

The Fall - Consequences and Solution

A Study on God's Forgiveness

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When Eve took of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and gave to her husband, the human race fell and sin and death entered the world. As Romans 5:12 explains it: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."

There are three basic ways we can look at the effect of sin entering the world. The solution that God provides speaks to each one of these facets. First, Adam was our representative and therefore when he sinned, we were all counted guilty in him and therefore we were born sinners. We are not speaking here of our propensity to sin, but the fact that we already were guilty at conception. Adam's decision was counted as if it had been our own. Romans 5 explains this when it says that sin is not imputed when there is no law and yet the people between Adam and Moses died even though there was no law for them to violate. No sin was imputed to them and yet they died. They, and all of us, were guilty of Adam's sin.

Second, we inherit a sin nature. Our hearts are evil at the core. The Bible says that every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts are only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). Man's heart is evil from his youth (Genesis 8:21). The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). There is none righteous, none who understands, none who seeks for God. All have turned aside (Romans 3:10-18).

Third, we also commit sins either by doing what is forbidden by God or by omitting what he commands. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

So what is God's solution to these three facets of our sin problem? One of the things we usually do is focus on the confession aspect of particular sins. Confession of identified sins is important, but there are also some dangers if we don't face the entirety of the problem I outlined above. For example, at the end of our day we may list a few specific sins and confess them to God. We may even list 10-15 specific sins. We may have been upset with a store clerk, frustrated with a waitress, impatient with traffic, angry with our spouse, excessively demanding of our children, etc. We may list all of these and confess them to God with the biblical knowledge that if we confess our sins God is faithful to forgive them.

The problem comes in if we think that we have now cleared the deck of today's sins. We found fifteen sins and confessed them. We don't realize that underneath and along side these were countless more. During how many minutes of the day did we come short of loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength? During which hours of the day did we fall short of loving our neighbor as much as we love ourselves? In how many ways did we fail to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? In what ways may we have been impatient, worried, lusted, coveted, or been insensitive to someone else's needs? Is it possible to recognize all of these and list them? I don't think so.

So one possibility is that we trivialize our sinfulness by listing a few sins we can remember. We don't mean to do this, but we do. We end up thinking pretty good thoughts about ourselves, because, after all, our sin problem is manageable. On the other hand, if we do recognize the almost limitless number of ways we have sinned in any given day and the impossibility of listing them all, we may be driven to despair over our wretched lack of achievement when it comes to behaving in a godly way.

What we need to do is be prepared to deal with our sin problem on the basis of truth. So many times we face life letting our feelings and emotions lead the way. Feelings and emotions are real, but they should not be the determiner of truth. We may feel like something has been resolved when it really hasn't been and we may feel as though God hates us when he may not,

depending on our relationship with him. The truth should lead the way, with faith believing the truth and then let feelings follow along and adjust themselves to the first two.

So what is God's answer to the three-fold aspect of our sin and guilt? First we'll look at the guilt we have because we sinned in Adam. Those who are in Adam (i.e. those who have been born human) are sinners, guilty and condemned because of the decision of their head, Adam (Romans 5:18). But, those who are in Christ (i.e. those who have been born again of the Spirit of God) are saints, righteous and alive because of the actions of their head, Jesus Christ. Romans 5:19 says, "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." 1 Corinthians 15:22 says, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

Just as Adam's sin makes us a sinner, Christ's righteous obedience makes us a saint!

How much of a sinner did Adam make you by his disobedience? Then more so Christ makes you a saint by his obedience. Thus God has dealt with the first aspect of our sin problem.

What is God's solution to the perverseness and wickedness of our hearts? The question of being sinners is more related to the **sin** issue rather than the **sins** issue. First we find out in 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21 that we have been made new creatures in Christ. The old has passed away and all things have become new. We also learn that Christ became sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. Note that in this verse he doesn't say Christ took our sins upon himself. It says that he became sin. In doing so it allows us to **be** the righteousness of God in him.

Since our righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), they need to be completely replaced with a righteousness from outside of ourselves. Paul's request is that he might be found in Christ not having a righteousness of his own, but a righteousness from God (Phil 3:9). The Bible teaches us that God's righteousness is imputed, or placed on the record of those who believe God (Romans 4:5-8, 22-25). That means if we believe the record that God has given of his son, our filthy rags righteousness is replaced by the righteousness of God and credited to us as though we had been the one who actually obeyed perfectly.

