

TREK 201

CORE CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

Lesson 9

HAMARTIOLOGY (THE STUDY OF SIN)

“Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.” Philippians 2:12b (NLT)

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HAMARTIOLOGY -- THE STUDY OF SIN

Whatever became of sin? Sin, like death, is not a pleasant subject and often avoided. We don't like to think of people being bad or evil. But we will discover that is our very nature. However, in our culture, "Sin" is never considered the problem. The problems that we face are blamed on a terrible environment that can be resolved either by education or legislation, but not by transformation of the heart of sinful man. In addition we focus on **Sins**, individual wrong acts, rather than **Sin**, an inherent condition within man. The result is that we compare ourselves to others, declare ourselves good and therefore have no need for change. The Bible focuses on sin as an inherent condition that produces guilt and separation from our Creator. Because of sin, our world has known nothing but decay, destruction, and death- nothing on this earth has escaped the touch of sin (Rom. 8:22). Sin has ruined our world and for those without redemption in Christ, even their eternity. The remedy is not resemblance to a fellow human being but *redemption by the blood of Jesus!*

Real questions: What is sin? How did sin enter the world? What is the source? Does Adam's sin affect me? If so, how?

A. SIN ENTERS THE WORLD – THE FALL OF MAN

Read aloud Gen 3:1-7 *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'' 2 And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' " 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths."*

1. **Original state of Man**
 - i. State of innocence. Created perfectly, and had no inward tendency to sin, as we now have. Innately, Adam was neither righteous nor sinful (but free to choose). God created Adam as a moral being (capacity to choose good or evil) and this is called "FREE WILL." However, in the Garden of Eden, man had a perfect relationship with God. Man chose God and goodness.
 - ii. While capable of being tempted (if evil was introduced), man did not have to sin, nor was Adam forced to sin (by God, by Satan, or even himself). Man freely chose to sin and exercise his own nature of Free Will. Imagine if Adam had chosen to reject Satan and trust only in God and His truth!!
 - iii. The Virtue of man was untested. When tested, man failed. Sin entered the world, because of both Satan's choice to rebel against God and Adam's choice to disobey God's explicit command NOT to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. For all humanity, even today we reap Adam's choice and its disastrous results.

2. The Tempter

- i. Serpent: What? Satan in disguise; manifestation of Satan
- ii. Satan's rebellion is surmised to have occurred between Gen 1 when God declared His creation very good and Gen 3. We will study Satan in more detail in a future lesson.
- iii. Satan lied and brought chaos (Jn. 8:44; 10:10). God's words brought life and order (Jn. 10:10). Satan's words brought death and chaos.

3. The Temptation

Satan appealed to man's natural desires which influenced Adam and Eve 1) to doubt God (Gen 3:1), 2) to disbelieve Him (Gen 3:4, actually said God lied) and then 3) to disobey Him (Gen 3:6). All of us have these same natural desires. While they are good in and of themselves, our desires become potential areas for temptation and sin. These were the same areas that Satan tempted Jesus (Matt 4:1-11) and the same ones John warns us in 1 John 2:15-17 that causes us to love the world rather than loving God.

- i. The desire to enjoy things-- "good for food" – appeal to physical appetite. These needs are essential and can also bring enjoyment. The need for food and drink is necessary in order to live. If we pursue them merely for pleasure and in excess, we are guilty of the sin of gluttony.
- ii. The desire to obtain things – "lust/desires of the eyes" – appeal to our aesthetic nature. The appearance of fruit appealed to Eve's desire to have something she did not possess. While it is not sinful to desire things, it becomes sin when it is contrary to God's command. When the desire to get worldly goods becomes so gripping that it must be satisfied at any cost, even by exploiting or stealing from others, then we have sinned.
- iii. The desire to do things – "desirable for gaining wisdom" – appeals to ambition. The desire to achieve are both natural and appropriate and God expects it. When this desire is followed at the expense of others, we forget our dependence upon God and sin by treating our fellowman with disdain rather than dignity.

B. THE NATURE OF SIN

1. Definition of Sin

- i. Sin is rebellion against the nature, work, and will of God for one's life.
- ii. Sin is anything (whether in thoughts, actions or attitudes) that does not express or conform to the holy character of God as expressed in His moral law. (Biblical Doctrine: an overview, ESV study bible, p 2530)
- iii. Sin includes not only individual **acts** such as stealing or committing adultery, but also **attitudes** that are contrary to the attitudes God requires of us (Mt. 5). The 10 Commandments command us not to

commit adultery but Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, said the attitude of lust is the same as the act.

