

Question #8: What Is Sin?*

I. What Sin Is

A. Sin is any failure to conform to the moral law of God in act, attitude, or nature.

God's moral law is on display throughout Scripture, but one place it is clearly stated is the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:1-17).

1. Sin consists of any action against God's moral law (murder -- Ex. 20:13; stealing -- Ex. 20:15).
2. Sin consists of any attitude contrary to God's law (coveting -- Ex. 20:17).
3. Sin exists in our natures -- the internal character of who we are (Eph. 2:3).

B. Sin stands in contradiction to the character of God himself (James 1:13).

II. Where Sin Came From

A. God should never be blamed for sin nor is he in any way held responsible for sin (Deut. 32:4; James 1:13).

1. Yet, God "works all things according to the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11).
2. He in some way did ordain that sin would be allowed in his world, and He in fact accomplishes his purposes at times through sinful actions (Acts 2:22-24; 4:27-28).
 - a) The existence of sin did not surprise God.
 - b) He decided that He would allow moral creatures to willfully and voluntarily choose to sin.
3. An explanation of how all this is possible is one of the great mysteries of theology. We should admit that we don't have all the answers to these issues.

B. Sin seems to have come into existence through the willful choices of God's creatures.

1. Satan and his demons were rebellious and "sinful" before the disobedience of humanity (the presence of the serpent in the Garden -- Gen. 3).

* The material in this handout is a summary of chapter three, "What is the Trinity?" in Wayne Grudem, *Christian Beliefs: Twenty Basics Every Christian Should Know*, ed. by Elliot Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 62-66.

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2. Adam and Eve willfully brought sin into this world and upon humanity through their choice to disobey God's command (Gen. 2:17; Gen 3:6; Rom. 5:12).

C. Sin has had dramatic effects upon humanity and creation.

1. Adam's nature became sinful, and subsequently, we now possess sinful natures. We are naturally opposed to God (Rom. 7:18; Jer. 17:9; Ps. 51:5; 58:3).
2. We are unable to do anything on our own that pleases God (Isa. 64:6).
3. Every part of our being (intellects, emotions, desires, hearts, goals, motives, and physical bodies) is affected by sin.
4. Sin has placed us in the position of "guilty" before God. When Adam sinned, God thought of us all as having sinned (Rom. 5:12-21).
 - a) God views humans as an organic whole -- we are guilty under the head of the human race -- Adam.
 - b) While this may seem unfair, this also allows Him to view Christians as an organic whole under the new head of the believing race -- Jesus Christ

III. How Sin Affects Us Today

- A. Every person commits sins (1 Kings 8:46; Ps. 14:3; Rom. 3:9-20, 23; 1 John 1:8).
- B. Sin has brought death upon all people (Gen. 3:19; Rom. 6:23); thus, it would take an act of God to solve our problem of sin and death (i.e. the perfect life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ).
 1. Death upon humanity is not instantaneous, but sin did guarantee that each person will ultimately die physically. It also brought spiritual death (separation from God) upon all people.
 2. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God has defeated sin and death (1 Peter 2:24; Rom. 8:1; 1 Cor. 15:20-22, 54-57).
- C. As forgiven Christians, sin does not affect our legal standing before God (1 Cor. 15:3; 1 John 3:2). Christ became all of our sins (past, present, and future) so that we could become his righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21).

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- D. While it may not affect our legal standing, sin still affects our fellowship and relationships.
1. God is grieved by our sin and must discipline us (Heb. 12:6).
 2. It affects our relationships with others.
 3. When we do sin, we can and should confess our sins to reestablish right relationships (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1; 1 John 1:9).

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