

Λιον and Λαμβ Apologetics'

Thirty-Three Words for Sin in the New Testament: Part 2

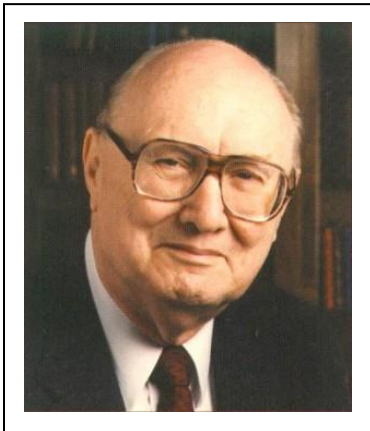
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(Continued from the January–March Number, 1943)

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II. Παράβασις

(παράβασις, παραβαίνω, παραβάτης)



After the study of *ἁμαρτία* in the previous article, it is fitting, now, to turn to the three important words to be considered in this section. Not only are the words in themselves significant as a contribution to the larger doctrine of hamartiology, but they refute by their very definition all the philosophies which find root in the idea that man will choose good if he knows it. The ancient Socratic motto that “virtue is knowledge,” i.e., “that if only men can be brought to see what the better course is they will spontaneously follow it,”¹⁸ is branded as false, along with all other theories asserting that man is naturally good. The Bible consistently teaches that men are wilfully sinful as the ensuing discussion helps to demonstrate.

1. Παράβασις

Παράβασις, like *παραβαίνω* and *παραβάτης*, is derived from *βαίνω*, a common verb meaning *to go, to walk, to step*. Though found frequently in the classic Greek, it does not occur in the New Testament without a prefix. The addition of the prefix, *παρά* gives its New Testament form the meaning, “*to go past or to pass over without touching a thing*.”¹⁹ In its tropical use in the New Testament, it is defined, “*to overstep, neglect, violate, transgress*.”²⁰ An interesting instance of its classical use is that in Homer, where the form *παρβεβαώς* occurs to represent warriors who stand side by side in a war-chariot.²¹ The New Testament form is translated six times in the Authorized Version by the word

¹⁸ Fuller, *History of Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 56.

¹⁹ Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, s.v.

²⁰ *Loc. cit.*

²¹ *Loc. cit.*

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transgression and once by *breaking*. A study of these passages reveals that it is a more serious sin and a stronger word than *ἁμαρτία*.

The central thought of the word *παραβαίνω* is that of wilful disobedience. In Romans 2:23, for instance, the Jew is challenged, “Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?” The sin in view is not imputed sin, a sin of ignorance, nor the fact of the sin nature, but it is rather the flagrant sin of disobedience to the law which the Jews themselves regard as their very own.

Another notable instance is the transgression of Adam and Eve—a disobedience to a specific command—to which reference is made in Romans 5:14 and 1 Timothy 2:14. In Romans 4:15, the interesting statement is made that it is necessary to have law in order to have transgression (*παράβασις*). The remaining references (Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2; 9:15) bring out the same thought of sin in its character of wilful transgression of known law.

2. Παραβαίνω

To all practical purposes, the uses of the verb are identical to those of the noun as far as meaning is concerned. The four instances (Acts 1:25; Mt. 15:2, 3; 2 John 1:9), or possibly only three if the reference in 2 John be omitted, following the best manuscripts, afford some further illustrations, however. In Matthew 15:2, the transgression in view is that of the tradition of the elders, in contrast to the transgression of the commandment of God in the following verse. In both these instances, however, the transgression is a violation of definite rules of conduct which were known, following the idea of wilful sin. The sin of Judas in Acts 1:25 has the same character.

3. Παραβάτης

The remaining noun form is similar to the two other words discussed, being used to represent the one transgressing. It is translated once as *breaker* (Rom. 2:25); three times as *transgressor* (Gal. 2:18; Jas. 2:9, 11); and once as *who doth transgress* (Rom. 2:27). The context of these instances bears out the previous definition that transgression is of known law, the sin being wilful disobedience.

