

# Sin, Transgression, and Iniquity

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## *What is the difference between sin, transgression, and iniquity?*

**Transgression** is infringing or violating (literally, *stepping beyond*) a law, command, or duty -- essentially, *stepping over the line*. So the term is used generically for breaking any kind of law. Yet there are different kinds of laws we can transgress, and each have different penalties:

**Crimes**, of course, are breaking the State's or the King's laws. It's a criminal matter; we would be arrested and get prison time -- or worse.

However, "**transgression**" or "**trespass**" (it's the same Greek word) can be used more narrowly to specifically mean infractions against another *person*, harming another person, violating their rights. Today, we'd say it's a civil matter; if it happened to us, we might sue.

**Sins**, however, are by definition against God. They are falling short of and breaking God's law. This includes anything contrary to His expressed commands. The Greek word for sin (*hamartia*) literally means *missing the mark*, which [Romans 3:23](#) well (if tragically) illustrates.

[Romans 3:23](#) (NASB) -- for all have **sinned and fall short of the glory of God**

The essence, then, is that if God says, "This is where I'm going and what I'm doing; Come with Me and walk in My ways" and we say, "No, but I'm going *that* way, my *own* way, and doing my own thing", that's willfully falling short of His requirements and expectations. *That's sin.*

The *only* penalty of sin against God's requirements is *death* ([Rom 6:23a](#)). It isn't merely punitive: we *earned* it; it's a natural consequence of going the other way. If God -- eternal life Himself -- goes *this* way but we choose to go *that* way, we've separated ourselves from eternal life. What's that called? That's eternal death. *That* is as good a definition of **sin** as I can think of.

[Romans 6:23](#) (NASB) -- For **the wages of sin is death**, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Iniquity** is *gross injustice* or *wickedness*, or the quality of being *unfair* or *evil*. If we have iniquity in our hearts, then as a result we will transgress against people, laws, and will sin against God. The iniquity, then, is the root of transgression. It's with us: our *hearts* cause us to sin.

Of course, lawlessness isn't exclusively civil. We can also break or transgress *God's Law*. When we break God's Law or commands, we've **both transgressed** them (broken them, stepped across that line) **and** have **sinned** against God by willfully going our own way.

However, we can't sin against a person. That term is reserved for offenses against God only.



***In Psalm 51, how could David claim that killing and adultery were sins against God only?***

David committed *transgressions* against Bathsheba and Uriah (and also committed the *crime* of murder against Uriah) because his acts harmed both of them. But they weren't sins against them because they are only people. However, the fact that these acts went against God's law (the Ten Commandments) was a *sin* against God. So at the same time, David *both* sinned against God *and* transgressed against Bathsheba and Uriah.

-- See also:

[\*Jesus Saves ... but How?\*](#) available from Amazon.com;  
see also <https://kspubs.com/welcome/books/>