

# SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

## WEEK 5: HAMARTIOLOGY—WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN?

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

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- In this 6-week series, we are going to look at three systematics...man, sin, and angels.
  - **October 30<sup>th</sup>: What is original sin and what are the full consequences of sin?**
  - November 6<sup>th</sup>: What are angels, demons and the believer's defense?

### INTRODUCTION

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When studying the effects of sin, we must look at three key places: the effect of sin upon man, upon man's relationship with their fellow man and most importantly, upon man's relationship with his Creator. The emphasis throughout the whole Bible is that sin is a very serious matter with far-reaching and long-lasting consequences. Before looking at the overall effects of sin, we need to look at original sin and its transmission.

### ORIGINAL SIN

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- How does the first man's sin affect all born after him? Theologians often refer to this reality as original sin. In one sense, original sin refers to the first sin committed by Adam. But original sin also encompasses the sinful state and condition of all people because of their relationship to Adam, which is the reason people are depraved and tainted with sin from conception.<sup>1</sup>
- There have been many models and attempts to understand and elucidate how this original sin came about in Adam and then has been passed down through subsequent generations.

#### Theories of Original Sin

- There are three main theories to consider when dealing with the doctrine of original sin: Pelagianism, Arminianism and Calvinism. The question that each of these theories attempts to answer is *but just what is the nature of this influence exerted by Adam upon all humans, and by what means does it operate?*
- The answer to that question is influences everything and shapes our view of all things pertaining to God.

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 461.

## Pelagianism<sup>2</sup>

- The man, Pelagius, was a moralist (a monk) whose primary concern was for people to live good and decent lives. He postulated that when man looked down upon man's nature, there could only be negative and unfortunate consequences. In other words, he did not like talking about sin because it only led to sin.
- To counteract these tendencies, Pelagius strongly emphasized the idea of free will. He thought that man was created without or free from any controlling influences of the universe. In other words, when Adam fell into sin, *only* Adam fell into sin. There are no subsequent consequences for us today.
- When Adam fell, he left us a bad example to follow.
- As Pelagius spelled out the implications of his various tenets, the idea emerged that humans can, by their own efforts, perfectly fulfill God's commands without sinning. There is no natural inclination toward sin at the beginning of life; any later inclination in that direction comes only through the building up of bad habits.
- Salvation by works is thus quite possible, although that is something of a misnomer. Since we are not sinful, guilty, and condemned, this process is not a matter of salvation from something that presently binds us.
- It is rather a preservation or maintenance of our right status and good standing. By our own accomplishment we keep from falling into a sinful condition.

## Arminianism<sup>3</sup>

- Unlike Pelagianism, Arminianism holds that we receive from Adam a **corrupted nature**. **We begin life without righteousness**. Thus, all humans are unable, without special divine help, to fulfill God's spiritual commands. **This inability is physical and intellectual, but not volitional**.
- Although some Arminians say that "guilt" is also part of original sin, they do not mean actual responsibility, but merely liability to punishment. **For whatever culpability and condemnation may have accrued to us through Adam's sin have been removed through prevenient grace**, a doctrine that is a unique contribution of later Arminianism. **This prevenient grace is extended to everyone, and in effect neutralizes the corruption received from Adam**.

## Calvinism<sup>4</sup>

- Calvinists have given more attention to the question of original sin than have most other schools of theology. **In general terms, the Calvinist position on this matter is that there is a definite connection between Adam's sin and all persons of all times**.

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<sup>2</sup> Millard Erickson *Christian Theology*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 575-577.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 577

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 577-579.

- In some way, his sin is not just the sin of an isolated individual but is also our sin. Because we participate in that sin, we all, from the beginning of life, perhaps even from the point of conception, receive a corrupted nature along with a consequent inherited tendency toward sin.
- Furthermore, all persons are guilty of Adam's sin. Death, the penalty for sin, has been transmitted from Adam to all humans; that is evidence of everyone's guilt.
- Thus, whereas in the Pelagian view God imputes neither a corrupted nature nor guilt to humanity, and in the Arminian view God imputes a corrupted nature but not guilt (in the sense of culpability), in the Calvinist scheme he imputes both a corrupted nature and guilt.
  - The Calvinist position is based upon a very serious and quite literal understanding of Paul's statements in **Romans 5:12–19** that sin entered the world through Adam and death through that sin, and so death passed to all people, because all sinned. Through one person's sin all became sinners.