The three words discussed in this section add their distinctive note to the whole doctrine of hamartiology. Sin is seen as an overt act, a wilful disobedience. None of these three words is used to represent the sin nature, imputed sin, or sin in the abstract. Sin is painted in its ugly reality of opposition to the revealed will of God, at once a proof of human depravity and the refutation of all worldly views of sin as a mere intellectual error. Transgression of the will of God is viewed more seriously than *ἁμαρτία*, and it is in

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contrast to ἀγνοέω, which speaks of sin as springing from ignorance and the natural blindness of the human heart to the things of God.

III. Παράπτωμα

(παράπτωμα, παραπίπτω)

Two Greek words in interesting contrast to παράβασις are παράπτωμα and παραπίπτω, the former occurring twenty-three times in the New Testament, and the latter being found once. Both words are derived from the verb πίπτω meaning *to fall*, and the preposition παρά meaning *alongside of*, or *near*. Thayer states it is nowhere found in its proper meaning of *to fall beside*.²² In its use in the New Testament, it means “*a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness*.”²³ In other words, it may represent sin in the act or merely ignorance. The Revised Version translates the word *trespass*. As used in the New Testament, both words are always used in an ethical sense, though outside the Bible this is not the case. The important point to be remembered in the use of these words is that it represents a deviation from the right path either in thought, knowledge, or act. It is therefore less emphatic in its representation of sin than any of the words previously studied.

1. Παράπτωμα

The noun is used in too many passages to discuss each instance, but representative passages will serve to bring out the use of the word. In Ephesians 2:1, we find a most interesting passage of considerable doctrinal importance in which both ἁμαρτία and παράπτωμα are found in one verse, “And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Some have construed this to mean “*dead through* trespasses and sins,” as translated in the Revised Version, but this is too obviously an attempt to escape the doctrine of original sin. As A. T. Robertson has clearly stated in this connection, both words for sin are in the locative case and express not the *cause* of the death, but the place or state in which the race finds itself.²⁴ The phrase *in trespasses and sins* is merely descriptive of their activity when spiritually dead. The previous discussion of Romans 5:12–21 has pointed out that spiritual death is a result of Adam’s sin, not the sins of the race subsequent to Adam, however unacceptable this may be to those who hold the concept of the inherent goodness of human nature.

²² *Ibid.*, s.v.

²³ *Loc. cit.*

²⁴ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. IV, p. 523.

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What, then, is the meaning of *trespasses and sins*? It has been suggested that *trespasses* (παράπτωμα) is sin as it is suggested to the mind, whereas sins (ἁμαρτία) is the overt act.

Trench gives an interpretation to the passage which bears this out: “At Ephes. 2:1, where παράπτωματα and ἁμαρτίαι are found together, Jerome records with apparent assent a distinction between them; that the former are sins suggested to the mind and partially entertained and welcomed there, and the latter the same embodied in actual deeds.... This distinction has no warrant. Only this much truth it may be allowed to have; that, as sins of thought partake more of the nature of infirmity, and have less aggravation than the same sins consummated, embodied, that is, in act, so doubtless παράπτωμα is sometimes used when it is intended to designate sins not of the deepest dye and the worst enormity.”²⁵

While, as Trench points out, there is more of the thought of inability, lack of knowledge, and moral weakness in παράπτωμα, and the root idea of *falling* connotes at least some inability to prevent it, the word is nevertheless used in Scripture to refer to serious sin. For instance, in Romans 5:15, 17, 18, it is used of the original sin of Adam, and hence we speak of Adam’s fall. In the LXX, there is a similar use of the word to represent serious sin, i.e., sin resulting in physical death (Ezk. 18:26). In other instances, however, a weaker sense of the word may be observed, as in the fall of Israel from their privilege—a result of sin rather than a sin in itself (Rom. 11:11, 12). Taking all factors into consideration, it is hardly sufficient to say as does Fritzsche, quoted by Thayer in the discussion of the meaning of παράπτωμα, that it differs “from ἁμάρτημα in figure not in force.”²⁶ It is perhaps better to conclude that παράπτωμα indicates sin more from the viewpoint of inability than wilful sin, dwelling on the concept of failing to keep the right way in thought or deed rather than a deliberate choice of evil.

