

# Sin - A practical study

Hamartiology [Greek: αμαρτια, *hamartia*, "missing the mark," "sin," + λογια, *logia*, "sayings" or "discourse"] - is the doctrine [study] of sin.

## Types of sin:

- **Inherent Sin** (*sin nature or original sin*) - Every member of the human race inherits a propensity for sin; that tempts and enables them to commit personal acts of sin. The first act of disobedience, placed a judgment upon all creation (*Genesis 3:1-24*), and brought us all under the penalty of sin. - **Romans 3:23, 5:12,18-19, 7:17-18; Ephesians 4:22**
- **Imputed Sin** (*transgression of the law*) - After Moses received and delivered the law, sinful acts became more self-evident. There was now a clearly defined line of right and wrong; proving once again that we are all without excuse. The Apostle Paul even seems to state that the law itself stimulated us to sin more (*Romans 7:8, 11*); because our nature is to have that which is forbidden (*Genesis 3:6*). - **Romans 4:15, 5:13-14, 7:7-11; 1 John 3:4; Galatians 3:19**
- **Willful Sin** (*personal sin*) - Our God given consciences helps reveal right and wrong. We choose to do wrong based on our inherent sin nature; and before salvation, we were powerless to live holy lives (*Romans 6:22*).

Personal sin can be divided into 2 categories:

1. **Commission** (*Colossians 3:25*) - acts we willfully do
  - a. Mental sin - 2 Corinthians 10:5; Matthew 5:21-28; Exodus 20:17
  - b. Sins of the tongue - James 3:1-12; Colossians 3:9; Exodus 20:16
  - c. Open [visible] sins - Romans 6:12-13; Colossians 3:5; Exodus 20:12-15
2. **Omission** (*James 4:17*) - acts we willfully do not do, or to disobey direct commands
  - a. Sins of disobedience - Matthew 21:28-32; Jonah 1:1-3; Titus 1:16
  - b. Sin of unfaithfulness - Hebrews 10:23-25; Exodus 20:3,8-11; 2 Timothy 1-9
  - c. Sin of not being light and salt - Matthew 23:23, 28:19-20; Luke 10:25-37; Revelation 2:4-5; Philippians 2:13-14; Ephesians 5:1-21

## Total depravity of mankind:

The first realization one must come to in understanding sin, is that all have an inherent sin nature. ***We are not sinners because we have sinned, but rather we sin because we are sinners.*** Sadly today, there are many professing Christians, churches, and even denominations, who do not believe in inherent sin. They go as far to even proclaim that if two Christians have a child together, that it is impossible for them to transfer a sinful nature; seeing that themselves are now pure and holy. This of course goes against everything the bible teaches. Even King David was aware of our inherent sin nature when he stated in ***Psalms 51:5*** that he was shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin. We do not have to teach children to misbehave, we have to teach them how to behave. God stated in ***Genesis 8:21*** that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. ***Ephesians 2:3*** tells us that our nature made us children of wrath; and even the Pharisees were aware of inherent sin as they stated in ***John 9:34***.

- **All have sinned** - Romans 3:23, 11:32; Galatians 3:22
- **None are righteous** - Romans 3:10; Isaiah 64:6; John 8:42-47
- **There are no good people** - Romans 3:12; Mark 10:18; John 3:19
- **No one seeks God on their own** - Isaiah 64:7; Romans 3:11; John 6:44

You must either believe that within you is evil and that without God you will not attain salvation, or you believe that on your own apart from God you can attain eternal life - ***Ephesians 2:1-22; Romans 7:14-25***. Unless you recognize the need to be saved from yourself, you will not seek a savior.

## The ranking of sin:

Often times people become confused when trying to rate one sin as greater than another. While it is true that different sins carried different consequences as related to the mosaic law, it only carries one punishment as relating to final judgment before God (*Galatians 3:19-25; Revelation 20:11-15*).

