

# THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF SIN

## INTRODUCTION

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- Hamartiology (from Gk. *hamartia*) = the study of sin
- It is crucial to understand what God says about sin because there are many false understandings of it:
  - “Sin is a queer thing. It isn't the breaking of divine commandments. It is the breaking of one's own integrity.” ~ D.H. Lawrence
  - “Sin cannot be conceived in a natural state, but only in a civil state, where it is decreed by common consent what is good or bad.” ~ Benedict Spinoza
  - “There is no sin except stupidity.” ~ Oscar Wilde
  - “Ugliness is a sin.” ~ Frank Lloyd Wright
  - “Sin is psychological self-abuse...Sin is any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self esteem...By nature we are fearful, not bad . . . Label it a ‘negative self-image,’ but do not say that the central core of the human soul is wickedness. If this were so, then truly, the human being is totally depraved” ~ Robert Schuller (from *Vanishing Conscience*, p. 84-87)

## NATURE OF SIN

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### Biblical Support

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**Psalm 51:1-3** ~ *Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity And cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me.*

**Romans 1:18** ~ *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.*

**1 John 3:4** ~ *Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.*

**1 John 5:17** ~ *All unrighteousness is sin.*

- The word translated “sin” throughout the OT, with very rare exceptions, is derived from the word *chatha*, which originally signifies to miss the mark, emphasize the fact that all wrong-doing is a failure or a coming short of that aim which God intended all His children to reach
- This is the most general and inclusive OT term for sin...thus, every departure from God’s law is a coming short of the purpose for which man was made, and a missing of the goal which ought to be reached
- The words for “sin” in the NT involve a number of different Greek words to describe the nature of sin:
  - *Hamartia* - a general word used to describe sinful acts. It emphasizes the concept of missing the mark or aim. It was used in classical Greek of “throwing a spear and missing the target.” In the singular it denotes the state of sinfulness (cf. Rom 3:9, 20; 4:7; 5:20; 6:16, 23; 11:27)
  - *Paraptoma* - denotes a false step in contrast to a true one (cf. Rom 4:25; Gal 6:1; Eph 2:1)
  - *Parabasis* - means stepping aside, a deviation from a true faith (cf. Rom 2:23; 4:15; Gal 3:19)
  - *Anomia* - means lawlessness or iniquity (cf. 2 Cor 6:14; 2 Thess 2:3)

## Working Definition

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- Our understanding of sin must be related to the character of God
- As such, God's holiness cannot be defined by comparison with anything that we know in this life
- Since God is unique, He is the standard for Himself - this is the point where our definition of sin must begin
- Anything that does not correspond to the nature of God is sin
- Sin draws its essential character of sinfulness from the fact that it is unlike God
- So sin is anything that rebels against God in thought, word, or deed
- It is missing the mark of God's standard...It is a deification of self and a dethronement of God
- "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God." ~ Westminster Confession
- "Sin is not just a minor deviation, an error, a false step. It is gross aberration from God's original purpose for all created rational beings, angelic and human alike." ~ Lewis Sperry Chafer
- Such definitions highlight how serious sin really is

## ORIGIN OF SIN

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### Not From God

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**Habakkuk 1:13** ~ *Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor*

**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.*

**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.*

- God Himself did not sin, nor is He to be blamed for sin...God is not the source of sin!
- But what about those verses that seem to indicate that God did, indeed, cause evil events to come about and evil deeds to be done?

**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*

**Exodus 4:21; 7:3** ~ *I will harden Pharaoh's heart*

**1 Samuel 16:14** ~ *an evil spirit from the Lord tormented Saul*

**2 Samuel 12:15, 18** ~ *So Nathan went to his house. Then the Lord struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was very sick...Then it happened on the seventh day that the child died*

**2 Samuel 24:1** ~ *The Lord incited David to take a census of the people (cf. 1 Chron 21:1)*

**1 Kings 22:23** ~ *Now therefore, behold, the Lord has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the Lord has proclaimed disaster against you*

**Job 1:7-8** ~ *The Lord said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." The Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."*

**Isaiah 45:7** ~ *I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do these things*

**Lamentations 3:38** ~ *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 ill go forth?*

**Amos 3:6** ~ *If a calamity occurs in a city has not the LORD done it?*

**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*

- Considering the weight of this Scriptural testimony, we must conclude that God actually ordains (not simply permits) evil in such a way that He is not morally responsible for it

God does bring about sinful human actions. To deny this, or to charge God with wickedness on account of it, is not open to a Bible-believing Christian. Somehow, we must confess both that God has a role in bringing evil about, and that in doing so he is holy and blameless. (John Frame, *Doctrine of God*, 175)

