

## BASIC DOCTRINE – THE FUNDAMENTALS

### PART 6: SIN

The history of humanity records an almost unbroken record of conflict, war, injustice, cruelty, and murder. Why is there so much evil and death in the world, and where did it all come from? When God first created man He put him and his wife in a perfect paradise so that they could enjoy fellowship with God and with one another forever. But why do we see so little evidence of this in reality?

Over the centuries many people have tried to give a credible response to cruelties and evil of this life. Many theories from political to psychological have been offered with varying success, but none offer a completely satisfying solution.

In the fifth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, Paul offers a simple but profound reply to our greatest conundrum when he wrote: *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned — ... by the one man's offense death reigned through the one,... Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation,” (Rom 5:12-18)*

In other words, something occurred in the beginning that brought evil into the world; an evil which would pit man against his fellow man, spouse against

spouse, man against his environment and even against God Himself. And that something is sin.

The Greek word Paul uses for sin in Romans 6:12 is '*hamartia*' which means a falling away from or missing the right path. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words defines it as "a missing of the mark". But the question arises, what "path" or "mark" has man missed or fallen away from?

Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary helps us here by defining sin as:

"Lawlessness (1 John 3:4) or transgression of God's will, either by omitting to do what God's law requires or by doing what it forbids. The transgression can occur in thought (1 John 3:15), word (Matt 5:22), or deed (Rom 1:32)". In other words, what we have missed or fallen away from is the righteous requirements of God's law by an act of willful disobedience.

One of the implications of being created in God's image and likeness implies that we are moral beings with the capacity to make moral choices. And it was this moral choice that confronted Adam and Eve in the garden in the form of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis says that *"The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life*

*was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil... And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."*

*(Gen 2:8-17)*

The tree of life represented continuing obedience, trust and reliance on God which would insure both eternal life and blessing, and the other, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolized disobedience and reliance on one's self will to determine what was right and wrong which would lead to death both spiritually and physically. God gave them the choice of either continuing to rely on Him for direction in their life or themselves instead.

Under the instigation and deception of Satan, the man and woman chose to disregard and disobey God's command and partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The effects of their choice was both immediate and horrific and has haunted humanity ever since with a continuous history of bloodshed and misery.

First and foremost the first couple was now under the condemnation and penalty of eternal judgment. This penalty would insure man's sentence of guilt and upon death the confinement into eternal hell. One may think that such a small sin does not warrant such an extreme punishment. In other words, the punishment does

not seem to fit the crime. But sin, no matter the degree of its nature, is in the final analysis, treason against the command of the holy God who created them.

Adam and Eve's disobedience would also separate them from the fellowship of God. The unique closeness the first couple enjoyed in the garden with God would now be exchanged for shame, fear and guilt, trying to cover themselves and hiding from the presence of God.

*And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. (Gen 3:6-8)*

Adam and Eve also experienced separation from the environment that God had endowed them with. Their dominion over the earth and harmony with nature was lost. They were expelled from the garden, and earth put under a curse to pit itself against their fight for survival.

*Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread (Gen 3:18-19)*

The man and woman were now alienated from the loving relationship they once enjoyed with each other. Instead of a close bonding they now blamed each other for what had happened.

And humankind from this point on would also find itself under the influence of Satan, which is why Paul tells the Ephesians that before being saved we *“once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. (Eph 2:2-3)*

As a cost of what they had done, Adam and Eve found themselves not only being manipulated by the Devil but separated from God, separated from their environment, separated from the loving relationship with each other, and most tragically separated from eternal life under the curse sin and death.

But not only would the experience of pain and anguish of the first couple be theirs alone, but now all of their progeny would suffer the consequences of sin. All of Adam’s and Eve’s children and their succeeding generations would appropriate Adam’s moral corruption and penalty of sin. In theology this is known as original sin. In other words, his fall became our fall, his sin our sin.

*“Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation,” (Rom. 5:18).*

That is, like our first parents, the fall has rendered our nature; that is, our inward moral intellect and will, into a state of corruption. To be in corruption means that that all of our being has been touched by the power of sin and death and, so, we

are unable to fulfill completely what we know to be right. It is important to understand that corruption does not mean that our personality and will are completely destroyed or utterly debase. Corruption simply means that our will, reason and moral ability have been “infected” with rebellion and, though not completely destroyed, has in essence been rendered dead so that we are unable to meet God’s holy requirements. In other words the condition that our first parents found themselves

*For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

*(Gal 5:17)*

For the word of God says: *“There is none righteous, no, not one;” (Rom 3:10)* and again: *“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;” (Rom 3:23).*

All of man’s actions, even those of with the best of intentions, now fall short of what God requires because all of man has been tainted with rebellion and sin.

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned (Rom 5:12)*

We are in a desperate and hopeless situation. Unable to help or rescue ourselves and needing something beyond ourselves we cry out as Paul did when

he wrote: *O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom 7:24)*

But then he added: *I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rom 7:25)*

God has an answer.