

Fundamentals, Study 6. Sin (Rom 5:12-21)

by BS Poh

o A correct understanding of sin is essential to appreciate the grace of salvation in Christ.

1. Sin is the breaking of, or failure to keep, God's law. These have been called the sins of commission and the sins of omission. Everyone in the world sins against God.¹ The law of God forbids us to steal, or lie, or hate, yet we have done all these. It requires us to worship God alone, to keep Sunday special to Him, and to honour our parents, but we have not done all these. From the time we were very young we showed forth anger, hatred, selfishness, envy, pride, and many such things. The tree is bad, that is why it produces bad fruits.² Where did this sinful nature come from? How bad is this problem of sin? (1. Rom 3:10; 2. Mark 7:21-23; Matt 7:18)

2. Our sinful nature actually came from the first man and the first woman -- Adam and Eve. God created Adam and Eve perfect, and gave them a good law. They could freely eat from every tree, except one. God warned them that they would die if they broke that law. Satan managed to tempt them to eat from the forbidden tree. By this sin, Adam and Eve fell from their original righteousness and broke fellowship (i.e. the good relationship) with God.³ God made Adam the federal (i.e. representative) as well as the natural head of the human race. We have Adam as our *natural head*, since we are all descended from him by birth. Therefore, the pollution of sin is passed down from Adam and Eve to the human race. We also have Adam as our *federal head*, so that we share in his guilt. His guilt is said to be *imputed* (i.e. counted as belonging) to us.⁴ Furthermore, we are guilty because of our own sins.⁵ (3. Gen. 2:16-17; 3:12-13; 2 Cor. 11:3; 4. Rom. 5:12; 5. Eph. 2:3)

3. The corrupt nature that everyone of us is born with has been called *original sin*. Original sin affects our total person - whether it is the mind, the feelings, or our actions.⁶ This is also known as *total depravity*. Since God is holy and just, while we are sinful and guilty, He is unable to keep a friendly relationship with us. Original sin actually makes us spiritually dead so that, left to ourselves, we are unable to do anything good in the sight of God.⁷ Like a mechanical clock whose hands always move in the clockwise direction, our sinful nature inclines us always in the direction of sin. We are therefore under God's condemnation, without the ability in us to save ourselves. That is how bad the problem of sin is. (6. Psalm 51:5; 7. Eph 2:1)

4. When a person is born again, i.e. spiritually transformed by the Holy Spirit, he still carries with him the corrupt nature during this life.⁸ Although the Holy Spirit now inclines him to do good, his sinful nature constantly draws him away in the direction of sin.⁹ This struggle - to do good and to do evil - will not be over until the believer arrives in heaven. (8. 1 John 1:8; 9. Rom 7:23-25)

5. We must guard against two wrong views on the human nature. *Pelagianism* teaches that every person is born with a perfect nature, like that of Adam and Eve before they sinned against God. Whether he becomes good or bad depends on the teaching he receives, and the environment that he is exposed to. Another wrong teaching is known as *Semi-Pelagianism*. It claims that the sin of Adam only affected the human nature partially. Man still has the power to cooperate with God to do

what is pleasing to Him. Both the teachings arise from human logic, and are not derived from the Bible. They are also contrary to human experience.

= Let us turn to Christ in faith and be saved from the awful consequences of sin!

Review Questions

1. What is *sin*?
2. Where did our sinful nature come from?
3. What do we mean when we say that Adam is the *natural head* of the human race?
4. What do we mean when we say that Adam is the *federal head*?
5. What is *original sin*?
6. What does original sin do to us?
7. When will a believer be free from the struggles with sin?
8. What does *Pelagianism* teach about the human nature?
9. What does *Semi-Pelagianism* teach about the human nature?
10. Give two reasons why we consider *Pelagianism* and *Semi-Pelagianism* wrong.

Assignment/Discussion

How widely are Pelagianism and Semi-Pelagianism held by people around us? Does a person need to understand the doctrine of *total depravity* before being saved?

Memory Passage (1 Cor 15:21-22)

21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

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