

CHAPTER 2

SIN -- OUR PROBLEM

In our last study, we introduced you to the Bible. It is my conviction that the Bible is the sole authority for our knowledge of God and His plan for man. Men have written many books about the Bible which are good books. Many sermons have been preached which are good sermons. They have helped people to understand God and His plan for their lives. But, in the end, the appeal must be to the Word God, the Bible, to determine the truth of any doctrine or teaching.

I trust these studies will be a help to you and your understanding of the Bible. But when these studies are over and the pamphlets are gone, I trust you will go to the Bible for your final authority on spiritual things.

Often people approach the Bible with their pre-conceived ideas and try to prove their ideas by using isolated passages of scripture. We should never do this. To the contrary, there should be an openness in our minds to the truth of scripture. We should bend to fit the scriptures rather than bending the scriptures to fit our opinions and lives. I desire to change my life for the better. I believe that if I would be able to do what God wants me to do, I would have the happiest, fullest life I possibly can experience.

Jesus said in John's Gospel, chapter 10 and verse 10, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Again, in 1 John 1:4 it states, "these things (i.e. the things contained in the scripture) write we unto you, that your joy may be full." God wants us to have a full, meaningful, happy life. However, most people do not have this joy in their life.

What is it that hinders? The answer is sin! But what is sin and where did it originate? How has it affected man, and what have been the results?

Let us look to the Bible for our answers. In 1 John 5:17 it states, "all unrighteousness is sin." In James 4:17 it states, "to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin." Sin is falling short of the righteousness or standard of what God asks of us. Sin pre-supposes a standard.

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Today men want to do away with standards. They say everything is relative. That is, what may be wrong for one person may not be wrong for another person.

According to 1 John 5:17, sin is a violation of righteousness, and according to James 4:17, the standard is the knowledge of that which is good. Righteousness and goodness are the standard in these two verses. But we might ask, "What is righteousness or what is goodness?" Righteousness is doing what is right, and goodness is doing what is good. But how do we know what is right and good.

God is righteous and God is good. These are the very qualities of God. They are manifestations of His character. There are other characteristics of God.

Look up these references:

"The Righteous God"

Ezra 9:15
Psalms 7:9
Psalms 116:5
Psalms 119:137
Psalms 145:17
Jeremiah 12:1
John 17:25
Romans 10:3
1 John 2:1

"The Good God."

Psalms 25:8
Psalms 33:5
Psalms 34:8
Psalms 100:5
Psalms 119:68
Nahum 1:7
Matthew 19:17
Romans 2:3 & 4
James 1:17

God's standard is Himself. The scriptures are the source of our knowledge about God. Therefore, the scriptures state in Romans 3:23 that "have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." This verse means all of us have fallen short of what God is. That may go without saying, but the truth of the matter lies in the fact that we all have fallen short of what God would want us to be.

Sin is not just killing someone or committing adultery. Sin is more than just lying or stealing. Sin is any action, attitude, or even any thought process which is in rebellion against God. Look up Psalms 14:1-3, Psalms 53:1-3 and Romans 3:9-12.

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Do self-check Number one

1. What hinders man from having a joy-filled life with God? _____
2. We can find God's standard in the _____.
- 3 Write put briefly you definition of sin. _____

(see answers in Outline and Study Guide 3)

Our next question is "When and where did this rebellion against God begin?" In Genesis 3, we are given the account of the fall of man through the sin of Adam and Eve. (turn to Genesis 3 in your Bible) In verse 1, it states, "The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field." As you read on in the passage, you find the serpent is the vehicle through which the temptation of Eve comes. Therefore, we know sin was already present in the universe.

Who is this serpent? Scripture can be used to interpret scripture. In Revelation 12, it speaks of a future battle which shall take place between Michael and his angels (which are the forces of God) and the dragon and his angels. (which are the forces of Satan) This dragon is clearly identified in verse 9 where it says "the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world." In this verse, the deceiver is called Satan, the devil, and the great dragon and the old serpent. In Genesis 3, the serpent is deceiving Eve. Certainly this must be Satan. But when did sin enter the universe? It was obviously here before man fell into sin for he was tempted by Satan.

Read Isaiah 14: 12-15. Note the five "I wills." In Isaiah 14, Lucifer (or some translations call him "star of the morning" or "day-star") is cast down because he exalted himself above what God intended for him to be. Pride caused him to fall. Note his self-assertion. "I will ascend into heaven." "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." "I will sit also upon the mount." "I will ascend above the heights." "I will be like the most High." He desired to take others with him in his rebellion against God. The scriptures indicate some of the angels of heaven followed him.

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Heaven was not all that was affected. Mankind, as soon as created, was attacked by Satan in Genesis 3.

God had given man a moral test. He gave man a choice. Man was not created to be a robot in his submission to God. Man was created different from the planets and stars. He was created different from other forms of life whether plant or animal life. God placed in man a God-consciousness. Man has what one man has called a "God-conscious vacuum" which can only be filled by God. Man may try to accumulate material things or wealth, but it will not satisfy his hunger for God. He may seek fame or popularity, but it will not meet his innermost need and hunger. Only God Himself can satisfy that longing of his heart.

God wanted man to fellowship with Him. He wanted man to be voluntarily obedient to Him. Therefore, He gave to man a free moral will. In order to exercise his free moral will, it was necessary for God to give man a choice. This God did by placing the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in the Garden of Eden.

There was nothing inherent in the tree itself or its fruit that made man become a sinner. That which made man a sinner his disobedience to the command of God. I believe God could have said, "Don't drink from this spring of water" or "Don't touch this rock" or whatever. But He chose to place a tree in the midst of the garden that would be a moral test to man.

