

* The Heights Baptist Church * Sermon Series: Doctrine *

* Topic: Sin * Romans 1:18-32 * 7/19/26 *

MAIN POINT

Sin can be defined as a failure to conform to God's moral law. This started with Adam (original sin) and infects all of us. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and results in physical and spiritual death and separation from God. It is only through faith, accepting Christ's payment for our sin through His shed blood on the cross that we can have our relationship with God restored (John 14:6).

INTRODUCTION

In Romans 1, Paul describes how people are tempted to worship created things rather than the creator, God. What created things are people tempted to worship or idolize today, and why?

Note to study leader: Today's lesson will be looking at the doctrine of sin. It can be outlined as follows:

- A. What sin is
- B. Four types of sin
- C. Four types of personal sin
- D. The effects of sin
- E. The remedy for sin

UNDERSTANDING

A. WHAT SIN IS

The Hebrew word for sin (e.g. Genesis 4:7) in the Old Testament is "hatta'at", which means "an offence". The Greek word for sin (e.g. Romans 5:12) in the New Testament is "hamartia", which means to miss the mark, or to wander from the path. Webster's dictionary defines sin as a "transgression of the law of God" and the "state of human nature in which the self is estranged from God." Putting these ideas together, we can summarize sin as any failure to conform to God's moral law, in nature, action, or attitude. We can sin against God's written law (Romans 7:7), and against God's law that is written in our hearts (Rom. 2:14-15).

B. FOUR TYPES OF SIN

1. Original Sin

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do each of these verses tell us about "original sin"?

- **Genesis 3:8-10:** When Adam sinned, it caused separation from God
- **Genesis 3:17-19:** When Adam sinned, it brought a curse on creation and death to mankind.
- **Romans 5:12:** When Adam sinned, it brought death to all creation, including the human race.
- **Romans 8:20-22:** When Adam sinned, it caused all of creation to be placed in bondage to decay.

Original sin is the term used to describe Adam's sin, and the effects that sin had on all of creation. This includes the origin of death, and the whole creation being cursed.

2. Inherited Sin

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do each of these verses tell us about “inherited sin”?

- **Psalm 51:5:** We are born with a sinful nature.
- **Jeremiah 17:9:** Our heart is deceitful, and desperately wicked.
- **Romans 7:18:** Nothing good lives in our sinful nature.

Inherited sin describes the effect that Adam’s original sin on all of us. His original sin caused every person after him to be born into a fallen sinful condition. All human beings have inherited a sinful nature through Adam’s original act of disobedience. Inherited sin affects our character and standing before God.

Note to study leader: There is not agreement among conservative Christians as to how much of our originally being made in God’s image remains with us along with our completely corrupt sinful nature.

3. Imputed Sin

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do each of these verses tell us about “imputed sin”?

- **Romans 5:18:** Adam’s sin resulted in condemnation for all people.
- **Romans 5:15-18:** Death was brought to us through Adam’s sin.

Imputed sin refers to the fact that in addition to receiving a fallen nature, all people who came after Adam are charged with the guilt of Adam’s sin. Imputed sin makes us subject to God’s judgment, since Adam’s guilt that is credited to us as his descendants

4. Personal Sin

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do each of these verses tell us about “personal sin”?

- **Deuteronomy 24:16:** Each of us dies for our own sin.
- **Romans 3:23:** All of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
- **Romans 6:23:** The wages of sin is death.
- **James 1:14-15:** Each of commits sin whenever we give in to temptation.
- **Revelation 20:12:** People will be judged based on what they personally have done.

Personal sin is any action, word, or attitude that a person has or takes that is contrary to God’s law, In the final judgement, people will be judged for the sins they personally have committed.

C. FOUR TYPES OF PERSONAL SIN

What do these verses tell us are ways we can commit personal sin?

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

In what ways can we commit personal sin according to these verses?

1. **Galatians 5:19-21:** Sins of commission. Doing things that God commands you not to do is sin.
2. **1 Samuel 12:23 and James 4:17:** Sins of omission. Not doing the good that God commands is sin.
3. **Matthew 5:21-23 and 27-30:** Sinning through wrong thoughts or attitudes.
4. **Romans 14:23:** Sinning by going against our consciences.

