

THE223 Christian Narrative 1 Creation and Fall

Unit 6b Original and Inherited Sin

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Welcome to Session 6b of Christian Narrative 1. Today, our focus is going to be on both original and inherited sin. Our main teaching idea today is that the first sinful act of humanity introduced sin into the human race. What we're going to focus on is what impact did Adam's sin and Eve's sin have on the rest of humanity that would come after them? Because what in fact we discovered in Scripture is that there's a lot of passages that talk about how sin has come to impact all of humanity through the sinful act of Adam. And so we want to discover what that is.

Let's start by first understanding original sin. *Peccatum originale* or original sin is defined as the sinful state and condition in which humanity is born. Now, a quick note, and we'll talk about it here in the keys in just a moment. Original not in the sense of always existing. We've talked about the reality of evil. This is not the reality potential of evil. Notice in the definition, we're talking about the state and condition of humanity as it is born. What separates us from Adam and Eve? Adam and Eve were not born. They were created. So original sin is not the same thing that we're talking about when Adam and Eve were created. They were not created with original sin. However, when they sinned, and we're going to come to discover, they passed on an aspect of that sinfulness, of the impact of that sinfulness to the rest of humankind. And this is what we call original sin.

So let's look at some of the keys. This comes from the root of the human race, Adam. And so we're going to look at Adam's role in this and how the Bible talks to us about his consequence for sin passing on to us. This comes from the root of the human race, but it doesn't come from before the root of the human race. Original sin is rooted at Adam. Second, it's present at the time of birth and, as such, is not a result of sinful acts. This is not the same kind of word that we use to describe someone who has transgressed God's law. Infants that are born are not coming out in an act of position of disobedience in what they are doing. But rather, what we see is, instead of a look at the result of acts or decisions, rather, original sin is the innate root of all actual sins that will defile a person's life. It's kind of like that seed that will grow in the full root. And as it grows, it will grow with the human being. As the human being grows, the original sin will grow and it will begin to affect them and they will choose to sin. But this also leads us to see that original sin is not a description of the original constitution of the human nature. In other words, God did not create Adam and Eve with original sin. God did not create Adam and Eve and the rest of humanity as sinful. Rather, God created Adam and Eve as morally free agents, and their decisions had lasting impact on the human race.

So there are two elements of original sin, and each of these elements we'll dig down into two separate components. So two big categories each with two subcategories. We want to look at original guilt and we want to look at original pollution. When we look at original guilt, we want to look at both potential guilt and actual guilt. We'll dig into each of these in just a moment. *Reatus culpae* and *reatus poenae*. Original pollution, then, we want to look at total depravity and total inability. These two big elements of guilt and pollution, and these four smaller elements of potential guilt, actual guilt, and then total depravity and total inability, are going to help us understand how sin has truly impacted the entire human race.

So let's begin to dig into original guilt. Let's start by looking at *reatus culpae* or potential guilt. It's something I'm actually just calling guilt, and I'm going to layer this against what we're going to call debt in the next slide. And you'll see that. So potential guilt. This is the essence of sin. Now, in our last lesson, we talked about what is sin. It's a positive kind of evil. It's moral kind of evil. It's seeded in the soul of man. We talked about these things. But guilt or *reatus culpae* is the essence of sin. It is the inseparable

part of sin's sinfulness. And in fact, it's attached only to those who themselves have committed sinful deeds. And it is permanently attached. It cannot be removed by forgiveness. It cannot be removed by justification on the basis of Jesus. And it's guilt that cannot be transferred. Now, that's saying a lot about potential guilt. It's saying a lot about this aspect of sin's sinfulness. But when we put it into context, it's what caused Adam and Eve to hide from the presence of God in the garden. When we read about that story of God walking in the midst of the garden in the cool of the day, of Adam and Eve hiding themselves, of Adam and Eve covering themselves, of Adam and Eve being shamed in the presence of God, this is *reatus culpae*. This is guilt. This is the inseparable part of sin's sinfulness that can never be taken away, that fundamentally and forever changes an individual because of the deeds that they've committed.

But when we're talking about original guilt, we have to talk about its twofold nature. It's *culpae*, it's guilt, but it is also *poenae*, that is, debt. Guilt and debt are both part of what we call original guilt or this innate sinfulness that comes to us in original sin. And they are very different. Where guilt is that inseparable part of sin's sinfulness that causes us to want to hide from God, debt, on the other hand, is the punishment of sin, or it's the obligation to satisfy God's justice for a self-determined violation of his law. Where the hiding of Adam and Eve from God represented their guilt, the penalty of death and the judgment that they incurred was the result of the debt that they owed because they had violated God's command. So *reatus poenae* is not the essence of sin, but guilt, which stands in relationship to the penalty a sin incurs relative to the law. "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of evil, for in the day that you eat it, then you shall surely die," right? It is a penalty, and this penalty is incurred when the sin is acted on. But what we read here is that it can be removed by a satisfaction of justice, either personally or vicariously. So debt can be paid, in essence, is what we're saying. It can be transferred or assumed from one person to another. It can be removed from believers by justification, so that their sins, although inherently deserving of punishment, are no longer liable for such punishment. Two aspects of original sin. The first one is this idea of original guilt. And this original guilt carries just inherent guilt or potential guilt, and actual guilt or debt. Inherent guilt can't be removed. It can't be changed, but neither can it be transferred from one person to another. It only comes when we actually sin. Yet the debt, the punishment of sin can in fact be transferred or assumed from one person to another. It can be given to another person, but it can also be removed. So guilt and debt, both part of original guilt.

