

KNOW THE TRUTH

Lesson 6 - Humanity and Sin (2 of 2)

Outline is drawn from pages 138-146 & 159-171 of *Know the Truth - A Handbook of Christian Belief* by Bruce Milne.

KEY CONCEPTS FROM CHAPTER 10 - HUMANITY IN SIN

I. The Fall of Humanity

A. Three Views on Genesis 3:1-7

1. The **literal** view sees the Genesis record as a direct historical description. (p. 138)
2. The **mythical** view rejects any historical element and treats the Genesis story as a religious picture which conveys important truths about humankind and its moral condition; it is not about the origin of sin, but about its essence. (p. 138)
3. The **'historical'** view asserts that while Genesis 2 – 3 are not to be interpreted in a literal sense at every point, space-time events are certainly being recounted. The Bible comments on the fall as an event (Rom. 5:12f.), locates Eden fairly precisely (Gen. 2:10–14), and sets Adam in historical continuity with Abraham and Israel (Gen. 4:1; 5:4; 11:27; Luke 3:38). The fall was a real event in our moral history. (p. 138)

II. The Nature and Extent of Sin

A. The Nature of Sin

1. Scripture uses a wide variety of **terms** to refer to sin, which is not surprising since redemption is the dominant theme of the Bible: human rebellion against God and God's gracious response.
 - a) ḥaṭṭā't - Missing the mark, or erring.
 - b) peša' - Active rebellion, a trespass or transgression of God's will.
 - c) šāgā - Expresses the thought of going astray.
 - d) hamartia - also has the force of missing the mark; it covers the thoughts of failure, fault and concrete wrongdoing.
 - e) anomia - expresses lawlessness.
 - f) asebeia (Titus 2:12) reflects the strong sense of godlessness.
 - g) ptaiō is more the moral stumble (Jas 2:10). (p. 139)
2. The most characteristic feature of sin is that it is directed against **God** (cf. Ps. 51:4; Rom. 8:7; Jas 4:4).
 - a) Its clearest expression is Satan's suggestion that Adam and Eve could usurp the place of their Maker, 'you will be like God' (Gen. 3:5). (p. 140)
 - b) People also blasphemously withheld that worship and adoring love which is our proper response to God, and paid homage to the enemy of God as well as to their own evil ambitions. (p. 140)
 - c) This explains why the issue of idolatry is so prominent in the Bible. In the OT it is Israel's idolatry which most clearly draws forth God's wrath. (p. 140)
 - d) At the heart of sin is that which de-gods God; sin is our rebellious refusal to let God be God. (p. 140)

B. The Extent of Sin

1. Sin is **universal**

- a) 'There is **no-one** righteous, not even one' (Rom. 3:10; cf. Rom. 3:1–10, 23; Ps. 14:1ff.).

- b) The extent of sin is **total**, not merely in a geographical sense, but also in an individual's life. Sin affects the whole of a human being:
 - (1) The will (John 8:34; Rom. 7:14–24; Eph. 2:1–3; 2 Pet. 2:19)
 - (2) The mind and understanding (Gen. 6:5; 1 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 4:17)
 - (3) The affections and emotions (Rom. 1:24–27; 1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Tim. 3:4)
 - (4) One's outward speech and behaviour (Mark 7:21f.; Gal. 5:19–21; Jas 3:5–9)
 - (5) And also, very often, social conditions in the form of oppressive political and social systems as 'structural sin'. (p. 140)
- c) Not surprisingly, theologians have expressed this catalogue of sin's effects as total **depravity**. (p. 140)
 - (1) The phrase does not imply that we are as evil as we possibly can be, which would make us indistinguishable from demons; rather, no area or aspect of our nature is left intact by sin; we can point to no single area of our personality in order to claim moral self-justification. (p. 140)
 - (2) redemption. The Bible also teaches our total depravity by saying that sin has affected the very core of the person. The heart (Heb. lēb), the essential person, has been perverted by sin. (p. 141)
 - (3) We are wholly fallen and hence wholly in need of redemption. (p. 141)
 - (4) Further, it is precisely because we are 'totally depraved' in this biblical sense that we are utterly unable to save ourselves. Total depravity implies 'total inability'. (p. 141)
- 2. The transmission of sin: original sin
 - a) The relationship between Adam's act of disobedience and subsequent human sinning is the question of original sin, a phrase which has two related meanings. (p. 141)
 - (1) First, it simply refers to **Adam's** sin in Eden, the original sin.
 - (2) Secondly, the Bible teaches that Adam's sin involved the **entire** human race. In Romans 5:12 Paul asserts that through Adam's disobedience sin and death became realities for all, 'because all men sinned', i.e. because they all sinned in Adam's sin (Rom. 5:14–19; 1 Cor. 15:22). (p. 141)
 - b) Two Traditional Explanations
 - (1) **Realism** interprets Paul's reference in Romans 5:12 in a literal manner. 'All sinned in Adam' means that all were present and involved when Adam sinned... (p. 141)
 - (2) **Federalism** argues that, in view of the parallel drawn between Adam and Christ (Rom. 5:12–19; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45–49), our universal solidarity with Adam is of the kind which Christ has with those he redeems, i.e. representative, or federal, headship. (p. 141)
 - c) Scripture universally relates our ultimate judgment to our own moral '**works**', which fall short of God's standards, and not in the first instance to our union with Adam (e.g. Matt. 7:21–27; 13:41; 25:31–46; Luke 3:9; Rom. 2:5–10; Rev. 20:11–14). (p. 142)

