

July 10, 2010 Florida Hospital Seventh-day Adventist Church
Romans 1:18-3:20 Whatever Became of Sin? By Andy McDonald

Whatever became of sin? It's a serious question. Before you saw the word on the screen or read it in the Update Email announcing today's sermon, when was the last time you read or heard the word? The last time you used it?

Curious to see if maybe I was just missing something I Googled "Sin" Here on the powerful Google Search Engine the hits fell into three broad categories

1. Definitions at Wikipedia and Merriam Webster's Dict
2. Church/Religious sites talking about sin
3. References to Sin City, some Rock Band, what I assume is some scientific acronym, and some movies with the word in the title.

The very word 'sin' has virtually dropped from most people's vocabulary in our current culture.

Things we used to call sin we've given a new nomenclature.

Instead of calling a sin a sin, euphemisms proliferate:

We replace sin with words like

mistake,	bad call,	poor judgment,	error, wrong,
negligent,	slip,	oversight,	misstep,
stupidity,	screw-up,	bungle,	fauz pas,
Fail	broken	bad	

But rarely today do we simply call sin by that simple three letter moniker—SIN.

So what is this thing called sin. While the New Testament uses five main Greek words for sin, our focus on the Law, the ten commandments, the importance of the Law of God, has caused us as a denomination to narrow our definition of sin, to focus on just one of those five Greek words translated sin.

I imagine that if I asked you to give me a definition of sin that the majority of us would give this definition:

Sin is the transgression of the law. That's a Biblical definition in 1 John 3:4

But that is not the only definition.

Sin is so insidious, so far reaching, so enmeshed in humanity that it demands a larger definition. Here are the five from the NT

The most common word is hamartia and it is word that means "missing the target, not hitting the bulls eye, failure to attain a goal.

Adikia is unrighteousness or iniquity

Poneria is evil of a vicious or degenerate kind

Parabasis or paraptoma is a trespass or transgression the stepping over a known boundary

And finally

Anomia or lawlessness, the disregard or violation of known law.

Taken together the Bible then focuses on and defines sin as a godless self-centeredness .

Sin is a rejection of our position of dependence which our createdness inevitably involves, and it identifies sin as our bid not just for independence but sin is our claim for self-dependence, a striving for autonomy.

Sin isn't just some regrettable mistake, some social miscue, some simple breaking of conventional standards, sin is hostility to God.

Sin is seeking to get rid of God in order to put ourselves in his place.

We don't like to think of sin in general or our sin in particular in these bad terms so we've simply set aside that big bad word at least in reference to our choices, our attitudes , and our mind sets. Yes, we make mistakes, bad decisions, social faux pas, but let's not call them sins.

Not only have we abandoned using the term we've chosen at least three other things as the real problems with the world not sin. There are real challenges in our culture but we, even in the church, have moved away from sin as the problem and self selected three other major challenges to be the problem

First We've decided that the real problem with the world is ignorance. We need to find the right formula, the right technique, the right thoughts to get us back to our true origins.

Eugene Peterson writes: "We assume that if we can just improve our schools, our social and political and personal lives will improve. But after two hundred plus years of intense and sustained work on that foundation in America, there is little to support hope. (Today) our schools...are seen by many now as dangerous to both body and mind.

Secondly, If we choose that what's wrong with the world is not sin but weakness then we need to improve our political processes and get others to do the same in a reformed exercise of power. We need a president, senators, legislators, governors, judges, and mayors who will work for the weak, protect the vulnerable, and control crime. And as we celebrated last week we have one of the best working democracies in the world, but the social results are far from encouraging.

And Third, If we identify the real problem in our world not as sin but as a lack of money then we need to develop businesses, corporations, banks, and investment ventures all over the world to put people to work, extract crops and minerals and oil, make more money and develop prosperity so that people will not have unmet needs and will be satisfied with their lives. We have been successful as any nation in history in making money, but the fallout in greed, self-indulgence, exploitation and dishonesty is appalling.

When Paul dictates his letter to the church at Rome there were problems. Problems in the culture of Rome and problems in the Roman Church and Paul doesn't mis-name them.

Remember last week Jeff gave us a snapshot of history in part of his sermon. The Jews, including the Jewish Christians, had all been thrown out of Rome around 49 AD and that meant that the Christian church in Rome immediately transitioned to an all Gentile Christian membership. By the time Paul is writing to Rome the Jews have been allowed to return to Rome and now there's this conflict.

The Jewish Christians with their long heritage and traditions of belief in the "true God" are not pleased with what the Gentile Christians have done to "their" church while they've been away. And they minimized their judgmental attitudes, their sins and maximized the sins of their fellow Gentile Church members.

