

Lecture 11 – The Doctrine of Sin (cont.)

“But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God’s grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man’s sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification. For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.” Romans 5:15-17

Key Terms

Condemnation, justification, death, life, disobedience, obedience, Pelagianism, Arminianism, Calvinism: natural headship, mediate headship, immediate imputation

Objectives

- *Summarize Paul’s comparison of Adam and Christ.
- *Identify how this comparison deepens our understanding of redemption.
- *Explore implications of this comparison for our understanding and communication of the Gospel.
- *Summarize and compare historical views on original sin.

Review & Preview

Please note that a more extensive exegesis of Romans 5:12-19 is contained in the supplemental readings assigned as homework for Lesson Ten.

The Doctrine of Sin

II. The Doctrine of Sin

- A. A biblical description of sin
- B. The fall of Adam and Eve into sin
- C. Original sin in Romans 5:12-19
 1. An analysis of Romans 1:18-5:21
 2. An exegesis of Romans 5:12-19
 - a. Verse 12
 - b. Verse 13
 - c. Verse 14
 - d. Verses 15-17
 - e. Verse 18
 - f. Verse 19
 - g. Representative view

<u>Head</u>	<u>Acts</u>	<u>Verdicts</u>	<u>Results</u>
Adam	sin transgression disobedience	condemnation	death
Christ	righteousness obedience	justification	life

3. Views of original sin

- a. Pelagianism (*see p. 2 below for evaluation of the view*)

Offended at the immorality of the late fourth and early fifth centuries the Irish monk Pelagius exhorted professing Christians to live godly lives. To promote godliness he strongly emphasized man’s free will. Man was created with freedom of will and the

fall of Adam has not changed that. Pelagius was a creationist who held that each human soul is a special creation of God which is not tainted by corruption or guilt. Adam's sin affected his descendants because the first man set a bad example. Babies are not born sinners, but may incline toward a sinful lifestyle by developing bad habits. No special grace of God is necessary for man to be saved. He is capable on his own of fulfilling God's commands and thereby maintaining his righteous standing before Him.

b. Arminianism (see p. 3 below for further explanation and evaluation of the view)

1) Preventive grace: Two views

- a) Limited/efficacious
- b) Universal

2) Evaluation of the view

c. Calvinism

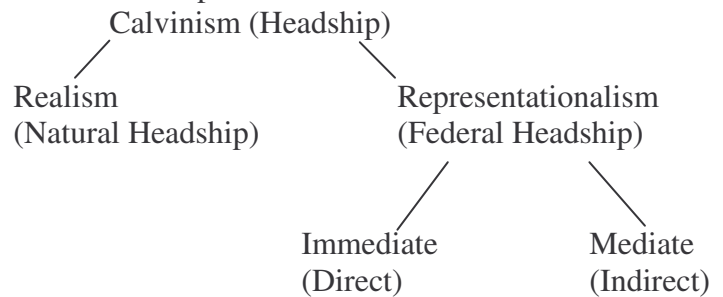
1) Natural headship/realism

a) Evaluation

(1) Strengths

(2) Weaknesses (see p. 4 below for further evaluation)

- Problem of alien guilt
- Intolerable implications
- Romans 5
- Romans 5:14
- Adam/Christ parallel



4. Evaluation of the views of original sin

Pelagianism

Strengths of the View

It is true that Adam was a bad example for the rest of the human race.

Weaknesses of the View

1) Paul says five times in Romans 5:15-19 that the one sin of Adam was the cause of all dying:

- v. 15 "...the many died by the trespass of the one man..."
- v. 16 "...the judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation..."
- v. 17 "...by the trespass of the one man death reigned..."
- v. 18 "...the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men..."
- v. 19 "...through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners..."

2) S. Lewis Johnson argues effectively:

"...the sense of v. 14 is against this view. There it is stated that certain persons, part of the *all* and ones who suffer death as the penalty of sin, did not commit sins resembling Adam's—that is, individual and conscious transgressions. They must, then, have died because of Adam's sin" (pp.306-7).

I conclude that although Adam is a bad example for mankind, Pelagianism fails as a theory to explain original sin.

