

THEOLOGY I: Doctrine of Sin (Part 1)

Session 1 - Dr. Jeremy Kimble - The Nature of Humanity

(Extensive notes mentioned in video - Pages 6-10)

KEY QUESTION

- What is the nature of man?

INTRODUCTION

- When you think of humanity, what are the essential “parts” that constitute us as being human? In other words, what are we made of?

Simply... we’re made up of a material aspect (physical) and an immaterial aspect (soul/spiritual).

- We turn now to one of the most difficult aspects of the doctrine of humanity, the topic of the human constitution. We will seek to analyze the human being, and identify its constituent (part of a whole) elements, such as soul, body and spirit.
- It is a difficult task because the Bible does not use the central terms (soul and spirit, especially) in any consistent way. Further, this question leads us into another difficult issue, that of the intermediate state (what happens when you die), or the nature of human existence in the period between death, which is the end of our earthly human existence, and the resurrection of the body, which is the inauguration of our normal heavenly existence.
- Despite the difficulties, this is worth looking at, for several reasons:
 - First and foremost, Scripture does use these terms (body, soul, spirit, etc.) And does affirm our continued existence after death, so we do need to try to understand what Scripture means.
 - Second, we must confront this topic because history has bequeathed to us two traditional debates on which theologians are expected to take a position. The first is the dichotomist (2 aspects - material & immaterial) vs. the trichotomist (3 aspects - body, soul, spirit) view of human nature, and the second is the origin of the soul. (Are souls created in each individual person by God when conceived or are they brought about by procreation?)

How does Jesus attain a fully human nature that is not a sinful nature?

It is not necessary that a human nature be sinful in nature - Adam & Eve.

Sin is not necessary for humanity.

- Finally, we must enter this arena for practical reasons. We use terms like “soul-winner”; we must know what we mean. Anyone preaching a funeral or ministering to grieving persons must have a theology of the **intermediate state**, and that rests upon an understanding of the human constitution. And there is our natural desire to understand how we are put together, what soul and spirit and heart are, and how they all fit together.

DEFINITIONS

- We will look at the central meaning, but any single definition is artificial, for, as we will see, the Bible uses these and other terms somewhat **interchangeably**, and with a variety of meanings. Nevertheless, these definitions do give us what I see as central or a distinctive aspect of meaning, and provide us a basis for responding to the questions of dichotomy or trichotomy, the intermediate state, and the origin of the soul.

English	Hebrew	Greek	Theological Significance
Body, flesh	<i>Basar</i>	<i>soma</i>	Physical Form
		<i>sarx</i>	Capacity for weakness, sin and rebellion
Soul	<i>Nephesh</i>	<i>Psuche</i>	The seat of life or being, the person
Spirit	<i>Ruach</i>	<i>pneuma</i>	The capacity of the human being for relationship with God
Heart	<i>Leb</i>	<i>Kardia</i>	The whole person at the deepest level of existence

DOCTRINE OF SIN: RESULTS OF THE FALL

Mercy and grace and love are meant to be treasured because sin is infinitely horrible.

James 5 says we're called to confess our sins to one another.

1 John 1:9 says to confess our sins to God, which means to say the same things about my sin that God does.

The ramification of hiding our sins is no repentance and no call to change.

KEY QUESTIONS

- What is sin?
- Where did it come from?
- How is it passed down to us?
- How do we overcome sin and temptation?

OVERVIEW

- We discussed first the issues of truth, and the veracity of Scripture.
- Then we moved into the doctrine of God, noting his being and character.
- Next, we talked about the doctrine of man, created in God's image.
- Now we come to the fall of man in biblical storyline.

INTRODUCTION

- For the last 200 years, sin has become an increasingly problematic doctrine for Christian theology. The Bible is certainly serious about sin, and the 20th and 21st centuries furnished more ample evidence of the reality of sin, yet biblical teaching about sin and its horrible seriousness is **strongly resisted**.
- One reason is a basic change in how humans have viewed **human nature**, from seeing humans as basically **sinful** and **depraved** to seeing humans as basically **good**. Today calling someone depraved is more likely regarded as a joke than a serious statement. Yet Jesus routinely called people as evil and regarded only one being as good - God Himself (Matt 19:17).

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Rom 3:23

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. Jn 3:36

among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. Eph 2:23

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! Matt 7:11

Shift in 1750 - Enlightenment, renaissance and a rise of humanism. It's a human centered universe and therefore we see ourselves as inherently good.

- Add to that the more recent deterministic view of humans as solely the products of their **environment**, their **families**, or their **psychological drives**, and sin becomes impossible. For sin assumes that one is responsible for one's actions.

