

## Session 12: Sin, Part 1

“The doctrine of sin is important to us since it affects and is affected by all other doctrines...Our view of the nature of God influences our understanding of sin...Our understanding of humanity also bears on our understanding of sin...Our doctrine of salvation will be strongly influenced by our understanding of sin.” (Erickson, 513, 515)

### I. The Nature of Sin

#### A. Terms Emphasizing Causes of Sin

1. Ignorance: to willfully refuse to discover the right course to follow
2. Error: decisions and actions for which one should have known better
3. Inattention: Failure to listen and heed what God requires

Ephesians 4:17-18 ...that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

#### B. Terms Emphasizing the Character of Sin

1. Missing the Mark: an archery term that means a failure to achieve or perform what is intended or required
2. Irreligion: Absence of righteousness, irreverence
3. Transgression: to cross a boundary
4. Iniquity: To deviate from the correct course
5. Rebellion: Cosmic treason, treason against God
6. Treachery: Breach of trust
7. Perversion: To bend or to twist or distort what is right
8. Abomination: An act particularly reprehensible to God

#### C. Terms Emphasizing the Results of Sin

1. Agitation or Restlessness: a lack of peace
2. Evil: Anything harmful or malignant, morally evil
3. Guilt: Liable to punishment for offending God
4. Trouble: Sin brings trouble or difficulty to the sinner

Romans 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

“A common element running through all of these varied ways of characterizing sin is the idea that the sinner has failed to fulfill God’s law. There are various ways in which we fail to meet his standard of righteousness. We may go beyond the limits imposed, or “transgress.” We may simply fall short of the standard set, or not do at all what God commands and expects. Or we may do the right thing, but for the wrong reason.” (Erickson, 528)

#### D. The Essential Nature of Sin

I John 2:15-16 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

1. Sensuality: The tendency of the lower or physical nature to dominate and control the higher or spiritual nature

2. Selfishness: The choice of self as the supreme end which constitutes the antithesis of supreme love of God

3. Displacement of God: The failure to let God be God by replacing His rightful role as Divine Sovereign with someone or something else

Genesis 3:4-5 The serpent said to the woman, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Genesis 11:3-4 They said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.” And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. They said, “Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top will reach into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

#### II. The Source of Sin (Secular and Christian)

A. Animal Nature: Humans have evolved from animals and thus to possess an animal nature with impulses still persisting from earlier periods. Since humans are evolving, those impulses are declining and humanity is less sinful now.

B. Anxiety of Finiteness: The intellectual pride and assertion of will to gain undue power disturbs the harmony of creation

C. Existential Estrangement: Human existence is estrangement from what humans were created to be and from what their existence actually has become

D. Economic Struggle: Sin is a matter of the individual’s broken relationship with God; thus sin is basically unbelief and rebellion. Sin is not primarily a religious impurity, but rather it is the social,

political, and economic oppression of the poor. It is the denial of the humanity of the neighbor through unjust political and economic arrangements.”

E. Individualism and Competitiveness: Humans are not sinful, per se, but rather there is an unhealthy battle within human social constructs created by competition that causes rebellion against those structures.

F. Biblical Teaching on Source of Sin:

1. Sin is not caused by God
2. Humans were created with the ability to choose
3. Humans have nature desires as part of their created design
4. God created the opportunity for choosing legitimate uses of natural desires
5. God also created the opportunity for choosing illegitimate uses of natural desires
6. Humans can and do make choices that are beyond the boundaries established by God
7. Human desire to be able to choose without boundaries and without consequences established a world where exceeding God's boundaries became commonplace for all
8. Human repeated violation of the boundaries set by God for natural desire plunged all of humanity into a world where illegitimate uses of desire dominate every person and every aspect of life

G. The Cure for Sin: The problem of sin lies in the fact that human beings since the fall of Adam and Eve are sinful by nature and by choice, living in a world in which powerful forces seek to induce them to sin.

I Peter 5:8 Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

“Our view of the cause of sin will influence our view of the cure for sin, since the cure for sin will necessarily involve negating the cause.” (Erickson, 547)

### III. The Results of Sin

A. Divine Disfavor: God has a sustained, holy aversion and disdain for human sin

B. Guilt: God is the highest being and we are His creatures. Failure to fulfill His standards disrupts the whole economy of the universe, thus incurring condemnation by God.

John 3:19-20 This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

C. Punishment: The negative consequences God uses in response to human sin. At times punishment is administered by God directly in response to human sin and at other times indirectly through natural consequences psychologically or physically.

D. Death (Genesis 2-3, Romans 6:23)

1. Physical Death: Termination of human existence in bodily or materialized state. "Separation from soul and body."

Genesis 3:4-5 The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! 5 For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

2. Spiritual Death: "Separation of the whole person from God."

Matthew 10:28 Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

3. Eternal Death: The extension and finalization of spiritual death.

E. Effects on the Sinner

1. Enslavement: Sin has enslaving power of humans.

John 8:34-36 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.

