

WE BELIEVE IN SIN Genesis 3

A number of weeks ago we began a series of sermons on the basic, cardinal doctrines of our Christian faith. And don't let the word "doctrine" scare you. It is a good Bible word. Paul says in Titus 1:9 that pastors should be able to exhort and convict by sound doctrine, and he wrote to Timothy that the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine. The word "doctrine" simply means "teaching". And beloved, we need to know, understand, and hold fast to the basic teachings of our faith! Those non-negotiables upon which we stand and do not waiver.

Not too long ago I ran across a letter to the editor of a Christian magazine that really spoke to me about the importance of sound doctrine. It was written by a 22 year-old young woman in reference to a previous article in the magazine by Chuck Colson. She writes:

I'd like to thank Chuck Colson for his focus on doctrine ["Doctrinal Boot Camp," February]. I am 22, grew up in church, and rarely hear doctrinal preaching any more. People my age who claim to be Christians think premarital sex is just fine, entertain serious thoughts about evolution, and compromise on the authority of Scripture. My generation **needs** doctrine, but we can't get it because no one teaches it anymore. (Christianity Today, April, 2011)

I ask you, could the importance of sound doctrine be put any more plain than that? If we don't teach the basic, precious truths of the Bible to our children and our youth in Sunday School, in TeamKid, in Vacation Bible School, on Wednesday nights, and in corporate worship services where the Word is supposed to be preached every Sunday, then we will lose them and their children to an ungodly world that will swallow them whole, destroying both their body and soul.

So, knowing of this awful danger, we believe, teach and stand firm upon the fact that there is one God, Jehovah, Who has revealed Himself perfectly in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. We believe and teach that the Bible is God's inspired, infallible Word, perfect, without any mixture of error. We believe that God created the heavens and the earth in six 24 hour days. And we believe that the way of salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone, and not of works, lest any man should boast. We believe that God has ordained the church as His ambassador to go into all the world and preach the message of salvation to every creature, that is, to every human being. And for us that means beginning in Fosters and Ralph and going to anywhere we can physically, and also to go to every nation vicariously by our prayers for those who go and by our gifts to send them.

Today we come to another cardinal doctrine in which we believe, and that is the doctrine of sin. And may I say that if actions reveal our true beliefs, this is a doctrine that many people have no trouble believing in at all. They believe in adultery, because they commit adultery. They believe in drunkenness, because they are a drunk. They believe in illegal drug use and legal drug abuse. They believe in cursing. They believe in child molesting. They believe in gambling, they believe in anger, and gossip, and lust, and pornography, and pride, and robbing God, and unforgiveness. Opps! I've just quit preaching and gone to meddling.

But in another sense, not too many people in this world believe in sin at all, at least in the Bible definition of sin. We'll discuss this a little later, but just let me say that if you reject the Bible's stance on sin you reject it to the peril of your soul, for God says in Proverbs. 14:12, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof is the way of death". To have an incorrect view of sin is to die in your sins and pay eternal consequences. So today we are going to learn what the real truth is about sin.

Turn in your Bibles please to Genesis 3:1-24. The Bible has much to say about sin. You will find the word "sin" is found 388 times in Scripture. "Sin" means to miss the mark, to err from the path of duty and right. It means to break the commands of Scripture, either by doing what is wrong or not doing what is right, and the latter is just as damaging to our soul as the former. And the Bible is crystal clear in saying that we all have sinned. David writes, "If You, Lord should mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand?" (Ps. 130:3) And the obvious answer is no one. Solomon writes, "For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin" (Ecc. 7:20). Isaiah writes, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all of our righteousness is as filthy rags..." (Is. 64:6). And John writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John. 1:8). Beloved, there's not a one of us who hasn't had his hand caught in the cookie jar. There's not a one of us, Paul says, whose feet are not swift to shed blood (Rom. 3:15). And just as plainly as it can be said Paul tells us in Rom. 3:23, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God". And since sin is a condition that is common to us all, in the sin of Adam and Eve we can see four truths about sin that we all need to know. And the first truth that we see about sin is that **the call of sin is deceitful.**

Verse 1 tells us that the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field that the Lord God had made. It is up for debate as to whether snakes in general are more devious than cats and dogs. But we do know for certain that this snake was. And it was because this snake was possessed by Satan. And Satan approached Eve through a snake in the Garden of Eden with one thing in mind, and that was to cause the demise of the entire human race. But he was smart enough to know that he could only do it by one way, and that was by deception, by getting Eve to believe something false about God. And I can tell you, Satan doesn't have any new tricks up his sleeve for you and me. He still comes to us slicker than any salesman who's ever

knocked on your door. And he comes with a suitcase full of lies about God and about sin itself.