Nurture certainly has an effect on who we are going to be but make no mistake, we are shaped by our sin nature that we are conceived in. We are responsible.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Rom 1:18-20

- Indeed, as Henri Blocher (1937 French evangelical theologian) notes, when we react to human evil with feelings of indignation, shame, or guilt, we are testifying to the fact that we believe humans are somehow responsible for their evil deeds, but recent developments, especially in genetic research, have sought to dissolve this innate awareness of responsibility.
- In a culture where morality is viewed as radically **relative**, there is no sin, for there is no set **standard**. The supreme duty in interpersonal relationships is to be **tolerant**. Words like admonish, rebuke, and warn, so prominent in Scripture, are absent from our culture and our lives. To say that something someone else is doing wrong is viewed as tasteless, rude, and arrogant.

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Matt 7:1-3

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, (repent) and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. Matt 7:5

- In such a context, affirming the doctrine of sin in a way that is faithful to Scriptures is a difficult task, but necessary for several reasons:
 - First, our understanding of sin is inextricably linked with our understanding of **God**, because sin is primarily against **God** and His **law**, which is a reflection of His **holiness**.

God has commanded his church to exercise church discipline because He is holy. Matt 18:15-20, 1 Cor 5:1-13, 2 Thess 3:6-18.

"Be holy, because I am holy. 1 Pet 1:16

The idea behind the reality of hell is based on the justice and righteousness and holiness of God. If we believe sin is not a big deal we are undermining the Doctrine of Hell that is taught clearly in Scriptures.

- We also must maintain a robust doctrine of sin, because it relates directly to our understanding of **salvation**. What are you being saved from?
- Sin is also linked to our understanding of **ministry**. If the greatest need of humanity is economic, we should focus on social ministries. If the key problem is education and technology, we should plant schools. But if the root problem is the sin problem, nothing but the gospel will help, and *sin is the key **prerequisite** to understanding the **gospel**.*

TALKING POINT

- If Adam and Eve had never sinned, what would not be present in our world (e.g. hospitals). What would we never know or experience that we do now experience in our present, sinful world? Try to list ten things.

NOTES

Even in the NT, while body (soma) and spirit are at times distinguished (Matt. 10:28), they are not opposed. As in the OT, the body can even be used to refer to the whole human person (Rom. 12:1), for human existence is a bodily existence and human nature is an embodied nature.

The culprit for the negative view of the body in Christian thought is mostly Greek philosophy, but it is also a misunderstanding of the second NT word that refers to body or flesh, sarx. Most of the time in the NT, sarx is roughly equivalent to basar, referring to human flesh (Lk. 24:39), or to humans in their external, physical aspect. In this sense, John 1:14 teaches that Jesus shared this essential aspect of human existence. Both the OT and Jesus recognized that human flesh was weak and could not be trusted (Jer. 17:5, Is.40:6, Matt. 26:41), but there is no idea that human flesh is inherently sinful. Sometimes Paul uses sarx in a fairly neutral way to refer to human ancestry (Rom. 1:3, 9:3, 5) or to physical human flesh (1 Cor. 6:16). However, about 35 times, Paul uses sarx in a distinctive way to refer to the human capacity for sin, weakness, and rebellion (see Rom.7:18, 8:5-13, Gal. 5:17). It is the opposing capacity to the human spirit, and is in conflict with the work of God's Spirit in His people. As the human spirit is the capacity to open one's life to the influence of God, so the flesh is the capacity to hear and respond to temptation.

We should note that Paul's use of sarx in this sense does not mean sin is especially associated with the body. Many of the works of the flesh in Gal. 5:19-21 are sins of the mind or heart, and sometimes the idea of flesh has caused us to see only bodily sins as really sins. For this reason, I prefer the NIV translation of "sinful nature," but not in the sense of a separate entity, but as a capacity that can invade all aspects of human nature. In theory, the sinful nature has already been crucified in those who belong to Christ (Gal. 5:24). In practice, we find that the struggle continues. But the struggle in the Christian life is not between the body and the soul, or the flesh and the spirit, but between the spirit and the sinful nature.

A second way to see the high view of the body in Scripture is to note that the hope of the believer is not the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. The body is not a temporary inconvenience, a disagreeable necessity for life here that will be discarded later. It is part of God's plan for heavenly existence, too. To be sure, it will be a different body, what Paul calls a spiritual body (1 Cor. 15:35-58; cf. Rom. 8:23; Phil.3:21), but our heavenly existence will be a bodily, not a ghostly, existence. This belief in the continuing importance of the body is another distinctive belief of Christianity.

