans 5:9–11

⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies⁸⁵ we were **reconciled to God through the death of His Son**, much more, **having been reconciled**, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received **the reconciliation**.

The following section of Scripture does not contain the word “sin” but is worth considering in this context.

John 3:14–18

¹⁴ “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ so that whoever believes will in Him have **eternal** [*aiónios*] **life** [*zói*]. ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that He gave [*didómi*] His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not **perish**

stated in Romans 1:3, Mary would have had to contribute via her egg to the genetic makeup of the developing fetus and the subsequent development of blood. Surely, the Father’s genes could be dominant, but it could not be said that Christ had “sinless blood.” For more on this topic see the following: “An Examination of the Chemistry of the Blood” available here: <http://www.gpp-5grace.com/graceproclamator/pp1198%20chem%20blood.htm>.

⁸⁴ For a consideration of the expression “made alive by spirit,” see the subsection “[The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.](#)”

⁸⁵ Regarding “enemies,” see [James 4:4](#).

[[apollumi](#)], but have **eternal** [[aiónios](#)] **life** [[zóé](#)].¹⁷ "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

In these verses, "eternal life" [[aiónios zóé](#)] is literally "age life" ("age" is an adjective and "life" is a noun).⁸⁶ Based on the larger context of Scripture, this phrase can be understood as "life in the age to come," that is, in the Messianic Kingdom and into the new heaven and earth which will follow the Messianic Kingdom. The word "perish," [apollumi](#), indicates the termination of life and not that those who have not believed will experience "eternal suffering." As stated earlier, death, the second permanent death, is the primary issue that Jesus Christ addressed along with reconciling people to God. God's intent was and has always been that there is a family who will live forever with Him and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

We include the following from Isaiah which foretold the Messiah—what he would experience and what he would accomplish.⁸⁷

Isaiah 53 (ESV)

¹ Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? ² For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. ³ He was despised [[bazah](#)] and rejected [[chadel](#)] by men, a man of sorrows [[makob](#)] and acquainted with grief [[choli](#)]; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised [[bazah](#)], and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne [[nasa](#)] our griefs [[choli](#)⁸⁸] and carried [[sabal](#)] our sorrows [[makob](#)]; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted [[anah](#)]. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions [[peshah](#)]; he was crushed for our iniquities [[avon](#)]; upon him was the chastisement [[musar](#)] that brought us peace, and with his wounds [[chabburah](#)] we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid [[paga](#)] on him the **iniquity** [[avon](#)] of us all. ⁷ He was oppressed [[nagas](#)], and he was afflicted [[anah](#)], yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. ⁸ By oppression [[otser](#)] and judgment [[mishpat](#)] he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken [[nega](#)] for the transgression [[peshah](#)] of my people? ⁹ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. ¹⁰ Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief [[challah](#)]; when his soul makes **an offering for guilt** [[asham](#)], he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.¹¹ Out of the anguish [[amal](#)] of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear [[sabal](#)] their **iniquities** [[avon](#)]. ¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors [[pasha](#)]; yet he bore [[nasa](#)] the **sin** [[chet](#)] of many, and makes intercession [[paga](#)] for the transgressors [[pasha](#)].

⁸⁶ See commentary here: <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/John/chapter3/15>.

⁸⁷ Suggest NET [notes](#) on this chapter. See the series of prophecies in Isaiah about Jesus, the Messiah, which are referred to as the "Servant Songs:" [42:1-7](#); [49:1-7](#); [50:4-11](#); [52:13-53:12](#). Also see REV [commentary](#).

⁸⁸ "sickness" is the literal translation of the word...it was not necessary that Jesus contract a particular illness. Illness typically brings some degree of pain and some sense of weakness. Surely, after the Roman soldiers treatment of him, he felt pain and weakness physically. Infections could have set in from the wounds he suffered.

Isaiah 53 speaks of the Messiah, though not specifically named. What the Messiah would experience are the penalties of transgressions [[peshah](#)], iniquities [[avon](#)], and sins [[chet](#)]. These penalties would include being humbled (in a negative sense—humiliated), suffering mental and physical pain, and ultimately death. Jesus would have read this and known what he would have to endure.

We return to a verse cited earlier.

1 Corinthians 15:3

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died** [[apothnēskó](#)] **for** [[huper](#)] **our sins** [[hamartia](#), pl.] according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

“first importance” is translated from one Greek word: [protos](#). This word can refer to first in time or first in importance. Modern translations, like the NASB above, opt for first in importance. However, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ was no doubt among the first things that Paul would have spoken about. So, perhaps the word can be taken either way or both ways.⁸⁹

As mentioned earlier, the exact phrase, “Christ died for our sins,” occurs only in this verse. Because this exact phrase only occurs once in Scripture it tends to call attention to itself. Of the previous cites, many, maybe most, are unique. These unique expressions perhaps help to highlight the uniqueness of Jesus Christ himself—there was and is only one.

The following is another statement regarding what Christ has accomplished.

Hebrews 2:14 and 15

¹⁴Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might **render powerless** him who had the power [[kratos](#)] of death, that is, **the devil**, ¹⁵and might **free** those who through **fear of death** were subject to **slavery** all their lives.

This will be fully realized in the future. But now, what Christ’s effort has made available is the gift of holy spirit. In this life, with the help of the gift of holy spirit, a person can overcome sin—not be a “slave to sin.” In the following verse, “sin” is described as “desire of the flesh.”⁹⁰

Galatians 5:16

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit [spirit], and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

The complete victory over Sin and Death is yet to be revealed with Christ’s second coming, which is as certain as his first coming.

1 Corinthians 15:52–54

⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For this perishable must put on **the imperishable**, and this mortal must put on **immortality**. ⁵⁴But when this perishable will have put on **the imperishable**, and this mortal will have put on **immortality**, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.”

We close with the following declaration—

1 Thessalonians 5:9 and 10

⁹For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

⁸⁹ Note 1 Corinthians 2:[1 and 2](#).

⁹⁰ Regarding “flesh” see “[Works of the Flesh](#).”

¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake [alive] or asleep [dead], we will live together [forever] with Him [the Lord Jesus Christ].

Sin and Law

The following is a statement about “law” in general.

Romans 4:15b

...where there is **no law**, there also is **no violation** [*parabasis*].

The word *parabasis* used in this verse literally means “an overstepping.” Metaphorically, as used here, the sense is a violation of law (perhaps deliberate). Some versions chose the word “transgression.” As this verse states, if there is no law, there cannot be “a violation,” e.g., if there is no speed limit sign, a driver cannot get cited for speeding.

This same Greek word occurs in the following verse.

Romans 5:14

¹⁴ Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the **offense** [*parabasis*] of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

This verse refers to the specific “offense” (*parabasis*—violation, transgression) Adam committed. Perhaps the NASB could have chosen “violation” because Adam violated the law to not eat of a particular tree. There are only seven occurrences of this word and it could be argued that they all relate to the violation of either this law not to eat or violations of the Mosaic Law. In other words, there needs to be a law for there to be a *parabasis*—no law no *parabasis*.

Another word used in the context of Adam is the Greek word *paraptóma*. Of the 21 occurrences of this word, five are also in Romans Chapter 5.

Romans 5:15–18 (Berean Literal Bible)

¹⁵ But so also the gift *is* not like the **trespass** [*paraptóma*]. For if by the **trespass** [*paraptóma*] of the one [Adam], the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gift in grace, which *is* of the one man Jesus Christ, abound to the many! ¹⁶ And the gift *is* not as through one having sinned. For truly the judgment from one *was* unto condemnation; but the gift *is* out of many **trespasses** [*paraptóma*] unto justification. ¹⁷ For if, by the **trespass** [*paraptóma*] of the one [Adam], death reigned through the one [Adam], how much more will those receiving the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ! ¹⁸ So then, just as through one **trespass** [*paraptóma*], *it is* unto condemnation to all men, so also through one act of righteousness *it is* unto justification of life to all men.

The word *paraptóma* has a literal sense of “a falling away after being close beside.”⁹¹ It is always used figuratively in the NT and, at least in the NASB, is always translated as “trespass(es)” or “transgression(s).” If *paraptóma* is to be distinguished from *parabasis*, as it appears to be in Romans 5, then *paraptóma* is indicating something other than a *parabasis*. In reference to Adam, *paraptóma* might be emphasizing not his breaking of a law but his breaking of a relationship between he and God—the “fall” from his righteous standing before God to his standing of condemnation which has also been passed on to all his progeny.

Based on vv. 14 and 16 above, we can see that from the time of Adam’s expulsion from the garden until the Mosaic Law, there was “sinning” [*hamartanó*] and “falls” [*paraptóma*] but no “violations”

⁹¹ This is perhaps where the expression “the fall of Adam” originates.

[[parabasis](#)] because there was no law in that period.⁹² Archaeological discoveries indicate that there were laws established by various kings during this time period, but violations of those laws are not in view in this section.⁹³

Typically, if there is a law, then there is a prescribed penalty associated with a violation of that law, e.g., “If you eat from that tree, then you will die (prescribed penalty).” The Mosaic Law has many such laws and associated prescribed penalties. As stated in Romans 4:15b, if there is no law, there is no violation. If there is no violation, there is no penalty. However, while there may be no penalty, there may still be **consequences** for sins or “falls.”

We see several examples of this in the period post-Eden and pre-Mosaic Law—a period of no law. Consider Cain, the first offspring of Adam and Eve.

Genesis 4:7 and 8

⁷ “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, **sin** [[chatta'ah](#)⁹⁴] is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.” ⁸ Cain told Abel his brother [*let's go out into the field*⁹⁵]. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

As a result of killing (murdering) his brother, God pronounced serious consequences for Cain.

Genesis 4:11 and 12

¹¹ “Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. ¹² “When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.”

There is no record in Scripture up to this point indicating a prescribed law with an associated penalty concerning murder. Nevertheless, Cain suffered serious consequences.

In the context of this section on “Sin and Law,” we are making a distinction between “prescribed penalties” and “consequences.” In the case of the verbal law in the garden and the written Mosaic Law, there are prescribed penalties associated with violations. In the case of Cain, and others, they did not experience prescribed penalties but experienced consequences. Obviously, a penalty can be considered a consequence, but we are making the point that Cain did not violate a verbal law, like the one in the garden, or a written law, like the Mosaic Law, yet there were consequences.

See also the record of Abraham and Abimelech.

Genesis 20:6 and 9

⁶ Then God said to him [Abimelech] in the dream, “Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from **sinning** [[chata](#)] against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. ... ⁹ Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? And how have

⁹² A possible exception is Genesis 9:5 and 6 where God instituted the death penalty for murder.

⁹³ For information on ancient near eastern law, see: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/religion/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/law-ancient-near-eastern>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Ur-Nammu.

⁹⁴ This is the first occurrence of this Hebrew word. It is the most commonly used Hebrew word for sin and is also used in contexts where its sense is punishment for sin or atonement for sin (i.e., translated as “sin offering”). This first occurrence is figurative and identifies “sin” as an animal crouching and ready to pounce.

⁹⁵ Regarding this phrase, see commentary here:

<https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/comm/Genesis/chapter4/8>.

I sinned [*chata*] against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin [*chataah*]? You have done to me things that ought not to be done."⁹⁶

This occurred well before the Mosaic Law, i.e., during a period of “no” law—we put “no” in quotes because, as will be seen, there is always “law.” In Egypt where Abimelech lived, there may have been a written law that prohibited adultery (see fn above regarding ancient near eastern law); or, perhaps it was just “understood” that adultery was wrong. Abimelech was not surprised by the potential negative consequences of adultery; he was only surprised and distraught to learn that Sarah was married to Abraham.

The following is also a good example.

Genesis 18:20

²⁰ And the LORD said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin [*chatta'ah*]⁹⁷ is exceedingly grave.

This again was obviously pre-Mosaic Law, i.e., “no law.” However, it is well known what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. Again, there may have been laws in place in these kingdoms, but God would not be “enforcing” those laws. What they were doing was violating a type of “law” that God recognized and, therefore, they were subject to the consequences associated with their violations. We note that God does not always actively engage in executing judgment; more often violations are allowed to continue with “natural” consequences following (see Romans 1:18–32). However, there will ultimately be a reckoning.⁹⁸

So, from these examples, we see that there must be “unspoken” or “unwritten law” which warrants consequences (not prescribed penalties). This concept is reflected in the physical laws that govern the universe that God created. For example, nowhere is it written or spoken that there is something called “gravity.” However, defying or ignoring the “law of gravity” by jumping out of a tall building will result in consequences. There are numerous such physical laws. However, there are also what we might refer to as “moral laws” as distinct from physical laws. These laws are based on God’s attributes or His nature. This type of law is sometimes referred to as “natural law.”⁹⁹ The expressions “moral law” or “natural law” do not occur in Scripture, but the sense of the expressions is communicated in the following.

Romans 2:14 and 15

¹⁴ For when Gentiles who do not have the [Mosaic] Law do **instinctively** [*phusis*]¹⁰⁰ the things of the [Mosaic] Law, these, not having the [Mosaic] Law, are a **law** to themselves, ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the [Mosaic] Law **written in their hearts**, their **conscience** bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

This intangible, moral law can also be seen in the following.

⁹⁶ These are the first two occurrence of *chata* (verb) and the first occurrence of *chataah* (noun).

⁹⁷ This is the second occurrence of this Hebrew word.

⁹⁸ [1 John 3:8](#) and 1 Peter 3:[19](#) and [20](#) could also be considered in this context.

⁹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_law.

¹⁰⁰ Meyer commentary here: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/romans/2-14.htm>: “...the word Φύσις [*phusis*] has here no other sense than *nativa indoles*, i.e. the original constitution given with existence, and not moulded by any extraneous training, culture, or other influence beyond the endowments of nature and their natural development.” [Latin: *nativa* = 1. original; 2. innate; 3. natural; 4. Born; *indoles* = 1. innate character; 2. inborn quality.]

Romans 1:18–21

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is **evident within them**; for **God made it evident to them**. ²⁰ For **since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature**, have been clearly seen, being **understood** through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though **they knew God**, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

The Romans 1 section above points to the fact that God put physical laws in place when He created the heavens and earth that reflect His “invisible attributes” [v.20]. Generally speaking, God is not a god of chaos (or darkness) but of order (and light). Order requires laws, whether they be physical laws or moral laws. Without physical laws there would be chaos—the absence or ignorance of moral law means moral chaos or lawlessness. We might consider that Jesus summed up all moral law in the statement, “Love God; love your neighbor” [Matthew 22:36–39]. These laws have been and are always right and good. So, we can say that there has **never been a time when there was no law**.¹⁰¹

We do not know how these moral laws are communicated to a person’s conscience.¹⁰² What is obvious is that these laws can be ignored and that the conscience can be molded towards evil rather than molded towards good.

We also note the latter part of Romans 5:13.

Romans 5:13b

but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

In context, this refers to the period of pre-Mosaic Law, when there was “no law.” “Not imputed” can be understood as “not charged.” If there’s no law, a person cannot be charged for breaking a law. However, this does not mean that there were not or will not be consequences as the records of Cain, Abimelech, and Sodom indicate.

Regarding “sin” and the Mosaic Law, consider the following.

Romans 5:20

²⁰ The [Mosaic] Law came in so that the **transgression** [*paraptóma*] would increase; but where **sin** increased, grace abounded all the more,

Just to distinguish *paraptóma* from *parabasis*, we are going to use the word “falls” for *paraptóma* (as in “a falling away;” whereas *parabasis* is more at “a violation”). In this verse, we see “falls” and “sin” equated—when Mosaic Law came in falls increased—sin increased. As covered earlier, there were both falls and sins pre-Mosaic Law but here we have an “increase” in falls and sin with the advent of the Mosaic Law. We should make clear that the Mosaic Law is more than the “Ten Commandments.” The most common phrase in Scripture regarding the Hebrew canon is “the Law and the Prophets.”¹⁰³ “The

¹⁰¹ This could also be considered as an aspect of “the beginning” when God created the heavens and the earth, as well as the “heavenly host.” 1 John 3:8 indicates that the devil has “sinned from the beginning.”

¹⁰² Or, how such laws were communicated to the “heavenly host,” including Lucifer and the spirits that are currently in “prison.”

¹⁰³ Matthew 7:12; Luke 16:16; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; Romans 3:21. See also “the book of the Law of Moses:” Joshua 8:31, 23:6; 2 Kings 14:6; Nehemiah 8:1; and the 21 occurrences of “the Law of Moses” across the Old and New Testaments. Once Jesus referred to the Hebrew canon as “the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms” [Luke 24:44].

Law” in this expression refers to The Mosaic Law and is generally understood as a reference to the five books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

This verse in Romans indicates that when the Mosaic Law was introduced, it codified, at least in part, the moral law of God. Codified law “increases” falls in the sense that falls are now obvious. Perhaps a better translation might be “the Mosaic Law came in **with the result that** falls increased.” It was not God’s intention in introducing the Mosaic Law that it would increase (create more) falls. Quite the contrary. God’s intent was to limit falls in order to maintain a civil society that would eventually produce the Messiah. This is covered in Galatians.

Galatians 3:19

¹⁹ Why the [Mosaic] Law then? It [the Mosaic Law] was added on account of the violations [[parabasis](#)],¹⁰⁴ [the Mosaic Law] having been ordered through angels at the hand of a mediator [Moses], **until the Seed** [Christ, the Messiah] would come to whom the promise [of the spirit¹⁰⁵] had been made.

The phrase “on account of” can be understood as “for the purpose of identifying violations and prescribing penalties or punishments” which would discourage violations.

The Mosaic Law also served to reveal, to anyone who had a heart to know, how short of righteousness they were falling since that law identified standards of what is holy and righteous and good [[Romans 7:12](#)]. A humble person could recognize their falling short of this standard and come to the realization of a need for a Messiah, a savior.¹⁰⁶

This brings us to the next point. The “weakness” of the Mosaic Law, or any law, is that no law can make a person obey it.

Romans 8:3a

³ For what the [Mosaic] Law could not do, **weak** [[astheneó](#)]¹⁰⁷ as it was through the flesh...

The Mosaic Law is “weak” (as is any law) with respect to making anyone obey or literally making anyone righteous. It can also be said that it is not so much that the Mosaic Law is weak as it is that people are weak. Even if a person wants to obey the Law, they will at times fall short of its requirements [[Ecclesiastes 7:20](#)]. And, as James declares...

James 2:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole [Mosaic] law but **fails** [[ptaió](#)] **in one point** has become guilty of all of it.

See also...

Galatians 3:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For all who rely on works of the [Mosaic] law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be

¹⁰⁴ The phrase “on account of” can be understood as “on account of ‘transgressions’ that would occur” once the Mosaic Law was in place. The Mosaic Law defined penalties or punishments which would discourage “transgressions.” The Mosaic Law also showed the seriousness of violations.

¹⁰⁵ This is gleaned from the context of Galatians 3. There is much to be said concerning the magnitude of this promise which will be covered later.

¹⁰⁶ Some commentators and teachers point to a “natural” rebellion in every person when placed under a law, any law. Based on this viewpoint, the law or the command “draws out” a desire to “fight against” that law. While empirical evidence might support this, it is not an absolute truth. This is examined more closely in the section “[Sin as a Condition.](#)”

¹⁰⁷ ESV: “weakened by the flesh.”

everyone who does not abide by **all** things written in the Book of the Law [the Mosaic Law], and do them.”

The following is perhaps the most significant statement concerning the “weakness” of the Mosaic Law.

Galatians 3:21b

²¹ ...if a **law** had been given that was able to **impart life** [*zōopoieó*], then **righteousness** would indeed have been based on **law**.

In Scripture, “life” frequently refers to eternal or everlasting life, that is, ultimately living with God and Jesus Christ in a new heaven and earth “in which righteousness dwells” [2 Peter 3:13]. Living in that place necessitates having **inherent righteousness**. It should be obvious that no set of “do-this-don’t-do-that” laws can literally make a person righteous in the sense that God is righteous, that is, not even being tempted with evil [James 1:13]. The best any set of laws can do is to provide a guide. Hence, the Mosaic Law is described as a “guardian” or “tutor” until Christ.

Galatians 3:23–25

²³ But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the [Mosaic] Law, being confined for the faith that was destined to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the [Mosaic] Law has become [has been] our **guardian** [*paidagógos*¹⁰⁸] to lead us to [until] Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. ²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a **guardian**.

The Mosaic Law served to codify what is good behavior and what is bad behavior. It also provided instructions¹⁰⁹ which included the building of the Tabernacle and various sacrifices that all foreshadowed the Christ. However, that law could only hope to encourage good behavior and limit bad behavior. It could not make anyone act righteously without fail or literally make a person righteous.

These above verses have covered the Mosaic Law—its nature, its purpose, and its weakness. Now that Christ has come and accomplished what was asked of him by his Father, there is a new “law” in place. But, before we get into that, we might consider the “law” or “principle” on which a person can be considered righteous (that is, qualified for everlasting life).

Romans 3:27 (Berean Literal)

Where then is boasting? It has been excluded. Through what **principle** [*nomos*]? That of **works** [of the Mosaic Law]? No, but through *the principle* [*nomos*] of **faith**.

The word “principle” here is the same Greek word typically translated “law.” “Law” connotes “do this...don’t do that,” so “principle” is perhaps a better choice so as to not point to a specific act. Righteous standing before God has always hinged on trusting God and not trusting in one’s own works, even a work described in the Mosaic Law.¹¹⁰ This is one of the main points made in Romans 4 regarding

¹⁰⁸ See <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/paidagogos.html>. There is no exact English word that communicates the sense of this Greek word.

¹⁰⁹ Regarding the Hebrew word *torah*—In the NASB the word is translated most often as “law” (188x). Per the article, “What Is Torah” at https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/3361517/jewish/What-Is-Torah.htm: “The definition of the word Torah is literally ‘instruction,’ and when Jews say ‘Torah,’ they’re most likely speaking of the Five Books of Moses, the foundation of all Jewish instruction and guidance.” At some point, the Jews divided their canon into three parts—the Torah (generally known as “Law”), the Prophets (the Nevi’im), and the “Writings” (the Ketuvim)—and that is how it is described today. Jesus once used the expression, “the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms” [Luke 24:44]. The most common expression used in Scripture, even later in Paul’s life was “the Law and the Prophets” [Acts 24:14, 28:23].

¹¹⁰ Some versions or commentators might use the words “faith” or “believing.” Regarding the use of “trust,” see https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Appendix/2/Faith_is_Trust.

Abraham who was considered righteous well before the Mosaic Law based on his trust in God. Abraham obeyed God's directive to move; he believed God's promise regarding him having a son; he acted on God's directive to sacrifice his son; he carried out God's command regarding circumcision. All these acts were indications of ("proved") his trust. James makes this point.

James 2:21 and 22

²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?

²² You see that faith [trust] was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith [trust] was perfected;

Genuine trust is an "inside job" that is evidenced by outward actions. Action alone does not evidence trust. Action "perfects" trust. It might seem that James is contradicting Paul, but he is addressing a different issue. It is evident that righteousness before God hinges on trust. James' point is that genuine trust will be evidenced in works. The word "works" as Paul sometimes used it has a different sense than the way James used it here.

To restate a point, trusting God can be reckoned as righteousness before God but this does not make a person **inherently righteous**.¹¹¹ Being reckoned righteous is a **legal standing** before God. A person who trusts in Christ will receive the gift of holy spirit which is a "gift of righteousness" [Romans 5:17], but that gift does not make a person righteous. That gift is only of benefit to the one who seeks to be righteous and act righteously. It is no guarantee of either, at least in the here-and-now. It is a guarantee of being "changed" and to be "like Christ" [see 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 53,¹¹² 1 John 3:2].

To this point we have considered what we are referring to as moral law which can be understood to be anything and everything that God considers right and good. We also considered the Mosaic Law which codified at least in part what God views as right and good. We have also touched upon the law/principle of trust upon which hinges righteousness before God as opposed to "works of the Law."¹¹³ There are yet a couple more "laws" that should be considered.

Romans 7:21–23

²¹ I find then the **principle** [*nomos*] that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²² For I joyfully concur with **the law** [*nomos*] **of God in the inner person**,²³ but I see a different **law** [*nomos*] **in the members of my body** waging war against **the law** [*nomos*] **of my mind**, and making me a prisoner of **the law** [*nomos*] **of sin**, which is in my members.

Earlier, in Romans 3:27, we saw that the word *nomos* can have the sense of "principle," as well as "law." The difference in meaning can be subtle and depends on the context. Where "principle" can be distinct is in the sense of something that is a foundation, e.g., there are "laws" based on the "principle" of "do no harm to your neighbor." Here, in Romans 7, the character speaking is describing the situation where he knows what is good and right and wants to do what is good and right but finds that he ends up doing what is bad and evil. This happens so consistently that he describes it as "the law of sin" dominating "the law of his mind."¹¹⁴ This is handled in some detail in the section, "[Sin as a Condition](#)." The "answer" to this "law of sin" is our next consideration.

¹¹¹ "Inherently righteous" is meant to express not capable of being tempted by evil [James 1:13].

¹¹² The only way the dead can become imperishable and the mortals become immortal is if they are "changed."

¹¹³ This expression occurs in the following: Romans 3:20, 28; 9:32; Gal. 2:16(3x), 3:2, 5, 10. As an indication of Paul's focus on "law:" 22x in Romans 2 (all but 1 refer to the Mosaic Law); 10x in Romans 3 (8x refer to Mosaic Law); 3x in Romans 5 (2x refer to Mosaic Law); and 2x in Romans 6.

¹¹⁴ The "law of his mind" or of his "inner person" could be viewed as conscience or simply as his intent.

The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus

With respect to those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, the following new “law” is of utmost significance.

Romans 8:2–4, 7

¹Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For **the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus** has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

We are aware that some versions handle v. 2 like this: “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus.” The difference is in the placement of the phrase “in Christ Jesus.” Both options are grammatically legitimate. We prefer the way the NASB handles it as cited above and hope to demonstrate why that is. We are also aware that, no matter which way it is translated, there are numerous views on what these verses are communicating. We will present our view and leave it to the student of Scripture to draw their own conclusions.

We will begin by considering the following phrase: “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” For starters, we will change “Spirit” to “spirit” because capitalizing it is a translator’s choice and capitalizing it can imply a certain meaning in some minds. There was no upper/lower case in the original text. We suggest the following phrasing and will endeavor to document why this approach is legitimate.

Read the phrase as follows:

the law of ... [pause] ... the spirit of life ... [pause] ... in Christ Jesus.

We will first focus on the phrase in the middle. Romans 8:2 is the only place where the expression “the spirit [*pneuma*] of life [*zōé*]” occurs, however, consider the following.

1 Corinthians 15:45

⁴⁵So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL [*psuché zōó*].” The last Adam became a life-giving **spirit** [*pneuma zóopoieó*].

This verse draws a contrast between Adam (“the first man”) and Christ (“the last Adam”). The first part of the verse is a reference to Genesis 2:7 (quoted from the Septuagint).

Genesis 2:7 (Brenton's Septuagint Translation)

⁷And God formed the man [Adam] of dust of the earth, and **breathed** upon his face the **breath of life**, and **the man became a living soul**.

God “breathed” the “breath of life” into Adam. That “breath-life” from God animated Adam. Prior to that he was just “dust of the earth.” That same “breath-life” has been passed on to all Adam’s progeny. In contrast, Christ (“the last Adam”) became a “spirit.” This occurred when God raised him from the dead. In this context, “spirit” does not mean that Christ became an angel or some other similar spirit being. After his resurrection, Christ still had flesh and bones.

Luke 24:39

³⁹“See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have **flesh and bones** as you see that I have.”

In this verse, “spirit” could be understood in the sense of a “ghost.” The disciples thought they might be seeing some sort of spirit apparition and Christ assured them that was not the case. While Christ had

“flesh and bones,” what animated his flesh and bones was not “breath-life” but “spirit-life.” He had been given a new kind of “spirit-life” when he was resurrected from the dead.¹¹⁵

This new life can also be seen in the following.

1 Peter 3:18 and 19

¹⁸For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive **in the spirit**; ¹⁹in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,

The phrase “in the spirit” [v. 18] can legitimately be translated as “**by the spirit**.” In our view, “by the spirit” could refer to “**the spirit of life**” referred to in Romans 8:2. In the next verse [v. 19], “in which” can also be rendered “by which.” It was by the enablement of that “spirit of life” that Christ, after his resurrection, “went and made proclamation to the **spirits** now in prison.” In his pre-resurrection breath-life body, Christ could not have accessed that spiritual realm.

We should also consider the expression “spiritual body” in 1 Corinthians 15.

1 Corinthians 15:44

⁴⁴it is sown a natural body, it is raised a **spiritual body**. If there is a natural body, there is also a **spiritual body**.

The context here is about those who have believed on Christ but is applicable to Christ as well. This new “spiritual body,” animated by spirit-life, was necessary in order for Christ to be able to access/live in the spiritual realm as well as in the physical realm after his resurrection. The same will be true for all those who have believed on him.¹¹⁶

1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 17

¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them **in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord**.

There is no way believers will be able to “meet the Lord in the air” in their current “breath-life” “natural bodies.” Also, Christ is described as being at the right hand of God [[Romans 8:34](#)]. If believers are with him, they will need to have a “spiritual body” like Christ’s body that is now animated by spirit-life. We note the following verse in this context.

2 Corinthians 5:16

¹⁶Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, **yet now we know Him in this way no longer**.

The resurrected Christ is different than the Jesus that walked on the earth. He had “breath-life” then, but now he has “spirit-life.” In the future, those who have believed on him will enjoy that “spirit-life” as well.

1 John 3:2

²Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet **what we will be**. We know that when He appears, **we will be like Him**, because we will see Him just as He is.

¹¹⁵ He no doubt also had a new kind of flesh that was not dependent on oxygen.

¹¹⁶ See also 2 Corinthians 5:[1](#), [2](#), [3](#), and [4](#) and 2 Peter 1:[13](#) and [14](#).

1 Corinthians 15:49

⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear **the image of the heavenly.**

Philippians 3:20 and 21

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

²¹ who will **transform the body of our humble state** [*tapeinósis*] into **conformity with the body of His glory**, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Because Christ is animated by “spirit-life,” at times, he is referred to as “The Spirit.”

Revelation 22:17a

¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, "Come."

2 Corinthians 3:17a

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit...

Romans 8:26 and 27

²⁶ In the same way the Spirit [Christ] also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself [Christ] intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷ and He [God] who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit [Christ] is, because He [Christ, the Spirit] intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. ¹¹⁷

Getting back to Romans 8:2, we have shown how the phrase “the spirit of life” can refer to the spirit-life that animated Christ’s body at his resurrection. Based on this, we take the last phrase, “in Christ Jesus” literally as the “spirit of life” that is “in” Christ Jesus. That spirit is what animates his body just as “breath-life” was “in” him and animated his body before his death.

We will now consider the first phrase in Romans 8:2, “the law of.” This “law” refers to the spirit-life that now animates Christ. Rather than “**the law of Moses**” written on tables of stone,” this new “law” is “**the law of the spirit**” written on the heart. This was promised in the OT.

Jeremiah 31:33 and 34

³³ "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "**I will put My law within them and on their heart** I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴ "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for **they will all know Me**, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

A reference to this prophecy occurs in Hebrews.

Hebrews 10:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, declares the Lord: I will put **my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,**"

The subject in Chapter 10 is Christ, so he is closely associated with God’s laws being put into peoples’ hearts. ¹¹⁸

In his resurrected form, Christ is not only animated by “the spirit of life” that he received from God at resurrection, but he is able to give of that spirit to those who believe on him. The fulness of that spirit gift is yet to be revealed when all those who have believed on him will be changed and have bodies like his. However, here-and-now, that spirit-gift is both “power” and a “helper.”

¹¹⁷ Regarding Christ interceding, see [Romans 8:34](#) and [Hebrews 7:25](#).

¹¹⁸ Note the occurrences of “the law of God” in [Romans 7:22](#) and [Romans 8:7](#).

John 14:26 (REV)

And **the helper**, the holy spirit [the spirit-gift], which the Father will send in my name, it will **teach you** all things and **bring to your remembrance** all that I said to you.

Acts 1:4–9

⁴Gathering them together, He [Jesus] commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for **what the Father had promised**, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit [the spirit-gift] not many days from now." ⁶So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸but **you will receive power** when the Holy Spirit [the spirit-gift] has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." ⁹And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and **a cloud received Him out of their sight**. ¹⁰And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men [angels] in white clothing stood beside them. ¹¹They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been **taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.**"

The fulfillment, at least in part, of God's promise in Jeremiah and Jesus' promise to his disciples occurred on the day of Pentecost. Peter describes it as follows.

Acts 2:32 and 33

³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³Being therefore exalted **at the right hand of God**, and having received from the Father **the promise of the Holy Spirit** [the spirit-life], **he has poured out this** that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

This "promised spirit" that Christ received that brought him back to life and that he "pours out" to those who believe on him is both power and a helper. What makes this spirit of life a "law" is that the power and help will never be at odds with God. That spirit of life is **inherently righteous**¹¹⁹ and can only empower what is righteous.¹²⁰ The challenge is that those who have believed on Christ and have therefore received this spirit-gift still have "breath-life" bodies and not the new body that Christ has. The "breath-life" body is not inherently righteous and, in fact, is "weak" with respect to righteousness. What believers are encouraged to do is to align their thinking with the spiritual reality of Christ and the reality of the spirit-gift so that Christ and the gift can take precedence in intent and action.

Colossian 3:1–4

¹If [since] then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are **above**, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are **above**, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life [everlasting] is **hidden with Christ in God**. ⁴When Christ who is your life [everlasting] appears, then you also **will appear with him** in glory.

Romans 8:6

⁵For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to [in accordance with or in union with] the Spirit [spirit-life-Christ], the things of the

¹¹⁹ "Inherently righteous" is meant to describe the "nature" of God in the sense that God cannot be tempted with evil [[James 1:13](#)]. It may be that the resurrected Christ shares this nature and is also incapable of being tempted with evil. He was, during his earthly ministry, tempted with evil [[Luke 4:1 and 2](#)]. This "inherent righteousness" would then extend to those who are going to be "changed" and be like him [[1 John 3:2](#)].

¹²⁰ Romans 8:10b "...the spirit is life because of righteousness."

Spirit [the spirit-life-Christ]. ⁶For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit [the spirit-life-Christ] is life and peace,

The body animated by “breath-life” is sometimes referred to as “the flesh.” This “flesh” is characterized by intents and actions that are contrary to God’s righteousness. Rather than allowing “the flesh” to dominate, the believer is encouraged to promote “the spirit.” The use of “spirit” in this verse and some subsequent verses can be taken as a reference to the spirit-gift the believer receives, but it may also include “The Spirit,” that is, Christ. The point being that there is no separation between Christ as “The Spirit” and the spirit-gift at work in the believer in terms of righteousness. There is, as well, obviously no separation in terms of righteousness between Christ and God. We make the assumption that Christ is now **inherently righteous** as is God—neither can be tempted with evil.¹²¹ So, there is a connection, or better yet, a union with God (who is spirit [[John 4:24](#)]), the spirit-life-Christ, and the spirit-gift. We do not know how spirit-to-spirit communication occurs but there obviously is communication.