2. Flight from Reality: "passing away" "Gone on to another place" and other phrases function as means of denying the harsh reality of sin and death

3. Denial of Sin: "I didn't do it."

I John 1:8-10 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

4. Self-Deceit: "I'm not that bad."

John 2:24-25 But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.

John 9:40-41 Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

5. Insensitivity: A spiritual callous grows upon the soul as a person willfully and purposefully lives a life of sin.

Ephesians 4:19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

6. Self-Centeredness: "We call attention to ourselves, and to our good qualities and accomplishments, and minimize our shortcomings." (Erickson, 563)

7. Restlessness: Never finding peace

#### F. Effects on the Relationship to Other Humans

1. Competition: Comparison and conflict with others

2. Inability to Empathize: The inability to comprehend or understand the hurt others experience due to human sin in general and especially our own actions against others

3. Rejection of Authority: "I am my own boss."

4. Inability to Love: The inability to really act for the welfare of others

#### IV. The Magnitude of Sin

"Sin is universal. Note merely a few isolated individuals or even a majority of the human race, but all humans, without exception, are sinners." (Erickson, 566)

##### A. The Extent of Sin: All sin

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

##### B. The Intensiveness of Sin: Total depravity

1. Sin is a matter of the entire person

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.

2. Unregenerate persons' altruism always contains an element of improper motive
3. External layers of charm and graciousness often cover the true intent of the human heart
4. Sinners are completely incapable of extricating themselves from their sinful condition

Ephesians 2:1-2 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

"All of us, without exception, are sinners. By this we mean not merely that all of us sin, but that we all have a depraved or corrupt nature that so inclines us toward sin that it is inevitable."  
(Erickson, 575)

John R. W. Stott "What man needs is a radical change of nature, what Professor H. M. Gwatkin called 'a change from self to unself'. We cannot do this for ourselves any more than patients needing surgery can perform their own operations."

C. Theories of Original Sin: How does the sin of Adam come to impact us all?

1. Pelagianism: An unduly negative view of human nature was having an unfortunate effect upon human behavior...Adam's sin had no direct impact on humans now and humans can and do live sin free lives now.

If someone does sin, God's grace is everywhere present in the world and every moment. Jesus simply provides an illustration as to the depth of God's readily present grace, a grace that is only needed by those that happen to sin.

2. Arminianism: We receive from Adam a corrupted nature. We begin life without righteousness. All humans are unable, without special divine help, to fulfill God's spiritual commands. This inability is physical and intellectual. Through prevenient grace God provides all sinners the ability to choose what is right, especially to believe in Jesus.

3. Calvinism: There is a definite connection between Adam's sin and all persons of all times. His sin is not just the sin of an isolated individual, but is also our sin. He was appointed by God as our representative and as our progenitor his corrupt nature became ours in full. Only by God's supernatural intervention can we believe.

Federal headship: humans receive their physical nature by inheritance from their parents but that the soul is specially created by God for each individual and united with the body at birth (or

conception). Thus, we were not present spiritually in any of our ancestors, including Adam. Adam, however, was our representative.

God ordained that Adam should act not only on his own behalf, but also on our behalf so that the consequences of his actions have been passed on to his descendants as well. Adam was on probation for all of us and because Adam sinned, all of us are treated as guilty and corrupted. We are treated as if we have actually and personally done what Adam did.

Natural headship: We receive our souls by transmission from our parents, just as we do our physical natures.

#### D. Original Sin: A Biblical and Contemporary Model

“We were all involved in Adam’s sin, and thus receive both the corrupted nature that was his after the fall, and the guilt and condemnation that attach to his sin...however, there must be some conscious and voluntary decision on our part as well. Until this is the case, there is only a conditional imputation of guilt. Thus, there is no condemnation until one reaches the age of responsibility.” (Erickson, 582)

#### V. The Social Dimension of Sin

##### A. The Difficulty of Recognizing Social Sin

1. We are not inclined to regard as our own deeds matters in which we do not have an active choice
2. We may be so conditioned by membership in a group that our very perception of reality is cloaked by it
3. We may not recognize group selfishness because it may actually involve individual unselfishness
4. Our excesses may be much less obvious to us because we are part of a group.
5. The further removed we are from the actual evil, the less real it seems.

##### B. The Biblical Teaching

1. The World: Evil has a status apart from and independent of any individual human will

Ephesians 6:11-12 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

2. The Powers: Corrupt power structures that enable sin and rebellion against God

3. Corporate Personality: "Sin is an element of each person's present social structure from which the individual cannot escape."

C. Strategies for Overcoming Social Sin: Regeneration, Reform, Revolution