Beloved, let me share three things about God with you today that you would do well to always remember, and not only remember, but let them be the ruling authority of your life. First of all, always remember that **God is good**. Psalm 25:8 says, “Good and upright is the Lord....” Psalm 100:5 says, “The Lord is good, His mercy is everlasting....” But not only is God good, but **everything that God commands us to do is good** (Deut. 6:24). Oh, Satan still has the world deceived about this precious truth! God is not a cosmic kill-joy. God delights in our joy and grieves in our pain. And He has given us a guidebook to keep us from pain if we will but obey it. But there is a third truth about God that we must understand. And that is, **God gives what is good**. Look at Psalm 84:12. What a promise!! If we seek to obey all of the good commands that God has given us He will bless us with all good things. So beloved, when you are tempted to sin, the first thing to remember is that when you walk with God He will provide you with every single thing that you will ever need or will make you happy.

But when the Devil comes to Eve he makes her question God’s goodness. “Has God indeed said that you can’t eat of every tree in the Garden?” Or in other words, “Do you mean that God has really said that you can’t eat of every tree?”, knowing full well already what God had said. But the deception worked. Eve’s mind began to race with thoughts about how God had deprived her and Adam of something that was really good for them. So the Devil lied to Eve about God.

But the Devil didn’t stop there. He also lied to Eve about sin. Look at verse 6a. The Devil called Eve’s attention to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and said, “Look at this tree, Eve. Look how good that fruit looks. And just think about all of the great knowledge that you will gain if you partake”. And again, Eve took the falsehood, took the fruit, and then took the fall.

But I want you to notice something so important here. When Eve listened to the Devil’s lie about sin, she had to completely turn her back on all of God’s blessings first. Verse 6 says that the forbidden tree looked good and its fruit looked good. But look back at 2:9 for a moment. The forbidden tree and its fruit looked good, but so did every other tree in the Garden, including the Tree of Life. Just think! Eve saw all of this luscious fruit from God around her, which looked just as good as the forbidden fruit and was just as accessible. And had she eaten of it she could have lived in God’s perfect paradise forever. And she chose to turn away from it and from the God that had done her nothing but good up until that moment, and to turn to the fruit that would destroy her.

But let’s not be too hard on Eve. Because how many times have we been burned by listening to Satan’s lies ourselves, going our own ways and paying the consequences?

So what's the lesson for us here? First of all, if you are unsaved, "BEWARE!" Jesus is calling you out of darkness into light. And as you hear His call, you will also hear the call of the enemy of your soul, telling you that you are really OK, that you just have an oversensitive conscience. Or that there is no hell, or that you still have plenty of time and there is no need to rush into giving your life to Christ. But hear the Word of the Lord. Hebrews 3:12-13 says, "But beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the **deceitfulness of sin.**" The longer you delay giving your life to Christ the more your heart becomes hardened, and the easier it becomes to continue to reject God's call to salvation.

And if you are saved, the Devil will persuade you that just a little sin won't hurt you, just like he persuaded David when he committed adultery just one time. But here the word of the Lord! God says, "Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man sows, that will he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). Do not think that you can play with fire and not get burned.

But there is a second truth that we see about sin from our text. Now only is the **call of sin deceitful**, but the **conviction of sin is awful**. Friend, there is no worse feeling in the world than true conviction of sin! First of all, because of the guilt that it brings to your soul. You know that you have no excuses for your sin. You are guilty of doing wrong and you feel ashamed, dirty, and unclean. When Adam and Eve sinned the first thing that they knew deep in their souls was all of these things. And they frantically began to try to do something about it. They sewed fig leaves together and put them on to try to hide their nakedness. But their bodies were not the problem. It was their sin-stained heart. But that was not the worst part of their conviction. For the first time in their brief lives they knew that they were alienated from God, cut off from His fellowship and His favor. For when God came down to walk in the Garden with them that day, as He always did, they ran and hid. Their sin made them afraid to be in the presence of a holy God.

Friend, that's what conviction of sin does to you. It give you that unsettled sense deep in your heart that something is not right between you and God and it makes you afraid to face God. But in Adam and Eve's case, the Holy Spirit had not yet completed His perfect work of conviction. Because when God found them and began to question them about their sin, they both started to play the blame game. Instead of owning up to his sin Adam said, "The woman that You gave me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate. It's her fault". And when God questioned Eve as to her sin, she said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate. It's the serpent's fault".