- How is it that God is not the culpable cause of sin, even though He ordains that it occur?
- The answer that Scripture seems to give can be boiled down to two propositions.
  1. First, though God is the *ultimate* cause of all things—even evil—He is never the *proximate*, or *efficient*, cause of evil
  2. Second, Scripture regards only the efficient cause of evil as the chargeable or blameworthy party
- Solution to the Problem of Evil is called Divine Compatibilism
- Definition: God predetermines wicked events in such a way that he is not directly responsible for the wicked free acts of men. His determination of wicked events is compatible both with human freedom and responsibility.
- Compatibilism states that when people perform free acts (i.e. not constrained or compelled in their actions), they do that which God wants them to do
- Explanation:
  1. God sovereignly predetermines all events – Eph 1:11
  2. God uses all things to fulfill His purposes and even uses evil for His glory and our good – Gen 50:20; Rom 8:28
  3. God predetermines/predestines sin but in such a way that man is the responsible party - Acts 2:23; 4:27-28
  4. In this process, God never does evil nor tempts anyone to do evil – James 1:13
  5. Man chooses freely in that he does what he wants to do and is therefore blameworthy
    - Scripture never blames God for evil or shows God enjoying evil – Gen 50:20
    - But God is in control of the sin of individuals in some mysterious way – cf. 2 Sam 24:1 with 2 Sam 24:10
    - God, in fact, uses Satan for His ultimate purposes – 1 Chron 21:1; 1 Kings 22:23; story of Job
    - In inciting sin, God punished David/Israel for its iniquities – 2 Sam 24:12-17
- The following examples demonstrate how God can be the ultimate cause of all things (even evil) while never being the proximate or efficient cause of it (i.e. the chargeable or blameworthy party)
  - God's punishment of Israel by Assyria in Isaiah 10:1-8.....God ordained the evil of the destruction of Israel by Assyria yet Assyria meant it for evil and are thus accountable for the sin
  - God's inciting David to number the people in 2 Samuel 24:1-17...God ordained the evil of numbering the people (see 1 Chron 21:1) yet David was held accountable for the sin and was punished (2 Sam 24:10, 15)
  - God's predetermined plan to crucify Christ in Acts 2:22-23 and Acts 4:27-28...God predetermined it, but Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles, and the Jews were the culpable parties

## Fall of Satan

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- Satan is held accountable for being the source of sin

**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*

**1 John 3:8** ~ *The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning...*

- Sin originated with Satan and is his constant practice
- God created Satan as a free moral agent with the capacity for choice...this does not mean that God created evil
- Evil is the absence of good...everything God creates is good...when Satan utilized his free volition to proudly reject God, he initiated the first sin and hence is called “the Father of lies” which at the core is what sin always is—a lie

- What we know about the Fall of Satan:

1. Satan exists and is a real person

2. Satan is a created spirit being

**Psalm 33:6** ~ *By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host*

**Colossians 1:16** ~ *For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him.*

3. Satan was created in the original creation

**Exodus 20:11** ~ *For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.*

**Job 38:7** ~ *When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy? (early on the first day?)*

**Psalm 148:2, 5** ~ *Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts!...Let them praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and they were created.”*

4. For a short time, he was in a state of unconfirmed holiness

5. Then Satan fell

- Assuming he was part of the creation deemed “very good” (Gen 1:31), then his fall came after the creation week and before tempting Eve in Genesis 3 (it is unclear how much time elapsed)
- There is no place in Scripture which describes Satan’s fall with absolute certainty but there are two possible passages that make reference to it:
  - **Isaiah 14:12-15** ~ *How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit*
  - Also Ezekiel 28:12-18

## Fall of Man

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- After their creation, Adam and Eve existed in a state of innocence or unconfirmed/untested holiness
- They were holy, yet not tested

**Genesis 1:31** ~ *And God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good*

- Genesis 3 describes the fall of mankind...it does not describe the origin of sin but rather the entrance of sin into the realm of humanity
- Reasons to take the Genesis account as factually true:
  - The account is presented as genuine history – it is a real event taking place within history recorded by Moses under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as he wrote Genesis
  - It is regarded as historical by other biblical writers...i.e. by Paul in Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14
  - It fits integrally with the rest of the Word of God and explains many facts that we cannot account for otherwise
- The context of Genesis 3:
  - There is no information given on how much time has passed since end of creation week
  - Some time passed since they knew of the pattern of God walking through the garden
  - The time is usually assumed to be short
  - Genesis 3 records the presence of three individuals in the Garden—Satan, Adam, and Eve (actually she is simply “the woman,” since she is not named until 3:20)
- Who is the serpent?
  - A real animal, but an animal unlike a snake or other reptile that we know now since it is clearly described as being the most crafty of all the animals that had been created
  - It was an animal possessed by Satan...How do we know? → The curse of Genesis 3:14 is on the serpent, but the curse of 3:15 is on Satan
  - Both Revelation 12:9 and 20:2 identify Satan as the serpent
  - Exactly how he possessed or utilized a real serpent for his purposes is never disclosed in the Bible, and we should not speculate beyond what the text tells us

## The Restriction

**Genesis 2:16-17** ~ *The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”*

- Concerning the restriction of eating from the tree, we are simply told that God prohibited it
- Although in itself it may not have been wrong, what makes it sin is the fact that God has prohibited it
- Whether it seems good to us, appears to do no damage, or may even feel good, is irrelevant...God’s Word is sufficient to establish something as right or wrong.

