

## Of Man's Fall (Part 2)

Rm 3:9-31 & WCF 6.3-6.4

Reformed Church of Wainuiomata, 10 March 2019, 16:30

(Sermon put together by Pieter van Huyssteen with due acknowledgement)<sup>1</sup>

### Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

This sermon is about sin – its beginning, its spread, and its impact on our daily lives. Yes, it's about a fall away from how God had originally created mankind.

Of course, many people deny the existence of sin.

Yet, the evidence of its existence is all around us. Just take a look man's actions on this planet. Study man's doings from east to west and north to south. There's not a country in this world which is not affected by sin. If it does not show itself in the selfishness of rulers who take too much money for themselves, then it's seen in war and revenge in another corner of the world or in widespread immorality and abortion.

In fact, not just every *country*, but every *home* is infected by sin – every *marriage*; every *family*! Even *pastors'* and *elders' households* are not free from sin and its painful results! Indeed, sin is widespread and it's deep-rooted. It's also in man's past and present – and, as long as the human race continues on this earth, it will still be in man's future!

Well, from the Bible we learn that there are two main "kinds" of sin, which theologians have called...

- Original Sin, and...
- Actual Sin

And they form the two main points of this sermon.

### Original Sin

Question: why is sin so much like a cancer – widespread and deep-rooted?

The answer is: Because it goes back to the *roots* of humanity – to the root of all mankind!

What/who is that root?

Well, the Apostle Paul gives the answer when he tells the people of Athens that God ***has made from one man every nation of mankind*** (Acts 17:26).<sup>2</sup>

Thus, all human beings on this planet hail from just one and the same human father!

And here's the problem – this one first father (Adam by name) disobeyed God, rejected God's authority over him – i.e. this first father *sinned* against God!

You ask, "But what have *I* to do with the sin and the fall of my first parent who lived ages ago and whom I never even met or knew?"

Well, you & I must understand that this first parent of ours was, in God's eyes, not loose-standing from all of his offspring! No, like a federal head, he represented all of his offspring; yes, he, as the first of mankind represented all of mankind!

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<sup>1</sup> In writing this sermon, I am greatly indebted to my two main sources whose guidance I appreciate: 1) Van Dixhoorn, Chad. 2014. *Confessing the Faith: a reader's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith*. Carlisle, PA : The Banner of Truth Trust. 484p.

2) Sproul, R.C. 2006. *The truth we confess*. (In: Sproul, R.C. ed. *Truths we confess: a layman's guide to the Westminster Confession of Faith – in three volumes*. Vol. I (chapters 1-8 of the Confession) Phillipsburg, NJ : P&R Publishing. 279p.).

Many words & phrases I have written, I have gladly borrowed with great thankfulness from these sources.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 17:26 ***And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place...*** (Emphasis mine)

Perhaps you say, “But *I* did not elect Adam to be my representative!” “Is it not so that I can only be blamed if it was *I* who elected a bad person as my representative?”

My brother & sister, of course, you & I did not elect Adam to be our representative – neither to be the representative of all mankind! But *God*, who does not make a mistake, selected him as the one who would perfectly represent all of mankind! Thus, you & I cannot say that Adam misrepresented us. No, as God’s perfectly selected representative, Adam – with his sin and all – represented us flawlessly!<sup>3</sup>

So, mankind’s *sin* comes from mankind’s *root*!

And we could see mankind as a tree with leaves, branches, trunk and root. Adam is the root – the sick & infected root! All of mankind is the rest of the tree. You and I might be the small leaves on the edge of a twig! But because our *root* is infected, we, too, are infected! It’s like the Joseph’s Coat pot-plant my father often used in his biology class! You see, to show the students how osmosis in a plant works, my father would take a Joseph’s Coat pot-plant and pour red-coloured water all around its base. The result? Well, after a while the red colouring could be seen spreading up through the stem, into the branches, twigs and leaves.

In the same way, when the “poison” of disobedience was absorbed into the root of mankind, nothing could stop it from infecting even the furthest branches of the human race!

So it happened that when our first parents tasted death and fell from God’s favour, all their posterity fell with them. Yes, all who descended from Adam & Eve’s union got infected.