Now let's turn our attention to original pollution. Original pollution, like we said, has two aspects to it: total depravity and total inability. Total depravity, we can see in Ephesians 4:18. "They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart." So what we mean when we say total depravity is that the corruption of man caused by sin extends to all parts of man's nature, his faculties and powers, both body and soul, that sin affects everything and that there is no spiritual good that is good in relation to God in the sinner at all, only perversion. Now, this doesn't mean that human beings can't do inherently good things, that they can't reflect the natural will of God or the natural order of God or the natural law of God. That's not true. But in relationship to God and to God's law, there is no spiritual good that can be found in people who are impacted by original sin. This is the truth of original pollution: that we are completely depraved.

And then this leads us into understanding not just depravity but also total inability. We read Ephesians 2:8-9. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." The unrenewed sinner cannot do any act,

however insignificant, which fundamentally meets with God's approval and answers to the demands of God's holy law. Furthermore, man cannot change his fundamental preference for sin and self to love for God. In our natural goodness, in our moral goodness that we sometimes express, we still cannot satisfy the demands of God's law. Unholy people cannot become holy in their own works in order to please God. That's the first bullet point there under total inability. But also, total inability actually shows us that neither do we even try. Man is so fundamentally changed and they have a preference for sin itself that they cannot, in their own power, change their preferences for sin itself to a love for God. It simply isn't possible.

So we have original sin, the state in which humanity is born. It carries the impact of Adam's sin in a very particular way. And so now we've got to go from understanding original sin to looking at the concept of inherited sin. How does Adam's sin impact the rest of humanity? In what way? And for this, we're actually going to look at Romans 5:12-19, a very powerful passage that actually explains to us how some of the guilt and debt, how some of the depravity and inability goes from one generation to the next. How did Adam's sin impact the rest of humanity? So let me read for us from Romans 5. "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through the one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

So on an aside, maybe you're a Bible memorizer. This is a powerful passage to talk about not only the grace and justice of Christ, because this is a salvific passage, but this also helps us understand that the actual canker of sin and how sin has passed from one human being to all the human race, but that the power of Christ is more powerful than the stronghold of sin in our lives. So sorry. Let me get us back to focus here. So let's understand inherited sin. First of all, we have to see that in Adam, all sinned. This is exactly what verse 12 tells us. "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men." Why? "Because all sinned." So sin is universal in this. We have to see that. But as we've talked about a moment ago, original sin includes guilt, debt, depravity, and inability. Those four things, right? Guilt is attached to an act of sin, and it cannot be passed from one person to another. It is only received when someone actually commits a sin. Debt is something that can be passed from one to another. In other words, one person's debt can be passed to another person, whether or not that person actually committed sin. Depravity and inability, we also have to deal with, right? That humanity, in and of itself, cannot pursue God, is not seeking the good, and in fact, is not interested in seeking the good. However, verse 12 tells us, in Adam, all sinned. We need to understand the nature of that sin.

So we come to this second portion in verses 13 and 14. And what we discover is that all humanity is guilty because of Adam's sin. "For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come." "Guilty in what manner?" is the question. Well, we see that death is reigning from Adam to Moses, even over those who were sinning but whose sin was not like the transgression of Adam. Remember when we talked about original guilt, there was two forms of that: the guilt that comes and makes us hide; the debt. Both of those under the idea of guilt. What guilt are we talking about here? There's the guilt of death, the debt that was applied to Adam's choice to violate God's law that is "In the day that you will eat of the tree, you will surely die." This begins to pass from one generation to another. The debt of Adam is passed to his children, and his children pass it to their children, and their children pass it to their children. So what we're seeing is that all humanity is guilty of the debt of Adam because of Adam's sin.

And we continue now. Look down to verses 18 and 19. What we discover there is that Adam's act of disobedience made all humanity a sinner. So we read, "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." Look at verse 19. As by one man's disobedience, the many were what? Made sinners. So here we see some really key points in Romans 5:12-19, and there is a lot of theological reading that you could do on this particular chapter and some great commentary. If you have a few commentaries, I would encourage you to spend some time reading through them. But what we're discovering is that in Adam, all sinned. All humanity is guilty and has received death because of Adam's sin. And Adam's act of disobedience does in fact make humanity sinners.

