

## **Examining Christian Doctrine**

### **Lesson 25: The Doctrine of Salvation Part 2 – The Fall of Humanity**

In the previous lesson we looked at humanity made in the image of God and the pre-fall state of man. As we progress through this study we will see that sin played a prominent role in affecting the image of God in humanity. This lesson will cover what sin is, what it did to the image of God, and what its effects are for all of humanity.

#### **The Fall of Man**

Mankind was made in the image and likeness of God with a perfect pre-fall condition, however because of sin and the 'fall of man' the image of God has been shattered and sin now affects all of humanity. The fall of man raises the question whether the image of God has been totally lost from humanity? Have we ceased to be made in the image and likeness of God because of sin? The answer is both No and Yes. First, the Bible indicates that fallen man retains the image of God with respect to our value and dignity. On the other hand, man has lost the vital core of the image of God in the form of righteousness and holiness in relating to him.

The result of sin, therefore, has been not the complete loss of the divine image but rather its thorough corruption which causes us to fail to live as the image of God. The Fall resulted in a distortion of the Imago Dei, but it did not erase it. Humanity still bears God's image, but it is marred by sin (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9).

#### **Defining Sin**

##### **Biblical Terms for Sin:**

- **Hamartia:** The most common Greek word for sin in the New Testament, meaning "to miss the mark." It conveys the idea of failing to meet God's standards of holiness and righteousness (Romans 3:23).
- **Paraptoma:** Greek for "trespass," indicating a deviation from the right path or an unintentional offense (Ephesians 2:1).
- **Adikia:** Translated as "unrighteousness," highlighting the aspect of injustice or moral wrong (1 John 1:9).
- **Pesha:** A Hebrew word often translated as "transgression" or "rebellion." It emphasizes a willful violation of God's covenant and laws (Isaiah 53:5).
- **Avon:** Another Hebrew term meaning "iniquity," often referring to the guilt or moral distortion that comes from sin (Psalm 51:2).

##### **Views About Sin**

Virtually every church historically that has a creed or a confession has agreed that something very serious happened to the human race as a result of the first sin. Among these are beliefs like '**Original Sin**', which says that all of humanity bears the guilt of Adam's sin, therefore we are born guilty of sin (or born sinners) even before committing acts of sin. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) is the most significant figure in the development of the doctrine of original sin. He formulated the doctrine in response to a controversy in the early 5th century.

Along with this idea is the doctrine of '**Total Depravity**' which says that humanity is spiritually dead and that sin affects every part of a person: their mind, will, emotions, and body. It also means that humans are completely unable to choose God or do good on their own due to the pervasive nature of sin. In this view mankind has no free will and is wholly enslaved to sin incapable of choosing to follow God or respond to the Gospel without divine regeneration which precedes faith. The groundwork for the doctrine of Total Depravity was laid by Augustine and was fully developed during the Protestant Reformation, particularly by John Calvin and his followers.

Also, in Protestant churches, sin has been primarily viewed within a **legal framework**. Sin is seen as a violation of God's law, an offense against God's justice, for which humanity is guilty and deserves punishment. There has always been those in the church who viewed sin through a legal aspect, and particularly in the teachings of Martin Luther and John Calvin, who emphasized legal metaphors for sin more strongly.

These ideas however, are contrasted with other similar, yet distinct views. For instance, instead of Original Sin there is also the belief in '**Ancestral Sin**', which refers to the consequences of Adam's sin, such as mortality and a weakened human nature, rather than inherited guilt. Humans inherit the effects of Adam's sin, which include a propensity toward sin and death, but they are not born guilty.

The Arminian view of depravity states that while sin has severely damaged human nature, it has not completely destroyed the **human free will** and ability to respond to God's grace. That while born with a bent toward sin, mankind still has the ability through God's prevenient grace to either accept or reject God's offer of salvation. This is seen through multiple examples of people living righteously (Noah, Job), through calls to choose to follow God and to good (Moses, Joshua), and through the calls to repent and follow Christ (Acts, Paul).

When speaking of sin, there's also a view throughout history and even today in churches like the Eastern Orthodox church, that emphasizes **sin as a sickness** or disease that affects all of humanity in which we need healing from. So instead of focusing on guilt, punishment, and legal justification, this view focuses more on healing, restoration, and transformation. This view brings about a more relational view in which sin hurts the heart of God and has brought about a broken fellowship vs. a strictly legal view.