This new “spirit-life” body of Christ is what each believer is a “part” of because they have the spirit-gift.

1 Corinthians 12:27

²⁷ Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.

Romans 12:5

⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Corinthians 12:12

¹² For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ.

Christ is the “head” of this body [[Colossians 1:18](#)] and believers are members in particular.¹²² So, by way of the spirit-gift, all believers are literally in union with the “spirit-life” body of Christ. Eventually, all who have believed on Christ will be changed by that spirit-gift and be like the spirit-life-Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:50–53

⁵⁰ Now I say this, brethren, that **flesh and blood** [breath-life bodies] **cannot** inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the **perishable** [[phthora](#)] inherit the **imperishable** [[aphtharsia](#)]. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be **changed** [[allassó](#)], ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and **the dead** will be raised **imperishable** [[aphtharsia](#)], and we [who are alive] will be **changed** [[allassó](#)]. ⁵³ For **this perishable** [[phthora](#)] **must put on the imperishable** [[aphtharsia](#)], and **this mortal** [[thnétos](#)] **must put on immortality** [[athanasia](#)].

1 Thessalonians 4:16 and 17

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds **to meet the Lord in the air**, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

In order for there to be “everlasting life” guaranteed, there needs to be inherent righteousness, i.e., cannot be tempted with evil. This, in part, is what it means to be *truly* righteous.

What we see in the above verses is perhaps another sense in which “the spirit of life in Christ Jesus” is a law. This ultimate change to imperishable and immortal will occur, guaranteed.

¹²¹ Absolute, guaranteed immortality hinges on being inherently righteous like God.

¹²² An aspect of the “sin condition” is not having any part in the body of Christ.

Ephesians 1:13 and 14

¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him [the spirit-life Christ] with the Holy Spirit [the spirit-gift] of **promise**, ¹⁴ who [which] is given as a **pledge of our inheritance**, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

We also see the following encouragement/command in Galatians.

Galatians 5:16

¹⁶ But I say, walk by [live by] the Spirit [the spirit-gift], and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

To summarize, the spirit-gift and the spirit-life-Christ are in union with God's "invisible attributes"—His holiness, righteousness, justice, mercy, love, etc. The new "law" of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus encompasses all that God would intend, say, or do. This new "spirit" law sets all those who believe on Christ "free from the law of sin and death."¹²³ There is no amount of "law" that can account for what is righteous in every possible circumstance. What it means to love your neighbor can vary dramatically based on circumstances. Only through "walking by the spirit" is it possible to know and do what is the right thing (the righteous thing) in every circumstance.

Those who have believed on Christ are to live in union, in agreement with this new "law."

Galatians 2:20

²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me** [by way of the spirit-gift]; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Galatians 4:6

⁶ Because you are sons, God has sent forth **the Spirit of His Son** [the spirit-gift] into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"¹²⁴

This new life involves knowing these truths, being responsive to the spirit-gift, and manifesting the spirit-gift [[1 Corinthians 12:7](#)¹²⁵]. Acting contrary to this new law can and will result in consequences. However, obedience to that law will result in "fruit" being evidenced.

Galatians 5:22, 23, and 25

²² But the fruit of the Spirit [spirit-gift] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ... ²⁵ If [since] we live [have everlasting life] by the Spirit [the spirit-life-Christ and the spirit-gift], let us also walk by [keep in step with] the Spirit [the spirit-life-Christ and the spirit-gift].

See also...

¹²³ This phrase could refer to the Mosaic Law; or more significantly to ultimately being free from any and all sin and therefore free from death.

¹²⁴ Either "the spirit of His son" is in the sense of a "part of" the same spirit-life that Christ received that he "shares;" or the spirit-gift that comes from His son. We note that God frequently operates through intermediaries. According to Acts, Christ poured out the gift, i.e., he was/is the intermediary.

¹²⁵ There are 9 specific "manifestations" of the spirit-gift: speaking in tongues, tongues with interpretation, prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, faith, miracle, and healing.

James 1:25

²⁵ But one who looks intently at [or “into”] **the perfect law**, the law of liberty, and **abides by it**, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man **will be blessed** in what he does.

In conclusion, the only “law” that is of ultimate concern to a person who has accepted Christ is “the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” May we live “up” to that law.

Under Sin, In Sin, Dead to Sin, Freed from Sin

The four expressions “under sin,” “in sin,” “dead to sin,” and “freed from sin” can be considered as foundational truths for anyone who has accepted Jesus Christ.

“Under Sin”

The expression “under sin” occurs in Romans 3:9.¹²⁶

Romans 3:9

⁹What then? Are we [Jews] better than they [Greeks]? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all **under sin**;

A key to the meaning of the phrase “under sin” is to first consider the phrase “already charged.” This phrase is one Greek word, *proaitiaomai*, which is a forensic term referring to a legal accusation or charge.¹²⁷ The “charge” was laid out in Romans 1:18ff where evidence was presented showing that the Greeks and the Jews had violated God’s “law.” Both groups were considered by God, through Paul, to be guilty of violating either unwritten moral law¹²⁸ [Romans 1:18–32] or the Mosaic Law [Romans 2:1–3:8]. So, from the immediate context, we see that “under sin” should be considered as a legal declaration.

We should also consider the word “under.” Here are two examples of how the word may be used.

Matthew 5:15a

¹⁵nor does anyone light a lamp and put it **under** a basket...

Matthew 8:9

⁹"For I also am a man [a centurion] **under** authority, with soldiers **under** me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes...

In Matthew 5:15, a lamp can literally be placed **under** a basket. In this case, “under” describes the physical relationship between the lamp and the basket. In Matthew 8:9, the centurion is not literally **under** a superior officer; nor are the soldiers he commands literally **under** him. Here, “under” expresses the idea of “subject to.” In both cases, the word “under” describes a relationship, either between things or people. It might describe a relationship between both a thing and a person, e.g., a person standing under a bridge. In the case of Romans 3:9, the relationship is between people (the Jews and the Greeks) and sin. It is obvious that people cannot literally be “under” sin like a person being under a bridge. Nor are people “subject to” sin as if it were a superior officer, except in a figurative sense (which figure occurs later in Romans). In this context, “under” means “subject to” but in the sense of “under/subject to a certain condition.”

In Romans 3:9, “sin” is being used figuratively to refer to *the judgment and punishment associated with sin*.¹²⁹ The phrase “under sin” could therefore be rendered “subject to a guilty verdict and the punishment that is due sin.”

¹²⁶ This phrase occurs in [Romans 7:14](#) with the definite article “the sin.” In the NASB it is translated as “to sin.” This exact phrase, “under sin,” occurs in [Galatians 3:22](#).

¹²⁷ See Vincent’s Word Studies here: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/vws/romans/3.htm>.

¹²⁸ For more on “unwritten moral law,” see the section “[Sin and Law](#).”

¹²⁹ This is the figure of speech metonymy “in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated, as in the use of *Washington* for *the United States government* or of *the sword* for *military power*.” (The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: <https://ahdictionary.com>.)

This understanding is reinforced by the preceding context. Note the occurrences of “judgment of God” in Romans 2 vv. [2](#) and [3](#), and more specifically the following verses.

Romans 2:5 and 12 (ESV)

⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you [Jews] are **storing up wrath** for yourself on **the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed**. ... ¹² For all who have sinned without the law [“Greeks”] will also **perish** without the law, and all who have sinned under the law [Jews] **will be judged** by the law. ¹³⁰

Context indicates whether “judgment” is positive or negative. This is similar to the word “verdict” which can be “for” or “against.” On the positive side, judgment could mean not guilty (a verdict to acquit). On the negative side, judgment means guilty (a verdict to convict). In this context, judgment means guilty and therefore subject to God’s wrath—ultimately the second death. In this sense, both Jews and Greeks (and all by extension) are “under sin,” that is, subject to a guilty verdict and a death sentence since all have committed sin. No type or amount of personal activity can alter this “death sentence.” In a sense, every person is a “dead man walking,” an expression that describes a convict walking towards execution.

Regarding death, there are two literal deaths identified in Scripture. ¹³¹ The “common death” is what all experience regardless of what they do or do not do. This death is a consequence of Adam’s disobedience in the garden. This death is temporary as all will be brought back to life at some point in the future. On the other hand, the “second death” is a consequence of each person’s own intents and actions. The unrighteous and unjust will experience this death. ¹³² This death is permanent. Here in Romans 3:9, “under sin” primarily refers to the judgment and punishment associated with this “second death.” ¹³³

Regarding the phrase “under sin,” some commentaries insert the word “power” in the expression and say, “under *the power of sin*.” This implies something different than what the verse is declaring. While “Sin” is personified later in expressions like, “slave of Sin,” that is not the sense of the word “sin” in this context. As is declared subsequently in Romans, those who accept Christ and his accomplishment are judged “not guilty” and, therefore, are no longer “under the death sentence associated with sin.”

Before leaving this section, we note that Romans 3:10 through 18 are quotes primarily from Psalms but paralleled in other OT writings and can generally be considered to be quotes from “the Law.” These quotes, while they may apply to all, are specifically addressed to Jews who would be familiar with them. This section may be viewed as further indictment of the Jews and is summed up in v.19.

Romans 3:19

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says [referring to the previous 8 verses], it speaks to those who are under the Law [the Jews], so that **every mouth** may be closed and all the world [including Jews] may become accountable to God;

The expression “every mouth may be closed” is not being addressed to “everyone” but specifically to those Jews who might still be considering themselves righteous before God based on their supposed adherence to the Law. Both the Jews and the Greeks have already been charged and found guilty meaning there is no further case to be made. However, there may be some Jews who have taken issue

¹³⁰ Regarding the “final judgment,” see also [John 5:28, 29](#); [Acts 24:15](#).

¹³¹ See the section “[Two Death](#).”

¹³² See Revelation 20:[14b](#) and [15](#); [21:8](#).

¹³³ Note that babies and infants are not held accountable. They are subject to the “common death” because of Adam’s disobedience, but they are not held accountable for their own actions until they reach an “age of accountability.” This is not a specific age but an age at which the individual can distinguish right and wrong.

with Paul's indictment, so here he levies the testimony of the Law to "shut the mouths" of those who may yet consider themselves righteous based on their supposed adherence to the Law. The remaining verses in the chapter bring forward the truth that righteousness before God is based on faith/trust/believing¹³⁴ in God and His word and not by the carrying out of actions prescribed by the Law.

"In Sin"

Romans 6:1

¹What shall we say then?¹³⁵ Are we to **continue in sin** so that grace may increase?

This verse introduces the phrase "continue in sin." A handful of versions have, "continue sinning;" turning the noun "sin" into a verb. We believe this does not accurately represent the sense of the phrase in context. Paul was certainly acquainted with the verb and could have written, "continue sinning." In fact, 14 verses later in v. 15 we see, "Shall we sin (verb)...?" The fact that he wrote "continue in sin" using the singular noun in v. 1 indicates a different sense than "continue sinning."

In consideration of this phrase, "continue in sin," we feel it necessary to provide the context leading up to the question posed here. We previously considered Chapters 1, 2, and 3 where Paul identified various activities and/or mindsets that would be considered sinning and, because everyone sins, everyone is considered guilty. Towards the end of Chapter 3, we clearly see that the way out from "under sin" is not by "works of the Law." Rather, a person is considered or declared righteous in God's sight through faith/trust/believing in Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:21 and 22

²¹But now apart from the [Mosaic] Law the **righteousness** of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the [Mosaic] Law and the Prophets, ²²even the **righteousness** of God through **faith [trust] in Jesus Christ for all those who believe**; for there is no distinction [between Jew and Greek];

Some Jews may yet have had trouble "buying into" the truth that righteousness before God was based on faith/trust and not adherence to the Mosaic Law. The balance of Chapter 3 declares that this righteousness before God is a gift and therefore no one can boast about having earned it, that is, through "works." This truth does not nullify the Mosaic Law but upholds it in the sense that the Mosaic Law confirmed that Abraham was declared righteous by his faith/trust in God [[Genesis 15:6](#)]. An example of his faith/trust was when he finally believed God's promise that he would have a child and be the father of many nations. Chapter 4 goes into great detail on this point.¹³⁶

Chapter 5 then opens with a restatement of Romans 3:22.

Romans 5:1

¹Therefore, having been **justified by faith [trust]**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

The word "justified" [*dikaioó*] is used in a variety of contexts and can carry various meanings. The root word *diké* means "**right**, especially a **judicial verdict** which declares someone approved or disapproved;

¹³⁴ The words "faith/trust/believing" can have subtle variations in meaning in peoples' minds. See <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Appendix/2/bb>. Based on that information, we will use "trust."

¹³⁵ [Vincent's Word Studies](#): "A transition-expression and a debater's phrase" (Morison). The use of this phrase points to Paul's training in the Rabbinical schools, where questions were propounded and the students encouraged to debate, objections being suddenly interposed and answered. This rhetorical method has also been described as "diatribe" where the writer is presenting a supposed audience member who is questioning him.

¹³⁶ See [James 2:21](#) and [22](#). In this context, the "works" proved or "perfected" Abraham's faith.

a judgment (just finding) that regards someone (something) as ‘guilty’ or ‘innocent.’” The phrase can therefore be translated as “judged/declared righteous based on trust” and can carry the legal sense of “acquitted.” Being acquitted is a **permanent legal standing** before God that is based on Christ’s sacrifice of his life.

What follows in Chapter 5 begins to go “deeper” into the issue of sin—not just sins or sinning which have been addressed at least in part up to this point. Remember, we are endeavoring to grasp the sense of the expression “continue in sin.” It is one thing to have God—The Righteous Judge—declare a person acquitted, i.e., free to leave the courtroom no longer facing a death sentence. It is quite another thing for The Judge to want a **relationship** with the acquitted. This relational aspect is expressed in the next verse in Romans.

Romans 5:2a

²through whom [our Lord Jesus Christ] also we have obtained our introduction by faith [trust] into this grace in which we stand;

Having an “introduction into grace” is like an open door into the presence of God—having access to a relationship with God and all the benefits that come with it. This goes beyond just being acquitted. Not only is the charged party “free to go” but now they are “free to come” into a relationship with The Judge. Establishing a personal relationship between The Judge and the acquitted will require some changes. One significant change that is necessary for this relationship to develop is the gift of holy spirit.

Romans 5:5

⁵and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit [the spirit-gift] who [that] was given to us.

The phrase “through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” can literally be rendered as “through holy spirit, the one *spirit*, having been given to us.” There is no article “the” associated with “holy spirit” in the text. Most versions capitalize “holy spirit” and include “the” because the words are translated by individuals or groups who believe the gift of holy spirit is a person. We believe holy spirit is a gift, an enablement that gives its recipient the ability to have a direct relationship with God (who is spirit) and the ability to exercise His power (like Christ did).

Throughout the OT there were individuals who had spirit, e.g., Saul, Samson, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., but that spirit was not guaranteed or permanent for them (note Saul and Samson in particular). Now, not only is this gift of holy spirit available to anyone who believes, but because this gift is permanent, it is considered a “down payment” for ultimately having a complete and unhindered relationship with God in the future [[Ephesians 1:13b, 14](#); [2 Corinthians 1:22](#)].

The idea of receiving spirit or having a relationship with God would not be totally “new news” to the Jews...only that it was available to anyone who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, including Gentiles. But the following verses would certainly be new and shocking news.

Romans 5:6, 8, 10

⁶while we were still **helpless** ... Christ died for the **ungodly** ... ⁸... while we were yet **sinner**s ...
¹⁰... while we were **enemies** ...

Not many, if any, Jews would have considered themselves to be “helpless,” “ungodly,” “sinners,” and especially “enemies” of God. This description is applicable to all, including Jews, and indicates why it is necessary for there to be a new and better relationship with God. We begin to see how this letter is gradually going “deeper” into the issue of sin, which is something more than sinning.

In the following verses, the establishment of this new relationship with God is described as being “reconciled to God”—not just acquitted but brought back into a relationship with God.

Romans 5:10 and 11

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** [*katallassó*] **to God** through the death of His Son, much more, **having been reconciled** [*katallassó*], we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have **now received the reconciliation** [*katallagé*].

Below we have indicated where “reconcile” and “reconciliation” occur in Scripture.

katallassó: Romans 5:10 (2x); 2 Corinthians 5:[18](#), [19](#), and [20](#); [1 Corinthians 7:11](#).

katallagé: Romans 5:11; 2 Corinthians 5:[18](#) and [19](#); [Romans 11:15](#).

It is clear from both Romans 5:10 and 2 Corinthians 5:18 and 19 that God made it available for people to be reconciled to Himself through the work of Christ. It is not as though anyone met God “half-way” to be reconciled or even that anyone except Christ could have done anything to accomplish the reconciliation. If not for Christ, all would be subject to God’s wrath and permanent death, which means, no relationship with God ever. The sacrifice of Christ means that God is not counting (or charging) anyone’s trespasses against them [2 Corinthians 5:[19](#)], but perhaps more importantly, those who believe on Christ are reconciled to God. So, in addition to the legal aspect of acquittal, there is a personal/relational aspect to what has been accomplished through Christ.

The “root” of the relationship problem, i.e., the lack of a relationship with God, is brought forward in the following verse.

Romans 5:12a

¹² Therefore, just as through one man [the] sin entered into the world, and death through [the] sin...

The text includes the definite article “the” with the word “sin” in both instances. This is typically not indicated in translations; however, it is potentially important here and in the phrase under consideration, “continue in [the] sin,” where again the definite article “the” is used. The following was considered in the section “[Sin as a Condition](#)” but is worth repeating here.

Now here is where the definition of Sin as used in Romans 5–8 might be a bit confusing. First note that “sin” is singular, so it is not “sins” but “sin” the significance of which becomes more apparent from the next fact. In many (most) of Paul’s uses of hamartia [sin] in Romans 5-8, Paul places the definite article “the” before “sin” (even though the “the” is not translated in most English versions for it would be somewhat difficult to read). In this way Paul is speaking of “Sin” figuratively, in what is referred to as a metonym ... which describes the substitution of a word referring to an attribute for the thing that is meant (eg, the use of the word “crown” to refer to the entire “monarchy”). ... what Paul is doing with the Sin (he hamartia) is to use this word not to describe the actions or results (i.e., the specific sins we commit in thought, word or deed) but to describe the **underlying root cause ...**¹³⁷

We consider the “underlying root cause” to be the **consequences** of Adam’s disobedience detailed in Romans 5 (and other places). It is the consequences of Adam’s disobedience that have been passed on

¹³⁷ See https://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_717-20. We note that “the sin” is personified in several contexts and could, by English rules of grammar, be capitalized, e.g., “Sin reigned” [5:21]. In such a case, there would be two “layers” of figure: 1) personification and 2) metonymy. In this example, the sense would be, “[Sin] As if an emperor [personification] reigned, meaning sin, as the consequences of Adam’s disobedience [metonymy] dominated everyone’s life.”

to all his progeny. Every person is subject to these consequences which have created a condition (status or state) that everyone is **in or impacted by**. Here are some of the consequences included in this condition: being subject to the “common death;” the possibility of premature death through injury, disease, or accident; being “breath-life” only (not having spirit); and living in a world dominated by an evil spirit being. Each of these consequences carries associated problems not the least of which is the fact that being “breath-life” only while living in a world dominated by an evil spirit guarantees that a person will commit sin and therefore be subject to God’s judgment and condemnation. In general, these consequences describe the condition of being helpless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies.

We note that Adam’s progeny are not considered **guilty** of Adam’s disobedience. This would be contrary to God’s sense of justice [Ezekiel 18:20]. However, it is possible that one person’s sinful act can result in others experiencing consequences. We might consider Achan [Joshua 7] whose violation of a direct command resulted in the death of 36 men and defeat in a battle. All the children of Israel were not held guilty for Achan’s disobedience, but they suffered consequences.¹³⁸ In like manner, one act of disobedience on Adam’s part has resulted in consequences for all of humanity. The “whole truth” regarding the consequences of Adam’s disobedience was never declared in the OT because there was no immediately available resolution to address the consequences.

Following is a summary of Chapter 5 vv. 15–21. These verses provide more detail on “the sin condition” and how God through Christ was able to “remedy” the condition.

Adam	Christ
v.15 “many died” [apothnḗskó]	“the gift”
v. 16 “judgment” [kríma] ... “condemnation” [katakrima]	“justification” [“declared right”] [dikaióma]
v. 17 “death” [thanatos]	“the gift of righteousness” [dikaiosunḗ]
v. 18 “through one transgression” “condemnation” [katakrima]	“through one act of righteousness” “justification” [“acquittal”] [dikaiósis]
v. 19 “through one man’s disobedience” “many made sinners”	“through the obedience of the one” “many made righteous” [dikaios]
v. 21 “sin [Sin] reigned in death” [thanatos]	“grace [Grace] would reign through righteousness [dikaiosunḗ] to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord

In these verses, we see “died,” “judgment,” “condemnation,” “death,” and “made sinners” as consequences of Adam’s disobedience. Every person’s relationship with these consequences was unheard of in the OT writings. What is presented here would truly be “new news” to the Jews (and anyone hearing or reading it). So, we see we have entered “new territory.”

We note that several of the words highlighted above have legal overtones. Adam’s disobedience, his “crime,” brought “judgment” and “condemnation” which essentially means a “death sentence.” This can primarily refer to the “common death” that all are subject to regardless of what they do or do not do. We previously noted that Adam’s progeny are not held guilty for Adam’s crime; however, all are subject to this “death sentence” as a consequence of Adam’s disobedience. Beyond that, it is only through the promise of a “redeemer” that a person’s own, personal sins can be “acquitted” and they can escape the “second death.” God cannot violate His nature and simply “accept” or “ignore” sin; His judgment is mandatory and righteous. Christ’s obedience, his righteous act of offering his life, of being the

¹³⁸ Ultimately, Achan was found guilty and punished with death, along with his family.

redeemer, brought about the availability of being declared righteous to anyone who has or who will believe on him.¹³⁹

In Romans 5:19, the expressions “made righteous” and “made sinners” are both unique expressions, i.e., this is the only place in Scripture where these expressions occur. “Made” in both cases is *kathistēmi*, a word used in a variety of contexts. Here it may perhaps carry the sense of *give standing (authority, status)*. If so, the sense is that Adam’s disobedience put everyone in the status/standing of “sinner” before God, whereas Christ’s obedience put everyone (who accepts him) in the status/standing of “righteous” before God. This would be apart from any action on the individual’s part. The word “designated” might work well. There are several other verses where people are “designated” as “rulers” or “officers” or “elders.”¹⁴⁰ This would make the point that nothing has changed “within” a person that is so designated only that they have a certain position or standing.

“Made sinners” does not mean that a person is inherently evil and only acts wickedly any more than “made righteous” means that a person is now inherently righteous and always acts righteously. This standing is based on Christ’s obedience just as the “sinner standing” is based on Adam’s disobedience. It is accurate to say that the consequences of Adam’s disobedience put everyone into a condition that guaranteed sinning to one degree or another but that is not the main focus here. Where this view is particular helpful is that it does not negate free will—a person, like Abraham, Moses, or David can choose to be more God-centered than self-centered. The person who has accepted Christ and has been “made righteous” can choose to act out that righteousness and can be successful in that endeavor to one degree or another. Subsequent verses encourage such action.

All of this is background leading up to the question posed in Romans 6:1, “Are we to continue in the sin?”

As previously considered, “the sin” refers to the condition that is the consequence of Adam’s disobedience. In other words, “sin” is not referring to any particular act or acts of sinning, but rather, “the sin” is referring to the condition or status/standing of all because of Adam’s disobedience. We might say that all have been forced into a relationship with the consequences of Adam’s disobedience.

The word “in,” like “under,” is a relationship word. In its literal sense, “in” describes the relationship of a subject to an object, e.g., water is **in** the glass, the nail is **in** the wood, etc. These are examples that demonstrate a physical relationship of one thing to another. If someone lives **in** Louisiana, we are describing the relationship of the person to a physical location. If we say, “I am **in** trouble,” we are describing our relationship to circumstances. In the expression, “Shall we continue **in** the sin,” it is implied that there is a relationship between a person and the sin condition. In light of this, we are perhaps justified in translating “in the sin” in 6:1 as “with the sin” to perhaps emphasize a relationship. In this case, Paul’s meaning might be along the lines of, “Shall we continue **in** our relationship **with** the condition we were made subject to because of Adam’s disobedience?” Or, said another way, “Should we continue as if we are still helpless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God?”

The following is perhaps a bit technical, but it provides support for the foregoing proposition. “Sin” in this verse is in the dative case. There is no word “in” in the text. It is supplied by the translator to reflect

¹³⁹ It is possible that Adam and Eve were forgiven as indicated by God “covering” them with animal skins. This implies a “blood sacrifice” which points to the Christ. They were not executed but eventually experienced the “common death” which was one of the consequences of Adam’s disobedience.

¹⁴⁰ Vincent’s Word Studies: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/romans/5-19.htm>—“Used elsewhere by Paul only at [Titus 1:5](#), in the sense of to appoint to office or position. This is its most frequent use in the New Testament. See [Matthew 24:45](#); [Acts 6:3](#); [Acts 7:10](#); [Hebrews 5:1](#).”

the dative case. There are different types of datives. In this context, we might apply the “dative of instrumental association.” An example of this is in Mark 2:15, “...many tax collectors and sinners were dining **with Jesus**.”¹⁴¹ This type of dative indicates an association, relation, or affiliation of some kind.¹⁴² Based on the preceding and subsequent context of Romans 6:1, we feel that “continue **with** the sin,” meaning “continue in a relationship with the sin,” or, personified, “continue in a relationship with Sin,” would perhaps better communicate the sense than “continue **in** sin” which tends to imply continue sinning.

We recognize that in Chapter 6, Paul (God) encourages people to change their behavior in a positive way, i.e., to not sin; however, before sinning can be subdued, a change in mindset must occur. With this in mind, we note the following. In Chapter 6 vv. 1–14, there is a focus on “death/dead” vs. “life/alive”—two very different states. In vv. 15–32, the focus is on “slave” vs. “free”—two very different conditions. These themes are used to contrast the old condition/state with the new condition/state. As these themes are grasped and taken to heart, new behaviors can follow.

In summary, all were not only “under (subject to the condemnation associated with) sin” but “in a relationship with the sin condition” or, personified, “in a relationship with Sin.” It is clear that those who have accepted Christ are no longer “under sin” because of what has been accomplished through Christ. Why and how that person should no longer continue “in a relationship with Sin” is addressed in subsequent verses.

This brings us to...

“Died/Dead to Sin”

We first note that “death” is a theme throughout Chapter 6.

“death” [*thanatos*]¹⁴¹—7x (vv. 3, 4, 5, 9, 16, 21, 23);

“died” [*apothnέskό*]¹⁴²—6x (vv. 2, 7, 8, 9, 10 (2x)); and

“dead” [*nekros*]¹⁴³—4x (vv. 4, 9, 11, 13).

In addition to these frequent occurrences, the noun “sin” occurs 15x. Of these occurrences, it is worth noting that there are only 6 in the dative singular.¹⁴³ Each of these occurrences is unique in Scripture and each also includes the definite article “the” in the text. These facts call for some degree of focus.

v. 1 shall we continue in the sin

v. 2 we who died to the sin

v. 6 we would no longer be enslaved to the sin

v. 10 Christ died to the sin

v. 11 consider yourselves dead to the sin

v. 13 don't use your members as instruments of unrighteousness to the sin¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ See https://www.blueletterbible.org/esv/mar/2/15/t_conc_959015.

¹⁴² https://ugg.readthedocs.io/en/latest/case_dative.html.

¹⁴³ Blue Letter Bible, see ἀμαρτία—7x here: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g266/esv/mgnt/0-1/>. The only other occurrence of this form is in [John 8:21](#)—the text reads, “die in [en] the sin of you.” Regarding the dative, see https://ugg.readthedocs.io/en/latest/case_dative.html.

Note in vv. 2, 10, and 11 that it does not say, “died/dead to **sinning**” but “died/dead to **the sin.**” We have heard the expression, “he/she is **dead to me**” which parrots the father of the prodigal son who said his son was “dead” [Luke 15:24 and 32]. The sense of “dead” in these expressions is that the speaker is saying there is no active relationship with the one they are referring to. The sense in v. 10, “Christ died to the sin,” is that “the sin (condition)” or “Sin (personified)” has no active relationship with Christ or no more influence on Christ (or even potential influence). Jesus suffered significant abuse at the hands of Sin, figuratively speaking, even to the point of death. Having been resurrected as a new man, Sin has no more influence over him. It is true that Christ is “free from sinning,” but that is not what is being declared here. He is “free from the sin condition” or “free from the consequences of the sin condition” or personified, “free from Sin.” We are considered to have died with Christ; therefore, we are to consider that we are also dead to the sin condition or ultimately to the consequences of the sin condition or dead to Sin. Unlike Christ, we are certainly not “free from sinning” (yet). The way it is stated in Romans 6 makes the point that neither Sin nor Death are dead (yet). These “characters” continue to dominate and abuse those who are in relationship with them, and they will continue to be active and abusive until the end [Revelation 20:10 and 14].

We will first consider “died to the sin” in v. 10 which refers to Christ and might be viewed as the crux of the matter at hand. Then, we will go back to v. 2 which refers to those who have believed on Christ.

Romans 6:10

¹⁰ For the death that He [Christ] died, He **died to [the] sin** once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Jesus Christ experienced a literal death (he died). Having died, the sin condition and its consequences no longer had any relationship with him—he was dead. Stated another way, Christ was no longer subject to the sin condition or its consequences or to Sin because he was dead. This “death to the sin” has a couple of important aspects. First, Christ is never going to die again. “Sin” cannot subject him to death ever again. Second, in his resurrected form, we believe that Christ is inherently righteous, meaning, not even tempted with evil. Sin has no relationship with him or influence over him. No person has ever been inherently righteous. Christ is the first.¹⁴⁵

We will now backup to v. 2 where we have Paul’s short response to the question, “Are we to continue in the sin so that grace may abound?”

Romans 6:2

² May it never be! How shall we who **died to [the] sin** still live in it?

This is the same construction as in v. 10 above. In that verse, it was Christ who “died to the sin,” here it is we who “died to the sin.” Verse 10 explains verse 2—because Christ died to the consequences of the sin condition, those who believe on him should consider themselves as having also died to the consequences of the sin condition. As Adam’s disobedience impacted everyone, Christ’s obedience impacts everyone. The only difference is that there was no choice involved where Adam is concerned. This is described in v. 6, as being “enslaved to the sin.” With Christ, there is a choice—anyone who believes on him can “inherit” his benefits and be “freed from sin.”

The primary consequence of sin in this context is condemnation and the second death—the “wrath of God.” Personified “Sin” cannot impose either of those on those who have believed on Christ. However,

¹⁴⁴ We also note the following with respect to the definite article “the:” genitive case: 6:6 body of [the] sin; 6:7 freed from [the] sin; 6:17 slaves of [the] sin; 6:18 freed from [the] sin; 6:20 slaves of [the] sin; 6:22 freed from [the] sin; 6:23 wages of [the] sin. There is one occurrence of the nominative case: 6:12 do not let [the] sin reign.

¹⁴⁵ Regarding Christ being inherently righteous, see the section “[Sin and Law.](#)”

there are still consequences in the here-and-now for sins committed. We are not dead to sinning or its consequences. It may also be worth noting that Christ's death did not eliminate the "common death" except in the case where those who have believed on him are still alive when he returns. Those individuals will not experience the "common death."

Those who have believed on Christ no longer have any relationship with the coming condemnation and death. This is explicitly stated in v. 11.

Romans 6:11

¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to [the] sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The word "consider" is legitimate but might be a little weak. The sense is more at "reason and conclude" based on the previous information. In the vernacular, we might say, "Adjust your thinking accordingly." You who have believed on the Christ are "dead to the sin" (the consequences imposed by the sin condition) and are now "alive to God in Christ Jesus." This is an interesting expression as well. Literally, the text has, "living to God." Most versions, like the NASB, have "alive to God." The opposite of this statement would be "dead to God," which is an accurate statement concerning everyone without trust in Christ. "Living to God," as in serving God is certainly an aspect of the relationship between us and God. So, this expression could be taken in two ways. Having believed on Christ, God sees us as alive rather than dead and since we are "alive" and not dead we can serve God. As we take this truth to heart, we can dedicate our lives in service to Him rather than in service to Sin. We can begin to foster a new relationship, a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁶

We note that the idea of relationship would perhaps serve as a backdrop for why there are frequent examples of personification of "sin" particularly in Romans: see "enslaved to Sin" or "slave(s) of Sin" (6:6, 17, 20), "freed from Sin" (6:7, 18, 22), "do not let Sin reign" (6:12), "Sin shall not be master over you" (6:14), "wages paid by Sin" (6:23). Note as well on the "positive" side: "[slave] of Obedience" (6:16) and "slaves of Righteousness" (6:18, 19). The relationship a person chooses to engage in impacts behavior in the here-and-now, but also impacts what is going to happen from an eternal perspective.

Up to this point, the focus has been on mindset or paradigm. Behavior comes into the picture in v. 13.

Romans 6:13

¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to [the] sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

For a visual representation of having been dead (a certain condition) but now alive (in a different condition) see [John 11:44](#). When Lazarus came out from the tomb, Jesus commanded, "Unbind him and let him go!" The one who has believed on Christ should want to be "unbound" from the wrappings of the Sin and Death. This leads us to our final point.

"Freed from Sin"

Romans 6:6, 7, 18, and 22

⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to [the] sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed [*dikaioó*] from [the] sin. ... ¹⁸ and having been freed [*eleutheroó*] from [the] sin, you became slaves of [the] righteousness. ... ²² But now having been freed [*eleutheroó*] from [the] sin and enslaved [having

¹⁴⁶ See [Galatians 2:19](#) and [1 Peter 4:2](#).

become slaves] to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life [life to the ages].

In these verses, “the sin” could be personified and translated as “Sin.” Therefore, having been slaves to Sin, but having died [with Christ], we are now freed from Sin. The picture being painted by this figurative language would have spoken loudly to Romans and others in Paul’s audience. Slavery was widely practiced and therefore was a very present reality. As a slave master, Sin eventually requires death. Christ died in our place so we are “free” from that slave master.¹⁴⁷ In literal terms, if a slave dies, they are “free” from their master and any obligation to that master.

With the advent of Christ and his righteous act of surrendering his life and God’s validation of his righteousness through raising him from the dead, those who accept Christ are “**freed from Sin**” ([Romans 6:7](#)). Being “freed from Sin” first means being “freed” from the ultimate consequence of sin, namely, the “second death.” Being “freed” also means being able to live a different life in the here-and-now. It may also mean for some to be freed from the “common death” when Christ returns. Because of Christ’s accomplishment, those who have believed on him are “dead to” and “freed from” a relationship with Sin and Death and are now “slaves of Righteousness” [[Romans 6:18](#)] and “have become slaves to God” [[Romans 6:22](#)]. These are statements of condition or legal status and not statements of behavior, although these truths should impact behavior in a positive way.

The word “sanctification” (v.22) describes an altered lifestyle, that is, a Christ-like life. While some verses in Chapter 6 indicate action along these lines, the emphasis is on establishing a new legal status and a new condition. As a person builds these truths into their heart and mind, it will tend to motivate towards more righteous living. However, how that new righteous life gets implemented is handled specifically in subsequent chapters.

