

The First Sin of the First Man

by James Arminius

The first sin of the first man was disobedience and offense, or the transgression of the law given by God, which had far-reaching effects on humanity and can only be liberated from through Christ Jesus.

Scripture: Genesis 3:6, Romans 5:12, Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:3, 1 John 3:4

Topics: "Original Sin", "Redemption Through Christ"

Description

James Arminius delves into the first sin of the first man, emphasizing the disobedience and offense committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He explores the causes of this sin, attributing it to man's free will and the influence of Satan through the serpent. Arminius also discusses the heinousness of the sin, highlighting the transgression of God's law and the effects it had on humanity, leading to the loss of righteousness and holiness. He concludes by pointing out that the consequences of this original sin extend to all of humanity, making everyone subject to condemnation and in need of redemption through Christ Jesus.

Transcript

DISPUTATION 7

ON THE FIRST SIN OF THE FIRST MAN

RESPONDENT: ABRAHAM APPART

THE USE OF THE DOCTRINE

I. When an inquiry is instituted concerning this first evil, we do not agitate the question for the purpose of unworthily exposing to disgrace the nakedness of the first formed pair, which had been closely covered up, as impious Ham did in reference to his father. (Gen. ix, 22.) But we enter on this subject, that, after it is accurately known, as when the cause of a mortal disease is discovered, we may with the greater earnestness implore the hand which heals and cures. (Gal. ii, 16.) In this discussion four things seem to be principally entitled to a consideration. (1.) The sin itself. (2.) Its causes. (3.) Its heinousness. (4.) Its effects.

THE SIN ITSELF

II. This sin is most appropriately called by the Apostle, "disobedience," and "offense" or fall. (Rom. v, 18, 19. (1.). Disobedience; for, since the law against which the sin was committed, was symbolical, having been given to testify that man was under a law to God, and to prove his obedience, and since the subsequent performance of it was to be a confession of devoted submission and due obedience; the transgression of it cannot, in fact, be denoted by a more commodious name than that of "disobedience," which contains within itself the denial of subjection and the renunciation of obedience. (2.) Offense, or fall. Because as man, having been previously placed in a state of integrity, walked with unshaking feet in the way of God's commandments; by this foul deed he impinged or offended against the law itself, and fell from his state of innocence. (Rom. v, 15-18.)

III. This sin, therefore, is a transgression of the law which was delivered by God, to the first human beings, about not eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; perpetrated by the free will of man, from a desire to be like God, and through the persuasion of Satan that assumed the shape of a serpent. On account of this transgression, man fell under the displeasure and the wrath of God, rendered himself subject to a double death, and deserving to be deprived of the primeval righteousness and holiness, in which a great part of the image of God consisted. (Gen. ii, 17; Rom. v, 19; Gen. iii, 3-6, 23, 24; Rom. v, 12, 16; Luke xix, 26.)

THE CAUSE OF THIS SIN

IV. The efficient cause of this sin is two fold. The one immediate and near. The other remote and mediate. (1.) The former is Man himself, who, of his own free will and without any necessity either internal or external, (Gen. iii, 6,) transgressed the law which had been proposed to him, (Rom. v, 19,) which had been sanctioned by a threatening and a promise, (Gen. ii, 16, 17,) and which it was possible for him to have observed (ii, 9; iii, 23, 24.) (2.) The remote and mediate efficient cause is the Devil, who, envying the Divine glory and the salvation of mankind, solicited man to a transgression of that law. (John viii, 44.) The instrumental cause is the Serpent, whose tongue Satan abused, for proposing to man these arguments which he considered suitable to persuade him. (Gen. iii, 1; 2 Cor. xi, 3.) It is not improbable, that the grand deceiver made a conjecture from his own case; as he might himself have been enticed to the commission of sin by the same arguments. (Gen. iii, 4, 5.)

