

Sin, Sins, and Sinners

What is the difference between Sin, sins, and being a sinner?

Well, first let me ask this: How many sins does it take to make us a sinner?

Just one? That's how our world works – committing just one murder makes us a murderer; committing just one act of adultery makes us an adulterer; going faster than the limit makes us a speeder.

But that's not how it works in God's Kingdom. Consider [Matthew 5:27-28](#); [Matt 12:34b](#); [Matt 15:18-19](#); and [James 1:14-15](#) (see also [Matt 5:21-22](#))¹ where Jesus and James make it perfectly clear that it is the heart that causes us to be sinners. Then, because we are sinners, we act on it and carry out sins. It is not committing murder that makes us murders, but it's first the anger in our hearts that makes us murderers, and we then act on it and commit murders. Similarly, it's not committing adultery that causes us to be adulterers, but it's the lust in our hearts that makes us adulterers, and that in turn causes us to act on it and commit adultery. Similarly for other sins.

So the answer is *zero!* It takes *zero* sins to make us a sinner. We're a sinner first, due to the self-centeredness in our hearts. This, in turn, when acted out, causes us to sin. Not the other way around.

So what is the difference between Sin, sins, and being a sinner?

A ***sinner*** is a fallen person, an unsaved person in this fallen world, who has a self-centered heart instead of a God-centered heart.

And ***sins*** (plural) are the self-centered *acts* committed by sinners. Such acts break God's laws. Breaking God's law is a sin.

¹ **The heart causes us to sin:** [Matthew 5:27-28](#) – You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who *looks* at a woman to lust after her has *already* committed adultery with her in his heart. [emphasis added]

[Matthew 12:34b](#) – ... For out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.

[Matthew 15:18-19](#) – But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these things defile a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander.

[James 1:14-15](#) – But each one is tempted when by his own evil desires he is lured away and enticed. *Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin*; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. [emphasis added]

[Matthew 5:21-22](#) – You have heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to the fire of hell.



Finally, Sin (I'll capitalize it for clarity, to distinguish it from sins (plural)) is the whole fallen-world / sin system of sinful hearts and the resulting acts of sin. It's the rejecting or ignoring of God and saying we don't need Him. That's Sin with a capital S – rejecting God.

So sinners are in Sin, and as a result, that's what causes them to commit sins.

But it is the turning from God (see “**Error! Reference source not found.**”, p.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**), whether choosing to break His laws or explicitly rejecting Him, that separates us from Him and His eternal Life and earns the penalty.

John may have had this in mind when he wrote:

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin *not* leading to death, he should ask God, who will give life to those who commit this kind of sin [what I'm calling sin with a little “s”]. There [also] is a sin that leads to death [sin with a capital “S”]; I am not saying he should ask regarding that sin. *All* unrighteousness is sin, yet there *is* sin that does *not* lead to death. ([1 John 5:16-17](#)) [emphasis added]

-- See also:

[Jesus Saves ... but How?](#) available from Amazon.com;

see also <https://kspubs.com/welcome/books/>

"[Sin, Transgression, and Iniquity](#)" on kspubs.com