“Freed from Sin” does not mean “freed from sinning” or “freed from our mortal (‘weak’) physical body” [[Romans 6:12](#)].¹⁴⁸ Nor does it mean being freed from any consequences of sin. There are still consequences for sin in the here-and-now.¹⁴⁹ Lying, cheating, and stealing still have consequences; however, the one “freed” no longer needs to “live in a relationship with” sin consciousness ([Hebrews 10:2](#)). Sin consciousness is the awareness of sin and the weight of expecting retribution from God for sinful acts. This is something very pertinent to the Jews, who, because of the Mosaic Law, were very conscious of sin (or at least should have been) and conscious of its ultimate consequence.

Being “dead to sin,” a person is dead to that relationship. The one who has believed on Christ should now “walk in newness of life” ([Romans 6:4](#)) realizing that they are in a new relationship with God and Christ and will “be in the likeness of Jesus’ resurrection” in the future ([Romans 6:4](#) and [5](#)). Particularly for the Jews, “sin” was a “master” because they were “under (subject to) the Mosaic Law,” which figuratively “demanded” obedience and “demanded” a penalty for violations of that Law. Now being “under grace,” the believer (whether Jew or Greek) is free and “alive to God” ([Romans 6:11](#)) without fear of any sin resulting in permanent death ([Romans 6:14](#)). Again, consider that the words “death,” “died,” and “dead” occur 17 times in Romans 6. This indicates a focus on a change of condition—being “dead” (permanently, eternally) or being “alive” (permanently, eternally)—changed behavior is a logical outworking of the realization of this new condition and new legal status. A person’s mindset is critical to experiencing the benefits of this new relationship with God and Christ.

¹⁴⁷ For an interesting illustration, go to https://www.preceptaustin.org/romans_66-7 and search on “Napoleon.”

¹⁴⁸ See the section “[Flesh is Weak](#).”

¹⁴⁹ There are also “eternal” consequences in the form of loss of rewards, i.e., not receiving the reward(s) for leading the life of a true disciple.

This section of Romans would seem to potentially have more impact on the Jews of Paul's day than on the Greeks of Paul's day. The Jews lived under the Mosaic Law and under the curse of that law ([Deuteronomy 11:26–28](#)). "Sin" meant something specific to a Jew and it was closely associated with punishment, including death. The concept of "sin" [*hamartia*] to a Greek was something quite different.¹⁵⁰ To say, "you died to sin" would have been a radical idea to a Jew. Back in [Romans 5:20](#) and leading up to Chapter 6, we see the expression, "The Law came in." The subject of the Mosaic Law would not be particularly pertinent to a Greek who had no knowledge of that law. Nevertheless, the Greeks had to realize that though they were not "under the Mosaic Law," they were still "under law" and liable before God because of the evidence of creation and conscience ([Romans 1:18–32](#)). The author admits to having been a "Greek"—not in a college fraternity but in a "Greek relationship" with sin—that is, one who "befriended Sin" (was in reality "enslaved to Sin") and had no interest in pursuing a relationship with God.

"Freed from Sin" is a new **condition** for the one who accepts Christ. In [1 Timothy 2:6](#), this new condition is described as having been ransomed. This "ransom" was paid in the form of Christ's death. This "ransom" can be viewed figuratively as having been "paid to Sin and Death" who held everyone hostage. Christ fulfilled the "demand" of Sin by offering himself to Death. Therefore, those who believe on him will not need to fulfill that demand. Those who believe are righteous before God...acquitted in legal verbiage and are in "right standing" with God. This new legal status is permanent, not because of anything a person does or does not do but because of what Christ did once for all. Being righteous equates to life...eternal, everlasting life—all through Christ—no longer under a death sentence but under a "life sentence" and this by grace. Hence believers are now considered to be, and should think of themselves as being, "**under the authority of grace** [Grace]" [[Romans 6:14](#) and [6:15](#)] and "**under the authority of righteousness** [Righteousness]" [[Romans 6:18](#)].

"Under sin," "in sin," "dead to sin," and "freed from sin" speak to a change in legal status, condition, and relationship. How to address and potentially overcome "sinning," which inhibits this new relationship with God and Christ is covered in subsequent chapters in Romans.

¹⁵⁰ See the section "[The Word 'Sin'.](#)"

Flesh is Weak

Jesus said...

Mark 14:38

³⁸ "Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the **spirit** is **willing** [[prothumos](#)], but the **flesh** [[sarx](#)] is **weak** [[asthenés](#)]."

Here's the context. Jesus and some of his disciples were on the Mount of Olives the night of his arrest. Jesus knew that Judas was in the process of betraying him. He knew the challenge that lay ahead, including arrest, judgment, punishment, and death. He took Peter, James, and John apart from the others and asked them to keep watch while he stepped aside to pray (vv. [33 and 34](#)). After praying for a while, he came back to them and found them sleeping. He reproved Peter saying, "Could you not keep watch for one hour?" (v. [37](#)).

The sense of "spirit" in this verse is determined by the word "willing." We assume that Peter **wanted** to do what Jesus asked of him, but his "flesh" could not carry it out either because of exhaustion, the stress of the situation, or something else. "Flesh" in this verse is referring to the physical body and its various functions. Though Jesus said this to Peter, his declaration may well be applicable to others who find themselves wanting to do the "right thing" but failing—falling short of expectations (either one's own or someone else's).¹⁵¹

That the "flesh is weak" is also described by Paul in Romans 7.

Romans 7:15, 18, and 19

¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. ... ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my **flesh** [[sarx](#)]; for the **willing** [[theló](#)—lit. to will] is present in me, but the **doing** of the good is not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

Peter could have said this, as well as anyone who wants to do good but finds themselves doing evil.¹⁵² This "weakness" or inability is worth considering.

These verses present what is probably the most significant aspect of the "flesh is weak," namely, that this weakness manifests in a failure to do the "right thing." In scriptural verbiage, this is a failure to act in a way that is righteous, or just, or merciful, or truly loving, etc. While this is the most significant aspect of the "flesh is weak," there are near countless other ways in which the flesh is literally or figuratively "weak." Related to the above described weakness is the fact that everyone is going to die—only the righteous will live (that is, not die). The "flesh," because it is subject to aging is subject to death. The "flesh" does not have the capability to go on living indefinitely. The "flesh" is also susceptible to sickness, to disease, to injury, etc. We should also not ignore the fact that the "flesh" requires oxygen, water, and food. In other words, the "flesh" is totally dependent on physical elements for survival.

Regarding the "flesh," we note that Jesus and Paul are not saying the "flesh" is evil or inherently sinful. Some have adopted this belief and developed theories, doctrines, and a life-style to support it. However, consider the following.

¹⁵¹ There are of course some, perhaps many or most, who are not concerned with doing the "right thing" but are simply focused on pleasing themselves.

¹⁵² We could include Peter's declaration of following Jesus to the death and then denying him.

Galatians 5:19, 20, and 21a

¹⁹ Now the **works of the flesh** are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

This is a figurative use of “flesh” that highlights how the “weakness” can be manifested in all sorts of bad/sinful behaviors. The point here is not that the “flesh” itself is evil or sinful but that personal interest—self-focus—can and will result in “works of the flesh” that are evil and sinful. “Works” implies behavior, that is, something a person does. The behavior is evil or sinful, not the “flesh.”

We note that the resurrected Christ had “flesh.”

Luke 24:39

³⁹ "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have **flesh** and bones as you see that I have."

Not only does he have “flesh and bones,” at that gathering he asked for something to eat.

Luke 24:41–43

⁴¹ While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; ⁴³ and He took it and ate it before them.

We suspect that he ate not because he needed the food but to reinforce that he was in fact the Jesus they had been following.

While the resurrected Christ had “flesh and bones,” he was decidedly different from everyone else in that room. Having been raised from the dead to never die again, he was and is a new kind of “man.” This is clearly revealed in the following.

1 Peter 3:18 and 19

¹⁸ For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but **made alive in the spirit**; ¹⁹ **in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison,** ¹⁵³

While Christ has “flesh and bones,” he is also able to access the spiritual realm (he visited the “spirits in prison” and he is now “seated at God’s right hand”). No human being animated by breath-life, that is, needs oxygen and blood to survive, can access the spiritual realm. This topic is covered in some detail in the subsection [“The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.”](#)

Based on this, we assume that Christ has a different kind of “flesh.” This possibility is indicated in the following verse.

1 Corinthians 15:39

³⁹ All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.

Scripture indicates that those who have believed on Christ are going to be changed to be like him, but in the here-and-now, weakness of the flesh is still an ever-present reality. Following are some additional examples of how the flesh is weak.

2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing [*apollumi*], ⁴ in whose case

¹⁵³ We believe these spirits were the primary one’s responsible for the corruption that occurred in Noah’s day.

the god of this world has **blinded the minds** of the unbelieving **so that they might not see** the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

This “blindness” (a form of “weakness”) applies not only to the Gospel but to life in general. This “blindness” began when Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s direct command and lost spirit and became senses dependent. From then on, the breath-life-only person has lacked “spiritual sight” in part or in whole. There has always been some sense of right and wrong in every person or available to every person [Romans 1:[19](#) and [20](#)]. For example, a person without spirit can know that stealing or adultery are wrong, even though these are spiritual truths. Also, when God revealed the Law to Moses, right and wrong were spelled out more specifically. Again, these are spiritual truths that people could understand at least to some extent. However, the absence of spirit seriously limits a person’s capability to fully grasp and, perhaps most importantly, to live out spiritual truths.

Besides being “blind,” as indicated in the verse cited above, the breath-life-only person is also ignorant of the existence and capabilities of a wicked spirit known as the devil. As “the god of this age,” the devil can influence people directly or indirectly by promoting some information and suppressing other information. People in this world without spiritual sight are at the mercy of the ebb and flow of information and opinions that are constantly being promoted by the “god of this age” [see [Ephesians 2:1](#) and [2](#)].

The breath-life-only person is “weak” in that they lack the capability to fully grasp spiritual truths.

1 Corinthians 2:14

¹⁴ But a natural [[psuchikos](#)¹⁵⁴] man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand [[ginóskó](#)] them, because they are spiritually appraised [[anakrinó](#)].

A “natural man,” a person who is only flesh and breath-life—spirit-less (senses dependent)—cannot understand things of the spirit or wield spiritual power. This would include those born again who live as if they are breath-life-only.

Most significantly, the person who is breath-life-only is “weak” in that they are incapable of accomplishing their own redemption and salvation—every person needs a savior to save them from death.

Romans 5:6 (ESV)

⁶ For while we were still **weak** [[asthenés](#)], at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Following are some additional occurrences of “weak” and “weakness.”

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our **weaknesses** [[astheneia](#)], but One [Jesus] who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 5:2

² he [the high priest] can deal gently with the ignorant and misguided, since he himself also is beset with **weakness** [[astheneia](#)];

These verses are referencing Christ as a “high priest.” He, like the high priests, was tempted, as is every person...perhaps not with the exact same temptations but the same in general character, e.g., pleasures

¹⁵⁴ [1 Corinthians 15:45](#) describes Adam becoming a living soul [[psuché](#)] (a reference to [Genesis 2:7](#)). The adjective [psuchikos](#) comes from this noun.

or pressures. Of course, the big difference is that Christ never succumbed to any temptation. He was “strong.”

Romans 6:19a

¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the **weakness** [*astheneia*] of your flesh.

The individuals being addressed were living according to the “flesh,” that is, their selfish desires and concerns. So, Paul was using an illustration in the physical realm that they could relate to in order to communicate a spiritual reality.

“Flesh is weak.” A person may want to do the “right thing” but has limited resources to carry it out. Having spirit is no guarantee that a person will do the right thing, but the spirit is an added resource to help a person to do the right thing and to help others do the right thing. These verses can be read in conjunction with the description of the weakness described in Romans 7 where the person knows what is right and wants to do what is right but fails to do what is right. Being breath-life-only, lacking spiritual power and authority, being senses-limited/-dominated, and being subject to death are the major consequences that all people inherit from Adam. These facts define how every person is inherently “weak.” What is called for is humility and thanks towards God and Christ for addressing this weakness both in the here-and-now via the spirit-gift and ultimately through the spirit-life to come.

Works of the Flesh

The word “flesh” has two basic usages. The one usage is figurative and refers to that which is senses-based or senses-focused as opposed to spirit-based or spirit-focused. The other usage is literal, as in what covers the bones and internal organs. In the context of “sin,” it is perhaps helpful to take a moment to describe what are at least some of the “deeds” or “works of the flesh.” These all fall under the general category of sin, that is, attitudes/intentions/behaviors that do not conform to God’s righteousness.

Galatians 5:19–21

¹⁹ Now the **deeds [works] of the flesh** are evident, which are: immorality [*porneia*], impurity [*akatharsia*], sensuality [*aselgeia*], ²⁰ idolatry [*eidólolatria*], sorcery [*pharmakeia*], enmities [*echthra*], strife [*eris*], jealousy [*zelos*], outbursts of anger [*thumos*], disputes [*eritheia*], dissensions [*dichostasia*], factions [*hairesis*], ²¹ envying [*phthonos*], drunkenness [*methé*], carousing [*kómos*], and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Some of the highlighted items have to do with personal attitudes or behaviors while others are more focused on how one interacts with others. In our culture, an example of at least some of these can be seen during “spring break” when students flock to Florida for “partying” or the annual Mardi Gras “celebration” in New Orleans. Some of these are perhaps less obvious like “jealousy” or “envying.”

A similar passage occurs in Ephesians.

Ephesians 5:3–5

³ But immorality [*porneia*] or any impurity [*akatharsia*] or greed [*pleonexia*] must not even be named among you, as is proper [*prepó*] among saints; ⁴ and there must be no filthiness [*aischrotés*] and silly talk [*mórologia*], or coarse jesting [*eutrapelia*], which are not fitting [*anékó*], but rather giving of thanks. ⁵ For this you know with certainty, that no immoral [*pornos*] or impure [*akathartos*] person or covetous [*pleonektés*] man, who is an idolater [*eidólolatrés*], has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

If the people who practice (habitually is implied) such things will not inherit the kingdom of God, why would one who professes Christ as lord and savior habitually engage in such behaviors? These terms are more specific than the term “sin” but, in some cases, could also manifest in a variety of ways. We know that some of the Corinthians were practicing things that would have fallen into various categories above, but we know that despite their behaviors they were still considered to be “saved,” that is, they still had the promise of eternal life.¹⁵⁵ This message is communicated in the following verse.

Ephesians 5:8

⁸ for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light

“Walk as children of light” rather than as children of darkness.

An example of “flesh-dominance” is also provided in Romans.

Romans 1:22–32

²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for

¹⁵⁵ This section of Scripture, as well as Ephesians 5:3–5, can be taken in the sense of “no rewards” in the future for Christians who habitually practice such things, or, it can be taken in the sense described here, namely, why would you, a believer, want to practice such things.

an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures [idolatry]. ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity [*akatharsia*], so that their bodies would be dishonored [*atimazó*] among them. ²⁵For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature [idolatry] rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions [lit. passions [*pathos*] of dishonor [*atimia*]; for their women exchanged the natural [*phusikos*] function for that which is unnatural [lit. contrary (*para*) to nature], ²⁷and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural [*phusikos*] function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts [lit. the shame [*aschémosuné*] working out] and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. ²⁸And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved [*adokimos*] mind, to do those things which are not proper [*kathékó*], ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness [*adikia*], wickedness [*ponéria*], greed [*pleonexia*], evil [*kakia*]; full of envy [*phthonos*], murder [*phonos*], strife [*eris*], deceit [*dolos*], malice [*kakoétheia*]; they are gossips [*psithuristés*], ³⁰slanderers [*katalalos*], haters of God [*theostugés*], insolent [*hubristés*], arrogant [*huperephanos*], boastful [*alazón*], inventors of evil [*epheuretés kakos*], disobedient [*apeithés*] to parents, ³¹without understanding [*asunetos*], untrustworthy [*asunthetos*], unloving [*astorgos*], unmerciful [*aneleemon*]; ³²and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

It is perhaps of note that many of these terms are used sparingly in scripture; several are used only in this section. This could simply imply that they are not for primary focus but just for “reference.” Also, the string of items in vv. 29–31 is a figure of speech asyndeton in which there is no conjunction like “and,” “but,” or “nor” between the items. This can be contrasted with the figure polysyndeton in which there is a repeated conjunction between the items. In the case of asyndeton, the items are simply run together with no particular emphasis on any one item, whereas in polysyndeton, each item is given emphasis (e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:11 cited below).

If there are any self-righteous among us, we might consider that a violation of one (even one time) is a violation of all and “proof” of a lack of righteousness [[James 2:10](#)].

The previous section in Romans was primarily describing some of the “Greeks” which the Jews at Rome would have been familiar with. ¹⁵⁶The following section from Romans is addressed specifically to the Jews.

Romans 2:5, 8, 21, and 22

⁵But because of your stubbornness [*sklérotés*] and unrepentant [*ametanoétos*] heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, ... ⁸but to those who are selfishly ambitious [*eritheia*] and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. ... ²¹you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal [*kleptó*], do you steal [*kleptó*]? ²²You who say that one should not commit adultery [*moicheuó*], do you commit adultery [*moicheuó*]? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

In addition to Paul, Peter and James also identify some “works of the flesh.”

1 Peter 4:3 (ESV)

³For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality [*aselqeia*], passions [*epithumia*], drunkenness [*oinophlugia*], orgies [*kómos*], drinking parties [*potos*],

¹⁵⁶ This section could be applicable to others throughout history who reject God and choose “works of the flesh.”

and lawless idolatry [*athemitos eidólolatria*]. ⁴With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood [overflow, excess] of debauchery [*asótia*], and they malign you;

James 4:1–4

¹What is the source of quarrels [*polemos*] and conflicts [*maché*] among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? ²You lust [*epithumeó*] and do not have; so you commit murder [*phoneuó*]. You are envious [*zéloó*] and cannot obtain; so you fight [*machomai*] and quarrel [*polemeó*]. You do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives [wrongly *kakós*], so that you may spend it on your pleasures [*hédoné*]. ⁴You adulteresses [*moichalis*], do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

More from Paul in the letters to Timothy.

1 Timothy 1:9 and 10 (Berean Literal Bible)

⁹knowing this, that law is not enacted for a righteous one, but for the lawless [*anomos*] and insubordinate [*anupotaktos*], for the ungodly [*asebés*] and sinful [*hamartólos*], for the unholy [*anosios*] and profane [*bebélos*], for murderers of fathers [*patralóas*] and murderers of mothers [*métrólóas*], for slayers of man [*androphonos*], ¹⁰for the sexually immoral [*pornos*], homosexuals [*arsenokoites*], enslavers [*andrapodistés*], liars [*pseustés*], perjurers [*epiorkos*], and if anything other is opposed to being sound in the teaching,

The first three pairs in v. 9 (lawless/insubordinate; ungodly/sinful; unholy/profane) emphasize attitudes and/or actions relative to God or what is godly. The rest of the items emphasize attitudes and/or actions relative to others. This roughly mimics the Ten Commandments (love God; love your neighbor), so some indicate that the word “law” in v. 9 could be a reference to the Mosaic Law. The phrase “murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers” can be understood to mean any form of abuse of parents. In v.10, “enslavers” would include those involved in the “sex slave” or “worker slave” trade.

2 Timothy 3:1–5

¹But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self [*philautos*], lovers of money [*philarguros*], boastful [*alazón*], arrogant [*huperephanos*], revilers [*blasphémos*], disobedient [*apeithés*] to parents, ungrateful [*acharistos*], unholy [*anosios*], ³unloving [*astorgos*], irreconcilable [*aspondos*], malicious gossips [*diabolos*], without self-control [*akratés*], brutal [*anémeros*], haters of good [*aphilagathos*], ⁴treacherous [*prodotés*], reckless [*propetés*], conceited [*tuphoó*], lovers of pleasure [*philédonos*] rather than lovers of God, ⁵holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

The Corinthians had a reputation for questionable behavior.

1 Corinthians 5:11

¹¹But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person [*pornos*], or covetous [*pleonektés*], or an idolater [*eidólolatrés*], or a reviler [*loidoros*], or a drunkard [*methusos*], or a swindler [*harpax*]*--* not even to eat with such a one.

1 Corinthians 6:9 and 10

⁹Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators [*pornos*], nor idolaters [*eidólolatrés*], nor adulterers [*moichos*], nor effeminate [*malakos*], nor homosexuals [*arsenokoites*], ¹⁰nor thieves [*kleptés*], nor the covetous [*pleonektés*], nor drunkards [*methusos*], nor revilers [*loidoros*], nor swindlers [*harpax*], will inherit the kingdom of God.

Both of these sections from 1 Corinthians are examples of polysyndeton. In 5:11, “or” is repeated; in 6:9 and 10, “nor” is repeated. Again, this figure places some emphasis on each item in the list.

2 Corinthians 12:20

²⁰ For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife [[eris](#)], jealousy [[zelos](#)], angry tempers [[thumos](#)], disputes [[eritheia](#)], slanders [[katalalia](#)], gossip [[psithurismos](#)], arrogance [[phusiósís](#)], disturbances [[akatastasia](#)];

And, just a few more.

Ephesians 4:31

³¹ Let all bitterness [[pikria](#)] and wrath [[thumos](#)] and anger [[orgé](#)] and clamor [[kraugé](#)] and slander [[blasphémia](#)] be put away from you, along with all malice [[kakia](#)].

Colossians 3:5 and 8

⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality [[porneia](#)], impurity [[akatharsia](#)], passion [[pathos](#)], evil desire [[kakos epithumia](#)], and greed [[pleonexia](#)], which amounts to idolatry. ... ⁸ But now you also, put them all aside: anger [[orgé](#)], wrath [[thumos](#)], malice [[kakia](#)], slander [[blasphémia](#)], and abusive speech [[aischrologia](#)] from your mouth.

And, to quote Jesus.

Matthew 15:19

¹⁹ "For out of the heart come evil [[ponéros](#)] thoughts, murders [[phonos](#)], adulteries [[moicheia](#)], fornications [[porneia](#)], thefts [[klopé](#)], false witness [[pseudomarturia](#)], slanders [[blasphémia](#)].

On the other hand, do this...

1 Peter 2:1

¹ Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,

1 Peter 1:14

¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, ¹⁵ but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; ¹⁶ because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

1 Peter 2:11

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

1 Peter 3:8

⁸ To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; ⁹ not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

It is possible that through one’s own willpower a person could stop doing some of the things identified above. However, one of the major “points” of the Gospel (the truth regarding Christ’s accomplishment, etc.) is that with the help of the gift of holy spirit a person can literally become a “new person” that is “Christ-like.” Remember how Jesus clarified the meaning of adultery.

Matthew 5:28

²⁸ but I say to you that everyone who **looks at a woman with lust for her** has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Sin in evidence begins with a desire. This is something “internal.” No strength of will can eliminate such desires. Only the truth of the Gospel and the help of the gift of holy spirit can bring about the new person spoken of in the Gospel and with that the new desires that come from that new, Christ-like person.

The following verse identifies some of what is available as that new person emerges.

Galatians 5:22 and 23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The “fruit of the spirit” is in stark contrast to the “works of the flesh.”

Below are all the items identified above sorted alphabetically (112 items). This list should not be considered complete, but it is a good “sampling” of items that would fall under the category of “works of the flesh.” No distinction has been made between singular or plural. Only the part of speech and number of occurrences is noted. Some of these words have a variety of usages or nuanced meanings which can be discovered in any Bible concordance. In the electronic version of this resource, all the items are linked to biblehub.com. Following this list is a “Summary” of at least some of the English words or phrases that can be found with the definitions of these terms.

The List

[acharistos](#); adj. 2x

[adikia](#); n. 25x

[adokimos](#); adj. 8x

[aischrologia](#); n. 1x

[aischrotés](#); n. 1x

[akatastasia](#); n. 5x

[akatharsia](#); n. 10x

[atimazó](#); v. 7x

[akathartos](#); adj. 32x

[akratés](#); adj. 1x

[alazón](#); n. 2x

[ametanoétos](#); adj. 1x

[andrapodistés](#); n. 1x

[androphonos](#); n. 1x

[anékó](#); v. 3x

[aneleemon](#); adj. 1x

[anémeros](#); adj. 1x

[anomos](#); adj. 10x

[anosios](#); adj. 2x

[anupotaktos](#); adj. 4x

[apeithés](#); adj. 6x

[aphilagathos](#); adj. 1x

[arsenokoites](#); n. 2x

[aschémosuné](#); n. 2x

[asebés](#); adj. 9x

[aselqeia](#); n. 10x

[asótia](#); n. 3x

[aspondos](#); adj. 1x

[astorgos](#); adj. 2x

[asunetos](#); adj. 5x

[asunthetos](#); adj. 1x

[athemitos](#); adj. 2x

[atimia](#); n. 7x

[bebélos](#); adj. 5x

[blasphémia](#); n. 18x

[blasphémos](#); adj. 4x

[diabolos](#); adj. 38x

[dichostasia](#); n. 2x

[dolos](#); n. 11x

[echthra](#); n. 6x

[eidólolatrés](#); n. 7x (masc.)

[eidólolatria](#); n. 4x (fem.)

[epiorkos](#); adj. 1x

[epithumeó](#); v. 16x

[epithumia](#); n. 38x

[eris](#); n. 9x

[eritheia](#); n. 7x

[eutrapelia](#); n. 1x

[hairesis](#); n. 9x

[hamartólos](#); adj. 47x

[harpax](#); adj. 5x

[hédoné](#); n. 5x

[hubristés](#); n. 2x

[huperephanos](#); adj. 5x

[kakia](#); n. 11x

[kakoétheia](#); n. 1x

[kakos](#); adj. 50x

[katalalia](#); n. 2x

[katalalos](#); adj. 1x

[kathékó](#); v. 2x

[kleptés](#); n. 16x

[kleptó](#); v. 13x

[klopé](#); n. 2x

[kómos](#); n. 3x

[kraugé](#); n. 6x

[loidoros](#); adj. 2x

[maché](#); n. 4x

[machomai](#); v. 4x

[malakos](#); adj. 4x

[methé](#); n. 3x

[methusos](#); n. 2x

[métrolóas](#); n. 1x

[moichalis](#); n. 7x

[moicheia](#); n. 3x

[moicheuó](#); v. 15x

[moichos](#); n. 3x

[mórologia](#); n. 1x

[oinophluqia](#); n. 1x

[orqé](#); n. 36x

[pathos](#); n. 3x

[patralóas](#); n. 1x

[pharmakeia](#); n. 2x

[philarquros](#); adj. 2x

[philautos](#); adj. 1x

[philédonos](#); adj. 1x
[phoneuó](#); v. 12x
[phonos](#); n. 9x
[phthonos](#); n. 9x
[phusikos](#); adj. 3x
[phusiósis](#); n. 1x
[pikria](#); n. 4x
[pleonektés](#); n. 4x
[pleonexia](#); n. 10x
[polemeó](#); v. 7x

[polemos](#); n. 18x
[ponéria](#); n. 7x
[ponéros](#); adj. 79x
[porneia](#); n. 25x
 [pornos](#); n. 10x
[potos](#); n. 1x
[prodotés](#); n. 3x
[propetés](#); adj. 2x
[pseudomarturia](#); n. 2x
[pseustés](#); n. 10x

[psithurismos](#); n. 1x
[psithuristés](#); n. 1x
[sklérotés](#); n. 1x
[theastugés](#); adj. 1x
[thumos](#); n. 18x
[tuphoó](#); v. 3x
[zéloó](#); v. 12x
[zelos](#); n. 16x

Summary

Below are some of the words/phrases used in the definitions of the words above. We have also added some vernacular words/phrases that would be equivalent. As mentioned at the opening, these “works of the flesh” all fall under the general category of “sin,” that is, attitudes/intentions/behaviors that do not conform to God’s righteousness.

Regarding attitude:

being ungrateful, unthankful
uncaring; without compassion; hardhearted; callous; mean-spirited
harboring hatred (especially of what is good)
arrogant; conceited; prideful
never content
headstrong; stubborn
being a “loser;” a “failure;” “sorry” for oneself

Regarding speech:

lying; misrepresenting; distorting; falsifying; testifying falsely; misleading
magnifying oneself; boasting;
belittling/tearing down/maligning others, gossiping; speaking untruthfully about others; slandering;
backbiting
using foul/obscene language; telling unsavory/lewd/off-color jokes
causing division (especially within the body of Christ); quarrelling; engaging in wars of words
relentless sarcasm
using abusive language; “murdering” others with words; using insults
complaining; grumbling

Regarding behavior:

stealing (literal or figurative)
murder (literal or figurative)
focused on personal pleasure (sexual or otherwise); engaging in pornography; adultery
engaging in unnatural sex (men with men, women with women; men with boys; being effeminate)
being an idolater (seeking as a priority anything other than God and godliness)
engaged in witchcraft/sorcery

being unjust; unmerciful
abusive; hurtful towards others
engaged in bribery; engaged in extortion
abusive of parents
not keeping contracts/agreements; unreliable
inventing evil (devising new ways to hurt others and benefit oneself)
engaged in slavery (sex slaves/work slaves)
lacking self-control; reckless; uncontrolled behavior; drunkenness (alcohol or drugs)
addiction (of any sort)
bursts of anger
being "cheap" (a "cheepskite," miserly, stingy) with money and time
always needing the "last word"

Sin and the “Helper”

As Jesus declared, “the flesh is weak.” God, through the work of Jesus Christ, provides help. In John 14, Jesus refers to a “helper” that will be available after his departure.

John 14:16–18 and 26

¹⁶ “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another **Helper**, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ... ²⁶ “But **the Helper, the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

In these verses, Jesus refers to that gift of holy spirit as “the helper” [*paraklétos*]. Jesus is informing his disciples that he must leave but he will not leave them alone like orphans. He will send a “helper.” This word was used in a variety of contexts including referring to an advocate before a judge, like a lawyer; or a counselor; or a comforter; or an encourager. In this context, where Christ is offering comfort and encouragement considering his coming absence, “helper” is appropriate. Among the things this “helper” will do is teach and bring things to their remembrance. So, here we have the gift of holy spirit being spoken of as if it is a person. This is the figure of speech personification. The gift of holy spirit is not a person, though some speak of it as if it is because of verses like this. Perhaps Jesus used personification to emphasize that this spirit would be much like having his presence. This same idea is repeated in the following verse.

Colossians 1:27 (ESV)

²⁷ To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.

“Christ in you” does not mean that Christ is literally in a person. The reference is to the gift of holy spirit. Again, this emphasizes that having the gift of holy spirit is like having Christ present...having a helper present.

The gift of holy spirit is also described as a divine nature.

2 Peter 1:4

⁴ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the **divine** [*theios*] **nature** [*phusis*], having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

Just before he was received up into heaven, Jesus referred to this gift as “power.”

Acts 1:8

⁸ but you will receive **power** [*dunamis*] when the Holy Spirit [spirit-gift] has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Without this “helper” (“Christ,” the “divine nature,” “power”) everyone is, among other things, “helpless.”

Romans 5:6

⁶ For while we were still **helpless** [*asthenés*], at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

The word *asthenés* literally means without strength but is used in a variety of contexts. It is used as a noun to describe people who are sick, i.e., “the sick” [*Acts 5:15*]. It is used to describe a “weak”

conscience [[1 Corinthians 8:7](#)]. It is used to describe the Law [[Hebrews 7:18, 19](#)]. Here it is used to describe a person before salvation and before receiving the gift of holy spirit. The “helper” that Jesus promised and made available on the day of Pentecost and ever since has the capability to address all of these concerns. Some of the capabilities of this “helper” are identified in 1 Corinthians 12.

- Speaking in tongues
- Interpretation of tongues
- Prophecy
- Word of knowledge
- Word of Wisdom
- Discerning of spirits
- Faith
- Miracles
- Gifts of healing

Among the benefits this “helper” can provide is referred to as “fruit of the spirit.”

Galatians 5:22 and 23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

The manifestations of the helper-spirit and the fruit of that helper-spirit enable the one who has believed on Christ to be “strong” rather than “weak.” In fact, these enable a person to become Christ-like in the here-and-now and to also have the promise of having a body fashioned like his glorious, resurrected body in the future.

Sin and Desire

Note the bolded words in the following sections of Scripture.

Genesis 2:8 and 9

⁸The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden;¹⁵⁷ and there He placed the man whom He had formed. ⁹Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is **pleasing** [*chamad*] to the **sight** [*mareh*] and good for food;¹⁵⁸ the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:5 and 6

⁵"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your **eyes** [*ayin*] will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶When the woman **saw** [*raah*] that the tree was good for food, and that it was a **delight** [*taavah*] to the **eyes** [*ayin*], and that the tree was **desirable** [*chamad*] to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Here are five words of interest in these verses.

chamad—"pleasing" (Genesis 2:9) and "desirable" (Genesis 3:6)—used in positive and negative contexts. In a "good" sense ([Psalm 19:10a](#); [Song of Solomon 2:3](#)) and in a "bad" sense ([Proverbs 1:22](#); [6:24,25](#))—in negative contexts it may be translated as "covet" ([Exodus 20:17](#)). This word equates to the Greek word *epithumia* which likewise can be translated as "desire" or "lust" depending on the context.

mareh—"sight" (Genesis 2:9)—most frequently translated as "appearance" (48x NASB). It can refer to the act of seeing but also refers to appearance, that is, what can be seen with the eyes ([Genesis 29:17](#); [39:6](#) NET: "well-built and good looking"). In Genesis 2:9, the phrase could read, "every tree that is pleasing in appearance."¹⁵⁹ This noun comes from the verb *raah* that occurs in Genesis 3:6 (noted below).

ayin—"eyes" (Genesis 3:6)—is used in a wide variety of literal and figurative expressions. It is most often translated as "eye" or "eyes" (440x) and "sight" (277x) (NASB). *mareh*, as mentioned above, can emphasize the appearance, what is outward (objective), whereas *ayin* can emphasize the response to what is seen (subjective). These are not necessarily the only defining characteristics of the two words.

raah—"saw" (Genesis 3:6)—is used in a wide variety of circumstances. It is most often translated as "see" (410x), "saw" (310x), "seen" (153x), and "look" (71x) (NASB). It occurs seven times in

¹⁵⁷ *Eden*, עֵדֵן, proper name, of a territory, 16x—Strong's: The same as *eden*, עֵדֵן, (masculine); Eden, the region of Adam's home -- Eden. [Cambridge](#): Eden in Hebrew means "delight," or "happiness;" and the Israelite naturally associated this meaning of the word "Eden" with the dwelling place of the first man and woman, because this auspicious name seemed appropriate to the Garden of Jehovah. Hence we find the Garden of God spoken of as the place of fertility, beauty, and delight: [Isaiah 51:3](#), [Ezekiel 28:13](#); [Ezekiel 31:8-9](#); [Ezekiel 36:35](#), [Joel 2:3](#). [Benson](#): Although the word eden signifies delight and pleasure; and undoubtedly the situation of the garden was extremely delightful, yet it is here the name of a place...

¹⁵⁸ "good for food [*maakal*]" implies that the body-soul man God placed in the garden needed food to sustain his body.

