

# **Hamartiology**

The Biblical Study and  
Doctrine of Sin



## Sin

(Hamartiology – The Biblical Study and Doctrine of Sin)

### Introduction:

Since we are all so personally familiar with sin it might seem there is no need for a study on this subject. We know it well, yet there is more we can learn and understand.

Of course we are not talking about learning new ways to commit sin, although Paul reminds us that there are those in the depths of depravity who indeed invent new ways of sinning. He states in his letter to the Romans,

“They (the unrepentant) are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. **They invent new ways of sinning, ....” Romans 1:30 NLT.**

(Also see Proverbs 6:6:16-19; Psalm 36:4; Micah 2:1)

Oh how this must grieve God’s heart! (Genesis 6:6)

Instead, we want to look more closely and clearly at what sin actually is, how it entered our world, it’s damaging effects on us, and just how grievous it is to God.

God cannot ignore or overlook sin any more than a good doctor would ignore or overlook an aggressive cancer that is killing a patient. Sin is killing us but God has a cure.

Be aware that as we consider our own sin we find our attitude often swings between extremes: downplaying and minimizing sin on one hand and on the other thinking our continual sin and failure is too great to be forgiven by God. Both of these extremes are untrue and the Bible brings this to light.

Another thing to be aware of is that secret sins are not really secret at all.

“Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later.” **1 Timothy 5:24**

Just because it seems no one knows and we think we are getting away with it does not mean it will not be dealt with in time. God knows and sin must be dealt with. If we do not deal with it privately before God, He may bring it to light publically before man. Sin will be exposed.

“But if you fail to do this, you will be sinning against the LORD; and you may be sure that your sin will find you out.” **Numbers 32:23**

### As We Begin, Consider These Truths

**1. Surely God hates sin** and the effects of sin. (Proverbs 6:16-19) We should hate sin as well. (Psalm 97:10) The damage sin has caused to the whole of His creation cannot be overstated.

“You are not a God who delights in wickedness; *evil may not dwell with you.*”

**Psalm 5:4**

“God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day.” **Psalm 7:11**

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”

**Genesis 6:5-6**

**2. The Bible claims** that we are all born sinners by nature and, in turn, willfully sin against God and His holy and just standards for righteousness.

“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. **Romans 3:23**

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

**1 John 1:8**

**3. God is Perfect**, Holy, Righteous and Just and He demands the same from us, His image bearers.

“but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” **1 Peter 1:15-16**

“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

**Matthew 5:48**

**4. All of our attempts** to measure up to God’s right standards by our own efforts fall short and are an insult to God.

“But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our (own attempts at) righteousness are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. **Isaiah 64:6**

**5. It’s clear**, the problem is not with a Holy God. Instead, the problem is with us.

“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but **your iniquities** have made a separation between you and your God, **your sins** have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.” **Isaiah**

**59:1-2** (Isaiah 1:15-20)

**6. We are objects of His wrath** in our fallen sinful state, worthy of death.

“among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath**, just as the others. **Ephesians 2:3**

“For the wages of sin is death,” **Romans 6:23**

“For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live.” **Ezekiel 18:32**

Yes, we are all sinners desperately in need of a Savior Redeemer!

**At this point** it’s important to know that there is Help for the sinner, a Remedy for sin, a real and lasting Solution to our fallen existence. Jesus is that Savior and in our next two

doctrinal studies we will look at Jesus Himself and then the salvation He purchased with His own precious blood and has made freely available to us.

“Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and **without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.** Hebrews 9:22 ESV

**7. The separation** between sinful humankind and a Holy God is an impossible gulf to span without God making the first move.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” John 3:16

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that **while we were still sinners,** Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” Romans 5:8-9

“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when **we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

**Ephesians 2:4-7**

**Oh the wonderful undeserved Mercy and Grace of our God!**

As we continue to look at what the bible says on the topic of sin, let it serve to deepen your appreciation for God and His awesome redemption plan instituted through His Son Jesus and the extent to which He bridged the gulf of sin that separated you from Him.

**Let’s look briefly at:**

A definition of sin and some bible words used to describe sin

The beginning of sin and sin’s introduction into our world

The extent and effect of sin on all lives and all creation

How to deal with temptation and sin

The final end of sin

When Adam and Eve sinned, a unique relationship with God was broken. The result was spiritual death and, in time, physical death. The consequences for Adam and Eve’s sin were disastrous. They did not take a casual step down from God’s high position for them. Instead, they crashed into an unknown harsh reality where everything changed for the worse. Tragically, everyone since then is born into sin and a relationship with God is not broken, it is nonexistent.

