

Hamartiology - The Study of Sin

Hamartiology comes from the Greek word *hamartia* which means to miss the mark, as in archery. In the New Testament, this is the word most often used for “sin”. The origin of sin is a challenge to identify, but there are some things we do know:

1. God Cannot Produce Sin – Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 18:30; Matthew 5:48.
2. God Cannot Promote Sin – James 1:13.
3. God Can Permit Sin – Genesis 12:3, 20.
4. God Can Produce a Greater Good by Allowing Sin – Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4; Hebrews 12:11.

Free Will

Sin originated because God allowed his creatures to have free will. The original sin was not committed by Adam in the Garden of Eden on earth, but in heaven by the archangel (or cherub) named Satan, who had access to the presence of God (Isaiah 14:12-14; 1 Timothy 3:6). Other angels followed Satan’s sin and rebellion and joined him in the ranks of the fallen angels (Revelation 12:3-9). Sin existed in Satan’s thoughts and actions before there was sin in the universe and before Adam’s sin. The perfect world that God had created for Adam was opened to sin when its master, Adam, sinned against God. As the New Testament says:

“Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” Romans 5:12

Free will must exist for sin to exist in God’s creation since God cannot produce sin or promote sin. In the chart below only one option (Self-Determinism) is rational and biblical:

Determinism	Indeterminism	Self-Determinism
Choices are caused by someone other than the subject.	Choices are not made and have no cause.	Choices are caused by the subject himself.
The subject is like a puppet – helpless and externally manipulated.	Outcomes are erratic, random chances, not the result of choices.	The subject makes choices and is responsible for those choices.
The subject has no control over outcomes and makes no choices.	Any <i>result</i> could have been different.	Any <i>decision</i> could have been different.
The future is determined and unchangeable – like falling dominos.	The future is random over a wide range of possibilities – like rolling dice.	The future is determined by God, but man is free to decide how he will respond to the future events determined by God – like the game of chess.
God knows all because he caused all.	God knows all – with the exception of free random acts, which he cannot foresee.	God knows all because he sees all – but not because he causes all.

Adam was created free. This point cannot be missed, for God says to Adam:

“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden.” Genesis 2:16

However, God also gave him a command and revealed his will concerning the choice, but this did not stop Adam from having free choice. Thus, when Adam chose against God's will, he sinned.

Types of Sin

Sin can be identified by two basic types:

1. Sins of Doing (Commission) – this is doing what we should not do
2. Sins of Not Doing (Omission) – this is not doing what we should do

Old Testament words for sin are:

1. *Chata* – means to miss the mark. If you shot an arrow poorly you not only missed the target, you hit something you were not suppose to hit.
2. *Ra* – means breaking up or ruin. It indicates something both morally wrong and damaging, and is often translated as “wicked”.
3. *Pasha* – means to rebel, and is translated as transgression
4. *Awon* – means iniquity and guilt
5. *Shagag* – means to err or go astray as a lost animal or a child in a store. The one who went astray was ignorant but still responsible. Ignorance is no excuse.
6. *Asham* – means guilt before God and is associated with the tabernacle
7. *Rasha* – means wicked, the opposite of righteous
8. *Taah* – means to deliberately, not accidentally, wander away

New Testament words for sin are:

1. *Kakos* – means bad as in morally bad
2. *Poneros* – means evil, usually moral evil. Often used to describe Satan and demons.
3. *Asebes* – means godless or ungodly
4. *Enochos* – means guilty, and when used in a legal context, it usually refers to being worthy of capital punishment.
5. *Hamartis* – means to miss the mark
6. *Adikia* – used to refer to any unrighteous conduct.
7. *Anomos* – means lawless and is translated “iniquity”
8. *Parabates* – means transgressor and refers to violations of the law
9. *Agnoein* – refers to ignorant worship or lack of worship that occurred when the Jews did not worship Christ (Acts 3:17) or the Gentiles did not worship the true God (Acts 17:30; Eph. 4:18).
10. *Planao* – means to go astray and is used of leading or deceiving others or self
11. *Paraptoma* – means falling away and usually, an intentional falling away
12. *Hypocrisis* – translated “Hypocrite” and refers to:
 - a. People who pretend, like an actor
 - b. People who interpret falsely
 - c. People who follow false interpretations that are known to be false

Jesus Teaching and Identification of Sin

One of Jesus' most common topics was sin. It is to be expected that the author of the Law of Moses would have plenty to say concerning violations against the holy and moral character of God. Here is a list of the sins that Jesus mentioned in the gospels:

1. Sacrilege (Mark 11:15-18) – violating the temple and holy things that were dedicated to God
2. Hypocrisy (Matthew 23:1-36) – religious leaders did not obey their own standards, exalted themselves, avoided fulfilling their oaths on technicalities, and

- kept the legalistic code but missed the intent of the law
3. Covetousness (Luke 12:15) – the sin of greed causes fights and quarrels as James says in his book (James 4:1-4)
 4. Blasphemy (Matthew 12:22-37) – calling God's work Satanic and vice versa
 5. Transgressing the law (Matthew 15:3-6) – manipulating the law to benefit your desires is breaking the law
 6. Pride (Matthew 20:20-28; Luke 14:7-11) – seeking positions of power and honor
 7. Being a Stumbling Block (Matthew 18:6) – leading others into sin or causing them to be unrighteous
 8. Disloyalty (Matthew 8:19-22) – seeking comfort and serving self before fulfilling duties, to Christ is sin
 9. Immorality (Matthew 5:27-32) – committed in action or in heart
 10. Fruitlessness (John 15:16) – not living productive Christian lives is a sin
 11. Anger (Matthew 5:22) – internal anger is compared to the act of murder
 12. Sins of Speech (Matthew 5:33-37; 12:36) – keep oaths, keep promises; we will be held accountable for useless, thoughtless or improper words
 13. Showing Off (Matthew 6:1-18) – doing good deeds for attention is sin
 14. Lack of Faith (Matthew 6:25) – worrying and not trusting God is sin
 15. Irresponsible Stewardship (Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:11-27) – failure to use your abilities and opportunities are the sin of irresponsibility
 16. Prayerlessness – Jesus told us to pray and never give up; to cease praying or to stop calling out to God for help is sin

Sources of Sin

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this **world (cosmos)** and of **the ruler (Satan)** of the kingdom of the air, **the spirit (Satan)** who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our **sinful nature (flesh, sarx)** and following its desires and thoughts." Ephesians 2:1-3

1. The World (or, cosmos)
 - a. The world system feeds man's sin nature: cravings, lust and pride (1 John 2:16).
 - b. Christians should not conform to the pattern of the world system (Romans 12:2).
 - c. The cosmos is the world system that has separated from the Kingdom of God and operates in opposition to God's plans.
2. The Flesh (or, Sin Nature)
 - a. The sin nature in man (called the flesh, or sarx) enslaves the body and mind of man (Romans 7:23; Ephesians 2:3) .
 - b. The sin nature affects every part of a man: body, mind, intellect, will, emotions, desires, etc.:
 - i. The intellect is blinded (2 Corinthians 4:4).
 - ii. The mind is depraved (Romans 1:28).
 - iii. The emotions are degraded (Romans 1:21, 24, 26; Titus 1:15).
 - iv. The will is enslaved (Romans 6:20; 7:20).
 - c. Sinning involves living for the satisfaction of the flesh, or sin nature (Colossians 2:23).

- d. The works that the flesh (or, sin nature) can produce are all sinful (Galatians 5:19-21).
- 3. The Devil
 - a. Ruler of this world or cosmos (John 12:31)
 - b. Head of the Kingdom of Darkness (Matthew 12:26; Ephesians 2:1,2)
 - c. Father of Rebellious People (John 8:44)
 - d. Father of Lies (John 8:44)
 - e. Works in the sin nature of man (Ephesians 2:2-3)
 - f. Opposes the gospel (Matthew 13:19)
 - g. Sows weeds among the good seed (Matthew 13:39)

Affects of Sin

No one sins in a bubble or in isolation. Adam's sin affected him, his wife, his unborn sons, the next generations and the entire human race. Likewise, our sins affect these things:

1. Human Destiny – Sin affects the eternal destiny of both believers and unbelievers, and causes the loss of eternal rewards for believers (2 John 8) as well as opportunities and blessings in time.
2. The Human Will – Jesus came to set the captive free. The captivity he referred to was of the human will, not physical bondage (Luke 4:18).
3. The Human Body – Not all sickness is from sin but some of it is (John 5:14; 1 Corinthians 11:30).
4. Other Humans – much of the suffering in the world can be traced back to the sin nature of man.

Total Depravity

Man is totally depraved, which is the theological term meaning that he is incapable of passing God's test or of pleasing God. This depravity totally affects every part of man's nature, and it leaves him in a condition that he cannot overcome with his own depraved ability. Man is considered dead in his sins. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Death means separation (James 2:26). Man's total depravity leaves him spiritually dead or separated from God's life. Total depravity does not mean that all men are as bad as they can be, but instead, it means that all men are as bad off as they can be. Totally depravity:

1. Does not mean that every person demonstrates the lowest level of human behavior
2. Does not mean that unbelievers do not have a conscience
3. Does not mean that all sinners commit every kind of sin available to man
4. Does not mean that all men are sinfully weak in every area; in fact, some sinners may demonstrate a moral strength in certain areas of life
5. Does not mean that totally depraved people cannot be good neighbors and do good things for their families, communities and nations

But, when compared to God's absolute righteousness and holiness, a totally depraved man can do nothing to gain God's approval. He is spiritually dead and separated from the life of God. Men are cut flowers withering in a vase. Pretty, but dead.

Inherited Sin, Imputed Sin, and Personal Sin

Inherited sin is the sin nature we inherit from our fathers, who got it from their fathers all the way back to Adam. Adam placed the human seed into a condition of sin. The image of this sin nature was reproduced in his children (Genesis 5:3). This is called inherited sin.

Imputed sin refers to sin that is charged legally to our account. To impute means to attribute, credit, or ascribe to someone else. There have been three imputations in history:

1. Adam imputed the penalty for his sin to the human race (Romans 5:12-21).
2. The sin of man and men's personal sins were imputed to Jesus on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Peter 2:24).
3. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to a believer (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Personal sin refers to sins we commit ourselves. Personal sins are committed by both unbelievers and believers. The personal sins committed by a believer do not cause them to lose their salvation, but they do obstruct fellowship with God.

Below is a chart from Charles Ryrie's *Basic Theology*:

Sin	Scripture	Transmission	Consequence	Remedy
INHERITED SIN	Ephesians 2:3	Generation to Generation	Spiritual Death	Redemption and the gift of the Holy Spirit
IMPUTED SIN	Romans 5:12	Directly deposited into your account from Adam	Physical Death	Imputed Righteousness directly deposited into your account by Christ
PERSONAL SINS	Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:9	(None)	Loss of Fellowship	Confession and Forgiveness

Penalties for Sin

1. Unbeliever – the unbeliever who dies with inherited sin, imputed sin, and personal sins will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:15).
2. Believer – there are several scenarios for believers:
 - a. Concerning inherited sin – believers will remain in a position of redemption and will not lose the Holy Spirit since the believer cannot regain inherited sin from Adam.
 - b. Concerning imputed sin – believers will remain in their position in Christ, having received the imputation of Christ's righteousness; they cannot regain the imputed sin of Adam.
 - c. Concerning personal sins –
 - i. If the believer commits personal sins he will lose fellowship with God (1 John 1:3, 6-7), begin to walk in darkness (which will lead to further sins and bad judgments) (1 John 1:6; 2:10), lose the joy of salvation (John 15:11; Galatians 5:22) and have a very weak prayer life (1 John 3:19-22).
 - ii. If the believer continues to live in sin it will have further devastating affects on his life since "the wages of sin is death" including punishment from God (Hebrews 12:5-11; 1 Corinthians 11:30), removal from church fellowship (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5), and an early physical death (1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 John 5:16).
 - iii. Ultimately, sin can result in loss of eternal rewards in heaven (1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

God and Sin:

- Deuteronomy 32:4 – “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”
- Psalm 18:30 – “This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.”
- Matthew 5:48 – “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”
- James 1:13 – “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God,’ for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.”
- Genesis 12:3, 20 – (Abraham lied about Sarah to Pharaoh)
- Romans 5:3-5 – “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”
- James 1:2-4 – “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
- Hebrews 12:11 – “For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

Free Will:

- Isaiah 14:12-14 – “‘How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn. How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God. I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit.”
- 1 Timothy 3:6 – “He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.”
- Revelation 12:4 (3-9) – “His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth.

Source of Sin:

- WORLD: 1 John 2:16 – “For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.”
- Romans 12:2 – “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
- FLESH: Romans 7:23 – “I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.”
- Ephesians 2:3 – “among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”
- **Intellect** – 2 Corinthians 4:4 – “In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

- **Mind** – Romans 1:28 – “And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.”
- **Emotions** – Romans 1:21, 24, 26 – “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened....Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,... For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;”
- Titus 1:15 – “To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled.”
- **Will** – Romans 6:20 – “For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.”
- Romans 7:20 – “Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.”
- Colossians 2:23 – “These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.”
- Galatians 5:19-21 – “Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
- **DEVIL**: John 12:31 – “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.”
- Matthew 12:26 – “And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?”
- Ephesians 2:1-2 – “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— “
- John 8:44 – “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”
- Matthew 13:19 – “When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path.”

Effects of Sin:

- **Human Destiny** – 2 John 8 – “Watch yourselves, so that you may not lose what we have worked for, but may win a full reward.”
- **Human Will** – Luke 4:18 – “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,”

- **Human Body** – John 5:14 – “Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”
1 Corinthians 11:30 – (below)
- **Other Humans**

Penalties for Sin – Believer – Personal Sins:

- **Lose fellowship** – 1 John 1:3 – “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”
- 1 John 1:6-7 – “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”
- 1 John 3:19-22 – “By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him; for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.”
- **Punishment/Discipline** – Hebrews 12:5-11 – “And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?
“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”
It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”
- 1 Corinthians 11:30-31 – “That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.”
- **Physical death** – 1 Corinthians 11:30 – (above)
- 1 John 5:16-17 – “If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God[a] will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is sin that leads to death; I do not say that one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death.”
- **Loss of Eternal Rewards** – 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 – “each one’s work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:10 – “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”