Many times we think of a garden as a small plot of ground with a few trees or plants which supply our food. We are not told how large this Garden of Eden really was. It may have been seven acres, seven hundred acres or all of the Middle East. We do not know. But we do know that man could freely eat of all the fruit of the garden. It was all his except the one tree in the midst of the garden. This was man's moral test.

Satan used this tree to deceive Eve who, in turn, gave to her husband, and they both fell into sin. Turn in you Bible to Genesis 3 and note what happened. First, Satan raised a question about the tree. Note in verse 1, "Has God said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Eve seemed to understand they were free to eat of all the trees of the garden except the one tree. Note her reply in verse 2. "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the

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garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat of it."

Note verse 4 where Satan raises a question about the truth of God's Word. "You shall not surely die." Then read verse 5. Satan is implying the real reason for God withholding the fruit of this tree is to keep man from becoming all that he could be. "For God does know that in the day that you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil."

What Satan said in verse 5 was true. If you will turn to the 22nd verse of Genesis 3, here we have God speaking and stating, "Behold man is become as one of us, to know good and evil..." That is exactly what Satan said would happen.

However, Genesis 3:4 is a lie "You shall not surely die." On the day of their sin, they were separated from God. Death basically is a separation. Man had been fellowshiping with God in a close day by day communion according to Genesis 3:8. There it states, as if it were a daily occurrence. "The voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." But this never happens again until the plan of redemption is complete. Man separated himself from God by his sin and spiritually died. Man is spiritually separated from God today and needs a new birth in order to come back to his place of fellowship.

Note the tragic phrase in Genesis 3:24. "So He drove out the man." Man was not only driven out of the Garden of Eden but also out of the presence of God. At this time, man became spiritually dead.

Notice how the seed of doubt Satan planed in Eve's mind grew into a sin. Re-read Genesis 3:6. "... and when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat..."

Now read two passages of scripture which deal with sin in the New Testament: James 1:13-16 and I John 2:15-16.

In James 1, did you notice how sin enters through the thought processes? Then we are enticed by our own lusts or desires. As we continue

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to think upon the fulfillment of that desire, it conceives in our heart and then waits until there is an opportunity to outwardly do that which the person has inwardly allowed himself to do. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. This is the process of sin. It has not changed since the Garden of Eden. Satan planted some thoughts. Eve meditated on those thoughts, examined the tree, and took of the fruit. When Satan approaches us with sin, it is first a temptation; just a thought. But if we harbor that sinful thought long enough and run it over and over in our minds, we will at last find an outlet for that thought in a sinful act.

Now look at 1 John 2:15-16. It states there are three elements in the world which are not of God: 1. the lust of the flesh, 2. the lust of the eyes, and 3. the pride of life. Compare these three elements of the world and see how Satan used them on Eve. Notice Genesis 3:6. First, Eve "saw that the tree was good for food," (the lust of the flesh.) Secondly, she realized, "It was pleasant to the eyes." (The lust of the eyes.), and thirdly, she felt it would be a "tree to be desired to make one wise." (The pride of life.) Of course, there is some overlapping, but it is always through one or more of these avenues that Satan will tempt us to sin. There is not a sin we commit that does not arise from either the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life.

Let's take the problem of lying. We say it is a sin, and that it is. From which of these sources does lying erupt? We lie, usually, to cover up some other evil we have done or to make ourselves look better in the eyes of others. If our passions get out of control, then we lie to cover up. If we feel we are not all we should be or are not quite what someone else thinks we are, we tell a story which puts in a better light than we really are. This arises from our pride.

Satan has not changed his tactics from the Garden of Eden until this very day. All men have problems with the same basic sins. You'll never be tempted to do evil unless it arises out of the lusts of flesh, the lust of your eyes, or your pride of life.

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Do self check number 2

1. Who is the author of sin? _____
2. Satan fell through _____
3. Outline the process of sin.

Every man is drawn away of his own _____

Lust when it is conceived brings forth _____

When sin is finished, it brings _____

4. There are only three avenues through which Satan can tempt you.
 - a. The lust of the _____
 - b. The lust of the _____
 - c. The _____ of life.
(answers in Outline and Study Guide 3)

After Adam and Eve partook of the forbidden fruit, they had a new self-consciousness and then, when God wanted to communicate with them, they hid from Him. (compare Genesis 3:8) We might wonder why they did not fall down and beg God's forgiveness right there. But what do we do when we do something wrong? We hide! We don't want anyone to know about our foolishness. This, my friend, is pride. Adam and Eve wanted to be someone greater than God had created them to be, and then they were so ashamed that they didn't even want God to know so they hid.

One other truth must be pointed out,. In Genesis 3:9, it is God who comes looking for Adam. He asks, "Adam, where are you?" It's the same today. God loved Adam, and He loves you and me. God pursued Adam to have fellowship with him. God wants us to have fellowship with Him. God wants to have fellowship with you and me as well. He has taken the

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initiative in this. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for our sin, and then He reaches out to us in love to draw us to Himself so that we might experience life in fellowship and joy with God.

If you have not put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, simply invite Him into your life. If you want help, simply ask the person who suggested this study, a trusted friend, or contact Baker Creek Community Church at: www.bakercreekcommunity.org or 503-454-5541. We will be happy and blessed to pray with you about his matter.

Bow your head, and pray this prayer: "Heavenly Father, I confess that I am a sinner. I fail you day after day. Thank you for Your love which remains the same for me. Strengthen me that I might live above sin. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen."

In our next study, we will look at the person of Jesus Christ and just how He meets our deepest needs.