

Essentials of Christianity (pt 21)
7/25/2010

Good morning to you all! I'm so looking forward to the material we'll be covering over the next couple of weeks. We all have a favorite subjects from the Bible we like: **these are some of mine.**

I pray that you all will be enriched by the Lord as we go deeper in our study of the knowledge of Him.

Last week launched into a new topic; a study in the field of **harmartiology: the doctrine of sin** . We began this study by going back to the source: the genesis of man's sin: the Garden of Eden: where man fell from the pristine condition in which God created him.

As I said, the garden scene is the prototype scenario of how sin is expressed throughout the Bible and all of world history.

Lust of the eyes, flesh, pride of life.

Adams and Eve's departure from God's command was ultimately an act of defiance and a move to be independent of God.

Last week we looked at the *results of their sin.*

Judgment on the serpent
Judgment on Satan
Judgment on the woman
Judgment on the man
Judgment on the human race

Judgment on creation

We looked at various definitions of sins.

Sin is a transgression of the law of God.
Sin is a failure to conform to the standard of God.
Sin is a principle within man.
Sin is rebellion against God.
Sin is wrongful acts toward God and man.

As I was considering the direction we should go next, the thought crossed my mind to blaze through the rest of this because of how familiar this subject is among Christians.

I mean who doesn't know that we're a bunch of sinners saved by grace?

But the longer I pondered the subject the more apparent it became to me that the battle we face to **hold on to** a biblical view of sin is becoming more and more difficult.

So there are other areas we need to address before we move on to the next subject.

I remember many years ago when I was a boy, one of the methods we used for dealing with insubordinate dogs and cats was to rub their noses in their mess. Remember that?

I don't imagine that's the recommended method these days because of how damaging it could be for a pet's psyche.

As repulsive as that method may be to us now, there's something very telling about this method, insofar as we are able to use it to make the point: that we sometimes need to have our noses

rubbed into the stench of what's really inside us (forgive me if you think I'm carrying the metaphor too far).

The Bible does not have any hang up's about telling us how wretched we can be. **BUT WE DO, AND OUR CULTURE DOES.** And their views have a tendency to rub off on us in one way or another.

Many of us here today are probably aware of the fact that people's view of sin is largely affected by their culture **rather than the Bible.**

Let me give you three examples of this:

Some of you may be familiar with **Liberation Theology** (Martin Luther King)

Liberation Theology sees sin in terms of social oppression, exploitation and acquiescence to injustice. It is also seen as greed for financial gain at the expense of the poor.

Just as sin is that which dehumanizes and oppresses people, so salvation is that which liberates them for meaningful and creative lives.

For them this translates into equal employment benefits and a variety of other human rights. Salvation for them is manifest in this way.

So the common ground we have in religion is whether we're fighting together to stamp out social evils.

Closely related is **Feminist Theology**

Feminist Theology sees the essence of sin in passivity to evil, in timidity and cowardice in the face of intimidation. The need for woman

who have been subjugated by a patriarchal culture (sic) is for self assertion, and their sin lies in resignation to the social system that relegates them to an inferior status.

Billie and Bobby

(my notes) They would say that the Bible's role for women is oppressive)

The understanding of sin has also undergone a profound transformation in popular culture religion, where psychology is more significant than theology. Under the influence of "new thought," sin is reinterpreted as negative thinking or defeatism.

The way to overcome it is to think more positively about yourself. And then (maybe) get into some group therapy.¹

These "systems" and many others like them, have succeeded in taking people's eyes off the ball (so to speak), and have distorted people's view of: **not just sin, BUT REALITY.**

A theologian named Millard Erickson has, in his tome--
Christian Theology, some very insightful comments about this:

One's understanding of sin is important because it has a marked effect upon one's view of the nature of ministry and the style in which one will conduct it. If one assumes that man is basically good and inclined to do what God desires and intends for him, the message and thrust of ministry will be positive and affirmative, encouraging persons to do their best. The supposition here is that in a sense most people already are basically Christian, and simply need to continue in their present direction. If, on the other hand, persons are viewed as radically sinful, then the message will be that they should repent and be born again. In the former case, appeals to fairness, kindness, and generosity will be

¹ Walter A Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Baker Books, 1984).

thought to be sufficient; in the later case, anyone who has not been converted will be regarded as basically selfish and even dishonest.

Our approach to the problems of society will also be governed by our view of sin. On the other hand, if we feel that man is basically good or, at worst, morally neutral, we will view the problems of society as stemming from man unwholesome environment. Alter the environment, and changes in individual humans and their behavior will follow. If, on the other hand, the problems of society are rooted in the radically perverted mind and will of human beings, then the nature of those individuals will need to be altered, or they will continue to infect the whole.

Our doctrine of salvation will be strongly influenced by our understanding of sin. For if man is basically good and his intellectual and moral capabilities are essentially intact, then whatever problems he encounters with respect to his standing before God will be relatively minor. Any difficulty he experiences may be merely a matter of ignorance, lack of knowledge as to what he ought to do or how to do it. In that event, education will solve the problem; a good model or example may be all that is needed. On the other hand, if man is corrupt and rebellious, and thus either unwilling or unable to do what he sees is right, a more radical cure will be needed. There will have to be actual transformation of the person. Thus, the more radical our conception of sin, the more supernatural the salvation we will deem needed.²

So, with all the different view points there are regarding the nature of man's sinfulness, we must have a clear understanding on the Bible's teaching on SIN.