¹⁵⁹ NET [note](#): Heb "desirable of sight [or "appearance"]." The phrase describes the kinds of trees that are visually pleasing and yield fruit that is desirable to the appetite.

Genesis 1 in the phrase, “God saw [[raah](#)]” (Genesis [1:4](#), [10](#), [12](#), [18](#), [21](#), [25](#), [31](#)). It has a figurative sense that means to think, perceive, or to understand, like the expression, “I see what you mean.”

[taavah](#)—“delight” (Genesis 3:6)—most often translated “desire” (14x NASB); used of good and bad desires. Examples of “good” desires: [Psalm 10:17](#) and [21:2](#); examples of “bad” desires: [Psalm 10:3](#); [78:29](#), [30](#). In Gen. 3:6, though apparently desirable, this fruit was not to be eaten.¹⁶⁰

These five words highlight appearance, seeing (both literally and figuratively), and desire (wanting). There is an emphasis on the sense of sight, as well as thoughts and emotions.

In Genesis 2:9, we read that the garden of Eden had trees that were pleasing to the sight or pleasing in appearance. The trees were probably strong, lush, and fruitful; not weak, dried up, and fruitless. According to Genesis 1:31, “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” We assume that these trees were not only pleasing in God’s sight but also pleasing in the sight of the people He placed in the garden. What is implied by the combination of these five words is that it is not just that something can be seen and that someone can see it but that there is a response or reaction to what is seen—a thought, a judgment, or an emotion is prompted by what is seen. In these two records, it is evident that the people God placed in the garden had the capability to literally see trees but also to see them as **pleasing in appearance**, that is, they could appreciate the appearance of the trees. All mankind still has this capability. If a person sees a fruit tree loaded with fruit, it is a “pleasing sight” as opposed to seeing a withering and barren tree. This becomes significant when we consider other capabilities God “built-in” to the man and woman when he made and formed them. It should be obvious that a person does not need a spiritual enablement to “see” (experience) a tree as pleasant in appearance (to enjoy the sight); or to “see” another person as attractive in appearance.

The Hebrew word [chamad](#) is translated as “pleasing” in Genesis 2:9 and as “desirable” in Genesis 3:6. To find something pleasing or to find something desirable are two subtly different capabilities. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was presented to Eve by the serpent in such a way that she not only noticed it as a “delight to the eyes,” that is, it was “pleasing in appearance,” but also as something “desirable” because the serpent cunningly convinced her that she was “missing out” on something. At this point, her capability to see something as pleasing became a desire to have something that God had forbidden. This sort of misdirected desire is the root of all kinds of fruitless living [[Mark 4:19](#)]. We know that Eve acted out her desire and ate. In the NT, this would be described as “walking by the flesh.” The desire for gain in various forms is constantly promoted in this world and leads to destruction [[Proverbs 1:19](#)]. There are countless records of warning in Scripture along these lines.

Though the word itself does not seem to occur in Scripture in the sense in which we generally think of it, “curiosity” is perhaps an aspect of desire. Curiosity is not inherently good or bad. God intended this capability for good, but as the old saying goes, “curiosity killed the cat.” In the sense of wanting to know, it can be seen in Genesis 3:9 as well as many other places in Scripture. Wanting knowledge or wanting to be wise is not inherently evil. It is a question of what knowledge do I want, how am I pursuing it, and why (positive examples—see [Psalm 86:11](#) “unite my heart;” [Psalm 25:1](#) “lift up my soul (ESV: I direct my desire to You);” [Colossians 3:1 and 2](#)). To be curious/desirous to have a growing knowledge of God, growing in wisdom, ought to have been preferred by Eve to grasping for a knowledge of good and evil—grasping to be wise.¹⁶¹ The “fear of God” is the beginning of wisdom—that is, humility with respect to

¹⁶⁰ See also [avah](#).

¹⁶¹ Per NET [notes](#), there are a couple legitimate ways to translate Gen. 3:6: “You will be like divine beings who know good and evil” or “You will be, like God himself, knowers of good and evil.” [Note: “knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4) is equated with “being wise” (Gen. 3:6).] The meaning of this expression has been handled in a variety of

God. The serpent enticed Eve with the same thing that enticed him, that is, being like God ([Isaiah 14:14](#)) as opposed to being humble before God. This has been and continues to be a strong enticement among mankind in this world influenced by the devil.

As an aside, to desire something, a person must have some knowledge or information about that something. Eve would not have had a desire for the forbidden fruit if the serpent had not provided certain information to her. In this case, the information was not fully truthful but deceptive [[1 Timothy 2:14](#)]. The serpent had an evil intent in mind and used persuasive information to appeal to Eve. Had Eve never heard that there was something to be gained by eating from that tree (i.e., to be like God, to be wise), she would never have had a desire to eat from it. This principle still holds true. If a person has no knowledge of something, they cannot have a desire for it, either good or bad. For example, if a person has never heard of ice cream, they cannot have a desire to eat ice cream.

The following verses from James describe this process of desire turning to sin.

James 1:13–15

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust [[epithumia](#)]. ¹⁵ Then when lust [[epithumia](#)] has conceived [[sullambanó](#)], it gives birth [[tiktó](#)] to sin [[hamartia](#)]; and when sin [[hamartia](#)] is accomplished [[apoteleó](#)], it brings forth [[apokueó](#)] death.

Here are some words of interest in this section.

[epithumia](#)—“lust”—occurs in both positive and negative contexts (positive: [Luke 22:15](#); negative: [Mark 4:19](#)); correlates to the Hebrew word [chamad](#).

[sullambanó](#)—“conceived”—Thayer: **b. to conceive, of a woman** (often so in the Sept. for הָרָה); see [Luke 1:24, 31, 36; 2:21](#).

[tiktó](#)—“gives birth”—to bring forth, bear, produce (fruit from the seed); properly, **of women giving birth**; see [Luke 1:31; Matthew 1:21, 23, 25](#).

[apokueó](#)—“brings forth”—to bring forth from the womb, give birth to; carries the same sense as [tiktó](#), namely **giving birth**; only other occurrence [James 1:18](#) (note NIV, “give us birth,” Holman, “gave us a new birth”).

The figurative language used in this section is striking. Desire (after “having intercourse with evil knowledge”) “conceives” and “gives birth to” “Sin;” she in turn “gives birth to” “Death.”¹⁶²

Note the phrase “by his own lust.” The capability to desire was built-in to man by God. When this capability is misdirected or abused, it is called “lust,” which is “over” desire or “out of bounds” desire. It is not a different capability.

The words [sullambanó](#) and [tiktó](#) occur together in [Luke 1:31](#) cited above, “...you will **conceive** in your womb and **bear** a son.” First, there is conception and then there is giving birth. Here is the NET version of James 1:15.

ways. It is possible that the expression could be read as “the knowledge of good AND EVIL”—meaning they already had some knowledge of good but not of evil.

¹⁶² Not to make too much of it, but “sin” [[hamartia](#)] and desire [[epithumia](#)] are feminine; death [[thanatos](#)] is masculine.

James 1:15 (NET)

¹⁵ Then when desire [*epithumia*] conceives [*sullambanó*], it gives birth [*tiktó*] to sin, and when sin is full grown, it gives birth [*apokueó*] to death.

Though there are two different Greek words used for “birth” in this verse, the meaning is essentially the same. What we have in this verse is “desire” [*epithumia*] being personified as a woman conceiving and then giving birth to “sin.” “Sin” is also being personified since it is not literally a baby. Then, when this “baby” matures, she gives birth to “Death.”

It is obvious that the capability to find things pleasing and to desire can be misdirected, as turned out to be the case with Eve. It is also obvious that this capability can lead to obsession—being covetous. This was certainly not God’s intended purpose for this capability, but along with this capability came the possibility of abuse. The first example of “out of bounds” desire occurred with Eve. Ever since, the god of this age has played no small part in encouraging the abuse of this capability. There is no scriptural indication that this capability has been somehow corrupted because of the action of Adam and Eve. The capability has not changed but through the influence of the world, along with the people in it, and no other internal moderating influence (like spirit), “out of bounds” desires have and continue to abound.

How the “desire” capability was impacted by the disobedience of Adam is worth considering. Being expelled from the garden, Adam’s survival depended on the “sweat of his brow.” In other words, if Adam did not work hard, he and his family would die prematurely. This circumstance would obviously impact what “desires” he or any other person might (or might not) have. So, it might be accurate to say that the capability to desire was not corrupted, but that the altered conditions post-Eden both internally (loss of spirit) and externally (out of the garden and into the “devil’s realm”) certainly have had a negative impact towards misdirected or over desires.

The following verse describes escaping this world dominated by corrupting desires.

2 Peter 1:2–4 (ESV)

² May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. ³ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption [*phthora*] that is in the world [*kosmos*] because of sinful desire [*epithumia*] (KJV, NASB: “lust”).

2 Peter 1:4 (NET)

...you may become partakers of the divine nature after escaping the worldly corruption that is produced by evil desire.¹⁶³

The significant point is that the gift of holy spirit is an enablement that makes it possible for a person to not be dominated by ungodly, corrupting desires. In conjunction with a renewing of the mind, this is the only way in this world to be genuinely “strong” (to be “mature”). This same concept is communicated in the following verses.

Romans 13:14

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision [*pronoia*] for the flesh [*sarx*] in regard to its lusts [*epithumia*].

Galatians 5:16

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire [*epithumia*] of the flesh [*sarx*].

¹⁶³ NET—see note 20 regarding the word “escape.”

In Romans 13:14, “provision” is “forethought,” that is “thinking ahead” about satisfying ungodly or unrighteous desires, i.e., desires of “the flesh.” Rather than thinking about how to fulfill ungodly and unrighteous desires, those born again are to think according to their new identity in Christ and “think ahead” to godly and righteous desires. “Walk by the spirit” in Galatians 5:16 involves both the renewing of the mind and the recognition of and response to the gift of holy spirit.

Both these verses could be read as if “flesh” had its own desires, especially given the NASB translation of Romans 13:14. However, there is no “its” in the text. The Berean Literal of the latter part of the verse reads, “make no provision for the desires of the flesh,” which is similar to Galatians 5:16. The “flesh” is not some part of each of us that has its own desires that is distinct from us. The desires of the flesh might be contrary to what we would really like to do, but the “desires of the flesh” are our desires. If “the flesh” is read as some part of us that has its own desires, it would be a personification of “the flesh” *as if* “the flesh” is some sort of evil entity living in each of us. Particularly in Romans chapters 6 and 7, these desires (lusts) are in fact spoken of *as if* there is another entity alive and well within each of us. “Sin” is personified as this entity “dwelling” in each of us and “reigning” over us. Obviously, not all desires are evil. The concept being portrayed is that those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ are “new” and have been “freed from (the dominance of) Sin.” This is characterized throughout the Church Epistles as the “old man” versus the “new man.” The “new man” submits to Righteousness, while the “old man” submits to “Sin.” The “old man” and “new man” are not literal “men” living in us. It is easy to understand that Scripture is talking about choosing a “way of life.”

In a figurative sense, there are two “men.” We either promote the “character” of the “old man” or we promote the “character” of the “new man.” What is being portrayed in Romans 7 is the “old man” being incapable of overriding the “desires of the flesh.” Eve epitomized this problem, even though she had spirit. She “walked” by her senses, her emotions, her feelings. What we now call the “old man.” What begins in Chapter 8 is a presentation of an aspect of the “new man” who has the gift of holy spirit. Through the renewing of the mind and acknowledging and responding to the spirit, a person can live out the “new man” character. In Chapter 7, everyone who is only body and soul is only capable of expressing the “old man” character which is “weak” in the broadest sense of the term. In Chapter 8, the one who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ has an added capability, which coupled with the renewing of the mind, enables the person to demonstrate the character of the “new man” and to be “strong” in the broadest sense of the term.

Sin and Enter

Romans 5:12

¹²Therefore, just as through one man **sin entered** into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

The Greek word translated “entered” in Romans 5:12, [eiserchomai](#), is used 194 times:¹⁶⁴

- 179x people entered a place or a situation, e.g., a city, a room, a wedding feast, life, joy, temptation, the kingdom of God, God’s rest, etc.
- 3x spirits entered people ([Mk 9:25](#); [Lk 8:30](#); [Lk 11:26](#) [“dwell” = [katoikéō](#)]);
- 3x spirits entered swine (same situation: [Mk 5:13](#); [Lk 8:32](#); [Lk 8:33](#));
- 2x Satan entered Judas (same situation: [Lk 22:3](#); [Jn 13:27](#));
- 2x food enters a person’s mouth ([Mt 15:11](#); [Acts 11:8](#));
- 1x an angel enters ([Luke 1:28](#));
- 1x an argument entered ([Luke 9:46](#));
- 1x the cries of the laborers enter into the ears of the Lord ([James 5:4](#));
- 1x the breath of God entered the “two witnesses” ([Rev. 11:11](#)); and
- 1x **sin entered the world** ([Rom. 5:12](#));

Of the 194 occurrences, 186 are in conjunction with people or spirit beings. The remaining seven occurrences are figurative:

- Satan entered Judas (2x);
- food entering the mouth (2x);
- an argument entered (1x);
- the cries of the laborers are entered into the Lord’s ears (1x);
- the breath of God entered the two witnesses (1x)
- sin entered the world (1x)

The reference to Satan entering Judas ([Lk 22:3](#); [Jn 13:27](#)) must be considered figurative since Satan did not literally enter Judas; food is an inanimate object, so this is figurative since food does not literally enter a person’s mouth ([Mt 15:11](#); [Acts 11:8](#)); an argument cannot literally enter ([Luke 9:46](#)); “cries” do not enter, they are heard; the “breath of God entered” is a figurative expression for God bringing the two witnesses back to life ([Rev. 11:11](#)); and sin entered the world should be taken as a figurative expression as well since sin is a concept not a person. Each of these is unique in its own right but each is definitely figurative, not literal.

We will take a moment to consider the three words “sin,” “enter,” and “world” and how they are used with each other in other contexts.

“enter” and “world”

“Enter” is used in conjunction with “world” only twice.

Romans 5:12a

¹²Therefore, just as through one man **sin entered** [[eiserchomai](#)] into [*eis*] **the world** [[kosmos](#)], and death through sin

¹⁶⁴ See the section “[eiserchomai—'enter'.](#)”

Hebrews 10:5 (Amplified Bible)

Therefore, when **Christ enters** [*eiserchomai*] into [*eis*] the **world** [*kosmos*], He says, “SACRIFICE AND OFFERING YOU HAVE NOT DESIRED, BUT [instead] YOU HAVE PREPARED A BODY FOR ME [to offer];

The contrast in these two verses is obvious. Sin entered the world and death followed. Christ entered the world” and brought life. “Enter” in Hebrews 10:5 can be understood as “became present” like a baby at birth becomes present in the world. In the same way, we might say that sin “became present” in the world. Per [James 1:15](#), ungodly or unrighteous desires “give birth” to “Sin.” The obvious difference is that Jesus is a person and sin is not.

In Romans 5:12, “sin” could be taken figuratively to refer to the “sin condition” that entered into the world. This would be the figure metonymy where “sin” is put for the result or consequence of sin. This condition is described in general terms in the preceding verses (vv. 6–10) as people being helpless, ungodly, sinners, and enemies of God. This “condition” includes being spirit-less, mortal, and living in a world dominated by the devil.¹⁶⁵

Another possibility is that “sin” is being spoken of *as if* it were a person—the figure personification. This would be supported by the way the word “enter” is predominantly used in Scripture. We also note that the personification of “Sin” occurs throughout the subsequent chapters of Romans and includes the expressions “Sin reigns” ([5:21](#); [6:12](#)), “the wages paid by Sin” ([6:23](#)), and “slaves of Sin” ([6:6](#), [17](#), [20](#)). Whereas “Sin” entered the world and brought death; Christ entered the world and brought life. The use of personification was certainly not foreign to Paul. We might also extrapolate a bit and say that Christ represents righteousness and Sin represents unrighteousness.

Christ overcame “Sin” and “Death.”

Hebrews 2:14 (Goodspeed)

Therefore since these children referred to have the same mortal nature, Jesus also shared it, like them, in order that by his death he might **dethrone the lord of death, the devil.**

This victory will become a total reality when “Death” (personified) is thrown into the “lake of fire” [[Revelation 20:14](#)].

“sin” and “world”

“Sin” and “world” occur in conjunction 3 times.

John 1:29

²⁹ The next day he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away [*airó*: pres. part. act.; taking away, bearing] the **sin** [*hamartia*] of the **world** [*kosmos*]!”¹⁶⁶

In John 1:29, “world” is a figurative reference to the people living in the world. Based on Romans 8:19–22, we might include the earth (even the universe) because it is also in “bondage to sin,” but the focus here is on people. What Jesus “bore” or “took away” was the certainty of the second death because of sins committed. Release from this death sentence was and is contingent on a person accepting Jesus’ accomplishment of living a righteous life, which was acknowledged by God when He raised him from the dead never to die again.

The expression “lamb of God,” points to the “Passover Lamb” which the Israelites were to sacrifice and put some of the blood on the door post of their house [[Exodus 12:21](#) and [22](#)]. The “angel of death” went

¹⁶⁵ This “condition” is handled in the section “[Sin as a Condition.](#)”

¹⁶⁶ A similar phrase using *airó* but without “world” occurs in [1 John 3:5](#).

throughout Egypt and if it saw the blood, it “passed over” that house and the first-born did not die. In [1 Corinthians 5:7](#), Paul also refers to Christ as “our Passover.” Peter refers to Christ as “a lamb unblemished and spotless” [[1 Peter 1:19](#)].

Sin may sometimes be referred to as a “burden.” We use the word burden in a variety of scenarios, e.g., the burden of being a father or a mother, which refers to the sense of responsibility one “carries.” A person may “carry the burden” of shame, guilt, or self-condemnation because of sins committed. The forgiveness made available through Jesus’ “bearing” the sin—through his acceptance of humiliation, punishment, and death—can release a person from “carrying” those emotional burdens. However, Jesus’ primary accomplishment was taking away the certainty of God’s wrath and judgment which would end in “eternal” (permanent) death. If there is no everlasting, “eternal” (permanent) life, being freed from any emotional burden is relatively meaningless.

Here is the next place where “sin” and “world” occur in conjunction.

John 16:8

⁸"And He, when He comes, will convict [*elegchó*] the **world** [*kosmos*] concerning [*peri*] **sin** and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning **sin** because they do not believe in Me.

Again, “world” refers to the people living in the world as is obvious from v. 9, “they do not believe in me.” This is a common theme throughout the Gospel of John, i.e., that “sin” refers to the failure to accept Jesus as the Messiah.

The third and final occurrence of “sin” and “world” in conjunction is in the following verse.

Romans 5:12

...through one man **sin** entered into the **world** [*kosmos*]...

As noted previously, “sin” in Romans 5:12 may be personification, in which case, “world” would refer to *the place* inhabited by mankind into which “Sin” entered. The use of the word “enter” supports understanding “world” as the *place* inhabited by people and not the people who inhabit the world. In other words, in Romans 5:12, “sin” as if some “thing” did not enter humankind like a virus or debilitating disease. We might think of “sin entered” in the same way we would think of “lawlessness entered the world” or “ungodliness and unrighteousness entered the world.” These are all abstract concepts that can be spoken of *as if* they are tangible things, like people or spirits, that can enter a place.

We can see from the above examples that “sin entered the world” in Romans 5:12 can be taken figuratively—either “sin,” as *the condition* that became a reality for all people in the world; or “sin” in the sense of “lawlessness” or “unrighteousness” became the dominant characteristic of the place inhabited by people; or that “Sin” being personified entered the place inhabited by people and brought “Death” along.

Sin and Death

Is there any question that there is a connection between sin and death? No doubt there is a connection, but scripture points to a lack of immediacy.

Consider Lucifer who sinned in the beginning [[1 John 3:8](#)]. He has continued to sin to this day.¹⁶⁷

God warned Adam that if he ate of a particular tree he would die. Adam ate, which is considered as him having sinned [[Romans 5:14](#)]. Scripture indicates he went on to live for 900+ years.

Cain killed his brother. Though not documented in scripture as a sin, most would agree that murder is a sin. He did not die but went on to live in another place [[Genesis 4:12](#)].

While the efforts to build the tower of Babel are not described as sin, it would seem that God considered it so and imposed a consequence that thwarted the effort, i.e., God instituted different languages to limit communication between the people and they scattered from one another [[Genesis 11:8](#)].

David had sexual relations with Uriah's wife Bathsheba and she got pregnant. He also had Uriah killed on the battlefield. He admitted guilt to Nathan and went on to live a long life [[2 Samuel 12:13](#)].

There are varying reasons why these situations played out as they did. And, in some cases, we may not really have a complete explanation as to why they played out as they did. This is particularly true with respect to Lucifer/the devil who to this day continues to sin.

It is evident, like in the record of David, that acknowledging sin can elicit forgiveness from God and the removal of a death sentence. It is also evident that removal of punishment does not equal removal of consequences, e.g., David's son died.

Somewhat in contrast to the above examples...

Consider the flood in Noah's day. What was going on would fall under the category of sin. There was some passage of time while Noah built the ark before God intervened and many died [[Genesis 6:13, 27, 28](#); [1 Peter 3:20](#)].

Consider Sodom and Gomorrah. The aberrant behavior (which would fall under the category of sin) that was going on in these cities was apparently going on for some time. However, at some point, God chose to intervene and the "rest of story" is well-known [[Genesis 19:24, 25](#)].

Consider the Pharaoh. He defied Moses (and God) on multiple occasions [[Exodus 10:17](#)]. He died with the rest of his army in the Red Sea [[Exodus 14:28](#)].

Consider Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They rose up against Moses in the wilderness (described as "sin" [[Numbers 16:26](#)]). Their rebellion resulted in them and their families being "swallowed up" by the earth [[Numbers 16:32](#)].

There are numerous records in scripture involving sin even if "sin" is not specifically labelled as such. It is difficult (perhaps impossible) to generalize concerning any punishment or consequences associated with sins or sinning, especially death. It might be said that generally God will let sin "run its course" to the end that it proves itself to be sin by the "fruit" of bad outcomes—Romans 1:18–32 is a good example of this. History in general is a good example of this as well because if all sin was punished by death, no one would be alive. This is not to say that "sin" will not ultimately be judged and righteous punishment

¹⁶⁷ There are some wicked spirits that have been put in "prison" in the spiritual realm (1 Peter 3:18–20).

effected. Regarding all other circumstances, God has His reasons for why certain situations are handled in a particular way and others handled differently. In some cases, perhaps many, withholding death gives people the opportunity, like in David's case, to acknowledge the sin and repent and to receive forgiveness. In the OT, God's actions can be viewed through the lens of endeavoring to establish a group of people and a place from which the Messiah would come. This, at points, necessitated God acting in certain ways to ensure that outcome. In this "age of grace," a dominant theme is to give ample opportunity for individuals to hear about and accept Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, and therefore, be guaranteed everlasting life. So, while it is clear from scriptures like Romans 1:18–3:20 that unrepented sin will ultimately be judged and condemned, resulting in death, we perhaps should be cautious about declaring a direct link between sin and death since "variables" may be involved, like those noted above.

We might consider the following verse which is not uncommon to hear in the context of sin and death.

Romans 6:23

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Based on this verse, it might be easy to say, "Sin results in death," but let's take a closer look.

In this verse "sin" is personified as an employer or superior who pays "wages." The Greek word for "wages" [*opsónion*] was used to describe the "pay" that soldiers would receive. "Wages" are earned for service. The character "Sin" pays work or service with death. Notice how the Weymouth translation handles this verse.

Romans 6:23 (Weymouth)

For the wages paid by Sin are death; but God's free gift is the Life of the Ages bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This version highlights the personification of "Sin." This personification occurs throughout Chapter 6 where "Sin" is portrayed as a slave owner/master [vv. 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22]. The point is not primarily about the relationship between "sin" and "death" but that **service** to "Sin" results in a payout of "death." Service is the primary issue. This verse is also pointing to the **end result** of sin versus the **end result** of trust in Christ Jesus.

We might also consider the following seminal statement.

Romans 5:12

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

This verse says that through "one man," namely Adam, "sin entered into the world." This phrase is covered in some detail in the section, "[Sin and Enter](#)." The word "enter" is almost exclusively used in relationship to people or spirits, so saying "sin entered" is a unique figurative expression. Like "sin" being personified in Romans 6, "Sin" here is potentially being personified as a character entering the world and "Death" following on "Sin's" heels. It is true that "sinning" entered Adam's world when he disobeyed God, but as noted above, the verse does not say, "through one man's sin sinning entered the world." It is our opinion that the verse is a figurative expression, even possibly a dramatic theatrical presentation of what happened when Adam did what he did. He figuratively "opened the door" for Sin to enter the world's stage and Death followed right behind. In other words, it is a depiction or portrayal rather than a literal description. We might follow this up with the following.

1 Corinthians 15:54–56

⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH [*thanatos*] IS SWALLOWED UP

[[katapinó](#)] in victory [[nikos](#)]. ⁵⁵ "O DEATH [[thanatos](#)], WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY [[nikos](#)]? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶ The sting [[kentron](#)] of death [Death] is sin [[hamartia](#)], and the power [[dunamis](#)] of sin [[hamartia](#)] is the law [[nomos](#)]; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory [[nikos](#)] through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Death" is here personified as an enemy combatant with a "stinger missile." The explosive component (the part that kills) is "sin" (the "launcher" is "the law"). Figurative language can help paint a picture and make things more relatable to people. While the Corinthians did not have stinger missiles, scorpions were and are common in Greece.

If this view seems a bridge too far, then we can consider the "sin" that "entered" to be the "*sin condition*" that entered which guaranteed death. See the section "[Sin as a Condition.](#)"

With respect to sin and death and ultimate consequences...

Revelation 20:10

¹⁰ And the **devil** who deceived them was thrown into **the lake of fire and brimstone**, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever [a long time]. ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and **books** were opened; and another **book** was opened, **which is the book of life**; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the **books**, according to their deeds. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and **death** [Death] and Hades [**the Grave**] gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. ¹⁴ Then **death** [Death] and Hades [**the Grave**] were thrown into the **lake of fire**. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the **book of life**, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Again, we see "death" being personified as well as "the grave." **They** are described as giving up the dead for judgment and then **they** themselves being thrown into the "lake of fire." Figurative language aside, there is a literal judgment day coming. We note that those who have accepted or will accept the Lord Jesus Christ will have already been changed prior to these events.

With respect to Romans 5:12 where "death" followed "sin," consider the following.

Romans 5:13

¹³ for until the [Mosaic] Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed [charged] when there is no law.

Sin was not charged because no law was in place to be violated. No law, no crime, no punishment.

Romans 5:14

¹⁴ Nevertheless **death reigned** from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

Even though sin was not charged before the Mosaic Law went into effect, people still died; so, obviously they didn't die because they violated the Mosaic Law. Nor do people die because of any sin(s) they commit. People die because of the condition that was introduced as a consequence of Adam's disobedience. ¹⁶⁸ This "common death" is summarized in the phrase, "You are dust and to dust you shall return" [[Genesis 3:19](#)]. It does not matter how a person lives their life.

¹⁶⁸ See the section "[Sin as a Condition.](#)"

Subsequent verses highlight Adam's disobedience that led to condemnation and death versus Christ's obedience that led to righteousness and life. While "death" in this context might still refer to the "common death," righteousness points to being free from the "second death" and enjoying everlasting life.

Up to this point we have primarily considered literal death, i.e., the absence of life. Some may speak of a sense of "death in part." The concept is that any intent or action that is not in alignment with God's righteousness results in something less than the life and blessing that could have been enjoyed. While there may be some truth to this view, the word "death" is never used in this way in Scripture. The word "dead" is used figuratively in the parable of the prodigal son where the father describes his wayward son as being "dead" [[Luke 15:24](#)]. In that context, "dead" means there was no active relationship between the father and the son. "Dead" is also used figuratively in [Romans 6:11](#), "dead to sin;" in [Romans 7:8](#), "sin is dead;" in [Romans 8:10](#) our body is described as "dead because of sin;" in [Ephesians 2:1](#) all are described as "dead in trespasses and sins" meaning "as good as dead" like Abraham's body [[Romans 4:19](#)]; along this same line, [1 Timothy 5:6](#) speaks of a woman who is "as good as dead." This is also described in [Romans 5:6–10](#) where everyone is described as "helpless," "ungodly," "sinners," and "enemies of God." There are other similar examples but the point is that "death" and "dead" are not used in the sense of "death in part" or "dead in part." A person is either alive, dead, or as good as dead.

Sin and Reign

The word “reign” occurs in conjunction with “sin” in Romans [5:21](#) and [6:12](#). What follows is a look at the verb “reign” as translated from the Greek word [basileuó](#).¹⁶⁹ We will read through all the verses focusing on who or what else is used in conjunction with the word reign.

There are four occurrences of the word in the Gospels.

Matthew 2:22

²² But when he [Joseph] heard that **Archelaus was reigning** [[basileuó](#)] over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee.¹⁷⁰

Archelaus was reigning. Upon the death of Archelaus’ father, Herod the Great, the Roman emperor Augustus gave Archelaus reign over Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea. Archelaus never properly bore the title of king but was assigned the title of ethnarch—a governor of a province or common ethnic group. He was cruel and tyrannical, sensual in the extreme, a hypocrite and a plotter.¹⁷¹ Joseph, who had taken his wife Mary and infant son Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod was going to return to Judea after Herod’s death, but God warned him and rather than returning to Judea he and his family settled in Galilee.

Luke 1:33

³² He [Jesus] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,³³ and **he will reign** [[basileuó](#)] over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Here, the angel Gabriel is speaking to Mary concerning the son she will birth, namely Jesus. Gabriel declares that God will give Jesus the throne of his father David and that he will reign over the house of Jacob forever.

Luke 19:14 and 27

¹² He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.¹³ Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’¹⁴ But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want **this man to reign** [[basileuó](#)] over us.’ ...²⁶ ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.²⁷ But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want **me to reign** [[basileuó](#)] over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.’”

This is a parable about a man of noble birth. Much could be said regarding this parable, but for the purpose at hand, we simply note that “reign” is used in conjunction with “this man.”

These are all the occurrences of [basileuó](#) in the Gospels. We have Archelaus, Jesus, and a nobleman used in conjunction with “reigning.”

We next move on to Paul’s letters, but we will jump over the letter to the Romans for the moment.

¹⁶⁹ reign—[basileuó](#) (v. 21x) from [basileus](#) (n. 115x—exclusively “king;” among those named: David, Herod, Jesus, Pharaoh, Agrippa, Aretas, Melchizedek).

¹⁷⁰ In this section, cited from the ESV® Text Edition® (2016) unless otherwise noted.

¹⁷¹ See the Jewish Encyclopedia here: <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1729-archelaus>; and Bible Hub here: <https://biblehub.com/topical/a/archelaus.htm>.

1 Corinthians 4:8 (2x)

⁸ Already you [Corinthians] have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings [lit. **reigned** [\[basileuó\]](#)! And would that **you did reign** [\[basileuó\]](#), so that we might share the rule with [might reign with—[sumbasileuó](#)] you!

This is a reference to believers in Corinth. The only other occurrence of [sumbasileuó](#), from [sun](#) and [basileuó](#), is in [2 Timothy 2:12](#) (those who have served faithfully will also reign with him).

Here is the next occurrence of [basileuó](#).

1 Corinthians 15:25

²⁴ Then comes the end, when he [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For **he** [Christ] must **reign** [\[basileuó\]](#) until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

Christ must reign.

1 Timothy 6:15

¹³ I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, ¹⁴ to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ which he [God] will display at the proper time—he [God] who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings [lit. king [\[basileus\]](#) of **those reigning**—[basileuó](#)] and Lord of lords [lit. of those ruling], ¹⁶ who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

Those reigning. This is a reference to those reigning whom God is king over. The phrase translated here as “king of kings” is different from what occurs in [Revelation 17:14](#) and [Revelation 19:16](#) where the second “king” in those verses is the noun [basileus](#) rather than the verb [basileuó](#) as it is here. In those two instances the expression is applied to Christ. The expression “king of kings” is also applied to the Persian king Artaxerxes [[Ezra 7:12](#)] and Nebuchadnezzar [[Ezekiel. 26:7](#); [Daniel 2:37](#)].

Next, we will look at the occurrences in the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 5:10

⁹ And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you [the Lamb] to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and **they shall reign** [\[basileuó\]](#) on the earth.”

They shall reign. This is a reference to those who have believed on Jesus Christ who will reign.

Revelation 11:15 and 17

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and **he shall reign** [\[basileuó\]](#) forever and ever.” ... ¹⁷ saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for **you** have taken your great power and begun **to reign** [\[basileuó\]](#).”

He shall reign. You have begun to reign. These are references to God who will reign “in the end.”

Revelation 19:6

⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the **Lord our God the Almighty reigns** [\[basileuó\]](#).”

Our God reigns. Another reference to God reigning “in the end.”

Revelation 20:4 and 6

⁴Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They** came to life and **reigned** [basileuó] with Christ for a thousand years. ... ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and **they will reign** [basileuó] with him for a thousand years.

They reigned. They will reign. This is a reference to those who remained faithful during the tribulation who will reign with Jesus for a thousand years.

Revelation 22:5

⁵And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and **they will reign** [basileuó] forever and ever.

They will reign. This is a reference to all those who will live in the new heaven and earth who will reign.

Up to this point, we have seen the following used in conjunction with reign: Archelaus, Jesus Christ, a nobleman, the Corinthians, God, those who remained faithful during the tribulation, and all those who will live in the new heaven and earth. We see that all the occurrences of reign are used in conjunction with God or people...**they** reign.

We now turn to consider the word reign in the letter to the Romans.

Romans 5:14, 17 (2x), and 21 (2x)

¹⁴ Nevertheless **death reigned** [basileuó] from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. ... ¹⁷ For if by the transgression of the one, **death reigned** [basileuó] through the one, much more **those who receive** the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness **will reign** [basileuó] in life through the One, Jesus Christ. ... ²¹ so that, as **sin reigned** [basileuó] in death, even so **grace would reign** [basileuó] through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

There are five occurrences of “reign” in Romans 5. It is used in conjunction with death 2x, those who receive grace and the gift 1x, sin 1x, and grace 1x. The only other occurrence of reign in Romans is in the following verse.

Romans 6:12

¹² Let not **sin** therefore **reign** [basileuó] in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

These are all the occurrences in Romans. We quickly observe that “death,” “sin,” and “grace” are not people but concepts. *Only in Romans* is the word reign used in conjunction with concepts. This fact should demand some attention.

Paul lived during a time when Rome was the dominant military force in the world. Things were relatively peaceful as long as the Roman subjects paid tribute and did not promote rebellion. Any resistance on either of these points was met with military force. When Paul, by revelation, used a phrase like “death reigning,” it would have had poignant meaning to those living in Rome or within the Roman Empire because the Roman rulers essentially held absolute power.

We might be inclined to think of “reigning” as control. That is, people who reign control other peoples’ lives. This may be a step too far since control implies no personal choice. We might be better served to

think of reigning as who or that which defines or characterizes the environment in which people live. People, by choice, may engage in a variety of activities, even under a tyrant, but there is an overriding structure that is not to be or should not be or cannot be breached.

