

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 of Biblical Doctrine covers *Man and Sin*. Last fall we covered only a portion of *Man* and this semester we want to focus on the topic of *Sin*.

Man was originally created in “*a state of maturity and perfection*.”¹ We know this by what we read in Genesis 1-2. **Gen. 1:31** sums up the 6th day very well –

³¹ And God saw all that He had made,
and behold, **it was very good...**

God had breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and “man became a living being” (Gen. 2:7), perfect, mature, and able NOT TO SIN.

Before sin entered the picture, Adam perfectly reflected *holiness, wisdom, goodness, truth, love, grace, mercy, longsuffering, and righteousness*, mirroring the attributes of God perfectly.

But then in one of the most vitally important chapters in all of Scripture, Genesis 3, we come to know how paradise was lost, how we got from that paradise of unimaginable perfection to where we are today.

There we read that Eve took from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and ate; “*and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. And the eyes of both of them were opened*” (Gen. 3:6-7a). The doubt sown and covetousness in her head gave way to evil behavior.

Our Pastor MacArthur reminds us: “*When sin penetrates the mind, emotions, and will, it will always be manifest in sinful actions.*”²

¹ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 92.

² John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning: The Bible on Creation and the Fall of Adam* (Nashville: W Pub. Group, 2001), 209.

Though the chapter begins the serpent deceiving Eve, it ends with God disciplining Adam. His guilt was greater than Eve's. She fell into transgression by being deceived, but Adam disobeyed deliberately (1 Tim. 2:14). As the representative head of the human race, he bore the ultimate responsibility for the fall.

The consequences of this deliberate act of disobedience were:

1. An immediate sense of guilt and shame – *“they knew that they were naked”* (Gen. 3:7).
2. The desire and effort to hide themselves from the face of God – *“I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid”* (Gen. 3:10).
3. The immediate execution righteous judgment of God upon the serpent, the woman, and the man (cf. Gen. 3:14-19).
4. The expulsion from the garden of Eden and the prohibition of access to the Tree of Life (cf. Gen. 3:22-24).

These were the immediate consequences but there was one more that Adam was to face: physical death. It is foretold to Adam: *“to dust you shall return”* (Gen. 3:19b).

This is also confirmed in the NT by the Apostle Paul in **Rom. 5:12** –

¹² Therefore, just as **through one man sin entered into the world**, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Death came in that way by sin and as the result of sin.

Not only physical death but spiritual death as well, falling out of relationship with God and having that correspondence with Him as he did before. He not only loses friendship with God, but becomes His enemy.

He is dead to spiritual things. Instead of mirroring God, man manifests in his nature and life the characteristics of that serpent of old who is now his father. He is now in slavery to sin.

Now man was NOT ABLE NOT TO SIN. Before he was able NOT TO SIN, now he was not able not to sin, in slavery to sin.

And so our study of sin begins in *Biblical Doctrine* in this way:

The universal sinfulness of man is obvious and verifiable.³

There is no way of denying the sinfulness of man.

So let me stop here and ask you a question:

Why does man make attempts in denying its existence?

Here are some reasons why:

1. Man is naturally and basically good.
2. Man's sinful behavior is explained/excused as products of their environment, social upbringings, or psychological drives or deprivations.
3. Sin is viewed relativistic/subjectively and not with absolute moral standards.
4. Sin is an unpleasant subject.

C O N T E N T

For the remainder of our time, I want to address *three elements to our discussion of sin* (pp. 451-457, 7 pages in *Biblical Doctrine*):

1. Sin Defined
2. Sin's Relationship to Other Doctrines
3. Origin of Sin

SIN DEFINED

The study of sin is called hamartiology, which comes from the Greek work harmartia (ἁμαρτία).

³ John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine: A Systematic Summary of Bible Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 451.

Bruce Milne, in his book, *Know the Truth*, wrote:

“Scripture uses a wide variety of terms to refer to sin, which is not surprising since redemption is the dominant theme of the Bible: human rebellion against God and God’s gracious response.⁴

SIN IS A FAILURE TO CONFORM TO THE STANDARD OF GOD

The most common OT term is **חָטָא** (*ḥāṭāʾ*). The root occurs about 580x in the Old Testament and is thus its principle word for sin. The basic meaning of the root is to miss a mark or a way.⁵

For example we read in **Judges 20:16** –

¹⁶ Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not **miss**.

The left-handed slingers of Benjamin are said to have the skill to throw stones at targets and “not miss.”

In a different context, we read in **Prov. 19:2** –

² Also it is not good for a person to be without knowledge, And he who hurries his footsteps **sins**.

It’s a much worse to rush into action and unwittingly sin than to be a person without knowledge. The idea of blundering past the path that would have led to success, hence *ESV* “his feet misses his way.”

This term is closely related to the Greek noun **ἁμαρτία** (*hamartia*) and its verb form **ἁμαρτάνω** (*hamartanō*), means *miss the mark, err*.⁶

⁴ Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth* (Oxford, England: IVP, 2012).

