

*The Effects of the Fall: Genesis 3*  
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Sunday morning, June 17, 2007

## INTRODUCTION

What is your view of human nature? What is your view of your own spiritual nature—your condition as a member of the human race? Some view humankind to be essentially good and healthy. We are born innocent, and we all have a disposition to do good and to be kind to others and to live honest and sacrificial lives. That would be a very optimistic view of human nature, and very naïve as well. Because even though there is such a thing as common grace, which restrains sin and often causes even unbelievers to lead peaceful and helpful and sometimes even heroic and sacrificial lives, that doesn't mean those things arise from our nature. Any good thing that is done by a believer or an unbeliever, is purely a result of God's grace, and it is contrary to our human nature. So we are not essentially good. We are not spiritually healthy.

Maybe your view of human nature is that we are sick. We are ill. There is clearly a problem. We're not well. But there is hope for a solution if the right medicine can be found, the right cure, the right therapy. There are problems, but by hard work and ingenuity we can fix those problems. We can remedy the illness.

When we look to the Bible, though, the truth is that we are not well, and we are not merely sick. It is much worse than that. We are dead! That's the predicament of the human race. We are "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). We are spiritually dead. That's our spiritual condition. Not health. Not even severe sickness. But death! The reality of human nature is that we are not spiritually healthy. We cannot run or jump or walk. In fact, it's not even the case that we're lying on a sickbed in desperate need of good medicine. The truth of the matter is that we are in the tomb. Cold and lifeless. That's what the Bible says about our spiritual condition. That's exactly what God said would happen if Adam disobeyed, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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" (Genesis 2:16-17).

What I want to talk about this morning is the spiritual death that is a result of the Fall. We've been looking at Genesis 3 for a few weeks now, and I want to conclude our study of Genesis 3 by pointing out the connections between the Fall and us. What does Adam's sin have to do with us in 2007? When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and violated God's clear command to them, they died spiritually. And as a result the entire human race fell into sin. As a result of their sin, we are all spiritually dead. We have inherited Adam's sinful nature. We have inherited his guilt and his corruption.

### **Inherited Guilt**

I want to begin with inherited guilt. When we think of inheriting something, we usually think of inheriting something good, like money or a house or heirlooms. But in the case of our relationship to Adam we have inherited two very bad things, and the first is inherited guilt.

In Romans 5 Paul writes about the relationship between Adam and his descendants. Adam is the father of the human race. He is our head in that sense, our representative. And because we are his descendants we have inherited his sin, and the guilt of his sin. Look at Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world

through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” Now this is kind of a strange verse. The first half of it is pretty easy to understand. Sin came into the world through one man, that is, Adam. Even though Eve ate first and gave the fruit to him, Adam is the one who is held primarily responsible. He was the head in the relationship, and he was the head of the human race. So sin came into the world through this one man, our forefather Adam. Then the next phrase says, “and death through sin.” In other words, the result of that sin was death. Sin came into the world through Adam, and death came into the world through that sin. But the last phrase of verse 12 is more difficult: “and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” What does it mean that “all sinned.” Certainly we all do commit sin, both in thought and deed. But that doesn’t seem to be the focus of what Paul is talking about here. He’s not talking about specific personal sins in this context. He’s talking about Adam’s sin.

Look in verse 15, “For if many died through one man’s trespass, . . .” And in verse 16, “For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation . . .” Verse 17, “If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, . . .” Verse 18, “Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, . . .” And verse 19, “For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, . . .” All of these point to the fact that Paul is not talking about our personal sins that we commit, but he’s talking about the guilt that we have because we are descendants of Adam. The focus is on the one sin of the one man, Adam. What verse 12 is saying is that “death spread to all men because all sinned,” meaning we all sinned in Adam. When Adam sinned, we sinned. When Adam ate of that forbidden fruit, it’s as if you and I ate of it as well.

This is the way God set it up. Adam served as the head of the human race, and when he sinned, he sinned on behalf of the entire human race. Therefore, even before we commit any sins of our own, we are already guilty because we are Adam’s descendants. We have inherited his guilt.

To speak of it another way, Adam’s guilt has been imputed to us. It has been credited to our account. His sin is considered to be ours. God looks at us as sons and daughters of Adam, and He sees us clothed in Adam’s sin and guilt.

This is devastating. We’re not born innocent. We’re born guilty. Before we even do anything wrong, before we tell a lie, or gossip or lust or cheat or steal, before we intentionally transgress the law, before we commit a sin, we are already condemned as sinners, simply because we are part of Adam’s progeny.

