

3. Devastation: The Corruption of our Nature

Introduction

- Two Giants...
 - 1 Cor 15:21-22; Rom 5:12-21
- ‘in Adam all die...’ (1 Cor 15:22)

‘sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...many died through one man’s trespass...the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation...because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man...one trespass led to condemnation for all men...by one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners’ (Rom 5:12-19)

1. Original Sin

- Distinguished from ‘actual sin’ – the particular sins of thought, word and deed we all commit
- ‘Original’ because...
 - It derives from our first origin (Adam; 1 Cor 15:21-22; Rom 5:12-21)
 - All of us sinned in Adam
 - It exists in us from conception (Ps 51:5)

a. Genesis 3

- *Not* just an example of what temptation is like
- *Not* like our temptation
- A unique temptation
- The catastrophic moment of entry of sin into God’s good world
- Adam our covenant head and representative

- We don't sin because we imitate Adam
- We sin because we sinned in Adam

b. Two parts of original sin:

- Guilt imputed and punished
 - Born 'East of Eden', separated from the tree of life (Gen 3:24-4:2)
 - Subject to death (Gen 4:8 (!!); 5:5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 27, 31; 7:21-23; 9:28-29)
- The comprehensive corruption of our nature
 - Gen 5:1-3
 - What happens if you pollute a river at its source?
 - Gen 4:1-16; 6:5; 8:21

2. Concupiscence

- From the Latin for desire, '*concupiscere*'; cf. Gk '*epithymia*'
- But usually, in the Bible and in systematic theology, it refers to evil desires
- 'the disordered state of all appetites'¹
- The Roman Catholic view:

'Concupiscence stems from the disobedience of the first sin. It unsettles man's moral faculties and, *without being in itself an offense*, inclines man to commit sins.'²

¹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, 4 vols (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), III.98.

² Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2515; italics mine. In discussing original sin, the Catechism refers to concupiscence as an 'inclination to evil' (405). The Catechism's teaching is rooted in the decrees of the Council of Trent.

a. *The Protestant view*³

Concupiscence ‘is both a punishment of the former sin, a sin, and a cause of other sins’⁴

‘The very first motions of concupiscence do not cease to be sins, although they are neither wholly voluntary nor in our power...although these motions may not be in our power, yet because they were such in the beginning and ought to be in accordance with the duty of man, they do not cease to be sins.’⁵

- A vivid illustration:

‘The pup of a wolf is killed, but who can excuse it just because it has not yet killed sheep or wreaked havoc on the flock? Still he is killed for a just reason, for he has a wolf’s nature, and he is going to commit that violence if he is permitted to live.’⁶

- Note the assumption about human nature in the Latin proverb: ‘*homo homini lupus est*’: ‘Man is wolf to man’.
- What are we in Adam? Wolves

b. *The Extent of sin*

- Our minds are darkened, foolish, ignorant (Eph 4:18-19)
- Our will are enslaved, so that we love evil and hate what is good (Jn 8:34)
- Our emotions are in chaos: fears and hatred, desires and delights, joys and sorrows (Rom 7:5)

³ E.g., Augsburg Confession (1530), Article 2; Belgic Confession (1559), Article 15; 39 Articles (1563), Article 9; The Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Question 10; The Second Helvetic Confession (1564), Chapter 8; Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), Chapter 6.5; Second London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689), Chapter 6.5. See the excellent book by Matthew Roberts, *Pride* (Christian Focus, 2023), 69-85.

⁴ Girolamo Zanchi, *Confession of the Christian Religion*, VIII.v.

⁵ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger, 3 vols (P&R Publishing, 1992), IX.ii.5.

⁶ Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Original Sin*, trans. Kirk Summers (Davenant Press, 2019), 20.

- We are corrupt to the very root, infected by sin in every aspect of our being
- So we do not only need to repent of our conscious thoughts and desires and actions:

‘repentance is a changing of the mind and heart, stirred up in us through the Holy Ghost, by the Word both of the law and the gospel, wherein we grieve from our heart; we detest, we lament, we loath and bewail, and confess before God all our sins, *and even the corruption of our nature*, as things utterly repugnant (as the law teaches) to the will of God...’⁷

- This is the uniform Protestant position, against Roman Catholicism
- The most important question for evangelical Christians: Is it biblical?
 - Gen 6:5; 8:21
 - Psalm 51:5
 - Jeremiah 17:9
 - Mark 7:20-23
 - Luke 6:43-45
 - Ephesians 2:1-3
 - Romans 7:7-25

Implications:

- As sinners in Adam, we hate God and we love to sin. We love our degradation. We love our self-destruction. And we call it freedom.

⁷ Zanchi, *Confession of the Christian Religion*, XVIII.5; my italics.

- We are utterly helpless
 - We are dead in sin
 - We are enslaved to sin
- We need a new and better Adam to set us free and raise us to new life.

‘O loving wisdom of our God
When all was sin and shame
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.’

3. Jesus: The Second Man and Last Adam

- Luke 4:1-12
- *Not* merely an inspiring story about how to resist temptation
- Jesus the New Adam doing what we, as sinners in Adam, could never do
 - Surrounded by wild animals (Mk 1:13; contrast Gen 2:19-20)
 - In the wilderness (contrast Gen 2-3)
 - Hungry (contrast Gen 2:16) but refuses to feed himself (contrast Gen 3:6)
 - Refuses to rely on evidence of senses (Lk 4:9-11; contrast Gen 3:6)
 - Relies instead on the word of God (Lk 4:4, 8, 12; contrast Gen 2:16-17; 3:1-4)
 - Refuses to receive the kingdoms of the world from Satan, instead worships God (contrast Gen 3:5)
 - At the end of the temptation, angels minister to him (Matt 4:11; contrast Gen 3:24)

Implication

- Our great need:
 - To be united by faith to the Second Adam
 - To have his righteousness imputed to us for our justification
 - To have his life and goodness infused into us by his Spirit for our sanctification