Years ago a friend of mine had a t-shirt with this on it:

If I'm okay...

² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology Unabridged (1 Vol. Edition)* (Baker Book House, 1996).

So here are some passages to place in our arsenal:

^{NAU} Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

^{NAU} Psalm 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

^{NAU} Psalm 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; These who speak lies go astray from birth.

Turn to

^{NAU} Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

We trace this inner corruption back to Adam. The Bible teaches that there is an application of Adam's sin to us. There are two ways in which Adam's sin is applied to us. This is an essential teaching of the Christian faith.

1. Inherited Guilt: We Are Counted Guilty Because of Adam's Sin.

2. Inherited Corruption: We Have a Sinful Nature Because of Adam's Sin.

Turn to Romans 5:12-21: read

^{NAU} Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

¹³ *for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law.*

¹⁴ *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.*

¹⁵ *But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.*

¹⁶ *The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.*

¹⁷ *For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

¹⁸ *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.*

¹⁹ *For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

²⁰ *The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,*

²¹ *so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

So let's go through this systematically.

1. Inherited Guilt: We Are Counted Guilty Because of Adam's Sin.

Paul explains the effects of Adam's sin in Rom 5:12. The context shows that Paul is not talking about actual sins that people commit every day of their lives, for the entire paragraph (Rom 5:12-21) is taken up with the comparison between Adam and Christ. And when Paul says, "so death spread to all men because all men sinned," he is saying that through the sin of Adam "all men sinned."

Here Paul says explicitly that through the trespass of one man "many were made sinners." When Adam sinned, God thought of all who would descend from Adam as sinners. Though we did not yet exist, God, looking into the future and knowing that we would exist, began thinking of us as those who were guilty like Adam. This is also consistent with Paul's statement that "while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Of course, some of us did not even exist when Christ died. But God nevertheless regarded us as sinners in need of salvation.

The conclusion to be drawn from these verses is that all members of the human race were represented by Adam in the time of testing in the Garden of Eden. As our representative, Adam sinned, and God counted us guilty as well as Adam. God rightly imputed Adam's guilt to us.

When we first confront the idea that we have been counted guilty because of Adam's sin, our tendency is to protest because it seems unfair. We did not actually decide to sin, did we? Then how can we be counted guilty? Is it just for God to act this way?

The most persuasive answer to the objection is to point out that if we think it is unfair for us to be represented by Adam, then we should also think it is unfair for us to be represented by Christ and to have his righteousness imputed to us by God. For the procedure that God used was just the same, and that is exactly Paul's point in Rom 5:12-21: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19).

Adam, our first representative sinned—and God counted us guilty. But Christ, the representative of all who believe in him, obeyed God

perfectly—and God counted us righteous. That is simply the way in which God set up the human race to work. God regards the human race as an organic whole, a unity, represented by Adam as its head. And God also thinks of the new race of Christians, those who are redeemed by Christ, as an organic whole, a unity represented by Christ as head of his people.

2. Inherited Corruption: We Have a Sinful Nature Because of Adam's Sin.

In addition to the legal guilt that God imputes to us because of Adam's sin, we also inherit a sinful nature because of Adam's sin. This inherited sinful nature is sometimes simply called "original sin."

Therefore, our nature includes a disposition to sin so that Paul can affirm that before we were Christians "we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph 2:3). Anyone who has raised children can give experiential testimony to the fact that we are all born with a tendency to sin. Children do not have to be taught how to do wrong; they discover that by themselves. What we have to do as parents is to teach them how to do right, to "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4).

This inherited tendency to sin does not mean that human beings are all as bad as they could be. The constraints of civil law, the expectations of family and society, and the conviction of human conscience (Rom 2:14-15) all provide restraining influences on the sinful tendencies in our hearts. Therefore, by God's "common grace" (that is, by his undeserved favor that is given to all human beings), people have been able to do much good in the areas of education, the development of civilization, scientific and technological progress, the development of beauty and skill in the arts, the development of just laws, and general acts of human benevolence and kindness to others.

In fact, the more Christian influence there is in a society in general, the more clearly the influence of "common grace" will be seen in the lives of unbelievers as well.

But in spite of the ability to do good in many senses of that word, our inherited corruption, our tendency to sin, which we received from Adam, means that as far as God is concerned we are not able to do anything that pleases him.

KJV Romans 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

KJV Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

KJV Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

KJV Romans 8:8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Turn to Romans 3:9-23

NAU Romans 3:9 What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin;

¹⁰ as it is written, "THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

¹³ "THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE, WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING," "THE POISON OF ASPES IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";

¹⁴ "WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS";

¹⁵ "THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

¹⁶ DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN."

¹⁸ "THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES."

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

²² even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The world is guilty of doing the following to the concept of sin: **marginalizing** its significance, **misunderstanding** its magnitude; **failing** to understand and **appreciate** its remedy.

It will be good for us to now turn to the remedy.

Soteriology: Doctrine Of Salvation

