

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 11, Biblical Description of Sin Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 11, Biblical Description of Sin, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This excerpt from **Dr. Robert A. Peterson's** lecture series on **Humanity and Sin** continues the biblical description of sin, explaining that it simultaneously encompasses **commission, omission, and imperfection**. Peterson cites **John Mahoney** and **John Calvin** to define sin as a violation of God's moral law, expressed through actions, inactions, and improper motives. The lecture further explores the concepts of **guilt and pollution** as inherent aspects of sin, differentiating between **original and actual sin**. Finally, Peterson emphasizes that sin is a **personal offense against God's holy character** and invites his **divine wrath**, highlighting its **deceitful nature** and humanity's need for accountability and God's grace.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 11 – Double click icon
to play in Windows media player or go to the
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link
there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Humanity and Sin).**



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3. Briefing Document: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 11, Biblical Description of Sin

Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on the Biblical Description of Sin (Session 11)

Overview:

This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 11 of his lectures on the Doctrines of Humanity and Sin. This session continues the exploration of the biblical description of sin, drawing upon introductory materials and insights from various theologians and biblical texts. The core arguments revolve around the multifaceted nature of sin, encompassing commission, omission, and imperfection, and its profound implications as an offense against a holy God.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. The Tripartite Nature of Sin:

- Sin is not simply about doing wrong acts (commission). It also includes failing to do what is right (omission) and doing the right thing with wrong motives or attitudes (imperfection).
- **Commission:** "When thinking of sin as commission, the deed done, we're talking about doing or saying or thinking the wrong thing."
- **Omission:** "Sin as omission, on the other hand, is not doing or saying or thinking the right thing."
- **Imperfection:** "...imperfection is refraining from doing or saying or thinking the wrong thing, but instead doing or saying or thinking the right thing with the wrong motive or attitude."
- Peterson illustrates this with a personal anecdote of breaking a window, lying, and blaming his brother (commission and omission), and then considers telling the truth out of fear of consequences (imperfect action).
- He argues that each sin inherently involves all three aspects to varying degrees, supported by the positive commands like Sabbath-keeping and honoring parents, which are broken by omission, and Jesus' emphasis on loving God with one's whole being, bringing motives into the equation.

2. Sin Involves Disposition and Motives:

- Sin is not limited to outward actions but also encompasses inner attitudes, motives, and dispositions.
- "Sin includes our disposition, dispositions, and our acts of disobedience. Within each sinful action or non-action is a set of attitudes and motives that are sinful as well."
- Examples provided include greed being at the heart of stealing (Gehazi), hate underlying murder (Joseph's brothers), and lust in the heart being treated seriously like adultery (Matthew 5:28).
- The Tenth Commandment against coveting is highlighted as directly addressing attitudes and motives.

3. Sin Includes Guilt and Corruption (Pollution):

- Peterson distinguishes between natural evil (disasters, disease) and moral evil (willful violation of moral law). Moral evil leads to guilt before God.
- "Moral evil is a violation of a specific moral law by one who acts willfully. The act makes us guilty before God."
- Guilt has two aspects: personal responsibility (potential guilt) and liability to punishment (actual guilt). All sin makes us guilty before God.
- Drawing on John Mahoney's work, Peterson adds the concept of "pollution" (traditionally "corruption") as the moral dimension of sin. This refers to the inner defilement and corruption of human beings.
- "Pollution, the traditional word corruption, means not only are we guilty before God, but we are ourselves corrupted by sin."
- He uses the analogy of a heavily polluted town to illustrate that this corruption is deep and pervasive, affecting the core of human beings. "We sin because we are sinners."

4. Sin is a Personal Affront to God:

- Sin is not merely breaking a rule but is fundamentally a transgression against the holy character of God.
- "Continuing with Mahoney's good lecture notes, sin is a personal affront to the God of the Bible and his righteous character."

- Biblical examples like Isaiah's reaction to God's holiness (Isaiah 6) and Peter's confession in the presence of Christ (Luke 5) demonstrate this awareness of personal sinfulness in light of God's purity and power.
- James Orr's statement is quoted: "Sin is a transgression against God, the substitution of the creature's will for the will of the creator, and revolt of the creature's will from God. It is this relation to God that gives the wrong act its distinctive character as sin."

5. The Enormity of Sin in Light of God's Holiness and Redemptive Work:

- The true extent of sin's evil is only understood when viewed against the backdrop of God's perfect holiness, Christ's sacrifice, and God's intention for humanity.
- Ralph Venning's quote emphasizes this: "as God is holy, all holy, only holy, altogether holy, and always holy, so sin is sinful, all sinful, only sinful, altogether sinful, and always sinful."
- Peterson outlines several "measurements" of sin's perversity:
- It violates the Creator.
- It contradicts God's intent for us (the height from which we have fallen).
- It necessitated the extreme sacrifice of Christ (violates the Son on the cross). "His grace is most amazing when seen from the perspective of our demerit."
- It falls short of the purpose for which we were created (violates God's image in us).
- It leads to eternal separation from God (the destination of fallen humanity - the lake of fire).
- It hinders the mission God has given to his people.

