

Romans - THE sin or SIN?

Romans Series (Part 7)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Dec 15, 2013

Opening Remarks:

- A. Welcome to another study of biblical history and eschatology from a full preterist perspective.
- B. Last time we looked at a couple of questions related to Romans chapter six. That discussion sparked some further emails from some of our listeners, so I decided to share some of those email exchanges here at the beginning of the program, before taking a closer look at the rest of the text of Romans.
- C. Before we look at those questions, however, let's ask God's blessing on our study:
Our Heavenly Father, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us. We praise Your Holy Name for sending Your Son to cover our sinful status in Adam, as well as atone for all of our own sins. Help us in this study of Romans to clearly understand what Apostle Paul taught about sin and salvation to the Jewish and Gentile saints in the first century. We ask this in the Name of Your Son, our Savior Jesus. Amen.

Question about "THE sin" in Rom. 6:1

[QUESTION] I appreciate your dealing with Romans 6:1 on last Sunday's podcast. Though I think your logic was correct as you demonstrated the fallacies in Sam Frost's old view, I was wondering if you have any thoughts as to the reason why Apostle Paul used the definite article **THE** before sin, death and grace? In other words, if Paul wasn't referring to THE SIN i.e. Adam's original transgression, why does he use the definite article (THE) here in reference to sin? That appears to be pointing back to a specific sin (THE sin of Adam) rather than to a generic "sinning in general."

[FROM ED] This is an excellent question. Here is what I wrote in reply:

The definite article ("the") does not function in the Greek in exactly the same way it functions in English. There is quite a bit of similarity, but also some significant differences. Sam Frost pretended like he was an expert on Koine Greek, but every time I shared his grammatical arguments with my Greek professor and several other Greek scholars at ETS, they raised their eyebrows (like Spock on *Star Trek*). When I examined Frost's arguments in the Greek grammars, I understood why they did not think very much of his Greek expertise. Some of the positions that Frost was taking were typical of beginning Greek students who did not know how to do advanced Greek exegesis.

This argument on the definite article is a case in point. Even in beginning Greek classes we were told that the presence or absence (articular vs. anarthrous) of the definite article was not always significant. It was simply the way some writers or speakers communicated in Koine Greek. It is just like the difference between Midwesterners and

New Englanders here in the USA. Texans like me are famous for bending the rules of English grammar.

Note that last sentence. I could have included the definite article ("the") on "THE Texans" and left the definite article off of "rules of English grammar" and it would still have meant the same thing. The presence or absence of the definite article in those two places would not significantly affect the meaning, and it sure would not justify the assignment of a whole different definition to TEXANS or English grammar just because they do (or do not) have the definite article in front of them. But if Frost's theory is allowed (sin = law), then we could substitute FLORIDIANS in place of TEXANS, and Spanish grammar in place of English grammar. But even a caveman can see the fallacy of that!

Sometimes the Koine Greek speakers/writers used the definite article, and sometimes they didn't. Quite often it was a matter of local or regional custom. Greek speakers in Turkey phrased their writings differently than Greek speakers in Alexandria or Athens, just like English speakers in the USA phrase things differently than they do in England, Australia, India, or South Africa. But it is usually clear in the context what the Greek speakers meant to say. And the surrounding sentence and clause structure contains the grammatical clues to determine the meaning, regardless of whether the definite article is there or not.

In advanced Greek courses they go way beyond word definitions and articular-anarthrous considerations, or tense-mood-voice-case-person endings of the words, to look at the overall function of the phrase, clause, sentence, or paragraph that the word is used in. The presence or absence of the definite article is seldom a major factor in determining the meaning of the sentence. Function of the word or phrase or clause in the context determines the meaning — regardless of the presence or absence of the definite article.

For instance, the Jehovah's Witnesses use John 1:1 as their proof that the presence or absence of the definite article is critical to the meaning of a word. In the Greek, John 1:1 literally reads:

John 1:1 In beginning was the Word, and the Word was with THE God, and God was the Word.

They JW's assert that since the second use of the word "God" here does not have the definite article that it is only talking about a lesser "god" (like the angels) and not talking about THE one true GOD. That sounds like an impressive argument until we look right here in the context of the first 18 verses of John 1 to notice other uses of the word "God" without the definite article attached to it (e.g., John 1:6, 13, 18). Those other three references are clearly referring to Yahweh, yet they do not have the definite article. Are we to conclude in verse 6 therefore that John the Baptist was sent by a lesser god or angel, and not by the one true God Yahweh? Of course not! This argument by the JW's is totally bogus, or as Chilton used to say, "Illegitimate, nugatory, and gossamer"!

