

Knowledge of Sin

Some who watch movies come across a movie that particularly fascinates them. So, they watch that movie over and over again. Perhaps at first, they learn something at the end of the movie that would change how they look at the movie from the beginning. Take for instance the movie “The Sixth Sense.” You learn something at the end that was not obvious throughout the movie. And yet, when you go back a second time, you see where the author left clues. Agatha Christie did that as well.

The Bible is like that. There are bits of information, insights that you gain from studying a book or series of books. Now you must go back and reread a book with the new bit of information in mind.

In our Bible study of the Book of Romans, we are about to get into the “barrier” between man and God. Herman and I have often talked about three major issues in salvation: sin, righteousness and life. They are part of that barrier. Sin is taken care of at the cross. No one, on their own efforts, can become righteous. God’s righteousness and everlasting life must be imputed to the believer. Keep that in mind, the need for righteousness and life, for a second while I introduce another thought that will tie some things together.

There was a Greek language expert in the last century, Adolph Deissmann who had a curious sentence in one of his books. “John is the oldest and greatest interpreter of Paul.¹” He did not give specifics. That statement fascinates me. Perhaps I will explore that in the future.

But the point here is righteousness and life. We see the word righteousness over and over in the book of Romans. At the start of this study on Romans, I said, along with many others that Romans is about

¹ Adolf Deissmann (1972). *Paul*. Page 7

Knowledge of Sin
Romans 3:19-20

the gospel. The central theme throughout the book is righteousness. It is not our righteousness, but God's righteousness that is imputed to the believer at the point of faith in Jesus Christ. That is part of the gospel or good news.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

In a way we might characterize the book of Romans as the "gospel of righteousness." Herman has a series of lessons on the "gospel of..." That looked at specific phrases using the word "gospel." We might add Romans as the book of the gospel of righteousness, even though that phrase is not found there.

Now we turn to the "interpreter" of Paul. The Gospel of John is a gospel or good news account of Jesus' life on earth. In the Gospel of John, one of the repeated words is "life." And the result of faith is life.

John 14:6 Jesus *said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever

Knowledge of Sin
Romans 3:19-20

believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John's gospel message is full of life words, like "I AM," "exist" and of course, "life" among others. So perhaps the gospel of John could be subtitled, "the gospel of Life."

Paul emphasized righteousness. John emphasized life. Perhaps a reread of the Gospel of John with the concept of "life" in mind may reveal new insights for you. "Life" is not the only word to consider as I mentioned above.

Picking up from last week in Romans 3:19...

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

Romans 3:20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Paul has been talking about the Law. It is perfect. It has a purpose. But keeping the Law does not save. Only faith in Jesus Christ saves. Paul concludes that all the world is accountable to God and that works of the Law will not justify any flesh.

So how does Paul go from the Jewish Law to all the world? If the Law that the Jews possess does not save and it is perfect, then anything less could not save either. It is an argument from the major to the minor. If the Law is the best, then anything less can't even measure up to it. Here is Douglas Moo's comment on this.

Knowledge of Sin Romans 3:19-20

“The Jews become, as it were, representative of human beings generally. If the Jews, with the best law that one could have, could not find salvation through it, then *any* system of works is revealed as unable to conquer the power of sin. The “bottom line” in Paul’s argument, then, is his conviction that sin creates for every person a situation of utterly helpless bondage. “Works of the Law” are inadequate not because they are “works of *the law*” but, ultimately, because they are “works.” This clearly removes the matter from the purely salvation-historical realm to the broader realm of anthropology. No person can gain a standing with God through works because no one is able to perform works to the degree needed to secure such a standing. This human inability to meet the demands of God is what lies at the heart of Rom. 3.²”

As a reminder, here is the list of items tied to the purpose of the Law. It is important to repeat this list since so many have distorted the true purpose of the Mosaic Law. Salvation is not the purpose of the Law.

In Romans 3:20 we have the knowledge of sin. When we get to Romans 3:23, we will have the declaration that all are under sin.

“The purpose of the Mosaic Law was to accomplish the following:

- (1) Reveal the holy character of the eternal God to the nation of Israel (Leviticus 19:2; 20:7–8).
- (2) Set apart the nation of Israel as distinct from all the other nations (Exodus 19:5).
- (3) Reveal the sinfulness of man (cf. Galatians 3:19). Although the Law was good and holy (Romans 7:12), it did not provide salvation for the nation of Israel. “No one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin” (Romans 3:20; cf. Acts 13:38–39).

