

Principle #1

SIN

our crippling disease



Principles of Discipleship

To understand how incredible salvation is, we must realize what we were saved *from*. It's true that being saved from hell is wonderful, but perhaps even more awesome is the fact that we have been saved from sin. It's an ugly picture, but it makes salvation that much more beautiful.

Many times we think of the law as something important only to Moses and the Jews. But it also plays an important role in showing us just how far gone we really were before we met Jesus Christ. When you finish this lesson, you should be able to explain the predicament of sin and the purpose of the law.

Romans 1:18-32

¹⁸ The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹ since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities -- his eternal power and divine nature -- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator -- who is forever praised. Amen.

²⁶ Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ In the

Main Passage: Romans 1-3

The first 3 chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans is perhaps the most complete explanation of sin in the entire Bible.

Read Romans 1:18-3:18, then **outline** the passage so that it breaks down into clearly defined sections that make sense to you.



Romans 1:18-32

What is the natural response of man toward God? Do you see any progression in these verses?

Romans 2:5-16

How does God decide if men are righteous? What means does God use to tell men what He wants them to do?

Romans 3:9-20 What conclusion can we make about all men and their relationship with God?

same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

²⁸ Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (NIV)

Romans 3:9-17

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. ¹⁰ As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." ¹³ "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." ¹⁴ "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." ¹⁵ "Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ ruin and misery mark their ways, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they do not know." ¹⁸ "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

What is the "Law"?

Review *Romans 3:19,20 and 5:12-14*.

If the Law doesn't make us righteous, then why did God give us the law through Moses?



Romans 7:7-13

What is the natural response of man when he discovers what God wants him to do?

Romans 7:14-22, 5:12-14

Why do men respond this way to God's Law?

What further light does *Galatians 3:19-29* throw on this subject?

What metaphor does this passage use (Galatians 3:24) to describe how the Law "leads" us to Christ? Why does Paul choose that term?

The biblical writers portray sin in a variety of terms. It is only as they are conscious of God's holiness that they are truly aware of their sin (1 Kings 17:18; Ps 51:4-6; Isa 6).

The first book of the OT reveals how human beings were created by God without sin but chose to act contrary to his revealed will and thereby caused sin to become an endemic feature of human existence (Gen 3; Ps 14:1-3). Sin is revolt against the holiness and sovereign will of God. Therefore, it is both a condition of the heart-mind-will-affections (Isa 29:13; Jer 17:9) and the practical outworking of that condition in thoughts, words, and deeds that offend God and transgress his holy law (Gen 6:5; Isa 59:12-13). For Israel, sin was a failure to keep the conditions of the covenant that the Lord graciously made at Sinai (Exod 19).

There is no person in Israel or the whole world who is not a sinner. However, those who have a right relationship with God, receive his forgiveness, and walk in his ways are sometimes described as righteous (Gen 6:9) and blameless (Job 1:1; Ps 18:20-24). This is not because they are free from sin, but because the true direction of their lives is to serve and please God in the way he requires.

The reality of sin and the need for atonement (and confession) are clearly presupposed by the

sacrifices offered to God in the temple-- e.g., the regular guilt (or trespass) offering and sin offering, as well as the special annual sacrifice of the Day of Atonement (Lev 4; 6:24 ff.)--and in the prophecy of the vicarious suffering of the Servant of the Lord (Isa 53:10, 12).

Jesus was sinless and taught that the root of sin is in the human heart (Mark 7:20-23). The outward life is determined by the inner (Matt 7:15-17), and thus an outward conformity to laws and rules is not in itself a true righteousness if the heart is impure. But sin is more than failure to keep the law: it is also the rejection of the Messiah and the kingdom he proclaims and personifies (John 16:8-9; 15:22). Further, to live without the light of God from Jesus, the Messiah, is to live in darkness and to be in the grip of evil forces (John 1:5; 3:19-21; 8:31-34).

Sin is revealed by the law of God, but it is only as the Holy Spirit enlightens the mind that a person truly sees what righteousness the law demands of us (Rom 3:20; 5:20). Sin begins in the heart (Rom 6:15-23). The origin of sin can be traced back to the first human beings, Adam and Eve, and to their revolt against the Lord (Rom 5:12-19; 2 Cor 11:3).



*“Jesus’ death saves us
from the penalty of our sin in the past,
breaks the power of sin now,
and frees us from the presence of sin in the future.”*

THE LAW

It is plain from the Decalogue (Exod 20:3-17; Deut 5:7-21) that morality is not to be derived from human standards and the verdict of society but from God. The Ten Commandments declare the broad principles of God's moral law.

Rather than setting aside the moral law, the NT reiterates its commands, develops more fully the germinal truths contained in it, and focuses attention on the spirit of the law as over against merely the letter. The NT also emphasizes the law of love (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:14; James 2:8) and selflessness and humility as representative of the mind of Christ (Phil 2:3-8).