We also learn in Scripture that Christ himself is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). God doesn't add to your righteousness to bring you up to the level required. Your righteousness, no matter what it is, is wiped out and replaced with Christ's righteousness. That means some good deed you did for someone today is wiped out because it was probably tainted with some amount of selfishness or pride and is replaced with Christ's perfection. In the end God is going to present us to himself as holy, blameless and above reproach in **his sight!** (Colossians 1:22)

Finally in this part of the discussion of what God has done to fix our sinful heart, we learn that God has done an amazing thing as part of his promise in the New Covenant. At the last supper, Jesus said that this cup was the New Testament in his blood. In other words he was initiating the fulfillment of the promised New Covenant. If we look back at Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Ezekiel 36:25-27 we can summarize the promises this way. He has promised to (1) remove our old stoney heart, (2) replace it with a new heart, (3) give us a new spirit, (4) give us his Holy Spirit, and (5) motivate us to follow God and his ways. This completely reverses what happened to our spirit in the fall. This is what we mean by the new birth.

But, the problem is that we have the remnants of what the Bible calls the flesh or the "old man" within us. There is a battle that needs to be fought to tame and keep in subjection those old habits and tendencies that still stay with us. But we should not think of ourselves as though we were still under the bondage of the old fallen self. God has provided all we need for a life of godliness. Old things are passed away and all things have become new.

Finally we want to look at God's solution to the sinning problem. We have looked at how God has solved our guilt in Adam and how he has changed our hearts so that we don't have that old dead, fallen nature any more. But what to do about sins we commit. That is the problem we want to look at next.

First of all we have to believe God when he says that we have forgiveness of our sins (Ephesians 1:7), and that he has forgiven all our trespasses (Col 2:13). The Psalmist reminds us that as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:12). Notice the word "from". Our sins are removed from us. Mary's baby was to be called Jesus because he would save his people from (there it is again) their sins. I think we have a huge problem believing what God is saying about our sins. I'm not speaking to the world here; I'm speaking to those who have trusted Christ as savior, those whom the Holy Spirit has regenerated through the Gospel. So I would like to look at this subject through some important teaching found in Hebrews 9-10 and then in 1 John 1. So first, Hebrews 9-10

The author of Hebrews tells us that the old sacrificial system, the Old Covenant could not make a person perfect with respect to conscience (Heb 9:9, 10:1). Now as we'll see, the implication of his teaching is that what the Old Covenant could not do, Christ and the New Covenant could and would do. Therefore I conclude that there should be cleansing with respect to the conscience through the New Covenant.

Next the author tells us that Christ obtained eternal redemption for us through his sacrifice **once for all** (Heb 9:12). That means it was sufficient and does not need to be repeated. He goes on to say in verse 14 that his blood cleanses our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Dead works are those we try to do to make ourselves acceptable to God or to win his approval. In chapter 6 of Hebrews, the author had connected this with elementary teaching. Elemental principles are those of basic religion where people try to make God happy with them through endless human effort, ceremonies, rituals and penance. Even Christians do this. When they confess their sins, people sometimes don't believe that God forgives them and so they try to do things to prove they are really, really sorry. If they can cry they will do that. They may put extra money in the offering or do extra works of penance so that God knows they really, really, really mean it. They may abstain from certain pleasures that aren't sinful in themselves, but somehow it makes them feel as though they are proving a point to God. Paul, at the end of Colossians 2 tells us that these efforts don't work in stifling our fleshly tendencies or in approving us to God. So the blood of Christ cleanses our consciences from the need to perform these sorts of deeds.

Hebrews 9:26 tells us that he came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. We need to understand that Jesus put away sin. He removed it. He even says of the people in the world, "that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). We need to remember that the whole point is for him to solve the sin question. He put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

The author goes on in Hebrews 10 to tell us that if the old system had made the worshippers perfect, two things would have happened: the sacrifices would have ceased (10:2), and the consciousness of sin would have been removed (10:2). But as it was, those sacrifices didn't stop, and instead of solving the conscience problem, they actually made it worse by reminding people day after day that they were sinners because new sacrifices were required all of the time. And so the author concludes that the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin (10:4).

But in contrast to that, the sacrifice of Christ has sanctified forever (10:10), and those who are sanctified have been perfected forever (10:14). So what the Old Covenant could not do, the New Covenant has accomplished. In fact he quotes from the New Covenant passages we studied earlier. And he summarizes with this amazing statement, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17).