2. Παραπίπτω

In general, the verb follows the same definition as the noun and is important in itself because it occurs in a passage of difficult interpretation. In its only use in the New Testament, it is found in Hebrews 6:6, where it refers to the “falling away” of one near faith in Christ. The context indicates that the person in view has tasted of spiritual things, though he has never really eaten. It is a picture of one trying something out, examining it, and determining whether to embrace it or not. Having once come to this point of decision, the Scripture tells us in Hebrews 6:6, that if they fall away, i.e., go past the place of decision without taking the right road, it is impossible for them to come back. This is,

²⁵ *Synonyms of the New Testament*, p. 246.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, s.v.

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however, from God's viewpoint, as no man can say of another that he has passed the place of opportunity. If one comes into the full light of the Gospel, insofar as this may be known by anyone unsaved, and with this knowledge deliberately spurns the work of the Holy Spirit and the work of Christ, there is no further step possible.

The sin in view is the sin of unbelief—deliberate unbelief. Whether the word means to fall short of true faith, or to pass by and thereby miss true faith, the result is the same. Needless to say, no one under conviction (John 16:7–11) has passed the possibility of faith in Christ, and no one however careless in previous opportunities to accept Christ need seek in vain if he wants to believe. The marks of the one who has “fallen away” in the sense of Hebrews 6:6 are indifference and deepening blindness. From a practical standpoint, however, it is the Christian's duty to continue to preach, to pray, and to exhort in the hope that saving faith may yet follow.

The study of these two words has brought out some of the distinctions which the Scriptures afford. The emphasis throughout is on the idea of falling into the wrong path or the wrong choice rather than the choice itself, upon the fact of sin rather than the sinfulness of it. Its use in the New Testament indicates that it does not represent sin of as deep a dye as many other words.

IV. Παρακοή

(παρακοή, παρακούω)

Another of the compounds which has the prefix *παρά* are the verb *παρακούω*, found twice in the New Testament (Mt. 18:17), and the noun *παρακοή*, found three times (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 10:6; Heb. 2:2). Both words are derived from the verb, *ἀκούω*, meaning *to hear*, with the preposition *παρά*, meaning, as has already been explained, *alongside of*. The compound comes to mean *to hear alongside of*, or *to hear amiss*. According to Thayer, this primary meaning is never found in the New Testament, however.²⁷ Rather, the thought of *unwillingness to hear* or *disobedience* is the apparent usage. The idea inferred is that the one who fails to hear does so of his own will with the intent of disregarding and disobeying what he ought to hear and obey. It is therefore worthy of censure and judgment inasmuch as it is an unwillingness to hear, rather than an inability to hear. In contrast to *παράπτωμα*, where the emphasis is on inability, the important point in these words is upon the will, a deliberate disregard of a prohibition. Thayer defines the verb, “*to refuse to hear, pay no regard to, disobey.*”²⁸

²⁷ *Ibid.*, s.v.

²⁸ *Loc. cit.*

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1. Παρακοή

In Romans 5:19, a good example is found of the true meaning of the noun. The reference is to Adam's sin as a disobedience. The facts of Adam's sin as related in Genesis show that Adam knew the will of God through the express command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In spite of this command, knowing that he was disregarding the prohibition, Adam failed to listen and disobeyed. The reference to Adam's sin as a παρακοή, then, is pointing out that the cause of the sin lay in failure to listen to God's warning and command. The emphasis is not on the result, as would be indicated by παράπτωμα, but upon the cause.

