SIN, TRANSGRESSION & INIQUITY

The Bible references sin, transgression and iniquity separately in Exodus 34:7 when the Lord made the second tablets of the Ten Commandments and descended from the cloud and passed before Moses:

- And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children to the third and the fourth generation.”

This indicates that sin, transgression and iniquity are different in some way. In fact, they represent increasing levels of falling “short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

- We can see from Leviticus 16:21 and the Strong’s Numbers associated with the King James translation that these are indeed three different words.

  > 21 And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.

So, let’s look at Strong’s Dictionary for each of the words to discern the differences:

1. H2403 (Sin): an offence [i.e. a single event]

- Sin is anything that comes short of the glory of God

  > “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.”

  (Mark 7:21-22)

  > “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

  (Galatians 5:19-21)

- There are many things we do that fall short of God’s glory which we usually don’t classify as sin. For example:

  > Fear – “for God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind”

  (2Tim.1:7)

  > Worry – “do not worry” commands the Lord in Matthew 6:25, 31,34

  > Shame – “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth.”

  (2Cor. 4:2)

  > Lusts of the flesh – “For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.”

  (1John 2:16)

  > Improper thoughts – “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.”

  (Matthew 5:21-22)

  > “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

  (Matthew 5:27-28)
Vengeance – "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Romans 12:19)

Pride – “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Prov. 16:18)

Gossip & Slander – “And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.” (James 3:6)

2. H6588 (Transgression): a revolt (national, moral or religious); rebellion
   - Repeated sin becomes outright rebellion ”which is as the sin of witchcraft” (1Samuel 15:23)
     - “An evil man seeks only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger will be sent against him.” (Prov. 17:11)

3. H5771 (Iniquity): perversity, that is, (moral) evil:
   - “Perversity is in his heart, he devises evil continually, he sows discord.” (Prov. 6:14)

Thus sin, when repeated against the knowledge of God, becomes transgression which, if it continues long enough, eventually becomes iniquity which perverts the flesh.

- This perversion changes the DNA/RNA structure of the “flesh” resulting in genetic changes that are passed on from generation to generation – just as the Bible says in the Second Commandment, which has as yet been repealed by God
- This is the way high blood pressure, alcoholism, sexual perversions, jealousy, anger, fear, etc. are passed down from generation to generation
  - I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me. (Exodus 20:8)

The progression from sin, to transgression, to iniquity (bondage in that particular area) is illustrated in the following two diagrams with Scriptural references

- This progression is also described by James 1:15:
  - Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.