

# Maranatha Bible Church 2021

## Men's Training Class Winter/Spring 2021

### Part 1: Leadership / Conviction - Hamartiology

#### Introduction

The doctrine of sin is important to us since it affects and is affected by all other doctrines. Several methods have been used to study sin, but the analysis of the biblical data provides the best understanding of sin and its consequences. The causes of sin, character of sin, and results of sin may be analyzed through studying the terms for sin as set forth in Scripture. Sin is any evil action or evil motive that is in opposition to God. Simply stated, sin is failure to let God be God and placing something or someone in God's rightful place of supremacy.<sup>1</sup>

I especially like Erickson's definition here because he rightly states that all of our doctrines are affected by sin. It would do us well to remember that there is nothing that we do which comes from a completely pure heart or pure motives. As we will come to see, we are completely tainted by the presence of sin, though not as bad as we could be.

Furthermore, I would echo his final statement with much vigor *sin is failure to let God be God and placing something or someone in God's rightful place of supremacy*. While many in the modern world today do not have physical idols in their homes, they are filled with idols in their hearts. From their spouse to their job to their comfort or to their freedom, far too many people are living in unrepentant sin thinking they are free from idolatry in their life.

#### Defining Sin

##### Philosophical theories concerning sin which are prevalent today.

1. The Dualistic Theory
  - a. Sin is an inseparable characteristic of matter...Spirit = Good...Matter = Evil
  - b. This removes the moral element from the concept of sin and replaces it with the physical one.  
This weakens the concept of sin.
2. Sin are imperfections which arise because man does not allow God's consciousness to rule his own.
  - a. This means that sin is necessary, unavoidable and subjective.

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<sup>1</sup> Erickson, Millard J. 1998. *Christian Theology*, 580-598. Grand Rapids: Baker.

3. When asked why he did not talk about sin in his Sunday messages, Joel Osteen said “I do, but in a positive way...There's enough pushing people down in life already," he added. "When they come to my church, or our meetings, I want them to be lifted up. I want them to know that God's good, that they can move forward, that they can break an addiction, that they can become who God's created them to be.”<sup>2</sup>
4. “87% of Americans believe in the concept of sin, defined as something that is *almost always* considered wrong, particularly from a religious or moral perspective.”<sup>3</sup>
5. There are only two places in the Bible that do not mention sin or sinners...Gen. 1-2 and Rev. 21-22.
  - a. These are obviously either before (original creation) or after sin (new creation).
  - b. The point of that is to show that from Gen. 3 – Rev. 20 the major issue is man’s sin and his need for salvation. This places the doctrine of sin in the *major doctrines category*.
6. Sin must be understood from a theocentric or God-centered standpoint. At its core, sin is a violation of the Creator-creature relationship. Man only exists because God made him and man is obligated to serve his Creator.<sup>4</sup>
  - a. It is vital to understand that no matter what sin you commit, you are ultimately going against God. While your sin will always impact others, that is not the main issue with sin.
7. Augustine asserted that *pride is the heart* of sin. Some others have attempted that it is a *lack of peace* in man’s heart that causes him to sin. Still others have said *selfishness* and *idolatry* are the core issues.
  - a. It is important to note that each of these are closely linked, sin is anytime you go against what God has ordered. Regardless of the motives, this is sin.
  - b. When we bring all these factors into play, we can say that *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. Also closely associated with sin are pride, selfishness, idolatry, and lack of peace*<sup>5</sup>.
8. **Romans 1:18-32** “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of *men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness*, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for *God made it evident to them*. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. *For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the*

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.christianpost.com/news/joel-osteen-talks-preaching-sin-materialism-and-coming-out-in-support-of-gay-marriage.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://albertmohler.com/2008/03/20/sin-by-survey-americans-say-what-they-think>

<sup>4</sup> Vlach, Michael. *Theology III*, p. 94, TMS, class notes

<sup>5</sup> Vlach, Michael. *Theology III*, p. 96, TMS, class notes

*incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.* Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. *For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator*, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; *for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts* and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as *they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer*, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

## Sin's Relationship with other Doctrines<sup>6</sup>

### 1. Doctrine of God

- a. When we sin, it is primarily against God

- i. Psalm 51:4a “Against You, You only, I have sinned ...”

- b. It is only God who can take the initiative to remove the enmity between He and man.

- i. 2 Corinthians 5:19a “namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself...”

### 2. Doctrine of Man

- a. Sin brought (and brings) death to all men because all men have sinned. It not only brings death but also it corrupts every relationship that we have with God, fellow men and our creation.

