

SOTERIOLOGY NOTES

STUDIES IN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN SALVATION

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Section 1a: The Doctrine of Sin

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- II. Definitions of Sin
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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The conflict between philosophy (naturalism) and Christianity (supernaturalism) revolves around the nature of man. Is man basically good or evil? There can be no question that the Bible teaches that men are basically sinful.
- B. A proper grasp of the fact that all men are sinners is essential to the understanding of our salvation. Sin and redemption go hand in hand. Where sin is minimized, redemption is impoverished. A person must get the divine perspective towards sin--it is obnoxious, odious, vile in the sight of our holy God, and it must be judged. **NOTE:** Only when we have had the malady accurately diagnosed, shall we be willing to take the medicine prescribed.
- C. Sin is what God says it is and human opinion and philosophy must bend to the testimony of the Bible, the Word of God in which He declares the true nature of sin. **POINT:** The basic reason men do not come to Christ is not intellectual, but moral. They refuse to admit they are sinners and they know

that to receive Christ will demand a moral change in their lives. All unsaved men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19).

- D. The Bible states that all men are sinners by acts, by nature, by imputation, and by declaration. Sin is seen in the lives of the unsaved in that they willfully choose for sin and against God.
- E. The sinful condition of man is so horrible and deplorable that God had to send His only begotten Son to die for it and to redeem sinners from the slave market of sin. Our sin cost God the one He loved the most--His Son. Even after salvation, sin is such a powerful force in the Christian that the Holy Spirit is needed to carry on the process of sanctification.

II. DEFINITIONS OF SIN

A. Non-orthodox Views

- a. Gnostic (Dualism): Sin is an eternal principle, independent and outside of God. Therefore sin is loss of ethical character.
- b. Pelagius: Sin is nothing more than doing wrong acts.
- c. Liberalism
 - (a) Sin is ignorance (Ritschl).
 - (b) Sin is lack of God-consciousness (Schleiermacher).
 - (c) Sin is the lower nature in man not yet overcome by the higher nature (Evolutionistic Theism).
 - (d) Neo-orthodoxy: Sin is selfishness or pride (Barth, Brunner).

B. Orthodox Views

- a. Arminianism: Sin is disobedience as a result of man exercising a free will
- b. Augustine: Sin is rebellion against God.
- c. Calvinism: Sin is rebellion, lawlessness (I John 3:4), and anything that fails to match up to God's holy character.

III. VIEWPOINTS ON THE NATURE OF MAN

- A. Liberals: All men are basically good and have a divine spark in them. Thus the goal of man is to fan this spark of divinity so that he may evolve from his lower self to his higher self. **NOTE:** Liberals deny sin and have no need for a savior.
- B. Neo-orthodoxy: They deny the historicity of the Fall but see that the myth of the Fall tells us that men are sinners and alienated from God. They deny, however, that man is responsible for Adam's sin and they really do not explain how sin came about in men.
- C. Neo-liberals: They deny the historicity of the Fall and claim that a child is born innocent; therefore sin is in no way connected with the Fall. A child may receive the transmitted consequences of sin (environmental factors). All men become sinners because of social influences. **NOTE:** This view is

just a step away from liberalism.

- D. Orthodox: The orthodox and biblical position on the nature of man is that all men are sinners, and since sinful, need the Savior, Jesus Christ.
- a. Biblical Evidence: The Old Testament teaches man's sinfulness (1 Kings 8:46; Eccl. 7:20; Psa. 14:1-3; 130:3; Isa. 53:6; 64:6). Christ taught it also (Luke 11:13) and it is clearly set forth by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 3:10-12; 3:20; Eph. 2:3; Rom 3:23). All the writers of the Bible assume the basic sinfulness of men (cf. 1 John 1:8-10).
 - b. Logical Evidence: (1) A baby never has to be taught to do evil but must be instructed in good; (2) History is filled with the wicked deeds of men; (3) Modern news is seventy-five percent about man's rebellion to God's order; (4) Men must pass laws in order to protect them from the evils of all men, and (5) Men must have a police force to maintain law and order.

IV. THE FALL

- A. Views on the Reality of the Fall
- a. Liberals: The Fall is mere legend (derived from man's religious experience). This view denies that the Fall is historical and that there are any lessons to be learned from it, for it is fiction and irrelevant to the scientific twentieth century. Therefore the liberal denies the fact of sin and places emphasis on the goodness of man. Genesis 3 simply teaches that man should be good instead of bad.
 - b. Neo-orthodoxy: The Fall is a myth. It is not historical but it is a true myth and accurately represents what happens to each one of us. Thus the story of Adam and Eve is you and me; we are fallen creatures. The Fall is real truth without real fact. **NOTE:** This view does not deny sin but it hedges on the gravity of sin.
 - c. Socinianism and Pelagianism: The Fall is a historical fact but merely shows that Adam was a bad example to the human race. There is no connection between Adam's sin and the human race.
 - d. Arminianism and Semi-Pelagianism: The Fall is a historical fact and Adam's sin was passed on to the human race but there was no guilt attached to it. Man is perverted because of Adam's sin, but not guilty or under judgment because of it.
- B. The Biblical Account of the Fall (Genesis 3)
- a. Before the Fall: Adam and Eve were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), will, intellect, and emotion--an intellect to know God, an emotional nature to love and appreciate God, a will to choose for God. **NOTE:** Adam was a reflection of God's personality but he was not divine.
 - b. The Fall: Adam and Eve were tested by one prohibition and failed that test by an act of their own free will. Now Adam and Eve's original sin darkened their will, intellect, and emotion with sin and

thus they could not have fellowship with God.