2 Moo, D.J. (1996). *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. Page 217

Knowledge of Sin Romans 3:19-20

- (4) Provide forgiveness through the sacrifice/offerings (Leviticus 1—7) for the people who had faith in the Lord in the nation of Israel.
- (5) Provide a way of worship for the community of faith through the yearly feasts (Leviticus 23).
- (6) Provide God’s direction for the physical and spiritual health of the nation (Exodus 21—23; Deuteronomy 6:4—19; Psalm 119:97—104).
- (7) Reveal to humanity that no one can keep the Law but everyone falls short of God’s standard of holiness. That realization causes us to rely on God’s mercy and grace. When Christ came, He fulfilled the Law and with His death paid the penalty for our breaking it (Galatians 3:24; Romans 10:4). By faith in Him, the believer has the very righteousness of Christ imputed to him.³”

The knowledge of sin takes us to the “barrier” between man and God. Those of you who are familiar with R.B. Thieme Jr. teaching have seen his picture of the barrier. Robby Dean also has a similar picture of the barrier and the doctrines associated with the solution to the individual parts of the barrier.

Below on the left is Robby Dean’s version⁴. On the right is R.B. Thieme Jr.’s (Bob Thieme) version⁵. You notice that most of the items in Bob Thieme’s version have a Scriptural reference from Romans. In Romans 3:20 we have the knowledge of sin from the Law. When we get to Romans 3:23 Paul declares that all are under sin.

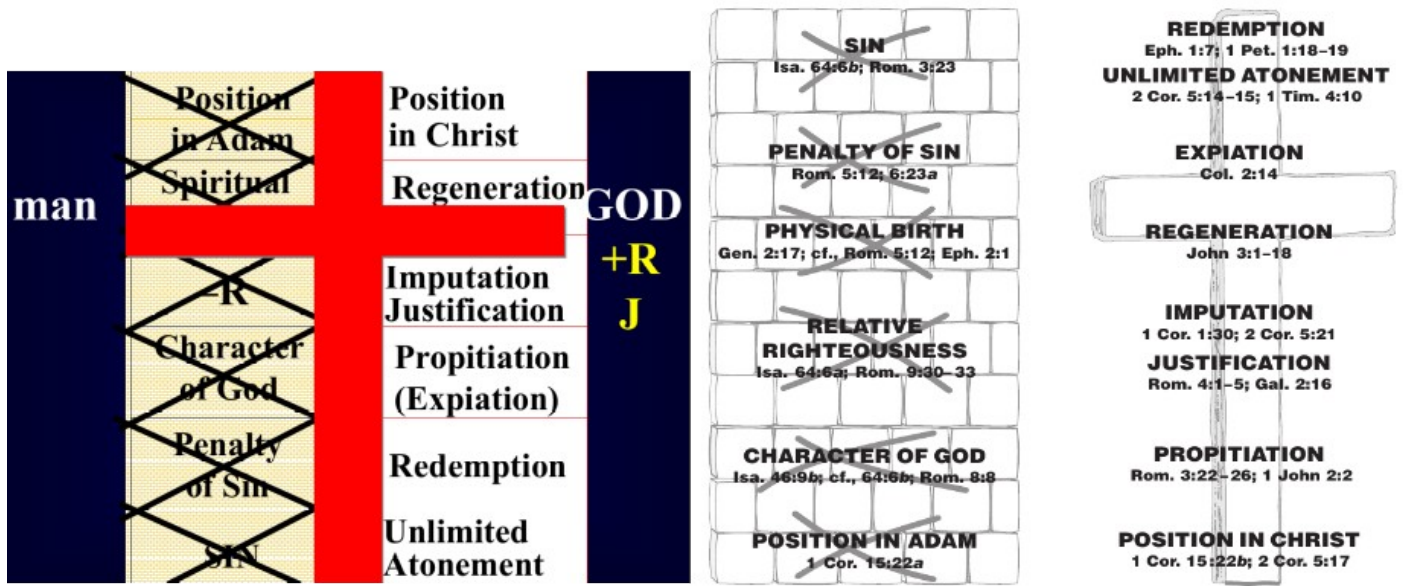
Since we are already talking about the sin issue, it is necessary to see the various impediments between sinful man and a righteous God. The first issue is sin. It also shows us the part played by three of the works of Jesus on the cross: Redemption, Propitiation and Reconciliation. The last one is not on the charts.

3 <https://www.gotquestions.org/Mosaic-Law.html>

4 <https://deanbible.org/dbmfiles/slides/2002-Salvation-02.pdf>

5 https://www.rbthieme.org/images/Illustrations/TheBarrier_2a.gif

Knowledge of Sin Romans 3:19-20



During the study of the book of Romans, there are some topics from the barrier that will be dealt with in some detail. These include: Sin, Penalty of Sin, Character of God, Righteousness, Spiritual Death, Position in Adam. The first topic, sin, will be dealt with in this lesson.

