

The Harsh Realities of Sin
HAMARTIOLOGY - THE DOCTRINE OF SIN
Intro Text: Romans 6:23

The late President Calvin Coolidge returned home from attending church early one Sunday afternoon. Because she was ill, his wife was unable to attend. When he returned, his wife enquired about the service. The president said "it was a nice one". She then asked about the sermon, to which he replied that "it was a good one". "What was it about", she asked. "He preached on sin", he said. "And...?" "Well, I think he was against it."

In his book "Respectable Sins", Jerry Bridges quotes Psychiatrist Karl Menninger: "The very word, 'sin,' which seems to have disappeared, was once a proud word. It was once a strong word, an ominous and serious word... But the word went away. It has almost disappeared-the word, along with the notion. Why? Doesn't anyone sin anymore? Doesn't anyone believe in sin?"

The simple truth seems to be that the word... the very notion or concept of sin, seems to be found in one of two extremes: (1) On the one hand it is determined to be politically incorrect... judgmental... expressive of intolerance; (2) while on the other hand it is quite the topic of discussion and sermons... where taking the cultural high-ground, we shake our fists, wag our heads, cluck our tongues, and express copious amounts of dismay at the short-comings of others, and the moral decay of our society. But what of us... you and me... looking in the mirror... doing serious self-examination with the Bible as our guide and standard???

We are going to examine one of the most fundamental doctrines of the Bible - The Doctrine of Sin - Hamartiology.... [Text...] Think of it this way: If sin is not real, then Jesus and the cross makes no sense... the whole notion of a Savior is pointless and meaningless...

I. SIN DEFINED

[It is interesting how we define "good people" and "bad people"....] Several Hebrew words are used to refer to sin: *awan*, meaning crookedness; *ra*, meaning violence; *nabhal* or fool. But the basic words are *hata* (Hebrew) and *hamartano* (Greek), both meaning to miss the mark. The idea is not only that of missing a target, but of hitting the wrong one! The target is the will and character of God. To miss it is to come short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23)!

Charles Ryrie provided the following definition: "Sin is missing the mark, badness, rebellion, iniquity, going astray, wickedness, wandering, ungodliness, crime, lawlessness, transgression, ignorance, and a falling away. Strong defines sin as "lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state."

But, I want to be a little more specific. So let's take a quick look at four things that help us to define sin.

→ *"Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge."* (Psalm 51:4)

1) Sin Is Breaking The Law Of God - *"Everyone who sins is breaking God's law, for all sin is contrary to the law of God."* (1 John 3:4 NLT) ... (John 14:15)

A.k.a. trespasses (Eph 2:1), transgressions (Ps 51:1), iniquities (Isa 64:6), and disobedience (Rom 5:19; Eph 2:2). Typically this is called sins of commission. E.g. King David... God's law, His Word, is still valid today, and when we act contrary to it, we are committing sin, whether it's an act of the will or ignorance. Here is the foundational principle of sin and the Christian life... [God's absolute truth... absolute standard of righteousness!]

2) Sin Is Disobeying Our Conscience – *"Even Gentiles, who do not have God's written law, show that they know his law when they instinctively obey it, even without having heard it. They demonstrate that God's law is written in their hearts, for their own conscience and thoughts either accuse them or tell them they are doing right."* (Romans 2:14-15 NLT) When confronted by the prophet Nathan, David knew he had sinned with Bathsheba! [When I stole from the

Drug Store... or switched price tag on toy I wanted] God has placed in all of us the consciousness of right and wrong (John 16:7-8 – The Holy Spirit). When we violate that, we are in sin!

3) Sin Is Failing To Do What Is Right – *“Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.”* (James 4:17 NLT) This is typically referred to as a sins of omission. A Sunday School teacher once asked her class "What are the sins of omission? After some thought one little fellow said: "They're the sins we should have committed but didn't get around to!" Not ☹ Note: sins of omission are just as sinful as sins that are actually committed!

4) Sin Is Unbelief - *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* (John 3:16-18) Romans 14:23 says, *“...whatsoever is not of faith is sin”*. When we fail to trust God and His Word, the Bible, when we fail to take God at His word, it is sin! That is why the Bible commands us not worry or doubt God!

