

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SIN GENESIS 3:1-10

INTRODUCTION:

The sin of Adam is called the "original" sin. Mark Twain joked about it when he said, "I do not see anything so original about it. I could have done it myself." Usually the term "original" sin is used in the context of defining how Adam's sin has affected our personal lives. I want us to use the term "original sin" in a little different context. It is also the original sin because all other sins are just a copy of it. You can learn everything you need to know about sin by studying the sin of Adam and Eve.

There are some things different about our sins however. The difference does not lie in the character of the sin, but rather in the context of the sin. Adam and Eve sinned in the midst of a perfect environment. They sinned even though they themselves to that point had been completely innocent. You and I do not live in a perfect environment, but rather we live in a fallen world. Neither are we innocent. The Psalmist revealed that he understood himself to have been "conceived in sin." In another place he indicated that he came forth from his mother's womb speaking lies. So, our sins are never the same in their context as that of Adam's sin. However, they are the same in character and in consequences.

As we look at this simple piece of human history, we can learn so much about ourselves and our world. We can surely learn the basics about human sin and the reason that sin should be avoided

at all costs!

I. YOU LEARN THAT YOUR HUMANITY MAKES SIN A POSSIBILITY.

This is a lesson to be learned from the fall of Adam and Eve. Their humanity made sin a distinct possibility. The Creator knew that sin was a possibility when He made the man and the woman. Since we share their humanity, sin is a distinct possibility in our lives.

1. You were created with freedom.

When God made the man and the woman and placed them in the Garden of Eden, he granted to them the special gift of freedom. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil that stood in the midst of the garden symbolized that freedom. God would not have the man and woman love and serve Him because they had no other choice. If they were to love and serve Him, it must be because they desired to serve Him. They had the freedom to disobey God or to obey God. They used that freedom to commit a sin against God.

There is a debate among the theologians about how much freedom you and I have at this point. Martin Luther, the great German reformer, wrote a book on "The Bondage of the Will." In that book he contended that because we are descendants of Adam that we no longer have the freedom that Adam possessed. We come into the world with a will that is already bent in the direction of sin. We do not have the freedom to say "no" to sin and "yes" to God like Adam enjoyed it. Other theologians would contend that even though we are the participants in a fallen race that we do still have this moral freedom.

I do not pretend to be able to solve the conflict between these two points of view, however, it is evident in scripture that man is held responsible for all of his sins. The assumption of God seems to be there is not one human sin that we had to commit. Every human sin is the result of the misuse of the freedom that the Creator gave us. It is this freedom that we enjoy as human beings that makes sin a possibility.

2. You are fallible.

This is the other aspect of our humanity. As human beings we are subject to temptation. The cause of their humanity, Adam and Eve were subject to the approach and the appeal of the adversary of God. They were temptable as no other part of the created order was temptable. A part of being created in the image of God is having the degree of intelligence and the capacity to reason that makes it possible for us to consider the temptations that the evil one might bring against us. When ever you are tempted it is simply a fresh piece of evidence that you share a common humanity.

That being subject to temptation is a basic part of our humanity became evident in the life of our Lord Jesus. When He took upon Himself our humanity, he became subject to the temptations of the evil one. He had no sooner committed Himself to do the will of His Father in the public baptism at the Jordan than He was faced with the strong temptations that Satan presented to Him in the wilderness. This is a reminder to us that there is no sin in being tempted. Being tempted is rather just a basic piece of evidence that you are a human being. It is our humanity that makes sin a possibility in our lives.

II. YOU CAN KNOW THAT YOUR PERSONAL CHOICE MAKES SIN A REALITY.

A careful look at the Genesis record helps us know this basic thing about sin. Moses reports the first human sin like this: "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it."

There is distinction to be made between the action of the man and the woman. When Eve ate the forbidden fruit, according to the scriptures, she was deceived. There is no indication that Adam was deceived. He knew what he was doing and made a choice of knowledge. There is some question about why Adams ate the fruit if he was not deceived. Some have suggested that he ate the fruit because he wanted to join the woman in her sin against God. He was prepared to be a part with her of whatever consequences her sin might bring. Others have suggested that Adam did his act of sin for essentially the same reason as the woman. He acted to eat the fruit because he, too, saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye and was also desirable for gaining wisdom. I suspect that there may have been a mixture of the two in the act of Adam.

1. A choice of knowledge.

It is clear from the scriptures that we are to understand that Adam knew that he was disobeying God. He had received from God the prohibition that he was not to eat from the tree in the midst of the garden. When he ate of the tree, he knew that he was disobeying God. He also knew that

it was an act that would bring consequences.

This is an essential part of human sin. Where there is no knowledge there is no sin. The thing that makes sin sin is the knowledge. You are doing something that you know is wrong, or refusing to do something that you know is right.