**Abominations** (*Hebrew "towebah" - a disgusting thing / Greek "bdelygma" - a foul thing*). The word abomination or abominations appear over 150 times in the bible (KJV). A majority of these verses deal with idolatry. Here are some other sins in which the Lord called abominations:

- Homosexuality is often times stated as a sin of greater condemnation. Many cite the fact that God called it an abomination (*Leviticus 18:22*). While it is true that homosexuality is a sin, the bible also refers to eating un-scaled fish (catfish) as an abomination (*Leviticus 11:10*).
- Not giving the Lord your best is also an abomination (*Deuteronomy 17:1*).
- Cheating or dealing unfairly with another is listed by God to be an abomination (*Deuteronomy 25:13-16*).
- A proud look (*arrogance and a contempt for others*); Lying tongue (*falsehood and fraud*); Hands that shed innocent blood (*cruelty toward others*); A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations (*plans to fulfill coveting, envying, and revengeful thoughts*); Feet that be swift in running to mischief (*constantly looking to fill fleshly desires*); A false witness that speaketh lies (*purposefully denying the truth*); He that soweth discord among brethren (*spreading of rumors and gossip to get people at odds with one another*) - God said that he hates these and calls them an abomination (*Proverbs 6:16-19*).
- Forgetting the blessings and saving grace of God is an abomination to Him (*Jeremiah 2:7*).
- Seeking the praise of men and the things of the world over that of God is also an abomination (*Luke 16:15*).

The Christian should not be focused on which sin is worse, or any particular sin; the Christian should seek to keep themselves pure from all unrighteousness (*1 Timothy 5:22; 2 Timothy 2:22*), so that their life will help point others to the saving grace of Jesus Christ (*Romans 12:1-2*).

The greatest sin for anyone would be unbelief. Our sin can only be forgiven when we come by faith to Jesus Christ; but without His grace we condemn ourselves (*John 3:18*).

- **Lack of faith is sin** - Romans 14:23
- **Cannot please God without faith** - Hebrews 11:6
- **Nothing is pure to the unbelieving** - Titus 1:15
- **Beware of unbelief** - Hebrews 3:12,19

## The penalty for sin:

The bible is very clear when it explains the reward for sin. That reward is in an eternal context, and it is always the same - death (*Romans 6:23*). God does not make allowances for an adulterer over a murderer, nor does He make allowances for a liar over a drunkard. The bible concludes all under sin (*Galatians 3: 22*), and it refers to sin as a debt owed to God (*Matthew 18:21-35*); therefore each of us is liable for our own sin, and only God has the power to release us from that debt through our faith in His Son Jesus Christ (*Galatians 4:3-5; Matthew 10:28*).

*Numbers 16:1-50* gives us a clearer understanding of how God deals with unrepentant sin; and how violent, judgment for the sinner will be. *Revelation 19:20; 20:14-15; 21:8* shows us that sin and evil will be dealt with, and that God has not wavered from His original command to us, that we should obey Him (*Genesis 3:17*). The promise of God's coming brings joy to the redeemed, but fear to the unbelieving. Jesus will return one day and His reward will be with Him (*Revelation 22:12*).

Judgment for sin and the sinner will be devastating:

- **The day of God's wrath will be a day of great astonishment.** -Deuteronomy 28:28

- **The day of God's wrath will be a day of great distress.** -Proverbs 1:26-27
- **God's great wrath will tear them in pieces.** -Hosea 5:14.
- **God's great wrath will consume them.** -Malachi 4:1
- **God's great wrath will swallow up His enemies.** -Psalm 21:8-9
- **God's great wrath rests upon all mankind.** -Ephesians 2:1-3
- **God's great wrath abides upon the sons of disobedience.** -Ephesians 5:5-6
- **God's great wrath abides upon all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.** -Romans 1:18
- **God's wrath is coming because of sin.** -Colossians 3:5-6
- **Hell is the destination of those condemned to eternal punishment.** -Matthew 25:41-46
- **Hell is described as a place of fire and darkness.** -Jude 7, 13
- **Hell is described as a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.** -Matthew 22:13
- **Hell is described as a place of destruction.** -1 Thessalonians 5:3
- **Hell is described as a place of torment.** -Luke 16:23
- **Without repentance, forgiveness, and grace, our reward will be hell.** -Mark 9:42-48

### **The Christian and sin:**

Christians still have the capacity to sin. Until we become glorified in Christ, our flesh will still bring us into temptation; but because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we can no longer use our flesh as an excuse to sin. Where once we were powerless, we now have been given the nature of holiness (**Romans 5:21**).

