

Purpose of Our Study

In these notes we will study the Christian teaching regarding sin.

Outline of Study

1. Definition
2. Origin
3. Imputed Sin
4. Sin Nature
5. Personal Sin
6. Results of Sin
7. Wrong Views

1. Definition

Sin is any lack of conformity to the moral law of God,¹ either in act,² disposition,³ or state.⁴ As such, it can be described as unrighteousness, that is, as a lack of conformity to God's holy standard,⁵ and manifests itself in pride,⁶ selfishness,⁷ a deep-seated desire for self-autonomy,⁸ idolatry,⁹ and a lack of love for God.¹⁰

2. Origin of Sin

Though sin was included in the decree of God, He is in no sense the author of sin.¹¹ Sin originated after the initial creation, for the creation was perfectly good.¹² Satan is the ultimate originator of sin.¹³ Adam is responsible for bringing sin into the human race.¹⁴

3. Imputed Sin

The first sin of Adam is reckoned immediately to every human being. This is effected when the person comes into existence, i.e. at conception. Because of Adam's representative position over the whole race, every per-

¹ 1 John 3:4

² Rom. 4:7

³ Matt. 15:19 (thoughts); Ex. 20:17 (coveting); Lev. 19:17 (hate); Matt. 5:27-29 (lust)

⁴ Psalm 19:12-13, 51:5

⁵ 1 John 5:17

⁶ Isa. 14:12-14

⁷ Php. 2:21

⁸ Isa. 53:6

⁹ Rom. 1:21-23

¹⁰ Deut. 6:4-5

¹¹ James 1:13; 1 John 1:5

¹² Gen. 1:31

¹³ Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:11-16; 1 John 3:8

¹⁴ Rom. 5:12

son is guilty before God as a member of the now sinful race.¹⁵

4. Sin Nature

In addition to the problem of imputed sin, every individual inherits the sin nature mediately from his parents. In other words, two sinners beget a sinner.¹⁶

5. Personal Sin

Every individual commits acts of sin, either by committing something that should not be done, or not doing something that ought to be done.¹⁷ These sins may be of varying levels of severity as far as their consequences to others and to oneself, but all are worthy of death.¹⁸

6. Results of Sin

When Adam sinned, death was brought into the world.¹⁹ This death is both physical²⁰ and spiritual.²¹ At physical death, one's spiritual fate is sealed, and for the wicked, this spiritual death is finalized in the second death.²²

7. Wrong Views

Sin is not learned. Rather, it is inherent from conception because of the sin nature.

Sin does not reside solely in the flesh. This is a Gnostic-type heresy.

Sin cannot be divided into various categories like "conscious" and "unconscious" sins as in the view that man can become perfect in this life. There may be sins that we do not yet realize in our own lives,²³ but these are no less cause for guilt or need for salvation and cleansing than the sins we know about.

¹⁵ Rom. 5:12-21

¹⁶ Gen. 5:3; Psalm 51:5, 58:3; 1 John 1:8

¹⁷ 1 John 1:10; Rom. 3:23. I allow for the possible exception of irresponsible people such as very young infants.

¹⁸ Rom. 6:23

¹⁹ Rom. 5:12; 6:23

²⁰ Gen. 3:19

²¹ Eph. 2:1

²² Rev. 20:14-15

²³ Psalm 19:12, 139:23-24