

Theology for Life
Faith Presbyterian Church
Lesson 13: Humanity and Sin

Last time: *Our understanding of creation has been shaped by the Fundamentalist-Modernist debates. Scripture is clear on the non-negotiables: God created all things out of nothing, God is the Lord of creation, and Adam functioned as our representative.*

Humanity and the Fall

WCF 4.2. *After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it: and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject unto change. Beside this law written in their hearts, they received a command, not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.*

What stands out to you about this definition of humanity?

Image of God

From *Designed for Dignity*:

“The police found a desperate note left on the nightstand. ‘Don’t cry for me,’ the wrinkled paper said. ‘I’m not even human anymore.’ ...Just a few floors below, advocates of the New Age Movement gathered in the convention center. After several rousing talks, a well-known celebrity led the crowd in a unison chant, ‘I am God!...I am God!’”

Pratt writes, *“Few people take the desperate step of suicide; not many openly worship themselves. But to one degree or another, **all of us tend toward** pitiful or grandiose self-images. In some instances, we even go in both directions at the same time.”*

WCF 6 Of the Fall of Man, of Sin and of the Punishment Thereof

6. 1. *Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned, in eating the forbidden fruit. This their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.*

2. *By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.*

What is Sin: Act or Identity?

In most non-Christian religions, if they have a concept of sin, sin is an act (something that is committed). Only in Christianity does the concept of sin refer to a state of being. You are sinful so you commit sins. It starts with the heart and flows to the actions.

Pelagius: The 5th century heretic

"All depravity is voluntary-- consisting in voluntary transgression... O! the darkness of that view of depravity which exhibits it, as something lying back, and the cause of all actual transgression."

According to Pelagius:

1. Sin is only in the deliberate choice of evil.
 - a. This denies a spiritual inability. Man, he says, is neutral.
 - b. It presupposes knowledge of what is evil
 - c. It assumes man has the full power of choosing or rejecting it.
2. Salvation is not a rescue of helpless man from sin, but a reward for virtuous living.
3. What role is left for Christ to play?

For Pelagius, Christ was merely a good example to follow.

Gnosticism: On the other hand, you have the heresy of Gnosticism: which states that created matter is evil.

1. This denies choice. You were made evil, or you have a wicked body, so you do wicked things.
2. The Bible says we are created good and in the image of God.
3. If created matter is evil, what would be your hope of salvation?

Original Sin (Imputation of Sin and the Corruption of Human Nature)

3. They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.

1. **Imputation:** credited legal guilt or innocence (this declaration does not change our nature)

Romans 5:12-21

1. Like Christ, Adam stood in as a **covenant representative**; as Adam goes, so goes the rest of humanity. Verse 14 (*Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come*) is reaffirmed in 1 Corinthians 15:22 *"as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."*

Adam and Christ both function as covenant representatives (Federal Heads). As part of the human race we enter into this legal covenant with Adam as our head, and we are faced with the penalty of a broken covenant which is death. His sin put the rest of humanity into the legal category of sinful humanity.

2. We face the **legal punishment of a broken covenant**. V. 15, *"Many died by the trespass of the one man...judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation...condemnation for all men."*

Is this fair? Would you have fared better?

Our individualistic culture rarely forces us to think in terms of solidarity with our fellow humans. Genesis affirms that we relate corporately to our Creator God as a created people.

The good news of this imputation is that it is also the principle by which we are redeemed. We need just one Christ to represent all humanity. Those who stay loyal to Adam are condemned with him; those who transfer loyalty to Christ are credited with his righteousness.

2. Corruption of Our Nature

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.

It is not just guilt from our legal record as humans “in Adam,” our nature is now corrupted.

- Jeremiah 13:23 *Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.*
- Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*

Universality

- 1 John 1:8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*
- Romans 3:12 *All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.*
- Psalm 51:5 *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*
- Ephesians 2:3 *we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

We often think about this in terms of morality, but this isn't saying that people are as bad as they possibly can be. It also isn't saying that there are no nice, kind, generous, helpful, etc. people in the world. It describes that our nature is corrupted and will continue to choose sin.

Examine these other passages that illustrate the effects of sin.

- [14] *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. **1 Corinthians 2:14***
- [7] *For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. **Romans 8:7***
- [17] *Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. [18] They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. **Ephesians 4:17-18***

Regeneration: Effect of Being Born Again

- [17] *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. **2 Corinthians 5:17***

- [5] Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. **John 3:5**
- [10] and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. **Colossians 3:10**

What effect does being born again have on us?

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.*

Inconsistencies

Non-Christians can say and do things that are wise, virtuous, and intelligent, sometimes more so than Christians. Why is this?

Even after the fall, people still retain the image of God (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9).

Because of the Image of God and common grace, non-Christians can live inconsistently with their own fundamental principles.

Likewise, Christians can say and do things that are far from their fundamental principles. This leads to experiences that can be misleading.

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Can you uncritically accept any Christian author (movie, music, counselor, teacher, etc.)?

The culture war has made us reject anything secular and value anything “baptized” with Christian terminology. Which is more dangerous? Which is safer?

Are There Degrees of Sin?

WCF 6.6. Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth, in its own nature, bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal, and eternal.

Westminster Shorter Catechism Q&A 83, 84

Q. 83. Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?

A. Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

Yes, there are some sins more heinous than others. Murder is a greater evil than anger; adultery is a greater offense than lust.

OT Law provides differing degrees of worldly punishments for different sins. Every culture in history has recognized the degree of punishment must fit the crime.

Jesus said to Pontius Pilate, "He who delivered me over to you has the greater sin" (John 19:11).

But...every sin is deeper than a mere transgression of law; it is cosmic treason. Sin by its nature seeks to reject God's lordship and claim independency. Each sin undermines the principle of creation we observed in Genesis 1.

Q. 84. What doth every sin deserve?

A. Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come.

James reminds us, "For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it" (James 2:10).

Connecting the Dots: Where Theology meets Life

Summary: Humans are created in the image of God. Sin has corrupted humans. Sin is legally imputed to us and our nature is corrupted.