2. **Old Testament View of sin** – more emphasis on the outward actions:

- i. Transgression of the Law. Since the Mosaic law reveals God's rule for life, breaking any of the 10 Commandments is sin.
- ii. Breach of the Covenant. God covenanted with Israel to be his people. Sins such as idolatry violated this covenant and was sin.
- iii. Violation of the righteous nature of God. His righteous nature was the plumbline (Amos 7:8) for Israel to live by. Any violation of His nature such as injustice was sin.

3. **New Testament View of sin** –more emphasis on the inner character and state of the soul:

- i. Lack of fellowship with God is sin. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10) therefore lack of fellowship is sin. In heaven there is the fullness of fellowship. Hell is the supreme lack of fellowship.
- ii. More subjective than objective. Jesus shows us sin is the condition of the heart. He reminds us inner motives and thoughts leads to overt acts (Matt 5:21-22, 27-28). Jesus declared real defilement of sin comes from the sinful heart (Matt 15:17-19). Therefore sin demands an inner cleansing and transformation.
- iii. Sin is unbelief. Unbelief is the deliberate and willful rejection of truth revealed in Jesus. Moral and spiritual blindness results when we reject the truth (John 3:18-19).

4. **Axioms about sin**

- i. Sin is an inward inclination. It is an inherent inner disposition inclining us to wrong acts. Motives are virtually as important as actions. So Jesus condemned anger and lust as vehemently as he did murder and adultery (Matt. 5:21–22, 27–28). **It is not simply that we are sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.**
- ii. Sin is moral evil such as murder versus natural evil such as cancer. Moral evil is rebellion against God.
- iii. Sin is always and ultimately related to God. While sin has serious consequence for society and those around us, the central issue is that sin offends God and incurs His wrath. This explains why David, who has committed adultery and murder, declares “against you and you only, I have sinned” (Ps 51:4). David voices for all us the realization that we must all answer to God for our actions and attitudes (Heb 4:13).
- iv. Sin is rebelliousness and disobedience.
 1. There are sins of commission – doing what we should not do.
 2. There are sins of omission— not doing what we should
- v. “Sin involves spiritual disability. It alters our inner condition, our character. In sinning we become twisted or distorted. The image of

God in which we were created is disturbed. In Romans 1, Paul describes this process. Having refused to acknowledge God, sinners became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened (v. 21). God gave them over to a depraved mind (v. 28). When left to itself, the human mind is not adequate to properly inform and direct our conduct. The results of this spiritual disability are the sins listed in verses 29–31. Only through a renewal of the mind by God can the individual be restored to an undistorted, spiritually healthy condition (Rom. 12:2).” Introducing Christian Doctrine, Millard Erickson.

- vi. Sin is displacement of God. Placing something else, anything else, in the supreme place which belongs to God is sin. Choosing any finite object over God is wrong, no matter how selfless such an act might seem. Ex 20:3

C. ORIGIN OF SIN

Where did sin come from? How did it come into the universe?

1. God himself is not sin, did not create sin, nor can God be blamed for sin. God did not cause sin. James quickly dispels this idea and places the responsibility for sin at the foot of the individual (James 1:13-15). Man sinned and did so by willful, voluntary choice. To blame God for sin would be blasphemy against the character of God.
2. God was not surprised by sin nor did it challenge His omnipotence or His control over the universe.
 - i. “We must never say that God himself sinned or he is to be blamed for sin, yet we must also affirm that the God who “accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will” (Eph. 1:11) did ordain that sin would come into the world, even though he does not delight in it and even though he ordained that it would come about through the voluntary choices of moral creatures.” Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology
3. Sin entered the human race in the Garden of Eden through an attack of Satan, who led Adam and Eve to doubt God’s word and trust their own ability to discern good and evil (Genesis 3). Satan’s strategy was to bring disorder to the created order. Satan then questioned God’s goodness, wisdom, and care for Adam and Eve by suggesting that God was a miserly legalist in his prohibition of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan then simply lied, saying, “you will not surely die” (Gen. 3:4). Such deception and rebellion against God stem from a failure to trust him and be satisfied with him and his commands and arrangements. Satan and our first parents demanded autonomy and rejected God’s authority, and this has been the source and shape of human sin ever since. Unbelief (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6), pride, and selfishness lead us to think we know better than God and to try to put ourselves in his place. All people, in their fallen condition, are indeed “lovers of self ... rather than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:2, 4). Biblical Doctrine: an Overview, ESV Study Bible.

D. CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

God rightly judged the rebellion of Adam and Eve and brought a curse on them and all their offspring. The curse brought physical and spiritual death, separation from God, and alienation from Him and others. All people are now conceived, born, and live in this fallen, depraved condition. (Rom. 3:10–12; 5:12)

1. **Total Depravity** – complete corruption of our moral and spiritual nature.
 - i. It is a distinct bias toward evil that results in man's certainty to sin.
 - ii. Depravity does not mean that humans are simply deprived of good or of God's goodness, but rather that we are completely void of God's moral goodness and are full of pride, selfishness, deceitfulness, and a moral nature which is contrary to God's. In short, sin has marred the moral nature of man which has caused his depravity, an inability to relate rightly to God or act righteously like God.
 - iii. Man is unable to resist the pull of temptation and unable to give himself completely to good. Man cannot escape sin.
 - iv. Total depravity means that all of man's nature is corrupted by sin. No one is as bad as he or she could be, nor are all mankind equally bad (actions). Yet, we are all equally sinful (by nature) and equally guilty & condemned apart from redemption. Sin touches every part of us so no action is as good as it should be.
 - v. Total depravity means that we can do nothing to earn God's favor or be "righteous" before God (Is. 64:6; Ro. 10:3). All parts of us are controlled and dominated by sin. The most devastating consequence of total depravity is that unless God's grace intervenes to save us, we are eternally lost and separated from God's presence.
 - vi. The ESV Study Bible summarizes it this way: Until God intervenes with his sovereign, gracious, saving power, mankind is totally unable to:
 1. repent or trust Christ (John 6:44)
 2. see or enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3)
 3. obey God and thereby glorify him (Rom. 8:6–8)
 4. attain spiritual understanding (1 Cor. 2:14)
 5. live lives pleasing to God (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6)
 6. receive eternal or spiritual life (Eph. 2:1–3)

2. **Guilt** – Guilt is moral condemnation due to breaking God's intent and therefore being subject to punishment.
 - i. We are not born guilty of committing sin. We are born with a sin nature. Our actions and choices by our OWN will –based on our own non-coerced sinful desires- these actions, thoughts, and intentions become sin (in action) and render us each one guilty before God. Just one sinful action renders us guilty for the rest of our life unless we are forgiven in Christ (James 2:10; Ro. 3:23; 6:23).
 - ii. Just as a football player who commits a foul is liable for a penalty (punishment), so when we sin, we incur guilt (foul) and are liable to punishment.
 - iii. God offers His love and provides salvation through the death of Jesus. Our rejection of what God has done for us is wrong and brings condemnation.

- iv. If God did not hold us liable for such rejection, He would cease to be a righteous and just God. His holy nature demands wrath/punishment. Our sin and rejection of God's nature and desire deserve punishment.
 - v. We, like Adam and Eve, attempt to cover up our sin by refusing to accept responsibility. Instead we blame something or someone else. Our attempt to cover up our guilt is evidence of its presence.
 - vi. Guilt often desensitizes our conscience toward sin even to the point of denial (1 John 1:8). The deeper we go into sin, the greater the insensitivity to it (Rom. 1:18-32). While guilt may be great, the awareness may be small (Eph. 4:18-19).
3. **Enslavement** - Sin becomes the master and man the slave (Heb. 12:1; John 8:34-36)
- i. In Rom 6, Paul says we are a slave either to sin or to righteousness (Rom 6:16-18).
 - ii. Since we cannot free ourselves, we must turn to the Redeemer, Jesus, who frees us from slavery to sin so we can obey and serve God.
4. **Suffering** – for both the sinner and those around him or her, this world suffers the devastating consequences of sin (Ro. 8:22)
- i. Much of human suffering is due to man's sin. Suffering began in the Garden (Gen 3:17-19) with burdensome labor.
 - ii. Natural evil –floods, tornados, disease, etc.—resulted from man's act of rebellion. Paul speaks of the creation's groaning and eager expectation for the future glory when Christ will come and deliver it from the bondage and pain it experiences now (Rom 8:18-22).
5. **Death** – the chief penalty of our sin.
- i. Physical death results.
 - 1. God declared this result to Adam and Eve (Gen 2:17) before they sinned. Though God created mankind to be eternal, man's sin resulted in death (as an initial covering for sin) throughout all animal, plant, and human life; instead of living physically for eternity, sin results that each (physical) life must end as punishment. The Hebrew writer (Heb. 9:27) reminds us that the mortality rate will be 100%. God even ended the great lengths of man's years on the earth because of the woeful sinfulness of mankind (Gen. 6:3; Ps. 90:10)
 - ii. Spiritual death results.
 - 1. This is separation from God. The Holy God, cannot look upon sin or tolerate its presence. Thus, sin is a barrier to the relationship between God and human beings. It brings them under his judgment and condemnation.
 - 2. Sin so separates us from God, we become enemies of God (Rom 5:8-10) thus alienated from Him. Sin is then hostility to God and drives Him out of man's life.
 - iii. Eternal death results.