Now, we have to make one thing clear: it was not as if Adam & Eve’s sexual *union* was sinful and is to be blamed. No, sexual union when happening on God’s terms cannot be blamed for our sinful state. After all, was it not God Himself who told our first parents to be fruitful and multiply?

We can say it in another way, i.e. that all who become people by procreation are infected with Adam’s sin.

Adam & Eve were dead in sin and corrupt in their nature. Thus, even though the very act of procreation was good, Adam & Eve could still only produce their own kind which is also dead in sin and corrupt!

The words of Gen 5:3 say it clearly, “***When Adam had lived a 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, in his own image...***”<sup>4</sup>

Did you hear the words, “in his own likeness” and “in his own image”?

Weighty words!

Why?

Well, because to be made in the likeness of *God* would mean holiness! But to be made in the likeness of *Adam* (Adam after his fall) certainly points to wickedness!

And also Job knew this truth!

Look is that not why he said (in Jb 14:4), “***Who can bring a clean thing from an unclean thing? No one!***”?

Yes, is that not why, in the next chapter,<sup>5</sup> Job says, “***What is a human being, that he can be clean, or that one born of a woman can be righteous?***”

So, what do we see?

Well, we see that the Bible is clear on this: Our first parents’ corrupt & polluted nature was passed on from generation to generation – from parent’s body to child’s body!

Question: Was it only their *corrupt nature* which got passed on?

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<sup>3</sup> Words borrowed and adapted from Sproul (ibid:185-186)

<sup>4</sup> Emphasis mine

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jb 15:14

No, based upon the Bible,<sup>6</sup> the WCF 6.3 says that also Adam & Eve's *guilt* was reckoned to their offspring!

You ask, "But how is *guilt* different from *corrupt nature*?"

Well, *corrupt nature* is a permanent mental or biological condition/state, which has left mankind with a natural bent to sin! But *guilt* is a judicial declaration. Thus, just as Adam stood guilty before God, so does every offspring of Adam stand guilty before God!

In other words, just as Adam (without Christ) will receive punishment from God, so, too, will all Adam's offspring (insofar as they have not received Jesus Christ as their Saviour & Lord)!

So, this is the grim reality – a reality which theologians have called *original sin*. The Dutch theologians have called it "erfzonde," i.e. "inherited sin." But the term "original sin" is better, for it takes us back to the *original root* of the human race; and also to the root of the problem, i.e. *our hearts*!<sup>7</sup>

Yesterday's videoclip of our one-and-a-half-year-old grandson shows how he was daunted by his shadow which constantly follows him. He sees his shadow! Then, very afraid, he moves two steps forward – looks sideways, again sees his shadow and cries, "No, no, 'dadow' (= shadow)!"

Well, what a picture of original sin sticking onto us!

Wow! What shall we do to escape the wrath of God?

Well, as David says: God desires truth in our innermost being,<sup>8</sup> which means that, to be able to live before God, you & I must openly confess with David that we are sinful from birth – in fact, from the time our mothers conceived us!<sup>9</sup> Yes, we should not deny it, but acknowledge that no baby is born with a clean slate; and that sin & guilt, just like our shadow, keep on sticking to us!

So, our only help is God's love-gift, Jesus Christ who took God's wrath for all who, by God's grace, turn to Him!

Well, so far point 1: Original Sin

Here's point 2...

## Actual Sin

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Rm 5:17-19 (especially v.17 & 18), ***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.***

<sup>18</sup> ***Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.*** <sup>19</sup> ***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.*** (Emphasis mine). What else do "death" and "condemnation" for all Adam's offspring mean but that they, too, became all regarded as *guilty* before the Holy God!?

Also cf. 1 Cor 15:21-22 ***For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead.***

<sup>22</sup> ***For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.***

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Berkhof, L. 1959. Systematic Theology. London : The Banner of Truth Trust. p.244

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ps 51:6 ***Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.***

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Ps 51:5 ***Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.***

My brother & sister, our original sin leaves you & me (in the language of WCF 6.4) “utterly disinclined, disabled, and antagonistic to all that is good,”<sup>10</sup> or, as the Apostle Paul says, “without strength!”<sup>11</sup>

At another place, where Paul describes our natural state, he says, “***I know that nothing good lives in me.***”<sup>12</sup> He also says that, in this state, we were ***alienated from***<sup>13</sup> and ***hostile***<sup>14</sup> to God!