- b. Man's whole makeup, both mind and body, are tainted by sin.

### 3. Doctrine of Salvation

- a. Lost people are unable to save themselves because they do not know they are need. They need salvation by grace and without God intervening he will face the wrath of God.

### 4. Doctrine of Christ

- a. Jesus is the second, or last Adam. Just as one man brought sin into the world, so Christ brought salvation. He defeated Satan and brings restoration to all who put their faith in Him.

### 5. Doctrine of Angels

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

- a. Satan and all the other fallen angels sinned against God and were removed from their heavenly home in His presence.
6. Doctrine of the Church
  - a. Not only is the church *the* community of God's people gathered together, they are also God's ambassadors to proclaim the gospel to the unsaved world. The church is to show the power of gospel as they live no longer under the power and influence of sin.
7. Doctrine of Eschatology
  - a. The world today is fallen in all aspects of creation. One day, not only the world but also mankind will be restored to their right place before God.

## Origin (Source) of Sin

1. First and foremost, *sin did not originate with God*.
  - a. James 1:13 "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone."
  - b. Job 34:10 "'Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to do wrong."
  - c. Habakkuk 1:3 "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You cannot look on wickedness with favor."
  - d. We cannot blame God for sin, nor can we say that God Himself sinned.
2. "The fallen world in which we live rests on the foundations of a creation that was good. Yet, it had scarcely been created before sin crept into it. The origin of sin is a mystery; it is not from God, and at the same time it is not excluded from his counsel. God decided to take humanity on the perilous path of covenantal freedom rather than elevating it by a single act of power over the possibility of sin and death."<sup>7</sup>
3. We can rightly say that moral evil originated with the creature, not with the Creator.
4. The first man, Adam sinned (**Rom. 5:12**), and his transgression spiraled mankind into sin, but this was not sin's origin.
5. We can say that sin originated with Satan and the Bible holds him accountable for this.
  - a. John 8:44 "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies."

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<sup>7</sup> Bavinck, Herman *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3: *Sin and Salvation in Christ*

- b. 1 John 3:8 “The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning...”
- c. Evil is the absence of good and we know that everything God created was good. When Satan utilized his free volition to reject God in his pride, he initiated the first sin and therefore is called *the Father of lies* which at the core is what sin always is; a lie.
- d. It is very possible that **Ezekiel 28:13-15** speaks of Satan, who was originally created without flaw (innocent), as all things created by God were.
  - i. Verse 15 gives us a hint as to the origin of sin: “You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you.”
  - ii. **Isaiah 14:12-14** further indicates that Satan (Lucifer) sinned in his pride and his coveting of God’s throne. When he rebelled against God, Satan was ejected from heaven.

## Original Sin and Mankind

- 1. Original sin does not necessarily refer to simply Adam’s first sin, but to the fact that because of Adam’s first sin we are all now subsequently born into a sinful state because of our relationship with Adam.
- 2. The question which must be answered is *how did Adam’s sin get transmitted to us?*
- 3. First of all, we must come to the conclusion that original sin is Biblically supported.
  - a. **Psalm 51:5** “Behold I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.”
  - b. **Ephesians 2:3** “...and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”
  - c. **Romans 5:12-21** gives the most extensive treatment of the issue.
    - i. In verse 12 he states “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.”
      - 1. We see that sin entered the world through one man.
      - 2. Sin brought death.
      - 3. Death spread to all people.
      - 4. The reason death spread to all peoples is because all sinned.
  - d. It is really #4 that people seem to struggle with...are people sinners because they sin or do people sin because they are sinners.
  - e. What is our connection with Adam’s sin?
    - i. As we read further in **Romans 5:18-19**, he says “one trespass led to condemnation for all men,” and “by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners.”
    - ii. In **5:15** he also says “many died through one man’s trespass.”

