

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Hamartiology— Study of Sin— Part 1  
Sin, Source of Sin, & Human Depravity

## Introduction

- Hamartiology is the Study of Sin.
  - From the Greek **ἁμαρτάνω**.
- Most negative subject of Systematic Theology.
- This lesson will do the following:
  - Define Sin
  - Talk about its origin in man
  - Discuss false views
  - Look at the doctrine of Human Depravity.

## Definition

- Millard Erickson writes: “Sin is any evil action or evil motive that is in opposition of God. Simply stated, sin is a failure to let God be God and placing something or someone in God’s rightful place of supremacy.”
- It is an attempt of the creature to assert autonomy over God.



## Relation to Other Doctrines

- Since it is opposition against God, sin is related to the doctrine of God.
- Since sin is committed by humans, it overlaps with the doctrine of humanity.
- It relates to the doctrine of salvation since salvation is the remedy for sin.
- It is related to the doctrine of Christology since He died to cleanse us of our sins.
- Sin affects the doctrine of the church since it is one means God uses to fight against the sin problem.
- The doctrine of sin helps us to better understand the problems in our society.
- Such problems are not caused by economics or social issues, but instead they are caused by the fact that every human being is a sinner by nature.



## Difficulties in Teaching About Sin

- People want a positive message.
- Post-Freudian world rejects objective guilt and sees people as naturally good (relativistic and pluralistic age).
- Sin as opposed to sins is foreign to the modern mind.
  - They believe in choices and consequences (i.e. sins), but they reject the idea that we by nature are sinners and are corrupted by sin.
  - We sin because we are sinners. We are not sinners because we sin.
- Since sin is real, we have to be changed from the inside out. Behaviorism is not the answer.



## Methodology

- Sin must be preached on even if modern people don’t want to hear about it. We must be committed to the whole counsel of God.
  - Without understanding sin, you cannot understand salvation, Christ, or humanity.
- So what method should we use in systematically studying the subject of sin?
  - Case study?
  - Paradigm Approach? (e.g. pride, selfishness, etc.)
  - We will follow Erickson’s approach: Biblical Terminology.
- We will do word studies on words that emphasize three different categories of sin.
  - Causes of Sin; Character of Sin; Results of Sin.

## Causes of Sin



- Ignorance (ἄγνοια): Two types of ignorance: Blameworthy (Eph 4:18) and non-blameworthy (Rom 1:13). We are only talking about blameworthy.
- Eph 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts.
- Such ignorance excludes them from the life of God and keeps them in darkness. Hardens the heart.

## Causes of Sin

- Error (πλάνη, πλάνη, πλάνη): It conveys the idea of straying sheep. It leaves the flock of safety and ends up lost and in danger.
  - Error includes consequence and culpability.
- Inattention/Disobedience (παρακούω): signifies a refusal to listen or the decision to simply ignore. Inattention also leaves the person subject to blame for their condition.
  - Heb 2:2-3 For if the message spoken through angels was legally binding,<sup>w</sup> and every transgression and disobedience received a just punishment,<sup>3</sup> how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? This salvation had its beginning when it was spoken of by the Lord, and it was confirmed to us by those who heard him.



## Causes Summarized

- We would do well to avoid personal ignorance, as well as error, and inattention/disobedience.
- Many people act not knowing if what they are doing is right in the eyes of God.
- The only way you will know is to study God's Word.
- Knowledge, understanding, and wisdom come from the Word and they help us to avoid error by eradicating our ignorance.



## Character of Sin

- We will start with the word ἁμαρτάνω, from which we get sin and hamartiology.
  - It means to miss the mark.
  - Rom 3:23 For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
  - It says everyone has sinned, and this sin causes us to fall short of God's glory, thus missing the mark.
- Irreligious (ἄσεβής); unrighteous (ἀδικέω); Lawless (ἀνόμωσ): Sin is all three of these. Sometimes they are translated as injustice.
- Transgression (παραβαίνω): It mean to cross over and violate a boundary. So when we sin, we are violating the boundaries set up by our perfect and holy God.
- Iniquity (ἠὴν): a lack of integrity and a perversion of justice. The overlying meaning of iniquity is to take something that is legitimate and then to pervert it.

## Character of Sin

- Rebellion, Apostasy, & Disobedience (γενῆ, ἀποστασία).
- Betrayal & Infidelity (ma'al, parapipto)
- Perversion (awah): to bend or twist. Sexual immorality is often called a perversion because humans are twisting something that God had made as a gift for us and are bending it away from its intended purpose.
- Abomination ( ἡὴν): This is the strongest word to describe sin.
  - The sins that God calls an abomination are things that are especially abhorrent to God, such as idolatry, cross-dressing, witchcraft, and homosexual acts. Keep in mind that God hates all sin, but these are sins that He goes out of His way to say that He really hates. The idea that "sin is sin" is false. God clearly hates some sins more than other sins. All sin equally condemns one to hell, but punishment in hell is in degrees based on the severity of one's sins.