⁵ G. Herbert Livingston, “638 חָטָא,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 277.

⁶ Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–), 66. Thereafter, *EDNT*.

By far *hamartia* is the most frequently used term for sin in the NT, occurring 173X. It appears 48x in Romans.

Romans 3:23 states –

²³ for all have **sinned** [ἁμαρτάνω]
and fall short of the glory of God,

SIN IS REBELLION AGAINST GOD

Another strong Hebrew term for sin in the OT is פָּשָׁע *pasha*. The fundamental idea of the root is a breach of relationships, civil or religious, between two parties.⁷

That is why the noun form [פְּשָׁעָא *pesa*] speaks of “*rebellion*” and the verb form is translated “*to rebel*” or “*to revolt*.”

Isaiah 1:2 states –

² Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth;
For Yahweh speaks, “Sons I have reared and raised up,
But **they have transgressed** against Me.

ESV – “*they have rebelled against me.*”

NASB – “*they have revolted against Me.*”

Proverbs 28:13 states –

¹³ He who conceals **his transgressions** [פְּשָׁעָא *pesa*] will not prosper,
But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will receive compassion.

KJV – “*his sins*”

⁷ G. Herbert Livingston, “1846 פָּשָׁע,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 741.

SIN IS LAWLESSNESS

Sin is also **ἀνομία** *anomia* (15x), which refers primarily simply to the fact of *lawlessness*.⁸ This is to reject God's law.

The ἄνομος, then, is *one for whom there is no such thing as a — or the — law*. In the eyes of the Jews this was the Gentile (Acts 2:23; 1 Cor 9:21).

For this reason the Gentile sins ἀνόμως (Rom 2:12), i.e., *independently of the (Mosaic) law*. Ἀνομία can also refer to *breaking of the law* and thereby come to mean *offense* and *sin* (Matt 7:23; Rom 4:7; Heb 1:9; 1 John 3:4, etc.).

1 John 3:4 states —

⁴ Everyone who does sin also does lawlessness [ἀνομία];
and sin is **lawlessness** [ἀνομία].

In this case the ἄνομος is *one who transgresses against a — or the — law* (Luke 22:37; 2 Thess 2:8; 1 Tim 1:9), and ἔργα ἄνομα are, accordingly, *unlawful deeds* (2 Pet 2:8).

The above, then is not an exhaustive list. I have summed up sin by defining just some its terms in both the Old and New Testament.

There is also iniquity, wicked, evil, unrighteous, ungodly, turn aside, deceitful, guilty, disobedient.

The overall emphasis regarding sin: The depravity is total!

- This does not mean that man cannot perform what is good.
- This does not mean that man has no conscience which judges between good and evil.
- This does not mean that man indulges in every form of sin or in any sin to the greatest extent possible.

⁸ EDNT, 107.

The word *depravity* means that because of sin's corruption "there is nothing man can do to merit saving favor with God," while *total* means that depravity "has extended to all aspects of man's nature, to his entire being."⁹

- No part has escaped the impact of sin.
- No man, thus, can commend himself to God.

Psalm 143:2 states "*no one living is righteous in Your sight.*"

Proverb 20:9 states –

⁹ **Who can say,**
"I have kept my heart pure, I am clean from my sin"?

Ecclesiastes 7:20 states –

²⁰ Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth **who continually does good and who never sins.**

Man has a "heart-trouble" according to **Jer. 17:9** –

⁹ "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick;
Who can know it?

Man has a "mind-trouble" according to **Gen. 6:5** –

⁵ Then Yahweh saw that the evil of man was great on the earth,
and that **every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**

This is the Bible's most penetrating description of the extent of man's sin. Notice the extent: "on the earth." Notice the inwardness: "the thoughts of his heart." Notice its propensity: "every intent." Notice its exclusiveness: "only evil." Notice its continuousness: "continually."

⁹ C.C. Ryrie, "Depravity, Total," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 312.

Man's basic plight is that he was *conceived in sin* according to **Ps. 51:5** –

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity,
And in sin my mother conceived me.

Man's basic plight is that he is *dead in sin* according to **Eph. 2:1-3** –

¹ And you were **dead in your transgressions and sins**,
² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience,
³ among whom we all also formerly conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

C O N C L U S I O N

My beloved, we need to consider sin in relation to God. Sin at its very core is a violation of the Creator-creature relationship.

He created us. He created everything. We are obligated to serve our Creator. We are all obligated to obey Him and live according to His will.

If we return back to the Garden, we realize that both Adam and Eve disobeyed seeking to be like God. Eve was deceived into thinking that she would “be like God” (Gen. 3:5). Adam was not satisfied in obeying God. Instead of His will be done, they both said, “My will be done.”

So *how do we define sin*? Good question.

Sin is any lack of conformity to God's will in attitude, thought, or action, whether committed actively or passively. The center of all sin is autonomy, which is the replacing of God with self. Always closely associated with sin are its products—pride, selfishness, idolatry, and lack of peace (shalom).¹⁰

¹⁰ *Biblical Doctrine*, 454.