Many will object to this idea of inherited guilt, and will say that it is not just for God to count us guilty for Adam’s offense. Adam is guilty for what he did, but I shouldn’t be counted guilty for what he did. God should hold each of us accountable for our own sins. How do we respond to this objection? First of all, we should remember that we ARE guilty of plenty of sins that we’ve committed ourselves. It’s not as though we’re innocent in ourselves, and yet we’re counted guilty because of our relationship to Adam. We are guilty as descendents of Adam, but we’re also guilty because we have actually sinned.

A second thing to ponder is the question: What if you had been in Adam’s place? What would have happened if you were Adam in the garden? Or me? Or any other mere mortal? I think it’s safe to say that the same thing would have happened. We can’t point our finger at Adam as if we would have done better. Adam acted on our behalf. He did what any of us would have done.

Our individualism may make it additionally difficult for us to accept the justice of this doctrine, but this is reality. In this respect God views humanity as a unified whole, and Adam was designated as our forefather and representative. When Adam sinned, we sinned, and as his descendants we inherit the guilt of that sin. In a few moments we'll also see the glorious counterpart to this truth, that although we are condemned because of Adam's sin, we are also justified because of Christ's righteousness.

### **Inherited Corruption**

But first I want to talk about the other aspect of this sin that we inherited from Adam. We not only inherited guilt. We also inherited his corruption. We're not only counted guilty because of Adam's sin, we also receive a sinful nature, a corrupted nature, because of his sin. In Psalm 51 David cries out to the Lord concerning his own sin: "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

That last verse makes a profound statement about our sinful nature. And David is not talking about his mom's sin there. The whole passage is about his own sin, and what he's saying in verse 5 is that he was a sinner even from conception. Even before he was born, while he was still in the womb, he was already sinful. So the sinful nature is present within each of us even from the time we were in the womb. As I already said, we are not born innocent. We're born sinners. That's our nature from the very beginning of our lives. We have a sinful nature, and that nature produces sinful actions and attitudes.

We all understand this to some extent. Anyone here who is a child, or remembers being a child, or has children, we all know that nobody needs to teach us how to sin. You don't have to sit down with your 4 year old, or 3 year old, or 2 year old, and say, "If you ever want to make one of your friends feel really bad, here are a few things you could try . . ." Or, "If you ever feel like disobeying Mom and Dad, here's a list of ways you could do that . . ." That kind of instruction is not needed, because it's our nature to sin. It's part of who we are as human beings affected by the Fall. This is the corrupt nature we inherited from Adam.

It's this sinful nature that produces the specific acts of sin in our lives. It's not the other way around. We don't become sinners because we commit sins.

We're not sinners because we sin. It's not as though we're born innocent and then become sinners when we commit a sin. Rather, the reason we sin is because we are sinners. We're not sinners because we sin, we sin because we ARE sinners. We are sinners from the very beginning of our lives. And because we are sinners, we inevitably sin. I AM a sinner. That's part of who I am in this fallen world. I'm evil and wicked inside. And it's not just because I do evil and wicked things, I AM evil. I AM sinful.

There's another point I want to make about our sinful nature, and it's from Romans 8:5-8. Paul writes, "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

What I want you to notice from this passage is how deeply the sinful nature affects us. The theological term for this is Total Depravity. Because of the sinful nature we inherit from Adam, we are totally depraved, we are completely corrupt, meaning that every part of who we are is corrupted by sin. Our intellects, our desires, our emotions, our physical bodies, and our wills. Everything is affected by the Fall. Every part of who we are as human beings is corrupted by the sinful nature. That's what we mean when we talk about TOTAL Depravity.

Now, Total Depravity does NOT mean that we are all as bad as we could be. This is where common grace comes in. God bestows common grace upon believers and unbelievers alike. It is grace that restrains sin and causes even unbelievers to do helpful and noble things for the benefit of society. So Total Depravity does not mean that we are as bad as we could be.

But it does mean, as this passage states in verse 7, that "the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot." Have you ever noticed that little phrase at the end of verse 7? "indeed, it cannot." This means that the power and imprisonment of sin is so complete that the unbeliever not only refuses to submit to God's law, but he is not even able to do so. In our sin, we cannot submit to God's law. There is a moral inability that keeps us in bondage to sin and keeps us from submitting our lives to God. That's how drastically the sinful nature affects the human will. We can't just decide whether or not to submit to God. The will is in bondage to sinful desires, UNTIL God pours out His sovereign grace in our lives to overcome those sinful desires; to overcome that rebellion and imprisonment. And when God takes out the heart of stone and gives us a heart of flesh, when He regenerates us, when He causes us to be born again, when He raises us from the dead spiritually, then we can submit to God's law. And we WILL submit to God's law. Then we will live according to the Spirit rather than living according to the flesh.