III. The Effects of Sin

A. In Relation to God

1. Five Effects

- a) We are **unfit** for God's presence
- b) We are **unable** to do God's will

- c) We are **unrighteous** before God's law
- d) We are **insensitive** to God's Word
- e) We become **subject** to God's wrath
- 2. These effects of sin are manifest in human **pride**. We resist God's rule and set ourselves up as our own lord; we make ourselves the standard of reality, and our own reason and experience the measure of truth. (p. 143)
- 3. In the religious sphere, this pride is expressed as **self-justification**. (p. 143)
- 4. But we cannot **escape** from God. The broken relationship is manifest as fear of God – not the godly self-abasement of the person of faith (cf. Deut. 10:12), but the terror of the fugitive, fleeing the God who has been disobeyed. This fear may drive us to seek a substitute God who will not expose our guilt. (p. 144)
- B. In Relation to One's Neighbor
 - 1. Sin brings **conflict**
 - a) Adam turned upon Eve and blamed her for his folly (Gen. 3:12), and the account of the fall is closely followed by the story of the murder of Abel (Gen. 4:1–16). Humanity against God is also humanity against its fellows, the stranger and the enemy, a threat instead of a friend. (p. 144)
 - 2. Sin produces **exploitation**
 - 3. Our breach with our neighbours also expresses itself as a **fear** that we shall be seen as we really are, in our weakness, guilt and self-contempt. (p. 144)
 - 4. One of the bitterest fruits of this separation from our neighbour is the habitual experience of **misunderstanding**, even when there is a genuine desire to know and to be known. (p. 145)
- C. In Relation to One's Self
 - 1. Sin sets us against **ourselves**
- D. In Relation to the Created Order
 - 1. Humanity loses its **harmony** with the natural order and our God-given stewardship of the environment gives place to sinful plundering. (p. 145)
- E. In Relation to Time
 - 1. Our lost lives are **spent** within lost time. Through sin we forfeit immortality (Gen. 2:17; 3:19); our days are numbered. God's future judgment is foreshadowed in the judgment of death. We are given time by God, but it moves inexorably to its close; all our plans, purposes and dreams are finally bracketed by our mortality: 'people are destined to die' (Heb. 9:27, NIV). (p. 145)
 - 2. This effect of sin is expressed in **materialism** (p. 145)
 - 3. This time-limit also produces **anxiety** (p. 146)

KEY CONCEPTS FROM CHAPTER 11 - HUMANITY IN GRACE

- I. Jesus Christ, the God Man
 - A. The extension of our story beyond our fallenness is wholly due to the miracle of God's **grace**. (p. 161)
 - B. Jesus, the God Man
 - 1. In relation to **God**
 - 2. In relation to his **neighbour**
 - 3. In relation to **himself**
 - 4. In relation to the created **order**
 - 5. In relation to **time**
 - C. The Christian, the New Creation in Christ

1. Ushered into the Kingdom of God
2. In relation to **God**
3. In relation to **neighbour**
4. In relation to **ourselves**
5. In relation to the created **order**
6. In relation to **time**

KEY CONCEPTS FROM CHAPTER 12 - HUMANITY IN GLORY

- I. This will be dealt with much more fully in Part 7. Here we simply note that this is the fulfilment of the **renewal** and **restoration** of God's people begun by grace in this age; humanity shall rise once again to the heights from which it has fallen. Scripture refers to this in terms of our being fully remade in the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:49b; Col. 3:10). Thus the image of God in which we were originally made is the image in which we shall stand before God in the new age to be inaugurated at the return of Christ (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 22:1–5).
- II. Hence the five dimensions distinguished throughout this Part as a framework for exposition will all be **perfected**. In glory we shall be perfectly related to God (Rev. 21:3; 22:4); to our neighbour (Eph. 4:13; Rev. 21:10); to ourselves (Rev. 21:4); to our environment (Rom. 8:21–23; Rev. 22:1f.) and to time (1 Pet. 1:3f.; Rev. 21:4). (p. 165)

APPLICATION

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