Along this line Trench writes, "Παρακοή is in its strictest sense a failing to hear, or a hearing amiss; the notion of active disobedience, which follows on this inattentive or careless hearing, being superinduced upon the word; or it may be, the sin being regarded as already committed in the failing to listen when God is speaking."²⁹

In 2 Corinthians 10:6, this same meaning is borne out. The Corinthians, or a portion of them, had failed to listen to Paul, and had cast reflections upon his apostleship. In reply, Paul warns them of the punishment that awaits those who fail to listen either to him as God's apostle, or to the truth he preached. He contrasts it to ὑπακοή, *to hear, to place the ear under, or to give heed, or obey*. Again the emphasis is on the failing to hear the truth.

In Hebrews 2:2, we find the context indicates that the *hearing* of the truth is the point in the exhortation. In Hebrews 2:1, we are exhorted, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard." In the verses which follow, accordingly, the writer points to the judgment awaiting failure to hear, "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" *Transgression* is παράβασις and is in evident contrast to παρακοή, *disobedience*. Not only shall transgression, a definite and positive act of sin, be punished, but even a *failing to hear*.

2. Παρακούω

The verb is found twice in one verse (Mt. 18:17), where it is translated in both instances, *neglect to hear*. The context deals with rules governing action against a sinning brother. The rule laid down, therefore, is "If he shall *neglect to hear* them, tell it unto the church, but if he *neglect to hear* the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican"

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 243.

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(italics not in original). Again we have a positive reference pointing to the sin of failing to hear, not because hearing was impossible, but because they did not want to hear.

It may be concluded, without further discussion, that the primary meaning of the word as used in the New Testament is *to hear amiss* or *fail to hear*, proceeding from wilful neglect of the divine command.

V. Ἄδικέω

(ἀδικέω, ἀδικία, ἄδικος, ἀδίκως, ἀδίκημα)

We turn now to a number of words which have the alpha privative prefixed to the root. Of such words, the five treated in this section form an important part. The idea back of all the five words is found in the adjective δίκαιος, meaning, according to Thayer, in its widest sense, "*upright, righteous, virtuous, keeping the commands of God.*"³⁰ A standard of right and wrong is assumed against which one is compared. The words we consider here have the alpha privative, indicating that the standard is not reached, that the person or act is not in conformity.

1. Ἄδικέω

Two general lines of thought seem to prevail in the verb, which is found twenty-seven times in the New Testament: first, the failure to measure up to perfect righteousness, i.e., to commit an unrighteous or wicked act; second, the result of the act, the wrong, injury, or hurt which is inflicted or received because of the sin of oneself or another. The idea of justice and injustice is prominent, or the idea of right and wrong. Accordingly, the verb is translated *to be an offender*, once; *to be unjust*, twice; *to do wrong*, eight times; *to hurt*, ten times; *to injure*, once; *to wrong*, twice; and *to take wrong*, once.

The verb is used in reference to both human and divine standards. In Acts 25:11, in reference to Paul it is used of civil law. Usually, however, moral law is involved and a special emphasis is laid on the injury which results from a violation of moral law. In Colossians 3:25, for instance, we read, "*But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons*" (italics not in original). The context deals with a servant's relation to his master. The statement in this verse is to the effect that a servant wronging his master by not rendering a full measure of service due shall receive judgment from the Lord. The servant is not only sinning, coming short of the perfect righteousness of God, but he is wronging, or inflicting injury on his master, by depriving him of his just due.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, s.v.

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There are a few instances in which ἀδικέω is found used with very little or no ethical sense (cf. Lk. 10:19; Rev. 6:6; 7:2; 9:4, 10). In Luke 10:19, the reference is to the fact that scorpions will not be able to hurt the seventy disciples involved. No moral issue is in question, but merely the matter of damage or injury. So in Revelation 6:6, the point is the damaging of the oil and the wine. The use without moral significance is common in classic Greek. In general, however, it is used in the ethical sense in Scripture, and even in most of the non-ethical passages there is some connection to God's judgment or His dealing with righteousness with those who trust Him.

