

HAMARTIOLOGY (10)

QUESTION #7 – What are some basic observations we may make concerning good and evil?

(Observation #1) - Good does need good to establish good .

God is often seen in contrast to evil, but good is good whether evil exists or not. For example, it is possible to love someone without having hatred present.

(Observation #2) - Evil does need good to establish evil .

Evil is seen when contrasted with good. Unless there is a standard that is good, it is not possible to determine evil. An accurate conclusion is good is totally independent of evil, but evil is totally dependent on good. A good example of this is God's law - given to show our sin **(Galatians 3:19, 24)**.

(Observation #3) - Evil, to a certain extent, must submit to good .

This reality is seen in the fact that even those who do evil continually still are restrained by good from doing evil completely. For example, a bank robber does evil in robbing a bank, but something restrains him from killing everyone in the bank and in all the stores surrounding the bank. God always forces evil to submit to good in one way or another.

(Observation #4) - Evil will always try to hid itself under some umbrella of good .

John 3:20 says, "For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed." People who do evil and are evil are not truthful people. They are people who lie, who hide, and who cover. In the very next verse John writes, "But he who practices the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God" **(John 3:21)**.

People who are doing good, tell the truth; people who are doing evil, don't. Evil will always try to hide; it will try to cover its trail through a series of "white lies" and distortions. When a person lies, he is really admitting what he is and that he is not good.

(Observation #5) - Evil will always have inner turmoil .

One practicing evil is inwardly a wreck. He lives with a heavy weight of guilt or depression that sooner or later catches up with the person.

(Observation #6) - Good will always have inner peace .

Isaiah said, "The steadfast of mind Thou will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in Thee" **(Isaiah 26:3)**.

Goodness will always be at peace with itself, and evil will never be at peace with itself.

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QUESTION #8 – How many human beings have sinned?

Although this question may seem simplistic, it is actually one of the key issues of theology - all people have sinned. Every human being has willingly chosen to rebel against God. This reality may be proved by many proofs:

(Proof #1) - The proof of direct Biblical statements:

- 1) I Kings 8:46 ; 2) Psalms 143:2 ; 3) Proverbs 20:9 ; 4) Ecclesiastes 7:20 ;
- 5) Romans 3:10, 12 ; 6) Romans 3:19-20 ; 7) Romans 3:23 ; 8) Galatians 3:22 ;
- 9) James 3:2 ; 10) I John 1:8

The Bible clearly and plainly says every person has sinned against God.

(Proof #2) - The proof of the universal need of salvation.

- 1) John 3:3 - Why is there a need for a spiritual birth?
- 2) John 6:47-51 - Why must a person eat of the bread of life?
- 3) Acts 4:2 - Why is there a need to be saved, and why is there only one way?
- 4) Acts 17:30 - Why do all men need to repent?

(Proof #3) - The proof of universal condemnation.

- 1) John 3:18 - One who has not believed on Christ is already judged as condemned.
Why are all condemned? Because all have sinned.
- 2) John 3:36 - One who does not obey the Gospel and believe on Christ will face God's wrath. Why? Because he is a sinner.
- 3) Romans 3:19 - The whole world is guilty and accountable to God. Why? Because all have sinned (**Romans 3:20, 23**).

(Proof #4) - The proof of historical observation.

Any honest evaluation of factual history will reveal man has a sin problem. History is filled with accounts of war, bloodshed, greed, deceitful espionage, and many things which are clearly evil and deranged. Mankind most definitely has something wrong with it - a terrible sin problem.

(Proof #5) - The proof of contemporary observation.

Daily newspapers, news programs and talk shows all reveal the reality of the universal problem. Our world is filled with scandal and crime. We need more jails and prisons, not less. All of this says we have a serious sin problem.

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(Proof #6) - The proof of personal observation.

Any honest examination of our own heart will reveal the truth of **Jeremiah 17:9** which says, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.”

When it comes to this particular proof, the more spiritual a person becomes, the more he realizes that he is a depraved sinner who does not deserve or merit any relationship with the Holy God. This was certainly the experience of Isaiah (**Isaiah 6:5**), of Paul (**I Timothy 1:15**), and of John (**Revelation 1:17**). The recognition of one’s own sinfulness is one mark of spirituality.

