

THEOLOGY I: Doctrine of Sin (Part 4)

Session 4 - Dr. Jeremy Kimble

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

- **The Issue of Original Sin**

- We need to be clear on what we are in fact discussing, for our focus is not in fact on what happened in Gen 3 (origin of sin), but what happened to **human nature** as a **result** of Gen 3.
- Why is it that every person, without exception, begins to sin as soon as they are capable of moral action and choice? Why is it that children do not need to be taught to be disobedient? If God created us upright, how did we arrive at the state we are in today?
- **Original sin**, in terms of its effect on human nature, has been the answer. We are **born** with a sin nature. (Rom 5:12-21)

- **The Biblical Basis for Original Sin.**

- **Genesis 3** talks about the curses pronounced on humanity. Ps 51:5 is best interpreted as simply affirming that humans are sinful from birth. There are clear statements of the universality of sin in **Rom 3:23** and elsewhere.
- There are four affirmations Christian theology has historically drawn from Scripture concerning original sin:
 - (1) it is **universal**, affecting all humans;
 - (2) it is something that has affected our **nature** (see Eph 2:3)
 - (3) It is **inherited**;
 - (4) It is **Adamic**, in that he plays a special role.
- But the key text is Rom **5:12-21**. All discussions of original sin must begin and end with an interpretation of these verses.

Death in Adam, Life in Christ

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death **spread to all men because all sinned**— for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from*

Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type (foreshadows Jesus) of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Rom 5:12-21

- Read Rom 5:12-21 in groups and divide out what Adam and Jesus did, and what the results were of their actions.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

How is it possible that all sinned in Adam when we weren't even there?

- **The Pelagian answer: Adam was simply a bad example.**
His sin in no way affects human nature. Our nature today is the same as the nature Adam originally had. We are sinners because we choose to follow his bad example and sin, but we are capable in our nature of following Christ's good example.
- This view comes from Pelagius, a fifth century British monk, who was disturbed deeply by the low level of morality in the church and wanted to insist that we can and must live holy lives. He thought the idea that we had inherited a sinful nature encouraged people to sinfulness.
- This view makes no sense of Rom. 5. The comparison between Adam and Christ has no validity, and leads to the conclusion that Christ is only a good example and we are responsible to save ourselves. This view is exegetically indefensible. It was initially condemned by the Church during Augustine's lifetime, but later slipped back in as the Church adopted a generally semi-Pelagian attitude toward free will, human nature, and Salvation.



Pelagius: 354-418 AD Heretic, denied human nature was corrupted by sin.

- **The Arminian answer: Man receives from Adam a corrupted nature but does not receive Adam's guilt.** This nature is corrupted physically and intellectually, but not volitionally. General (prevenient) grace enables man to believe.
- Paul's point in vv. 13-14 seems to be that in the time between Adam and Moses, death spread to all men, not as a result of their individual sins, but as a result of **Adam's sin**. This is a problem for the Arminian view because it maintains that we did not actually sin in Adam, but only inherited a corrupt nature, and, further, that any guilt or liability to punishment we have as a result of Adam's sin is erased by Christ's atoning work on the cross. While it does not save all, it does have a universal effect described in terms of prevenient grace. Prevenient grace, in a sense, balances the effect of original sin, so that we are not guilty before God for Adam's sin, and we can respond to the gospel in our own power.
- But if this is so, what is the point of vv. 13-14? Why does Paul even bring it up? The point seems to be that death's reign even over individuals whose sins were "not taken into account" is explained by some degree of liability all humans share for Adam's sin. We all became mortal because of Adam's sin.



Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609) Corrupted by Adam's sin but only guilty for our own sin.

- **The Augustinian answer: We sinned in Adam (natural headship, seminal headship).** It affirms that all of humanity was, in a true way, present with Adam in the garden, and participated in the original sin. All humanity was present in the loins of Adam (compare with Heb. 7:9-10), and as potentially present, we participated.
- This explains v. 12. "All sinned" is in the past tense, referring to a single action, and points to the involvement of all in the first sin.
- Further, the comparison of Christ and Adam makes some sense. The actions of one man in each case had tremendous effect. This view also explains how all can be made sinners by the action of one man. Historically, this has been the most widely held view.



High Priesthood of Melchizedek

It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. (Melchizedek blessed Abram who was inferior) In the one case tithes are received by mortal men (priests) , but in the other case, by one (Melchizedek) of whom it is testified that he lives. One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him. Heb 7:7-10

Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek... Levi is a descendant of Abraham... in the loins of Abraham, (in the line of Abraham). The Levitical priesthood is therefore inferior because they're the "payer" of tithes via Abraham (inferior) and The Melchizedek priesthood (superior) was the "receiver" of tithes.

Saint Augustine: (354-430 AD) In the same way... we're descendants of Adam and "in him" when he sinned.

- **The Federal Headship answer: Adam sinned for us all.** This view is associated with Calvin and Reformed theology in general. Adam's sin is special and determinative for all of humanity, because he sinned as our head, or our **representative.**
- It explains why it is the sin of Adam, and not Eve, that is noted. The reason is the idea of headship. This also explains how our sin is linked to Adam in v. 12. All sinned for he **sinned**, not only as an individual, but as our **representative.** For this reason, all who lived between Adam and Moses died, even though they had not sinned in the same way as did Adam. All of humanity shared in the mortality that resulted from Adam's sin. And in v. 19, all are constituted sinners because there is a true solidarity between the head and those he represents.
- The parallel between Adam and Christ is understood as the parallel between the heads of two races. This is why Paul calls Christ "the last Adam" in 1 Cor. 15:45. In each case, the action of the head is determinative for all the members of the race. The sin of Adam is imputed to all the members of his race. The righteousness of Christ is likewise imputed to all the members of his race.



