

BEING BORN AGAIN

This paper will try to show that since Adam chose to disobey God that all people from Adam are slaves to sin. They are not seeking God. They are spiritually dead. Only when God takes the initiative and makes people spiritually alive will they seek to relate to God by believing in Jesus Christ and be saved from their sins.

ALL PEOPLE IN ADAM ARE SLAVES TO SIN AND SPIRITUALLY DEAD

The Bible says, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). God made the first man Adam "very good." There was no sin nature in Adam or sin in the world at the beginning of creation. The Bible says God put Adam in the garden of Eden and gave him the freedom to eat of any tree in the garden, but God commanded Adam to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil or he would die (Genesis 2:15-17). Adam and Eve had the ability to obey God and the ability to disobey God.

The serpent tempted Eve. Adam and Eve disobeyed God. They ceased to be good and ate from the forbidden tree. As God warned, they died spiritually. They hid from God (Genesis 3:8). The Bible says, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2; cf. Hebrews 11:6).

God asked Adam and Eve if they had eaten from the forbidden tree. Adam blamed Eve for eating the fruit and he blamed God for giving him Eve (Genesis 3:11-12). Eve blamed the serpent (v.13). They did not want to admit that they had sinned against God by their own choice. God removed Adam and Eve from the garden. They could no longer eat from the trees of the garden. Adam and Eve had lost the ability to not sin. Jesus says, "Everyone who sins is a slave to sin" (John 8:34).

Adam's offspring were born with the inclination to sin (Psalm 51:5). Cain murdered his brother Abel and then lied about it. Lamech entered into polygamy and said he killed someone for wounding him (Genesis 4). The Bible says, "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (Genesis 6:5; cf. Genesis 8:21). God chose Adam to represent us in the garden and as Adam's descendents, we are born with this inclination to sin. From Adam all of us have evil hearts. We are slaves to sin. The Bible says:

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me
(Psalm 51:5; cf. Psalm 58:3).

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned-...the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men,...(Romans 5:12,18).

Who can say, "I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin?" (Proverbs 20:9).

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away (Isaiah 64:6).

God told Adam that if he disobeyed Him that he would die. From Adam we are not "sick" in sin, we are "dead" in sin. The Bible says:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3).

God, as He promised Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15), has provided salvation for His people. God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:1,14), lived a sinless life (1 Peter 2:21-22), died for our sins (Romans 5:8-9) and rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). In our heart we must believe in Jesus Christ to be saved from our sins and the wrath of God (Romans 10:9-11).

The problem, as we have seen, is that from Adam we are dead in sin, and because of our evil desires we hate Christ and do not want to believe in Christ. The Bible says:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed (John 3:19-20; cf. John 7:7, 8:12).

The Bible makes it clear that no one from Adam is good and no one from Adam is seeking God:

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one" (Romans 3:10-12; cf. Psalm 14:1-3).

GOD MUST TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND MAKE PEOPLE SPIRITUALLY ALIVE

Because people from Adam are dead in sin and no one from Adam is good or seeking God, Jesus Christ says that they cannot believe in Christ unless God does something:

"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him" (John 6:63-65; cf. 44).

God has to make the first move. Unless God takes the initiative no one will believe in Christ. God has to give spiritual birth to spiritually dead people before they will choose to come to Christ. Jesus says:

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again....Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:3,6-7).

What was the difference between Cain and Abel (Genesis 4:1-6)? Why did Abel have faith and not Cain (Hebrews 11:4)? Why do some people reject Christ and others believe in Christ? The Bible says it is because God makes them spiritually alive while they are dead in sin. "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

This is why the Bible says that even our faith is the gift of God:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:8-10; cf. Philippians 1:29).

On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed (Acts 18:27b; cf. Acts 13:48).

If our faith was of our own doing instead of a gift from God then we would have something to boast about. God does not believe for us. We do the believing but our faith is the gift of God.

When God makes us spiritually alive and we receive Christ, we will be set free from our slavery to sin. The Bible says:

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:31-36).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We have seen that at creation Adam had the ability to sin against God and the ability to not sin against God. When Adam sinned he died spiritually. He became a slave to sin. The offspring of Adam had hearts whose every inclination was only evil all the time. Everybody is born with Adam's sinful nature. From Adam we are slaves to sin and we are spiritually dead in sin. This is why the Bible says, "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

We have also seen that only when God takes the initiative and in His mercy makes us alive are we able to believe in Christ to be saved from our sins. This is why the Bible says, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God" (John 1:12-13).

So, in conclusion, the Bible is saying that, "Salvation comes from the Lord" (Jonah 2:9b). Our salvation is all of God's mercy and grace. In talking about the sovereign grace and mercy of God, Paul states: "For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy" (Romans 9:15-16). We have nothing to boast about not even our faith. The Bible says, "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). We owe everything to God.

PERSONAL REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

Early in my Christian life I wondered why I was a Christian. Why do I love Jesus and other people seem to hate Him? Why is it that when I tell some people about the sinless life, death and resurrection of Christ they do not come running to receive Him? Why do they reject an obvious good thing? I wondered how people could witness the miracles of Christ and still not believe in Him. Is it because some people have a good heart and the others have a bad heart? How did these people get their good heart so they would believe?

As I continued to read the Bible I noticed that verses such as Acts 16:14b which says, "**The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message**" and John 6:44,63-65 seem to teach that unless God takes the initiative a person will not believe. John 10:24-30 has Jesus saying that even miracles are not enough to enable people to believe. I came to understand that I was born dead in sin. I would never have believed in Christ if God had not given me spiritual life. I need and I want to continually thank God and live for Him.

God is not arbitrary (Ephesians 1:11; Genesis 18:25) and God has not given us enough information to answer all of our questions (Deuteronomy 29:29). I know I must trust God Who is love (1 John 4:16). I am motivated to learn about Him and to know Him from what He has revealed to us. I have awe and love for Him. I believe I can understand a little why the Apostle Paul seemed to spontaneously break into doxology in his writings. After writing about the sovereignty, mercy and love of God in Romans 9-11 Paul writes:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

(Romans 11:33-36)

Now I know that when I follow Jesus' command to tell others the good news of Jesus' sinless life, death and resurrection that God may make them spiritually alive so they will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 16:30-31; 1 Corinthians 15:1-6). I know that when God leads me to pray for certain people's salvation that God may make them alive and bring them to Christ through the hearing of the good news (Romans 5:5; 10:8-15; 1 John 5:14-16).

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