Arminianism

Here we are not concerned with the details of James Arminius's doctrine of original sin; rather we want to know the views of his theological successors. A task force was commissioned by the Good News Movement within the United Methodist Church to prepare a statement of contemporary, conservative, Wesleyan theology. The resulting statement of faith is known as the Junaluska Affirmation after the lake by the same name in North Carolina where the statement was adopted in 1975. Paul A. Mickey has written a commentary on the Junaluska Affirmation called *Essentials of Wesleyan Theology* (Zondervan, 1980).

Since I found Erickson's systematics text sketchy on the Arminian position I will use the Junaluska Affirmation and Mickey's commentary as bases for setting it forth fairly and accurately. The conservative Arminian position affirms the corruption of mankind: "Since the Fall of Adam the corruption of sin has pervaded every person and extended into social relationships, societal systems, and all creation" (Junaluska Affirmation; hereafter JA).

Furthermore, our Arminian brothers teach that this corruption makes a sinner's positive response to God impossible: "This corruption is so pervasive that we are not capable of positive response to God's offer of redemption..." (JA). Because of that the convicting work of the Holy Spirit is necessary if people are to be saved: "...except by the prevenient, or preparing, grace of God" (JA). Mickey goes on to explain that only the Spirit's work enables men to be saved. Traditionally Arminians have held that this preparing grace is universal—it affords all people alike the possibility of salvation.

At first glance the Arminian position of inherited corruption seems to be close to the Calvinist view of mediate imputation. It is similar at the beginning. Yet the Arminian and Calvinist doctrines of original sin arrive at different conclusions. Erickson says that Arminians hold that "whatever culpability and condemnation may have accrued to us through Adam's sin have been removed through prevenient grace" (p. 634). He quotes Orton Wiley: "Man is not now condemned for the depravity of his own nature, although that depravity is of the essence of sin; its culpability, we maintain, was removed by the free gift of Christ." Erickson then summarizes Wiley's thought: "This prevenient grace is extended to everyone, and in effect neutralizes the corruption received from Adam" (from Wiley's *Christian Theology* 2:121-28).

Strengths of the View

Arminianism is correct when it posits that "since the Fall of Adam the corruption of sin has pervaded every person..." (JA). The Arminian view is also correct when it holds that the result of that corruption is that sinners are incapable of making a positive response to God for salvation.

Weaknesses of the View

Arminianism is correct in what it asserts. It does not assert enough, however. In rereading the JA and Paul Mickey's commentary upon it I noticed that there was no explanation of the *way* in which Adam's sin affected his posterity; merely the *fact* of this effect was affirmed. Mickey says, "Adam and Eve were the prototype of humanity, and their action has been determinative for each person since" (p. 82).

My question is *how* was the sin of the first man (and woman?) determinative for the human race? One could read Pelagianism, any of the Calvinistic options, or other views into this statement. An Arminian could respond by claiming to stay precisely within the bounds of Scripture and accuse others (e.g. Calvinists) of going beyond the Word in their theologizing. Yet, we have seen how the biblical data in Romans 5 rules out the Pelagian view of original sin. Therefore, more definition of original sin is necessary than that given in the Arminian position advocated by the JA and Paul Mickey.

I also take issue with the Arminian conception of prevenient grace which nullifies the effects of Adam's sin upon the human race.

Calvinism: Natural headship

Weaknesses of the View

1. Problem of alien guilt. Johnson, S.L. “Romans 5:12—An Exercise in Exegesis and Theology” in *New Dimensions in NT Study*, eds. R.N. Longenecker and M.C. Tenney.
2. “Intolerable implications.” Johnson points to “intolerable implications” which “arise from realism and burden the theory” (p. 310): Why are Adam’s descendants responsible only for his first sin and not his later sins? Why is Adam’s sin counted against the human race and not that of Eve?
3. Romans 5. Realism argues for what Romans 5, the *textus classicus* for original sin, never says: That sin and guilt are the result of the act of all men. Repeatedly the passage relates the sin of one man to our sin and guilt. It never relates the sin and guilt of the human race to the act of all men. “Realism could say this, but Paul never says it—and the silence is almost deafening” (Johnson, p. 310).

A realist will object that those holding the representative view are using the argument from silence. The federal headship advocates counter by saying that the main beam in the realist doctrinal construction is simply missing from the passage; surely such an omission is important. How can one base his view on something the passage does not say? Representation accuses realism of assuming its conclusion, of begging the question.