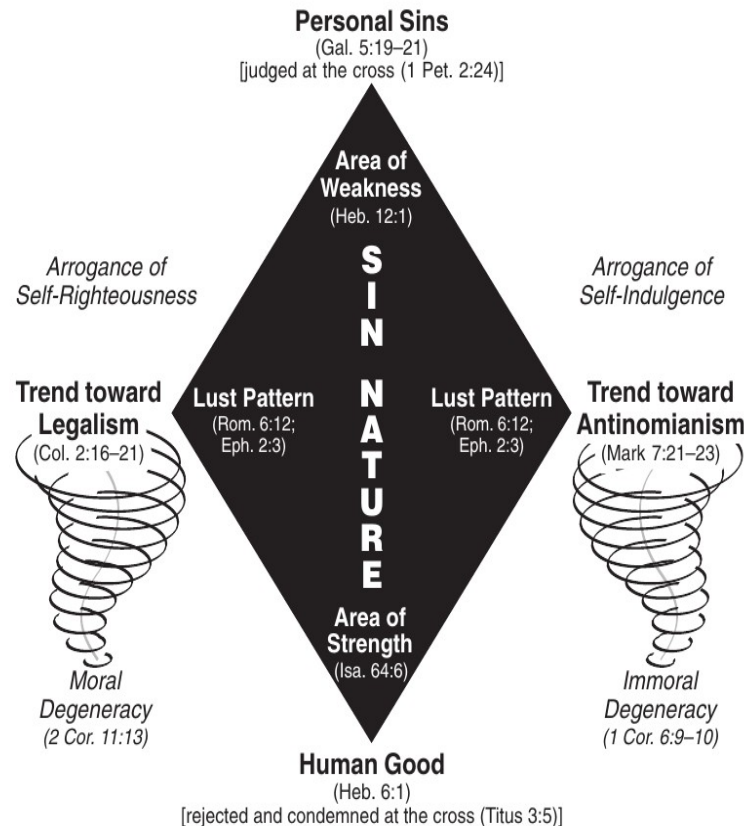
But before we get to the doctrine of sin, let us touch on a word in Romans 3:30, Justification. Herman has some points on Justification.⁶

1. Justification is not concerned with sins not being there. Jesus Christ died for the payment of all sins of the world, all sins, past, present and future are forgiven at the cross.
2. But just because one is free of sins, or have all sins forgiven does not result in Justification.
3. Justification is concerned with the perfect righteousness of God.
4. While the debt of sin must be taken care of and removed in order for mankind to be justified, he must possess the perfect righteousness of God.

⁶ <https://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Romans/notes/20110508Romans159.pdf>

Knowledge of Sin Romans 3:19-20

The following is an illustration from R.B. Thieme Jr. concerning the sin nature.⁷



Psalm 143:1 Hear my prayer, O Lord, Give ear to my supplications! Answer me in Your faithfulness, in Your righteousness!

Psalm 143:2 And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, For in Your sight no man living is righteous.

Commentators point to Psalm 143:2 as being alluded to by Paul. Again, this is a Psalm of David.

At that point, one would ask the question that Job asks in Job 9:2:

⁷ https://www.rbthieme.org/images/Illustrations/CharacteristicsOfTheSinNature_1b.gif

Job 9:1 Then Job answered,

Job 9:2 “In truth I know that this is so; But how can a man be in the right before God?”

Job says that because he recognizes that every man is dominated by the sin nature as an unbeliever. Only the believer has an opportunity to be dominated by the Holy Spirit, by faith.

Now, let us delve into the topic of sin. Rather than struggle to put a few points together about sin, Herman has already done this. I have taken his outline and reformatted it and done some editing.

Doctrine of Sin (Herman Mattox)⁸

1. **Definition:** When most people think of sin, they think of doing bad things, but to truly understand sin, you have to start with God, not man!

Sin is anything contrary to the essence of God or acting independently of God.

Romans 14:23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin.

Another way of looking at sin is that sin is coming short of God's glory, Romans 3:23. To correctly understand sin, you have understand the Glory of God, and the perfect righteousness of God. We sometimes write God's perfect righteousness as +R.

⁸ <http://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Romans/notes/20100131Romans107.htm>

Knowledge of Sin
Romans 3:19-20

2. Three categories of sin:

A. **Imputed sin:** The first category is one that few know about, much less understand. But it is so important to our salvation.

Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. His sin is accredited or imputed to every member of the human race. Every member of the human race is counted guilty when Adam sinned. Romans 3:23; 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22. In Adam all die!

B. **Inherent sin.** simply stated this is the sin nature of every human being;

- 1) Sin is inherent to our nature.
- 2) When Adam sinned he acquired a sin nature.
- 3) The sin nature was brought into existence by Adam.
- 4) The human race inherits this sin nature (therefore inherent sin) through physical birth.