“Death,” “sin”, and “grace” are obviously not people. We see that Paul is communicating certain spiritual truths by using figurative language, namely, personification. Personification is a “figure by which things are represented or spoken of as persons; or, by which we attribute intelligence, by words or actions, to inanimate objects or abstract ideas.”¹⁷²

There are some who might think of sin as a force that influences or directs peoples’ actions. Since [1 John 3:4](#) equates sin with lawlessness, perhaps we can temporarily replace sin with lawlessness to help clarify our understanding of sin. For example, we might say, “Lawlessness reigned” or “Do not let lawlessness reign.” We suspect that it is easy to grasp that lawlessness is an abstract concept and not a person or a force. If we said, “After the unfortunate incident, lawlessness reigned,” we would understand this to mean that lawlessness was the predominant characteristic of the situation, i.e., people were burning things, destroying things, stealing things, etc.

The word “sin” tends to bring with it a host of thoughts that may or may not be what God intended to be brought to an expression such as “sin reigns.” We do not have the same sort of mental baggage with the word “lawlessness.” We also do not have such a problem with considering “grace reigning.” No one would take “grace” as being some sort of force that acts on people. A person’s acknowledgment of God’s grace may certainly impact how the person thinks, speaks, and acts, but grace, in and of itself, is not doing anything—so it is with sin.

The words death, sin, and grace are being used here in Romans *as if* they are kings or emperors. In the case of death, the figure could be taken a couple different ways. Death certainly became a dominant characteristic in the world as a consequence of Adam’s disobedience—all mankind became mortal (subject to death). But also, death became a dominating aspect of peoples’ “mental environment” as evidenced in such things as a focus on self-preservation or self-promotion. People do many ungodly and unrighteous things to ignore or explain away death. Death is not literally doing any of this. It is the *awareness* of death that motivates actions. The same can be said regarding sin. Sin, in the form of people committing sin, is certainly evident (just as death is evident), and the committing of sin is universal to mankind. In this respect, sin is a dominant characteristic of the world. But it can also be said that sin may be a dominating aspect of peoples’ mental environment as evidenced by the commission of various sins. It cannot be said that sin or death are literally doing something any more than it can be said that grace is literally doing something.

This viewpoint regarding sin argues against sin being understood as some sort of force. Only figuratively can sin, *as if* a person, be said to dictate, direct, or influence peoples’ actions. Sin is a concept that equals any thought, word, or deed contrary to God—this is a simplified literal definition of sin. Sin is portrayed *as if* it were a king or emperor or tyrant because of peoples’ experiences with being tempted and doing what is contrary to God. But it is not sin as some invisible force that is influencing or directing our actions, but our own thoughts and desires as encouraged by the god of this age and the less-than-godly people around us [see [James 1:14](#) and [15](#)].

Perhaps it is of some significance that Romans was initially written to people in Rome and generally to people living within the Roman Empire. The letter to the Romans highlights that Jesus did not come, as many Jews anticipated, to overthrow the Roman Empire but to overthrow the “empire” of Sin and Death—the wicked “emperors” “reigning” in the world.

¹⁷² *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, E.W. Bullinger, Baker Book House Company, reprinted 1968, p. 861.

In closing, consider the following regarding emperors reigning.

Luke 4:5 and 6

⁵ And **the devil** took him up and showed him **all the kingdoms of the world** in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, “To you **I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will.**”

2 Corinthians 4:4

⁴ In their case **the god of this world** (age) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Ephesians 2:1 and 2

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following **the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

Hebrews 2:14 and 15

¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death **He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,** ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

1 Corinthians 15:25

²⁴ Then comes the end, when he [Christ] delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For **he [Christ] must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.**

We conclude that “sin” or “death” “reigning” is figurative language that Paul used to “paint a picture” easily understood by people living under Roman tyranny. This sort of figurative language makes the concepts of sin and death more relatable.

ADDENDUM

Other related Greek words.

[archó](#) (v. 2x)—only in KJV as “reign”

Romans 15:12 (KJV)

¹² And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust.

[hégemonia](#) (n. 1x) is translated as “reign” in Luke 3:1 (fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar).

[hégemón](#) (n. 20x)—in NASB: governor (14), governor's (1), governors (4); in KJV “rulers” (2)

[hégeomai](#) (v. 28x) is translated with such words as: consider, thought, regard, esteem, suppose, count, lead.

Acts 11:28—some versions, e.g., NIV, insert the noun reign but it is derived from the sense of *epi* in the context (during *the reign* of Claudius); ESV: in *the days* of Claudius.

Sin and Dwell

Romans 7 speaks of sin “dwelling” in a person.

Romans 7:17 and 20

¹⁷ So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but **sin** (n.) which **dwells** [*oikeó*] in me. ... ²⁰ But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but **sin** (n.) which **dwells** [*oikeó*] in me.

We first note the figurative language that runs throughout Chapter 7:

- v. 8—**sin** taking opportunity, **sin** is dead;
- v. 9—**sin** became alive;
- v. 11—**sin** taking an opportunity, **sin** killed me;
- v. 14—sold into bondage to **sin**.

These are all examples of the personification of sin, that is, attributing characteristics of persons to an abstract concept. “Sin” in its literal sense cannot “take opportunity,” “come alive,” “kill me,” or “hold me in bondage.”

We note in Chapter 8 that the spirit “dwells” in a person.

Romans 8:9 and 11

⁹ However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God **dwells** [*oikeó*] in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead **dwells** [*oikeó*] in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [spirit] who [that] **dwells** [*enoikeó*] in you.

“Dwell” in these verses from Romans 7 and 8 is a translation of the Greek word *oikeó*. Literally, this word means to occupy a house or to reside somewhere. It comes from the Greek word *oikos* which is most frequently translated in the NASB as “home(s)” (20x) or “house” (79x). With this in mind, a literal use of the word *oikeó* would be something like, “John **lives** (or resides) at 123 Main Street.” We understand that John has a home or a house at 123 Main Street...that’s where he lives...that is where he **dwells**.

Here are all the occurrences of the Greek word *oikeó* and the expressions that accompany it:

- sin **dwells** in me ([Rom. 7:17, 20](#));
- nothing good **dwells** in me ([Rom. 7:18](#));
- the spirit of (from) God **dwells** in you ([Rom. 8:9, 11](#); [1 Cor. 3:16](#));
- to **live** with husband/wife ([1 Cor. 7:12, 13](#));
- God **dwells** in unapproachable light ([1 Tim. 6:16](#)).

Based on the literal example provided above, we see that all of the occurrences of *oikeó* in Scripture are some type of figurative language. One way of considering these figures is that they are emphasizing **permanence**. As Romans 7 clearly indicates, the “sin dwelling in” is not something that can be removed. Permanence would also apply to the spirit from God. A person can deny or ignore the presence of the spirit, but it cannot be “lost” or “given back.”

We might consider that Paul was addressing a train of thought that was common among Jews.¹⁷³ In summary, some Jews believe that man has two impulses: one towards good and one towards evil. The impulse towards evil is not evil in the sense of inherently evil (God would not have given man an inherently evil impulse), rather, it is an impulse that can be turned towards evil. Sexual desire is a primary example. This desire promotes marriage and childbearing (something godly) but can turn towards adultery and rape (something ungodly). This Jewish belief includes the idea that adherence to the Torah (the Law) “strengthens” the good impulse which in turn subdues the evil impulse. In other words, in their thinking, it was possible to achieve inherent righteousness via adherence to the Law. As Chapter 7 argues against, having a sincere desire to uphold the Law (any law) cannot make a person inherently righteous.

We might consider Romans 7, in light of [1 Corinthians 7:12](#) and [13](#). Verse 12 addresses a “believer husband” married to an “unbelieving wife” and verse 13 addresses a “believer wife” married to an “unbelieving husband.” Paul’s exhortation in both cases is for the believing partner to “live with” the unbelieving partner if possible. While the idea of permanence is still present, the emphasis is more on “living with.” In some cases, this might require a good bit of patience and might also involve some frustration on the part of the believer partner in dealing with the unbelieving partner. If we take this and apply it to Romans 7, we get an interesting picture. In that scenario, the “believer husband” is Paul and the “unbelieving wife” is “sin.” Paul finds the arrangement rather frustrating. What is different in Romans is that the message is to “divorce” the “unbelieving partner.” This is literally not possible, but we are commanded to consider the “sin partner” to be dead. We might also consider Adam and Eve. Perhaps Adam wanted to “do the right thing,” that is, to not eat of that one tree, but Eve was both very attractive and quite persuasive. The point being made here is that Romans 7 does not need to be taken as “theological doctrine” regarding sin; especially with respect to taking sin as a “force” or “power” that somehow “dwells” in every person. Romans 7 is a description of a “bad” and frustrating relationship. Surely, there is more that can be gleaned from this section of Scripture, but it is worth pointing out that Romans 7, which is where “sin dwells” occurs, opens with an illustration of marriage and the role of law. Therefore, any “take” we might have on Romans 7 ought to align with that setup.

We see from other Scriptures that “sin” (n.) can refer to a **status** or **condition**. Our “condition” as a result of Adam’s disobedience is being body-and-soul-only (spirit-less, senses dependent/dominated) and being mortal, that is, subject to death.¹⁷⁴ At birth, every person is separated from God who is **spirit** and **eternal** while every human being is “**flesh and blood**” and **subject to death**, see [1 Corinthians 15:50](#). Everyone at birth can also be said to be an “enemy” of God because “the flesh” and the worldly desires that it is susceptible to are contrary to God and His desires [see [James 4:4](#)]. In all respects, body-and-soul are inherently “weak” being susceptible to both sin and death.

Being reliant on the senses and the other faculties of breath-life alone means having an ongoing stream of feelings, desires, and thoughts, being aware of being mortal, having a sense of “vacuum” within, etc. Not every feeling, desire, or thought is necessarily ungodly or unrighteous (Paul knew what was right and had the desire to do what was right), but the reality of the situation is that the condition of being spirit-less, senses-dependent, and mortal is a breeding ground for ungodly and unrighteous feelings, desires, thoughts, and actions. All these can be placed into two major categories: self-preservation and self-glorification. We might also consider the “strength” of certain innate desires like the “will to live.” It

¹⁷³ This position is described in this article: <https://openoureyeslord.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/shogren-romans-7.pdf>. For more background see <https://www.jewfaq.org/human.htm> and <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/judaisms-two-sources-of-good-and-evil/>.

¹⁷⁴ See the section “[Sin as a Condition](#).”

is very difficult to overcome this desire as testified by individuals who attempt suicide or by those who have a terminal disease and would like to simply die but cannot just “let go.”

The **condition** of sin is permanent and “active,” therefore, it is *as if* it is something “living in” and can figuratively be described as “dwelling in” us because of its presence and its permanence. It is the **condition** of sin that “dwells” in a person and makes it difficult (but not impossible) for a person to do good at least some of the time (that is, trust God and act accordingly, as some obviously have through the ages). And, even when a man does good, the sin condition remains, so “evil” is present even when the man does good. The teaching in Chapter 7 cannot be taken to negate the fact that some individuals recorded in Scripture chose to serve God rather than to “serve” or be in “bondage” to sin—perhaps few and far between to be sure.¹⁷⁵ The primary focus in Chapter 7 is about lacking the capability to truly live out righteousness. This issue is resolved in Chapter 8 with the focus on the gift of holy spirit which provides the capability to walk according to the Spirit [[Romans 8:4](#)]. Chapter 7 also makes the case that no matter how honorably and diligently one might seek to adhere to the Law (any law), that effort/sincerity cannot produce inherent righteousness (ungodliness and unrighteousness will still be present—[Romans 7:21](#)). The Law, at best, if recognized, can only serve to keep society from veering off into complete lawlessness.

The following verses describe in figurative language how desire becomes “sin.”

James 1:14 and 15

¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by **his own lust** [desire]. ¹⁵ Then when **lust** [desire] has conceived [[sullambanó](#)], it gives birth [[tiktó](#)] to **sin**; and when **sin** is accomplished [[apoteleó](#)—has matured], it [sin] brings forth [[apokueó](#)—births] death.

We observe the figurative language here. Desire “conceives” (as a result of the person having “intercourse” with their desires). “Desire” (as if a pregnant woman) “gives birth” to “Sin.” “Sin” matures (gets pregnant) and “gives birth” to “Death.”

We also note the following figurative language from Genesis.

Genesis 4:6 and 7

⁶ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷” If you do well [choose what’s pleasing to God], will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well [choose what is not pleasing to God], **sin** [[chatta'ah](#)] **is crouching** [[rabats](#)] at the door; and its [sin’s] desire is for you, but you must master it.”

These verses present a figurative description of how things work. “Lust” may legitimately be translated as “desire.” Desire is a capability that was built-in to Adam and Eve and has been passed on to all their progeny. Through a person’s own desires and choices, sin is always a possibility. Also, the “god of this age” promotes a wide array of options to distract and to turn people from God (note the “Parable of the Sower”).

There is no scriptural indication that some form of “corruption” literally occurred to man’s body and/or soul (breath-life) as a result of Adam’s act. We concede that it is implied in various verses. Subsequent genetic damage or genetic weakening is a possibility as evidenced by the shorter life spans that ensued post expulsion from “The Garden.” But the fact that humans, given good living conditions, can “look good” and live relatively long lives even after some 6,000 years of breeding and that some people still turn to God and Christ is an indication of some degree of genetic stability being present.

¹⁷⁵ It might be argued that man being spirit-less (without a God nature) cannot do anything outside of self-interest. This is perhaps debatable.

Corruption in the form of deterioration is certainly a fact of the physical universe. Deterioration may occur at a faster or slower pace, but no object, even the universe itself, is developing into something of a “higher order”—people die, animals die, plants die, stars die, computers die, the earth will not continue in its current state indefinitely [[Romans 8:21](#)]. However, there is no indication that anything “entered” man when Adam disobeyed and some “thing” now “dwells” in man. It is implied that something “left” man(kind) when Adam disobeyed God. The physical body deteriorates to the point it can no longer support breath-life, but there is no indication that the breath-life itself is not the same as it was when God breathed it into Adam.¹⁷⁶ Again, some genetic deterioration **impacting** the body is possible. The study of epigenetics may be pertinent in this regard.

Loss of spirit certainly put man in a worse condition than he might otherwise have been in, and loss of access to the “tree of life” is certainly significant because that tree apparently had the capability of keeping Adam’s physical body alive indefinitely. In this context, we note that [Romans 5:12](#) says, “...just as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin.” This verse does not say that Adam sinned, or that “sin” entered Adam but that *through Adam [pause] sin (perhaps the “sin condition” or “Sin” personified) entered into the world*; and, along with sin/Sin, death/Death. We might say that spirit-lessness and mortality entered the world.

None of the above is meant to be the “final word” on Romans 7 but rather a consideration of some of the language used that is worth considering.

For further study: [katoikéō](#) and [enoikeó](#).

¹⁷⁶ It is not uncommon to hear people say they feel “young” inside even though their body is “old.”

Sin and Slave

The expression “slaves of sin” occurs in Romans 6:[17](#) and [20](#). Being a slave of sin is implied in Romans 6:[16](#), [18](#), and [22](#).

Slavery has been practiced in many cultures and civilizations from the beginning of recorded history. It was practiced among the Jews and throughout the Roman Empire—the primary cultural contexts for the New Testament. A cursory look at the topic reveals that there is no one picture of slavery. It could involve horrible working conditions under brutal slave masters, or a slave might manage a household, which could include managing other slaves and/or buying and selling goods. Slaves were in some cases tutors or physicians. Some became slaves through defeat in battle. Some became slaves by choice in order to pay off debt. There are many other details regarding slavery that could be detailed here. Suffice it to say that slavery is a broad subject with a history of thousands of years.¹⁷⁷

This section is not intended to be a thorough exploration of the topic of slavery. The focus here is to potentially gain insight into the use of the word “sin” as it occurs in conjunction with the word “slave.” As noted above, slavery, as practiced in both the Jewish and Roman cultures, is not easily catalogued. Therefore, Bible readers who know the history of slavery in America should be cautious about injecting assumptions into the topic.¹⁷⁸

The following demonstrates two important aspects of slavery as presented in Scripture: **authority** and **obedience**. These aspects are demonstrated in two relationships: commander/subordinate and master/slave.

Luke 7:2–10

²And a **centurion's slave** [*doulos*], who was highly regarded [*entimos*] by him, was sick and about to die. ³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave [*doulos*]. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him; ⁵for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue." ⁶Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; ⁷for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant [*pais*] will be healed. ⁸"For I also am a man placed **under authority** [*exousia*], with soldiers **under me**; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, '**Come!** and he comes, and to my slave [*doulos*], '**Do this!** and he does it.'" ⁹Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." ¹⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave [*doulos*] in good health.

¹⁷⁷ See “[slavery](#)” in the Britannica online. The subject of slavery is handled in [Leviticus 25:39–55](#) (see the [NET](#) online notes regarding Leviticus 25); see also [Deuteronomy 5:12–15](#); [15:12–18](#); [23:15 and 16](#). Regarding the prohibition of permanent slavery, see Jeremiah’s condemnation of the practice ([Jeremiah 34:8–17](#)). For an overview of slavery in the Roman Empire see <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/629/slavery-in-the-roman-world/> and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavery_in_ancient_Rome.

¹⁷⁸ In the NASB, *doulos* is translated as bond-servant(s) (23), bondslave(s) (11), both men and women (8), servants (1), slave(s) (97), slave's (1). See ESV Preface p. 21: These terms [*ebed* (the Hebrew word often translated as “slave”) and *doulos*], however, actually cover a range of relationships that requires a range of renderings...depending on the context.

This is a record of an incident involving Jesus, a centurion, and a [doulos](#). A centurion was an officer in the Roman army who commanded approximately 80 to 90 soldiers who was “under” a higher-ranking officer. This centurion had a slave [[doulos](#)] who he held in high regard who was very sick. This slave may have been a young boy based on the word [pais](#) in v. 7. The concept of *authority* [[exousia](#)] is clearly displayed in this record. As a military commander, the centurion exercises authority by giving orders to his subordinates and, as a master, he exercises authority by giving orders to his slaves.

Authority is generally conferred. This can happen in any number of ways. In the record above, the centurion obviously had the conferred authority that came with his position in the military hierarchy. Here is another example.

Mark 13:34 (Berean Literal)

It is like a man going on a journey, having left his house, and having given his servants [[doulos](#)] **authority** [[exousia](#)], to each one his work. And he commanded the doorkeeper that he should keep watch.

In this situation, an owner confers authority to his slaves by giving them various responsibilities related to the care of his property.

In the Gospels, there are many verses concerning Jesus’ authority. Here is one example.

Mark 2:10 and 11

¹⁰ "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has **authority** [[exousia](#)] on earth to forgive sins "-- He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."

Jesus had authority conferred on him from his Father. He exercised that authority by commanding the paralytic to pick up his bed and go home. We note that Jesus in other places indicated that he only did what his Father showed him to do or told him to do. The authority Jesus had was accompanied with spiritual power.

The devil has authority.

Luke 4:5 and 6 (ESV)

⁵ And the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, ⁶ and said to him, "To you I will give all this **authority** [[exousia](#)] and their glory, for it has been delivered [[paradidómi](#)] to me, and I give it to whom I will.

The devil’s authority was “delivered” to him from Adam who originally had the authority that was conferred on him by God. It is perhaps more accurate to say that Adam relinquished or forfeited his authority to the devil. This occurred when Adam disobeyed God, and, as we understand it, lost the spirit God had given him—this spirit was the power to execute his authority. This, at least in part, is why humankind is still able to exercise some authority in the world but not to the extent that God originally intended.

We see from these examples that authority is conferred or can be acquired if someone relinquishes it. We also see that authority is generally exercised through giving commands.

In the Luke record, the response to the commands is *obedience*, “Do this!” and he does it.” The soldier does what the centurion commands, and the slave does what the master commands. Obedience implies the recognition of authority and possibly some degree of respect. Some recognition of power is usually involved. If a soldier disobeys, he can be punished or even discharged. If a slave disobeys, he will likely suffer some form of punishment.

Obedience with respect to slaves is commanded in several verses: [Ephesians 6:5](#); [Colossians 3:22](#); [1 Peter 2:18](#). In [1 Timothy 6:1](#) and [Titus 2:9 and 10](#), slaves are instructed not only to be obedient but to have a respectful attitude towards their masters and not to take advantage of them. On the other side of the relationship, in [Colossians 4:1](#) and [Ephesians 6:9](#), masters are commanded to be examples of godliness with respect to their slaves.

None of this should be construed as advocating for the institution of slavery. It is addressed as a “fact of life” in that culture. Instructions are provided as to how to operate within that culture. All these verses are speaking of literal slaves and literal masters which is something that would be familiar to Jesus, Paul, Peter, Timothy, and their audiences.

One aspect of slavery that is not brought forward in these verses is “ownership.” Masters literally owned slaves—they were bought and sold as property. Whether this should be considered as something implied in a particular context is questionable. Such a case would be, “you are not your own...you were bought with a price” [[1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20](#)], which on the surface implies ownership. Other verses highlight the fact that believers were “freed” which would imply that they are no longer “owned.” As an aside, there was no verb “to own” in either Hebrew or Greek. The concept of ownership can possibly be seen in verses like [Exodus 13:2](#) where it says that the first-born of animals and people “belong” to God—the Hebrew literally reads, “to me it.”¹⁷⁹ There are numerous verses with a similar construction.

The idea of “belonging to” or being “mine” can be applied to expressions like “sons/children of God” [[Galatians 3:26](#)] or “born of God” [[1 John 3:9](#)]. We do not say that God “owns” us any more than a parent would say they “own” their children. There is a legally binding relationship involved but it is not typically characterized as ownership.

Concerning “slave of sin(s),” the noun “sin” can refer to an act contrary to God, but it can also refer to the consequences/punishment associated with sin. When Scripture says that Jesus will save his people from their sins [[Matthew 1:21](#)], it means that Jesus saves people from the consequences of sin, primarily death (the “second death”). The consequences of Adam’s sin should be noted as a backdrop to this discussion. Because of Adam’s disobedience, every person is born into this world spirit-less and mortal (subject to the “common death”—[Hebrews 9:27](#); [Ecclesiastes 3:19 and 20](#)) and “weak” ([Matthew 26:41](#)). These factors make every person vulnerable to the efforts of the spiritual entity called the god of this world ([2 Corinthians 4:4](#)). Because of this “weakness,” everyone sins and is therefore also subject to the second, permanent death. This is a condition and a legal state that no person can “free” themselves from. It is binding and in this sense all are “slaves to Sin” and “Death.” All are born subject to a “death sentence” figuratively speaking. It was necessary for Jesus to give his life to satisfy the death penalty required for sin—not his sin, but every person’s sin, including Adam’s.

Following are the only three occurrences of the expression “slave of sin.”

John 8:34

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave [[doulos](#)] of sin.

Romans 6:16–18

¹⁶ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves [[doulos](#)] for obedience,

¹⁷⁹ Hebrew, “to me it.” The preposition here expresses possession; the construction is simply “it [is, belongs] to me.” [NET note #5].

you are slaves [*doulos*] of the one whom you obey, either [slaves¹⁸⁰] of sin resulting in death, or [slaves] of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves [*doulos*] of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and having been freed from sin, you became slaves [*douloó*] of righteousness.

Romans 6:19–22

¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves [*doulos*] to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves [*doulos*] to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.²⁰ For when you were slaves [*doulos*] of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved [*douloó*] to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

It should be obvious that “sin” is being personified in these verses *as if* “Sin” were a slave master. We have included Roman 6:18 and 19 above because we also see “righteousness” being personified in the expressions “enslaved [*douloó*] to righteousness” [NET v. 18] and “slaves to righteousness” [v. 19]. We also note the expression “enslaved to God.” [v. 22].¹⁸¹

In John 8:34, “Sin” is being personified but Jesus is also making a general statement using the metaphor of slave. The verb tense of “commits” (present participle active) implies repeated, continuous action. Jesus is saying that everyone who continuously sins is “obeying Sin” and is therefore *like* a slave (here stated as a simile). In the context, Jesus is indirectly addressing the Jewish authorities. Following is the NET [note](#) regarding John 8:34.

... repeated, continuous action is in view ... the particular sin of the Jewish authorities, repeatedly emphasized in the Fourth Gospel, is the sin of unbelief. The present tense in this instance looks at the continuing refusal on the part of the Jewish leaders to acknowledge who Jesus is, in spite of mounting evidence.

People *act like* “slaves of Sin” when they “obey sin.” They figuratively make themselves slaves. “Sin” is not really a slave owner, but the person who “obeys sin” as a way of life is treating “sin” *as if* it were a slave owner, a master, an authority. “Sin” is literally an abstract concept and, therefore, has no authority or power. A “slave of Sin” is a person obedient to selfish desires and to the “ways of the world” and, in a sense, they “forfeit” personal authority and power to their ungodly desires. Saying, “Everyone who commits sin is the slave of Sin,” is a dramatic and emphatic way of reproofing an unrighteous or ungodly way of life.

The two occurrences of “slaves of sin” in Romans 6 are part of the answer to the question posed in verse 15.

Romans 6:15

¹⁵ ... Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?

In this verse, “sin” is a verb, which implies action, so the question has to do with behavior or way of life. If a person is no longer bound by the [Mosaic] law, if the [Mosaic] law no longer has authority over a person, shall that person sin? Is it “OK” to live ungodly and unrighteous lives? While this was addressed

¹⁸⁰ This is an example of the figure of speech ellipsis—the omission of a word or words that are obviously understood but must be supplied to make the sentence grammatically correct. See “The Figure of Speech Ellipsis as Used in the Bible” here: <https://spiritandtruthonline.org/the-figure-of-speech-ellipsis-as-used-in-the-bible/>.

¹⁸¹ “enslaved” [*douloó*] is the verb form of “slave” [*doulos*].

specifically to Jews, it has application to everyone. Consider the “wild west” in America where there was no law or law enforcement. Does that mean it was acceptable for people to be unethical and live like criminals? The simple answer is “No!” The more complete answer is framed in the metaphor of slavery and, in part, parallels the message in John 8. If a person “obeys Sin,” they are a “slave to Sin.”

In Romans 6, framing the response in the concept of slavery adds rhetorical impact. The Jewish authorities that Jesus was interacting with in John 8 took offense at being referred to as slaves [see [John 8:33](#)]. We might expect a similar response from any self-righteous Jews in Rome (or, by extension, any self-righteous person). As a rhetorical device, calling a “free” person a “slave” would hopefully be an “attention getter.”

The answer to the question in v. 15 begins in the following verse.

Romans 6:16a

¹⁶ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves [[doulos](#)] for obedience, you are slaves [[doulos](#)] of the one whom you obey...

Several versions make “obedience” an adjective, so the opening phrase reads, “...when you present (offer) yourselves as obedient slaves” (see, [NIV](#), [ESV](#), [NET](#)). If you offer yourself as a slave, then, you are a slave of the one whom you obey. You have relinquished your authority to make your own choices and surrendered that authority to a master. This is stated as a self-evident fact... “Don’t you know?” Offering yourself as a slave, say to pay off a debt, is something a person in Rome could easily relate to because it was not an uncommon practice. This is not something that typically occurs in American culture. However, we can understand the principle being communicated which is being “obedient” to someone means surrendering your authority to that someone.

Romans 6:16b

... either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness.

The end of the verse adds a spiritual component. “Sin” and “Righteousness” are spiritual concepts, and a contrast is being presented. The contrast is **sin** resulting in **death** vs. **obedience** resulting in **righteousness**. We might think that this should read, “sin resulting in death vs. *righteousness resulting in life*.” This would be an obvious contrast: sin/death vs. righteousness/life. However, in this verse, the antithesis of sin is not righteousness but obedience. Both sin and obedience are nouns (not verbs) and both are being personified as authority figures—as slave masters. This phrase could read, “... either a *slave* of Sin resulting in death, or a *slave* of Obedience resulting in righteousness.” Contrasting “Sin” and “Obedience” as authority figures serves to highlight an important aspect of sin, namely that it is disobedience.¹⁸² We note that Adam’s act in “the garden” is described as disobedience [[Romans 5:19](#)].

While behavior or way of life is touched upon in this section of Romans, the following verses describe a transition from “slaves of Sin” to “slaves of Righteousness.” The focus here is on a change of condition or status (legal status) which becomes the basis for a change in behavior.

Romans 6:17 and 18

¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were **slaves** [[doulos](#)] **of sin**, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,¹⁸ and having been **freed from sin**, you **became slaves** [[douloó](#)] **of righteousness**.

They were “slaves of Sin” but were “freed from Sin” and became “slaves of Righteousness.” The turning point was that they “became *obedient* to the teaching.” The teaching would refer to the Gospel message

¹⁸² Per [Vincent Word Studies](#): The antithesis is not direct - sin unto death, obedience unto life; but obedience is the true antithesis of sin, since sin is disobedience, and righteousness is life.

which includes accepting, “from the heart,” Jesus as Lord. This is the pivotal point in a person’s life. “Became slaves of righteousness” is a legal statement, a statement of legal status. This status is only evidenced if a person chooses to “act like it.”

In this section, “Sin” and “Righteousness” are being personified, but the slave metaphor is also continued here as well. Here “slaves of Sin” is not pointing to their behavior but to a *condition* or *state* of “slavery.” When Adam disobeyed God, several consequences ensued and these consequences constitute, figuratively, a state of slavery for all mankind. For example, the “common death” became a reality as a result of Adam’s sin. No one can escape from this death. It is a binding reality. All are “slaves” to its “authority.” Also, being born spiritless, all mankind is “weak” with respect to moderating desires, as well as resisting the efforts of the “god of this age” who is a wicked spiritual adversary. All mankind is also subject to a second, permanent, death—the just punishment for their own sins.

To be “freed from Sin” means primarily being freed from the ultimate and sure *consequence* of sin, that is, death...the second death...permanent death. In addition, the death that is common to all is guaranteed to be a temporary state and is, therefore, sometimes referred to in Scripture as being asleep. Not only is the person who has believed on Christ guaranteed of not experiencing the second death, it is possible they will not experience the “common death” if they are alive when Christ returns. Being “freed from Sin,” also includes receiving the gift of holy spirit, which is an enablement to live righteously in a crooked and perverse world. If taken to heart, these truths will have a dramatic impact on how a person lives their life.

Becoming “slaves of Righteousness” is not about living righteously. This is a statement regarding a new condition or new status (new legal status). The one who has believed has a new “authority” over them. Having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, a person has moved from a condition of certain death to a condition of certain life.

Rejection of Jesus as the promised Messiah will eventually result in the “second death.” For those who are obedient, that is, believe the Gospel message that Jesus is the promised Messiah, their end is eternal life...they have been freed from the second death. Legal status is a significant aspect here. A legal transaction has occurred and those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ have been “freed from Sin,” because a “price was paid,” and they have now become “slaves to/of Righteousness” (whether they act like it or not).

The following verses continue the “slave” metaphor and clearly encourage a change in way of life.

Romans 6:19 and 20

¹⁹I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as **slaves** [*doulos*] to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as **slaves** [*doulos*] to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. ²⁰For when you were **slaves** [*doulos*] of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.

Whereas vv. 17 and 18 primarily focused on a change of legal status, these verses primarily focus on way of life. Given that you have been “freed from Sin” and become “slaves of Righteousness,” live like it. “Slaves of Sin” is here detailed as being obedient “to impurity and to lawlessness” [see [Romans 2:8](#)]. People use their “members,” including physical members and mental faculties, to pursue impurity and lawlessness. Now, they are commanded to use those “members” as “slaves to Righteousness.” How a person can actually carry this out is covered in subsequent chapters in Romans and the other Church Epistles.

Living as a “slave to Sin” results in lawlessness and death. Living as a “slave to Righteousness” results in sanctification and life. These two verses point towards how a person lives their life. Are you living like a

“slave of Sin” or a “slave of Righteousness”? Neither “Sin” nor “Righteousness” are literal slave masters, however, being a slave to either brings consequences or benefits to life. Only in this sense do “Sin” and “Righteousness” have inherent authority or power *as if* slave masters.

This new way of life is described in Titus.

Titus 2:11–14

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. ¹⁸³

And in Galatians.

Galatians 5:16

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

This section of Romans closes with the following.

Romans 6:22

But now having been freed from sin [Sin] and enslaved [[doulóó](#)] to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

And the final verse...

Romans 6:23 (Weymouth)

For the wages paid by Sin are death; but God’s free gift is the Life of the Ages bestowed upon us in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The word “wages” was used in connection with the “pay” a soldier would receive—many times in food. The Weymouth New Testament recognizes the personification of Sin as an authority, like a slave master or military commander. Obeying/submitting to that authority results in death. If we obey/submit to the Gospel and its authority, the result is genuine life and eternal life.

So, we see that the expression “slaves of Sin” carries a common theme of obedience to “Sin” as if “Sin” had authority like a slave master. The added element in Romans 6:17 is a change in legal status that occurs when a person “obeys” the Gospel message and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of what God through Jesus Christ accomplished, “Sin” no longer has any legal authority. One question then to the believer is, “Why should I want to live like it does?”

¹⁸³ Verse 13 has been much debated. The sense we lean towards is that “God and Savior” are one and the same. God is ultimately our Savior. His glory is Jesus Christ who will be revealed at some point in the future. The [REV](#) translates it this way: “our great God and Savior’s glory—Jesus Christ.”

Sin and Forgiveness

Acts 2:38

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pierced [*katanussó*] to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent [*metanoéo*], and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness [*aphesis*¹⁸⁴] of your sins [*hamartia*]; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

This is the first occurrence of “forgiveness” in Acts. Here, it is associated with the words/phrases repent, Jesus Christ, sins, and receiving the gift of holy spirit.¹⁸⁵ The “sins,” from the immediate context of Peter’s preaching would be their rejection of and involvement in the death of Jesus. Peter laid the blame at the audiences’ feet.

Acts 2:23

²³ this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, **you** nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

Acts 2:36b

³⁶ ...this Jesus whom **you** crucified.”

Peter also informed them that while they had crucified Jesus, God raised him from the dead and made him both Lord and Christ.

Acts 2:24 (ESV)

²⁴ **God** raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

Acts 2:32 (ESV)

³² This Jesus **God** raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

Acts 2:36a (ESV)

³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that **God has made him both Lord and Christ**

As Acts 2:38 indicates, those hearing Peter’s message were “pierced to the heart,” which implies a strong or deep emotional response. We might say they were overcome with guilt or grief as they realized what they had done. When they asked, “What shall we do?” Peter’s response was, “Repent, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the holy spirit.” He did not say, “Confess your sin(s).” Acceptance of Jesus as the Christ, the promised Messiah/Savior, includes the forgiveness of sins. That forgiveness of sins is verified by the receipt of the gift of holy spirit.

The word “repent” [*metanoéo*] is composed of two words:

meta—properly, with (“after with”), implying “change afterward” (i.e. what results after the activity). As an active “with,” [it] looks towards the after-effect (change, result) which is only defined by the context

¹⁸⁴ “forgiveness” [*aphesis*]—properly, “something *sent away*”; i.e., remission (“forgiveness”), releasing someone from obligation or debt.