- c. After the Fall: (1) Adam died spiritually and had no innate fellowship with God (2) Adam acquired a sin nature; thus his whole constitutional make-up was changed because of sin; (3) Adam and Eve, from that time on, began to die physically, although they probably lived for hundreds of years after their initial sin; (4) Adam and Eve's will, intellect and emotions were now affected by sin so they could not fellowship with God without Divine enablement; (5) Adam and Eve now had a consciousness of sin; (6) Adam and Eve lost their free will; man's will was now corrupted and he could not choose for God without Divine enablement. Even before the Fall, Adam and Eve had a free will under the sovereignty of God; thus whatever free will Adam and Eve had they lost in the Fall; and (7) Adam and Eve now became slaves to sin. NOTE: While man was created in the image of God, because of the Fall, this image was marred by sin. Thus man has a likeness to God today (James 3:9; Gen. 3:9; 1 Cor. 11:7) but the original image has been marred.

C. The Seriousness of the Fall

- a. One act of sin plunged the whole human race into sin.
- b. The Fall shows the seriousness of sin. Sin of any kind has devastating effects such as: (1) One sin by Lucifer made one-third of the angelic beings evil angels because they followed in his rebellion, and (2) One sin of Adam plunged the whole race into sin.
- c. The Fall brought a need for grace, mercy, and love in redemption. Deny the seriousness of the fall of man and there is no need for a Savior from sin.

V. THE EFFECTS OF THE FALL ON MANKIND

A. Views on the Effect of the Fall

- a. Man is Diverted (Pelagianism, Socinianism, Liberalism): Man's character and nature is not that of a sinner but he has seen a bad example in Adam's fall and needs to be shown a good example in Christ Jesus. Man, so to speak, fell upward in the Fall.
- b. Man Is Diseased (Semi-Pelagianism, Arminianism, Semi-Arminianism or Any of a Freewill Persuasion): Adam's sin has some effect upon his posterity. Humanity is very sick and in need of a physician. Jesus Christ is that physician who left the cure-all for sin by its sickbed when He came into the world and died for the sins of the world. Man must get this medicine and take it himself. NOTE: This view is widely held in modern day fundamentalism, especially in America.
- c. Man Is Spiritually Dead (Augustinianism, Calvinism): Adam's sin brought condemnation to his descendants, and as a result of the condemnation, the corruption of man's nature and his spiritual death became a reality. Death means inactivity and inability to respond; it is an utterly helpless condition from which it is impossible for a man to transport himself. In the Christian church, those who have denied the real character of sin and the helpless

condition of sinners have weakened the glory of our salvation in Christ.

B. Personal Sin

- a. Definition: Individual acts of sin that spring from the sin nature. Sin is any lack of conformity to the perfect character of God (Rom. 3:23). Scripture defines personal sin as lawlessness (I John 3:4). Lawlessness is rebellion against God. The whole unsaved world is in rebellion to the God of Scripture (Rom. 8:7). Personal sins can be those of omission — not doing what we should do is evil just as doing what we should not do against God is evil.
- b. Scriptures: Rom. 1:28-32; Eph. 4:25-32; Gal. 5:19-21
- c. Transmission: None
- d. Penalty: Guilt and condemnation for acts of sin.
- e. Remedy: (1) Forgiveness (Eph. 1:7); this negates the sins done but does not remove the guilt and penalty for sin. (2) Justification (Rom. 3:24); this is positive and declares one righteous, removing the guilt and penalty of sin.

C. Inherent Sin

- a. Definition: That sin nature which was derived from Adam and which is passed on from generation to generation (parents to children).
- b. Scriptures: Ps. 51:5; Jer. 17:5-9; Eph. 2:3.
- c. Transmission: From Adam to parents to child.
- d. **Point:** The sinfulness of man does not begin from without but from within. It is not the result of bad training in early years. It is not picked up from bad companions and bad examples. It is a family disease that we all inherit from our first parents, Adam and Eve, and with which we are born.
- e. Penalty: Spiritual death (Eph. 2:1-3; 4:18, 19; Rom. 6:23). Man's soul and spirit are separated from God in time and thus he has no fellowship with God. Man cannot respond to God unaided.
- f. Remedy: Judgment of the sin nature at the Cross (Rom. 6:1-10), control by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16), and final eradication of the sin nature at the coming of Christ (Rom. 8:23).
- g. Effects: (1) Intellect corrupted (Eph. 4:18; 11 Cor. 4:4, 5; Tit. 1:15) (2) Conscience perverted (I Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:15); (3) Heart is wicked (Jer. 17:5-9); (4) Flesh is filthy (11 Cor. 7:1); (5) Spirit is filthy (11 Cor. 7:1); (6) Will is corrupt (Rom. 1:19-23, 29).
- h. Root of Sin: Behind the acts of personal sin is the sin nature, the source of all sin (Mk. 7:21, 22).

D. Imputed Sin

- a. Definition: Adam's original sin is reckoned, imputed, or distributed to every member of the human race.
- b. Scriptures: Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22
- c. Transmission: Imputed directly to every human being.
- d. Penalty: Physical death and spiritual death, but a greater emphasis is upon physical death. This results in condemnation.

- e. Remedy: Christ's righteousness imputed or reckoned to the Christian (II Cor. 5:21).
- E. Declared Under Sin
- a. Definition: A declaration from God whereby He concludes that all men are under sin.
 - b. Scriptures: Rom. 3:9; Gal. 3:22
 - c. Penalty: Lost
 - d. Transmission: None
 - e. Remedy: Bring one under grace (Eph. 2:8, 9; 1:6)
- F. Conclusion: All men are sinners by acts, by nature, by imputation, and by declaration, objects of God's wrath, unable to will towards God, and headed for condemnation.