Psalm 51:5 (NASB) Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. (This is not saying that sexual intercourse is sinful)

Psalm 51:5 (NIV) Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. (This is the sin nature of mankind.)

- 5) Every member of human race retains this sin nature after salvation.

Knowledge of Sin
Romans 3:19-20

Therefore believers sin! Some more than others, some worst than others, but we all sin. Before God all sins are against His glory.

6) Therefore Adam is a sinner with a sin nature and saved through grace as any other member of human race.

- C. **Personal sin** is a manifestation or result of having this sin nature.
- a. Two classifications: known sin and unknown sin. Unknown sins are ones we commit in ignorance, yet they are still sin.
 - b. Three categories of personal sin: Mental Attitude Sin; Sins of the Tongue and Overt sin.
 - c. Summary: There are three categories of sin: Imputed, Inherent, and Personal.
 - d. Singular sin and plural sins. When sin is used in singular it generally refers to the sin nature or production of the sin nature, while more generally, in the plural it refers to personal sins!

3. The Sequence of sin

- A. **The first personal sin.** It was committed by Adam—where he made a decision to sin against the word of God.
- B. **Imputed sin** results in spiritual death. When Adam sinned the entire human race sinned. Therefore all members of the human race are born spiritually dead and are in need of a second birth. 1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12.
- C. **Inherent sin.** When Adam sinned he acquired a sin nature or a natural propensity to sin and brought the sin nature into existence.

Knowledge of Sin
Romans 3:19-20

Every member of the human race acquires this sin nature through birth of man and woman.

D. **Personal sin.** The human race sins personally because of the presence of sin nature both before and after salvation.

4. The work of Jesus Christ on the cross regarding sin. (The Solution to sin!)

A. **Imputed sin.**

In Adam we are all counted guilty before God. 1 Corinthians 15:22; Romans 3:23 but

In Christ we are counted not guilty 1 Corinthians 15:22b; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:1, 5-6.

B. **Inherent sin.** Jesus Christ died with reference to everyone's sin nature. He made provision to handle sins from the sin nature. 1 John 1:7 He rejected human good which comes from the sin nature Ephesians 2:8-9 Romans 4:4; 6:10; 8:8; Isaiah 64:6.

C. **Personal sin.** Jesus Christ bore the penalty of sins of everyone 1 John 2:2.

D. **Penalty of sin.** Spiritual death is replaced by the provision of spiritual life for anyone who believes in Christ Romans 6:23.

E. **Solution of sin on the cross.** The sin-ward side of cross is Redemption 1 Corinthians 1:29-30; Colossians 1:14 and Unlimited Atonement 1 John 2:2; 2 Peter 2:1.

F. **Problem of penalty of sin**—death Romans 6:23

Expiation Colossians 2:14—He put an end to this penalty

Knowledge of Sin
Romans 3:19-20

Remember unbelievers are not judged on the basis of their sins, but on the basis of their rejection of Jesus Christ. Law of double jeopardy: if the unbeliever is penalized for sins then Christ did not pay the penalty on the cross.

G. Therefore the unpardonable sin is rejection of Jesus Christ as savior. Rejecting what He did on the cross.

5. The Issue of Sin

A. The issue of sin for the unbeliever's personal sins are of no issue. The issue is rejection of Christ as Savior John 3:18, 36. This is the basis of their condemnation at the last judgment. Personal sin never condemns anyone to the Lake of Fire.

B. The issue of sin for the believer is loss of the filling of the Holy Spirit. Faith dependence on the Holy Spirit becomes the issue for spirituality. Personal sins reminds the believer of his weakness of flesh, and his need of the Holy Spirit.

C. Personal sins can wreck a person's life, be he a believer or unbeliever. This is true of sins that are capital offense, and also sin's that hang on, and bring about shame or guilt or fear. These sins can make a person's life miserable with Stress, Anxiety and Depression (SAD). You must remember that you are forgiven of sins at the cross. Just get back to what you stopped doing-walking by Faith in the Holy Spirit.

Do not allow others to make you continue to carry the guilt or shame of sin. Many Christians will try to serve Satan by making a believer live in shame and guilt, denying what Jesus Christ did on the cross. The further you move from the cross, or from the teaching of His Word, His Word abiding in you the more you live in sin. Chain Sinner.

**Knowledge of Sin
Romans 3:19-20**

D. The issue of sin for God:

Sin offends and is opposed to the +R of God. God hates sin. Sin stirs His wrath. His +R has wrath towards sin.

Ezekiel 30:15 “And I will pour out My wrath on Sin, The stronghold of Egypt; I will also cut off the multitude of Thebes.”

Also Dan. 9:16; Rom. 1:18; 2:2.