6. Sin as a Privation of Good (Augustinian Perspective):

- Drawing on Augustine, Peterson explains that sin is not a substance created by God but rather a "privatio boni," the absence or negation of good.
- "Augustine understood sin as a privatio boni, the privation of good. Accordingly, good characterizes God's creation... For Augustine, sin is the negation of that good. Sin does not actually exist but appears in the absence of the good."

- He uses the analogies of silence (absence of sound) and darkness (absence of light) to illustrate this point.
- Sin arises through the willful choices of free creatures and is therefore "parasitic," existing only within the context of God's good creation and purposes.

7. Sin as a Failure to Image the Creator:

- Humanity's primary role was to reflect God's glory to the world. Sin has disrupted this function.
- "Sin is a failure to image the creator to the world."
- Gerhard von Rad's analogy of earthly kings placing their images in their provinces is used to illustrate humanity's role as God's representative on earth.
- The Fall has subjected creation to futility (Romans 8:20) and led to social collapse (violence and injustice in Genesis 4-11).
- Believers, as restored image-bearers, have a cultural mandate (Genesis 1:28) to pursue God's glory in all areas of life and a responsibility through the Great Commission to transform the hearts of sinners.

8. Sin Invites the Wrath of God:

- God's wrath, as declared in Romans 1:18, is his holy and just response to sin.
- "God's wrath is an expression of his holiness or moral purity. Therefore, his wrath is simply his instinctive holy indignation and settled opposition of his holiness to sin, which, because he is righteous, expresses itself in judicial punishment."
- Martin Luther's view is presented: "the source of God's wrath is the fact that men are altogether godless and ungodly in their life and behavior."
- God's response to sin includes the negative element of removal from his favor and presence (as seen in the final judgment - "Depart from me...") and the positive imposition of punishment (eternal fire).
- Millard Erickson's paraphrase highlights the sinner's desire for God's absence and hell as God granting that wish.
- The cross of Christ demonstrates the certainty of God's judgment on sin.

9. Sin is Deceitful:

- Sin does not appear as it truly is but often disguises itself, deceiving individuals.

- "Sin is tricky. It doesn't come dressed up as an ugly creature and say, I'm sin, I'm going to get you. No, it comes dressed up as a beautiful creature and it tries to deceive us."
- Jesus' teaching on hypocrisy in Matthew 7 (the log in one's own eye) illustrates this self-deception.
- Hebrews 3:12-14 warns against being "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" and emphasizes the need for daily exhortation and accountability among believers.
- A simple but memorable quote from a Bible college preacher is shared: "this book, referring to the Bible, will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book."
- Jeremiah 17:9 is cited: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick." However, the following verse (Jeremiah 17:10) reminds that the Lord searches the heart and knows it fully.
- While believers will not be sinless, it is possible in Christ to overcome sin.

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson's Session 11 provides a comprehensive overview of the biblical understanding of sin, emphasizing its multifaceted nature, its profound offense against a holy God, and its pervasive impact on humanity and creation. The lecture highlights the importance of recognizing not only outward actions but also inner attitudes and motives as sinful, and underscores the reality of both guilt and the corrupting influence of sin. Ultimately, the session points to the necessity of God's grace and the transformative power of the gospel in addressing the pervasive problem of sin.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 11, Biblical Description of Sin

Study Guide: Biblical Description of Sin

I. Key Concepts and Themes:

- **Sin as Multifaceted:** Understand that sin is not just about actions (commission), but also includes failures to act (omission) and actions with wrong motives (imperfection).
- **God's Moral Standard:** Recognize that God's holy character, expressed in his moral law (e.g., the Ten Commandments), is the ultimate standard by which all moral acts are judged.
- **Sin and the Heart:** Grasp the significance of inner attitudes and motives as integral parts of sin. Understand how Jesus expanded the understanding of sin to include thoughts and desires.
- **Guilt and Pollution:** Differentiate between the legal aspect of sin (guilt, deserving of punishment) and the moral aspect (pollution/corruption, the defiling nature of sin). Understand the distinction between original sin and actual sin.
- **Sin as an Affront to God:** Comprehend that sin is fundamentally a personal offense against God and his righteous character. Consider how encounters with God's holiness reveal human sinfulness.
- **The Measure of Sin:** Explore the various ways the Bible measures the enormity of sin, including the holiness of God, humanity's fallen state, the cost of redemption, God's intended purpose for humanity, the consequences of sin (hell), and the unfinished task of the Great Commission.
- **Sin as Privation of Good:** Understand Augustine's concept of sin as *privatio boni*, the absence or negation of good, rather than a substance created by God.
- **Sin as Failure to Image God:** Recognize humanity's role as God's image-bearers and how sin disrupts this function, affecting both creation and social structures. Understand the cultural mandate and the task of restoring God's image.
- **God's Wrath:** Understand that God's wrath is not arbitrary anger but a manifestation of his holy opposition to sin, resulting in both the withdrawal of his favor and judicial punishment.