So Adam's sin was imputed to humanity. Now, how do we define the word "imputed"? Well, there is the definition for you. It's to think of something as belonging to someone and therefore to cause it to belong to that person. So we read Romans 5:12-19. We can look at these other two passages as well. Particularly, though, look at 1 Corinthians 15:22. "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive." Now, the beauty of the New Testament is when we have the tragedy of sin, we're always presented with the potency, or many times we're presented with the potency, of salvation. But that first portion of 1 Corinthians 15:22 is really, really important. "In Adam all die." Or if we look at Ephesians 2:3, talking about the children of wrath, you were by nature, before Christ, a child of wrath. You were like the rest of mankind, Ephesians 2:3 says. All mankind are children of wrath in their nature.

So Adam's sin was imputed to humanity, was brought forth. But let's take a look at what it is that was actually brought in this imputation of sin. What part of Adam's sin was brought to us, the rest of his descendants? So we start with this. Adam's sin was his own. "I am not guilty for reaching across and taking the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of eating it myself." That's Adam's sin. And as such, it brought guilt and debt to Adam alone, right? He was guilty of it. The essence of the sinfulness of sin was Adam's, and the debt of death was Adam's. These were both his. Furthermore, Adam's guilt was unique to him. The guilt of his original act was not imputed to the rest of humanity. This aspect of guilt, *culpa*, doesn't pass from one person to the other. We are culpable for our own sins. We are not culpable for the sins of others. Adam's guilt was unique to him.

However, Adam's debt was in fact imputed on all his posterity, as evidenced by the universality of death. Because all die after Adam, it becomes clear to us that the debt of Adam's sin was passed on to his

children and his children and his children. All of humanity dies in the single act of Adam, but it is Adam alone who bears the guilt of his particular sin. But we still have to see that, in fact, we are all going to have to wrestle with our own guilt and this is why. The result of Adam's sin brought depravity and inability, which, by their very nature, are passed on to his posterity. So we receive the debt of Adam's sin and the impact of Adam's sin. He becomes depraved and unable to pursue God. And by his nature, which he passes on to his posterity, we too are born depraved and unable to pursue God. We carry in us original sin. That debt that will cause us to die, that inclination to be depraved and unable to pursue God, this is now inherent in the human race.

And then this leads us to that final point. Because humanity is both depraved and unable to relate to God as a result of Adam's sin, thus, logic would tell us that we will experience our own guilt, our own culpability for sin, which is similar to the guilt that Adam experienced, because we will, in fact, be sinners ourselves. We become culpable of sins that we've committed. And the culpability of sins that we've committed isn't passed on to our children or our wives. We don't pass that on. That's inherent within us. But the debt of sin is passed from one generation to the next. The impact of sin and its depravity and inability is passed from one generation to the next. So we can say that we've received the debt and consequence of Adam's sin, which inevitably leads us to experience the same guilt that Adam experienced. But we experience this due to our own sin and not the sin of Adam.

"Therefore," Romans 5, "Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who were sinning and whose sin was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come...Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous." We receive the debt in consequence of Adam's sin, which leads us to experience the same guilt he experienced. But we experience of our own sins, not the sin of Adam.

And finally, we have to ask the question, "How does original sin impact human freedom?" Because we said God made us morally free agents. What we have to acknowledge is that sin has partially impacted human freedom. What we mean is man retains his essential freedom. He is still free to choose as he pleases, according to the inclinations of his own soul, but man has lost what we call material freedom. That is, he no longer has the rational power to determine a course for himself that's in harmony with the highest good because he has an irresistible bias for evil. God created us as morally free agents, and yet when we introduce the presence of evil, evil has so bent our wills that we now pursue willingly in our essential freedom a course that is no longer towards the highest good because we have an irresistible bias towards evil.

So we have argued and talked a little bit about how the first sinful act of humanity introduced sin into the human race. We've investigated what that means, what the concept of original sin means, what it means to be guilty, what it means to be filled with debt, what it means to be depraved, what it means to be unable to pursue God. We've talked about how it transferred from Adam to his posterity. We've talked about what aspects of Adam's sin transferred to Adam's posterity and what aspects of his sin did not. We talked about how the impact of Adam's sin passed on and how the impact of Adam's sin ultimately leads us to follow after Adam, to also be sinners as well. And as we close this portion about

sin, let me just say one moment that we never talk about the aspect of sin without the powerful resurrecting grace of Jesus Christ. And in another course, we're going to talk about the great gift of salvation. And I want to encourage you to go back and read that passage from Romans that we've been reading a couple of times because what we discover is that the power and potency of redemption is so much stronger than the destruction of sin. And so, as we close our research and discussion on sin, remember that the grace of God is so much greater.