It is imperative that in this brief life we recognize our sinful state, repent and cry out to a Gracious and Merciful God for Salvation. He alone is able to save us as a result of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

## **A. What is Sin?**

**The theological basis** for human sinfulness is seen in opposing statements.

**God is holy.** Exodus 15:11; Leviticus 11:44–45; Joshua 24:19; Isaiah 5:16; Revelation 4:8; Psalm 77:13.

**Sin is being unholy.** 1 Timothy 1:9; 2 Timothy 3:2–5.

God is just (righteous) Sin is unjust (unrighteous)

God is perfect Sin is morally imperfect

God is love Sin is being unloving

God is truth Sin is being untruthful

**In general**, sin is both the inability to measure up to God's high standard of holiness and also disobedience to His just laws and demands as our creator. So sin is both unintentional (who we are - our nature) and deliberate (what we do - willful disobedience). Sin as willful disobedience can be by commission (what we do) or omission (what we fail to do).

1. **Sin is the condition of our human existence**, a fallen state of being, in us from birth. **It is our nature**, flawed, imperfect, completely unable to measure up to the standard of the holy and righteous perfection that God expects and demands. This condition is often described as our "fallen nature" or the "original sin" nature. This sinful fallen nature has been passed on to us from Adam.

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."

**Psalm 51:5**

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—." **Romans 5:12**

**The Old Testament Hebrew word "chata"**: to miss or go wrong, describes this **condition** of sin. Genesis 4:7; Psalm 32:1; 51:4

**The Greek New Testament word "hamartia"** (from which we get our term Hamartiology - the theology or doctrine of sin): means to miss the mark or not to share in the prize. This word clearly describes the condition and state of sinfulness. John 3:4, 5:17; Romans 3:23; James 4:17

2. **Sin is an action**. It is the doing of that which God says is wrong. It is a conscious decision of our mind and will. It is an intentional act of disobedience to God's law and standards. It is the fruit of the broken nature of humankind that is in rebellion to God.

**The Old Testament Hebrew word "pesa"**: a revolt, rebellion, transgression or trespass, define the **action** of sin. Psalm 25:7

**The Greek New Testament word “*anomia*”:** illegality, a violation of law, wickedness, iniquity or transgression describes the action of sin, literally, to be willfully disobedient. Also “*parabasis*”: violation, disregard of the law, to breach a law. 1 Timothy 2:14; Hebrews 2:2; (1 John 5:17 has *hamartia* and *anomia* used together in the same verse)

**3. Sin is an inaction.** This is not doing what you know you should do. This is defined well by James in his letter where he states, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” **James 4:17**

\* **To summarize,** Sin is a matter of who we are, what we do and what we do not do.

## **B. Where Did it Begin?**

Sin began as an act of rebellion by a created angelic being called Lucifer. (Isaiah 14:12) He was cast down to earth (Revelation 12:7-9) where he enticed Eve and then Adam to question God’s intention and disobey His command concerning eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. (Genesis 2:17)

**1. In the heavenly or spiritual realm,** as an act of Satan's pride and decision to rebel against his creator. Although this took place in the invisible spiritual realm it was a very real action having eternal consequences. This is the first record of a created being sinning. Isaiah 14:12-14; Luke 10:18

**2. In the earthly or physical realm,** Adam and Eve chose to believe Satan’s lies instead of God. Sin entered the physical realm at this point with all its consequences. Genesis 3:1-7; Romans 5:12

**\*This raises the question of why God would allow Sin?**

a. God cannot sin - Deuteronomy 32:4; 2 Samuel 22:31

b. All that He created was very good - Genesis 1:31

God created all substance. (visible and un visible)

Sin is not a thing or a substance. It is, instead, like a parasite or corruption of good, like rot to a tree or rust to metal, corrupting the good. Neither rust nor rot can exist in and of itself.

c. God cannot create sin, nor tempt anyone with sin - James 1:13 (Matthew 6:13)

d. He can and does allow sin for His greater glory and good - Genesis 12:3; 50:20; Habakkuk 1:13; Romans 11:11-12

## **C. Where does Sin Come from Today?**

Since Adam’s sin to the present all humans are born with a sinful fallen nature. Sin is the result, or fruit, of being a sinner. We are not sinners because we sin, instead we sin because we are sinners. It is our nature to sin. This is the reason Jesus says we must be born again. (John 3:6-8) We need our nature renewed.