In our NT passage (Rm 3:10-12) Paul reminds us that *no person*, in & of himself, is *righteous; no, not one!*<sup>15</sup>

Someone will say, “But hang on, preacher!” “I know of many non-Christian people who put some Christians to shame with their sacrificial giving and good attitudes toward their fellow man!” “How can you say that no one does any good at all!?”

My brother & sister, yes, none of us can deny that many people – even non-Christians – do good things to society, but... what the Bible means is not so much the good man does to *man*, but the good man does to *God*!

You see, there’s a clear example of this in the Bible... Remember the rich young ruler who came to Jesus<sup>16</sup> and claimed that he had kept all the commandments for he never sinned against other human beings – yes, he claimed that he never committed adultery, never murdered, never stole anything, never bore false witness, always honoured his parents...<sup>17</sup> See, he claimed that he did good to his *fellow man*? But did you notice when Jesus asked him to do something which would show his love to *God*, what did this man do?

He became very sad, for he was very rich!

Thus, he might have been good to *people*, but he neglected the first commandment – i.e., “You shall have no other gods before Me!”

So, when our NT passage says (in Rm 3:12), “No one does good,” it has in mind good toward God!

Of course, *good-toward-God* does not exclude *good-to-our-neighbour*, but so often *good-to-our-neighbour* happens without any motive of doing “good-to-God.”

My brother & sister, a good deed is one that is not done by selfish motivations (like, “it will make me feel good”)! Yes, a good deed is one that is not just *objectively* good (good in the eyes of the world), but it must also be motivated by a good inclination or desire to please God.<sup>18</sup> From this perspective, then, who, out of his/her own, will ever do good?

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<sup>10</sup> WCF 6.4 Modern English Version

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Rm 5:6 where Paul describes our state before we were followers of Jesus Christ, “***For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly***” (KJV).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Rm 7:18 “***For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.***”

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Col 1:21 ***And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds...***

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Rm 8:7-8 ***For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup> Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.***

<sup>15</sup> Also cf. Ps 14:1-3 ***The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good. <sup>2</sup> The Lord looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. <sup>3</sup> They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.***

Also Ps 53:1-3 for near-similar words. Then, also cf. Eccl 7:20 ***Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.***

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Lk 18:18-30

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Lk 18:20-21

<sup>18</sup> Well-said words borrowed from Sproul (ibid:191)

Thus, unless God intervenes, it is from our *original* sin that our *actual* sins bursts forth!  
Yes, it's from our *state* of sin that a *life* of sin erupts!

You see, is this not why the Apostle Paul, in our NT passage, moves from saying, “no one *is* good,”<sup>19</sup> to “no one *does* good”!<sup>20</sup> From *state* to *life* – from “no one *is* good” to “no one *does* good!”

Someone has said it well: “Original sin can be *distinguished* from our actual sin from day to day. But the two should never be *separated*, for sins well up from inside us.”<sup>21</sup>

And James *says* it: “...**(God) Himself tempts no one.** <sup>14</sup> **But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire.**”<sup>22</sup>

Sinful acts come from our own sinful hearts & wills!

Well, by God's grace, some people *wake up* to the horror that from their own hearts are streaming all those evil things mentioned by Jesus (in Mt15:19), “...***evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.***”

But sadly, some never wake from their sins at all!

Yes, thank God, some wake from this nightmare and repent of their sins! And, of course, even these ones who have repented – they still continue to sin, for, in this life, they are not freed from original sin nor actual sin, because they're still children of the first Adam. But look, they rejoice, for they remember that there is one Child of Adam who was not born by ordinary generation – thus free from sin!<sup>23</sup> His Name is Jesus the God-given Saviour!

Question: Are you in this second group? Have you received Jesus as your Saviour and Lord?

AMEN (2,012 words excluding footnotes)

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<sup>19</sup> Rm 3:11 Literally, “**None is righteous, no, not one...**” (Emphasis mine)

<sup>20</sup> Rm 3:12 “**All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.**” (Emphasis mine)

<sup>21</sup> Van Dixhoorn (ibid:90) (Emphasis mine)

<sup>22</sup> Js 1:13d-14

<sup>23</sup> Borrowed from the well-said words of Van Dixhoorn (ibid:91)