V. Those arguments which may be called "both the inwardly moving" and "the outwardly-working causes," were two. (1.) The one, directly persuading, was deduced from a view of the advantage which man would obtain from it, that is, a likeness to God. (Gen. iii, 5, 6.) (2.) The other was a removing argument, one of dissuasion, taken from God's threatening; lest the fear of punishment, prevailing over the desire of a similitude to God, should hinder man from eating. (iii, 4.) Though the first of these two arguments occupies the first station, with regard to order, in the proposition; yet, we think, it obtained the last place with regard to efficiency. To these arguments may be added two qualities imparted by the Creator to the fruit of the tree, calculated blandly to affect and allure the senses of a human being; these qualities are intimated in the words, "that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes." (iii, 6.) But there is this difference between the two principal arguments and these qualities. The former were proposed by the Devil to persuade to the commission of sin, as such; while the two qualities implanted by God were proposed only for the purpose of persuading [the woman] to eat, if that could have been done without sinning.

VI. The inwardly-moving causes, but which became such by accident, were two. (1.) Such an affection, or desire, for a likeness to God, as had been implanted in man by God himself; but it was to be exercised in a

certain order and method. For the gracious image and likeness of God, according to which man was created, tended towards his glorious image and likeness. (2 Cor. iii, 18.) (2.) A natural affection for the fruit which was good in its taste, pleasant in its aspect, and well adapted for preserving and recruiting animal life.

VII. But as it was the duty of man to resist the efficacy of all and each of these several causes, so was it likewise in power; for he had been "created after the image of God," and therefore, in "the knowledge of God," (Gen. i, 27; Col. iii, 10,) and endued with righteousness and true holiness. (Ephes. iv, 24.) This resistance might have been effected by his repelling and rejecting the causes which operated outwardly, and by reducing into order and subjecting to the Law and to the Spirit of God those which, impelled inwardly. If he had acted thus, the temptation, out of which he would have departed victorious, would not have been imputed to him as an offense against the violated law. (Gen. iii, 7-12.)

VIII. But the guilt of this sin can by no means be transferred to God, either as an efficient or as a deficient cause. (1.) Not as an efficient cause. For He neither perpetrated this crime through man, nor employed against man any action, either internal or external, by which he might incite him to sin. (Psalm v, 5; James i, 13.) (2.) Not as a deficient cause. For He neither denied nor withdrew any thing that was necessary for avoiding this sin and fulfilling the law; but He had endowed Him sufficiently with all things requisite for that purpose, and preserved him after he was thus endued.

IX. But the Divine permission intervened; not as having permitted that act to man's legitimate right and power, that he might commit it without sin, for such a permission as this is contrary to legislation; (Gen. ii, 17;) but as having permitted it to the free will and capability of man. This Divine permission is not the denial or the withdrawing of the grace necessary and sufficient for fulfilling the law; (Isa. v, 4;) for if a permission of this kind were joined to legislation, it would ascribe the efficiency of sin to God. But it is the suspension of some efficiency, which is possible to God both according to right and to capability, and which, if exerted, would prevent sin in its actual commission. This is commonly called "an efficacious hindrance." But God was not bound to employ this impediment, when He had already laid down those hindrances to sin which might and ought to have withheld and deterred man from sinning, and which consisted in the communication of his own image, in the appointment of his law, in the threat of punishments, and in the promise of rewards.

X. Though the cause of this permission may be reckoned in the number of those things which, such is the will of God, are hidden from us, (Deut. xxix, 29) yet, while with modesty and reverence we inspect the acts of God, it appears to us that a two-fold cause may be maintained, the one a priori, the other a posteriori. (1.) We will enunciate the former in the words of Tertullian. "If God had once allowed to man the free exercise of his own will and had duly granted this permission, He undoubtedly had permitted the enjoyment of these things through the very authority of the institution. But they were to be enjoyed as in Him, and according to Him; that is, according to God, that is, for good. For who will permit any thing against himself? But as in man [they were to be enjoyed] according to the motions of his liberty." (2.) The cause a posteriori shall be given in the words of St. Augustine. "A good being would not suffer evil to be done, unless He was likewise Omnipotent, and capable of bringing good out of that evil."

XI. The material cause of this sin is the tasting of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which is an act in its own nature indifferent, and easily avoidable by man in the midst of such abundant plenty of good and various fruits. From this shine forth the admirable benignity and kindness of God; whose will it was to have experience of the obedience of his creature, in an act which that creature could

with the utmost facility omit, without injury to his nature, and even without any detriment to his pleasure. This seems to have been intimated by God himself when he propounded the precept in this manner. "Of every tree of the garden thou shalt freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat." (Gen. ii, 16, 17.)