Right there in the first eighteen verses of John chapter one there are three exceptions to the JW's rule. Native Greek speakers and orthodox Greek scholars laugh at the fallacy of the JW argument. It is something that only a first-year Greek student might suggest, but no real Greek scholars would take it seriously.

And it is the same error that Sam Frost was making when he suggested that the presence of the definite article "the" in front of the word "sin" here in Romans 6 must be referring to "THE (specific) SIN" of Adam and not simply to generic "sin or sinning" by individual Christians.

We will see right here in the context of Romans that there is no support for Frost's claim that every time the definite article is used with the word "sin" here in Romans it is referring to the specific sin of Adam, and never to generic "sin" or "sinning."

One way to refute this claim of Frost is to show how Paul uses the word "SIN" (Gk. "hamartia") in the book of Romans. The Greek word "hamartia" (sin) occurs 48 or more times in 39 verses in the Greek text of Romans (NA28). Here is the list of 39 verses: *Rom 3:9, 20; 4:7-8; 5:12-13, 20-21; 6:1-2; 6:6-7, 10-14, 16-18, 20, 22-23; 7:5, 7-9, 11, 13-14, 17, 20, 23, 25; 8:2-3, 10; 11:27; 14:23.*

Key to the red-lettered text: Below I have printed the text of all 39 of those verses in the left-hand column, with my comments in the right-hand column. Every time the Greek word "hamartia" (sin) is used in one of these 39 verses, it is marked by red-lettered text (i.e., "sin"). If the definite article ("the") is used with that Greek word "hamartia," I have included the word "the" in brackets to indicate the presence of the definite article in connection with that particular occurrence of the word "sin" (i.e., [the] sin).

Key to the blue-lettered text: Whenever a personal possessive pronoun (my, our, your, his, their) is used with a noun, it is marked by blue-underlined text (i.e. "our body"). We will not deal with these blue-text statements in this lesson since we already did a podcast on that idea ("OUR BODY") several months ago. But I wanted you to be aware of these occurrences here in the context of Romans. It is a very common way for Paul to express the idea of each of the individuals in a group (e.g., "our" plural) having their own copy of the item that is mentioned (e.g., "body" singular). These blue-text references will come in handy for us when we get to chapter eight in our study.

Key to the yellow-highlighted text: Several of the places which use the word "sin" in a way that clearly indicates the kind of "sin" Paul has in mind here, are yellow-highlighted. Those yellow-highlighted verses in the left-hand column below are the ones to which we need to pay close attention, because they will help us see that Paul is not only using the definite article in reference "THE (specific) sin of Adam," but also in reference to generic "sin" or "sinning." In the right-hand column below we will say more about this.

