

## SummerSalon14 - Hamartiology

We now turn to the systematic theology topic of Hamartiology. A central question has driven **SummerSalon14**: “Are we looking forward to heaven —as much as our next vacation?” If the answer is “no,” the Bible tells us we ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit who warns us by the example of the Laodicean church. Spiritual deception gains control of lives where interest in preparing to appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ is lacking. Reflection is needed to admit lukewarm lifestyles focus on the here and now more than preparing to meet our Lord.

The most significant human problem is spiritual deception. That deception, if not confronted in the life of the believer, will negatively impact their meeting with the Lord at His Judgment Seat. We know the visible work of the adversary, the deceiver, is to “steal, kill, and destroy.” But before these outward evils occur, people must be inwardly, spiritually deceived to be of use to Lucifer in perpetrating evil. Evil and its outworking in sin is the topic studied in Hamartiology —from the Greek word, *hamartia*, meaning a fatal flaw leading to the downfall of a tragic hero or heroine.

So often it is assumed that evil presents itself as clearly recognized wrong —that which is *vile* (Note, vile is anagram of evil). Therefore, most feel “evil” could not possibly apply to their own thoughts, words, and deeds. But the truth is —*all evil is simply the absence of God’s perfect, righteous goodness*. There is no middle ground. Everything is a product of His perfect, righteous goodness —or else it is a product of the work of the adversary. And it is spiritual deception working both in the lost and the saved that prevents recognition of and resistance to evil. We **are** new creatures (2 Cor 5:17). But until we are in glory with the Lord, our sin nature must be

overshadowed by the Holy Spirit within us to guard our thinking, speaking and actions. This is the truth of two natures compared to *one naturism* which is a false teaching. All sin, which is the outworking of evil, **was paid for** at the Cross —and the penalty for that sin —death and the grave —**were** conquered at the Cross. Yet, the Apostle Paul reminds us that even he did not do God’s perfect, righteous goodness —despite having the power of God, the Spirit, living in him (Rom 7:15). Even the great Apostle suffered from spiritual deception.

This is universally true: sin makes us stupid —and stupidity leads to spiritual deception. But spiritual discernment is the remedy for spiritual deception and stupidity. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). We test the spirits by the truth of God’s Word. The Bible is the remedy for spiritual deception. “For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12).

It remains, that while one may *profess* faith in Christ, without intimate knowledge of God’s Word, the Bible tells us our life is carnal, according to 1 Corinthians 3. And carnality does not produce spiritual discernment. Rather, it feeds spiritual deception. We have not touched on the exact nature and origin of evil which is the foundational topic studied in Hamartiology. That topic is still a matter of debate among the greatest of Bible theologians. But the importance for the believer is to know they must first submit to the Holy Spirit to effectively deal with the evil in their own lives. The simple reminder is true: If we love Him, we will obey Him. Spiritual

discernment is ours if we submit our life to the constant care and correction provided by the Holy Spirit. And we certainly know — “He who in us is greater than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4).