

The Doctrine of Sin

(HAMARTIOLOGY)

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Hamartiology is the study of sin. The study deals with how sin originated, how sin affects humanity, and what a continued life in sin will result in after death. To sin essentially means to "miss the mark."

According to Romans 3:23, we all miss God's mark of righteousness. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."

Hamartiology explains why we miss the mark, how we miss the mark, and the consequences of missing the mark.

God is man's holy Creator. The first Adam challenged the very nature of the One who formed him by exercising his gift of free will by disobeying the one law of the Garden of Eden and sin entered the human race. God, who is rich in mercy, used the plan of redemption to display His glory through grace toward undeserving mankind. By eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil with the expectation of becoming "like Elohim," the first Adam received the first promise of God: "...you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17).¹ Adam and Eve knowing and consciously disobeyed God: first in their hearts then with action. Adam's decision was against the *divine prohibition* in order to *gain forbidden knowledge*.² Man was tempted by Satan and yielded to the deceiver of all mankind rather than bowing to the One true God and persevering through his first recorded trial (James 1:12-15). God revealed His sovereign plan to redeem mankind through His own Son. Adam's rebellion meant The Lamb of God would surely die for the sins of the world (Revelation 5:12). The righteous blood of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, is the only cure for man's sin.³

¹ Spiros Zodhiates, The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible, NASB, (Chattanooga, AMG Publishers, 1977), pg. 1678.

² Ibid.

³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, (Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1976), Vol. 2, pg. 224.

Child Evangelism Fellowship trains volunteers to talk with children about Jesus Christ in after school programs called Good News Clubs by parental permission. Children are taught that *sin is anything that we think, say, or do that breaks God's laws* because sin is what separates a person from God.⁴ The only way to connect to God is as simple as ABC: **A**dmit and agree that God's word is His message to mankind and that all have sinned; **B**elieve that Jesus Christ is the one and only redeemer; **C**onfess individually the need for Jesus to save each person from sin. On a more adult level, Chafer points out that the *Larger Catechism* (Westminster) declares: "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature."⁵ As the author of Systematic Theology acknowledges, the 'law' of God should be substituted by the 'character' of God.⁶ The premise holds that 'sin is sin because it is unlike God as man deals with the inherited sin nature from Adam, living in a sinful world, and committing personal sin.'⁷

The reality of the sinfulness of mankind revealing the depravity of man contrasted with the priceless gift of God's only begotten Son who never committed one sin is from one extreme to another in order for God to show the world His loving grace and infinite mercy. Society minimizes the implications of sin in many ways; such as, calling the murder of innocent unborn children 'Free Choice'; homosexuality/sodomy, an 'Alternative Lifestyle'; a person one shacks up with, a 'Significant Other'; etc. More palatable terms for sinful behavior, coupled with the secular worldview of anti-Christian views, presents a society as being beautiful on the outside while the undetected ravaging effects of sin works faster than cancer at the heart of the matter to destroy an individual or a nation given over to idolatry. Satan's strategy is to deceive the world

⁴ Child Evangelism Fellowship curriculum guide.

⁵ **Chafer, pg. 227.**

⁶ **Ibid.**

⁷ **Ibid.**

into thinking lightly of the penalty of rebellion against God and His message to mankind. Lewis Sperry Chafer says, “What God is and what God says are the material out of which all moral and spiritual values are derived.”⁸ The reality of the offspring of Adam and Eve having the knowledge of good and evil ever before them presents the inescapable need of yielding to the Savior by the power of the Holy Spirit who has revealed the heavenly Father’s loving nature by drawing man to Himself. Jesus said, “You must be born-again” (John 3:7).

The benchmark of good is the holy character of God Almighty revealed to man through creation, the Sacred Scriptures, and His Son. All immorality is rightly judged by the holiness of God.⁹ The upright laws of any society are ultimately based upon the Judeo-Christian principles found in the word of God. Man’s willingness to exercise his ‘free will’ against God’s standards for a society seeks to impose a disregard of divine authority and live simply by social custom or by the dictates of a perverted conscience.¹⁰

The Bible records three exceedingly great demonstrations of sin. The first sin of the universe was committed in heaven by the highest of all angels, the anointed cherub of the mountain of God in charge of guarding the holiness of the Almighty (Ezekiel 28:12-16). His slander of the character of the Most High influenced a great number of the lesser hosts who fell with him from the glory of God. Satan resisted the holiness of God by exercising his free will to claim five decisions against his Creator (Isaiah 14:13-14). He gained the title of the god of this world, and the prince of the power of the air.¹¹ Satan and the fallen angels are the demons of the air that man wars against, recorded in Ephesians 6:12. They have no hope against the fate of the lake of fire that awaits them in the due course of time and events (Isaiah 14:15; Revelation 20:10,

⁸ Chafer, pg. 224.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. pg. 227.