D. THE EFFECTS OF SIN

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 1:18-23

How do some people react to the fact God has revealed Himself to mankind?

Since the garden of Eden, people have been unrighteous, and they have suppressed the truth. God is at work to show Himself in the world, yet the world is in rebellion against Him.

Why did Paul state that people who live in sinful ways are without excuse?

Because God has revealed Himself through creation, Paul stated that lost people are without excuse. The creation should lead to the reasonable conclusion that there is a Creator.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ ROMANS 1:24-32

Describe the downward spiral of sin depicted in these verses?

It appears as if God removes layers of protection that He has given us against our own sinful natures. Things that even our sinful natures initially find repulsive eventually captivate those who reject God.

E. THE REMEDY FOR SIN

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 AND 1 PETER 1:18-19

Who or what is the only remedy for our sin?

Jesus!

APPLICATION

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

***Note to study leader:** The following question incorporates the “LIFE” acronym (from our “Starting Point” classes) into the lesson. A summary of this acronym is included in the first portion of the Commentary section of this lesson and probably on a poster in your classroom. Include a brief description of “LIFE” as part of this application. Today’s application is based on the “E” in the “LIFE” acronym.*

Faithful follower: Am I saying no to the desires of my flesh as I choose to follow Christ?

In what ways can we be more alert to the sin in our lives and more committed to rejecting sinful ways of living? How can we encourage one another in this pursuit?

PRAYER

God we confess to you that we are sinners. We thank you that when we confess our sins, you are faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. Lead us not into temptation. Protect us from and deliver us from the evil one. We pray that we wouldn’t take advantage of your grace as an excuse to deliberately keep on sinning, but rather that we’d rely on your grace to keep us from sinning. We pray you would give us a persistent attitude of forgiveness toward others, remembering how you forgave us of the debt that was impossible for us to pay. Help us to quickly forgive those who sin against us and quickly make restitution with others when we sin against them.

COMMENTARY

The LIFE Acronym

This acronym is part of our “Starting Point” training programs. The letters in LIFE stand for the following:

Loving our neighbor: I am motivated to show God’s love and compassion to others where I live, work, and play.

Intentional friend: I am purposefully cultivating relationships within my church family.

Faithful follower: I am sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit in regular times of prayer, worship, and Bible study.

Engaged disciple-maker: I am regularly looking to invest in others to help them take their next step in following Jesus.

Romans 1:18-32

1:18. In Romans 1:16-17 Paul wrote that God has revealed His righteousness. And when people reject God, God’s wrath is also revealed in the present. Though God ultimately will dispense wrath and righteousness in the final judgment, these twin expressions of God’s nature are present realities. The present tense of is revealed is important in this verse and for what Paul wrote in later verses concerning the results of humanity’s sin. The present tense indicates an action that is ongoing, not just limited to a one-time expression. Wrath is God’s righteous anger against sin. His wrath is the natural complement to His righteousness. The objects of God’s wrath are godlessness and unrighteousness. The first term indicates an impious life that rejects God. The second term focuses on unjust human relationships. The two terms are related. Our neglect of God makes impossible our rightly relating to one another. The verb in suppress the truth also can be translated “to hinder” or “to hold back.” God’s truth cannot be changed to fit a cultural whim. However, people can suppress the truth by willful rejection of God.

1:19-20. Paul continues his opening statement with a summary since. The word here is a combination of two common conjunctions: *dia* (on account of) and *hoti* (because). It has the sense of “in as much as” or “in light of the fact that.” Therefore, “in light of the fact that God has made knowledge about himself plain to everyone,” he is justified in exercising his wrath toward humankind for suppressing that knowledge. God has made known His eternal power and divine nature to humanity. Creation reveals the truth at God exists (Psalm 19:3), God has also caused man to understand internally what is seen externally. So both externally and internally, God has provided sufficient insight through His creation—remember, Paul is discussing the Gentiles, those who have no special revelation from God as did the Jews—for humans to know He exists, and sufficient internal motivation to understand that what they are seeing is the handiwork of God.