## HOW WAS ORIGINAL SIN TRANSMITTED TO ALL ADAM'S POSTERITY?

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### Realism<sup>5</sup>

- Also known as the Augustinian or seminal view, realism asserts that all humanity was physically present in Adam when he sinned. As the first man, Adam collectively represented human nature, of which Adam's descendants are all a part. And all were in Adam in seed form when he sinned. This means that Adam's descendants were in Adam's loins participating in his sin. And since everyone participated in Adam's sin, all people are morally guilty and condemned for doing so. Thus, both the corrupt nature and guilt are passed down naturally from Adam.
- The realism view affirms that the connection between Adam's sin and the sin of humanity is more than just a bad example from Adam or an inherited sin nature. Instead, all people actually participated in Adam's sin. So the guilt and condemnation are deserved because all actually sinned. Realism offers an explanation as to how all people can appropriately be guilty for Adam's sin. **When Adam sinned, all sinned in him. If that is so, advocates say, no one can make the charge that "innocent" people are wrongly imputed with Adam's sin, since everyone actually participated in his transgression.**

### Unexplained Solidarity

- One view is that **Romans 5:12–21** reveals a vague solidarity between Adam and all people that is not explained. Some connection admittedly exists, but proponents of this opaque idea suggest that it cannot be

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<sup>5</sup> MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 463-464.

known with certainty. We must be content with not knowing. This unexplained solidarity position appears to be the default for those unsatisfied with the other views.<sup>6</sup>

### **Bad Example**

- This bad-example view is flawed, since it does not adequately grasp the sinfulness of people after Adam's fall (Eph. 2:1, 5). It also does not do justice to the comparison between Adam and Christ in **Romans 5:12–21**. Further, if Adam is only a bad example, does this mean that Christ is only a good example and that we are left to save ourselves? Judging by Pelagius's reliance on the freedom of the human will for salvation, one must answer affirmatively. His condemnation for heresy at the Council of Ephesus in 431 is therefore justified.<sup>7</sup>

### **Representative or Federal Headship<sup>8</sup>**

- One of the most accepted positions is that Adam's sin is imputed to all who were united to him as the representative of humanity. Adam's guilt is our guilt. While affirming that a corrupt nature is passed down from Adam, representative headship teaches that all people are condemned because of their direct relationship to Adam.
- The representative-headship view (often called federal headship) asserts that the action of a representative is determinative for all members united to him. When Adam sinned, he represented all people; therefore, his sin is reckoned to his descendants.
- Adherents of this view also appeal to 1 Corinthians 15:22, which says, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." This verse shows that death and life are linked with Adam and Christ as two representatives of mankind. In addition, Romans 5:14 states that "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam." This verse explicitly teaches that Adam's offspring did not commit Adam's sin. **So Adam relates to his offspring as their representative head, and thus the act of Adam is imputed to others, even though the others did not actually commit the sin that Adam did.**

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 462.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 464-465.

## HOW SIN EFFECTS MANKIND

- Now that we know original sin exists and that it has infected and affected all of mankind (except Jesus), we turn our attention to what extent it has taken hold of us.

### All of Mankind: Man's Total Depravity

- Total depravity emphasizes the devastating impact of sin on the person and covers three related concepts: (1) the pollution and corruption of all aspects of a person; (2) the complete inability of a person to please God; and (3) universality, in that all are conceived and born as sinners.<sup>9</sup>
- Man, as totally depraved, does not mean that they are not able to do good in our society. Jesus said in Matthew 7:11a “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...” Unredeemed man is capable of acts of relative goodness.
- What total depravity emphasizes is that it is total or pervasive in that all components of a person are polluted by sin. There are no parts of mankind which have escaped the effect of sin.
  - Ephesians 2:3 “Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by **nature** children of wrath, even as the rest.”
  - This word *nature* means “the natural things, laws, order of nature.”
  - We were born “this way” as sinners, as the natural order of things in life.
  - We did not become children of wrath but were born children of wrath.
- Because man is completely depraved, he is incapable of pleasing God through his own efforts. There is nothing that man can do in himself which will be pleasing to God.
  - Ephesians 2:1 “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins...”
- Since this issue affects all men after Adam, all men are fallen. There are no people who have escaped being born with a sinful nature and the effects of sin upon them (except Jesus).
- It is of the utmost importance to fully understand that people are not neutral. They are not able to accept or reject the gospel of Jesus Christ based in its merits.
  - Romans 6:16 “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?”
  - What some people consider freedom to sin, freedom from the restrictions of obedience to the will of God, is actually the enslavement that sin produces.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 467.

<sup>10</sup> Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 561.

- In his unredeemed state, man hates God.
  - Romans 8:7-8 “because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”
- In his unredeemed state, man cannot accept spiritual truth. He denies the existence of Biblical sin.
  - Man does not, nor has a desire, to take responsibility for his actions.
  - 1 Corinthians 2:14 “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”
- Once we are able to accept the fact that man is completely tainted and controlled by sin, then accepting the fact that God is sovereign in salvation is the next natural step.