But friends, when the Holy Spirit gets ahold of your heart in full conviction of your sin it will not be this way. Your attitude will be the same as the sweet Psalter of Israel, King David. Listen to his response when Nathan the prophet confronted him about his sin of adultery: "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my

groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. **I acknowledged my sin before You...**” (Psalm 32:3-4). When God fully exposes your sin and you see it for what it is and you see yourself for what you are, you won't be just be a teeny weenie bit disappointed, you will be miserable! It is an **awful** feeling, and you will not be pointing fingers at your wife, your boss, your neighbor, or your friends at school, and crying, “It's their fault”. You will cry out to God in bitterness of your soul and say, “It's not my father or my mother or my brother or my sister or the deacon or the preacher but it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer”.

May I say to you that this is exactly what is wrong with America in general and also what is wrong with the church today. When many, many Americans sin and God begins to convict them of their sin, they look around and see many who they consider worst sinners than they are, they start pointing fingers, just like Adam and Eve, and it gives them a false soothing of their own guilty conscience. Or they say to themselves, “My sin is not all that bad”, and they keep right on sinning, and their sin causes misery to abound in their own lives and the lives of many others.

I want you ask you something. Are you living in habitual sin? And is the Holy Spirit of God hounding you day by day, convicting you of that sin? And if so, are you making up all kinds of excuses for your sin, saying, “My wife made me do it, or my friends made me do it, or like Eve, the devil made me do it?” Oh, friend, don't run from the conviction of the Holy Spirit! Nobody makes you sin, not even the devil!! Quit making excuses. Cry out to God just like David did, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord”. And when he did he went on to gladly proclaim “...and You forgave the iniquity of my sin”. And what God did for David He will certainly do for you.

So we have seen that **the call of sin is deceitful**, and we've seen that the **conviction of sin is awful**. But our text tells us just why the conviction of sin is awful. It is because **the curse of sin is damnable**. We have already noted how so many do not take their sins seriously. They see no real adverse consequences to their sin. But they most certainly do not get this belief from the Bible. I want us to notice the effect of Adam and Eve's sin, first of all upon the serpent (read v. 14-15). As a result of Satan's temptation, the serpent, which was apparently created an upright animal, was made to sliver along on its belly, eating the dust, from that time forward. Furthermore, snakes would forever be hideous in the sight of humans and be a target for destruction. Was this fair to the snake, seeing it was inhabited by Satan? It most certainly was. God can do anything with His creation that He wants, for He is God! And God chose to use this human hatred for snakes as a reminder to all mankind for all the ages to come of the temptation and the Fall.

But as you know, the curse of the serpent carries a much deeper truth than simply the Fall of man. Verse 15 says that the Seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent. And the word means “to crush”. The Seed of the woman,

ultimately, is Jesus, and when Jesus came He crushed the power of Satan and at the cross and he was defeated forever more, damned for eternity.

But I want us to also notice the effect that sin had upon Adam and Eve. Whereas they had nothing but pleasure in the Garden of Eden, they would now have much pain. Eve would have pain in childbirth; Adam would have pain as he made a living by the sweat of his brow. But in addition to pain instead of pleasure, they would experience meagerness instead of abundance. The Garden of Eden brought forth any and every kind of vegetable and fruit with no hindrance, but now Adam would eke out a living amidst thorns and thistles. And finally, whereas Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect relationship before the Fall, there would now be turmoil and strife between husband and wife. She would desire to rule over him, but he would rule over her. Friends, in this life sin has a huge payday!

But the consequences of sin in this life is but the beginning of sin's payday. God told Adam in verse 19, "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return". Because of the Fall we all will die physically. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:22: "For as in Adam all die.." And physical death is no picnic. Job calls it the king of terrors. But we die because of sin.

But physical death is not the worst effect of sin. As bad as it is, we can still have joy in this life if when we die we have hope for eternal life on the other side. But this is not the case because of sin. For we read in the NT that the curse of sin is so much more far reaching than the physical world. Paul writes in Rom. 5:12: Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—. Friends, in some mysterious way which we do not fully understand, when Adam sinned as the head of the race, you and I sinned right along with him. And just as Adam's sin damned him for eternity, so it damned you and me. For God went on to declare twice in Ezekiel 18, "The soul that sins, it shall die" (v. 4,18).

The cure for sin is wonderful. (v. 21)

1. Because of its source. It came from God! (Is. 61:10). Therefore it is perfect cure.
2. Because of its sacrifice. It was a blood sacrifice. For the believer in Jesus, "...in whom (Jesus) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us" (Eph. 1:7).