1. This is the extension and finalization of the spiritual death. If one comes to physical death still spiritually dead, separated from God, that condition becomes permanent (Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8).

6. All men are sinners before God.

- i. The extent of sin's consequences is that it touches every human being that has or will live. The Bible affirms this in both the Old (Gen 6:5) and the New (Rom 3:23) Testaments. No one escapes the tyranny of sin.
- ii. There may be a difference in the degree, but not in the fact of sin. All men, Jew and Gentile, have missed the mark, and failed to attain to God's standard. There is none righteous, no, not one (Ro. 3:10).

E. DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN

All of us are sinners—no exceptions. All of us have a depraved and corrupted nature which results in our bent toward and inevitable sin. Yet, how can it be? This raises another question: How does Adam's sin affect us? Paul answers: **Read Aloud: 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**—Romans 5:12 (ESV) How does Adam's sin affect our sin nature as well as our guilt?

Before discussing this, let's define the term "original" sin. This term does NOT refer to Adam's first sin, but it refers to the nature of sin with which we are born. It is the sinfulness that marks everyone from birth, in the form of a heart inclined toward sin and before committing any actual sin. This inner sinfulness is the root and source of all actual sins. It is transmitted to us from Adam, our first representative before God. It is original in the sense that we have it from the beginning of our existence. It is our sin not Adam's.

The doctrine of original sin makes the point that we are not sinners because we sin but we sin because we are sinners born with a nature enslaved to sin.

Some theologians use the term "inherited" sin rather than "original" sin. This emphasizes that we inherit from our parents the tendency toward sinful actions.

Throughout Church History there have been 4 views about how Adam's sin affects mankind.

1. Pelagianism (Heresy)

- i. Pelagius, a popular Christian teacher active in Rome about 383–410AD and then later (until 424AD) in Palestine, taught that God holds man responsible only for those things that man is able to do. Since God warns us to do good, therefore, we must have the ability to do the good that God commands. Pelagius maintained that the soul, created by God specially for every person, is not tainted by any supposed corruption or guilt. He said that Adam's sin affected himself only; that every human being born into the world is as free from sin as Adam was. The only effect the first sin had upon the race was that of a bad example. *In essence, for Pelagius, man is basically good.*

- ii. He said man has the ability to stop sinning if he simply chooses to. Man can take the first and the most important steps toward salvation on his own, apart from God's intervening grace. Since, in this view, man is morally and spiritually "good" and by his own righteous acts could earn a relationship with God, the foundation of salvation lies with man working equally in partnership with God (Synergism). Pelagianism was condemned as a heresy at the Council of Carthage on May 1, 418AD.

2. Semi-Pelagianism (Roman Catholicism)

The Roman Catholic Church today holds to a form of Semi-pelagianism today: = man is not depraved. Man is simply deprived of all of God's goodness. So, when God stirs the heart of man, man can use his and God's moral goodness to work together with God and earn/attain salvation based on good works and faithful actions toward both God and man (Synergism). Many Christians also believe this theory practically today.

3. Arminianism (Methodists, Pentecostals, Nazarenes, Many Baptists etc.)

James Arminius (1560-1609), Dutch Reformed pastor and theologian, presented a moderate view. He said we receive from Adam a corrupted nature -- sin nature. This sin nature causes us to naturally sin. We begin life without righteousness. Man cannot stop sinning on his own. Thus, all humans are unable, without special divine help, to fulfill God's spiritual commands. This inability is physical and intellectual, but *not* of the will. God gives a universal grace to all to enable us to stop. God imputes a corrupted nature, but not guilt.

God bestows upon each individual a special gift of His Spirit, which is sufficient to enable man to be righteous, if he will allow his will to cooperate with God's Spirit. According to this view, man is only half sick, or half well. Thus, man can contribute to his own salvation only after God empowers him to do. (Synergism)

4. Calvinism (Presbyterians, Reformed, Lutheran, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Baptists)

John Calvin (1509-1564), French/Swiss Reformed Pastor and theologian. The Calvinistic doctrine states that Adam's sin has resulted not only in our having a sin nature, but also in our incurring guilt before God for which we deserve punishment. Being conceived with original sin upon us (Psalm 51:5) results in our inheriting a sin nature so wicked that Jeremiah 17:9 describes the human heart as "deceitful above all things and beyond cure." Not only was Adam found guilty because he sinned, but his guilt and his punishment (death) belong to us as well (Romans 5:12, 19).