XII. But the form of this sin is anomia "the transgression of the law," (1 John iii, 4,) which belongs to this act in reference to its having been forbidden by the law. And because this relation adhered to the act from the time when God circumscribed it by a law, the effect of it was that the act ought to be omitted. (Dan. iii, 18.) For the moral evil, which adhered to it through the prohibition of God, was greater, than the natural good which was in the act by nature. There was also in man the image of God, according to which he ought to have been more abhorrent of that act because sin adhered to it, than to be inclined by a natural affection to the act itself, because some good was joined with it.

XIII. No end can be assigned to this sin. For evil, of itself, has not an end, since an end has always reference to a good. But the acts of the end were, that man might obtain a likeness to God in the knowledge of good and evil, and that he might satisfy his senses of taste and seeing. (Gen. iii, 5, 6.) But he did not suppose, that he would gain this similitude by sin as such, but by an act as it was a natural one. It had the boundary which the Divine determination placed round about it, and which was two-fold. The one, agreeing with the nature of sin, according to the severity of God. The other, transcending sin, nay, contravening it, according to the grace and mercy of God. (Rom. ix, 22, 23.)

THE HEINOUSNESS OF THIS SIN

XIV. From the particulars already discussed, some judgment may be formed of the heinousness of this sin, which seems principally to consist of these four things. (1) That it is the transgression of a law that is not peculiar [to one person, or only to a few,] but of a law which universally bears witness to the obligation of man towards God, and which is a test of his obedience. A contempt of this law has in it a renunciation of the covenant into which God has entered with man, and of the obedience which from that covenant is due to God. (Gen. xvii, 14.) (2.) That man perpetrated this crime, after he had been placed in a state of innocence and adorned by God with such excellent endowments as those of "the knowledge of God," and "righteousness and true holiness." (Gen. i, 26, 27; Col. iii, 10; Ephes. iv, 24.) (3.) That when so many facilities existed for not sinning, especially in the act itself, yet man did not abstain from this sin. (Gen. ii, 16, 17,) (4.) That he committed this sin in a place that was sanctified as a type of the celestial Paradise. (ii, 15, 16; iii, 6, 23; Rev. ii, 7.) There are some other things which may aggravate this sin; but since it has them in common with most other offenses, we shall not at present enter into a discussion of them.

THE EFFECTS OF THIS SIN

XV. The proper and immediate effect of this sin was the offending of the Deity. For since the form of sin is "the transgression of the law," (1 John iii, 4,) it primarily and immediately strikes against the legislator himself, (Gen. iii, 11,) and this with the offending of one whose express will it was that his law should not be offended. From this violation of his law, God conceives just displeasure, which is the second effect of sin. (iii, 16-19, 23, 24.) But to anger succeeds infliction of punishment, which was in this instance two-fold. (1.) A liability to two deaths. (ii, 17; Rom. vi, 23.) (2.) The withdrawing of that primitive righteousness and holiness, which, because they are the effects of the Holy Spirit dwelling in man, ought not to have remained in him after he had fallen from the favour of God, and had incurred the Divine displeasure. (Luke xix, 26.) For this Spirit is a seal of God's favour and good will. (Rom. viii, 14, 15; 1 Cor. ii, 12.)

XVI. The whole of this sin, however, is not peculiar to our first parents, but is common to the entire race and to all their posterity, who, at the time when this sin was committed, were in their loins, and who have since descended from them by the natural mode of propagation, according to the primitive benediction. For in Adam "all have sinned." (Rom. v, 12.) Wherefore, whatever punishment was brought down upon our first parents, has likewise pervaded and yet pursues all their posterity. So that all men "are by nature the children of wrath," (Ephes. ii, 3,) obnoxious to condemnation, and to temporal as well as to eternal death; they are also devoid of that original righteousness and holiness. (Rom. v, 12, 18, 19.) With these evils they would remain oppressed forever, unless they were liberated by Christ Jesus; to whom be glory forever.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-arminius/the-first-sin-of-the-first-man/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net