

Sin, IV

We are working with the doctrine of original sin. I have rejected Pelagianism as no doctrine of original sin—it is only teaching actual sin. I have said that Arminianism is really beside the point and I have rejected the natural headship view.

You may ask why Pelagianism is included in these notes. It is included because it was important historically. Not because it is a good option, but because it was a reaction to Augustinianism and the beginning of wars, outside of the Bible, over grace and the nature of grace. That battle decided whether grace was necessary. The necessity of grace is seen in opposition to Pelagius who said it was not, at least not the biblical notion of grace. The Calvinist/Arminian debates centered around the question of whether grace was efficacious. Wesley held it was universal and not efficacious, the Calvinists followed George Whitefield, who said, it is not universal; it is particular because it is efficacious. He stood in the line of Augustine and Calvin in so disagreeing with Wesley, with whom he agreed to disagree and they both rejoiced that the other one preached the true Gospel.

We are still into the Calvinist views. Let me now work with mediate imputation, which is illogical and difficult to understand. The Calvinist views of mediate and immediate imputation are alike in holding to representative union between Adam and his posterity and to the imputation of Adam's sin to the race. Again, let us briefly review what is either mediate or immediate in the imputation of Adam's guilt. Joshua Placeus, professor at the theological school in Saumur, France—which gave us also unlimited atonement, also called four-point Calvinism, and Amyraldism, because Amyraut was a teacher there—is the originator of the view of mediate imputation. Previously all of the orthodox reformed scholars had taught that Adam's sin was the basis for the condemnation of mankind and that the corruption of human nature was a result of Adam's sin. Placeus reversed the order. He made the corrupt human nature the basis of the condemnation and made the guilt of Adam's sin dependent on participation in the corrupt nature. Let me try to explain. Here is immediate imputation: first, Adam's sin is imputed to the human race, resulting in condemnation for the race; this is up front, bold, alien guilt. Second, as a consequence, human beings are born with a corrupt nature. The two are inseparable: guilt and corruption, but in terms of cause and effect, the guilt is the cause of the corruption or pollution. According to mediate imputation—this is why I say it is illogical, because it is out of order—as a result of Adam's sin, human beings are born with a corrupt nature, corruption proceeds logically, and it is the cause of the guilt. This corrupt nature is the basis for each person's condemnation because, second, since each person has a corrupt nature from Adam, each is guilty of Adam's sin. As I sift through some of the weaknesses I think it will become evident to you what really is involved is this. Placeus and mediate imputation hold that we are born sinners because of Adam's sin. We are not guilty per se, and it is when we live out of our sinful natures and commit actual sins that we then become guilty. They end up with a dilemma of either a practical denial of original sin or if you think about it hard enough, it is illogical that we are just born sinners. How did that come about? It came about because of Adam's sin. But is not our being born sinners a punishment? That is, there is a hidden prior guilt so either you have guilt, then corruption, then guilt which, in effect, is no different than immediate imputation, or you really do cancel that first guilt and you have us corrupt and then guilty because of our own sins, which veers very close practically to Pelagianism. Let me just work with c, d, and e in your notes of the weaknesses. Mediate imputation, c, has difficulty with verses 13 and 14. There was Adam's sin, which was the cause of the death of even those who did not sin as Adam did. It is the sin of the first man that is the cause of death reigning from Adam until Moses. There is no other intermediary. Second, d, Johnson correctly argues the theory is inconsistent with the parallelism between Adam and Christ. Just as we are not justified by inherent righteousness, so also we are not condemned by inherent corruption. It really breaks down the parallelism. And, e, mediate imputation, was devised as an attempt to soften Calvinism. In this case, by

solving the problem of God's reckoning guilt to those who had not personally sinned. It is the problem of alien guilt again. You say alien guilt is really a frustration to many people, is it not? Yes. It is the reason for realism and it is the reason for mediate imputation. It looks to me like the cure is worse than the disease. As in the case of realism, this theory too fails to reach this goal. Johnson aptly argues, "If inherent depravity"—being born with corrupt natures—"is a punishment"—and it is hardly possible to argue otherwise, then God would have called us to be born corrupt with no reason; is that not a verdict—"then guilt must have preceded it." What then could the guilt be other than the guilt of Adam's first sin? Either it conceals an implied guilt, which really is a concession to the immediate imputation view, or in fact as the Helvetic Confession, a really important statement of the reformed faith, and Turretin, its prime mover, claimed, Placeus' doctrine, in reality, did away with the imputation of Adam's sin entirely for it is really corruption that makes us liable to wrath. It is rather our actual sins that bring us under God's condemnation. This is hopelessly illogical. It wants to put the result, which is corruption, before the cause, which is guilt, and that is why it is so hard to wrap your mind around it.

You may feel overwhelmed and think, "How can I digest it all? It is too much good stuff." It is heavy. I do not apologize for it in this way: original sin is a neglected doctrine and I am trying not to neglect it. Through the reading of the syllabus and the books beforehand, I hope you have enough background to follow my summary.

Onto e, which is Calvinism. The representative view is immediate imputation. I have saved what I consider the good view for last. I only give strengths and then I try to answer objections. You may wonder why I am not including weaknesses. I have been all the way along. The big weakness is alien guilt. People do not like it. Of the strengths, I am just going to pick out a few of these as well. Immediate imputation is implied in our estate, born spiritually dead and evidently under a curse, b. This is evidenced in Ephesians 2. We were either tried in Adam and fell or we have been condemned without a trial. We are either under a curse for Adam's guilt or for no guilt at all. Immediate imputation explains most satisfactorily that which is ultimately mystery. Johnson is pointing us in the right direction here. Although Romans 5:12-19 is the only passage that deals with original sin in any kind of detail, that teaching is implied in different places in the Bible. It is implied in Psalm 51 where David laments that "I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." It is original sin alone that helps us understand that particular state of affairs. We are saying that babies are born as sinners.

