

"You and Your Beliefs"--Harmartiology, part 1

Discuss: What's wrong with the world today?

In essence, the problem with the world today is summed up on one three-letter word. *Sin*. But what is sin really? It's to this question we now turn our attention.

In the past two lessons we have explored the subject of *anthropology*, the study of *man*. We have sought to answer five questions about man that God's Word addresses in Genesis 1-3.

I. Where? Man's Origin (1:26; 2:7)

II. What? Man's Design as Image (1:26, 27)

III. Why? Man's Purpose in the World

A. To Live in Fellowship with God

B. To have Dominion over the earth (1:26, 28)

1. Develop the earth (2:15)

2. Name the animals (2:19)

C. To Live in Relationship with Others: The Family (1:28; 2:18, 24)

IV. What Happened? Man's Fall

A. Man sinned (3:1-6).

B. Man came under the Curse of a Holy God (3:17-19)

1. Alienation from God

2. Alienation from Mankind

3. Alienation from Self

V. What did God Provide? Man's Hope

So to summarize, God created Man. God created Man to live in fellowship with Him. But the natural man does not live in fellowship with God. Why not?

Man sinned. It is difficult for us to think about Man apart from sin. Today, all men are sinners. It's hard to imagine what man was like pre-sin. The Bible teaches that Man's biggest problem is a moral problem, the problem of sin.

What is sin? Let's search the Scriptures to find out...

Related Doctrine: Harmartiology, The Doctrine of Sin

"*Harmartios*" is the Greek word for "sin." Hence, the theological term used to refer to the doctrine of sin is *harmartiology*.

Key Questions Relating to "Man and Sin":

We're going to seek to answer the following questions in the next couple of weeks...

What is sin?

What happened when Adam sinned?

What does it mean to say that man is depraved?

Is Man still God's Image-bearer since the Fall?

What happens to Man when he is born again?

Does a new man have an old nature? Rom 6-8

What does God expect of Man now?

1. Humility (Micah 6:8)
2. Worship (Jn 4:23-24)
3. Praise (Ps 150)
4. To know Him (Jn 17)
5. Reflect His Character (Mt 5:18)
6. Enjoy Him (Is 61:10; Hab 3:18; Ph 4:4)

Key Questions Relating to "Man and Sin":

Question: What is sin? [\[2\]](#)

Westminster Shorter Catechism: "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of the Law of God."

1. Stated negatively, Sin is a shortcoming.

Rom 3:23 "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

James 4:17 "To him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is SIN."

To do: Give an example of sin as a shortcoming (e.g. the priest and the Levite in the story of the Good

Samaritan) (e.g. the failure to call my brother when he is hurting and needs my encouragement).

2. *Stated positively, Sin is transgression.*

Is 53:6 "All we like sheep have gone OUR OWN WAY..."

I Jn 3:4 "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law."

What is God's Law? God's Law is His Holy, moral standard. God has revealed that unchanging standard in His Word. We generally think of the Ten Commands (Exod. 20), fulfilled in the Law of Love in the NT (Luke 10:27).

Sin is anything we do that is contrary to God's holy character and God's holy will. God's Word defines what sin is. Sin is a Deviation. Sin is Disobedience.

The main word for sin in the OT (*chet*) and in the NT (*harmartia*) both mean "to miss the mark." Sin is against God. Sin offends a Righteous God.

To do: Give an example of sin as a transgression (e.g. looking as pornography) (e.g. gossiping about a brother in Christ).

Key: We need to realize that sin is both Shortcoming and Transgression.

The mass murderer at Lucasville is a sinner. His transgressions are obvious. But so is the Boy Scout that helps people across the street. Why? He too has missed God's mark.

Discuss: It's easy to see the mass murderer's sin, but how has the "boy scout" missed God's mark?

Question: What happened when Adam sinned?

You can read about the entrance of sin into the world in Gen 3. You know the story well. But what really happened when Adam sinned? The fact is, Adam's sin affected practically everything in God's world. Mankind came under the Curse of a Holy God (3:17-19). Let's notice, first of all, what happened to Adam when he sinned, three consequences...

1. *Alienation from God*

Gen 3:23-24 Adam was sent from God's presence.

2. *Alienation from Mankind*

Gen 3:12 Adam turned on Eve and blamed her for the problem.

3. *Alienation from Self*

Gen 3:7-8 Adam experienced shame.

Those were the consequences of sin for Adam. But not just for Adam. As his descendants, we too have experienced these consequences...

Rom 5:12 "Wherefore as by one man sin entered the world...for all have sinned."

I Cor 15:22 "For as in Adam all die..."

Adam's sin was the original sin. But Adam's sin involved the entire human race. Adam was our Representative. He represented us.

We are born in sin.

Ps 51:5 "Behold I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Ps 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."

Eph 2:3 "...were by nature the children of wrath..."

Here are the consequences of sin for us: We're alienated from God, from Mankind, from ourselves.

Rom 8:7 "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to God's law, neither indeed, can be.

Rom 8:8 "They that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Question: What does it mean to say that man is depraved?

Suppose I go to the inner city of Chicago, find a bum in the gutter, pick him up, and bring him home. I give him a good meal. I send him to the shower. I shave him. I buy him a nice suit. I enroll him in the best university. Later I help him find a respectable, high paying job.

Discuss...

Is the man still a sinner? Yes, a Refined sinner.

Is the man still depraved? Yes. What is depravity?

Key: Total depravity does not imply that we are as bad as we could be. It means that there is no area in our lives left intact by sin.

Depravity has to do with the EXTENT of sin. The Bible teaches that sin affects the WHOLE PERSON (Milne, 104):

1. Sin affects the Will.

Jn 8:34 "Jesus answered...Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin."

Rom 7:18ff "For I know that in me dwells no good thing; for to will is present, but..."

2. *Sin affects the Mind and Understanding.*

Gen 6:5 "God saw the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Eph 4:17 "...in the vanity of their mind."

3. *Sin affects our Emotions and Affections.*

Rom 1:24-27 "...For this cause God gave them up to vile affections..."

We are all born into this world depraved. Sin has affected us to the very core. We are not "sick" in sins. We are "dead" in sins (Eph 2:1).

Discuss: Can depraved people do "good" things? Depends what we mean by "good." In our fellow man's eyes, yes. In God's holy eyes, no.

What do depraved people need? The gracious work of the New Birth.

Rom 5:15ff (5:19) "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

There is hope for sinners! Why? This coming Friday we'll observe what we call "Good Friday." That's why there is hope, because of the cross.

Next Week:

Q: Is Man still God's Image-bearer since the Fall?

Q: What happens to Man when he is born again?

Q: Does a new man have an old nature? Rom 6-8

Q: What does God expect of Man now?

1. Humility (Micah 6:8)
2. Worship (Jn 4:23-24)
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Hypothetical Situation: How would you help a neighbor who opened up and said to you, "I hate myself. I hate the way I look. What's wrong with me?"

[\[1\]](#) These unedited notes were prepared for use in a Wednesday evening, discussion-oriented Bible study at Wheelersburg Baptist Church in Wheelersburg , Ohio . Although the notes are in draft form, I trust the seed thoughts contained will be used by our gracious God for your edification. –Pastor Brad Brandt

[\[2\]](#) See V. Matthews, Chr Life syllabus, 33