1. **Our hearts**, our fallen desires - Matthew 15:19; Jeremiah 17:9  
**Our minds**, our conscious ungodly thoughts and imagination - Matthew 5:27-28  
**Our flesh**, our selfish and prideful actions - Galatians 5:19-21
2. **The world system** of Satan that stands in opposition to God's kingdom - John 15:18-19
3. **Satan**. Even though Satan continues to be the tempter (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5), the onus or responsibility for sin is ours to bear. Ezekiel 18:20; Hebrew 4:12-13; James 1:14-15

#### **D. What is the Extent of Sin?**

1. **It is universal** in its reach, affecting every human being since Adam. Romans 3:23
2. **Affecting all living things** and every living creature, even the ground itself. Genesis 3:17-19
3. **Worse than any known disease**, sin's effects are so invasive and damaging that short of God's intervention, ultimate destruction of the earth and all its inhabitants would take place.
  - a. In Noah's day. Genesis 6:11-12
  - b. In the Last days. Matthew 24:22
  - c. At the end of the millennium. Revelation 20:7-10

#### **E. Are all Sins Equally Bad?**

In the sense that all sin results in death, the answer is yes.

"For the wages of sin is death," **Romans 6:23**

1. **Yet Paul states**, "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality **sins against his own body.**" **I Corinthians 6:18**
2. **And Jesus told Pilate** "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the **greater sin.**" **John 19:11**
3. **Some sins have greater consequences** in this life. For instance, stealing a piece of gum compared to murdering someone.
4. **The writer of Hebrews** mentions worse punishment. "**Of how much worse punishment**, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son



of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" **Hebrew 10:29**

### **F. What are the Effects of Sin?**

These are just a few of the effects of sin the bible mentions.

**1. Spiritual death** - Ephesians 2:1; 1 John 5:12

**2. Separation from God's presence** - Genesis 3:24; 1 Corinthians 6:9  
Galatians 6:7-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:9

**3. A present trouble** - Genesis 3:16-19; John 16:33

**4. Cosmic disruption** - Romans 8:19-23

**5. Physical death** - Genesis 2:17; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23; James 1:15

**6. War and unrest** - Matthew 24:6-7

**7. Final judgment** - Revelation 20:11-15

**G. Is There a Solution?**

**Yes!** God has a plan to redeem fallen sinful man. As mentioned, Jesus is the Savior Solution to our sinful condition. Those who want to be free from the control of sin must:

**1. Admit** you are a sinner - Luke 18:13

**2. Confess** your sins - Psalm 32:5; 1 John 1:9

**3. Believe** in Jesus as Savior - John 3:16

"To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." **Acts 10:43**

**4. Receive** forgiveness and new life

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." **1 John 1:9**

"I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins." **Isaiah 43:25**

"For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

**Jeremiah 31:34**

**5. As a child of God** we can resist the Devil.

"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." **James 4:7**

6. **Walk in victory** by the power of the Spirit. Galatians 5:16, 17, 25

#### **H. Can all Sins be Forgiven?**

**Among sincere followers of Jesus**, the concern often arises, “have I committed the unforgivable sin?” John gives us assurance that, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from **all unrighteous.**” **1 John 1:9**

**Yet Jesus gives a clear warning**, “Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter; **but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness**, but is subject to eternal condemnation” — because they said, “He has an unclean spirit.” **Mark 3:28-30** (1 John 5:16-17)

Jesus made this statement in the context of verse 22 of Mark 3, “the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He has Beelzebub,” and, “**By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons.**” **Mark 3:22** This was the most serious of accusations, attributing the power of the Holy Spirit to demons. I doubt many searching individual would do such a thing but it needs to be mentioned. If someone is concerned about the possibility of committing the unforgivable sin, it is probably a good indication they haven’t.

#### **I. Does Sin Have an End?**

**1. The bible says so.** In Daniel’s revelation concerning the Messiah to come, one of the important things the Messiah would accomplish was putting an end to sin.

“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, **to make an end of sins**, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.” **Daniel 9:24**

**2. Certainly** that old serpent the Devil (Satan), the author of sin, has an end. He will not be able to torment humans any longer. “Death” will be destroyed.

“**The devil, who deceived them**, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” **Revelation 20:10**

**3. Not only that, but death**, which is the wages or results of our sin, has an end!

“**The last enemy** that will be destroyed is death.” **I Corinthians 15:26**

“Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” **Revelation 20:14-15**

**In conclusion:**

**Satan and sin is not the end.** Satan does not have the final say. Satan will be judged, God will redeem fallen mankind through His son Jesus and create a new heaven and a new earth where Satan and sin do not exist.

**“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth,** for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."

6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts."

**Revelation 21:1-6**

**“And he showed me a pure river of water of life,** clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was **the tree of life**, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. 4 They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” **Revelation**

**22:1-5**