## The Temptation

**Genesis 3:1-5** ~ *Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”<sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;<sup>3</sup> but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.’”<sup>4</sup> And the serpent said to the woman, “You surely shall not die!<sup>5</sup> “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

- Interestingly, Satan approached Eve first, showing his craftiness going after the most vulnerable
- Only Adam was given the prohibition in Genesis 2:16-17...Eve only learned it second hand from Adam, not from God
- Note how Satan tempted Eve:
  1. He Casts Doubt about the Word of God – 3:1
    - His question has an overtone of criticism and implies that God is unfair
    - But the original prohibition emphasizes the generosity of God (2:16-17): free to eat from any tree
    - The serpent reverses this emphasis by asking whether God had said the man and woman were not to eat from any tree in garden
    - In framing question that way, serpent exaggerates the prohibition, not the generosity
  2. He Distorts the Word of God – 3:3
    - “or touch it” is not in the original prohibition
  3. He Denies the Word of God – 3:4-5
    - Vs. 4 ~ True, they did not die physically, but they did spiritually Did they die? → No not physically
    - Vs. 5 ~ They did know good and evil, but it was only a half truth
    - They came to know good and evil but not in the way Eve thought
    - As result of Fall, she knew good and evil (true) but not outside herself like God but inside herself by experience (false)
    - The knowledge they gained only produced guilt and shame
- At the very beginning of the experience in the Garden, we see The essence of sin: disobedience to the revealed will of God
- This is where sin starts. This is confirmed in the account by the fact that Satan himself reversed the statement of God, saying that there would be no resulting death, when God had said there would. It is significant that though Satan and the woman both tried to dismiss God’s Word, it turned out that God’s Word had the final say. What it predicted was exactly what happened. Failure to believe what God says to us is always disastrous and always results in sin.
- This provides remarkable insight into the enticement to sin both then and now
- It shows how the human heart can turn from God to evil

## The Violation

**Genesis 3:6** ~ *When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.*

- Interestingly, the serpent never invited the woman to eat the fruit...It is enough that the serpent has already created doubt
- In doing this she had already set herself up as an entity operating against God, since up to this point there had been perfect fellowship with Him
- Thus before she ate the fruit she had already pulled herself away from God, and thus had sinned
- Notice how sin works:

**1 John 2:16** ~ *the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

How Satan Tempts		
Genesis 3:6	1 John 2:16	Matthew 4:1-11
As Experienced by the First Adam	As Described by John	As Experienced by the Second Adam
"The tree was good for food"	"The lust of the flesh"	"Command that these stones be made bread."
"It was pleasant to the eyes"	"The lust of the eyes"	"The devil...showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them."
"A tree desired to make one wise"	"The pride of life"	"Cast yourself down; for...he shall give his angels charge concerning thee..."

- Although Eve sinned first, it is Adam who is held accountable for the sin
- Eve sinned first because she was deceived

**1 Timothy 2:14** ~ *And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression*

- Eve's sin was the first one but it was without consequence...It was Adam's sin that brought the consequence of plunging the human race into sin

**Romans 5:19** ~ *For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

## The Investigation

**Genesis 3:7-9** ~ *Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"*

- "Where are you" (vs. 9) – "you" is 2nd masc. sing – addressed only to Adam

## The Justification

**Genesis 3:10-13** ~ *He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."*

- Both try to shift blame: Adam – says it's woman's fault; Eve – say's its serpent's fault

## The Condemnation

### Curse on the Serpent

**Genesis 3:14** ~ *The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life;*

- The serpent is degraded to eat dust

## Curse on Satan

**Genesis 3:15** ~ *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.*

- The language passes from the actual serpent to address the evil one who has used the serpent
- Note the interplay:
  - “Between you and the woman”
  - “Between your seed (sons of devil – John 8:44) and her seed”
- Note the pronouns and antecedents
  - “he (woman’s seed = Christ and consequently believers) shall bruise you (Satan) on the head”
  - “you (Satan) shall bruise him (woman’s seed = Christ/believers) on the heel”
- This is clearly a prediction of Satan’s apparent victory over Christ from the cross to the resurrection, and then of the final triumph by the God-man
- Interestingly enough, then, the outcome of the course of the ages is predicted right at the beginning, perhaps lest there be discouragement from then on that the results of sin might never be reversed.
- This is the first mention of the Gospel (*protoeuangelion*)

## Curse on Eve

**Genesis 3:16** ~ *To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.”*

- The judgments upon the woman include the restriction in relation to the man and increased pain in childbearing
- “desire” – cf. 4:7...sinfulness wants to do away with submission and causes husband to be domineering

## Curse on Adam

**Genesis 3:17** ~ *Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.*

- Falling upon the man is the curse of pain in making a living
- Prior to the fall, work was present and expected, since Adam was to tend the Garden (2:15) and subdue the earth (1:28), yet there was no sin involved.
- God exerted effort in creation, yet there was no sin or curse present
- Work itself is not a curse, and is not to be associated with sin. The difficulty of work comes as a result of the fall

## Curse on the Earth

**Genesis 3:18-19** ~ *“Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”*

- Adam’s sin affected not just humanity but all of creation

**Romans 8:20** ~ *For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it*