2. Ἀδικία

The noun is found twenty-five times in the New Testament of which six instances carry the translation *iniquity*; sixteen times it is translated *unrighteousness*, once, *wrong*, twice as *injury*. Thayer states that the noun is found in three senses in the New Testament: (1) *injustice*; (2) *unrighteousness of heart and life*; (3) *a deed violating law and justice, act of unrighteousness*.³¹ Of the first, Luke 18:6 may be taken as an example. Here reference is made to an “unjust judge,” i.e., a judge who does not render judgment which is according to law. The result is injustice. In the second sense suggested by Thayer, Romans 1:18 may be taken as an illustration. There the word ἀδικία, translated *unrighteousness*, is linked with ἀσέβεια, translated *ungodliness*. God's wrath is declared to be poured out on those who are described in this way. The primary meaning of ἀδικία is that of a general lack of righteousness, positional and experiential. The last part of the verse connects this kind of righteousness with holding down the truth. There is evidently a connection between the lack of truth and holding down the truth and the state of unrighteousness. Not only here but in John 7:18 and Luke 16:9 there is a connection between this unrighteous state or general disposition and the truth. It is seen either to effect the teaching of error, or to result in holding down the truth, or both. Unrighteousness is both a result and a cause of being deceived.

Of the third meaning of ἀδικία, unrighteousness in deed, we may take Hebrews 8:12 as an instance. Found here in the plural, it clearly refers not to abstract injustice, nor to a disposition or state of unrighteousness, but to *deeds* which may be so classified (cf. Acts 1:18; 2 Pet. 2:15; 1 John 5:17). In general, the noun bears the same meaning as the verb.

3. Ἀδικος

The adjective follows the same threefold meaning as the noun. As Thayer points out, it is used of one who is unjust as a judge (Rom. 3:5; Heb. 6:10); of general unrighteousness or sinfulness (Mt. 5:45; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 6:1; 1 Pet. 3:18; 2 Pet. 2:9), and in a specific way of

³¹ *Ibid.*, s.v.

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one who betrays a trust (Lk. 16:10).³² It is translated eight times as *unjust*, four times as *unrighteous*.

4. Ἀδίκως

The adverb occurs only once (1 Pet. 2:19) where it is translated *wrongfully*. The context is similar to Colossians 3:25 which has already been discussed, and deals with the relation of servant to master. Again, it is stated that for a servant to serve his master improperly is to *wrong* his master by withholding that which is due. The meaning of the adverb is the same as the other forms already discussed.

5. Ἀδίκημα

As A. T. Robertson points out, this noun means essentially *injury*, as in Acts 18:14, one of the three instances found in the New Testament.³³ In Acts 24:20, it is translated *evil doing*, with the idea of a misdeed,³⁴ as Thayer points out in his definition.³⁵ In Revelation 18:5, the remaining instance, it is translated *iniquities*. In contrast to ἀδικία, it may be said that ἀδίκημα is more concrete and less abstract. This is the usual meaning of the μα ending. It is *deeds* that are in view, rather than a state or a disposition. The deed may be viewed, however, either in the injury done, as in Acts 18:14, or as the deed itself as in the other references.

A survey of the five words treated in this section reveals that their meaning is to all practical purposes the same. Sin is viewed as something which is not right, not in harmony with God's character, and resulting in injustice and wrong to others. It is clearly taught that injustice must be corrected with justice; that wrong must be made right; that sin in its consequences must be met. Lack of righteousness is seen to be not only manifest in deed with injury to those concerned, but it is also viewed as a state or disposition. Lack of righteousness in state and act is revealed to be a part of the problem which Paul meets in Romans. In answer to man's righteousness, God offers His righteousness, not only justification, but sanctification, not only positional, but experimental and ultimate sanctification.

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(Series to be concluded in the July–September Number, 1943)³⁶ 1

³² *Ibid.*, s. v.

³³ *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. III, p. 301.

³⁴ Cf. Robertson, *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 420.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, s. v.

³⁶ Walvoord, J. F. (1943). "Thirty-Three Words for Sin in the New Testament." *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 100, 244–255.