- **The Deceitfulness of Sin:** Appreciate the deceptive nature of sin, how it can be disguised and lead to self-deception and hardening of the heart.

II. Quiz:

1. Describe the three ways sin can be categorized according to the lecture. Provide a brief example for each category.
2. According to the lecture, what is the ultimate standard by which all moral acts are judged? How is this standard expressed?
3. Explain how Jesus' teachings broaden the understanding of sin beyond just outward actions. Provide an example from the lecture.
4. What is the distinction made between guilt and pollution in the context of sin? Why are both considered fundamental in understanding sin?
5. In what way is sin described as a personal affront to God? How does the encounter of Isaiah with God illustrate this?
6. List three ways the lecture suggests we can measure the perversity or enormity of sin.
7. Explain Augustine's concept of *privatio boni* in relation to sin. Use the examples of silence and darkness to illustrate this idea.
8. How did the fall of Adam affect humanity's role as God's image-bearers? What are the two strategic arenas mentioned for believers as restored image-bearers?
9. Describe what the lecture explains about God's wrath. What are the two responses of God to sin mentioned in the context of final judgment?
10. How is sin described as deceitful in the lecture? Provide one example or biblical reference that illustrates this point.

III. Answer Key:

1. Sin is categorized as **commission** (doing, saying, or thinking the wrong thing, like lying), **omission** (not doing, saying, or thinking the right thing, like failing to tell the truth), and **imperfection** (doing, saying, or thinking the right thing with the wrong motive, like telling the truth to avoid punishment).
2. The ultimate standard is **God's holy character**, which is expressed in his **moral law**, exemplified by the Ten Commandments.

3. Jesus brings inner **motives and attitudes** into the mix of sin. For example, lust in the heart is treated with similar seriousness as the act of adultery itself, showing that sinful desires are also considered sin.
4. **Guilt** is the legal dimension of sin, signifying our blameworthiness before God and deserving of his punishment. **Pollution** (or corruption) is the moral dimension, indicating that sin defiles and corrupts our very being, not just an external veneer.
5. Sin is a personal affront to God because it is a **transgression against his will and a violation of his holy character**. Isaiah's encounter with God's holiness revealed his own "unclean lips," demonstrating his awareness of his sinfulness in the presence of divine purity.
6. Three ways to measure the perversity of sin are: by the **holiness of God** against whom we revolt, by the **height from which we have fallen** (Christ's perfect righteousness), and by the **length to which the Father went to redeem us** (the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross).
7. Augustine viewed sin as *privatio boni*, meaning the **absence or lack of good**, rather than an existing substance created by God. Just as silence is the absence of sound and darkness the absence of light, sin is a deficiency within God's good creation, arising from willful choices.
8. The fall horribly **disrupted humanity's role of imaging God**, subjecting creation to futility and leading to malicious rather than benevolent rule. The two strategic arenas for restored image-bearers are fulfilling the **cultural mandate** (family, church, government, etc.) and carrying out the **Great Commission** (transforming hearts through the gospel).
9. God's wrath is an expression of his **holy indignation and opposition to sin**, rooted in his moral purity. The two responses at the final judgment are the **negative removal from God's favor and presence** and the **positive imposition of punishment** in eternal fire.
10. Sin is deceitful because it **doesn't appear in its true, ugly form but often masquerades as something appealing or harmless**, leading us astray. Hebrews 3:12-14 warns against being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, highlighting its power to mislead and cause unbelief.

IV. Essay Format Questions:

1. Discuss the interconnectedness of commission, omission, and imperfection in the biblical understanding of sin. Provide scriptural examples or draw from the lecture to support your analysis.
2. Analyze the significance of understanding sin as both guilt and pollution (or corruption). How do these two aspects impact our relationship with God and our understanding of salvation?
3. Explore the various ways the lecture argues that sin is a direct offense against God. Which of these arguments do you find most compelling and why?
4. Evaluate Augustine's concept of *privatio boni* as a way to understand the nature of sin. What are the strengths and potential weaknesses of this perspective in light of the broader biblical description of sin presented in the lecture?
5. Examine the implications of humanity's role as God's image-bearers in relation to the doctrine of sin. How does the fall impact this role, and what responsibilities do believers have as restored image-bearers in a fallen world?

V. Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Commission:** Sin that involves actively doing, saying, or thinking something wrong or contrary to God's law.
- **Omission:** Sin that involves failing to do, say, or think what is right or required by God's law.
- **Imperfection:** Sin that involves doing, saying, or thinking what is right but with a wrong motive or attitude, falling short of perfect obedience.
- **Moral Law:** God's declared will that directs and obligates humanity to do what pleases him and abstain from what displeases him, often expressed in the Ten Commandments.
- **Guilt:** The state of being answerable and blameworthy before God for violating his moral law, deserving of punishment.
- **Pollution (Corruption):** The moral defilement and inherent sinfulness that affects human nature as a consequence of sin.
- **Original Sin:** The sin of Adam, imputed to the entire human race, resulting in a fallen nature and inherent tendency towards sin.
- **Actual Sin:** The individual sins committed by people throughout their lives.
- **Holiness (of God):** God's state of being separate from creation and morally pure, the standard against which all sin is measured.
- **Privatio Boni:** A Latin phrase meaning "privation of good," used by Augustine to describe sin as the absence or negation of good rather than a positive entity.
- **Image of God:** The unique capacity and likeness with which humanity was created, reflecting God's attributes and intended to represent his rule over creation.
- **Cultural Mandate:** God's command in Genesis 1:28 for humanity to have dominion over the earth and cultivate it, reflecting God's glory in various spheres of life.
- **Great Commission:** Jesus' command to his followers to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20), the primary task of restored image-bearers in transforming the hearts of sinners.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Humanity and Sin, Session 11, Biblical Description of Sin, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Biblical Description of Sin

1. How does the Bible categorize sin beyond just "wrong actions"?

The Bible describes sin as involving commission (doing, saying, or thinking the wrong thing), omission (not doing, saying, or thinking the right thing), and imperfection (doing the right thing with the wrong motive or attitude). All moral acts are judged against God's holy character and moral precepts. Each sin, in varying degrees, encompasses all three aspects simultaneously.

2. What is the relationship between God's law, such as the Ten Commandments, and sin?

God's moral law, expressed in the Ten Commandments and summarized by Jesus as loving God and loving neighbor, serves as the standard by which sin is defined. While some commandments are overt prohibitions, they also imply positive principles (e.g., "do not murder" implies the sanctity of human life). Failing to uphold these positive aspects or adhering to the law without the proper heart attitude also constitutes sin.

3. How do attitudes and motives factor into the biblical understanding of sin?

Sin is not limited to outward actions but deeply involves inner attitudes and motives. Actions like stealing stem from greed, and murder from hate. Even seemingly correct actions can be tainted by impure motives. Jesus emphasized that loving God requires engaging the heart, soul, and mind, indicating that our inner disposition is crucial in fulfilling God's commands.

4. What are the concepts of guilt and pollution (or corruption) in relation to sin?

Sin brings both guilt and pollution. Guilt is the legal consequence of breaking God's law, making us blameworthy and liable to punishment. It includes both personal responsibility for our actions and the liability to God's judgment. Pollution, or corruption, refers to the moral defilement of our being caused by sin. We sin because we are inherently sinful, and sin corrupts us to our core, affecting our thoughts, desires, and actions.

5. How does sin relate to God's character and holiness?

Sin is fundamentally a personal affront to the holy character of God. It is a transgression against the Creator, a substitution of our will for His, and a revolt against Him. God's holiness sets the standard against which the enormity of sin is revealed. Our understanding of the wrongness of sin is limited by our context, while God's estimation is based on His perfect holiness.

6. In what ways does sin impact humanity's role as God's image-bearers?

Humanity was created to reflect God's glory and exercise dominion over creation as His representatives. The fall of Adam disrupted this role, subjecting creation to futility and corrupting the image of God within us. This corruption manifests in selfish pursuits, violence, and injustice. Believers, as restored image-bearers, are called to exercise the cultural mandate (expressing Christ's glory in various aspects of life) and to transform hearts through the gospel.

7. How does the Bible describe God's response to sin?

Sin invites God's wrath, which is an expression of His holy opposition to all ungodliness and unrighteousness. This wrath manifests in both a negative response—the removal of God's favor and presence (eternal separation in hell)—and a positive response—the imposition of punishment. The cross of Christ demonstrates the certainty of God's judgment against sin.

8. How is sin described as "deceitful," and what are the implications for believers?

Sin is portrayed as deceitful, often appearing attractive rather than repulsive, luring us away from God. It can blind us to our own faults while making us quick to judge others. The Bible warns against being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin and emphasizes the need for mutual accountability, daily encouragement, and a consistent engagement with God's Word to resist its deceptive power. The human heart is inherently deceitful and vulnerable to sin's enticements, highlighting our ongoing need for God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin.