

**Loris First Baptist Church**  
***“52 Vital Doctrines of The Bible”***

**Doctrine #27 - Sin: Its Character and Universality**

**Note:** Most information based on pages 177-180 of the book “Major Bible Themes” by Lewis Sperry Chaffer.

**Human Speculation on Sin**

1. Because sin is a dominant fact of human experience as well as a major theme of the Bible, it has been the subject of endless discussion.
2. Those who reject scriptural revelation have frequently provided inadequate concepts of sin.
  - a. A familiar feature of the nonbiblical approach is to regard sin as to some extent an “illusion”.
    - 1) That is, that sin is just a misconception based upon a false theory that there is no right and wrong in the world.
    - 2) This theory, of course, fails to face the facts of life and the evils of sin, and denies the existence of a moral God and moral principles.
  - b. Another ancient approach to the problem of sin regards it as an inherent principle, the opposite of what God is, and related to the physical world.
    - 1) This is found in oriental philosophy as well as in Greek Gnosticism and is the background both for asceticism, the denial of the desires of the body, and its opposite, Epicureanism, advocating indulgence of the body.
    - 2) The effect, however, is to deny that man really sins and is accountable to God.
  - c. A common, although inadequate, concept is that sin is just selfishness. While sin is often selfish, this concept does not cover all cases, for man sometimes sins against himself.
2. All these theories fall short of the biblical standard and are a rejection of the biblical revelation of the character and universality of sin.

**The Biblical Doctrine of Sin**

1. The teaching of Scripture is that sin is any lack of conformity to the character of God, whether it be an act, disposition, or state.
2. Various sins are defined in the Word of God as illustrated, for instance, in the Ten Commandments which God gave to Israel (Exod. 20:3-17).

3. Sin is sin because it is different from what God is and God is eternally holy.
4. Sin is always against God even though it may be directed against human beings.

Psalm 51:4 *“AGAINST YOU, AND YOU ONLY, HAVE I SINNED and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are proved right when You speak and justified when You judge.”*

Luke 15:18 *“I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and AGAINST YOU.”*

5. A person who sins is, accordingly, unlike God and subject to God’s judgment.
6. The doctrine of sin is presented in the Bible in four aspects.
  - a. Personal sin is the form of sin which includes everything in the daily life which is against or fails to conform to the character of God.

Romans 3:23 *“For ALL HAVE SINNED and fallen short of the glory of God...”*

- 1) Men are frequently conscious of their personal sins which may take a variety of forms.
- 2) Generally speaking, personal sin relates to some particular command of God in Scripture.
- 3) It includes the aspect of rebellion or disobedience.

1John 3:4 *“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, SIN IS LAWLESSNESS.”*

- 4) Although at least eight important words are used for sin in the Old Testament and as many as twelve in the New Testament, the basic idea is lack of conformity to God’s character and will by acts either of omission (“sinning by failing to do what should be done”) or commission (“sinning by doing what should not be done”).
- 5) The essential idea is that man comes short, he misses the mark, and he fails to attain the standard of God’s own character of holiness.

- b. The sin nature of man is another major aspect of sin as revealed in the Bible.

Romans 5:19 *“For just as through the disobedience of the one man THE MANY WERE MADE SINNERS, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.”*

Ephesians 2:3 *“All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of OUR SINFUL NATURE and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”*

- 1) Adam’s own initial sin caused him to fall, and in the fall he became an entirely different being, depraved and degenerate, and only capable of begetting posterity like his fallen self.

- 2) Therefore, every child of Adam is born with the Adamic nature, is ever and always prone to sin, and, though this nature was judged by Christ on the cross (Rom. 6:6-10), it remains a vitally active force in every Christian's life.

Romans 6:6 *"For we know THAT OUR OLD SELF (i.e. "our sin nature") was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."*

- 3) It is never said to be removed or eradicated in this life, but for the Christian there is overcoming power provided through the indwelling Spirit.

Romans 8:3-4 *"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was WEAKENED BY THE SIN NATURE, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so He condemned sin IN SINFUL MAN, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according TO THE SINFUL NATURE but according to the Spirit."*

Galatians 5:16-17 *"So I say, LIVE BY THE SPIRIT, and you will not gratify the desires OF THE SINFUL NATURE. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. THEY ARE IN CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER, so that you do not do what you want."*

- 4) Many biblical passages allude to this important subject.
  - a) According to Ephesians 2:3, all men "were by nature the children of wrath," and man's whole nature is depraved.
  - b) The concept of total depravity is not that every man is as evil as he "possibly could be" but rather that man, throughout his nature, is corrupted by sin (Rom. 1:18—3:20).
  - c) Accordingly, man in his will (Rom. 1:28), his conscience (1 Tim. 4:2), and his intellect (Rom. 1:28; 2 Cor. 4:4) is corrupted and depraved, and his heart and understanding are blinded (Eph. 4:18).

Romans 1:28 *"Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to A DEPRAVED MIND, TO DO what ought not to be done."*

- d) As seen in previous study, the reason why men have a sin nature is that it is "transmitted" them from their parents.
- e) "No" child ever born in the world has been free from his sin nature except in the unique case of the birth of Christ.
- f) Men do not sin and become sinners; it is rather that men sin because they have a sin nature.
- g) The remedy for this as well as for personal sin is, of course, the redemption which is provided in salvation in Christ.

- c. Sin is also presented in Scripture as “imputed” or “reckoned” to our account.

Romans 5:12-18 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and IN THIS WAY DEATH CAME TO ALL MEN, because all sinned— for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come. But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, BY THE TRESPASS OF ONE MAN, DEATH REIGNED THROUGH THAT ONE MAN, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. Consequently, just as THE RESULT OF ONE TRESPASS WAS THE CONDEMNATION OF ALL MEN, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.”

- 1) As revealed in connection with the fall of man in Doctrine #26, there are three major imputations set forth in the Scriptures:
  - a) The imputation of “Adam’s sin” to “the entire human race”, on which fact the doctrine of original sin is based;
  - b) The imputation of the “sin of man” to “Christ”, on which fact the doctrine of salvation is based; and
  - c) The imputation of “the righteousness of God” to “those who believe on Christ”, on which fact the doctrine of justification is based.
- 2) Imputation may be either (a) actual, or (b) judicial.
  - a) Actual imputation is the “reckoning” (i.e. “to count”, “to credit”) to one of that which is “antecedently” (i.e. “previously) his own. Although God might righteously do this, yet because of the reconciling work of Christ, God is not now “imputing” to man the “sin” which is antecedently his own.

2 Corinthians 5:19 “...God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, NOT COUNTING MEN’S SINS AGAINST THEM...”

- b) Judicial imputation is the reckoning to one of that which is NOT antecedently his own.

Philemon 18 “If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, CHARGE IT TO ME.”

- (1) Though there has been disagreement as to whether the imputation of Adam’s sin to each member of the race is actual or judicial, Romans 5:12 clearly states that the imputation is actual, since in the federal-head representation, Adam’s posterity sinned when he sinned.

- (2) The next two verses (Rom. 5:13-14) are written to prove that this is not a reference to personal sins (for example of this type of imputation, see “Hebrews 7:9-10”).

Hebrews 7:9-10 *“ONE MIGHT EVEN SAY that Levi, who collects the tenth, PAID THE TENTH THROUGH ABRAHAM, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, LEVI WAS STILL IN THE BODY OF HIS ANSCESTOR.”*

- (3) However, Romans 5:17-18 implies that his imputation is also judicial, as it is stated that by one man’s sin judgment came upon all men.
- (a) Only the one initial sin of Adam is in question.
  - (b) Its effect is “death”—both to Adam and directly from Adam to each member of the race.
  - (c) The divinely provided cure for imputed sin is the gift of God, which is eternal life through Jesus Christ.

d. The resulting judicial state of sin for the entire human race is also presented in Scripture.

- 1) By divine reckoning the whole world, including Jew and Gentile, is now “under sin”:

Romans 3:9 *“What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are ALL UNDER SIN.”*

Romans 11:32 *“For God has BOUND ALL MEN OVER TO DISOBEDIENCE so that He may have mercy on them all.”*

Galatians 3:22 *“But the Scripture declares that THE WHOLE WORLD IS A PRISONER TO SIN, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.”*

- 2) To be under sin is to be divinely reckoned to be without merit which might contribute toward salvation.
- 3) Since salvation is by grace alone and grace excludes all human merit, God has decreed all, as regards their salvation, to be “under sin,” or without merit.
- 4) This estate under sin is remedied only when the individual, through riches of grace, is “reckoned” to stand in the merit of Christ.

