

What Does The Bible Tell Us About “Original Sin”?



To our enlightened, scientifically, sociologically, psychologically-driven culture that believes people are basically good or at least morally neutral, the idea of “original sin” is a big UGH! It sounds so archaic, so pessimistic, so grim, so . . . medieval! People who oppose this teaching of “original sin” often compare God’s dealing with humanity to God’s dealing with a field of corn, with each stalk standing for himself/herself, or with pebbles of sand on the seashore, with each person isolated and independent from each other. Surely this overly pessimistic and outmoded view of human nature must be mistaken, right? Fact is, UNLESS we understand the Biblical doctrine of “original sin,” we have every reason to be pessimistic! This may not be the easiest issue to deal with, but if we strap on our thinking caps, we have every reason to be encouraged with hope . . . because of what the Bible reveals about “Original Sin”.

What is “original sin”? The terminology is often used in 3 ways.

- **The ORIGINAL original sin, or the sin of ADAM.** Adam disobeyed the gracious and clear command from God to not eat from 1 tree in the garden. Adam obeyed the voice of the devil by determining for himself what was good and evil rather than leaving that determination, that decision to God. WE repeat that original sin every day!
- **INHERITED sin.** With Adam & Eve being our 1st parents, there’s a natural, biological, (if you will) organic connection between them and us. Think of a tree. Adam and Even were the main “trunk” of the tree. We are all limbs and leaves on that tree, and just as the sap runs from the trunk to the limbs & leaves, so the “sap” of Adam’s sin (& sinful disposition) runs from Adam & Eve to us. [“He’s got his Daddy’s eyes & his Mother’s firey temper!” “She’s got her Mom’s beautiful skin & hair color & her Daddy’s STUBBORN streak!”] We see the sin of our 1st parents repeated in us. [Nobleman & field worker, “Don’t know WHY b/c of the sin of Adam I’M doomed to work in the field for the rest of my life.” To prove a point, “We will switch places . . . only 1 stipulation: You MUST NOT open this box!” “I knew you would!” “How?” “B/c you are a child of Adam & Eve and transgressing the boundaries is part of your inherited nature!”]
- **The CORPORATE nature of sin.** Adam represented ALL his descendents (all humanity, including US), Adam acted on OUR behalf, as OUR representative, & when ADAM failed & sinned, WE being CONNECTED with him, failed and sinned along with Adam.

The key Text for advancing this doctrine (teaching) is **Romans 5:12-21**. 5 phrases in **Vs 12** need to be examined.

1. “. . . **through one man . . .**” Why is that significant? B/C this tells us that Adam was a historical figure living in time & space & in a specific place. Adam is NOT mythology, but HISTORY.

2. “... *sin entered the world* ... “ How does this verse portray sin? Sin is portrayed as an INTRUDER. Sin had EXISTED, b/c of satan, but was not part of the world. Through the decision of ADAM, sin ENTERED the Garden of Eden & spread through the world. & through the decision of Adam, sin entered the bloodstream of humanity.

3. “... *and death through sin* ... “ What is Paul’s point? How in Scripture is death portrayed? The CAUSE of death is SIN. ADAM’S sin. The PRIMARY cause of death lies in the SIN decision ADAM made.

➔ **There’s SPIRITUAL death.** It’s the way we’re born, separated from God and NOT in a relationship of friendship, fellowship, and favor with God.

➔ **There’s PHYSICAL death.** There’s a lot of scientific / medical terminology wor death. Basically, it’s When we breathe our last breath & our heart stops beating. Gave up the ghost. That was not true until sin entered the world, people were designed NEVER to die. So death is NOT a “natural” thing is the world as it was intended to be.

➔ **There’s the SECOND death.** Eternal separation from God, never to be restored, the death of both the BEING and the WELL-BEING of both body & soul.

2 of those 3 deaths have a remedy. 1ST DEATH, the remedy is SALVATION (“... *whoever has believed has crossed over from death to life, John 5:24* . . .) For the 2nd DEATH, the remedy is the RESURRECTION (*John 14:19, “...b/c I live, YOU shall also live...”*). There is NO REMEDY for the 3rd DEATH. If someone dies w/o having experienced salvation, they are eternally dead, forever.

4. “... *spread to all ANTHROPOS* ... “ What does this say about Adam’s sin? The sin of ONE and the DEATH that resulted from that sin affects ALL people. No exceptions.

5. “... *because all sinned* ... “ HOW did all sin in Adam? Is it just inherited, or is something more involved? ADAM represented ALL people, WE are connected to Adam, and what is true of ADAM is ALSO true of US b/c of our connection with Adam.

The **BOTTOM LINE** has to do with **2 MEN**, **2 DEEDS**, and **2 DESTINIES**.

