

THE ORIGIN OF SIN

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The one question that has engaged the profoundest thought of the philosophers throughout the centuries is the problem of evil. They have sought for an explanation of its existence — its cause and its cure. Man looks upon the world about him and sees evidence of conflict and struggle — not only in the physical kingdom, but also in the animal realm, as well as in the human family. There is a continuous struggle, in which usually only the fittest survive. Furthermore, there is evidence of destructive forces in the realm of nature. For instance, the earthquake has wrought untold damage from time to time. Cyclones have struck certain communities with terrific force. Lightning storms have likewise been very destructive at times. Sickness and disease are taking heavy toll every hour of the day. What is the real cause? and when will the cure be effected?

Regardless of what the philosophers say about sin and evil, the Scriptures are very clear and trace all ills, disasters, and calamities back to a sinister spirit called Satan, the adversary, and his legions of servile spirits. In this study we shall briefly examine the five phases of this question indicated on the chart above.

THE ENTRANCE OF SIN INTO THE WORLD

And Jehovah God called unto the man, and said unto him, Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said; “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat ...And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And Jehovah God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, cursed art thou ... and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Genesis 3).

Therefore, as through one man (Adam) sin entered the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned ...(Romans 5:12). God placed man and woman in the Garden of Eden, giving them permission to eat of all fruit except that of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Furthermore, he warned them that, should they partake of the forbidden fruit, they would die on the very day of their eating — dying thou shalt surely die (literal rendering of the Hebrew). Death *began* to prey upon Adam's physical body the day on which he ate the fruit and finally accomplished his death at the age of 930. He also died spiritually on the very day he disobeyed God. He was banished from God's presence, and the fellowship which he had enjoyed with his Creator was broken.

On that fatal day the force and power which Paul calls *sin* entered the world. Prior to that time, it had never been known. But, when man transgressed the only prohibition which the Lord laid upon him, the door was opened and this power entered the world, bringing death, wreckage, and devastation. But what is sin? One of the clearest statements concerning this mighty power is set forth in Romans: For until the law, sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law (Romans 5:13). In Romans 7, Paul uses the personal pronoun I as if he were thinking of his own experiences. But it is impossible for us to place this interpretation upon the passage since he spoke of himself as having been alive apart from the Law or before the Law came. Paul said, when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died (Romans 7:9b). We know that Paul was a young man when Stephen was stoned. He was not living at the time of the giving of the Law by Moses. We can be certain therefore that Paul was not referring to his own personal experiences; but that, as a prophet, he was speaking for God concerning mankind. In other words, he was, in a figure, transferring the experience to himself. Let no one, therefore, think that this was Paul's own personal experience, when he wrote Romans, for it was not. He claimed at that time that he was living a victorious life in Christ (Galatians 2:20; I Thessalonians 2:10-12).

Now concerning sin which entered the world by man's one transgression, let us note this statement: For that which I do I know not: for not what I would, that do I practice; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I would not, that I do, I consent unto the law that it is good. So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me (Romans 7:15-17). Note particularly what the Apostle says about sin: So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwelleth in me. Paul declared that sin is a force or power, dwelling in the flesh of man, which drives him to do evil and holds him back from doing the good. If one practices what he knows he should not do and what he hates and also fails to do what he knows he should, evidently there is some force or power driving him to act in such a manner. This power is called 'sin in the flesh'.

We must make a clear distinction between sin in the flesh and sins in the life. The former is the cause; the latter is the result. Sin in the flesh might be spoken of as spiritual gravity. There is a force in the physical world called gravity which pulls all material objects towards the center of the earth. What we call sin is a force — spiritual gravity — pulling downward upon the spirit of man, that causes him to do things he would not otherwise attempt and to refrain from doing those things which his better nature would lead him to do. This evil, satanic power, driving the human family away from God, is called sin in the flesh.