*** The greatest of all sins, a sin of unbelief, and what the Bible tells us is the "unpardonable sin," is the final rejection of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. *“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”* (John 3:36)

II. SIN CLASSIFIED

1. Personal Sin. *“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one’;... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”* (Rom 3:10 & 23)

2. Inherited Sin. (A.k.a. The sin nature; original sin; the “old man”) *“When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.”* (Romans 5:12) When the word "sin" appears in the singular, it is usually speaking of the sin nature in man. *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”* (1 John 1:8)

Note: “inherited sin” has also been referred to as the "Doctrine of Total Depravity."

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

1. Sin Affects Man's Eternal Destiny. *“Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue has muttered perversity.”* (Isaiah 59:1-3)

2. Sin Affects the Will (and judgment). In Romans 6 Paul described the affects of sin especially in regards to the will and our walk. *“Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.”* (Romans 6:16 NLT) Jesus made it clear that the Pharisees, because of their sin of unbelief, were slaves to the desires of the devil (John 8:44).

3. Sin Affects the Body. While not all sickness and suffering is the result of sin (John 9:3), some of it is: *“What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.”* (Romans 6:21) ... *“Because of your anger, my whole body is sick; my health is broken because of my sins. My guilt overwhelms me—it is a burden too heavy to bear.”* (Psalm 38:3-4)

4. Sin Affects Others. No one sins in a vacuum! Every sin has consequences, and these consequences often affect others. *“You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me.”* (Exodus 20:5) - speaks of the sins of the

parents affecting 3, even 4 of their generations. The sins of the scribes affected widows and others who followed their traditions (Luke 20:46-47). This is one of the principle reasons we are commanded to not be unequally yoked, whether in marriage or business (2 Cor 6:14)!

In the life of the believer...

- Sin interrupts our fellowship with God and others (1 John 1:3, 6-7; Psalm 66:18)
- Sin causes a loss of joy (John 15:11; Galatians 5:22)
- Sin causes the believer to walk in darkness (1 John 1:6; 2:10; Ephesians 5:8))
- Sin brings a lack of confidence in prayer (1 John 3:19-22; Psalm 66:18).
- Persistent sin brings about God's chastisement (Hebrews 12:5-11; 1 Corinthians 11:30)
- It can result in Church discipline - excommunication (1 Corinthians 5; Matthew 18:17)
- Persistent sin can even result in physical death - the "sin unto death" (Hebrews 11:30; 1 John 5:16).

IV. THE REMEDY FOR SIN

"The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, but He loves him who follows righteousness." (Proverbs 15:9) →
"Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin'?" (Proverbs 20:9) → *"In [Jesus] we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."* (Ephesians 1:7) → And... 1 John 1:9

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of a sermon one Sunday, a man came forward at the invitation. He was visibly disturbed and moved by the conviction of sin in his life. With tears in his eyes and a faltering voice the man was trying to say that his life was full of sin, but instead, he said, "My sin is full of life". Though he realized his mistake and corrected it, his first statement was the reason for the second. Because our sin is full of life, our lives are full of sin...

It is so easy to look at the decay of the world around us... to see the faults and failings of others... But do we examine ourselves... do we ever see... have we ever admitted that our own *stuff* is just as stinky to our holy God? The proper biblical attitude toward sin is neither indifference nor denial, but to acknowledge that all are sinners (Rom 3:23). The truth of God's Word says we are not sinners because we sin - we sin because we are sinners!

We must never forget that ALL sin, whether committed by believers or unbelievers, grieves God and carries with it consequences that we must all face. And, all sin, while it may affect others, is ultimately against God (Ps 51:4; Rom 8:7). However, it is the grace of God through Jesus Christ that is greater than all of our sin (Rom 5:8)! Christ had to die for the sins we committed before and after we were saved, with His death paying the penalty for all sins, for all time. What's more, the great hope of all believers is that some day, through faith in Jesus Christ, we shall be removed from the very presence of sin (Rev 21:27) to live eternally with our holy, righteous Lord and Creator!

"God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:20-21)