## Character of Sin Summarized

- All these words show that all are violations against a standard set by God.
- Putting all of these terms together, we know that sin is missing the God's mark, wrongfully crossing His boundary, unrighteous, ungodly, unjust, iniquitous, rebellious, disobedient, treacherous, perverse, and abominable.
- The greater we see the problem of sin, the greater the act of redemption and salvation will have to be.
- The opposite holds true. If a person sees sin as a small problem, then they will believe only a small remedy is necessary.
- The Bible does not leave that option. Just by looking at the character of sin, we see that it is a great problem indeed



## Results of Sin

- Restlessness, Agitation, & Wickedness (resha): Stirs up the idea of abnormality.
  - Isa 57:20-21. But the wicked are like the storm-tossed sea, for it cannot be still, and its water churns up mire and muck. <sup>21</sup>There is no peace for the wicked," says my God.
  - The storm-tossed sea represents the idea of never having peace and rest.
- Evil or Badness (רע): It means harmful or malignant. Committing sin is evil, which says that by nature we are evil.
  - Deu 30:15 See, today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and adversity;



## Results of Sin

- Perhaps the most consequential result of sin is objective guilt ('asham, plemmeleia, and enochos).
  - We are not talking about subjective guilt which is nothing other than a feeling.
  - All men are guilty before God, whether they feel it or not. It is a standing before our Maker. The technical meaning of guilt is "wrong that requires compensation or restitution."
  - Jam 2:10 For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all.
- Related to this passage is compensation that we owe God. Thus guilt is actually a forensic or legal term when used in the Bible.
  - Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death....

## Results of Sin

- Trouble (תָּוָה): This means trouble in a moral sense.
  - Psalm 5:5 teaches us that God actually hates those who do evil.
  - Often Christian preachers try to soften God by saying He hates the sin, not the sinner. However, there are a number of Bible passages that teach that He actually hates the sinner too.
  - Psa 5:5 The boastful cannot stand in your sight; you hate all evildoers.



## All Sin-Terminology Summarized

- Sin is a failure to live up to what God expects of us in act, thought, and being.
- Theologians often try to find a central underlying factor with sin such as sensuality, selfishness, or displacement of God.
- It would probably be accurate to say that it is a combination of the three, but at the heart of it, sin is the displacement of God.
- His creatures volitionally choose to violate His will in an attempt to rob God of His sovereign right to be the center of our lives.
- Looking back in the Garden of Eden, Satan tempted Eve by saying that her and Adam would be like God if they ate the fruit. At the heart of it, Adam wanted to be like God, thus bringing the first sin and the Fall.
- All of our sin in one form or another will be related back to that one as we place our own desires above that of God. This is the heart of what sin is.

## Sources of Sin Within the Individual

- Where does the sin nature come from? The Bible is pretty clear, but since most reject it's authority, there is a debate.
- Social scientists, medical doctors, psychologists, philosophers, and other so-called experts offer a variety of wrong theories.
- The biblical answer is original sin, which will be covered in the next lesson.
- Here we will look at some false views.



## Darwinian View

- They see human beings as sophisticated animals and claim that sin is a part of our animal nature.
- Darwinian theologians believe the sin problem is actually part of our development upward.
  - The Fall was actually part of progress. Allegedly, our early animal state made it very important that we propagate the species by having a great number of offspring so we would survive.
  - Once the race was propagated, then it was no longer necessary to have indiscriminate sex.
  - Thus, according to these evolutionists, moral restrictions were inappropriate in the early stages of the human race.
  - In fact, it would be more moral to have sexual relations with anyone and as many people available in those days. Once the race became numerous, the it became a good idea not to do that so overpopulation doesn't occur.
- This twisted, amoral, and relativistic logic stands behind the attempt to normalize homosexual behavior, abortion, child limit laws, and any laws that make it hard to have a large family.

## Darwinian View

- What used to be right at the beginning of our history is now wrong because we evolved and no longer need to follow the primitive pattern.
- In summation, they would say sin is a reflection of the progress of the human family from the animal beginnings up to where we are at present.
- Sin is relative in this view to the time and stage of human evolution.
- The solution to sin in this view is the same as the source of sin.
- If evolution caused sin, then evolution will fix the problem. Thus, this view sees no need for divine redemption.