15). The magnitude of the first sin committed by Satan and his demons and their continuance in a perversion against God has raged in the heavenlies and caused death and destruction upon the earth. The second exceedingly great demonstration of sin was the first sin committed by Adam. God had placed Adam as ruler over the entire earth and all it contained. When Satan tempted Eve to partake of the fruit from the one tree God had set limitations with the promise of death, she was used to entice Adam to rebel against the One with whom he shared a perfect relationship. Not only did Adam fall from the grace of God, but all of mankind within Adam fell with him. The penalty for sin was penned and passed down through all generations from Adam: “It is appointed unto man...to die...” (Genesis 2:17; Hebrews 9:27). History records the ravaging, damaging effects of this one sin upon the entire human race through pain, sorrow, lack, suffering, and death.¹² The third exceedingly great demonstration of sin was in the death of the Son of God. The virgin-born Gift of Salvation was sent from heaven to redeem mankind from Satan’s grasp to end up with him in hell. The very Son of God was spat upon, His beard plucked out, tied to a whipping post and given thirty-nine lashes with a cat-of-nine-tails, and nailed to a cross stripped of all that could be taken from Him from an earthly standpoint. When thirsty, the Living Water was given vinegar to drink. In dying, He cursed not but rather asked His Father to forgive His perpetrators for they knew not what they did. Jesus willingly laid His body down to be nailed to the cross and was lifted up by those who wanted to destroy Him. He willingly bowed His head, gave up His Spirit of human existence evidenced through the breath of life through death, and His innocent blood flowed forth. The first drop of blood shed after His death was enough to cleanse the entire human race of the first sin of Adam and all subsequent sin.¹³ The Second Adam became the Substitute for the first Adam and for all his offspring who would

¹² **Ibid., pg. 228.**

¹³ **Class notes from Dr. Dave Olander.**

be born-again by the Holy Spirit of God by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ.¹⁴ When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, an animal had to die in order for him and his wife to be clothed; blood was shed. The righteousness of Jesus Christ clothed all who would believe for all eternity with His blood-bought righteous covering since “all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22).

Paul Enns, author of *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, records a comprehensive definition of the attributes of God offered by Gordon Lewis:

“God is an invisible, personal, and living Spirit, distinguished from all other spirits by several kinds of attributes: metaphysically God is self-existent, eternal, and unchanging; intellectually God is omniscient, faithful, and wise; ethically God is just, merciful, and loving; emotionally God detests evil, is longsuffering, and is compassionate; existentially God is free, authentic, and omnipotent; relationally God is transcendent in being, immanent universally in providential activity, and immanent with His people in redemptive activity.”¹⁵

All of the attributes of God help man to understand and gain a greater appreciation for *the nature and Person of God*.¹⁶ The immutable holiness of God sets the standard for all mankind; indeed, His spotless character reveals the sinfulness of man’s fallen character.¹⁷

God permitted sin in heaven and on earth yet is in no way held liable for guilt.¹⁸ His message to mankind is clear: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; wisdom, and instruction (Proverbs 1:7); and, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride, arrogance, and the evil way, and the perverted mouth, I hate (Proverbs 8:13). God cannot lie and cannot die for His character is bound by His own perfect attributes to exemplify transparent holiness from His sphere above time and existence.¹⁹ Sin could not have entered heaven or earth prior to His creation of the heavenly host and mankind.²⁰ Because, “God so loved the world, He gave His

¹⁴ Chafer, pg. 228.

¹⁵ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, (Chicago, Moody Press, 1989), pg. 188.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Chafer, pg. 228.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”
(John 3:16).

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OTHER WORKS CITED

Child Evangelism Fellowship Curriculum Guide

Class Notes by Dr. Dave Olander and Dr. Christopher Cone