English Text (NAS95)	Ed's Comments
<p>* Rom. 3:9 ¶ What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under SIN;</p> <p>* Rom. 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.</p> <p>* Rom. 4:7 "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds have been forgiven, and whose SINS have been covered.</p> <p>* Rom. 4:8 "Blessed is the man whose SIN the Lord will not take into account."</p> <p>Rom. 5:12 ¶ Therefore, just as through one man [the] SIN entered into the world, and death through [the] SIN, and so death spread to all men, because all SINNED —</p> <p>* Rom. 5:13 for until the Law SIN was in the world, but SIN is not imputed when there is no law.</p> <p>Rom. 5:20 The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where [the] SIN increased, grace abounded all the more,</p> <p>Rom. 5:21 so that, as [the] SIN reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.</p>	<p>3:9 -- Note especially this first reference to "sin" here in Rom 3:9. It does NOT have the definite article ("the") prefixed to it. It is simply "sin" and not "the sin." Both Jews and Greeks are under the condemnation of this kind of "sin."</p> <p>3:20 -- Paul points out that there is a relationship between "the Law" and "sin." That relationship is explained here as being "through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." In other words, "the Law" defines what "sin" is. That is one of the functions of the Law.</p> <p>4:7-8 -- These two verses quote from Psalm 32:1-2 where David pronounced blessings on the person whose SINS God does not take into account. Note the lack of a definite article here in these two verses.</p> <p>5:12-13 -- Here is the verse (12) which Frost used to support his claim that "the SIN" is referring to Adam's specific sin. Adam's sin is definitely under consideration here. However, it is not "the" specific sin that is referred to here by the words "the sin." Instead, Paul is simply telling us how generic sin (or "sinning" or "sinfulness") entered into the world. Notice the absence of the definite article in the next verse (13) which refers to the presence of sin in the world ("because all sinned") before the Law came to point out that sin and show how utterly sinful mankind really was (see v. 20).</p> <p>5:20-21 -- One of the functions of the Law was to define what sin is, point out how sinful mankind really is, and to bring him under condemnation. Note that "the SIN" here in verse 20 is the sinfulness that the Law was pointing out, and does not refer to "THE sin" of Adam. But if Frost's theory is correct, we would have to say that "THE sin" that was "increased" by the Law was the specific sin of Adam, and not the kind of generic sinfulness that the Law was designed to point out and condemn. So here in verse 20 we see a clear exception to Frost's theory.</p>
<p>Rom. 6:1 ¶ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in [the] SIN so that grace may increase?</p> <p>Rom. 6:2 May it never be! How shall we who died to [the] SIN still live in it?</p> <p>Rom. 6:6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with <i>Him</i>, in order that our body of [the] SIN might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to [the] SIN;</p> <p>Rom. 6:7 for he who has died is freed from [the] SIN.</p>	<p>6:1-2 -- To be consistent, we would have to believe that these references to "THE sin" here in verses 1-2 are at least referring back to 5:20-21, if not all the way back to 5:12-13 where "THE sin" was first used. But as we noticed above in those verses, "THE sin" was not exclusively referring to the specific sin of Adam, but to the sinfulness of all mankind "because all sinned" (5:12). And in 5:20 we noted again that the sinfulness that the Law defined was not exclusively "THE sin" of Adam alone, but the sinfulness of all men. Therefore, "continuing in THE sin" here in 6:1 does not necessarily refer to the specific sin of Adam, but instead seems to refer to our own continuation in a sinful lifestyle after supposedly dying to that sinful lifestyle (by repentance). Notice Paul's reference to</p>

<p>Rom. 6:10 For the death that He died, He died to [the] SIN once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.</p> <p>Rom. 6:11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to [the] SIN, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.</p> <p>Rom. 6:12 ¶ Therefore do not let [the] SIN reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,</p> <p>Rom. 6:13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to [the] SIN as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.</p> <p>* Rom. 6:14 For SIN shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace.</p>	<p>"we" here in 6:1. He was referring to saints in his day who had received grace. He was arguing against their continuation in the sinful lifestyle after their conversion to Christ, not urging them to forsake THE sin of Adam by leaving the collective body of Adam and coming over into the collective body of Christ. Although that may be a valid biblical concept, it is NOT the concept that Paul is using here in 6:1-2. We know this because in 6:2 Paul refers to the "we" as having "died to THE sin." What "sin" had they died to when they became followers of Christ? It was their own sinful lifestyle, not THE sin of Adam?</p> <p>6:6-14 -- In 6:14 Paul uses "SIN" without the definite article, but is clearly referring to the same "THE sin" as the previous verses (6:6-13). The reason we know this is because he is talking about "SIN" not being master over us. That is the same idea that Paul mentioned back in verses 6 ("slaves to THE sin"), 7 ("freed from THE sin"), and 12 ("do not let THE sin reign"). It is the same SIN in all four of these verses, regardless of whether it has the definite article or not, and verse 14 does not have the definite article.</p>
<p>* Rom. 6:16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of SIN resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?</p> <p>Rom. 6:17 But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of [the] SIN, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,</p> <p>Rom. 6:18 and having been freed from [the] SIN, you became slaves of righteousness.</p> <p>Rom. 6:20 ¶ For when you were slaves of [the] SIN, you were free in regard to righteousness.</p> <p>Rom. 6:22 But now having been freed from [the] SIN and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.</p> <p>Rom. 6:23 For the wages of [the] SIN is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.</p> <p>Rom. 7:5 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were <i>aroused</i> by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.</p>	<p>6:16-23 -- Here in verse 16 is another reference to the same "THE sin" without the definite article, followed immediately in the next seven verses (17-23) by five more references to "THE SIN" with the definite article! The claim by Frost that Paul uses "THE SIN" consistently throughout this context as a reference to the specific sin of Adam, simply does not hold up under our scrutiny here. Compare 6:14 ("SIN") with 6:17 ("THE sin"). In both verses it is referring the same sin that had been master over them before they became Christians, yet verse 14 does not have the definite article, while verses 17-23 do have the definite article. Do you see the problem here for Sam Frost's theory? Paul does not consistently use the definite article even when it is clear that he is referring to the same kind of sin. This means that either Paul is inconsistent, or that Sam Frost has concocted an arbitrary rule of grammar that is not in sync with first century Koine Greek grammatical usage. Who are you going to believe, Paul or Frost?</p>