1:21. Idolatry is worship, and at the heart of worship is the attribution of glory. When people “exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles” (v. 23), they moved into idolatry. It is for the exchange of glory that God’s wrath is revealed. The Hebrew word for glory, *kabod*, means “weight.” The glory of God is the measure of the weight, or worthiness, or value of God. Worship is to be ascribed only to Him because no created thing compares to God. Because the glory of the Lord is matchless, to give worship to anything else would be to suggest a comparison between the object worshiped and God. In light of God’s infinite worth (glory), no earthly comparison can do justice to the offense generated by giving worship to anything or any person besides God.

Only two categories of “entities” exist in the biblical universe: Creator and created. And these two are separated by an infinite gulf of worth, or glory. Granted, of all the created things, man has more weight (worth, glory) than all the rest of creation (Ps. 8:3-9, esp. v. 5). But even so, the glory of man is not the same as the glory of the One who made man (Ps. 8:1). Humankind’s rightful place, in all its appropriate glory among the creation, is looking “up” into the face of the Creator, ascribing ultimate glory to Him. When a human being looks “horizontally” at another human, or “down” (on the scale of glory) to a plant or animal, he is worshipping something that has no more—indeed less—worth than he or she does.

1:22-23. This exchange of glory is the theft of glory in no uncertain terms, and could not be more “foolish” (v. 21). Humans began ascribing “worship” to other humans, or to birds and animals and reptiles, when “their foolish hearts were darkened” (v. 21). Literally, they became fools and became idolaters. Idolatry is a sign of moral and spiritual depravity (the baseline of foolishness), a sign of the rejection of the glory and prominence of God. For such foolishness the wrath of God is revealed, Paul says. The glory of God is the “heaviest” thing in the universe. To assign, through worship, the glory of the Creator to a part of the creation is to turn moral and spiritual sensitivity upside down. And such upsetting of the spiritual order of things has dreadful repercussions.

So far, Paul has said that the wrath of God is revealed against humanity in light of the suppression of truth about God. When people act as if they do not know the truth about God, then their hearts become increasingly dark and they move to idolatry. And because idols cannot speak or write, and there is no revelation to govern the people, idolatry always results in immorality. The sin of the human race is getting ever more specific: first, the suppression of truth. Then, the specific sin of idolatry. Now, Paul will catalog the specific sins that characterize the lives of those who suppress the truth about God and exchange His glory for the glory of a part of the creation.

1:24-25. Because they rejected the truths of God revealed in creation, God punished humankind by delivering them to the cravings of their hearts. The loss of the knowledge of God in the mind and heart leads to an exchange of truth for a lie. Something created is served and worshiped rather than the Creator, and judgment is the result (Ps. 81:12; Acts 7:42).

1:26-27. Paul moves to the most graphic evidence of the complete inversion of the spiritual and therefore moral compass of the human species. It is not just sexual immorality to which God has given them over, it is sexual inversion and perversion. Homosexuality was rampant in the Roman Empire, and represented perhaps the greatest offense to Jewish sensibilities. As Jewish and Gentile believers in the church in Rome looked around their society, they would have seen homosexuality practiced and encouraged at every turn. It seems that Paul has chosen homosexuality as the lowest point of sinful expression because of its complete reversal of God’s natural order. It indicates a total throwing off of the revealed will and design of God. Paul’s last words in verse 27—received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion—are the most frightful of all. What is the penalty? Is that penalty delivered culturally as well as individually? When any person is washed, sanctified, and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (v. 11), then they are freed, at least eternally, from the penalty for their perversion.

1:28-32. Finally, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind. Knowledge is retained in the mind, and sinful humankind has decided it is not worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God. This must refer to thoughts about God, the function of the conscience, the mental evaluations that even a pagan goes through about who and where God is and how one may know Him. When people do not pursue these God-given internal and external evidences (see Eccl. 3:11; Acts 17:23-31), they gradually develop minds characterized continually by depravity—as in the days of Noah (Gen. 6:5). It is characteristic of a depraved mind to reverse the importance of everything, including evil and its origin.

Paul, writing to those who undoubtedly knew of his past as a persecutor of Christian believers, concludes with what must have been a difficult thing to write. He points out that those who act with depraved indifference are worthy of death—and know they deserve to die (Rom. 6:23). Yet they continue. And not only do they continue in the same acts, but also approve of those who practice them (1:32). Paul concludes this section with a point to which he adds a counterpoint beginning with 2:1. Those who sin and approve others who do are obviously guilty and deserving of the wrath of God.