

Hamartiology

Part 1 – Sin Defined

- **What covenant did God make with Adam and Eve, the first covenant with the first humans?**

God made a covenant of life with Adam and Eve, which was based on perfect obedience to one rule. God forbade them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The penalty for disobedience was death.

Genesis 2:15-17 – “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- **Did our first parents keep this covenant and remain righteous?**

Our first parents, possessing the ability to do good or to do evil, fell from the righteous state, in which they were created, by sinning against God.

Genesis 3:6-7 – “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”

- **What is Sin?**

Sin is any lack of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God.

Sin is any lack of conformity to the law of God. (sins of omission)

Sin, on the one hand, is all that humans do not do that the law of God commands them to do. Human refusal to conform to God’s required statutes is sin. The “greatest” commandment, according to Jesus, is the one, to which humans fail to conform most.

Matthew 22:37-40 – “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

James 4:17 – “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”

Leviticus 5:17 – *“If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the LORD’s commandments ought not to be done, though he did not know it, then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity.”*

Sin is any transgression of the law of God. (sins of commission)

Sin, on the other hand, is all that humans do that the law of God forbids.

1 John 3:4 – *“Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.”*

- **What was the first sin, which was the fall of all humanity?**

The first sin, committed by Adam and Eve, was the eating of fruit from the forbidden tree. This was an ultimate rejection of God’s authority and a desire to be a god for themselves.

Genesis 3:1-6 – *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”*

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

“But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”

- **What was the effect of this transgression on the whole of humanity?**

Adam, the representative of all humanity in covenant with God, sinned against God. His sinful act was not only for himself, but also for all humans who would descend from him.

Adam was our sinful representative.

Romans 5:12-21 – *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned — [F]or sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even*

over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin.

For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

J. I. Packer comments on these verses: Paul, in Romans, affirms that all mankind is naturally under the guilt and power of sin, the reign of death, and the inescapable wrath of God. He traces this back to the sin of the one man whom, when speaking at Athens, he described as our common ancestor. This is authoritative apostolic interpretation of the history recorded in Genesis 3, where we find the account of the Fall, the original human lapse from God and godliness into sin and lostness...

Though telling the story in a somewhat figurative style, Genesis asks us to read it as history; in Genesis, Adam is linked to the patriarchs and with them to the rest of mankind by genealogy (chs. 5, 10, 11), which makes him as much a part of space-time history as were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All the book's main characters after Adam, except Joseph, are shown as sinners in one way or another, and the death of Joseph, like the death of almost everyone else in the story, is carefully recorded (Gen. 50:22-26); Paul's statement "In Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22) only makes explicit what Genesis already clearly implies.

It may fairly be claimed that the Fall narrative gives the only convincing explanation of the perversity of human nature that the world has ever seen. Pascal said that the doctrine of original sin seems an offense to reason, but once accepted it makes total sense of the entire human condition. He was right, and the same thing may and should be said of the Fall narrative itself.¹

¹ Packer, J. I. (1993). *Concise theology: A guide to historic Christian beliefs*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.