

# Wesleyan Studies

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## *The Optimism of Grace*

### Wesley's Understanding of Sin – Episode 2 – Willful Transgression

Wesley's understanding of sin, as a \_\_\_\_\_, has the following benefits:

1. This definition keeps people from going through life and thinking that everything they do is \_\_\_\_\_.

This needs to be understood in the context of Wesley's day. At that time, there was a good deal of teaching that people had a sin consciousness \_\_\_\_\_. Augustus Toplady, in an attempt to help people understand sin as it related to people that felt they had no need for God, used an analogy of national debt as to how sinners have an incalculable debt to God. Toplady estimated that if people sinned once an hour and lived to be eighty, they would have 708,000 sins in their lifetime. Toplady goes on to make further calculations that if a person sinned every second, they would sin 2,522,990,000 times in 80 years. Toplady also wrote that it is not only the unconverted that sin like this, but that "sin continues unabated for the regenerate at a pace undifferentiated from the reprobate. Every single second, one sins. The very existence of sin is happening every second in one's life."

This position of Toplady illustrates why Wesley had this view that sin was a willful transgression of the known law and not some vague experience of \_\_\_\_\_.

Wesley used the term "\_\_\_\_\_" because humans \_\_\_\_\_ against God. Far too often people go through life with this sin consciousness that everything they do is sin, believing, as Toplady did, that human beings are sinful in \_\_\_\_\_ of their life and there is \_\_\_\_\_ from the unregenerate to the regenerate.

2. It helps people in dealing with sin as a \_\_\_\_\_.

If sin is something I do every second, how can I take it seriously? If I sin in thought, word, and deed, which is the 82nd question in the Westminster Catechism, then I sin all the time. Why should I be concerned with that?

A more modern example would be by Tim Keller who said, "The Reformed Christian understanding of sin is different than what most people think. I can't preach a sermon, or say a prayer, without sinning." That has to be

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because one has adopted, or accepted, that sin is something they do every second of every moment of the day. That they, as the Westminster Catechism says, sin daily in word, thought, and deed.

Under Wesley's definition of sin, as a willful transgression, it would be \_\_\_\_\_ to do that – to \_\_\_\_\_ every second of your life.

3. This definition causes people to seek \_\_\_\_\_ to work in one's \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

If sin is a willful transgression that I \_\_\_\_\_ and that my \_\_\_\_\_ is to commit, it would cause us to take sin \_\_\_\_\_ and to ask God to work in my \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. If it is in the motive, if it is in the desires of willfully transgressing God's law, then this is where I would ask the Holy Spirit to work in my heart \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ what is it I want. I'm not just concerned about \_\_\_\_\_, I'm not just trying to do \_\_\_\_\_ or get my life in order in some kind of outward way, but it would cause me to seek God's will and God's help, through His Spirit, to purify and help me with my \_\_\_\_\_.

This seems to be a very important reason as to why Wesley's definition of sin causes one to say, "God, I need Your help inside." It's not just a matter of \_\_\_\_\_ it's a matter of having this \_\_\_\_\_ or this \_\_\_\_\_ that can \_\_\_\_\_.

Recommended considerations as to why this understanding of sin--as willful transgressions—can really assist people:

1. It helps them to not have this constant sin consciousness.
2. It helps them deal seriously with sin as a willful transgression.
3. It causes them to seek the work of God's Holy Spirit to do a work in my life to enable them to live for Him.

Wesley's understanding of sin, and these three benefits of Wesley's definition, can be invaluable to our daily living.