

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines

Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24

11 | Doctrine of Original Sin, cont.

## IMPLICATIONS OF ORIGINAL SIN

**Review** - after the Fall, we are all born sinners “in Adam”, worthy of death and in need of redemption.

**Intro** - Let us always make sure to focus on God and the cross of Jesus Christ when discussing sin.

### 1. Could Original Sin be good news? On Humanity, Dignity, and Responsibility

1. Sin, though it is present in us now by nature, is **still the invader!** Original sin makes this clear because we weren't created sinners, we're only born sinners now after the Fall. To say "well, everyone's human" is an excuse that is foreign to the Bible. Human's were created with great dignity and integrity, and although the grace of the gospel makes it clear that sin is pervasive and should not surprise us, it is also not a part of God's ultimate purpose for us.
2. "The Bible takes sin seriously because it takes man (male and female) seriously... To say that somebody 'is not responsible for his actions' is to demean him or her as a human being. It is part of the glory of being human that we are **held responsible** for our actions." - John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*
3. **Sin and evil are not "creative"**, meaning they don't do anything on their own. Evil is merely a privation of good, sin distorts God's purposes, it doesn't add anything of its own. Why is this important? What are implications of this view?
  1. **Look to Jesus** - he was FULLY human, yet without sin
  2. This point is also grounded in our **doctrine of creation**. God alone creates out of nothing, and when he had created, it was all good. Whatever the devil does, he's merely working with what God provided. Thus, common grace says that no human being this side of hell is 100% purely sinful.

4. Not only does Original Sin highlight the dignity of humanity, it also **casts us upon the mercy of God**, which also comes through a covenant representative, Christ.
  1. One incredible feature of the Great Awakening was the deep conviction of sin that forced them to see their need for God's mercy and love.

## 2. **Original Sin and other sins: distinguishing between symptoms and essence**

1. WCF 6.4 - "From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions."
  1. "Neither the language of medicine nor of law is adequate substitute for the language of [sin.] Contrary to the medical model, we are not entirely at the mercy of our maladies ...the choice is to enter into the process of repentance... Contrary to the legal model... the essence of sin is not the violation of laws but... a wrecked relationship with God, one another, and the whole created order. "All sins are attempts to fill voids," wrote Simone Weil. Because we cannot stand the God-shaped hole inside of us, we try stuffing it full of all sorts of things, but... only God may fill (it)." – Barbara Brown Taylor
  2. What happens if we forget Original Sin and focus merely on "sins", especially as merely individual behaviors and thoughts we can change?
2. "It is just as possible to avoid God as Savior and Lord by keeping and obeying the laws of God as by breaking them" - Keller
3. How do these words help us think about sin?
  1. alienation
  2. distortion
  3. falling short
  4. rebellion
4. How could differentiating between sins and Sin help us in dealing with our own sin?

## 3. **On talking about sin in the world, from Tim Keller**

1. For example, if most people hear you say that people who have sex outside of marriage are sinning, they will immediately believe you look

down on them, that you think they are lost because of that behavior, that you are one of the good people who don't do things like that, and so on.

2. Even if you don't mean any of that, others will believe you are saying that because they have a completely different grid or paradigm in their minds about how anyone can approach and relate to God. This is why Christians with a good grasp of the Biblical view of sin will try to avoid public pronouncements on particular behaviors as sinful and will try to get people to hear the radical message of the Bible about the true nature of sin and its universality. **They will show that people are lost only if ultimately they are too proud to see they are lost and needful of a Savior who saves by sheer grace, just as a drowning person offered a life-preserver will only die if he won't admit he needs it.**
  
4. *Christians are still sinners* - WCF 6.5: "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be, through Christ, pardoned, and mortified; yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin."
  1. Cf. Rom. 7; 1Jn. 1.8-10; Gal. 5:17; as well as the assumption underlying every moral exhortation to believers ("Though you're in Christ, stop acting like you're in Adam!"); if this wasn't true, moral exhortation would be nonsense because Christians wouldn't struggle with sin anymore.

**Faith vs. sin** - "Faith is: that the self is grounded in God. Sin is faith's opposite. Sin is... wanting to be one's own self, instead of a self whose specifications and identity are the outcome of one's relationship to God." – Soren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death*

**Pride** - "Many have overcome cowardice, or lust, or ill-temper by learning to think that they are beneath their dignity. The devil laughs. He is perfectly content to see you becoming chaste and brave and self-controlled provided he is setting up in you the Dictatorship of Pride — just as he would be quite content to see [the corns on your foot] cured if he was allowed, in return, to give you cancer. **For Pride is spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or common sense. In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that — and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison — you do**

not know God at all. He wants you to be delightedly humble, feeling the infinite relief of having for once got rid of all the silly nonsense about your own dignity which has made you unhappy and restless all your life. Whenever we find that our religious life is making us feel we are good — above all, that we are better than someone else — I think we may be sure that we are being acted on not by God but by the devil... If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed." – C.S.Lewis

**Sloth as the other side of the coin of pride** - The *humility* of the Son of God unmasks our *pride*. On the other hand, the *exaltation* of the Son of Man unmasks, in turn, our *sloth*. "As reconciling grace is not merely *justifying*, but also wholly and utterly *sanctifying* and awakening and establishing grace, so sin has not merely the heroic form of pride but also, in complete antithesis yet profound correspondence, the quite unheroic and trivial form of sloth. In other words, it has the form, not only of evil action, but also of **evil inaction**; not only of the rash arrogance which is forbidden and reprehensible, but also of the tardiness and failure which are equally forbidden and reprehensible. It is also the counter-movement to the elevation which has come to man from God Himself in Jesus Christ. The sinner is not merely Prometheus or Lucifer [prideful]. He is also a lazy-bones, a sluggard, a good-for-nothing, a slow-coach and a loafer. **In the one case, he stands bitterly in need of humiliation; in the other he stands no less bitterly in need of exaltation.**" - Karl Barth