John Calvin: 1509-1564 theologian, pastor and reformer during the Protestant Reformation. All of us under Adam's headship are impacted, we get what he gets.

Jesus is our representative head, what he does impacts those who have faith in him.
Rom 5

- Summary: We have a sinful nature because of Adam's Sin. (Ps 51:5, 58:3; Eph 2:3)
 - In our **original** natures we totally lack **spiritual good before God.** (Rom 7:18; Titus 1:15; Jer 17:9; Eph 4:18)
 - In our actions we are totally **unable** to do spiritual good before God. (Rom 8:8; Jn. 15:5; Heb 11:6)

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; Isa 64:6

Before the Fall	After the Fall	In Heaven
The Time of Innocence	The Time of Responsibility	The Time of Full Salvation
Able not to sin	Not able not to sin (flesh)	Not able to sin
Essential Humanity	Existential Humanity	Eschatological Humanity
Gen 1-2	Gen 3 - Rev 20	Rev 21-22

THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

- **The Absoluteness of Morals.**

- The **presupposition** of sin is that there are absolute rights and wrongs. Certainly there are ethical dilemmas in life. Still, when all allowances have been made, most of life is right and wrong where we must say, "these things are not relative." Few maintain moral relativism when evil is done to them.
- But the church seems to have lost its **courage** on these matters, and **capitulated** to the rampant relativism in our culture. It shows in our lack of **church discipline**, which does not reflect true Christian love, but the much less strenuous level of complacent tolerance. Matt 18

*Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.
Heb 3:12-13*

- Our gospel that proclaims the necessity of forgiveness of sins will fall on deaf ears unless there is a belief in the **reality of sin**, and that depends on the reality of a **transcendent** (above the range of normal) standard of right and wrong.

- **Human responsibility.**

- Again, sin cannot be sin unless humans are **responsible** for their actions.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. 2 Cor 5:10

- We need to take care in our teaching of original sin and human depravity that we do not neglect the clear teaching that we are responsible and **culpable** for the sin in our lives. There is one passage that teaches us about our guilt from original sin; there are countless passages that uphold the fact that we are responsible for the actions that proceed from the sinful nature we inherit, for we and and willingly **enact** the desires of that sinful nature.
- In the final analysis, the heart of the human problem is not education, or poverty, or dysfunctional families, or psychological maladjustment, or bad examples, or a deprived childhood, though all these do have real effects on individuals. The heart of the human problem is the **human heart**, which the Bible describes as wicked and deceitful. (Jer 17:9).

THEOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

- What happens when a Christian sins?
 - Our legal **standing** before God is unchanged.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, Rom 8:1

- Our **fellowship** with God is disrupted and our Christian life is damaged. (Rom 6:16)

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Rev 3:19

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Eph 4:30

Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. Heb 12:9-12

- The danger of “**Unconverted Evangelicals**”:
 - There is a real possibility that some will associate with the church who are not truly **born again** (Matt 7:21-23).

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’” Matt 7:21-23

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” Matt 7:13-14

- A life of **disobedience** and a lack of the **fruit of the Spirit** is a warning that a person is not truly regenerated.

● The Reality of Creation

- Creation is deeply affected by the fall

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Rom 8:18-23

- Though God completed His initial creative work and rested, there still remains to be seen the new heavens and the new earth, the home of all God's redeemed (2 Pe. 3:13, Rev 21:4-5). Some have suggested that the fire at the end of history will be to cleanse and purge this creation and ready it to be recreated as God's new creation; others have said the new creation will be just that, new. But in either case we are not destined to live on clouds, but in a new (or renewed) universe.

● The Weightiness of Sin

Cur Deus Homo - Why God Became Man - by Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)

He denies the idea that God could simply forgive sin apart from atonement with the words.

Why couldn't God just forgive sins?

If that's your question, you have not yet considered the weightiness of sin (or the weightiness of the glory of God). The loss of a sense of the weightiness of sin and the majesty of the one against whom all sin is directed may be the cause.

Could a dim vision of the weightiness of sin also be behind the present day debate on:

Annihilationism - doctrine that the wicked will cease to exist after this life. They'll be cast into the lake of fire and incinerated after a few moments of torture. Scripture doesn't support that.

Inclusivism - it's possible to obtain salvation through revelation. Those who respond positively to natural revelation, and live out a faith commitment sincerely will be saved. A "sincere" Muslim. The "cross" opened to doors to reach God by any means.

Universalism - all people are going to be saved by God and brought into heaven. *Love Wins by Rob Bell.*

- When the majesty, transcendence and holiness of God are diminished, and the depravity of human nature denied, then inevitably the horror of sin and the rationale for hell is obscured.

"God rests lightly or inconsequentially on the church.

Sin needs to be seen in all of its horror in the light of the holy loving majestic transcendent God Against whom it's directed. Sin is seen in all its reality when an absolute transcendent standard of right and wrong is upheld in a loving and humble way. Sin is seen as something for which we may justly be held guilty when our teaching on sin does not obscure our personal responsibility and complicity in improving and enacting the desires of our sinful nature.

David F. Wells Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology

Books available on Amazon.com written by Dr. Kimble

- Invitation to Biblical Theology: Exploring the Shape, Storyline, and Themes of the Bible by Jeremy Kimble
- 40 Questions About Church Membership and Discipline (40 Questions & Answers)
- That His Spirit May Be Saved: Church Discipline as a Means to Repentance and Perseverance
- A Reader's Guide to the Major Writings of Jonathan Edwards: "A Reader's Guide"
- How Can I Get More Out of My Bible Reading? (Church Questions)