Gentile Christians are quite sure that the Jewish Christians are being stuffed shirts about the church issues.

The gentile's have erred on the side of abandoning the law—lets sin so that grace may abound. After all we are no longer under the law. They minimized their sins and maximized the sins of their opponents.

That's just how sin works we justify our minimized little slip by exaggerating another's sin as some major bad thing. While at the same time that person minimizes their own while they enlarge another's sin. So Paul writes to them.

18 But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.***19** They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them.**20** For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.

21 Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused.**22** Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools.**23** And instead of worshipping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

24 So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired. As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies.**25** They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.**26** That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other.**27** And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved.**28** Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done.**29** Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.**30** They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents.**31** They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy.**32** They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too. **1**

You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things.**2** And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things.**3** Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things?**4** Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

5 But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you

are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.**6** He will judge everyone according to what they have done.**7** He will give eternal life to those who keep on doing good, seeking after the glory and honor and immortality that God offers.**8** But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness.**9** There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who keeps on doing what is evil—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile.***10** But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who do good—for the Jew first and also for the Gentile.**11** For God does not show favoritism.

12 When the Gentiles sin, they will be destroyed, even though they never had God's written law. And the Jews, who do have God's law, will be judged by that law when they fail to obey it.**13** For merely listening to the law doesn't make us right with God. It is obeying the law that makes us right in his sight.**14** Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it.**15** They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right.**16** And this is the message I proclaim—that the day is coming when God, through Christ Jesus, will judge everyone's secret life.

THE JEWS AND THE LAW

17 You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him.**18** You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law.**19** You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness.**20** You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

21 Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal?**22** You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples?***23** You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it.**24** No wonder the

Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."*

25 The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile.**26** And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God declare them to be his own people?**27** In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God's law but don't obey it.

28 For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision.**29** No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise* from God, not from people.

Then what's the advantage of being a Jew? Is there any value in the ceremony of circumcision?**2** Yes, there are great benefits! First of all, the Jews were entrusted with the whole revelation of God.*

3 True, some of them were unfaithful; but just because they were unfaithful, does that mean God will be unfaithful?**4** Of course not! Even if everyone else is a liar, God is true. As the Scriptures say about him,

"You will be proved right in what you say,
and you will win your case in court."*

5 "But," some might say, "our sinfulness serves a good purpose, for it helps people see how righteous God is. Isn't it unfair, then, for him to punish us?" (This is merely a human point of view.)**6** Of course not! If God were not entirely fair, how would he be qualified to judge the world?**7** "But," someone might still argue, "how can God condemn me as a sinner if my dishonesty highlights his truthfulness and brings him more glory?"**8** And some people even slander us by claiming that we say, "The more we sin, the better it is!" Those who say such things deserve to be condemned.

ALL PEOPLE ARE SINNERS

9 Well then, should we conclude that we Jews are better than others? No,

not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles,* are under the power of sin.**10** As the Scriptures say,

"No one is righteous—
not even one.

11 No one is truly wise;
no one is seeking God.

12 All have turned away;
all have become useless.

No one does good,
not a single one."*

13 "Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave.
Their tongues are filled with lies."

"Snake venom drips from their lips."*

14 "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."*

15 "They rush to commit murder.

16 Destruction and misery always follow them.

17 They don't know where to find peace."*

18 "They have no fear of God at all."*

19 Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses, and to show that the entire world is guilty before God.**20** For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

John Stott reminds us "To the last it will be a sinner that walks with God. Old John Newton, the converted slave trader, said: I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world, but still I am not what I once used to be, and by the grace of God I am what I am.

GK Chesterton wrote a book with the title "What's Wrong with the World" He wrote it early in the last century when the country was full of ideas and plans for making the world a better place. His series of articles collected into this book could be summed up in a one word answer to the

books title, What's Wrong with the World, Chesterton said the answer was "Me!"

Over my years as pastor groups have gotten together and decided to move to the country, move to some place away from sin. I have consistently pointed out the fallacy that wherever you go you still have you which means the problem of sin follows even to the most idyllic location.

No one is good. WE are all messed up. And sin is an inescapable dilemma. It sounds bad because it is bad

21 But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses* and the prophets long ago.**22** We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

We may not like using the term or finding any personal identity with the word because of sin's payout. Paul writes in Romans 6:23 that "The wages of sin is death."

While we are aware that there can be pleasure in sin for a time we have this almost intuitive sense that as good as the pleasure may be it just doesn't end well.

What is sin?