When you look at the description of Eve's sin, you see the basic elements that make up human sin and the motivation for it. Moses says that it all began when the woman "saw that the fruit of the trees was good for food and pleasing to the eye." In his epistle the Apostle John indicated that the world is made up of the "lust of the flesh" - which is seeing that the fruit of the tree was good for food." In other words, sin happens when we respond to a basic desire of our humanity in an inappropriate way. John also indicated that the world is made up of "the lust of the eye." Eve saw that the fruit of the tree was "pleasing to the eye." So human sin is always a response to something that we see with our eyes and become curious about in an inappropriate way. Eve also saw that the fruit of the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom." John indicated that the world is made up also of the "pride of life." When a person sins they are choosing to act independently of God. They are choosing to be a god unto themselves. It is always a matter of choice. All human sin begins with an act of the will expressed in a choice.

2. Sin is a responsible choice.

This simple story of the original sin is a reminder to us that all sin involves a responsible choice. Regardless of why you do it, it is still a responsible choice! You may be deceived like Eve, but Eve was still responsible for her choice. You may be tempted through someone you love like

Adam but you are still responsible for your choice. Sin is always an act for which you become responsible.

It is interesting in the conversation that follows to see how God refused to allow either the man or the woman to evade their responsibility for the choice they have made. We moderns have developed a victimization syndrome in which we are reluctant to accept responsibility for any of our choices. This is a distortion of the Biblical understanding of who we are and what we have done. You sin when you make a choice to disobey or dishonor God. When you make such a choice you are responsible for such a choice. All human sin is by its very nature a knowledgeable and responsible choice.

III. YOU NEED TO KNOW THAT THE TRAGIC RESULTS OF SIN ARE UNAVOIDABLE.

The record in Genesis is so instructive at this point. God came walking in the garden in the cool of the day and found His creation, man and woman, suffering the consequences of the choice they had made. We will not have time here to explore fully the consequences that befell the man and the woman when they sinned, but we will look at some of the more obvious ones. These consequences of sin are inevitable.

1. Shame.

The first realization that came to the man and the woman after they had sinned is described like this: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realized that they were naked: so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." The record of their creation

had closed with that insightful word, "The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame."

Students of scripture have debated the significance of their becoming aware of their nakedness after their sin. Some have contended that the man and the woman were clothed in light before they sinned. Since they were walking in communion with God and had the presence of the Spirit of God within them they could have been clothed with an outward ray of light. The moment they sinned the Holy Spirit withdrew His presence from them, and they suddenly began to see themselves as naked.

Others have suggested that what actually happened in the sin was that instead of being God-conscious, they suddenly became self-conscious. They suddenly had self awareness rather than a God awareness. Which ever of these ideas is the true explanation, the bottom line is still the same--"They suddenly became filled with shame."

Because of the shame they sought to cover themselves with a garment made from fig leaves. It is noteworthy that they did not make the garment in order to hide their nakedness from God, but rather in order to hide their nakedness from each other. It is a clear sign that their relationship with each other has been tragically affected by their act of sin. Shame is a destructive thing in the relationship between the man and the woman. There has never been a marriage since that has not been affected and limited by this consequence of sin. There has never been a human relationship since time that has not been affected by this consequence of sin. We are not able to

be open with each other apart from the enablement of Jesus Christ because of the tragic consequences of sin.

2. Fear

The second thing that we learn about the man and the woman is that when they heard "the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden." When God called Adam out of His hiding by saying to him, "Where are you?" His response was, "I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

The man and the woman are suddenly afraid of God. Before their sin their relationship with God had been one of awe, trust, devotion, and love. They had enjoyed fellowship with God. Now suddenly God is someone to be avoided: someone to fear.

This is not the fear that is commended in scripture as being the beginning of wisdom. This is a cringing fear that would prompt a person to flee from the presence of God rather than an awe that would prompt one to fall before Him in worship. This is a clear sign to us that a consequence of sin is a tragic breach in the relationship between man and his creator. This consequence is inevitable. You cannot sin without having your relationship with God tragically affected. Sin always separates us from God and changes our attitude toward God.

3. The curse.

We will come back to it in our next study in the book of Genesis but I could not leave the passage without indicating that sin always puts a life under the curse. In this case it put the

whole of the creation under the curse. We will notice the implications of this next time.

IV. YOU CAN KNOW THAT THE COVERING OF SIN IS COSTLY.

Without going into any depth in exploration of the text, I cannot leave the text without calling attention that in order to cover the nakedness of the man and woman death had to be introduced into the world. This third chapter of Genesis reminds us, "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them." God did not leave the man and the woman wearing their home-made fig leaves. Instead, He Himself offered a sacrifice of an innocent animal. He skinned the animal and made a covering for the man and the woman. What a foretaste of the New Testament gospel when the Son of God dies so that our sins can be covered.

So, indeed everything that you need to know about sin is found in this chapter. The things that you discover about sin in this chapter says to your heart and to my heart that sin must be avoided at all cost. Man and woman were not created for sin but were rather created for obedience and devotion toward God. You are going to find your highest humanity fulfilled as you find the will of God and do it in your life. Every time you sin you will be a little bit less than what you were created to be. So, sin should be treated as a terrible, terrible, enemy that we must avoid always. May God help us to live in light of the truth that is found in this great chapter.