¹⁸⁵ There is the definite article (“the”) before *pneuma hagion* (holy spirit) in the text. In this case, the word “of” could be taken as “from,” i.e., the gift from The Holy Spirit, that is, from God. However, the “of” can also be taken as “consisting of,” i.e., the gift consisting of the holy spirit. The evidence of that gift was the apostles speaking in tongues which is what got the attention of the people.

noeó—(from 3563 /noús, “mind”) – properly, to apply mental effort needed to reach “bottom-line” conclusions

While “repenting” can imply emotions like guilt or grief, emotion is not the principal thing. Emotion without change is meaningless. The basic sense of the word is a change of thought. It can imply a reversal (in thought and/or action). In Acts 2:38, as well as other verses, the change of thought is based on having heard the Gospel message. In contexts, such as Acts 2:38, to “repent” is to accept Jesus as Lord and Christ (as opposed to wanting to kill him).¹⁸⁶

The psychological/emotional benefit of forgiveness is that a person can be “happy.”

Psalm 32:1 (ESV)

¹ Blessed (happy) is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

While this is certainly an important aspect of what transpired on that day in Acts 2:38, the more significant aspect is that those who heard the message recognized Jesus as Lord and Christ and received the gift of holy spirit.

There are five occurrences of the expression “forgiveness of sins” in Acts. Acts 2:38 cited above is the first occurrence. Later, in Acts 5:26ff is the second occurrence. Here, Peter is before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious leaders.

Acts 5:31

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross. ³¹ "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and **forgiveness of sins**. ³² "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."

As in Acts 2:38, Peter informs these religious leaders that Jesus, whom they “put to death by hanging him on a cross” (at the hands of the Romans), had been “raised up” from the dead and was now “exalted to God’s right hand as a Prince and a Savior.” If the hearers accepted this prince and savior, they would be granted “forgiveness of sins.”

The Greek word translated here as “prince” is *archégos*. Regarding Acts 5:31, the NET note 84 on this word has “Or ‘Founder’ (of a movement).” The word may be defined as follows: from 746 /arxé, “the first” and 71 /ágō, “to lead” – properly, the first in a long procession; a file-leader who pioneers the way for many others to follow.¹⁸⁷

Acts 10:34ff is the third occurrence. Peter is at Cornelius’ house.

Acts 10:43

³⁸ "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit¹⁸⁸ and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. ³⁹ "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.

¹⁸⁶ [2 Corinthians 12:21](#) is the only occurrence of *metanoéo* in the Church Epistles. The message of “changed thinking” is communicated throughout the Church Epistles but in different terms, e.g., the renewing of the mind, seeking those things which are above, etc.

¹⁸⁷ <https://biblehub.com/greek/747.htm>.

¹⁸⁸ Some versions capitalize holy spirit in these contexts because it is considered the “third person” of the Trinity. When *pneuma hágion*, holy spirit, refers to a gift that God gives, it is better to keep it lower case to distinguish it from God who is The Holy Spirit. The oldest texts were all upper case, as well as no punctuation. Capitalization and punctuation reflect the translator’s understanding.

They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. ⁴⁰ "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, ⁴¹ not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. ⁴² "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives **forgiveness of sins.**"

Again, Peter tells the people that while the Jewish leaders had Jesus put to death, "God raised him up on the third day." He also declares that Jesus has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. Then he declares that everyone who believes in this Jesus receives "forgiveness of sins." At this point, the people listening did believe in this Jesus, and they received not only forgiveness of sins, but the gift of holy spirit as evidenced by the fact that they, like the apostles in Acts 2, spoke in tongues: "For they (Peter and those who accompanied him) were hearing them (the people at Cornelius' house) speaking with tongues and exalting God" (v. 46).

So, these first three occurrences of "forgiveness of sins" involve Peter preaching to three different groups of people. In Acts 13 is the fourth occurrence. Here, Paul is preaching in a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch.

Acts 13:16ff

²⁶ "Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. ²⁷ "For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. ²⁸ "And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be executed. ²⁹ "When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. ³⁰ "But God raised Him from the dead; ³¹ and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people. ³² "And we preach to you the good news of the promise made to the fathers, ³³ that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.' ³⁴ "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF DAVID.' ³⁵ "Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAy.' ³⁶ "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; ³⁷ but He whom God raised did not undergo decay. ³⁸ "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through Him **forgiveness of sins** is proclaimed to you, ³⁹ and through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.

Paul's message is similar to Peter's message. Paul said that "those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers... asked Pilate that Jesus be executed...but God raised Him from the dead." And, "through Christ forgiveness of sins is proclaimed." It is implied that those hearing this message would check their thinking regarding Jesus and accept him as the promised Messiah. "Everyone who believes" will receive forgiveness of sins. In this context, "sins" includes the wide array of possible violations of the Law (Paul's audience being those in the synagogue in Antioch).

Just as a point of contrast, later, in Acts 17, Paul is preaching at the Areopagus in Athens; not a synagogue but a public meeting place, so an audience made up primarily of non-Jews.

Acts 17:22ff

²² So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very

religious in all respects. ²³ "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; ²⁶ and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' ²⁹ "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man. ³⁰ "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should **repent** [*metanoéo*], ³¹ because He has fixed a day in which **He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed**, having furnished proof to all men **by raising Him from the dead.**" ³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."

Here, Paul is preaching to Greeks/Gentiles, not Jews. He makes no mention of "forgiveness of sins." He does declare that God "has fixed a day in which He [God] will judge the world (that is, the people in the world) in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." This audience was not particularly receptive to Paul's message, especially the part about "the resurrection of the dead." We might note here that the concept of "sin" would have been more pertinent to the Jews than to the Greeks/Gentiles.

Later, in Acts 22, Paul is recounting his conversion experience before a mob of predominantly Jews in Jerusalem.

Acts 22:2ff

² And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said, ³ "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today. ⁴ "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons, ⁵ as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished. ⁶ "But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime, a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me, ⁷ and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' ⁸ "And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.' ⁹ "And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me. ¹⁰ "And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.' ¹¹ "But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. ¹² "A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him. ¹⁴ "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. ¹⁵ 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and **wash away your sins**, calling on His name.'

In vv. 12–16, Paul is quoting Ananias. In v. 16, Ananias used the expression “wash away your sins.” At this early stage of the church, it is likely that water baptism was still practiced. Remember, John the Baptist was known for “baptizing” people in water. Later on, the term “baptize” took on the meaning of immersion in Christ and all that that name means and/or being immersed in or with the gift of holy spirit. Perhaps Paul was baptized with water, but there is no record of it in Scripture.

In Acts 26 is the fifth and final occurrence of “forgiveness of sins.” By this time, Paul had been arrested and was here pleading his case to King Agrippa, a Jew, the great grandson of Herod the Great, who had a reputation for being supportive of the Jews but ultimately his loyalties were to Rome.

Acts 26:1ff

¹ Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to make his defense: ² "In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today; ³ especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently. ⁴ "So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my own nation and at Jerusalem; ⁵ since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion. ⁶ "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; ⁷ the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews. ⁸ "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead? ⁹ "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ "And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. ¹² "While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³ at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. ¹⁴ "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵ "And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; ¹⁷ rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive **forgiveness of sins** and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

As Paul was recounting his conversion experience, he quotes Jesus as saying, “...to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive **forgiveness of sins** and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.” This “forgiveness of sins” is contingent on them changing their thinking and turning to God.

As an aside, the statement, “It is hard for you to kick against the goads,” that Paul attributes to Jesus is a quote from a Greek play that Paul was probably familiar with.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ See “Greek Writers Quoted in the New Testament” here:

<https://talesoftimesforgotten.com/2017/03/09/greek-writers-quoted-in-the-new-testament/>. “This unusual phrase is a direct quote from line 1624 of the Greek tragedy Agamemnon by Aischylos.”

So, the five occurrences of the expression “forgiveness [[aphesis](#)] of sins” are: Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38, and 26:18. The message is similar in each instance. Within the context of preaching, Peter and Paul both declare that Jesus was raised from the dead and that anyone who repents, changes their thinking, and accepts Jesus as the Christ will receive forgiveness of sins. None of the records speak of confessing sins.

When we come to the Church Epistles, there are only two occurrences of “forgiveness” [[aphesis](#)]: Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14.

Ephesians 1:7

⁷In Him we have [[echó](#)] redemption [[apolutrósis](#)] through His blood, the **forgiveness of our trespasses**, according to the riches of His grace

Colossians 1:14

¹⁴in whom we have [[echó](#)] redemption [[apolutrósis](#)], the **forgiveness of sins**.

The word “have” is significant. Those who have accepted Jesus as the Christ **have** redemption, that is, the release from and the forgiveness of trespasses and sins.

“Redemption,” which occurs in both verses, is a key term here. It means to be freed or released through payment of a ransom. The “ransom paid” was the death of Christ. We usually consider the word “ransom” in the case where there is a hostage, that is, someone has been taken against their will and the person holding the hostage is demanding a ransom before releasing the hostage. We were not literal hostages, however, figuratively, all are “hostages of sin” and “hostages of death,” or if personification is used, “hostages of Sin and Death.” All are “hostages” in that all are held against their will to the consequence of Adam’s sin, namely death. Jesus’ death, because he committed no sin, “paid the price” to affect the release from sin and death (or Sin and Death). Primarily this means release from the consequence of sin, that is, the second permanent death. Secondly, for those living in this period of grace, receipt of the holy spirit can help a person to live out righteousness—“free from sin” and the threat of ultimate, permanent death.

We might find it interesting that the expression “forgiveness of sins” does not occur in the letter to the Romans, considered “foundational doctrine.” What might help to explain its absence in Romans and its relative absence in the Church Epistles is the following.

Romans 6:11

¹¹Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is addressed to people who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Christ. “Consider” or “reckon yourselves” is a command to think a certain way. The mindset of the believer ought to be, “I am dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” “Dead” in this context can mean “no more relationship with.” This same sense occurs in the record of the “prodigal son” where the father describes his wayward son as “dead.” His son was not literally dead, but the father and son had no relationship with one another once the son left. “Dead to sin” does not mean dead to committing sin but can mean “dead” to the consequence of sin, namely God’s judgment and the second death. With the death and resurrection of Christ, the “sin issue” has been dealt with in the sense that forgiveness of sin(s) is an accomplished reality. The “ransom” has been paid to release the believer from the “hold” of sin. The believer has been “separated” from sin and has no relationship with the ultimate consequence of sin.

There are two aspects to this. First, the believer will not experience the “second death” which is a consequence (a judgment) based on a person’s own sins committed. All sin is due the “death penalty.” Christ having given his life, as a sinless offering, “paid the price” for everyone’s sins. Therefore, acceptance of his offering means release from the ultimate consequence of sin, namely, death...not

necessarily the death common to all, which is a temporary death, but the second death, which is permanent. The other aspect of being “dead to sin” concerns the believer’s ability to “live to God.” “Living to or for God” is opposed to living to or for sin. Having been “freed from sin,” through Christ’s death, the believer is now “free” to live for God. The capability to do this is two-fold. First, the believer must think in terms of being “dead to sin” (having no relationship with it) and secondly, the believer must rely on the gift of holy spirit as a “helper” in overcoming sin in their daily lives.

If a believer is “dead to sin,” then there is no further need for forgiveness. The believer **has** forgiveness. It has already occurred through Christ. Forgiveness is a state or legal condition before God. It is equivalent to being considered righteous before God. Again, as declared in Ephesians 1:7 and Colossians 1:14, believers **have** redemption. The believer must mentally “claim” it. We might think of Paul claiming his Roman citizenship—his right to trial before the Roman magistrates. Believers can “claim their right” of redemption and forgiveness of sins.

Righteousness before God, rather than the forgiveness of sins, is the primary topic of Romans and is summarized in the following verses.¹⁹⁰

Romans 10:9 and 10

⁹ that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in **righteousness**, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in **salvation**.

The emphasis of the Gospel message is “look up not down” and “look forward not back.” Focus on Christ (life), the “new man,” and not on sin (death) and the “old man.” Focus on becoming Christ-like. Accept Christ, receive the gift of holy spirit—focus upward and forward.

Philippians 3:12–16

¹² Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; ¹⁶ however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

Being “dead to sin” does not mean “eat, drink, and be merry.” Behavior/way of life is important with respect to personal growth, encouraging the same in those around us, and ultimately rewards from Christ. This message is clear and brought out repeatedly in the Church Epistles.

The word “forgiveness” is a translation of the Greek word [aphesis](#) (noun) which comes from the verb [aphiemi](#). This verb is never translated as any form of “forgive” in the Church Epistles except in a quote from the Old Testament [[Romans 4:7](#)]. The word more commonly translated as “forgive” is the word [charizomai](#). This word is translated as follows in the NASB: bestowed (1), forgave (2), forgive (3), forgiven (4), forgiving (2), freely give (1), gave (1), given (1), graciously forgave (1), granted (4), hand (2), things freely given (1). Of these occurrences, variations of “forgive” occur 10x in the Church Epistles.

2 Corinthians 2:7

so that on the contrary you should rather **forgive** [aphiemi](#) and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

¹⁹⁰ Righteousness [[dikaionun](#)]—of the 92 occurrences of the word, 30+ times are in Romans.

2 Corinthians 2:10

But one whom you **forgive** [aphiémi] anything, I forgive [not in text] also; for indeed what I have **forgiven** [aphiémi], if I have **forgiven** [aphiémi] anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ;

2 Corinthians 12:13

For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? **Forgive** [aphiémi] me this wrong!

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, **forgiving** [aphiémi] each other, just as God in Christ also has **forgiven** [aphiémi] you.

Colossians 2:13

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, **having forgiven** [aphiémi] us all our transgressions;

Colossians 3:13

bearing with one another, and **forgiving** [aphiémi] each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord **forgave** [aphiémi] you, so also should you.

We see from these occurrences that “forgiving” is in the context of believer to believer with two exceptions, namely Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 2:13 where the believer is reminded of **having been forgiven by God**. We might note that there is no occurrence of “forgiving yourself.” Forgiving is important in the context of believers’ relationships with other believers. God has forgiven you...forgive one another. This is obviously contingent on the believer recognizing and appreciating that they themselves have been forgiven by God based on the accomplishment of Christ.

Sin and Heart

There are 800+ occurrences of the Hebrew words [leb](#) and [lebab](#) and 150+ occurrences of the Greek word [kardia](#). These are the words most commonly translated as “heart.” However, a quick glance at a concordance will show that the Hebrew words are also translated by a wide array of other words or expressions. The Greek word, at least in the NASB, is almost exclusively translated with the word “heart.” It is nearly impossible to summarize the meaning of the words (especially the Hebrew) in a simple definition. What is common to these words is that they are always used figuratively, that is, no occurrence in scripture refers to the physical organ.

As the pumping action of the physical heart is considered vital to life (i.e., as long as the heart is beating it indicates a person is alive), so figuratively the metaphorical heart is vital to life, but perhaps more precisely, it is vital to a person’s “way of life.” A person’s way of life is determined by the “condition” of their heart—their disposition, intentions, inclinations, purposes, desires, etc. Just as the condition of the physical heart is important to a doctor, the condition of a person’s metaphorical heart is important to God.

It is also clear that just as the physical heart can be conditioned, so too the metaphorical heart can be conditioned. An athlete can exercise and eat health-promoting food to strengthen their heart, so to a person can “exercise” and “eat” health-promoting food to strengthen their metaphorical heart. God’s word is the best nutrition to absorb in order to build a healthy “heart.” This is how Jeremiah said it.

Jeremiah 15:16a

¹⁶Your words were found and I ate them, And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart...

The psalmist said...

Psalms 119:11

¹¹Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.

We need a steady “diet” of God’s word to develop a “heart” for God; a “heart” for righteousness.

The “exercise” aspect involves making choices about behavior.

Jeremiah 15:17a

¹⁷I [Jeremiah] did not sit in the circle of merrymakers...

Jeremiah chose his “diet and exercise program.”

These truths and other similar truths have been known by countless people for thousands of years. A cursory consideration of the state of various cultures throughout those thousands of years would indicate that not many have chosen Jeremiah’s “diet and exercise program.” Why this is the case is considered at least in part in the section [“Sin as a Condition.”](#)

For those who want to follow Jeremiah’s program, it is important to note that the “heart” is malleable, that is, by choice a person can encourage a “healthy heart.” It is also important to note however that despite a person’s best efforts they will not achieve a “perfectly healthy heart,” that is, a heart that never falls short of God’s righteousness. Regardless of the potential for occasional failure, it is still good to seek a “healthy heart,” a heart that seeks God and his righteousness.

Deuteronomy 5:29

²⁹ 'Oh that they had such a **heart** in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!

With the coming of Christ and his accomplishment, God has at least in part addressed the “heart problem.” One of the results of Christ’s sacrifice of his life and his resurrection to everlasting life is the availability of the gift of holy spirit. This spirit was described by Jesus to his disciples as a “helper.” This “helper” is in part a fulfillment of God’s declaration to Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 11:19

¹⁹ "And I will give them **one heart**, and put a **new spirit** within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

Ezekiel 36:26

²⁶ "Moreover, I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

We observe that these prophecies relate to what’s known as the “Millennial Kingdom” when Christ will reign on the earth for a thousand years. This statement is based on the fact that the “period of grace” that began after Christ’s resurrection and ascension that will last until the first part of his return was unknown before it was revealed to the apostle Paul and others, therefore, these prophecies would not relate directly to the gift of holy spirit that is available during this period of grace. However, there are similarities between the spirit Ezekiel prophesied about and the spirit-gift that is now available.

Jesus spoke of this spirit-gift just before his ascension.

Acts 1:4

⁴ Gathering them [his apostles] together, He [Jesus] commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what **the Father had promised**, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;

The apostles thought that maybe Jesus would be establishing his kingdom at this time, but he corrected them and then added some more detail concerning this “promise of the Father.”

Acts 1: 6–8

⁶ So when they [the apostles] had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸ but you will receive **power** when the **Holy Spirit** [holy spirit] has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

This spirit that “the Father promised” is the same spirit Jesus had earlier referred to as the “helper.”

John 15:26

²⁶ "When the **Helper** comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the **Spirit** [spirit] of truth [the spirit-gift] who [which] proceeds from the Father, He [it] will testify about Me,

Everyone who accepts Christ receives the “helper” which is a gift of holy spirit. This spirit-gift is never referred to as a “new heart” as in Ezekiel’s prophecy. The expressions that do occur in the NT are “new man” [*kainos anthrōpos*] and “new creation” [*kainos ktisis*]. Those who have received the spirit-gift are encouraged to think in terms of being a “new creation” and to “put on the new man” [[2 Corinthians 5:17](#); [Ephesians 4:24](#)]. That spirit-gift can “help” a person who has a desire to be more Christ-like. In that sense, the “helper” helps a person develop a “heart” inclined to God.

The following verse from Romans is the only verse in the NT where “heart” and “sin” occur near each other.

Romans 6:17

¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were **slaves of sin**, you became obedient from the **heart** to that form of teaching to which you were committed,

“Heart” in this verse indicates a genuine decision as distinct from just “nodding one’s head” in agreement. No longer “slaves to sin” means being “free” to live righteously in a relationship with God. This implies developing a “heart” that is inclined towards God and the things of God. The spirit-gift can “help” in this process.

This brings us back to Ezekiel’s prophecy concerning a “new heart.” In Ezekiel 11:19, God says, “I will give them **one heart**, and put a **new spirit** within them.” This indicates a dramatic change like the one spoken of in the following verses.

1 Corinthians 15:50–53

⁵⁰ Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹ Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be **changed**, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be **changed**. ⁵³ For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

“Flesh and blood,” every person’s current physical makeup, cannot literally enter the spirit realm. A dramatic change in the makeup of the body needs to occur. This change is described in part in the following verses.¹⁹¹

Philippians 3:20 and 21

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will **transform** the body of our humble state into **conformity with the body of His glory**, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

In this context, note the following verse.

2 Corinthians 5:16

¹⁶ Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer.

Scripture also says that we will be like Christ when he returns.

1 John 3:2

² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, **we will be like Him**, because we will see Him just as He is.

We believe that this coming “change” means becoming inherently righteous, like God and like Christ. Being inherently righteous means, among other things, cannot be tempted with evil. This could be spoken of as having a “new heart.”

Before concluding this section, we consider the following verse.

Matthew 15:19

¹⁹ "For out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

¹⁹¹ See the subsection, “[The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus](#)” for more detail on this change.

Note that this does not say that the “heart” is evil but that “out of the heart” come evil things. Romans 1:18–32 would be an example of this. By their choices, people molded their hearts towards evil, so evil is exactly what manifested in their lives. In our current “flesh and blood” state, the “heart” is malleable. We all choose what kind of “heart” we want—hard and dull or tender and willing. We can’t “perfect” our heart, but we have a hope of a “new heart” and a “new life” that is radically different and better than our current heart and life.

Sin and Blood

Before approaching any specifics on this topic, it is important to note that “sin” is an abstract concept and not a material object, like a virus, or something animate, like a person or a spirit. If “sin” is characterized as being animate, then it is figurative language, i.e., not literal. Since “sin” is an abstract concept, as is righteousness, grace, peace, etc., any consideration of “sin” literally being in or literally not being in the blood is ignoring a basic fact.

Some have proposed that Jesus had “sinless blood.” The following are examples [emphasis added].

[regarding Hebrews 2:14] The danger of translating *paraplēsiōs* as “in the same way, or “likewise,” is that we might think that Jesus took flesh and blood “in the same way” that we have, when he was somewhat different than we are: because God was his father, he had **sinless blood**.¹⁹²

Indeed, it was the **sinless blood** of Christ alone that was able to bring peace between God and mankind.¹⁹³

Only one price would do for the forgiveness of sin and that price is perfect – the priceless, **sinless blood** of our Lord.¹⁹⁴

In stating that Jesus had “sinless blood,” these commentaries are either using figurative language or are assuming that Jesus’ blood was determined by his Father alone. The processes involved in conception argue against this assumption.

There is no actual blood involved in the fertilization of an egg. A one-celled male gamete (a sperm cell) with 23 chromosomes combines with a one-celled female gamete (an egg) with 23 chromosomes to form a one-celled zygote with 2 pairs of chromosomes (46 total). These chromosomes interact with each other, and the zygote then develops into an embryo and then into a fetus. The gender of the baby is determined by the father, who provides either an X or a Y chromosome. If an X, the baby will be a male, if a Y, the baby will be a female. The one-celled zygote begins to multiply by division and by about the 10th day, the resulting cells begin to differentiate. Blood cells develop soon after. So, the make-up of the blood, as currently understood, is derived from the genes of both parents.¹⁹⁵

If Jesus had “sinless blood,” then we would have to assume that everyone else has “sin blood.” Neither of these expressions are scriptural. What we can accurately say is that Jesus was different in that God fathered him and not a man. What exactly might be different with Jesus because God fathered him is open for speculation.

An important issue to consider is that Jesus was to be a descendant of David according to Scripture ([2 Samuel 7:12](#) and [13](#); [Romans 1:3](#)). According to the genealogy in Matthew Chapter 1, Mary was a descendant of and therefore of the genetic bloodline of David (“husband” in [v.16](#) should be translated

¹⁹² [Comment](#) from REV on [Hebrews 2:14](#).

¹⁹³ See “Was Jesus sinless?” here: <https://www.gotquestions.org/Jesus-sinless.html>.

¹⁹⁴ See “What the Precious Blood of Christ Means to Our Holiness” here: <https://covenantlifetampa.org/2016/10/1-peter-117-21-what-the-precious-blood-of-christ-means-to-our-holiness/>.

¹⁹⁵ See “Fertilization and development review” here: <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/high-school-biology/hs-reproduction-and-cell-division/hs-fertilization-and-development/a/hs-fertilization-and-development-review>. See also: “Meiosis, Gametes, and the Human Life Cycle” here: <https://youtu.be/k2DBsovDXxE>.

as “father”¹⁹⁶). If God created not just the sperm that fertilized the egg but the egg as well, or even the entire zygote, can it be said that Jesus was truly a descendant of David? We think it more reasonable to consider that Mary provided the egg and its 23 chromosomes, therefore, Jesus was a true descendant of David.¹⁹⁷

It is important to note that no record supports Jesus having inherited God’s “nature,” i.e., God’s inherent righteousness/holiness. Jesus had a body and soul/breath-life; he also received a spirit from God. In this respect, he was similar to Adam. Neither Jesus nor Adam were inherently righteous like their Father in the sense that they could not be tempted with evil. Adam was tempted and Jesus was tempted [[Luke 4:2](#)]...God cannot be tempted [[James 1:13](#)].

There is no Greek word for “sinless,” hence, if it occurs in a particular translation, it is an editor’s choice but does not accurately represent the text. We can say that Jesus was “sinless” or, more accurately, “without sin” in that his intentions, his words, and his actions were always in accordance with his Father’s will.

Hebrews 4:15

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet **without** [*chóris*] sin.

1 Peter 2:22 (ESV)

²² He **committed** no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

Hebrews 4:15 is the only verse that uses the expression “without [apart from] sin.” 1 Peter quotes Isaiah and specifically indicates that Jesus did not commit any sin.

It might be considered that God’s genes were dominant. As a result, perhaps Jesus had a propensity towards righteousness rather than having a propensity towards sin. One upside of this view is that a “strong” genetic makeup does not absolutely determine behavior. The individual is still responsible to exercise choice. In this case, the important point is that Jesus **chose** to obey his Father and he did so out of love for his Father. This should dramatically raise our perception of Jesus’ character and life.

Along these lines, it is also perhaps worth noting that Jesus grew in wisdom [[Luke 2:52](#)]. He was not born with all the knowledge of God in his brain; he had to learn. We see from his early interactions with the teachers of the law that he was mentally sharp [[Luke 2:47](#)]. We might use the word “precocious.”

An associated idea that has been promulgated is that “sin” is **in** the blood. If we were to argue that “sin” is “in” a person in some concrete/literal way, we might consider that Adam’s DNA was damaged or weakened as a result of his disobedience. From this perspective, “sin” in the expression “sin dwelling in” found in Romans 7 would be figurative language referring to a **consequence** of Adam’s disobedience. The word “sin” referring to its consequences is not uncommon in Scripture [see [Matthew 1:21](#); [John 1:29](#); [Acts 3:19](#); [Romans 3:9](#); etc.]. A weakened genome could account for behavioral propensities. Another thing to consider is that given the current understanding of epigenetics, some genetic alterations may incrementally due to bad choices. No access to the tree of life and exposure to the less than perfect environment dominated by the “god of this age” would also tend to influence a person towards sin. We can also add the potential genetic damage that accrued to mankind as rebellious spirits “fathered” genetically altered progeny known as Nephilim [see Genesis 6]. This race was essentially wiped out by the flood, but some genetic remnant remained or was reintroduced as evidenced by other “giants” being present after the flood [see [Deuteronomy 3:11](#) and [1 Samuel 17:4](#)].

¹⁹⁶ See commentary here: <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Matthew/chapter1/16>.

¹⁹⁷ A consideration of [Luke 1:31](#), “conceive in your womb,” might shed some light on this topic.

Of course, this is all conjecture. Having lost spirit (being senses dependent), being expelled from “the garden,” and living in an environment dominated by an evil spiritual being would no doubt be enough to account for the preponderance of sin in the world.

See the following for more detail.

This article looks at the science of epigenetics.

<https://outlawbiblestudent.org/the-science-of-sin-is-evil-inherited/>

Video on epigenetics.

https://youtu.be/_aAhcNjmvhc

Current research on fetus development.

<https://www.sciencealert.com/human-embryos-have-a-mysterious-yolk-sac-and-we-finally-know-why>

The Ten Commandments

The first communication of the “Ten Commandments” occurred at Mount Sinai after Moses had led the children of Israel out of Egypt. The children of Israel heard God speak this message from the top of Mount Sinai.

Exodus 20:1ff

¹Then God spoke all these words, saying, ²"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ³"You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴"You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. ⁷"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain. ⁸"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. ¹¹"For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. ¹²"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. ¹³"You shall not murder. ¹⁴"You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵"You shall not steal. ¹⁶"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ¹⁷"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

At hearing God speak from the mountain, the people were terrified. ¹⁹⁸

Exodus 20:18 and 19

¹⁸All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. ¹⁹Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die."

Following this, Moses went up the mountain (his 4th trip). ¹⁹⁹ During this trip, God revealed various additional commands as recorded in vv. 22–25 and Chapters 22 and 23. These are categorized in some versions as: The Altar of Sacrifice; Law for Servants; Personal Injury Laws; Laws about Restitution; Property Laws; Laws of Social Responsibility; Justice and Mercy; Sabbath Laws; Three Yearly Feasts; and God’s Angel to Lead. The expression “Ten Commandments” does not occur in this context.

Moses came down from the mountain and relayed to the people what God had told him.

Exodus 24:3

³Then Moses came [down from the mountain] and recounted to the people all the **words** [*dabar*] of the LORD and all the ordinances [*mishpat*]; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the **words** [*dabar*] which the LORD has spoken **we will do!**"

¹⁹⁸ Concerning the significance of mountains, see the commentary for Genesis 17:1 regarding “El Shaddai:” <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/comm/Genesis/chapter17/1>.

¹⁹⁹ For a listing of Moses’ trips up the mountain, see <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/comm/Exod/19/3>.

Then Moses wrote it all down.

Exodus 24:4a

⁴ Moses wrote down all the words [*dabar*] of the LORD.

This is referred to as “the book of the covenant.”

Exodus 24:7

⁷ Then he took the book of the covenant [*berith*] and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"

“Book” should be understood as “scroll.” This scroll contained the “ten commandments” as well as what God communicated to Moses in Chapters 22 and 23. This writing is the basis for what is known as the “old covenant.” This is not the totality of what is known as the Mosaic Law, or just the Law, which is generally considered to be the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (also referred to as the Pentateuch or in Jewish circles as the Torah). At this time, the children of Israel agreed to obey this “scroll of the covenant.”

Sometime after this, Moses went up the mountain (his 5th trip).

Exodus 24:18

¹⁸ Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Joshua accompanied Moses on this trip.

During these forty days and forty nights, God gave Moses instructions regarding the building of the ark of the covenant (essentially a “box”); the mercy seat (a “lid” on the “box”²⁰⁰); the table of showbread; the golden lampstand [[Exodus 25:1–39](#)²⁰¹]; and God said...

Exodus 25:40

⁴⁰ "See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain.

Then God gave instructions concerning the ten curtains of the tabernacle; eleven curtains of goat hair; the boards and sockets; the veil for the ark; the curtain for the door; the bronze altar; the courtyard; the oil for the lamps; garments for the priests; the ephod; the breastpiece; additional priestly garments; consecration of the priests; the order of the sacrifices; food for the priests; and the daily offerings. These instructions concerned the establishment of God’s “house” and those designated to take care of it [[Exodus 26–29:44](#)].

Exodus 29:45 and 46

⁴⁵ "I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. ⁴⁶ "They shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God.

Then God gave instructions concerning the altar of incense; the atonement money; the bronze basin; the anointing oil; the incense; the craftsmen who would work on the project; and the sign of the sabbath.

Then, still during that forty days and forty nights period, God gave Moses the tablets.

²⁰⁰ Regarding the “mercy seat,” see <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/comm/Exodus/25/17>.

²⁰¹ For additional detail and pictorial representations, see the ESV Study Bible pages 206–208 and 214.

Exodus 31:18

¹⁸ When He [God] had finished speaking with him [Moses] upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony [[eduth](#)], tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

During this period, the children of Israel built a “golden calf.” God informed Moses of this. Then, Moses went down from the mountain to the camp.

Exodus 32:15 and 16

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony [[eduth](#)] in his hand, tablets which were written on both sides; they were written on one side and the other. ¹⁶ The tablets were God's work, and the writing was God's writing engraved on the tablets.

We note that God provided the tablets and He wrote on the tablets. The tablets had writing on both sides. What was written on each tablet is not described and there are varying views on the topic. There are also varying opinions regarding how the message is divided into ten. What was on the tablets were “ten commandments” which God had previously spoken directly to the people and which Moses had written down in the “scroll of the covenant.” Here, the writing is characterized as the “testimony,” which also means “witness.” Regarding the two tablets, it is possible that the contents of each was identical based on the concept of “two witnesses” [[Deuteronomy 19:15](#)]. The tablets acted as two “witnesses” giving “testimony” to what the children of Israel had agreed to do. God put it in writing—“This is what you agreed to do.” Or the contents of the two tablets was identical based on the concept of a “contract/treaty” between two parties where each party received a copy of the agreement. In this case, both “sides” were placed in the ark of the covenant.²⁰² Of course, the point is the content and not how the content was organized.

When Moses came down the mountain and saw the children of Israel partying around a golden calf idol, he threw the tablets to the ground and they broke into pieces [[Exodus 32:19](#)].

Moses ascended the mountain (his 6th trip) and interceded for the people [[Exodus 32:31–34](#)].

After descending from the mountain, God spoke to Moses, probably in the “tent of meeting.” During one of these interactions, God told Moses to cut two stone tablets like the ones he broke [[Exodus 34:1](#)].

Moses ascended the mountain again (his 7th trip). He took with him the stone tablets he had made per God’s order. At this time, God repeats some of the original commands and adds some new information. Then we come to the first occurrence of the verbiage, “ten commandments.”

Exodus 34:28

²⁸ So he [Moses] was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he [God] wrote on the tablets the words [[dabar](#)] of the covenant [[berith](#)], the **Ten Commandments** [[dabar](#)].

This is the second time Moses spent forty days and forty nights on the mountain. The Hebrew word [dabar](#) means speech or word(s); the “ten commandments” in Hebrew is literally, the “ten words.” As indicated in this verse, what God wrote on those tables were the “words [[dabar](#)] of the covenant [[berith](#)].” A covenant is defined in the Merriam-Webster online as: 1) a usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement; 2a) a written agreement or promise usually under seal between two or more parties, especially for the performance of some action. The Hebrew sense of the word is similar. The point of these “ten words” was that if the children of Israel did what they agreed to do, then God would

²⁰² See [discussion](#) posted on Biblical Hermeneutics. Regarding duplicates see page 81 of “Israelite Covenants” available here: <https://drmsb.com/TheNakedBible/OT%20covenant%20ANE%20covenants%20Pt2.pdf>.

bless them in multiple ways. If they failed to uphold their end of the agreement, they would suffer consequences.²⁰³ Consider the opening declaration that God first spoke from the mountain.

Exodus 20:2

²"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

This is obviously not a "command." It is a declaration that communicates that God is a delivering God as the children of Israel had dramatically seen on their exit from Egypt.

There are commands in the "ten words" but there are also promises.

Exodus 20:6 and 12

⁶but **showing lovingkindness** to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments [[mitsvah](#)]. ... ¹²"Honor your father and your mother, that your **days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.**

Back when the people expressed their fear at hearing the voice of God from the mountain...

Exodus 20:20

²⁰Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, **so that you may not sin** [[chata](#)]."

The Hebrew word [chata](#) corresponds to the Greek word [hamartanó](#). Both words generally describe variance from or falling short of righteousness...missing the mark of righteousness. There are always consequences for failure to "hit the mark." Most consequences are just "built in" to the fabric of life while some consequences are actively imposed by God Himself. Lying, for instance, tends to result in damaged relationships between people without any active participation on God's part.