Let’s consider this idea of CORPORATE or FEDERAL Headship of Adam. Some ILLUSTRATIONS help here. *The VOTE of 1 SENATOR who represents US affects EVERYBODY in the State of MS. **The PLAY of 1 QUARTERBACK affects the whole team. [TEAM A: 1 QB throws 3 interceptions run back for 3 touchdowns. TEAM B: The OTHER QB throws 3 touchdown passes & no interceptions. Although the QB of team “A” made the poor decisions, the whole TEAM loses. Adam was the QB, and WE are ON the LOSING team.] ***The ACTIONS of a TEAM CAPTAIN affects the whole team. [Hartfield spelling team . . . Suzie Migilluciti

REPRESENTS “team Hartfield”. SHE misspells a word. The TEAM loses the spelling competition b/c of the actions of the TEAM CAPTAIN.] Happens all the time.

Why do people have a problem with this idea? How does Paul defend this idea and help us to (with much relief!) embrace it? It doesn't seem fair, that the sins of SOMEONE ELSE would be counted AGAINST us, UNTIL . . . you consider the OTHER side of the corporate coin, namely, that NOT due to OUR OWN actions but due to the actions of ANOTHER who REPRESENTS us, WE are SPARED the awful effects of sin. [Go back to the BENEFITS of the examples IF they are REVERSED . . . We have no problem saying in those cases, “WE WON!”] So the question is, “WHOSE TEAM are you on?”

Notice the CONTRASTS between Adam and Jesus . . . & how the actions of the team captains affects their “teams.”

- **The contrast between OFFENSE and OBEDIENCE, Vs 15.** Adam's OFFENSE brought DEATH; Christ's OBEDIENCE brought people of Faith the free gift of God's GRACE.
- **The contrast between SINNING and OBEYING, Vs 16.** Adam's SIN brings CONDEMNATION; Christ OBEDIENCE brings JUSTIFICATION (we are counted as righteous B/C X lived a RIGHTEOUS life & HIS life-record is credited to the account of those trusting in Christ.)
- **The contrast between DEATH and LIFE, Vs 17.** Through the 1 OFFENSE of Adam, there's death; the TOTAL OBEDIENCE of Jesus, there's life for those who trust in Christ.
- **The contrast between JUDGMENT and JUSTIFICATION, Vs 18.** Adam's offense brings JUDGMENT; Christ's righteousness brings JUSTIFICATION (to those trusting in Him)
- **The contrast between being made SINNERS and being made RIGHTEOUS, Vs 19.** Adam's disobedience makes us all sinners; Christ's OBEDIENCE makes people righteous (not in themselves, but in Christ, b/c their trust is in Christ alone, and B/C of WHOSE team they're connected to).
- **The contrast between the reign of SIN to death and the reign of RIGHTEOUSNESS to life, Vs 21.** Again, 1 because of 1 person; the other b/c of ANOTHER.

Before someone objects to the doctrine of “original sin”, they must consider this: ****Only if ADAM represents you in the GARDEN can JESUS represent you on the CROSS.**** Otherwise, we are . . . on our own! IF WE ARE ON OUR OWN, WE STAND BEFORE A PERFECT GOD AND MUST CLAIM OUR OWN PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SINCE WE ARE NOT PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUSNESS, WE ARE DOOMED! We need HELP from OUTSIDE ourselves, and that help comes from JESUS.

But BIBLICALLY speaking, JESUS serves as YOUR REPRESENTATIVE. HIS obedience, HIS Righteousness, & HIM being punished FOR YOU is what HE did this ON BEHALF OF HIS PEOPLE. The Bible makes this connection: IF there's NO "Team ADAM," then neither is there a "TEAM JESUS." Biblically, you CANNOT have one w/o the other! Biblically, it's a package deal, and you can't break the package! Therefore, apart from being on JESUS' TEAM, you are on your own! Is THAT where you want to be?? Standing before God w/only YOUR record to stand on?? "In ADAM'S fall, WE sinned ALL." In JESUS' life & death, God's people are COUNTED as righteous.

Friends, We are all BORN on the LOSING team, but ***by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone***, we can be on the WINNING team, and it's the LIFE & DEATH of our TEAM CAPTAIN that secures our salvation & our future! This is all to say, SIN IS BIGGER THAN US; BUT SALVATION ALSO IS BIGGER THAN US! Biblically speaking, right now, you ARE on 1 team, and your destiny is sealed by the actions of your Team Captain. Which team are you on?

- ***Of course, this discussion almost always leads to an emotionally-loaded question . . .*** IF people are BORN on the WRONG team, but are later on in life given the opportunity to join another team, how about those who never had that opportunity? Specifically, how about those who DIE in infancy or in their Mother's womb?