Two biblical explanations for this view:

- 1) The first view states that the human race was within Adam in seed form; thus when Adam sinned, we sinned in him. This is similar to the

biblical teaching that Levi (a descendant of Abraham) paid tithes to Melchizedek in Abraham (Genesis 14:20; Hebrews 7:4-9), even though Levi was not born until hundreds of years later.

2) The other main view is that Adam served as our representative (our Federal head) and so, when he sinned, we were all found guilty as well. When Adam sinned, we were actually sinning with him. Adam's vote for our sin is similar to our congressman who represents us and by his vote obligates us for certain indebtedness.

The Calvinistic/Reformed view sees one as unable to overcome his sin apart from the power of the Holy Spirit, a power possessed only when –initiated by God, not man- one turns in faith to Christ and His atoning sacrifice for sin upon the cross. Jesus, therefore becomes man's NEW (Federal Head) representative before God. Thus, IN Christ and because of our new UNION with Christ, therefore there is now NO CONDEMNATION for those who are in Christ (Ro. 8:1) because He is our new Head and we identify with Christ, no longer Adam.

How can God hold us accountable for a sin we did not personally commit? There is a plausible interpretation that we become responsible for original sin when we choose to accept, and act according to, our sinful nature. There comes a point in our lives (sometimes referred to as the age of accountability or consciousness—neither terms are used in the Bible) when we become aware of our own sinfulness. At that point we should reject the sinful nature and repent of it. Instead, we all “approve” that sinful nature, in effect saying that it is good. In approving our sinfulness, we are expressing agreement with the actions of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. We are therefore guilty of that sin without actually having committed it.

The Calvinist position is based upon a 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 individuals because all sinned. Through one man's sin all became sinners.

An examination of Romans 5:12-21

- iii. Every influence that Adam passed on to humanity, Christ overcame. Through Jesus' death as our substitute on the cross, a repentant sinner receives new life:
- iv.

Through Adam	Through Christ
1. Sin entered (v12)	Grace entered (v15)
2. Offense transferred (v12)	Free gift offered (v 15-16)
3. Condemnation (v 16)	Justification (v16)
4. Death reigns (v12)	Righteousness reigns (v18)
5. Disobedience (v19)	Obedience (v19)
6. Makes men sinners (v19)	Makes men righteous (v19)
7. Sin abounds (20)	Grace abounds (v20)
8. Death (v18)	Eternal life (v18)
- v. Was it fair for God to condemn the whole world just because of one man's disobedience? One answer we can give is by condemning the

human race through one man (Adam), God was then able to save the human race through one Man (Jesus Christ). But because you and I were lost in Adam, our racial and Federal head, we can be saved in Christ, the Head of the new creation. God's plan was both gracious and wise.

F. SUMMARY OF SCRIPTURAL TEACHING ABOUT SIN

1. All men without respect of condition or class are sinners before God.
 - i. Rom. 3:9, 10, 22, 23;
 - ii. There may be a difference in the degree, but not in the fact of sin. All men, Jew and Gentile, have missed the mark, and failed to attain to God's standard. There is none righteous, no, not one.
2. This universal sinful condition is vitally connected with Adam's sin.
 - i. Rom. 5:12-21
 - ii. All men were in Adam when he sinned-- he sinned; we sinned. This the principle of the organic unity of the race. "In Adam all die."
3. The whole world rests under condemnation and wrath.
 - i. Rom. 3:19; Gal. 3:10; Eph. 2:3.
 - ii. The law of God demands a perfect obedience. The wrath of God abides on all not vitally united by faith to Jesus Christ (John 3:36).
4. The whole race of men is in helpless captivity to sin and Satan.
 - i. John 8:31-36; Eph. 2:3.
5. The entire nature of man—mentally, morally, spiritually, physically, is affected by sin.
 - i. The understanding is darkened (Eph. 4:18; 1 Cor. 2:14);
 - ii. The heart is deceitful and wicked (Jer. 17:9-10);
 - iii. The mind and conscience are defiled (Gen. 6:5; Titus 1:15);
 - iv. We cannot meet the requirements of God's holiness (Rom. 3:10)
 - v. We are totally dependent upon God for salvation and transformation (Eph. 2:8-10).