I take all of this to mean that if we keep resurrecting our sins in a way that is reminiscent of the Old Covenant we are acting in disbelief of what God has promised us in Christ. He put away sins by the sacrifice of himself and separated them from us and refuses to remember them or impute them to us (Romans 4:8).

Now let's look at 1 John 1 and then we'll sum up this study. In 1 John 1:7 John says that if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ continuously cleanses us from all sin. This is a description of believers. John had earlier said in verse 3 that our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul asks what fellowship righteousness and unrighteousness can have with one another. The implication from the passage is that they cannot. But here John is saying we have fellowship with both God the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. If we are to have fellowship with God or better if God is to have fellowship with us, we can't be unrighteous. But why aren't we unrighteous? Because we have been cleansed by the blood of Christ and our sins have been removed from us and the cleansing is ongoing and continuous.

So 1 John 1:7 is speaking of believers. If on the other hand, we walk in darkness, or deny that we sin, or deny that we have a sin nature, we are lost (1 John 1:6, 8, 10). So we're not talking about two kinds of Christians here but the difference between believers and unbelievers.

In the middle of these verses we come to 1 John 1:9 which most of us are familiar with. In my opinion, this verse is primarily a verse contrasting believers with the unbeliever mentality mentioned in verses 6, 8, and 10. It is not primarily a verse about daily confession of particular sins. Please don't read this statement as though I am saying we don't need to confess sins. I'm not saying that. But this verse is primarily a verse that tells us the contrast between an unbeliever who doesn't admit he is a sinner and the believer who confesses that he is a sinner.

If we walk with God in humility, acknowledging our situation as sinners, God is faithful and just to continuously forgive us of our sins and to continuously cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Notice the word "all". His forgiveness and cleansing are continuous. It doesn't get applied to each particular sin but His blood stands as the continuous cleansing agent for all of our sins, past, present and future, recognized and unrecognized, thoughts, attitudes and actions. We walk in the blaze of his all-seeing holiness and we have fellowship with him because our sins have been removed from us.

Sir Robert Anderson said, "It is not in order that it may thus cleanse him that the believer confesses his sin; his only right to the place he holds, even as he confesses, depends on the fact that it does thus cleanse him."

Jesus Christ is our advocate or attorney pleading our case continually because his blood is the propitiation (continual satisfaction before God) for our sins (1 John 2:1-2).

So we can see from Scripture that God has provided for every aspect of our sin problem. He accepts Christ as our head and sees us as saints rather than sinners. He resurrects our dead spirit and provides the motivation to follow him. And finally he completely and totally forgives and removes all of our sins on a continual basis based on the sacrifice and continuing advocacy of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Spurgeon writes:

"According to this gracious covenant (the new covenant of Hebrews) the Lord treats His people as if they had never sinned. Practically, He forgets all their trespasses. Sins of all kinds He treats as if they had never been; as if they were quite erased from His memory. O miracle of grace! God here does that which in certain aspects is impossible to Him. His mercy works miracles which far transcend all other miracles. Our God ignores our sin now that the sacrifice of Jesus has ratified the covenant. We may rejoice in Him without fear that He will be provoked to anger against us because of our iniquities. See ! He puts us among the children; He accepts us as righteous; He takes delight in us as if we were perfectly holy. He even puts us into places of trust; makes us guardians of His honor, trustees of the crown jewels, stewards of the Gospel. He counts us worthy, and gives us a ministry; this is the highest and most special proof that He does not remember our sins. Even when we forgive an enemy, we are very slow to trust him; we judge it to be imprudent to do so. But the Lord forgets our sins, and treats us as if we had never erred. O my soul, what a promise is this! Believe it and be happy."

You may be thinking, "Yes, that's all well and good but we do sin. How do we overcome this sinful tendency?" That's a topic for another day. But the short answer is that as we live by faith in the truth of Scripture, and meditate on his Word, God's Spirit will gradually make us more like Christ:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:18

Sanctification -- growing in Christlikeness, including the desire for such growth are all part of what Christ purchased for us on the cross and provided in the New Covenant. He gives the new life **and** the desire to grow.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Jeremiah 31:33

I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Ezekiel 36:27

for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:13

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— 1 Corinthians 1:30 (Christ is our righteousness and our sanctification.)

Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Galatians 3:3 (The question expects an answer of "No".)