

Doctrine of Sin: Teaching Guide

What Does the Bible Say?

- **Genesis 3:** The Fall of Man. Satan tempts Eve to sin against God. Eve sins, then Adam. As a result, God curses Satan, Eve, and Adam. Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden.
- **Isaiah 1:** Isaiah exhorts Judah for its moral decline and deep corruption.
- **Isaiah 64:** All are unclean; even our righteousness is like filthy rags compared to God's holiness.
- **Proverbs:** Solomon's wisdom contrasts worldly wisdom with Godly wisdom. Man's ways may seem right to him, but God measures the heart.
- **Ecclesiastes:** No one is righteous; all fall into sin.
- **Psalms 53:** Humanity is godless and corrupt; none are good or seek God.
- **Romans 3-8:** No one is righteous. Sin and death entered through Adam and affect all people. Yet, through Christ, many are saved. We are freed from sin's slavery and become servants of Christ, no longer condemned.
- **Ephesians 2:** We were dead in sin but made alive in Christ. Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works. We are created for good works.
- **1 John 1:8-9, 3:** Denying personal sin is self-deception. Confession leads to forgiveness and cleansing through Christ.

What Has the Church Said?

- **Saint Augustine:** Defined sin as any utterance, deed, or desire contrary to eternal law. He taught that evil is the absence of good, not an independent force. Augustine developed the doctrine of original sin, asserting that sin is inherited biologically from Adam.
- **Pelagius:** A heretic who taught that humans are inherently good and capable of choosing righteousness on their own. Augustine countered by emphasizing human depravity and our absolute need for grace.
- **John Calvin:** Influential in Reformed theology, Calvin described humans as totally depraved: utterly corrupted by sin and completely incapable of saving themselves apart from God's grace.

How Does It All Fit Together?

Sin is the absence of good, a separation from God. Romans 6:23 says, "the wages of sin is death." Sin brings both physical and spiritual death to humanity. Because of original sin, human nature is inherently corrupted. Apart from Christ, we cannot escape this condition.

Adam serves as our federal head; through him, all inherit sin and its consequences both biologically and legally. This is central to Reformed theology.

However, we must remember that Creation itself is good, and humanity, in structure, is "very good." Humanity is structurally good but directionally corrupted. This distinction protects against the heresy of Gnosticism, which wrongly teaches that the physical world is inherently evil.

Ministry Application

- **Preach Repentance:** Confession and repentance of sin are essential starting points for salvation. One must acknowledge personal sin to receive the saving work of the cross.
- **Proclaim Grace:** Without God's grace, there is no salvation. Jesus Christ's death and resurrection provide atonement for our sins.
- **Evangelize and Disciple:** Encourage nonbelievers to trust Christ and believers to actively battle sin in their lives. As John Owen said, "Be killing sin or it will be killing you."
- **Replace Sin with Righteousness:** Simply stopping sinful behavior is not enough; it must be replaced with godly pursuits.
- **Hate Sin:** As God hates sin, so should we.
- **Support Addicts:** Christ empowers us to overcome addictions.
- **Value Life:** Recognize the inherent goodness in our created structure.
- **Address Social Sin:** Beyond personal sin, confront social injustices and pursue justice, ethics, mercy, and grace in society.
- **Pursue Intimacy with Christ:** A deep, personal, devotional relationship with Christ is essential. Without Him, we are hopeless.