It is true that the NT affirms the continuation of human existence in a fashion in the time between death and the resurrection of the body when Christ returns (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Verses such as Phil. 1:23, Luke 23:43, and 2 Cor. 5:8 require some type of an intermediate state, and our relationship with Christ is such that not even death can end it (Rom. 8:38), but Paul's longing is not escaping from the prison of this body, but being clothed with his heavenly body and being present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1-8). He seems to regard a disembodied existence as abnormal, a form of nakedness that is not desirable.

- **Soul**

- **Three central meanings of this word.**

- *Seat of life:* First, the most frequent sense is the soul as the seat of life (282 times out of a total of 754 occurrences of *nephesh*). Thus, when Adam received the breath of life from God, he became a living soul. But likewise, in Gen. 1:20, the animals in the water are called living souls. This does not mean we need to evangelize fish (i.e. soul-winning), but that the normal meaning of soul is the seat of life, that which makes a body, animal or human, a living being. Taking the life (or "lifeblood") of a man or animal in Gen. 9:4-5 is taking its *nephesh*, for, as Lev. 17:11 says, the *nephesh* of an animal is in its blood. To shed blood is to pour out life. In I Kings 19:10, Elijah was hiding from those who were seeking his life (*nephesh*).
- *Subject of agent of life:* A second and closely related major usage (223 times), is *nephesh* as subject or agent of life. In such cases, the best translation is often a personal pronoun (such as I for *nephesh* in Ezek. 4:14; this seems to be the usage as well in the more well known verse, Ezek. 18:4).
- *Emotional manifestation of life:* The third sense of *nephesh* involves an emotional manifestation of life, often similar to the ideas associated with spirit or heart (see Ps.19:7 or Prov. 2:10).
- Other desires are also referred to as being in the soul, both evil desires (Gen. 34:3;his "heart") and godly desires (Ps. 42:1, 63:1). In these last cases, the meaning of soul is virtually equal to "heart," and is often so translated (Ps. 10:3, Eph. 6:6, Col. 3:23), referring to the center of life, and especially the seat of emotions, even the emotions of God. It is God's soul that hates (Ps. 11:5, and Is. 1:14) and loves (Jer. 12:7; "the one I love" is "the beloved of my soul"), and Jesus' soul that is sorrowful in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:38). Infrequently, *psuche* is spoken of as the object of God's saving work (James 1:21, Heb. 10:39, I Pet. 1:9) or the locus of the spiritual life (Matt. 11:29, Acts 14:22, Heb. 13:17, I Pet. 2:11, 2:25), so there is a slim basis for speaking of "lost" and "saved" souls.
- Finally, there is some overlap with "spirit." A couple of clear examples are Luke 1:46-47, where the two are used in parallel, and Rev. 6:9, Heb. 12:23, where both are used to refer to those who have died. But *nephesh* and *psuche* more often overlap with the concept of heart, and the dominant and distinctive meaning overall is that of life.

- **Spirit**

- The words *ruach* and *pneuma* are used in five senses in Scripture. In the physical sense, these words can denote wind or breath (Ex. 14:21, John 3:8). In a psychological sense, these words can refer to an attitude or disposition (Ps. 51:10, Is. 61:3). The divine sense of spirit is the Holy Spirit. The angelic sense is used for good spirits and unclean spirits (demons). Our major concern is with the anthropological sense, the human spirit. Actually, this anthropological sense is not the most frequent usage of *ruach* or *pneuma*. The most common usage in the NT, is the Holy Spirit. Most common in the OT is the physical sense of wind, closely followed by the Spirit of God. But where these words are used in an anthropological sense, we see some important nuances of meaning.
- As we mentioned above, spirit can sometimes be used almost interchangeably with soul (Ps. 31:5, Eccles. 12:7, Heb. 12:23, and especially Lk. 1:46-47), and at times overlaps with the idea of heart (the psychological sense above, and especially Is. 57:15, where spirit and heart are used in parallel), but the dominant use is slightly different from either soul or heart. It refers to the *capacity of humans for a relationship with God*, and the means by which that relationship is established. Usage is especially noteworthy in Paul, particularly Romans 8, but is found as well in the gospels (Matt. 5:3, Lk. 1:47, Mk. 2:8, 8:12, 14:38, Jn. 11:33, 13:21) and less frequently, in other parts of the NT (Heb. 4:12, I Pet. 3:4).

- **Heart**

- The heart in Scripture is the seat of personality, the central focus of one's life, who one really is (1 Sam. 16:7, Prov. 4:23, Matt. 12:34, I Pet. 3:4). At various times, the heart is spoken of as the center of thinking (1 Kings 3:9, 12; Luke 2:19), feeling (Is. 35:4, John 14:1), and especially willing. In Deut. 6:5, we are commanded to love God with our hearts, the heart being responsible to obey. It is with the heart that we choose to trust Christ (Rom. 10:10). It is the heart that one purposes to give (2 Cor. 9:7). Josiah is praised because his heart was responsive to God's word (2 Chron. 34:27), but the heart of the wicked is perverse and proud (Ps. 101:4-5). Heart is used 166 times for emotional states, 204 times for intellectual activities, and 195 times for volition. Even more frequent is heart as the personality or character as a whole (257 times, including 1 Sam. 16:7).
- Obviously, there is a lot of overlap between heart, mind, soul, will, spirit, and even conscience (Rom. 2:15), but the central idea is that the heart is that which directs the course of one's life. Thus, it is crucial for the heart to be sensitive to the voice of the Lord, and not become hardened (Ps. 95:8-10), for obedience begins in the heart. The heart can be the seat of sin (Gen. 6:5, Jer. 17:9) as well as the seat of faith (Prov. 3:5).

- At the same time, we may note a slight difference of emphasis between Paul and the OT. Paul at times uses mind (nous) or conscience (suneidesis) where the OT uses heart, and Paul uses pneuma as central to one's relationship to God almost as often as he uses heart. Still, the statement of Hoekema is a good summary of the importance of heart in Scripture: "Kardia stands for the whole person in his or her inner essence. In the heart man's basic attitude toward God is determined, whether of faith or unbelief, obedience or rebellion" (215).

THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

● How should humans be described in their nature?

- Trichotomy: human nature is composed of three distinct parts (body, soul, spirit; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12).
- Dichotomy: human nature is composed of a material and immaterial (body and soul/spirit).
- The arguments for trichotomy are few and weak. Heb. 4:12 is cited to prove a distinction between soul and spirit, but there can be a difference without the two being separate elements in humans. Most often cited is 1 Thess. 5:23, but it either proves too much or not enough. If each word listed denotes a different element in humanity, trichotomy is not enough, for Mark 12:30 gives four elements, and spirit is not among them, so that would make five elements. On the other hand, if the three words are used just to emphasize the totality of a person, and not necessarily separate elements, then it proves too little.
- The arguments for dichotomy are stronger. While soul and spirit are used sometimes almost synonymously, there is a difference between either of them and the body. Humans are sometimes described as body and soul (Matt. 10:28) and sometimes body and spirit (Eccles. 12:7, 1 Cor. 5:3). Strongest of all, if humans continue to exist after the death of the body, and Scripture teaches they do, there must be some non-material aspect of human nature that can exist in separation from the body. Thus, we are more than just a body; there is another element, whether one calls it soul or spirit. The reality of human existence in the intermediate state seems the strongest reason for resisting other views. Even still the human make-up should be viewed in a relatively holistic manner (i.e. complex functional unity).

- **The origin of the soul**

- The first and least held view is that souls eternally pre-exist and join with the bodies at birth. This was held by Origen and is held by Mormons, but has no biblical basis.
- The creationist position states that each soul is directly created by God and joined to the body at conception. This view is favored by most Catholics, in large part because it seems to safeguard the purity of the souls of Jesus and Mary from the taint of original sin. Others maintain that this view follows the model of Gen. 2:7 and affirms the continuing creative involvement of God with every person (see also Eccles. 12:7). Historically, this has been the majority position, with Calvin among its supporters.
- The traducianist theory states that souls and bodies (or material and non-material aspects) are passed together from parents to children. This allows for the type of functional, psychosomatic unity we see in Scripture, and accounts for the possibility of non-material aspects of personality to be passed from parents to children (the corrupt spiritual nature passed down from Adam). Finally, It also gives a good basis for affirming the full personhood of babies from the moment of conception, for at that moment, children have already received all that is involved in being human (though most creationists would affirm this as well).

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Ministry must address the physical needs of people, if it is to minister to the whole person. Certainly spiritual needs must take priority (i.e. evangelism and discipleship), but we must also think through how to minister to physical needs.
- We must develop not only spiritual disciplines, but also be good stewards of our bodies. We should not fall into the present day cult of worshiping the body and physical fitness (1 Tim. 4:8), nor follow the American obsession with bodily comforts and pleasures (see 1 Cor. 9:27), but we cannot ignore the body's needs (1 Kings 19:1-9), for God has created human beings as a physical-social-emotional-spiritual unity.