### Man’s Relationship with God

- Man became spiritually dead. Unredeemed man no longer has any relationship with God. He cannot pray to God; he cannot love God and he cannot do anything for God.
- Man came under the wrath and punishment of God. Mankind is no longer in a favorable place with God but now under His righteous judgment.
- Man, and God became enemies. Since there is nothing that man can do for God, all that he does is against God. While his actions may seem genuine, his motives and desires are impure and not seeking to bring God glory.

### Man’s Relationship with People

- **Sin brought tension between men and women specifically.**
  - Women would now desire to rule over their husbands, but their husbands will have rule.
  - Genesis 3:16 “To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.’”
- **People, in general, will have strife and conflict between them.**
  - An increasing self-centeredness also results from sin. In many ways sin is a turning in upon oneself that is confirmed with practice. We call attention to ourselves, and to our good qualities and accomplishments, and minimize our shortcomings. We seek special favors and opportunities in life, wanting an extra little edge that no one else has. We display a certain special alertness to our own wants and needs, while we ignore those of others.<sup>11</sup>
- **Inability to love.**

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 563.

- Since other people stand in our way, representing competition and a threat to us, we cannot really act for the ultimate welfare of others if our aim is self-satisfaction. And so suspicions, conflicts, bitterness, and even hatred issue from the self-absorption or the pursuit of finite values that has supplanted God at the center of the sinner’s life.<sup>12</sup>

## SIN BROUGHT DEATH

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- **One of sin’s obvious results is death.** This truth is first pointed out in God’s statement forbidding Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: “for when you eat from it you will certainly die” (**Gen. 2:17**). It is also found in clear didactic form in **Romans 6:23**: “**The wages of sin is death.**” Paul’s point is that, like wages, death is a fitting return, a just recompense for what we have done. This death that we have deserved has several different aspects: (1) **physical death**, (2) **spiritual death**, and (3) **eternal death**.<sup>13</sup>

### Physical Death

- **The mortality of all humans is both an obvious fact and a truth taught by Scripture.** Hebrews 9:27 says, “People are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” Paul in Romans 5:12 attributes death to the original sin of Adam. Yet while death entered the world through Adam’s sin, it spread to all humans because all sinned.<sup>14</sup>

### Spiritual Death

- **When Adam and Eve sinned, physical death did not occur immediately.** Adam lived 930 years (Gen. 5:5). **Spiritual death, however, happened instantly.** Spiritual death is the state of spiritual alienation from God. As a result of Adam’s sin, all living people are born spiritually dead.<sup>15</sup>

### Eternal Death

- **Eternal death awaits those who physically die while being spiritually dead.** Those who die in unbelief will face the lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:11–15). John refers to this as “the second death” (Rev. 20:6). While it does not cause people to cease to exist, eternal death is still a kind of death since it involves everlasting ruin, punishment for sins, and separation from God’s presence to bless.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 564.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 557.

<sup>14</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 557.

<sup>15</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 460.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 460.

## SIN AND THE REDEEMED MAN

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- What is the effect of a Christian sinning? The Bible does not teach perfectionism in this life or before the resurrection, so Christians will sin. **1 John 1:8** “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”
- But when a person trusts in Christ, he receives both forgiveness of sins and Christ’s righteousness. As a result, Paul declares in **Romans 8:1** “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Christ died for our sins (**1 Cor. 15:3**), so all sins—past, present, and future—are forgiven.
- God, who began a good work in us, will be faithful to complete what he started (**Phil. 1:6**). Sin will not remove a Christian from God’s love; indeed, Paul says in **Romans 8:39** “nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- However, while instances of personal sin cannot break the believer’s union with Christ, they do have a negative impact on the believer’s communion with Christ.
- When Christians sin, they grieve the Holy Spirit (**Eph. 4:30**). Sin also brings God’s discipline. Jesus said in Revelation 3:19 “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”
- In addition, **Hebrews 12:6** says, “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”
- Christians should examine themselves for sin and be open to loving exhortation and rebuke from other believers (**Gal. 6:1**).
- Jesus instituted a church discipline process for dealing with sin in the life of a professing Christian (**Matt. 18:15–20**).
- Unrepentant sin leads to expulsion from the church, so that the church maintains its purity (**1 Cor. 5:13**).
- Sin in the life of a Christian is a serious matter. It harms one’s spiritual growth and testimony for Christ.
- While Christians will never face judicial punishment for sins, they will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account for their deeds done in the body, whether good or bad (**2 Cor. 5:10**).
- The dross will be burned away, and the eternal reward will reflect what remains (**1 Cor. 3:12–15**).<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds., *Biblical Doctrine*, 472.