THE RESULT OF THIS SIN-POWER IN THE WORLD

The entrance into the human family of sin in the flesh wrought havoc, as stated before, the result of which is death, both physical and spiritual. Sickness likewise resulted. Man's nature became corrupted. His whole mental and spiritual being was thrown out of balance. He became self-centered, inconsiderate of people, and ambitious to accomplish his own plans and purposes regardless of others. Among the dire results which followed were man's pitting his will against God, his substituting his own ideas for those of the Almighty, and his accepting Satan's suggestions instead of God's will.

These facts became evident soon after the fall of man as we see in the first tragedy. In the process of time, Cain and Abel made offerings to the Lord. The former brought of the fruit of the ground, whereas the latter offered a lamb. God had respect unto Abel's offering but rejected Cain's. By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than his brother. As faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ, it is evident that God gave specific instructions as to what offering should be made. Cain, pitting his will against God's, substituted his ideas for those of the Almighty. When Abel was acceptable, Cain became jealous and slew his brother without provocation. Thus in cold blood he took his brother's life. Every murder that has been committed since then, every theft that has been perpetrated in the world, every injustice done by one person to another, and all wrongs are the result of the entrance of the power of sin into the world. Sin in the flesh results in sins in the life.

GOD'S TEMPORARY PROVISION FOR SIN

The offering which Abel made by faith evidently was the beginning of sacrifices, all of which were typical of the real sacrifice that atones for sin. When the children of Israel were delivered from Egyptian bondage, God gave them a ritualistic worship in order to keep before them the idea of atonement by means of sacrifice. Thus on the night that Israel left Egypt, the Passover lamb was slain, the blood of which was sprinkled upon the lintels and the doorposts; for God said, When I see the blood, I will pass over you. The blood of this lamb actually protected the first-born of the house wherever it was applied. This was a ceremonial which Israel was commanded to observe throughout all generations. In addition to the paschal lamb, there were many other sacrifices and offerings that were commanded by the Lord. There were especially five offerings, as we see, in the Book of Leviticus. On the Day of Atonement, the bullock together with the goat that was slain was offered to atone for the sins of the nation — to roll their sins forward one year. This ceremonial was repeated annually. See a full discussion of this point in Hebrews 9:23-10:18.

But all of these sacrifices were only provisional and temporary, pointing forward to the real offering — the Lamb of God — that He would provide later on. This typical significance of the sacrifices is set forth clearly in such passages as Hebrews 9:6-10.

Some critics have claimed that sacrifices were not of divine origin. In support of this assertion, our attention is sometimes called to such passages as Jeremiah 7:21-23, in which statement the prophet said that God did not command the fathers of Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt, to offer burnt offerings and sacrifices but to hearken unto His voice and obey His will. This was the prophet's unique way of declaring that God did not command them to offer sacrifices with a mechanical ceremonialism while their hearts were elsewhere. On the contrary, while he commanded them to make such offerings, the emphasis was placed upon their following the spirit of the Law and in trust hearkening implicitly to His Word. When all the facts are taken into consideration, it is perfectly clear that the sacrifices were ordered by the Lord and that they had a typical significance, pointing forward to the one all-sufficient sacrifice that alone can atone for sin.

GOD'S PERMANENT PROVISION FOR SIN

The entire Levitical system of sacrifices and offerings connected with certain ceremonies was simply provisional, waiting the time when the real sacrifice would appear. John the Baptist recognized this fact when he pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world (John 1:29). This remark is God's official interpretation of such a passage as Isaiah 53, which foretells the vicarious, sacrificial death of the Messiah for man's redemption. To the inspired Apostle Paul, the blood of Christ was paramount. It is the one and only thing which can atone for the sin of the world. Jesus Christ was God incarnate. He was the Creator of all things, the one who holds all things together. And He is in all things to have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18-20), and he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it was the good pleasure of *the Father* that in him should all the fullness dwell; and through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, *I say*, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens.

On the cross Christ tasted death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). The atonement of Christ counteracts the evil results of Adam's one trespass (Romans 5:18). So then as through one trespass *the judgment came* unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness *the free gift came* unto all men to justification of life. All were made sinners by the one act of disobedience of Adam; all were made righteous by the one act of righteousness (death, burial, and resurrection) of the Lord Jesus Christ, for Christ is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe (I Timothy 4:10).