Jesus famously condensed the "ten words" of the covenant into the following.

Matthew 22:37–39 (ESV)

³⁷And he [Jesus] said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ³⁸This is the great and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

This view of the commandments was apparently not unique to Jesus.

Luke 10:26–28 (ESV)

²⁶He [Jesus] said to him [a lawyer], "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" ²⁷And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." ²⁸And he [Jesus] said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

The "ten commandments" and the Mosaic Law in general focus on intents and behaviors. We know from numerous scriptures that there is no one who never sins, that is, never has an unloving intent or never acts in an unloving way. There is an underlying issue as to why this is the case. The core problem is that no one is inherently righteous. As indicated in Romans and Galatians, the purpose of the Mosaic Law was not to make people righteous (something no written law could do), but to preserve at least some semblance of a civil society from which the Messiah could come who would address the core problem. This is addressed in the section "[Sin as a Condition](#)."

Besides Exodus 34:28, the expression "ten commandments" (or ten words) occurs in Deuteronomy.

²⁰³ Regarding "blessings" and "punishments/curses," see [Leviticus 26](#) and [Deuteronomy 28](#).

Deuteronomy 4:13

¹³ "So He [God] declared to you His covenant [[berith](#)] which He commanded you to perform, that is, the **Ten Commandments** [[dabar](#)]; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

After 40 years in the wilderness, Moses is preparing the children of Israel to venture into the promised land. In Deuteronomy 5:1–21, he restates the “ten words.” The verbiage is not exactly the same as recorded in Exodus 20 but the substance is the same.

Note what Moses relays to the people as part of what God said to him back at Mount Sinai.

Deuteronomy 5:29

²⁹ 'Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, **that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!**

The third and last time the expression “ten commandments” occurs is a little later as Moses is recounting to the people what had happened previously at Mount Sinai.

Deuteronomy 10:4

¹ "At that time [between the 6th and 7th trip] the LORD said to me, 'Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself. ² 'I will write on the tablets the **words** [[dabar](#)] that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.' ³ "So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. [his 7th trip] ⁴ "He [God] wrote on the tablets, like the former writing, the **Ten Commandments** [[dabar](#)] which the LORD had spoken to you [previously] on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. ⁵ "Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, as the LORD commanded me."

As part of his message to the people, Moses also said...

Deuteronomy 10:12 and 13

¹² "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today **for your good?**

While those who have accepted Christ are no longer required to obey the entirety of the Mosaic Law, the new covenant initiated through Christ does demand obedience with respect to living righteously, which certainly includes loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and, loving your neighbor as yourself. Note, however, that there is much more to this new covenant. Again, as with the old covenant, obedience means blessing and disobedience means consequences. For a detailed consideration of this topic, see the subsection "[The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus](#)" in the "Sin and Law" section.

The “unforgivable” Sin

Following are sections of Scripture that express the concept of “unforgivable sin.”

Matthew 12:31 and 32

³¹ "Therefore I say to you, any sin [[hamartia](#)] and blasphemy [[blasphémia](#)]²⁰⁴ shall be forgiven [[aphiémi](#)] people, but blasphemy [[blasphémia](#)] against the Spirit **shall not be forgiven** [[aphiémi](#)].

³² "Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven [[aphiémi](#)] him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it **shall not be forgiven** [[aphiémi](#)] him, either in this age [[aión](#)] or in the age to come [lit.—in the coming *one*].

Mark 3:28 and 29

²⁸ "Truly I say to you, all sins [[hamartéma](#)] shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit **never has forgiveness**, but is guilty of **an eternal sin** [[hamartéma](#)]"—

Berean Literal

²⁸ Truly I say to you that all sins [[hamartéma](#)] and blasphemies [[blasphémia](#)] will be forgiven [[aphiémi](#)] the sons of men, as many as they shall have blasphemed [[blasphémeó](#)]. ²⁹ But whoever shall blaspheme [[blasphémeó](#)] against the Holy Spirit does not have forgiveness [[aphesis](#)], to the age [[aión](#)], but is guilty [[enochos](#)] of eternal [[aiónios](#)] sin [[hamartéma](#)]."

Luke 12:10

¹⁰ "And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven [[aphiémi](#)] him; but he who blasphemes [[blasphémeó](#)] against the Holy Spirit, it **will not be forgiven** [[aphiémi](#)] him.

1 John 5:16

¹⁶ If anyone sees his brother committing a sin [[hamartia](#)] not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin [[hamartia](#)] **leading to death**; I do not say that he should make request for this.

Berean Literal

If anyone should see his brother sinning [[hamartanó](#)] a sin [[hamartia](#)] not unto death, he shall ask, and He will give him life, to those sinning [[hamartanó](#)] not unto death. There is a sin [[hamartia](#)] unto death; I do not say that he should implore concerning that.

Though the Gospel of John does not use the same language as the cites above, it does say this:

John 8:21 and 24

²¹ Then He said again to them [Pharisees], "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." ... ²⁴ "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

“Sin(s)” (noun) can refer to an act contrary to God or it can refer to a condition of sin or the consequence of sin. All three of these uses of sin are represented in these two verses. In v. 21, their **condition of sin** is unbelief, as detailed in v. 24 (and throughout the Gospel of John). A person will die (the second death) due to their **sins committed** if they fail to accept the savior from sin, Jesus Christ. It is **the consequence of sin** that these people could be saved from, namely permanent death. The sin of

²⁰⁴ REV: “speaking against” = “defaming”—“What we learn from the scope of Scripture is that the defaming that cannot be forgiven is a person saying, and truly meaning in the depths of their heart, that Satan is the true God.”

unbelief in this context seems to go beyond “simple” unbelief. All are guilty of some degree of unbelief, but it seems that Jesus was pointing at an unbelief that was “irreversible.”

Perhaps the following record can shed some light on the subject.

Matthew 4:1, 8–10

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ... ⁸Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; ⁹and he said to Him, "All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me." ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'"

“Devil” is a transliteration of the Greek word *diabolos*—(from 1225 /*diabállō*, "to slander, accuse, defame") – properly, a slanderer; a false accuser; unjustly criticizing to hurt (malign) and condemn to sever a relationship.

The devil (the slanderer) said, “...if you fall down and worship me.” Jesus’ reply was, “You shall worship the Lord your God....” The slanderer had offered Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.” If the slanderer could not have that to offer, it is likely that Jesus would have “called his bluff.” So, we can assume that the offer was legitimate. Jesus refused the offer but there may be others throughout history who have accepted a similar offer. They might not have been offered “all the kingdoms and their glory” but enough to satisfy their greed. Someone who has chosen to “worship” the slanderer and in the process rejected outright the one true God could be said to have committed the “unforgivable” sin. Such a conviction might well involve the person opening themselves up to a very powerful spirit from which there is no release or turning back (or any desire to do so).

Some additional considerations.

“whoever shall blaspheme [*blasphéméō*] against the Holy Spirit does not have forgiveness [*aphesis*]” —“blaspheme” in Leviticus 24:10ff, see NET [note 21](#) on v. 11. This person was stoned to death for what he said or did, which involved “blasphemy” and or “cursing.”

Numbers 15:27ff (v. 30 “high hand” [ESV]...intentional/defiant sin gets the death sentence.

Sin and Atonement

The Hebrew word [kaphar](#) occurs some 104x in the OT. Well over half of those are in Leviticus and Numbers and are almost exclusively translated as “(make/made) atonement.”²⁰⁵ In varying contexts, the word may also be translated as: appease, cleanse, disannul, forgive, pacify, pardon, purge, put off, or reconcile. The literal meaning of the word is “to cover,” and it is so used in its first occurrence which is in [Genesis 6:14](#). All the other senses of the word are metaphorical but related to the sense of “to cover.”

As an example, in Leviticus 5:1–4 there are a number of sins identified which require a “sin offering.” Verses 5–10a describe various circumstances that determine what should be offered and what the priest does with the offering. This process is described in the following verse along with the result.

Leviticus 5:10b

¹⁰ ... So the priest shall **make atonement** [[kaphar](#)] on his behalf for his sin which he has committed, and it will be **forgiven** [[salach](#)] him.

So, the priest “making atonement,” covering in a metaphorical sense, results in the sin being forgiven. Forgiven can be understood in the sense of a pardon. A person is guilty and therefore deserves punishment, however, an authority grants release from the punishment that is due.²⁰⁶ In this case, God is the authority who through the agency of the high priest grants forgiveness.

The expression, “the priest shall make atonement,” occurs 20x in Leviticus. This indicates that this type of atonement was a significant aspect of the Mosaic Law. We might, therefore, find it interesting to see how “atonement” occurs in the NT. The table below indicates where the word “atonement” occurs in a couple of the most commonly used versions. The table also shows the Greek words that are so translated.

	Greek	NIV	KJV	ESV	NASB
Acts 27:9	nésteia	Day of Atonement	fast	fast	fast
Romans 3:25	hilastérion	atonement	propitiation	propitiation	propitiation
Romans 5:11	katallagé	reconciliation	atonement	reconciliation	reconciliation
Hebrews 2:17	hilaskomai	make atonement	make reconciliation	make propitiation	make propitiation
Hebrews 9:5	hilastérion	atonement cover	mercy seat	mercy seat	mercy seat

In Acts 27:9, the NIV took a somewhat liberal approach to the word [nésteia](#), which means “fast,” by translating it as the “Day of Atonement.” This translation could be considered legitimate in that the context indicates that the “fast” being referred to is in fact the “Day of Atonement,” the once-a-year ritual that addressed the sins of the people (Leviticus 23:[27](#) and [28](#)).

The only verb in the list of Greek words is [hilaskomai](#) which occurs in Hebrews 2:17 (remember the Hebrew word [kaphar](#) is also a verb). Neither the verb [hilaskomai](#) nor its related noun [hilastérion](#) carries the sense of “to cover” literally or metaphorically. Consider Hebrews 2:17.

Hebrews 2:17

(NIV)

¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might

²⁰⁵ Related words: [kippur](#); [kopher](#).

²⁰⁶ See other examples here: Numbers 15:[25](#) and [28](#).

become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might **make atonement** [[hilaskomai](#)] **for the sins of the people.**

(KJV)

¹⁷ Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, **to make reconciliation** [[hilaskomai](#)] **for the sins of the people.**

(ESV)

¹⁷ Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, **to make propitiation** [[hilaskomai](#)] **for the sins of the people.**

(NASB)

¹⁷ Therefore, He [Jesus] had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, **to make propitiation** [[hilaskomai](#)] **for the sins of the people.**

Hebrews was addressed primarily to people with Jewish background. Therefore, Christ is presented in terms that those people would be familiar with. In this verse, Christ is identified as a high priest who makes atonement/reconciliation/propitiation for the sins of the people. This reminds us of the record in Leviticus cited earlier. The NIV makes a direct connection with the Mosaic Law in equating [hilaskomai](#) with [kaphar](#) by choosing “make atonement.” Whether this is a legitimate choice is up for discussion. The other versions chose “make propitiation” or “make reconciliation.” These two expressions do not mean the same thing. They represent two views of what Christ, as the high priest, did or accomplished. For a detailed examination of this verse, see the commentary in the REV for this verse. The final paragraph reads as follows:

In conclusion, what Jesus did as it is expressed in Greek is hard to express easily in English, which accounts for the many different English translations of [Hebrews 2:17](#). But Jesus became the High Priest so that he could **wipe away** the sins of the people, and in so doing he appeased the wrath of God, removed the guilt of the people, and restored the harmony between God and man. What the Old Testament high priest and sacrifices could only do in a token way, Jesus Christ actually and fully accomplished in removing the sins of the people. [emphasis added]

The concepts of “to cover” [[kaphar](#)] and “to wipe away” [[hilaskomai](#)] are typically not the same. As indicated in Hebrews, the sacrifices under the Mosaic Law were a shadow of Christ ([Hebrews 8:5](#); [10:1](#)). This means that literal forgiveness was contingent on Christ accomplishing what God called him to do. Sins could be said to be “covered” in the sense that they were no longer in plain view as far as God was concerned. What Christ accomplished was not just “to cover” but to “wipe away” sin. We note the figurative language being used in both instances since “sin” is an abstract concept and not a thing that can be “covered” or “wiped away.” “Covering sin” can be understood as God “not seeing” sin (figuratively) and therefore not holding it against a person in terms of any punishment warranted (literally). To “wipe away sin” means it is “gone” and therefore God no longer holds a person liable, that is, subject to the punishment due for their sin. So, while there are two different expressions being used, the result is the same, i.e., no condemnation and punishment, but it all hinged on Christ carrying out God’s plan. One teacher described this metaphorically as the sinner having a credit card. The sin committed went on the credit card and later Christ paid what was due on the card.

The noun form of [hilaskomai](#) is [hilastérion](#). This word is translated in Romans 3:25 as “atonement” by the NIV and as “propitiation” by the KJV, NASB, and ESV. The same word in Hebrews 9:5 is translated as “atonement cover” by the NIV; as “mercy seat” by the KJV; and as “mercy seat” by the NASB and ESV.

Are our heads spinning yet? The issue here is that [hilastérion](#) was used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures) for the “mercy seat”—a solid gold “lid” that sat on top of the ark of the covenant (a box that contained the stone tablets with the commandments given to Moses; Aaron's rod; and a pot of manna).²⁰⁷ The blood of a sacrifice was sprinkled on that “mercy seat” by the high priest as part of the atonement process once a year. Since Hebrews 9:5 is an obvious reference to the physical object known as the “mercy seat,” this is a legitimate translation. Since the mercy seat was associated with the priest making atonement for the sins of the people, the NIV chose “atonement cover” rather than “mercy seat.” However, in Romans 3:25, the word [hilastérion](#) is only an indirect reference to the literal mercy seat. God did not “display Christ as a mercy seat” but as that which was “sprinkled” on the mercy seat to atone for the sins of the people, namely, Christ’s blood. We might go with “atoning sacrifice” as indicated in the translation below.

Romans 3:25 (REV)

whom God set forth as an **atoning sacrifice** [[hilastérion](#)] through trust in his blood. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in God’s restraint he passed over the sins previously committed,²⁰⁸

The purpose and anticipated result of an “atoning” act is reconciliation. This brings us to the word [katallagé](#) in Romans 5:11 where the NIV, NASB, and ESV all translate the word as “reconciliation.” Only the KJV chose the word “atonement;” however, at the time of the translation of the KJV “atonement” meant “reconciliation.” “Reconciliation” is the intended result of an “atonement.”

It might be helpful to consider the context of Romans 5:11.

Romans 5:6–11

⁶For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** [[katallassó](#)] to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been **reconciled** [[katallassó](#)], we shall be saved by His life.

¹¹And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the **reconciliation** [[katallagé](#)].

The word [katallassó](#), here translated as “reconciled” (v. 10 2x), is the verb form of the noun [katallagé](#), here translated as “reconciliation” (v. 11). Reconciliation was necessary because people were/are “helpless,” “ungodly” (v. 6), “sinners” (v. 8), and “enemies” (v. 10). Why these terms can be applied to everyone who is not reconciled is covered in the section “[Sin as a Condition](#).”

Based on our look at the word “atonement,” we see that it is primarily an OT concept but foreshadows Christ and what was accomplished by Christ’s death, namely reconciliation with God. God has always provided a way to address sin so that the justifiable condemnation and punishment might be removed and a favorable relationship be developed. This has been and still is God’s intent—to have a positive, healthy, loving relationship with all people. Through Christ, He has done his part. It is up to each individual to choose to accept what God through Christ has made available.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ [Exodus 40:20](#); [1 Kings 8:9](#); [Hebrews 9:3 and 4](#).

²⁰⁸ For a detailed consideration of this verse see the REV [commentary](#) on Romans 3:25.

²⁰⁹ See also: <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-does-atonement-disappear-in-the-new-testament>.

Free Will, Original Sin, Sin Nature

The expressions “free will,” “original sin,” and “sin nature” are used by theologians, teachers, commentators, etc. These expressions do not occur in Scripture. It is, therefore, worth considering whether these expressions communicate the truth of the Scripture.

Free Will

The expression “**free will**” and its implications have been a part of long-running debates in philosophy and religion.²¹⁰ The basic question is whether man truly has free will or only the appearance of free will.

For a consideration of “free will,” let’s start in the beginning. In the garden, God gave Adam a command and a warning.

Genesis 2:16 and 17

¹⁶The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;

¹⁷but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

It is implied by the command to not eat that Adam had the ability to choose to eat or to not eat. We note that Adam and Eve violated this command while **in the garden**.

Many years later, God presented the children of Israel two choices.

Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, and 15

¹“Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ²“All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you **if you obey** the LORD your God: ... ¹⁵“But it shall come about, **if you do not obey** the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

Deuteronomy 30:19

¹⁹“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So **choose** life in order that you may live, you and your descendants,

The children of Israel could choose to obey or choose to not obey.

In this period in which we live, God has given commands.

Romans 12:2

²And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:9

⁹Let love be without hypocrisy. **Abhor** what is evil; **cling** to what is good.

We can choose to be transformed by renewing our minds. We can choose to abhor evil and cling to good.

In the coming period of Revelation, people will be given choices.

²¹⁰ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_will.

Revelation 1:3

³Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and **heed** the things which are written in it; for the time is near.

Revelation 14:6 and 7

⁶And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; ⁷and he said with a loud voice, "**Fear God**, and **give Him glory**, because the hour of His judgment has come; **worship Him** who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."

People will be able to heed or not heed. They will be able to choose to fear God, give Him glory, and worship Him or not.

People have been and are "free" to choose, however, there are only two meaningful choices...obey God or disobey God. One choice brings consequences; one choice brings blessings. So, people do have "free will" but not in the sense that they can choose "whatever" and life will be good for them.

Original Sin

The doctrine of "**original sin**" began to emerge in the 3rd century but only became fully formed with the writings of Augustine of Hippo (354–430 AD), who was the first author to use the phrase "original sin."²¹¹ Variations on the theme of "original sin" have been posited through the centuries, and these variations go well beyond simply saying that Adam committed the first sin.²¹²

God gave Adam and Eve the **capability** to choose. From that moment on, the **potential** to choose badly became a **possibility**. Adam and Eve were not inherently righteous in the sense that God is inherently righteous. If Adam and Eve were inherently righteous, like God, it would have precluded the possibility of being tempted to sin [[James 1:13](#)]. Adam and Eve were not inherently UNrighteous either. What is stated in Genesis is that God saw all that He had made and it was very good [[Genesis 1:31](#)]. This would have included Adam and Eve. They were perceived by God as "good." They were righteous in the sense that they were in good standing with God. Adam and Eve's choice to rebel against God actualized, brought into being...brought into reality, what was previously only a possibility, namely disobedience.

The record in Genesis reveals how this disobedience occurred. The serpent (the devil) "played" to Eve's physical senses and her emotions—scripturally, the serpent "deceived" Eve [[1 Timothy 2:14](#)]. With the serpent's encouragement, Eve **saw** the forbidden tree as something **to be desired** [[Genesis 3:6](#)]. The ability to desire was a function built-in to Adam and Eve by God along with the ability to make choices. Of course, the intent was that they would choose to direct their desire towards God. But Eve's desire was aroused and misdirected, and she chose to eat contrary to God's directive. Adam "listened to the voice of his wife" [[Genesis 3:17a](#)] and he also ate.

If there is an "original sin," it is perhaps more appropriate to tie that to Lucifer, now known as the devil, who has sinned from the beginning [[1 John 3:8](#)].²¹³

²¹¹ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Original_sin.

²¹² See "Origins of Sin" here: <https://restitutio.org/2020/04/02/321-origins-of-sin-kegan-chandler/>.

²¹³ See the section "[A Tale of Three Sins](#)."

Sin Nature

The expression “**sin nature**” is a derivative of original sin (who first used the expression is undetermined—it might be helpful to know who coined the term). Here are a couple of ways “sin nature” has been characterized:

“Every human being possesses a *sin nature* -- a *corrupt nature* inherited from Adam.”²¹⁴ [emphasis added]

When Adam sinned, his *sinless nature* ended and he changed to having a *sin nature*. ... He then passed down his *sin nature* to his descendants...²¹⁵ [emphasis added]

Based on these two quotes, Adam had a *sinless nature* that became a *sin nature*, a *corrupt nature*, when he rebelled against God and this sin/corrupt nature has been passed on to all mankind. There are, no doubt, variations, or different explanations of this concept.²¹⁶ Some variations speak of “sin nature” as if sin is some “thing” that “entered” and “corrupted” man’s original “nature.” One teacher has said that the “sin nature” is “something” in us that rebels against God and “likes it that way.”

Going back to “the garden,” there were several consequences associated with Eve and Adam’s choice to disobey God, among them: they forfeited the spirit God had given them;²¹⁷ they were expelled from the garden; and they were denied access to the tree of life. It is also possible that Adam and Eve experienced some form of genetic corruption.²¹⁸ All their progeny have subsequently been born spirit-less (with an inner void and senses-dependent); born without access to the tree of life (mortal, subject to the “common death”); born into a world ruled by a wicked spirit; and possibly born with a weakened genetic makeup. If we put together the void created by the absence of spirit, reliance on the body and soul capabilities only, mortality, and a world-ruling wicked spirit, we have all that is needed to explain the proliferation of sin in the world.

We might consider the Hebrew word “*yetser*.” This noun occurs 9x and is defined as “a form, a framing, a purpose.” There are three contexts in which the word occurs.²¹⁹

Three occurrences are in a negative context.

Genesis 6:5

⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every **intent** [*yetser*] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 8:21

²¹ The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the **intent** [*yetser*] of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

²¹⁴ See “The Sin Nature” here: <https://www.gospeloutreach.net/sinnature.html>.

²¹⁵ REV [commentary](#) on 2 Peter 1:4.

²¹⁶ See ESV study bible: “4. Sin is rooted deep in our very nature...” page 2778.

²¹⁷ Some do not recognize “soul” and “spirit” in Genesis as two different things. See the section on “[Two Deaths](#)” for more information.

²¹⁸ The science of epigenetics is documenting how our behaviors, including what we think, and environment can cause changes that affect the way our genes work. These changes can sometimes be for the better or sometimes for the worse. For more on epigenetics, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/genomics/disease/epigenetics.htm>.

²¹⁹ See [NET](#) note 19: “The word יֶצֶר (*yetser*) became a significant theological term in Rabbinic literature...”

Deuteronomy 31:21

²⁰ "For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant. ²¹ "Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their **intent** [[yetser](#)] which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore."

Three occurrences are in a positive context.

1 Chronicles 28:9

⁹ "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a whole heart and a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts, and understands every **intent** [[yetser](#)] of the thoughts. **If you seek Him**, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will reject you forever.

In this verse, an "intent" can be described as seeking Him or forsaking Him. In other words, "intent" can go either way.

The following is on the heels of the children of Israel bringing goods for the building of the Temple.

1 Chronicles 29:17 and 18

¹⁷ "Since I know, O my God, that You try the heart and delight in uprightness, I, in the integrity of my heart, have willingly offered all these things; so now with joy I have seen Your people, who are present here, **make their offerings willingly to You**. ¹⁸ "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, our fathers, preserve this forever in the **intentions** [[yetser](#)] of the heart of Your people, and direct their heart to You;

Here, at least for a time, the "heart" of David and the people was "upright." David's prayer is that this intent could be maintained.

Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)

³ You keep him in perfect peace whose **mind** [[yetser](#)] is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

The above verse could easily say, "whose intentions are stayed on you." The three verses above indicate the possibility that at least some of the time a person's intentions or frame of mind can be directed towards God.

The remaining three occurrences are more literal and refer to some object being "framed," "formed," or an object being someone's "handiwork" [[Psalms 103:14](#); [Isaiah 29:16](#); [Habakkuk 2:18](#)].

If it is possible for a person to have an **intent** to seek God [1 Chronicles 28:9], the declaration that the **intent** "of man's heart is evil from his youth..." [Genesis 8:21] must not be taken as an absolute, or it needs to be understood differently than it sometimes is as "**every** intent is **only** evil."

Consider Romans 7. We see that the writer has an "intent" to do what is right, but he lacks the ability to carry out his intent—"for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not" [v. 18]. It is not that he literally has something in him keeping him from doing good but that he is lacking something to enable him to do the good he wants to do. What he is lacking is a righteous nature. It is in this sense that "nothing good" [v. 18] is in him. This would be the same way in which Jesus used the word "good" when he said that only God is "good," that is, only God is inherently good, meaning inherently righteous. What the Romans 7 man has "in" him is whatever was left after spirit had been removed from Adam.

Back in Genesis, the external environment described in [Genesis 1:2](#) was "darkness" [[choshek](#)]. Darkness is the absence of light. The first thing God did was to introduce (or reintroduce) light into His damaged

creation [[Genesis 1:3](#)]. We have deduced that as originally made, formed, and created, Adam and Eve had a spirit from God. This spirit could be considered “light.” When they disobeyed God, they lost that spirit-light, and their internal environment became “darkness,” i.e., the absence of “light.” They still had all the physical and psychological capabilities they had before including the five senses, the ability to choose, the ability to reason, conscience, etc., but there was now “darkness” internally, an absence of light. Nothing entered Adam when he disobeyed God but something was removed.²²⁰

The following is one verse of Scripture that has been used in the discussion of “original sin” or “sin nature.” This verse has been handled by countless theologians and commentators and it is unlikely that we can add much, but the verse is worth a close look because it brings a couple of important points to the fore.

Romans 5:12

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

As we begin considering this verse, there is an important point to be made. There is a difference between condition/legal status and behavior/way of life. The distinction between these is easily seen when we consider the following circumstances. Person “A” is born in the United States; person “B” is born in Kenya. As a result of birth, person “A” is a citizen of the United States, and person “B” is a citizen of Kenya. This describes their **legal status**. Now, person “A” might decide to live a life of crime while person “B” decides to seek wisdom and understanding. This relates to behavior or **way of life**. In the case of citizenship, the individual had no choice in the matter; whereas in the case of how they live their life, the individual chose a path. Another example would be birth. A child is born to a mother and father and as a result that son or daughter is of that bloodline. They are also legally a son or daughter. This is a **condition/legal status**. The son or daughter had no choice in the matter and under normal circumstances this condition/legal status is permanent. However, that son or daughter could choose to lead a life of crime or choose to seek wisdom and understanding. This relates to behavior or **way of life**. For a final example, consider someone who commits a felony and is sent to prison. Their **legal status** is convicted felon and their **condition** is living in prison. While in prison, they could choose to spend time with the hardened criminals, or they could choose to change their life for the better by getting an education—amend their **way of life**.

The book of Proverbs, particularly the opening chapters are about way of life—don’t go after the prostitute, stay with your wife; don’t go with the bloodthirsty crowd, go after wisdom and understanding. The “Parable of the Sower” also addresses way of life, that is, whether an individual “withers” or “grows,” which is based on their heart which is a result of their choices. A lot of the Bible deals with way of life, but the Bible also speaks to condition/legal status. The letter to the Romans addresses both these topics and it is important to make the distinction.

[Romans 5:12](#) says that “sin entered the world.” “Sin” is a generic term that can be applied to a wide variety of intents and actions that are contrary to God. However, it is important to note that the term “sin” is also used figuratively to refer to a **condition** contrary to God. What “sin” entered the world in Romans 5:12 is not immediately obvious but consider the preceding verses.

Romans 5:10 and 11

¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been **reconciled**, we shall be saved by His life. ¹¹ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the **reconciliation**.

²²⁰ Consider the occurrences of “light” in the Gospel of John.

There is a focus on the topic of reconciliation. Reconciliation implies that a separation existed between man and God. Given this context, the “sin” referred to in Romans 5:12 would be **separation** from God or stated another way, the absence of a relationship with God or being without God. This is a **condition** that was the **result** of Adam having sinned.

Through Adam, a condition of sin entered the world. This condition occurred because of something Adam did, which is described in Romans 5:[15](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), and [19](#). Verse 19 specifically identifies what Adam did as “disobedience.” So, we might say, “through *Adam’s disobedience* the condition of sin entered the world.” This condition is characterized by being spirit-less, mortal, and living in a world ruled by an evil spirit. This condition of sin, although a possibility, had not occurred in the world until Adam did what he did. This sin condition is what every person is born into without any choice.²²¹

Romans 5:12 goes on to say “...and death through sin.” Death was introduced into the world in several ways: Adam and Eve, having lost access to the tree of life, became mortal (subject to death; the “common death”); they also no longer had spirit in them which may be described as “spiritual death” (separation from God who is spirit); and they were now potentially subject to the “second (permanent) death” that will follow God’s final judgment in the end times. The first two of these deaths are conditions that spread to all mankind because of Adam’s disobedience. The “second death” is based upon each person’s own choices to disobey.

In the expression “sin entered,” the word “enter” [[eiserchomai](#)²²²] is being used in an atypical way.²²³ In a significant majority of cases, the word “enter” refers to people (183 of 194 occurrences). We also note that “sin entered” is a one-time expression in Scripture. Since people literally enter, we can perhaps take the phrase “**sin entered**” as personification. If so, we might say that Adam’s disobedience introduced the actor “Sin” onto the world’s stage and “Sin” brought along his (or her) “partner,” “Death.” These two “actors” have dominated the world’s stage ever since. Before dismissing this out-of-hand, consider that the personification of “Sin” and “Death” is not uncommon in the letter to the Romans.²²⁴

Given that Romans 5:15–19 presents a contrast between the consequences of Adam’s act of disobedience and the blessings of Jesus Christ’s act of righteousness, the focus is not on individuals sinning and why they sin but on the **consequences** of the “first Adam” and the **blessings** of the “last Adam.” These are statements regarding conditions.²²⁵ Adam’s disobedience put man into a condition of sin (subject to death); Christ’s righteousness puts man into a condition of righteousness (access to life).

Only if “sin” is understood as the “consequences of sin,” can it be said that man “inherits” sin. What has been inherited is not the guilt of Adam’s disobedience—he alone was held guilty for his act (and

²²¹ “World” in Rom. 5:12 should be limited to the “world” in which God placed Adam and Eve—a well-ordered world. The serpent, the devil, was already “in the world” since he spoke to Eve, but any exercise of his power in that world was restricted until Adam forfeited his spiritual authority and power. The world then became a less well-ordered place characterized by sin (lawlessness) and death. Per [1 John 3:4](#), which equates sin with lawlessness, we might also say that “*lawlessness entered the world.*”

²²² See the section “[eiserchomai—‘enter’](#)” that identifies all the occurrences of this word.

²²³ See also “[Sin and Enter](#)” for more detail.

²²⁴ Note, in Romans chapters 6 and 7 [NASB], “slave,” “freed,” “master,” “reign,” “wages,” “taking opportunity,” “sold,” “dwell,” “prisoner,” and other figurative language. There may also be linkage between “Sin” and the devil, a spiritual entity, who gained authority within the world when Adam forfeited at least some of his authority through disobedience and loss of spirit (Matt. 4:[8](#) and [9](#); [2 Cor. 4:4](#); [Eph. 2:2](#)).

²²⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:[21](#), [22](#), and [45](#).

probably forgiven²²⁶). What has been inherited is the result, the consequences, of Adam's disobedience; and, likewise, potentially, the results, the blessings, of Christ's obedience.

Jumping back to Romans 7, one thing that it highlights is that this condition can impact behavior. Romans 7 can be taken as a description of a man prior to being born again of God's spirit, that is, a "natural man," a man of body-and-soul-only, spirit-less, reliant on his own innate capabilities (and given v. 1, a Jew). This man wants to do "good" (wants to obey the Law) but acts contrary to the Law. His condition is impacting his behavior. What occurs in Romans 8 is the "fix" to the problem, namely, being born again of God's spirit, which gives a person an enablement that was not there before. This enablement can help the person to do the right thing. The person has a new condition.

Some may say that a person *cannot but sin*. If this were true, God would be unjust in judging and punishing the individual based on sins committed. This point is well clarified in the [notes](#) for Genesis 3:22 in the REV. Here is an excerpt:

"So although many proud and intellectual people deny it, human beings instinctively know good from evil at a basic level, and also know there is a creator," and quoting from Roman 2:14, "indeed when Gentiles who do not have the law **do by nature** [[phusis](#)] the things of the law."

People make choices and are therefore responsible for their choices. That individuals are responsible for their choices is also made clear in Romans 1.

Romans 1:20, 21, 25, 28, and 32

²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that **they are without excuse**. ²¹For even though **they knew God, they did not honor Him** as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ... ²⁵For **they exchanged the truth of God for a lie**, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ... ²⁸And just as **they did not see fit** to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ... ³²and although **they know the ordinance of God**, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Those spoken of in Romans 1:18–32 made choices for which they are responsible for before God. It cannot be said that these people were inherently corrupt. It can be said that their "mindset" or "mental frame" was arrogance (see Ezekiel 16:[49](#) and [50](#) regarding Sodom). It can be said that they were without "light," that is, their "internal environment" was darkness, and they chose to go with "darkness" rather than seek "light." Their arrogance resulted in their hearts becoming darkened and their minds becoming depraved.

Considering the word "nature," it can carry different senses depending on context. In Ephesians 2:3, "...were by nature [[phusis](#)] children of wrath," it can be viewed as a statement of condition as a result of Adam's act of disobedience. It can also be used in the sense of "by birth" (see ESV translation of [Galatians 2:15](#)). By birth, all are body-and-soul-only; all are "dust." This is every person's condition. In this respect, all are born contrary to (and separated from) a righteous and eternal God. "Sin nature" may be a convenient expression, but, in our opinion, it clouds rather than clarifies.

Consider the following.

Mark 7:20 and 21

²⁰And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. ²¹"For

²²⁶ God sacrificed an animal to "cover" Adam and Eve.

from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²² deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. ²³ "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

This does not say that the heart is inherently wicked, only that these wicked things come from the heart, which is a different issue. The heart, per the "Parable of the Sower," can be directed.

Here is another verse that might come to mind.

Genesis 8:21

²¹ The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the LORD said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent [[yetser](#)] of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

"[T]he intent [[yetser](#)] of a man's heart is evil from his youth"—a spirit-less, body-and-soul-only person relying on his senses and flesh-based reasoning coupled with a sense of inner void will tend towards selfishness, etc. This should not be taken as documentation for "sin nature" unless this expression is clearly defined as the condition man finds himself in as a result of Adam's disobedience and not some inherent corruption.

The "Parable of the Sower" clearly indicates that a man's heart is malleable. Individuals choose how to live their lives. They promote a heart that is dedicated to God, or they seek other things.

Luke 8:12–15

¹² "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their **heart**, so that they will not believe and be saved. ¹³ "Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root [in their **heart**]; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴ "The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life [in their **heart**], and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵ "But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good **heart**, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

A body-soul-only person can determine to seek God and, in the process, live a life that is more lawful than lawless and, therefore, more fruitful. However, it is obvious from Scripture that this person will fall short at points because body-and-soul is limited and "weak." It is not that a person's "nature" is corrupt, rather, the body-and-soul-only person is "weak" [[Mark 14:38](#)] "...the desire to do right is there (at least for some people), but the flesh is weak—see again Romans 7.

A body-soul-only person is especially "weak" regarding death. There is nothing a person can do to avoid the death common to all—"dust you are and to dust you will return." Note the NET translation of the following verse.