<p>* Rom. 7:7 ¶ What shall we say then? Is the Law SIN? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know [the] SIN except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET."</p> <p>* Rom. 7:8 But [the] SIN, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law SIN is dead.</p> <p>Rom. 7:9 I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, [the] SIN became alive and I died;</p> <p>Rom. 7:11 for [the] SIN, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.</p> <p>* Rom. 7:13 ¶ Therefore did that which is good [the Law] become a <i>cause of death</i> for me? May it never be! Rather it was [the] SIN, in order that it might be shown to be SIN by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment [the] SIN would become utterly SINFUL.</p> <p>Rom. 7:14 ¶ For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to [the] SIN.</p> <p>* Rom. 7:17 So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but SIN which dwells in me.</p> <p>* Rom. 7:20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but SIN which dwells in me.</p>	<p>7:7 -- Paul asks the rhetorical question whether the Law is SIN (without the definite article), but then refers to that same SIN (without the definite article) as "THE sin" (with the definite article) right here in the same verse! Do you catch the power of that?</p> <p>7:8 -- Paul does the same thing here in verse 8. He refers to "THE sin" (with the definite article) in the first part of the verse, but then ends the verse with another reference to "SIN" (without the definite article)! Yet both references to "sin" are talking about the same "sin"! How does Frost's theory fare here in this verse?</p> <p>7:9, 11 -- Here are two more references to "THE sin" (with the definite article) right after Paul had referred to it as "SIN" (without the article).</p> <p>7:13 -- Here is another verse that has both uses of sin with and without the definite article. This does not fit Frost's theory either.</p> <p>7:14, 17, 20 -- Here is another occurrence of "THE sin" with the definite article, only to be followed a few verses later with two more references to the same "SIN" without the definite article (vv. 17 and 20). EITHER Paul does not understand proper Greek grammar and is grossly inconsistent here, OR Sam Frost has frivolously constructed a grammar rule that did not exist in the first century! I feel very safe in imputing the error to Sam Frost and not to Apostle Paul. Paul is not inconsistent. This is simply the way they used the definite article in Koine Greek of the first century.</p>
<p>* Rom. 7:23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of SIN which is in my members.</p> <p>* Rom. 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of SIN.</p> <p>Rom. 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of [the] SIN and of death.</p>	<p>7:23, 25 and 8:2 -- Notice the two phrases "law of SIN" (7:23, 25) and "law of THE sin" (8:2). Both phrases are referring to the same "law of SIN" but only one of the three verses has the definite article used in reference to this law of "THE sin" (8:2). Sam Frost's grammar rule strikes out again.</p>

<p>* Rom. 8:3 For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God <i>did</i>: sending His own Son in the likeness of SINFUL flesh and <i>as an offering for SIN</i>, He condemned [the] SIN in the flesh,</p> <p>* Rom. 8:10 If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of SIN, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.</p> <p>Rom. 11:27 “THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY [the] SINS of them.”</p> <p>* Rom. 14:23 But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because <i>his eating</i> is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is SIN.</p>	<p>8:3 -- This verse exhibits another clear example of the equivalence of these two uses of SIN in the same verse (one with the article and the other without it). We have to wonder how Frost could miss this! Was he reading the same Greek Text that we are reading?</p> <p>8:10 -- Compare this verse ("dead because of SIN" without the article) with 6:16 ("SIN resulting in death"); 6:23 (wages of THE sin is death); 7:9 ("THE sin became alive and I died"); 7:11 ("THE sin killed me"); and 7:13 ("SIN effected my death"). Notice the flip-flop back and forth between the presence and absence of the definite article. All these verses mention the same "SIN" causing their death, regardless of whether they have the definite article or not. Do you catch the power of that?</p> <p>11:27 -- The usage of "SINS" here is plural, referring to the salvation of ALL Israel when their "THE sins" (with the definite article) were taken away. This is obviously not referring to "THE sin" of Adam which was already taken away by Christ on the Cross!</p> <p>14:23 -- I do not think this verse is really significant for our study here, since it is three chapters or more removed from the context where Paul was dealing with "THE sin." This occurrence of "SIN" (without the article) is referring to the practice of eating meat sacrificed to idols without a proper understanding of it. It was defiling their conscience and causing the weaker brother to stumble, and was therefore sinful.</p>
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Conclusion:

We have seen that Frost's theory about "THE sin" referring exclusively to the sin of Adam, simply does not hold up under an examination of the context here in Romans. There are too many exceptions to the rule, to even have a rule.