Some teach that Christians are incapable of sinning; if that were true then most of the New Testament would have no use. As we read our bible we realize that God's people still make mistakes, and they still rely on God's mercy as they repent and seek forgiveness.

The moment of salvation does not remove the desires of the flesh, but it does enable us to say no to temptation (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).

*The difference between a sinning unbeliever and a sinning believer is that one loves his sin while the other hates it. The believer who stumbles in his walk with the Lord regrets it, confesses it, wishes to never do it again and seeks to appropriate God's power and grace to avoid it. He doesn't consider how much he can sin and still be considered a Christian. Rather, he considers how he can avoid even the appearance of sin in the future.*

- John Owen

Without books such as **1 Corinthians** or **1 John**, our view of sin as a Christian, may bring us to a different understanding; but knowing that sin is possible for the believer, should bring us to a greater awareness of our own frailty in this mortal life. God's word does warn us about being too comfortable in our spiritual life. Any confidence we have, only comes from God and nothing from ourselves. Unless we believe we can be deceived, we make ourselves easier prey for the devil (**Galatians 6:1-8; 1 Peter 5:8-9**)

When we "*miss the mark*" as Christians, our motivation to clear our conscience and to heal the hurt we have inflicted on God, should be the fact that Jesus shed His blood for our forgiveness. Maintaining a humble heart filled with gratitude for the price Jesus paid, helps keep the Christian acutely aware that sin lays at the door (**Genesis 4:7; Romans 11:20**).

As born-again followers of Christ, we become a dwelling place for God; and when we sin, we allow the unholy into the temple of God (**Revelation 21:27**). Just as Jesus cleansed His temple of that which was not holy, we too must seek to purge ourselves of sin (**John 2:14-16, 13:9-10**).

## Sin restricts blessings:

As we give into temptation, we cut off our source of blessing. God seeks to bless those who are obedient, and to chasten those who are out of fellowship with His word (*Luke 15:11-16*).

- **Sin stops communication** - Isaiah 59:2; John 9:31
- **Sin removes joy** - Psalm 51
- **Sin destroys** - 1 Corinthians 3:16-17
- **Sin traps us** - Romans 6:16
- **Sin ruins relationships** - James 4:1-10
- **Sin prohibits wisdom** - Ecclesiastes 2:26
- **Sin hides truth** - 2 Corinthians 4:1-4
- **Sin brings pain and sorrow** - Psalm 38
- **Sin creates hardship** - Genesis 3:14-19
- **Sin creates guilt** - Genesis 3:7
- **Sin stops fellowship** - 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14
- **Sin brings discipline** - Hebrews 12:4-17
- **Sin puts us at odds with God** - 1 Peter 3:12

## Sin defined:

*"Sin is anything that is displeasing to God."*

### Old Testament

- *ra*, **bad** (Genesis 38:7)
- *rasha*, **wickedness** (Exodus 2:13)
- *asham*, **guilt** (Hosea 4:15)
- *chata*, **sin** (Exodus 20:20)
- *avon*, **iniquity** (I Samuel 3:13)
- *shagag*, **err** (Isaiah 28:7)
- *taah*, **wander away** (Ezekiel 48:11)
- *pasha*, **rebel** (I Kings 8:50)

### New Testament

- *kakos*, **bad** (Romans 13:3)
- *poneros*, **evil** (Matthew 5:45)
- *asebes*, **godless** (Romans 1:18)
- *enochos*, **guilt** (Matthew 5:21)
- *hamartia*, **sin** (I Corinthians 6:18)
- *adikia*, **unrighteousness** (I Corinthians 6:9)
- *anomos*, **lawlessness** (I Timothy 2:9)
- *parabates*, **transgression** (Romans 5:14)
- *agnoein*, **to be ignorant** (Romans 1:13)
- *planan*, **to go astray** (I Corinthians 6:9)
- *paraptomai*, **to fall away** (Galatians 6:1)
- *hupocrites*, **hypocrite** (I Timothy 4:2)

*Dr. Charles Ryrie compiled this list of Hebrew and Greek words in which he believes describe sin.*