Romans 1:23 (NET)

and exchanged the glory of the immortal [[aphthartos](#)] God for an image resembling mortal [[phthartos](#)] human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.

The NET notes "there is a wordplay on the Greek terms ἀφθαρτος (aphthartos, "immortal, imperishable, incorruptible") and φθαρτός (phthartos, "mortal, corruptible, subject to decay"). These words mark a clear distinction between God and human beings.

A body-and-soul-only person is particularly weak regarding contending with the wicked, invisible, spiritual forces at work in the world. Reliance on body-and-soul, which is the path Eve and Adam chose, makes for weakness against a wily wicked spirit. If two people who were body, soul, and spirit and who

were living in an idyllic world lacking nothing could be turned from God by a wicked spirit or because of their "love" for one another, what chance do body-and-soul-only people have of living righteously without fail. History tells the tale.

In conclusion, we feel the expression "sin nature," besides the fact that it does not occur in scripture, is not self-explanatory and can be somewhat misleading. If it is understood as being separated from God, which "sin" generally implies, it is perhaps workable. However, we do not think this is how the majority of people understand the expression. There is in fact no word or phrase in scripture that capsulizes the human state, condition, or "nature." The expressions "body-soul nature" or "spirit-less nature" or "flesh-only nature" do not occur in scripture but they do point to the actual condition that every person is born into. It is, therefore, perhaps worth considering that God has not intended for there to be a "simple" phrase to describe the "nature" of human beings.

Appendix

More on “Sin Nature”

The following are quotes from various sources arguing for “sin nature.” We leave it to the reader to decide whether to use or not use the expression.

"The sin nature is that **aspect** in man that **makes him** rebellious against God. When we speak of the sin nature, we refer to the fact that we have a **natural inclination** to sin; given the choice to do God’s will or our own, we will **naturally** choose to do our own thing.” [emphasis added]²²⁷

The sin nature is that **part** of human beings that **impels us** to commit sin. The Bible teaches that we have a **sin nature**. Not only do we commit sin, but it is our **nature** to do so. ... Being sinners by **nature**, we cannot **help but sin**. [emphasis added]²²⁸

“**sin.**” “Sin,” dwells, or lives, in us even when we are not in the act of “sinning.” This is due to our “**sin nature,**” the **nature** we have as descendants of Adam. We have a **sin nature**, and it **leads us** to sin in our flesh. An unanswered and historically much-debated question is exactly how it came to be that everyone is under the **power of sin**. The term “original sin” does not occur in the Bible, but the doctrine of original sin and subsequent sin nature is clearly in the text. To summarize: the “original sin” was the sin that Adam committed that **produced in him**, and then all of his descendants (thus all humans) an inescapable **sin nature** that results in the verdict of “death” in the eyes of God. When Adam knowingly and willingly disobeyed God and ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ([Gen. 3:6](#)), **his nature actually changed from being pure and blameless** before God to being **an impure, sinful nature**. Worse, this sin nature was then **somehow** passed down to all his descendants; all mankind. But how did that happen? We do not know “how” the sin nature is passed from generation to generation, although there is much speculation about it. Perhaps it would be more honest just to say we are not sure. What we do know is that the Bible makes it clear that **the nature of the Devil became the nature of Adam and Eve**, and mankind has had a **crafty nature** ever since then. [emphasis added]²²⁹

“Sin” is a quality (not an action); the root of all the actions is a quality. When Adam sinned, **something changed**. Born with a hindrance. Something God calls sin. When Adam sinned, **a new quality entered**. A quality that at its root is **antagonistic to God and likes it that way**. [emphasis added]²³⁰

The following quotes communicate a common view of “sin nature.”

Sin’s Ruling Principle—Romans 7:23; 8:2

- a. Paul refers to this **sin-force** as the “flesh” or “**sinful nature**”
- b. Not your human nature (words, thoughts, motives, emotions, intentions, and attitudes)
- c. The sin principle is the **active agent** that **uses** the human nature which is passive (Rom. 6:13)
- d. The sin principle completely **dominates** the lives of the unbeliever (Rom. 3:9-12; John 8:34)

²²⁷ <https://www.gotquestions.org/sin-nature.html>.

²²⁸ <https://www.compellingtruth.org/sin-nature.html>.

²²⁹ <https://www.revisedenglishversion.com/Rom/7/17>.

²³⁰ <https://bookstore.ssg.church/classes#Sin,%20Grace,%20and%20Newness%20of%20Life>.

e. Believers still have the sin-principle **within them**—but they are not slaves (Rom. 7:18; 6:11-14)

f. The results of sin as a principle are sins of word, action, thought, will, emotion, attitude, and motive [emphasis added]²³¹

Also...

His [Adam's] transgression or rebellion against God released the **power** of the sin principle within each of us, and this **causes us** to do what we don't want to do and **keeps us** from doing those things we desire to do. [emphasis added]²³²

All men commit sins because all are **infected** with the sin principle. [emphasis added]²³³

And...

So we see that Paul by his experience with the law was led to see that "in him, that is, in his flesh, dwelt no good thing" [Romans 7:18]; that in his members is the sin principle enslaving him so that he "is sold under sin" [Romans 7:14], that is, under the sway of this sin principle. ... Paul testifies that sin **entered our race** in and through the disobedience of Adam. "As through one man sin, [hamartia, the sin principle] entered into the world, and death by sin. ... (Romans 5:19). The apostle here means, doubtless, that all...the race was seminally in Adam as its progenitor, and that Adam by the process of heredity handed down to his descendants a **depraved nature**. [emphasis added]²³⁴

We commit sins because we have the nature of a sinner. We can easily understand this by observing children. They don't have to be taught to lie; they lie spontaneously because they were born with the sinful nature. Our **sinful nature is the cause of our sins**. [emphasis added]²³⁵

See also...

The Source New Testament (by A. Nyland, 2004) ... Jesus was fully human but **without a sin nature** ... He had no sin nature because God was his Father, whereas every other human has a sin nature inherited from Adam.

We are not sure that any of this really serves to clarify the situation. All the definitions/descriptions of "sin nature" provided above state or imply that a change/distortion/corruption took place **in** Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God. We find it curious that **loss of spirit** and **becoming mortal** does not seem to get much "press." Whether all or any of the above is scripturally accurate is worth considering.

²³¹ <http://www.graceindep.com/storage/pdf/Fall.pdf>

²³² <https://smoodock45.wordpress.com/2010/11/28/rebellion-and-the-sin-principle/>

²³³ <https://bible.org/article/doctrine-sin>

²³⁴ https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/torrey_ra/fundamentals/39.cfm

²³⁵ <https://blog.biblesforamerica.org/difference-between-sin-and-sins/>

[eiserchomai](#)—“enter”

The following is a list of all occurrences of [eiserchomai](#).

<u>Matthew 2:21</u> they came into the land	<u>Mark 1:45</u> he could no long enter
<u>Matthew 5:20</u> you will not enter	<u>Mark 2:1</u> he had come back
<u>Matthew 6:6</u> you go into	<u>Mark 2:26</u> he entered
<u>Matthew 7:13</u> few enter	<u>Mark 3:1</u> he entered
<u>Matthew 7:13</u> many enter	<u>Mark 3:27</u> no one can enter
<u>Matthew 7:21</u> he will enter	<u>Mark 5:12</u> we may enter
<u>Matthew 8:5</u> Jesus entered	<u>Mark 5:13</u> spirits entered
<u>Matthew 8:8</u> you to come under	<u>Mark 5:39</u> [he] entering in
<u>Matthew 9:25</u> he entered	<u>Mark 6:10</u> you enter
<u>Matthew 10:5</u> you do not enter	<u>Mark 6:22</u> [she] came in
<u>Matthew 10:11</u> you enter	<u>Mark 6:25</u> she came
<u>Matthew 10:12</u> you enter	<u>Mark 7:17</u> he entered
<u>Matthew 12:4</u> he entered	<u>Mark 7:24</u> he had entered
<u>Matthew 12:29</u> anyone enter	<u>Mark 8:26</u> [you] do note enter
<u>Matthew 12:45</u> they [spirits] go in	<u>Mark 9:25</u> you [spirit] do not enter
<u>Matthew 15:11</u> what enters into the mouth	<u>Mark 9:28</u> he came into the house
<u>Matthew 18:8</u> you to enter	<u>Mark 9:43</u> you to enter life
<u>Matthew 18:9</u> you to enter	<u>Mark 9:45</u> you to enter life
<u>Matthew 19:17</u> you wish to enter	<u>Mark 9:47</u> you to enter the kingdom
<u>Matthew 19:23</u> rich man to enter	<u>Mark 10:15</u> a child will not enter
<u>Matthew 19:24</u> [textual variations] rich man <i>to enter</i>	<u>Mark 10:23</u> wealthy to enter
<u>Matthew 21:10</u> he had entered	<u>Mark 10:24</u> [children] how hard it is to enter
<u>Matthew 21:12</u> Jesus entered	<u>Mark 10:25</u> a rich man to enter
<u>Matthew 22:11</u> the king came in	<u>Mark 11:11</u> Jesus entered
<u>Matthew 22:12</u> how did you come in here	<u>Mark 11:15</u> he entered
<u>Matthew 23:13</u> you do not enter in	<u>Mark 13:15</u> [textual variations] [the one] <i>enter</i>
<u>Matthew 23:13</u> those who are entering	<u>Mark 14:14</u> he enters
<u>Matthew 23:13</u> those who are entering	<u>Mark 15:43</u> he went in
<u>Matthew 24:38</u> Noah entered the ark,	<u>Mark 16:5</u> [they] entering
<u>Matthew 25:10</u> [those] ready went in	<u>Luke 1:9</u> [he] chosen by lot to enter
<u>Matthew 25:21</u> [you] enter into	<u>Luke 1:28</u> [he] coming in
<u>Matthew 25:23</u> [you] enter into	<u>Luke 1:40</u> [he] entered
<u>Matthew 26:41</u> you may not enter into	<u>Luke 4:16</u> he entered
<u>Matthew 26:58</u> Peter entered in	<u>Luke 4:38</u> [he] entered
<u>Matthew 27:53</u> they entered	<u>Luke 6:4</u> he entered
<u>Mark 1:21</u> he entered	<u>Luke 6:6</u> he entered
	<u>Luke 7:1</u> he went

[Luke 7:6](#) for you to come under
[Luke 7:36](#) he entered
[Luke 7:44](#) I entered
[Luke 7:45](#) I came in
[Luke 8:30](#) demons had entered him
[Luke 8:32](#) them [demons] to enter
[Luke 8:33](#) [demons] entered the swine;
[Luke 8:41](#) him to come to his house
[Luke 8:51](#) anyone to enter
[Luke 9:4](#) you enter
[Luke 9:34](#) they entered
[Luke 9:46](#) an argument started
[Luke 9:52](#) they entered
[Luke 10:5](#) you enter
[Luke 10:8](#) you enter
[Luke 10:10](#) you enter
[Luke 10:38](#) he entered
[Luke 11:26](#) they [spirits] go in
[Luke 11:37](#) he went in
[Luke 11:52](#) you yourselves did not enter
[Luke 11:52](#) those who were entering
[Luke 13:24](#) [you] strive to enter
[Luke 13:24](#) you will seek to enter
[Luke 14:23](#) compel [them] to come in
[Luke 15:28](#) [he] was not willing to go in
[Luke 17:7](#) he has come in
[Luke 17:12](#) he entered
[Luke 17:27](#) Noah entered
[Luke 18:17](#) a child will not enter
[Luke 18:25](#) for a camel to go through
[Luke 18:25](#) rich man to enter
[Luke 19:1](#) he entered Jericho
[Luke 19:7](#) he has gone
[Luke 19:45](#) Jesus entered
[Luke 21:21](#) [those who] must not enter
[Luke 22:3](#) Satan entered into Judas
[Luke 22:10](#) you have entered
[Luke 22:40](#) you may not enter
[Luke 22:46](#) you may not enter

[Luke 24:3](#) they entered
[Luke 24:26](#) [he] to enter
[Luke 24:29](#) he went in
[John 3:4](#) he cannot enter
[John 3:5](#) he cannot enter
[John 4:38](#) you have entered
[John 10:1](#) he who does not enter
[John 10:2](#) he who enters
[John 10:9](#) anyone enters
[John 10:9](#) he will go in
[John 13:27](#) Satan entered into him
[John 18:1](#) he entered
[John 18:28](#) they themselves did not enter
[John 18:33](#) Pilate entered
[John 19:9](#) he entered
[John 20:5](#) he did not go in
[John 20:6](#) he entered the tomb
[John 20:8](#) he entered
[Acts 1:13](#) they had entered
[Acts 1:21](#) [textual variations] Jesus went *in*
[Acts 3:8](#) he entered
[Acts 5:7](#) his wife came in
[Acts 5:10](#) the young men came in
[Acts 5:21](#) they entered
[Acts 9:6](#) [you] enter the city
[Acts 9:12](#) seen Ananias come in
[Acts 9:17](#) he entered the house
[Acts 10:3](#) [an angel] had come in
[Acts 10:24](#) he entered
[Acts 10:25](#) Peter entered
[Acts 10:27](#) he entered
[Acts 11:3](#) you went to
[Acts 11:8](#) nothing unclean has entered
[Acts 11:12](#) we entered
[Acts 13:14](#) they entered
[Acts 14:20](#) [he] entered the city.
[Acts 14:22](#) we must enter
[Acts 16:15](#) [you] come into my house
[Acts 16:40](#) [he] entered

[Acts 17:2](#) he went
[Acts 18:7](#) he himself entered
[Acts 19:8](#) he entered
[Acts 19:30](#) [he] wanted to go into
[Acts 20:29](#) wolves will come in among
[Acts 21:8](#) [we] entering
[Acts 23:16](#) he entered
[Acts 23:33](#) these had come
[Acts 25:23](#) [they] entered
[Acts 28:8](#) Paul went in
[Acts 28:16](#) we entered
[Romans 5:12](#) sin entered
[Romans 11:25](#) full number of Gentiles has come in
[1 Corinthians 14:23](#) unbelievers enter
[1 Corinthians 14:24](#) ungifted man enters
[Hebrews 3:11](#) they shall not enter
[Hebrews 3:18](#) they would not enter
[Hebrews 3:19](#) they were not able to enter
[Hebrews 4:1](#) [you] entering
[Hebrews 4:3](#) [you] enter that rest,

[Hebrews 4:3](#) they shall not enter
[Hebrews 4:5](#) they shall not enter
[Hebrews 4:6](#) some to enter
[Hebrews 4:6](#) [they] failed to enter
[Hebrews 4:10](#) the one who has entered
[Hebrews 4:11](#) let us be diligent to enter
[Hebrews 6:19](#) one which enters
[Hebrews 6:20](#) Jesus has entered
[Hebrews 9:12](#) he entered
[Hebrews 9:24](#) Christ did not enter
[Hebrews 9:25](#) high priest enters
[Hebrews 10:5](#) he comes into the world
[James 2:2](#) a man comes into
[James 2:2](#) comes in a poor man
[James 5:4](#) [cries] have entered the ears
[Revelation 3:20](#) I will come in
[Revelation 11:11](#) God came into them
[Revelation 15:8](#) no one was able to enter
[Revelation 21:27](#) no one shall ever come into it
[Revelation 22:14](#) [they] may enter

Concrete vs. Abstract

Following are some descriptions or definitions regarding the difference between concrete and abstract.

Effective writers use and mix language at all levels of abstraction, so we must learn to use language on all levels. But first, it's important to understand what is meant by abstract and concrete language and also by general and specific language. In brief, we conceive the abstract through our mental processes and perceive the concrete through our senses.

Abstract words refer to intangible qualities, ideas, and concepts. These words indicate things we know only through our intellect, like "truth," "honor," "kindness," and "grace."

Concrete words refer to tangible qualities or characteristics, things we know through our senses. Words and phrases like "102 degrees," "obese Siamese cat," and "deep spruce green" are concrete.²³⁶

YouChat (AI assistant) regarding sin.

In abstract terms, sin is often understood as a violation of moral or religious principles, a deviation from ethical norms or an offense against the divine law. In this sense, sin is an abstract concept that is based on values and beliefs.

However, sin can also be seen as a concrete manifestation of these abstract principles, as reflected in people's actions and behavior. For example, lying, stealing, or harming others can be seen as concrete instances of sin.

The same can be said of righteousness, unrighteousness, grace, and lawlessness.

YouChat (AI assistant) regarding lawlessness.

In abstract terms, lawlessness is often understood as a disregard for the law and social norms, and an absence of order and organization. In this sense, lawlessness is primarily an abstract concept based on values and beliefs.

However, examples of lawlessness can be seen as concrete manifestations of this abstract principle, such as rioting, looting, or vandalism. These tangible instances of lawlessness can have real-world consequences, including damage to property, injuries, or loss of life.

"Sin ran wild" and "lawlessness ran wild" are equivalent statements using personification.

²³⁶ <https://www.isu.edu/media/libraries/student-success/tutoring/handouts-writing/editing-and-mechanics/Concrete-and-Specific-Language.pdf>.

The Jewish Perspective on Sin

The following was gleaned from a variety of sources. This is not presented as doctrinal truth but as added background that might help elucidate beliefs that Paul and other 1st Century believers were confronted with which needed to be addressed through the Gospel. This is by no means complete and there are numerous variations and divisions among Jewish theologians.

The “Nature” of Man

A simple definition of sin is a violation of any of the 613 commandments contained in the Torah—248 positive (“thou shalt”) commandments and 365 negative (“thou shalt not”) commandments.

Judaism teaches the human ability to obey God’s law. Judaism contains the idea of an impulse (or inclination) for good and an impulse (or inclination) for evil—a modern representation of the Two Impulses is the cartoon of a good angel on one shoulder and an evil angel sitting on the other shoulder and both whispering advice. Submission to the Torah was the proper technique for fortifying the good impulse. ... Paul, during his Pharisaic training and/or in his travels would have encountered the following: every person is endowed with the ability to make moral choices; every person possesses an inclination to good and an inclination to evil, either of which may be resisted or followed, but never killed off; Gentiles, without the benefit of the Torah, will naturally choose to follow the evil impulse to their destruction; Israelites, beneficiaries of God’s election and covenant, are enabled to strengthen the good impulse by attending to the Torah.²³⁷

Prior to his conversion, Paul would have believed the following: “If you choose, you can keep the commandments, and to act faithfully is a matter of your own choice.” ([Gen. 4:7](#); [Ps. 37:27](#))²³⁸

Judaism teaches that to sin is a part of life, since there is no perfect human and everyone has an inclination to do evil “from youth,” though people are born sinless. ... In Judaism, all human beings are believed to have free will, with the ability to choose the path of life that they want to take. It does not teach that goodness is impossible, only difficult at times. If a person strays from the path of goodness in some aspect, there is always a “way back” if a person wills to try taking it.²³⁹

Until a child reaches an “age of accountability,” they are not held liable for sin. This is typically associated with the age of 13 when a “child” becomes a “youth.”

Man is responsible for sin because he is endowed with free will (“behirah”); yet he is by nature frail, and the tendency of the mind is to evil: “For the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” ([Gen. viii. 21](#); Yoma 20a; Sanh. 105a). Therefore God in His mercy allowed man to repent and be forgiven. There is no unforgivable sin.²⁴⁰

Again, these are “broad brush strokes” only meant to give a very general sense of some of the commonly held beliefs among the Jewish population.

Regarding Romans 7

The following is a perspective on Romans 7.

²³⁷ <https://openoureyeslord.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/shogren-romans-7.pdf>.

²³⁸ Ibid. [Sirach 15:14 and 15](#)—the Wisdom of Ben Sirach (2nd century BC) was revered. Other sources with a similar message are provided in that article.

²³⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_views_on_sin.

²⁴⁰ <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13761-sin>.

Excerpts from: <https://openoureyeslord.files.wordpress.com/2012/08/shogren-romans-7.pdf>.

Rom 7:14-25 may reflect certain tenets of 1st-century Jewish anthropology which Paul caricatured in order to reinforce the Torah's ineffectiveness. Romans 7 argues against the idea that... "If you choose (or 'wish'), you can keep the commandments."

Paul in his turn was "contesting the Rabbinic view that the law gives deliverance from the tyranny of the evil impulse." In contrast to the rabbis, Paul claims that deliverance from the domination of this "evil desire" comes not through the law or through the power of the "good desire," but through God's grace in Christ.

By discrediting the tradition of a good impulse, Paul allowed the gospel to stand alone as "the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Scattered throughout the first half of Romans are arguments that would have been used in the first instance within the synagogue, but which are now adapted to a (mainly Gentile) Christian audience (cf. Rom 3:1-31 - esp. 3:19-20! - and 4:1-25). Paul employed the device known as "diatribe"²⁴¹ in 2:17 ("You call yourself a Jew"). He could carry on an imagined argument with a rhetorical audience (the synagogue) in front of his actual literary audience. He set that stratagem in motion early on, in Rom 1:18-32. This paragraph would have established common ground by condemning Gentile wickedness.

Paul affirmed with the synagogue the divine origin of the Torah, while still pivoting the discussion to his point, that the Torah was not effective in changing an evil heart. Throughout Romans 7 he is speaking rhetorically "to those who know the law."

The caricature of the Wretched Man gave Paul a dramatic structure through which he could portray both the impolitic truth about Judaism and the universality of the gospel.

It is possible that Paul was "answering" a certain train of thought common among the Jews. Without directly stating the position of the Jews, he addresses its weakness.

On Sin

The Jews identify three kinds of sin.

... the lightest is the "ḥeṭ," [*chet*] "ḥaṭṭa'ah," [*chatta'ah*] or "ḥaṭṭat" [*chataah*] (lit. "fault," "shortcoming," "misstep"), an infraction of a command committed in ignorance of the existence or meaning of that command ("be-shogeg"). The second kind is the "awon," [*avon*] a breach of a minor commandment committed with a full knowledge of the existence and nature of that commandment ("bemezid"). The gravest kind is the "pasha" [*pasha*] or "mered," [*mered*] a presumptuous and rebellious act against God; or a "resha," [*resha*] such an act committed with a wicked intention. These three degrees are mentioned by the Psalmist (cvi. 6): "We have sinned ["ḥaṭa'nu"], . . . we have committed iniquity ["he-'ewinu"], we have done wickedly ["hirsha'nu"] (comp. I Kings viii. 47; Dan. ix. 5).

Psalm 106:6

⁶ We have sinned [*chata*] like our fathers, We have committed iniquity [*avah*], we have behaved wickedly [*rasha*].

1 Kings 8:47 (ESV)

⁴⁷ yet if they turn their heart in the land to which they have been carried captive, and repent and

²⁴¹ Dialogue with an imagined interlocutor [responder].

plead with you in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned [[chata](#)] and have acted perversely [[avah](#)] and wickedly [[rasha](#)],'

Daniel 9:5

⁵we have sinned [[chata](#)], committed iniquity [[avah](#)], acted wickedly [[rasha](#)] and rebelled [[marad](#)], even turning aside [[sur](#)] from Your commandments and ordinances.²⁴²

The repetition in these verses implies that it was a common expression. A couple of commentaries mention that these three words go increasingly negative. Perhaps curious that God/Paul settled on the noun "sin" to be the major focus of Romans 5, 6, and 7. "Sin" [singular] in Romans may be seen as a combination of the three (maybe four) Hebrew words going from "minor" to "major:" [chata](#), [avah](#), [rasha](#), [marad](#).

The word pasha [[pasha](#)], or "trespass," means a sin done out of rebelliousness. The word aveira [?] means "transgression." And the word avone [[avon](#)], or "iniquity," means a sin done out of moral failing. The word most commonly translated simply as "sin," hata [[chataah](#)], literally means "to go astray." Just as Jewish law, halakha, provides the proper "way" (or path) to live, sin involves straying from that path.²⁴³

Pasha [[pasha](#)] (deliberate sin; in modern Hebrew: crime) or Mered (lit.: rebellion) - An intentional sin; an action committed in deliberate defiance of God; (Strong's Concordance :H6588 (פֶּשַׁע pasha', peh'shah). According to Strong it comes from the root (:H6586); rebellion, transgression, trespass.

Avon [[avon](#)] (lit.: iniquity) - This is a sin of lust or uncontrollable emotion. It is a sin done knowingly, but not done to defy God; (Strong's Concordance :H5771 (avon, aw-vone). According to Strong it comes from the root (:H5753); meaning perversity, moral evil:--fault, iniquity, mischief.

Cheit [[chet](#)] - This is an unintentional sin, crime or fault. (Strong's Concordance :H2399 (חַטָּה chate). According to Strong it comes from the root khaw-taw (:H2398 [[chata](#)], H2403 [[chatta'ah](#)]) meaning "to miss, to err from the mark (speaking of an archer), to sin, to stumble."²⁴⁴

²⁴² <https://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13761-sin>.

²⁴³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jewish_views_on_sin

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

Die/Death/Dead

This section lists the various Greek words that are translated as “die,” “death,” or “dead” that occur in conjunction with the word “sin.”

[apoginomai](#) (v.)—to be away, be removed from, depart, to die (only 1 occurrence)

1 Peter 2:24

²⁴ and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die [[apoginomai](#)] to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

[paschó](#) (v.)—to be affected; to feel; to suffer

1 Peter 3:18

¹⁸ For Christ also died [[paschó](#)] for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

[thnéskó](#) (v.)—to die (literally or figuratively) -- be dead. Does not occur in conjunction with "sin"

[apothnéskó](#) (v.)—properly, die off (away from), focusing on the separation that goes with the "dying off (away from)."

John 8:21

²¹ Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die [[apothnéskó](#)] in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

John 8:24

²³ And He was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. ²⁴ "Therefore I said to you that you will die [[apothnéskó](#)] in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die [[apothnéskó](#)] in your sins."

Romans 6:2

¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? ² May it never be! How shall we who died [[apothnéskó](#)] to sin still live in it?

Romans 6:7

⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died [[apothnéskó](#)] is freed from sin.

Romans 6:10

⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died [[apothnéskó](#)], He died [[apothnéskó](#)] to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.

Romans 7:9

⁹ I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died [[apothnéskó](#)];

1 Corinthians 15:3

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died [[apothnéskó](#)] for our sins according to the Scriptures,

[nekros](#) (adj.)—dead (literally or figuratively; also as noun) -- dead.

Romans 6:11

¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead [[nekros](#)] to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Romans 7:8

⁸ But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead [[nekros](#)].

Romans 8:10

¹⁰ If Christ is in you, though the body is dead [[nekros](#)] because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

Ephesians 2:1

¹ And you were dead [[nekros](#)] in your trespasses [[paraptóma](#)] and sins,

Ephesians 2:5

⁵ even when we were dead [[nekros](#)] in our transgressions [[paraptóma](#)], made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Colossians 2:13

¹³ When you were dead [[nekros](#)] in your transgressions [[paraptóma](#)] and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions [[paraptóma](#)],

Jesus raised from the dead many occurrences.

Judge the living and dead several occurrences.

Dying You Shall Die

[Gen. 2:17](#)—Literally “dying [[muth](#) ([mō-wt](#))] you die [[muth](#) ([tā-mūt](#))],” which is the figure of speech *polyptoton*, repeating the same root word for emphasis (E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*). [Commentary](#): the infinitive absolute before the finite verb intensifies the latter.

The root [muth](#) is Young’s 4191. The words in parens are the specific forms of the word [muth](#).

REV commentary [here](#). The Hebrew word translated “day” is used to refer to a 24-hour period (“a day” or “the day”) or a period of time (see [Gen. 2:4](#) as an example).

The same expression occurs in the following verses.

[Gen. 20:7](#)—“dying [[muth](#) ([mō-wt](#))] you shall die [[muth](#) ([tā-mūt](#))]”—This is the record of Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech. From the context, Abimelech understood “death” as no progeny for him via his wife or slaves/maids; his actual death is a possibility because he was apparently suffering a malady because of his action—v. [3](#) (“shall die” [[muth](#) ([mēt](#))] no “man” in text; NET: “as good as dead”) and v. [4](#); v. [6](#) (first occ. of *chata*), v. [7](#) (NET: The imperfect is preceded by the infinitive absolute to make the warning emphatic; also note NET “along with all who belong to you”), v. [9](#), v. [17](#), and v. [18](#).

[Ezekiel 33:14](#)—“dying [[muth](#) ([mō-wt](#))] you shall die [[muth](#) ([tā-mūt](#))]; “sin” [[chatta'ah](#)].

Below are similar expressions.

mō-wt̄ t̄a·mu·t̄ūn

Gen. 3:4 (not) surely you will die

mō-wt̄ yū·māt̄

Gen. 26:11 surely shall be put to death

Exod. 19:12 surely shall be put to death

Exod. 21:12 surely shall be put to death

Exod. 21:15 surely shall be put to death

Exod. 21:16 surely shall be put to death

Exod. 21:17 surely shall be put to death

Exod. 22:19 surely shall be put to death

Exod. 31:14 surely shall be put to death

Exod. 31:15 surely shall be put to death

etc...

mō-wt̄ yā·mu·t̄ū

Num. 26:65 surely they shall die (in the wilderness)

mō-wt̄ nā·mūt̄

Judg. 13:22 we shall surely die

There are other variants. The duplication ([muth muth](#)) occurs approx. 50x; most “surely shall be put to death.”

Mortal/Corruptible – Immortal/Incorruptible

[thnétos](#), adj. 6x—liable to death, subject to death. [mortal body, mortal bodies, this mortal (2x), mortal flesh, mortal); from [thnesko](#);

Romans 6:12

¹²Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal [thnétos](#) body [sóma](#) so that you obey its lusts [epithumia](#),

Romans 8:11

¹¹But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal [thnétos](#) bodies [sóma](#) through His Spirit who dwells in you.

1 Corinthians 15:53

⁵³For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal [thnétos](#) must put on immortality [athanasia](#).

1 Corinthians 15:54

⁵⁴But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal [thnétos](#) will have put on immortality [athanasia](#), then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory.

2 Corinthians 4:11

¹¹For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal [thnétos](#) flesh [sarx](#).

2 Corinthians 5:4

⁴For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal [thnétos](#) will be swallowed up by life.

The mortal body is short-lived. The new, immortal, body is everlasting. It is only reasonable to give preference to that which is everlasting.

See also...

[phthartos](#), adj. 6x—From [phtheiro](#); decayed, i.e. (by implication) **perishable** – corruptible: [Rom 1:23](#); [1 Cor. 9:25](#); 1 Cor. 15:53 (above); 1 Cor. 15:54 (above); [1 Pet. 1:18](#) [futile = [mataios](#)]; [1 Pet. 1:23](#) [first birth is via perishable seed; new birth is via the word of God which is imperishable seed].

[phtheiro](#), v. 9x—properly, waste away, corrupt (deteriorate); (figuratively) to cause or experience moral deterioration – i.e. decomposition (break-down), due to the corrupting influence of sin. [This root (pht-) literally means "waste away" (degenerate), "moving down from a higher level (quality, status) to a lower form.]

[aphtharsia](#), n. 8x—properly, no-corruption (unable to experience deterioration); incorruptibility (**not perishable**), i.e. lacking the very capacity to decay or constitutionally break down. [Rom. 2:7](#); [1 Cor. 15:42](#) ["perishable" = [phthora](#); [Rom. 8:21](#); [1 Cor. 15:50](#)];

[athanasia](#), adj. 3x—(from 1 /A "without" and 2288 /thánatos, "death") – properly, **immortality** (literally "without death, deathlessness"): 1 Cor. 15:53 and 54 (above); [1 Tim. 6:16](#). The word "without" is generally derived from the "a" prefix.

Rulers/Kings

[*basileus*](#), n. 115x—a king, ruler, but in some passages clearly to be translated: emperor

[*basileuó*](#), v. 21x—(from [935](#) /*basileús*, "king") – to reign as king, i.e. exercise dominion (rule); Thayer: Metaphorically, to exercise the highest influence, to control.

This is something that contemporaries of Paul would be familiar with, and especially so for those living in Rome. The expressions “death reigns” or “sin reigns” would have had meaning for them from personal experience. The same would be true of the expression “slave of sin,” since slaves were part of everyday life. So, by revelation, Paul was using things familiar to his audience to communicate truth. We should understand that these are not literal, doctrinal expressions but rhetorical expressions for communicating truth.

The verb “reign” is being used metaphorically and the expression “death reigns” is personifying death. So, two figures of speech are in play. As with other metaphors, we ought to isolate the point of comparison and not include any and all aspects implied by the comparison.

A tyrannical/wicked king/emperor can make people do what he wants or kill them. If we consider Rome, this is only true to a certain extent. The Roman emperors did not typically control every action of their subjects as if they were all slaves. However, the emperor along with the senate made laws that impacted the lives of all those under their reign. Roman subjects functioned within the sphere of the emperor’s authority. As we see in Jesus’ day and Paul’s day, the Jews were allowed to practice their religion. They were not allowed to rebel against the Roman government. So, generally, the idea of a ruler reigning should not communicate total control of every act of every individual living under that reign. This is also true of some slaves within that culture who had personal responsibilities and exercised a degree of personal authority in carrying out their responsibilities. Granted, there was a form of slavery, like the slaves working the fields or the mines or soldiers, who had essentially no personal life. These “slaves” were more like prisoners.

Specifics regarding historical figures contemporary with Jesus or Paul are somewhat wanting. There are limited sources of information and some of the information comes from people who lived well after the figures they wrote about. What follows is a generalization gleaned from a brief overview of the figures involved.

There are two ways individuals typically became kings or rulers: 1) they were part of a powerful family; and/or 2) they had the support of the military.

The history of the Roman emperors is characterized, at least in part, by violence. Though not necessarily an everyday occurrence, it was not uncommon for rulers to murder people they considered to be a threat to them.

Conspiracies were not uncommon. One group would gather support and violently remove the current ruler and replace them with their chosen ruler.

Roman rulers had essentially absolute power in the sense that their word was the final word. This is evidenced by Herod the Great commanding the death of the young children in the region of Bethlehem and Pilate having the power and authority to let Jesus go or to have him executed.

Both Jesus and Paul lived during a time when Rome had conquered and was militarily occupying much of the world they were familiar with. Things were relatively peaceful as long as the Roman subjects paid

tribute and didn't promote rebellion. Any resistance on either of these points was met with military force.²⁴⁵

When Paul, by revelation, uses the term *basileus* (a king, ruler, but in some passages clearly to be translated: emperor), it might enhance our understanding to consider the culture in which he lived. We also note that Jesus spoke of kings in several parables and these parables might shed light on how we understand the term *basileus*.

Strong's: Probably from *basis* (through the notion of a foundation of power); a sovereign (abstractly, relatively, or figuratively) -- king.

We should perhaps not think of "reign" as control, but rather as that which defines the environment people live in and the choices people make.

We should not let unrighteousness be the realm in which we live. We should choose to live in the realm of righteousness. Jesus Christ did not attempt nor did Paul, Peter, James, or John attempt to overthrow the Roman rule. Jesus Christ initially came to "overthrow" the "reign" of "sin" and "death." This was accomplished. When he returns, he will assume rule over all other rulers and will reign for a thousand years. In the new heaven and earth, the one true God will be the only sovereign.

²⁴⁵ Some might see a parallel taking place in the United States of America.