From these and other passages we learn that, while by the one sacrifice of Christ all were made righteous — no one will be lost because of Adam's transgression, since the atonement of Christ made null and void that act — everyone who is born into the world is in a saved condition. Should he die before reaching the age of accountability — when he can oppose his will to God's and substitute his ideas for the divine will — he is saved. When he reaches this age and does set his will against God's in stubborn rebellion, he ceases to be under the protecting shield of Christ's atonement but is upon his own responsibility. After he has reached this age, he must voluntarily, by faith, accept Christ as the atonement for his sins and bring Him to God as his sacrifice in the spirit of the song; "Just as I am, without one plea, But that Thy blood was shed for me ...Oh, Lamb of God, I come."

One who brings the Lord Jesus Christ to God as his sacrifice in this manner will by no means be cast out. God will not reject His Son when He is brought as a sacrifice. Neither will the Lord Jesus cast out him who comes in humble, believing faith. God, therefore, in the person of the Christ has given us the permanent provision for sin, as is stated in Romans 7:24-25:

Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I of myself with the mind, indeed, serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law [power] of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in

that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ordinance of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 7:24-8:4).

It is clear from Romans 7 that sin in the flesh is an evil, spiritual force which impels man to do what he otherwise would not. Is it possible that man may be delivered from this bondage to sin? Yes; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus [the power of the indwelling Spirit in the heart of the believer] made me free from the law of sin and death [the power of sin residing in the body] (Romans 8:2). As suggested above, sin in the flesh might be compared to the power of gravitation which pulls upon all material objects. The indwelling Spirit likewise may be compared to a force opposing this spiritual gravity, but more powerful. Speaking in literal language, I would say that the power which the Spirit imparts to the believer in whom He is residing counteracts the downward pull of sin in the flesh — if such a one is trusting Christ and is surrendered to do His will. A person can no more in his own strength resist the downward pull of sin than he can resist the pull of gravity on his physical body. One may, by trusting and yielding, avail himself of this delivering power of the Spirit and live the victorious life in Christ. Thus with Paul we can say, I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord, deliverance is granted.

THE ETERNAL CITY OF THE SAVED WHERE SIN CAN NEVER ENTER

We who know God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ look forward to the time when we shall be moved from the place where sin is prevalent. As long as we are in the flesh here, we shall be in the presence of sin. We long, therefore, for the day when the Lord shall come for His saints and take us out of this present evil age. But our hopes go beyond that time to the eternal state where sin can never enter.

In Revelation 20:11 we are told that, at the judgment of the great white throne, the present universe will pass out of existence. Then will be fulfilled the prediction which the Lord Jesus made concerning the passing away of the heavens and earth (Matthew 24:35).

After the dissolution of the present order, God will create a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1). All things at that time will be made new. All the material entering into the eternal universe will be created. Nothing will be taken over from the present order that has been contaminated by sin.

The New Jerusalem will come down out of the eternal heavens and rest upon the eternal earth. This New Jerusalem will be the home of all the redeemed from this earth. It will be the city foursquare; each dimension will be fifteen hundred miles. I am of the opinion that this will be a perfect cube, although some brethren think of it as a pyramid. Of course, each one has a right to his own opinion, since the Lord is not specific on this point. But it seems to me that the language naturally inclines towards our interpreting it to mean that this city will be a perfect cube.

Since God has the proper sense of proportion and since this New Jerusalem will be fifteen hundred miles in each direction, I conclude that the new earth to which it comes and upon which it rests forever will be an enormous one. It is impossible for us, with our limited comprehension, to understand these vast proportions.

There will be a wall around it approximately 216 feet high. Twelve gates will be in the walls. Over each of these will be the name of one of the tribes of Israel. Under this wall will be a foundation with twelve types of precious stones, and on each one will be a name of one of the apostles. An angel will stand guard at each of the gates.

The redeemed of this earth will be there forever and ever with God and the Lord Jesus Christ — a wonderful family reunion. Marvelous glories await the redeemed. Sin can never touch this eternal creation. Praise be to God!