Martin Luther, the great Reformation leader, is said to have admitted several times that he was a sinful person. In fact, it has been written that at times in his prayers, he would be heard crying out to God concerning his sinfulness, when he could not even name any specific sin. He had a very acute awareness of his own depravity and an acute awareness of God’s holiness.

Jonathon Edwards, the famed theologian who was credited with beginning a revival in America in 1734 called “The Great Awakening,” had a profound sense of his own sinfulness. After twenty years of faithful service and ministry, he wrote these words:

“Often since I have lived in this town, I have had very affecting views of my own sinfulness and vileness, very frequently to such a degree as to hold me in a kind of loud weeping, sometimes for a considerable time together, so that I have been often obliged to shut myself up. I have had a vastly greater sense of my own wickedness and the badness of my heart than ever I had before my conversion. It has often appeared to me that if God should mark iniquity against me, I should appear the very worst of all mankind, of all that have been since the beginning of the world to this time; and I should have by far the lowest place in hell.”

Jonathon Edwards was one of the godliest and most powerful men of God in the world at the time he wrote these words. Any person who is honest and objective in looking at his own heart will admit the same truth that Luther and Edwards admitted - our hearts are depraved in sin.

All people have sinned, but not all admit it. Until one does there can be no salvation or sanctification. (Both stories of Luther and Edwards taken from *Strong’s Theology*, p. 556.)

QUESTION #9 – How much sin is God aware of in our life?

This question is very important for it is a key to recognizing our guilt and God’s grace. The clear testimony of the Bible is that God is completely aware of all of our sin. This makes every human being guilty and accountable to God for the sins he has committed.

There are many passages of Scripture which reveal this truth:

Passage #1 - **Job 34:21-22** - There is not one sinful step that escapes the eyes of God.

Passage #2 - **Psalm 44:21** - God knows the “secrets of the heart.” The word secret implies God knows all things which have been hidden, including all sin that has been committed in the heart.

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Passage #3 - **Psalms 90:8** - All sin is before God, even secret sin of which no one else knows. It is clear from the context that unless something is done about this sin, one will face God's wrath at the end of life (**verses 7, 9**).

Passage #4 - **Jeremiah 2:22** - Even though a person may look clean externally, this passage is clear that God sees the internal iniquity. In the context, there were two ways God's people had committed internal iniquity: 1) They turned away from God and His Word (**2:13**); 2) They had turned to idolatry (**2:23**). Even though much of the sin had been internal, not external, God still saw it and held Israel accountable.

Passage #5 - **Romans 2:16** - God knows the secret sins of man and will judge them. This verse is in the context of Romans, the book that unfolds the Gospel. When God's judgment comes against a person, no sin will be overlooked.

Passage #6 - **II Timothy 2:19-21** - This text makes it clear that God knows everyone who is His and knows every wickedness His children commit. This obviously will be a critical part of determining who will be rewarded as a vessel of honor, and who will lose rewards as a vessel of dishonor (**I Corinthians 3:12-17**); **II Corinthians 5:9-10**). In order for God to make an accurate judgment, He must know about all the sin.

The conclusion is clear; God is completely aware of every sin committed by every human being. He sees the external sins and the internal sins, and every person is responsible and will be held accountable for his sin.

QUESTION #10 – How do we personally sin?

All sin is against God and all sin is known and seen by God. However, as we examine the Bible, we learn that there are various ways that people sin. At times many of these categories will overlap; but for the sake of understanding sin, it is wise to systematize it by showing how it relates to various areas:

Sin Area #1 - Personal sin as it relates to God's Word:

(Sin Way #1) - It may be a sin of ignorance. **Leviticus 4:2**

This type of sin is personally committed by an individual unintentionally, because he did not know what the Word of God actually said (**Leviticus 19:28; I Peter 2:18**).

(Sin Way #2) - It may be a sin of omission. **James 4:17**

This type of sin is personally committed when one knows what he should do but refuses to do it. In this case, he fails to do what he knows God's Word tells him to do (**i.e. Hebrews 10:25**).