The law made humans aware of their sinfulness (Rom 7:7, 13), condemned them as unrighteous (7:9-11; Gal 3:13; James 2:9), and, having removed any hope of salvation through their own righteousness, brought them to the place where they would cast themselves on the grace of God and trust only in the righteousness and merit of the atoning Savior, Jesus Christ (Gal 3:24). Christians are under obligation to keep the moral law (cf. Matt 5:19 ff.; Eph 4:28; 5:3; 6:2; Col 3:9; 1 Peter 4:15) and this because of love for the One who redeemed them (Rom 13:8-10; 1 John 5:2-3).

[from the NIV Bible Dictionary]



Every one has heard people quarrelling. Sometimes it sounds funny and sometimes it sounds merely unpleasant; but however it sounds, I believe we can learn something very important from listening to the kinds of things they say. They say things like this: “How’d you like it if anyone did the same to you?” – “That’s my seat, I was there first” – “Leave him alone, he isn’t doing you any harm.” People say things like that every day, educated people as well as uneducated, and children as well as grown-ups.

Now what interests me about all these remarks is that the man who makes them is not merely saying that the other man’s behavior does not happen to please him. He is appealing to some kind of standard of behavior which he expects the other to know about. And the other man very seldom replies: “To hell with your standard.” Nearly always he tries to make out that what he has been doing does not really go against the standard, or that if it does there is some special excuse. And there would be no sense in trying to do that unless you and he had some sort of agreement as to what Right and Wrong are; just as there would be no sense in saying that a footballer had committed a foul unless there was some agreement about the rules of football.

Now this Law or Rule about Right and Wrong used to be called the Law of Nature. Nowadays, when we talk of the “laws of nature” we usually mean things like gravitation, or heredity, or the laws of chemistry. But when the older thinkers called the Law of Right and Wrong “the Law of Nature,” they really meant the Law of Human Nature.

Each man is at every moment subjected to several sets of laws but there is only one of these which he is free to disobey. As a body, he is subjected to gravitation and cannot disobey it; but the law which is peculiar to his human nature is the one he can disobey if he chooses.

This law was called the Law of Nature because people thought that every one knew it by nature and did not need to be taught it. The human idea of decent behavior was obvious to every one.

I know that some people say the idea of a Law of Nature or decent behavior known to all men is unsound, because different civilizations and different ages have had quite different moralities.

But this is not true. There have been differences between their moralities, but these have never amounted to anything like a total difference. If anyone will take the trouble to compare the moral teaching of, say, the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks and Romans, what will strike him will be how very like they are to each other and to our own.

It seems, then, we are forced to believe in a real Right and Wrong. People may be sometimes mistaken about them, just as people sometimes get their sums wrong; but they are not a matter of mere taste and opinion any more than the multiplication table. Now if we are agreed about that, I go on to my next point, which is this. None of us are really keeping the Law of Nature. If there are any exceptions among you, I apologize to them. They had much better read some other work, for nothing I am going to say concerns them. And now, turning to the ordinary human beings who are left:

I hope you will not misunderstand what I am going to say, I am not preaching, and Heaven knows I do not pretend to be better than anyone else. I am only trying to call attention to fact; the fact that this year, or this month, or, more likely, this very day we have failed to practice ourselves the kind of behavior we expect from other people. There may be all sorts of excuses for us. That time you were so unfair to the children was when you were very tired. That slightly shady business about the money – the one you have almost forgotten – came when you were very hard up. And what you promised to do for old So-and-so and have never done – well, you never would have promised if you had known how frightfully busy you were going to be. And as for your behavior to your wife (or husband) or sister (or brother) if I knew how irritating they could be, I would not wonder at it – and who the dickens am I, anyway? I am just the same. That is to say, I do not succeed in keeping the Law of Nature very well, and the moment anyone tells me I am not keeping it, there starts up in my mind a string of excuses as long as your arm. The question at the moment is not whether they are good excuses. The point is that they are one more proof of how deeply, whether we like it or not, we believe in the Law of Nature. If we do not believe in decent behavior, why should we be so anxious to make excuses for not having behaved decently? The truth is, we believe in decency so much – we feel the Rule of Law pressing us so – that we cannot bear to face the fact that we are breaking it, and consequently we try to shift the responsibility. For you notice that it is only for our bad behaviour that we find these explanations. It is only our bad temper that we put down to being tired or worried or hungry; we put our good temper down to ourselves.

These then, are the two points I wanted to make. First, that human beings, all over the earth, have this curious idea that they ought to behave in a certain way, and cannot really get rid of it. Secondly, that they do not in fact behave that way. They know the Law of Nature; they break it. These two facts are the foundation

SCRIPTURE

Which verses significantly impacted you and why?



ARTICLE

What did you personally glean from this article?



PRINCIPLE

Summarize the truth you've learned in a concise statement:



LIFE APPLICATION

- 1. What is your spiritual self-image right now? How do you see yourself spiritually, and how do you think God sees you? Do you tend to have a Biblical self-image, or does it depend more on feelings or your recent "track record"?*
- 2. Has this study affected the way your view other people?*
- 3. What can you do to make these truths more of a reality in your life?*