Immediate imputation best fits with Paul's argument in Romans 5, c. This view alone emphasizes what seems to have been the governing principle of the apostle's argument. Adam and Christ are representatives of their respective races. There is a definite parallel between the respective acts of the two Adams and the effects of those acts upon their people. Adam's sin brought condemnation and death to the human race. Christ's righteousness brings justification and life to His people. I would go so far as to say that Christianity is a representative religion. Romans 5 teaches that this representation works in two ways. It explains the condemnation of the race in Adam and it accounts for the justification of believers in Christ. The two are bound together by the apostle and I receive them as such.

The last one takes us back to 13 and 14.

As far as objections are concerned, some have argued that the following verse contradicts immediate imputation. Deuteronomy 24:16 says, "Fathers shall not be put to death for their children nor children put to death for their fathers. Each is to die for his own sin." This verse deals with civil government rather than with divine government. We must separate the two. If this verse is pressed into service in evaluating God's ways and salvation, it could also be used to disprove the substitutionary atonement of Christ and we do not want to do that. So let us keep the civil sphere and the sphere of salvation separate.

Ezekiel 18 is a better objection than that first one that talks about spiritual life and death. It points to actual sins of human beings as being the cause of their condemnation. The soul who sins is the one who will die. It goes through extensive examples of each person standing for himself before God. If you have a godly father, it does not automatically make you godly. If you mess up, you will be judged for your own sins. Your father's righteousness does not suffice for you. Conversely, if you have wicked parents, you can end up doing the right thing. And if you start out good you may end up bad. The passage has nothing to say about the reasons men are in sin. It is like Romans 1 to 3; it gives the more immediate reasons, not the ultimate ones. And this passage says nothing about original sin; it does not even talk about that. Or the imputation of Adam's sin to men, it does not deny these things; it just does not address them. It refers to the principles of divine government in the earth or divine justice; the wicked shall die, the righteous, in the divine way, of course, shall live. Again you could press this one. This does deal with God's dealings with human beings on Earth in a religious sphere, not just a civil sphere, so it is more apropos than the first passage and the first objection. You could press this one too and deny substitutionary atonement. It just is not talking about atonement and it is not talking about original sin; it is talking accurately about actual sins of human beings and we should not use it to deny original sin any more than we should use Romans 1 to 3 to deny the truths taught in Romans 5. We are condemned for our actual sins. It is true. Is it the ultimate grounds of our condemnation? No, that is what Adam did in the Garden of Eden.

Third, realists commonly appeal to Hebrews 7 to defend the concept of realistic imputation in general. Here the writer to the Hebrews is showing that Christ is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, and He is far superior to the priests who came from Levi. He mentions here that Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek. He then argues from that that with 7:9-10, one might even say that Levi who collects the tenth, meaning who functions as a priest and collects the people's tithes, paid the tenth through Abraham, because when Melchizedek met Abraham, Levi was still in the body of his ancestor. Realists commonly appeal to this passage to defend realistic imputation in general and apply it in particular to a realistic imputation of Adam's sin. The passage does not talk about that particular thing, but it seems, on the surface of it, to support a notion of realistic imputation of Levi really being in Abraham's loins and in that way paying the tenth in that real sense. Johnson argues that in view of the special typical nature of Hebrews 7, "the tithing of Levi in Abraham was no more 'real' than the fact that Melchizedek 'really' was the Son of God." No, Melchizedek was a type of the Son of God and likewise Abraham stood for his descendant Levi. The relationships are typical. The NASB better indicates the typical nature when it starts out in verse 9, "And so to speak." The NIV says, "One might even say." It is indicating that the relationships are not real but rather representative, rather typical.

You say, "This is a very impractical thing, the whole discussion." And since you have an abiding concern for the purposes of the doctrines of the Word of God you say, "Please draw some systematic and pastoral implications of the doctrine of original sin." Friends, I would be glad to. First, worship is due God for His dealings with human beings, for revealing His truth to us. He could have just left it at our actual sin and not even gotten into the more immediate things. Could you imagine the views we would have had, the speculation that would have gone? Worship is due God for the principal of representation. We certainly enjoy it on the positive side for His gracious dealings with us in Christ and for His wisdom and justice for all of this—God is to be praised. More than once in Romans Paul just bursts out with praise to God for His Gospel.

Second, the doctrine of original sine leads to a realistic assessment of fallen human beings. People are in need of a savior due to real objective guilt—Adam's and their own. Moderns will fight against this; they will not admit it, but it is the truth. They are in need of a savior due to real objective guilt and due to the pollution of sin. Let us be careful to heed the purposes of the doctrine of original sin in Scripture. It does

not remove culpability from sinners. Instead, it establishes it; it gives us the background story of how we became sinners in the first place. It is not God's fault. God made us holy; we sinned in our first father Adam. Could God have put 10 people on probation? Sure, or a hundred or a thousand or a million, sure. But He did not; He did it with one and it seemed right in God's sight and all I can say is praise the Lord for His grace in the Son of God. Evangelism is thus imperative. Now we come full circle.

Now I will give some implications. A fuller appreciation of the saving righteousness of the second and last Adam, Jesus Christ, should result. Let us not lose sight of the major purpose and context of Romans 5:12-21. Our salvation totally depends on the efforts of another, even Jesus on our behalf. Here is the greatest cause of our rejoicing; it is called alien righteousness. I do not love alien guilt; I accept it because I think the Bible teaches it here. I am driven to it because of the inevitable implications of the parallelism between the two Adams, but I do love alien righteousness. Jesus Christ died and rose to save sinners, even us, praise the Lord!

Go in peace and the Lord bless you all.