

What We Believe: Knowing and Loving our Doctrines
 Adult Sunday Studies 2023-24
 10 | Doctrine of Original Sin

WHAT HAVE WE DONE?!

Intro - What does Jesus, in both his teachings and crucifixion, reveal to us about sin?

What Happened in the Fall?

Pre-Fall Folks – Their lives then

1. **People on trial**, not yet either sinful or confirmed in righteousness, but the devil is introduced as a test – *this is never again true of humans*
 1. **Covenant of creation: WCF 7.2** "The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam; and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience."
 2. **Intimate, but conditional presence with God** – it's God's garden and He walks there!
 3. **Kingly** (ruling the land) and **priestly** (serving and guarding the Temple; and reflecting God's glory) role over the land

Nature of the Fall - Gen. 3.1-19

- We're not given the spiritual source of the Serpent – "evil is not created by God nor is it outside of God's power"
- What are the general steps or the movement of the Fall?
 - Speaks *about* God and whether or not He said it, diverting Eve's attention
 - Changes the command into a question
 - Doesn't mention the free gift to eat of every other tree, but only the one prohibition
 - Distorts motive as if God is restricting Eve out of self-interest
 - Denies the truth of the statement
- If humanity were to be king and priests, we failed in both in the Fall
- WFC 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."

Protoevangelium – 3.15 – first promise of the Gospel

Post-Fall Folks – Our Lives Now

1. **Sinful people**– now it's impossible for us to fulfill the covenant of works, since we are all "in Adam" as our public representative or covenant head (Rom. 5:12-19, 8:20-23)
 1. In need of a new covenant - *Covenant of Grace to come* [WCF 7.3]
 1. Although the Covenant of Works/Life/Creation is not abrogated, but fulfilled also in Christ
 2. **Lack of immediate presence** (Gen. 3:23-24) and even fear in His presence – Cherubim guard the garden now, not humanity
 3. **Distorted relationships** - to the land (Gen. 3:15-19) and to each other (they lack intimacy by needing clothes, they blame each other, and have distorted communion)
 4. **God still provides common grace** (Gen. 3.21), yet He *must* expel them (3.22) lest they enter eternal life stained and corrupted.

Original Sin

WCF 6.2 - "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."

WCF 6.3 - "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." Cf. WLC 22.

Cf. Rom 3:23; Eph 2:1-3; Gen 6:5; Jer 17:9; Titus 1:15; Rom 3:10-19; Rom 5:12,15-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22,49; Ps 51:5; John 3:6; Gen 5:3; Job 15:14; 2Tim. 3:2-4

Covenantal Solidarity in Adam: "We are not only guilty *for* Adam's sin; we are guilty *as sinners in Adam*." (Horton) We share an identity with Adam, we have a corporate, covenantal solidarity with Adam. Though foreign to modern democracies, Scripture treats us corporately in many more ways than we realize.

Yet we are responsible for being "in Adam." It's not that we *can't* obey God, it's that we *won't*. It's not that we have a natural or physical inability, we have a spiritual inability. There is a mystery here, but Scripture clearly teaches both that humans are by nature sinners and wholly responsible for their sin.

Remember, infants die. We need a theology that accounts for that simple fact.

Test Case: What if, instead, each person started as a blank slate? If each person started in a pre-Fall state, and had a chance to fulfill the original covenant of obedience? What would that make Christ's work of redemption into?

- **"The peculiar individualism of the Pelagian view** of the world comes out strongly in their failure to perceive the **effect of habit on nature itself**....After each act of the will, man stood exactly where he did before: indeed, this conception scarcely allows for the existence of a "man" - only a willing machine is left, at each click of the action of which the spring regains its original position, and is equally ready as before to reperform its function. In such a conception there was no place for **character**: freedom of will was all. . . . Keeping man in perpetual and hopeless equilibrium between good and evil, they permitted no growth of character and no advantage to himself to be gained by man in his successive choices of good. . . . To the Pelagian, Adam was a man, nothing more. . . . And this carried with it the corresponding view of man's relation to Christ. He could forgive us the sins we had committed; He could teach us the true way; He could set us a holy example; and He could exhort us to its imitation. But he could not touch us to enable us to will the good. . . . **Man needs something more than to know the right way: he needs to love it, or he will not walk in it;** and all mere teaching, which can do nothing more than bring us knowledge of what we ought to do, is but the letter that killeth. What we need is some inward, Spirit-given aid to the keeping of what by the law we know ought to be kept. Mere knowledge slays: while to lead a holy life is the gift of God." [This also led Pelagians to believe that physical death was part of man's nature. Why?] - B.B. Warfield
- Christian orthodoxy, as is often the case, gives us a far more profound understanding of human nature: "We all know from experience that a sinful action is not external to us, like a dirty garment which can be taken off and laid aside; rather, it is intimately connected with our inner nature and leaves

ineradicable traces upon it. After each sinful act we are no longer what we were before." - Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*

What "Total Depravity" does NOT mean: "1. that every man is so thoroughly depraved as he can possibly become; 2. that the sinner has no innate knowledge of the will of God, nor a conscience that discriminates between good and evil; 3. that sinful man does not often admire virtuous character and actions in others, or is incapable of disinterested affections and actions in his relations with his fellow-men; nor 4. that every unregenerate man will, in virtue of his inherent sinfulness, indulge in every form of sin" - Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*

- "What is meant by 'total' is that the whole nature of humanity, not only the body and its desires but the soul, mind, heart, and will, is corrupt." - Horton
- We are incapable of any *saving* good, yes, but are capable of penultimate good.