### **Adam and Christ**

Well, let's go back to Romans 5 now and look at the relationship between Adam and Christ. We saw the first half of the story, that the descendants of Adam are guilty and corrupt because of the family ties. But the other half of the story is that there is another family. There is another humanity, and it's head is Christ.

At the end of verse 14 it says that Adam "was a type of the one who was to come." That means Adam was a type of Christ. He was a foreshadowing of Christ. He was similar to Christ in some very important ways. He was a type of Christ in this respect: he was the head of humanity, and he acted on behalf of humanity. In his case, by sinning. Jesus Christ is the head of a new humanity. A new family. And Jesus lived, and died, and rose again, on behalf of this new humanity. Throughout this passage, Paul contrasts the head of humanity and the head of the new humanity. Adam is the head of all humanity, and due to Adam's sin all humanity is guilty and corrupt. Christ is the head of a new humanity, whom He has redeemed out of sin.

Look at all the comparisons and contrasts in these verses. On the one hand, Adam, the one man, sinned. And his trespass brought condemnation and death. It brought guilt and corruption to his descendants. It "led to condemnation for all men," (v. 18), and "the many were made sinners," (v. 19). On the other hand, Jesus Christ, the one man (or we could say, the second Adam), did NOT sin. He lived a righteous life. And the free gift of God's grace abounds to those who are His, those who are in Christ. Just

as Adam's sin led to condemnation to all who are in Adam, Christ's righteousness leads to justification for all who are in Christ. That's what verse 18 is saying. It's not teaching universalism, that everyone will be justified, saved. This is one of those places where "all" does not mean "all without exception." It doesn't mean every single person in the world. Paul is being very intentional in making these parallel statements to contrast Adam and Christ, and the term "all men," which appears twice in this verse, first refers to all men who are in Adam, and in the second instance refers to all men who are in Christ.

So which family are you part of? We're all born into the family of our forefather Adam. His guilt is on us. His corrupt nature is within us. And from the very beginning of our lives, we bear his resemblance. We live in bondage to the sinful nature and the sinful desires it produces. That is our predicament as children of Adam. For all who remain in Adam, there is condemnation and death. But there is a second Adam, One who succeeded where Adam failed, One who never sinned, never disobeyed God. And for all who are in Him, there is justification and life.

In order to be in Christ, one must repent of sin and believe in Christ. One has to acknowledge that, yes, I am a sinner. I am guilty and corrupt to the core of my being. And I am in desperate need of a Savior, because I deserve God's punishment. Our only hope of escaping God's punishment and instead receiving God's reward, is if we are in Christ.

Are you in Adam or in Christ this morning? If you're in Adam, you probably hardly recognize your sin. You probably think you're a very good and moral person. What you need to see is your guilt and corruption. There is nothing good in you. There is only evil in you. And therefore the only way you can stand before God is if you are in Christ. You must be clothed in His righteousness.

The application that we should all take from this is the fact that we are more sinful than we think we are. It's true, brothers and sisters. Your sinfulness is much worse than you think! My sinfulness is much worse than I think. And the closer we get to God, the more clearly we will see our own sinfulness. It's a very interesting thing in the Christian life, that we do grow in holiness, and as we grow in holiness we also grow in our awareness of our own sin. And our awareness of sin should continually send fleeing to Christ, because He is our righteousness.

James Montgomery Boice, who was a well-known pastor in Philadelphia, told the story of counseling a young man who was distraught because of his sin. It was a unique situation, because the man was actually burdened by his own sin. And Boice used an illustration that he had heard from Donald Grey Barnhouse. He told of a man who was wearing his finest clothing and on his way to social gathering one evening. But as he was walking along, a car sped by and splashed through a mud puddle on the side of the road. The man was drenched, although in the dark of the evening he didn't think there had been much damage. So he continued on his way. As he approached a streetlight, he could see that there were some stains on his clothes, but he decided to continue. Finally he found himself standing directly beneath the streetlight, and he could see that the damage was much worse than he had imagined. And he said, "There's no way I can go to the party in these clothes. I must return home and change into clean clothes." And as James Boice shared this illustration with the troubled young man, the man said, "But I don't have any clean clothes."

That is precisely the point. I don't have any clean clothes. All of my clothing is in much worse shape than I can even imagine. And that's why I must look to another to clothe me. Jesus Christ must clothe me in His perfect robe of righteousness, and I will be clean.