

## I. The question of Sin

- A. Everyone is familiar with the term sin and the historical event of the fall of Adam and Eve. The question that has plagued us is not why Adam sinned. The question is how could an all-powerful, all-loving God allow sin and suffering. We wrestle as we seek to reconcile the issues of sin and evil, sovereignty and free will.
- B. At the onset of this subject, I want to counsel you to be careful not to exalt a theological camp and apply it to every issue. These blanket sets of doctrines often times do not allow for the believer to view a doctrine by itself simply based on scripture pertaining to that doctrine. For example, (Not subject to Wrath)
- C. God hates sin. Did He, in fact, ordain it? Though this is a clear contradiction it is a widely-held view in the church today. To say that God ordained evil to accomplish some higher purpose of showing His glory is not in accordance with the testimony of Scripture.

- 1. God's Righteousness – There is no room in the scriptures to postulate the argument that God orchestrated sin and suffering. In light of these scriptures, it is clear that God did not ordain evil. (Deut 32:4, Ps. 5:4, 11:5,7, 45:6-7, 1 Jhn 1:5)

***Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding: Far be it from God to do wickedness, and from the Almighty to commit iniquity. (Job 34:10)***

***Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. (Jas 1:13)***

- 2. Free will – God did not ordain sin but rather ordained free will and bestowed upon man the nobility of freedom. Sin occurs through divine permission of humanities freedom. True relationship and love demand a choice.

*"Although the abuse of free will was foreseen by God, it could have been prevented by God only at the price of depriving human existence of its most noble attribute, namely, free will." – Thomas Oden*

- 3. The Adversary – God granted the dignity of free will to His angels as well. A once powerful and glorious angel chose sin just as Adam sinned. He is called our adversary and he and his fellow fallen angels (demons) try to influence humanity with lies about God. Though the battle is real we still clearly have a choice to believe and follow those lies. (Mat. 4:1-11, Eph. 4:27, 6:11, Jas. 4:7-8, Rev. 12:9)

4. Biblically Sin is not a force or an influential power, it is simply the misuse of freedom. The existence of choice necessitates the possibility of wrong in our decision to obey and honor God. God does not hold sin or Satan accountable for our wrong choices, He holds us accountable. (Ecc. 7:29, Ps. 106:39, Rom. 1:18-21, Titus 3:3)

## **II. Depravity**

- A. The depravity of man refers to his state of following the fall of Adam through sin resulting in estrangement from God. When considering the sinful nature of man there are two major dimensions that scripture addresses.
  1. Sinful Nature – The moment that we are conceived we inherit a corrupt, perverse nature from Adam as the consequences of His rebellion. The result is that man has an inherent propensity towards sin and evil. In our hearts a fundamental desire to rebel and disobedience that exists from the moment we draw breath. (Gen. 6:5, 8:21, Num. 15:39-40, Ps. 58:3, Jer. 17:9, Mk 7:20-23, Jhn 3:18-19, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 2:3)
  2. Sinful Actions – The fallen heart of man results in innumerable willed transgressions to the extent that every individual stands guilty before a Holy God. We all are fully and justly deserving of eternal punishment for our crimes. (2 Chron. 6:36, Ps. 130:3, Ec. 7:20, Is. 53:6, Rom. 3:23)
- B. The effect of sin reaches through the whole of our being and we possess no spiritual good (merit) before God. We are not able to do anything that is pleasing or righteous outside of His grace and salvation. All of humanity possesses the same hatred for God and His ways and our abased and vile passions are directly opposed to Him. (Job 15:14-16, 25:4-6, Ps. 14:3, Ps. 143:3, Is. 64:6, Jhn 3:35-36, Rom. 1:16-32, 5:8-10, Gal. 3:22)

## **III. Illusion of Goodness and Reality**

- A. The lie that man is fundamentally good has been told with great success, so much so that it has taken root in the Church. The Biblical doctrine of hell isn't palatable to many in the church because we don't think anyone really could deserve punishment so severe. Our society is convinced that we are mostly good and that through our morality we can reform our negative tendencies. As we have seen the Bible is in direct opposition to this perspective. Modern history also offers a testimony that makes a mockery of humanism.

B. Let's look at just a couple aspects of our supposedly good society we live in. To put some of these numbers in perspective there are 324 million people living in the US. In the state of CO, we have a population 5.4 million.

1. CAST (Coalition to Abolish Slavery & Trafficking) estimates that presently there are 30 million people in slavery worldwide. Compare this number to the 12.5 million Africans were trafficked in the slave trade from 1525 to 1866. In 2004 the U.S. Department of State estimated that annually 600 to 800 thousand individuals are trafficked across international borders with 50% of them being children. Some estimates place that figure closer to four million every year when they considering the numbers of people trafficked domestically. (Gen. 9:6,
2. In the 20th century between World War I and World World II alone, 70 million people were killed. This astonishing figure is dwarfed by the 262 million deaths in the twentieth century that came directly at the hand of governments abusing their power (referred to as Democide). Neither of these totals includes the countless civil wars and genocides that characterize the 20th century global scene.
3. Yet all of these pale in comparison to the estimated 1.4 billion abortions that have taken place globally from in the last fifty years. In America, we have murdered 59 million babies since roe vs wade.

C. Goodness Defined – We commonly think and speak of people we know being “good people” and yet if someone were to ask us to define what good means we would have a hard time responding with clarity. Biblically only God is spoken of as being good and all mankind is spoken of as evil and the ones who are called righteous are righteous by grace through faith because we are unable to produce goodness apart from being joined to the One who is good. (Ps. 14:1-3, 53:1-3, 86:5, 119:68, Rom. 3:10-18, Mar. 10:18, 1 Jhn 1:8-9)

#### **IV. Accusing the Just One**

A. Through our sinful pride and narcissism, we are convinced that God is unjust, abusive, and malicious to judge our depravity and sin to the extent that He does. Many Christians struggle with the judgments of God because they insist that humans are mostly innocent. Many believe that there are varying degrees of lesser sin and we are far from being truly wicked. (Lk 13:1-9, 2 Thes. 2:1-17, Rev. 9:18-21)

1. The testimony of the scriptures is the overwhelming mercy of God that allows humanity to continue to exist even though they are rightly deserving of death. Consider the extent of depravity and wickedness that would necessitate a judgment like the flood through the hands of our merciful, slow to anger, abounding in love God?

*“When we understand the character of God, when we grasp something of His holiness, then we begin to understand the radical character of our sin and hopelessness. Helpless sinners can survive only by grace. Our strength is futile in itself; we are spiritually impotent without the assistance of a merciful God. We may dislike giving our attention to God's wrath and justice, but until we incline ourselves to these aspects of God's nature, we will never appreciate what has been wrought for us by grace. Even Edwards's sermon on sinners in God's hands was not designed to stress the flames of hell. The resounding accent falls not on the fiery pit but on the hands of the God who holds us and rescues us from it. The hands of God are gracious hands. They alone have the power to rescue us from certain destruction.”*  
— R.C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*

2. The real biblical question is how could a Holy God of perfect Justice allow any of us to take another breath. How could a Just God let me go free and punish another? (Rom. 1:28-32, 3:10-27)

*“The most violent expression of God's wrath and justice is seen in the Cross. If ever a person had room to complain for injustice, it was Jesus. He was the only innocent man ever to be punished by God. If we stagger at the wrath of God, let us stagger at the Cross. Here is where our astonishment should be focused.”* — R.C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God*