And if "THE sin" (with the article) does not refer to the specific sin of Adam (our federal head), then "THE sin" is not necessarily referring to the sinful condemned status of a collective body (all those in Adam or Moses). It could just as easily be summing up all men (Jews and Gentiles) under condemnation for their sin. Frost's idea that "THE sin" here is a reference to the sin of Adam and the Law, simply does not have contextual verification. It is a very flawed theory with no consistent contextual support.

The concept of a collective body seems to be the thing that drove Frost to suggest this theory in the first place. His reasoning appears to have been based on some assumptions like the following:

- Paul teaches the idea of a Collective Body in some of his letters.
- So Paul must be teaching it here in Romans as well.
- That means that this whole discussion about "THE sin" must be related to the collective body somehow.
- So we will have to redefine "THE sin" so that it harmonizes with the collective body concept.

However, it appears that Frost was assuming what he needed to prove. He assumed that the Collective Body concept is found here in Romans 5-11, and then twisted the text to make it fit his assumptions, rather than looking at the context to see if the Collective Body concept is actually there. Enough said about that, for now. We will probably deal with it a little more when we get into chapters 7 and 8.

Next week we will deal with the subject of baptism a little bit, since it is referenced right here in Romans 6 verses 3 and 4. It is amazing to me how many preterists have thrown baptism out with the bath water! I will read a few statements from some of the best commentaries on the subject (both Reformed and other conservative evangelicals), to show that the baptism that Paul mentions here is indeed water baptism as practiced by John the Baptist, Jesus, the Apostles, and the pre-70 church. This is something that you will want to pay close attention to, especially if you have not been baptized. We need to know what baptism is all about, and what its place is in our Christian life.

That will do it for this session. Hope that cleared up some things for you. If not, don't hesitate to email me with your questions. I would love to hear from you.

Thanks so much for listening.

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Addendum: Another Email about "THE sin"

Is "THE sin" the Law?

[LISTENER COMMENT] Though I had been convinced by Frost's strange explanation of Romans 6:1, I was never completely comfortable with the fact that according to the Collective Body guys, Paul substituted "the sin" for "the law". Why didn't Paul simply use the phrase "Shall we continue in the law that grace may abound?" The reason, as you so clearly stated, is because that was not Paul's point in this text. I am continually amazed at how far off track the CBV view has taken so many of our fellow preterists.

[MY REPLY] As we have seen from the color-coded text of Romans above, Frost appears to have been trying to bluff his way through this, hoping that no one in Pretland knew enough Greek to refute him. And what is even more disturbing, is that the other Collective Body advocates who followed him into that error, are still using that fallacious argument to buttress their Collective Body interpretation here in Romans, even though it has now been shown to be in error. They gulped it down without question, and bet the farm on Sam Frost's skill as a Greek exegete.

It is very clear after looking at the yellow highlighted material above that "the sin" and "the Law" are not interchangeable. Even though Paul shows here that there is a symbiotic relationship between the Law and sin, he also just as clearly distinguishes between them and shows that they are not the same thing. Relationship? Yes! Same thing? No!

Furthermore, it is interesting grammatically that LAW is masculine in gender, while SIN is feminine in gender. Paul also notes that the LAW is holy, righteous, good and spiritual, while SIN is utterly sinful and detestable and to be avoided at all costs. Paul makes a clear contrast between LAW and SIN, even though there is a relationship between them. SIN uses the LAW to deceive us into sinning. It is not the Law's fault that we sin, but rather our own sinful desires which cause us to break the Law and commit sin. The Law is not sin, nor is it sinful. But sin uses the commandments in the Law to deceive us into breaking the Law. So the Law and Sin are two different things, even though there is a functional relationship between them.

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(the most helpful ones are boldfaced below)

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