- iii. The verb for sinned at the end of verse 12 is ἥμαρτον, which is an aorist tense. This is important because it puts the emphasis on the action itself, not on its duration<sup>8</sup>. So this means that the one time event of Adam sinning is a specific historical event.
  - 4. There are a few views which have been offered as to the relationship between Adam's sinfulness and the rest of mankind.
    - a. Unexplained Solidarity
      - i. As the name implies, there is solidarity between Adam and all subsequent generations, but how they relate is unknown.
      - ii. We must just be content knowing that we sin.
    - b. Bad Example (Pelagian View)
      - i. Adam set a bad example for all people. Throughout time, when people sinned they were simply following the bad example that Adam set forth.
      - ii. Those who hold to this theory say that we are not born into sin but rather are born neutral and have the capacity to sin or not to sin. We can choose to follow Adam's bad example, not because we have sinful nature, but because we want to.
      - iii. This primarily has come from a 5<sup>th</sup> century monk named Pelagius.
        - 1. He did not like how Augustine taught and held to the doctrine of original sin. In fact, it was Augustine's prayer "give what you command, and command what you will" that threw Pelagius off.
      - iv. Pelagius postulated that man has a completely free will. This means that he is free and able to choose good or evil at any given time. Man has no predetermined plan as his future is fully in his own hands.
        - 1. Man is born with no virtue or vice, simply a person who freely chooses.
      - v. There is one very obvious problem with this theory
        - 1. The forgiveness of sin does not exist. Because man is neutral and simply chooses one way or another, he has no need for God's grace.
        - 2. For Pelagius, it was of the utmost importance to live as close to God's character as possible, not desperately seek out his grace.
    - c. Semi-Pelagian View
      - i. Seeing the problem with denying God's grace, John Cassian in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century took a middle of the road approach to original sin.

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<sup>8</sup> The significance is that it happened. Whether it happened over a period of time or in an instant is not indicated.

- ii. “Semi-Pelagianism took a middle-of-the-road approach to depravity; we are depraved, but not totally so. Semi-Pelagianism allows that humanity is tainted by sin, but not to the extent that we cannot cooperate with God’s grace on our own. Semi-Pelagianism is, in essence, partial depravity as opposed to total depravity. We are sinful, but we can still recognize the truth, cooperate with God’s grace, and choose to seek Christ. We need God’s grace to be saved, but we can take the first step toward Christ on our own, apart from grace.”<sup>9</sup>
- iii. This view of original sin and mankind is held by most Eastern Orthodoxy churches, Roman Catholic Churches (some more Pelagian), Arminian Churches (Pentecostal, Charismatic, Wesleyan).
  - 1. While attempting to recognize the fact that man is sinful from birth, many within the Arminian Church hold to prevenient (or cooperative) grace.
  - 2. “Despite its clear biblical foundations in passages such as Ephesians 2:1–10, the understanding that saving grace is ultimately irresistible—that it effectually overcomes all our resistance to it and brings us to salvation—remains a minority position among professing evangelical Christians. Today, most people who identify as evangelicals adopt the views of grace and freedom propounded by men such as Jacob Arminius and John Wesley. Arminius and Wesley understood the necessity of grace for salvation, but they wanted to preserve our ability to accept or reject saving grace.”<sup>10</sup>
- iv. The main issue with both Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism is they do not see man as totally depraved<sup>11</sup> and desperately needing God *only* for their salvation.
  - 1. “This view has the advantage of stating that no one can be saved without grace or even God’s initiative in freeing our wills just enough to choose Him. The problem is that the doctrine of prevenient grace ends up creating a kind of de facto semi-Pelagianism. If prevenient grace is indiscriminate and merely restores our ability to choose, then it is hard to see how salvation is truly all of grace. In a sense, God takes the first step in redemption by bestowing prevenient grace, but the final reason why anyone is saved must be located in our will, in our willingness to

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/semi-Pelagianism.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/grace-cooperative/>

<sup>11</sup> We will discuss this at length in our next men’s meeting.

move toward God that we somehow, with the help of grace, work up in ourselves.”<sup>12</sup>

d. Federal Headship

- i. “The most acceptable position is that Adam’s sin is imputed to all who were united with him as the representative of humanity. Adam’s guilt is our guilt. While affirming that a corrupt nature is passed down from Adam, representative headship teaches that all people are condemned because of their direct relationship to Adam.”<sup>13</sup>

## Problem with Evil

1. Here is the common question regarding evil...if God is always good...why is there evil?
2. The *supposed* problem of evil is often times called a Theodicy (from Greek θεός, “god”; ἐκδίκησις, “justice”), explanation of why a perfectly good, almighty and all-knowing God permits evil.
3. How can evil exist if God is all-powerful and good?
  - i. If God is all powerful then He would be able to prevent / stop evil.
  - ii. If God is good then He would desire to prevent evil.
  - iii. Therefore, if God is both all-powerful and good, there should be no evil.
  - iv. ***There is evil...so there is no God***, or He is not all powerful, or He is not good.
    1. There are two things that this argument assumes...
      - a. **One is that there must be a standard of Good.**
        - i. Who gets to decide the standard if not God?
      - b. **Two is that all evil is bad, worthless and pointless.**
        - i. We cannot see the past clearly nor the future at all. How do we know that something which happened is bad, could it not actually be good?
        - ii. “The argument assumes that there is no sufficient reason why God would permit evil, such as the accomplishment of a greater good.”<sup>14</sup>
    - v. We, as Christians, need to admit the following truth about evil...