## **Conclusion**

- 1. Taken as a whole, the Bible clearly indicates the devastating effects of sin upon man and the hopelessness of man solving his own sin problem.
- 2. The proper understanding of the doctrine of sin is essential to understanding God’s remedy for it.

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Doctrine # 27 - “Sin: Its Character and Universality”

1. Read Pages 1-5 from the Doctrine#27 Study Guide by next Wednesday.
2. Answer the following Questions about “Sin” as you read:

**a. Human Speculation on Sin**

- 1) For those who regard “sin” as to some extent an “illusion”, what are their misconceptions based upon?  
(page 1, top)
  
- 2) What is the “effect” of the “ancient” approach to the problem of sin which adopts the “Ying” and “Yang” approach and simply claims that “sin” is just the direct opposite of what God is? (page 1, middle)
  
- 3) What is wrong with defining “sin” as nothing more than “selfishness”? (page 1, middle)

**b. The Biblical Doctrine of Sin**

- 1) What is the overall teaching of Scripture on what sin “is”? (page 1, bottom)
  
- 2) True or False. In all cases, sin is against God even though it may be directed against another human being. (page 2, top; see also Psalm 51:4; Luke 15:18)
  
- 3) The Doctrine of Sin is presented in the Bible in how many aspects? (page 2, top-middle)

- 4) What is “personal” sin according to the Scriptures? (page 2, top-middle)
  
- 5) True or False. Everyone, no matter their religious position or social graces is guilty of personal sin.  
(page 2, middle; Romans 3:23)
  
- 6) According to 1John 3:4, what is a good definition of “personal” sin?
  
- 7) What is a sinful act of “omission”? (page 2, middle)
  
- 8) What is a sinful act of “commission”? (page 2, middle)
  
- 9) What is the “internal” part of man which constantly tries to get every man to rebel against God’s laws and to follow its own “desires” and “thoughts”? (page 2, bottom; see also Romans 5:19; Ephesians 2:3)
  
- 10) Because of the fall of Adam, what is every human born with and what effect does that have? (page 3, top)
  
- 11) True or False. One of the benefits of being “saved” is that your “sin nature” is removed from your body and replaced with the Holy Spirit, making you incapable of sinning against God.  
(page 3, top; see also Romans 8:3-4 and Galatians 5:16-17)
  
- 12) The concept of “total depravity” is NOT that every man is as evil as he “possibly could be”, but rather that man, throughout his “nature” is what? (page 3, middle; Ephesians 2:3; Romans 1:18-3:20)

- 13) In what ways is a man “corrupted” and “depraved”?  
(page 3, middle; Romans 1:28; 1 Timothy 4:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:18)
- 14) How does a person get a “sin nature”? (page 3, bottom; Romans 5:12-18)
- 15) True or False. A man becomes a “sinner” against God the moment he chooses to sin.  
(page 3, bottom)
- 16) What is the remedy for personal sin in the eyes of God? (page 3, bottom)
- 17) Sin is presented in Scripture as being “imputed” or “reckoned” to our account. From “whom” was our sin against God “imputed”? (page 4, top-middle; see also Romans 5:12-18)
- 18) On what fact is the Doctrine of Original Sin based upon? (page 4, middle)
- 19) On what fact is the Doctrine of Salvation based upon? (page 4, middle)
- 20) On which fact is the Doctrine of Justification based upon? (page 4, middle)
- 21) What is the difference between “actual” and “judicial” imputation?  
(page 4, bottom; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Philemon 18)



- 22) True or False. According to the principle of “actual” imputation, Sin was “imputed” to all mankind when Adam sinned because all man was “in Adam” and sinned when Adam sinned.  
(page 4, bottom; Romans 5:12)
- 23) What is the “divinely” provided “cure” for imputed sin? (page 5, top-middle; Romans 6:23)
- 24) According to Romans 3:9, who is “under sin”?
- 25) According to Galatians 3:22, what does the Scripture declare?
- 26) What does “being under sin” mean when it comes to being “divinely reckoned”? (page 5, bottom)
- 27) When a person is in the estate of being “under sin”, what is the only remedy? (page 5, bottom)

**c. Conclusion**

- 1) Taken as a whole, the Bible clearly indicates “what” in regards to sin? (page 5, bottom)
- 2) What is absolutely essential for a person to understand God’s remedy for sin? (page 5, bottom)