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/grace-cooperative/>

<sup>13</sup> MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine* p. 464

<sup>14</sup> Joel Beeke p. 1092



1. It exists. The world is plagued with evil.
  - a. We cannot deny it or make it out to be some abstract idea.
2. Since God is all-powerful and knows all things, He either determines or allows evil to exist and work in this life.
  - a. We cannot deny God's character or attributes in an attempt to defend God...*we say what the Bible says.*
3. We simply do not have all the answers, but we have context and meaning.
  - a. It is because God *does* have all the answers that we know we can rest in Him, even when we simply do not know.
- b. We will never fully know the answer to the question as to *why evil exists*, but we certainly have some guardrails that keep us from living like those with no hope.
  - i. We have to fully understand and believe that ***no person is neutral!*** We can struggle to understand sin because we think that left to their own, man would be okay. This is a complete and utter lie!!
  - ii. It is absolutely and completely impossible for man to live a good life without the Lord intervening. We are sinful and dark people.
  - iii. John Frame says that if God enticed or forced man to sin, this "would picture God as some kind of giant Mafia boss who keeps his hands clean by forcing underlings to carry out his nasty designs"<sup>15</sup>. God has clearly revealed that man sins as the result of his own desires rather than the coercion of God.

#### 4. **God's Providence and Evil**

- a. God sovereignly predetermines all things.
  - i. Ephesians 1:11 "...also we have obtained an inheritance, ***having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will...***"
  - ii. Lamentations 3:37-38 "Who is there who speaks and it comes to pass, Unless the Lord has commanded it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High That both good and I'll go forth?"
- b. God was in providential control of the fall of man.

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<sup>15</sup> John Frame. *Apologetics to the Glory of God*. p. 166 Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1994.

i. **Genesis 3**

c. Because of the Fall, God causes and uses natural catastrophes

- i. Romans 8:22 “For we know that the *whole creation groans and suffers* the pains of childbirth together until now.”
- ii. Isaiah 45:7 “The One forming light and creating darkness, *Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.*”

d. We know that God predetermines and predestines sin, but this in no way makes Him culpable. Those who decide to sin stand solely responsible.

- i. Acts 2:23 “...this Man, *delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God*, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.”
- ii. Acts 4:27 “For truly in this city *there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus*, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.”

- 1. You can see both the predetermination of God *and* the will of man to carry out what God desired.

e. We know that God hardens sinners in their sin.

- i. Romans 9:18 “So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.”

f. We also know that God hardens the sinners hearts, He never tempts anyone to sin.

- i. James 1:13 “Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.”

g. Man *does what he wants* and is culpable...yet *God works through sinful choices*.

- i. Genesis 50:20 “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”

**5. God uses evil for His glory.**

a. The wicked have a divine purpose.

- i. Proverbs 16:4 “The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil.”

b. It displays His grace and mercy.

- i. Romans 3:25 "...whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed..."

6. *Any attempt to give answers for the problem of evil through dethroning God of his sovereign power, limiting God's knowledge, or questioning God's goodness, should be refuted as biblical impossibilities.*

- a. Frame says, "It would be nice to have a solution to the problem of evil, but not at any price. If the price we must pay is the very sovereignty of God, the faithful Christian must say that the price is too high. After all, it is of little importance whether any of us discovers the answer to the problem of evil. It is possible to live a long and happy and faithful life without an answer. But it is all-important that we worship the true God, the God of Scripture. Without Him, human life is worth nothing"<sup>16</sup>

7. **What about man's free will?**

- a. One of the most frequently used answers amongst Christians is found in the Free-Will argument.
  - i. Simply, the choices man makes are not foreordained or caused by God and, therefore, God cannot be held responsible for the existence of evil.
  - ii. The freedom of the will, as a gift from God, delivers God from His responsibility for evil and places it upon man.
  - iii. Undoubtedly, Scripture teaches that man is responsible for sin, however, Scripture also gives clear references to God foreordaining and decreeing all things which occur.
- b. A potter has every right to do as he desires with his clay. All people belong to the same lump of fallen humanity through the sin of Adam. All of mankind has willingly rejected God in active sin prior to God hardening their already sinful hearts. The person questioning the justice of God is not pointed to man's free will for the answer, but rather, to a sovereign God who acts in perfection as He pleases.<sup>17</sup>

8. Sometimes, it is best to conclude Deuteronomy 29:29 "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law."

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid p. 154

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/evil.cfm> 10/20/2020