



“Be sober, be vigilant: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,” I Peter 5:8.

Satan and Human Depravity

Lesson Aim: To show the natural condition of man and to investigate the being who caused this condition.

L302. Date: September 1974. **Text:** Genesis 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-15; Ephesians 2:1-3. **Topic:** Depravity: Of Man; Satan.

There is a great battle taking place in the unseen world between the forces of righteousness and the forces of sin. The two spirit-forces are set in direct conflict. One is the kingdom of heaven over which God rules in righteousness. The other is the kingdom of evil over which Satan reigns in iniquity. The spiritual conflict is as real, though unseen by human eyes, as the conflict man experiences in life.

Today's study calls for a recognition of the reality of sin. Here are possible positions a person may take in considering the problem. (1) One may deny the reality of sin. (2) One may minimize the seriousness of sin. (3) One may accept what the Bible says about sin. The Bible teaches in great detail a doctrine of the reality of sin.

Sin is essentially transgression (rebellion) against God. It blights man's peace of conscience, disrupts his fellowship with God, and condemns him to hell, unless he repents and receives deliverance in Jesus Christ.

Sin in human experience may be traced back to the person called Satan, or the devil. It is he whose spirit prompts disobedience against God (Ephesians 2:2). Today's study is concerned with Satan and the tragedy he brought into human experience through the fall of man.

A FALLEN ANGEL

We believe in a personal devil. That is to say, evil in the world is

headed up in and directed by a person of exceptional evil whom we call Satan, or the devil.

What was the origin of Satan? We do not know. The Bible does not say in specific detail. Two things are certain: (1) Satan is a created being; (2) Satan was not created evil.

We know Satan is a created being because only God is self-existent. If Satan were not created, he would share eternal self-existence with God. He is not equal to God!

We know Satan was not created evil. The Bible declares that God looked upon all He had created and pronounced it “very good,” Genesis 1:31. It is most unlikely that He would declare a wicked person who was dedicated to thwarting God's plans and destroying man who was made in the image and likeness of God as being “very good.” Satan must have been created as a good angel. He became evil later.

We know Satan must have fallen into evil. Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:1-19 (along with Colossians 1:16; I Timothy 3:16; II Peter 2:4; Jude 6, 9) recount the fall of Satan. Originally, the angel known as Lucifer was of great beauty and power. He became filled with pride, however, and by an act of his own will rebelled against God. He was determined to be like God, or even to take the place of God. His sin of pride and rebellion caused him to be cast down, degraded in person, position, and power. From that time onward, he exercised himself as the opponent of God and man.

Satan is a person. He has intelligence, will, and the power of moral discernment. He is no mere impersonal force. Neither is he merely a personified principle of evil. He is called by personal names; personal pronouns are used to refer to him, and personal acts are ascribed to him.

Satan is still in rebellion against God. He causes sin (Genesis 3:1-6), sickness (Luke 13:16), and death (Hebrews 2: 14). He blinds the hearts of men to keep them from God (II Corinthians 4:4). He tempts men to sin (Matthew 4) by putting wicked purposes in them (John 13:2; Acts 5:3). He is set against any influence of the gospel (Mark 4:15). He opposes and harasses God's servants, resisting, hindering, and accusing them (II Corinthians 12:7; I Thessalonians 2:18; Revelation 12:9-10). He seeks to mix evil with good (Matthew 13:25). To keep from being discovered and resisted, he transforms himself and his ministers into angels of light (II Corinthians 13: 25). All his efforts are directed toward thwarting the purposes of God among men.

Satan is not restricted to any one place at the present time. He has access to heaven (Job 1:6; Zechariah 3:1; Luke 10:19; Revelation 12:7-12). He walks up and down in the earth (Job 1:7; 2:2; I Peter 5:8). He is everywhere present among men through the activity of his subjects—demon

spirits. Satan's names reveal his character. He is called Beelzebub—prince of demons (Matthew 12:24-27), Belial—vileness (II Corinthians 6:15), Devil—slanderer (Matthew 4:1), Satan—adversary (Zechariah 3:1; I Peter 5:8), Liar and Murderer (John 8:44), the Old Serpent (Revelation 12:9), the Tempter (I Thessalonians 3:3), and the Wicked One (Matthew 13:19). He is so named as to show him to be a person of exceptional wickedness.

Satan is limited. He has power, but he does not have all power. He has knowledge, but he is not all wise. He is limited by the will of God. He operates only in that area allowed by God. He cannot touch a believer, unless God permits it (Job 1-2). He is a coward; he flees when he is resisted in the name of Jesus Christ (James 4:7). One day God will cancel all his power. He will then be so helpless that one angel will bind him and cast him in the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1-3). Satan is a dangerous enemy, but you can know victory over him in Jesus Christ.

A FALLEN MAN

A sad state has fallen upon man. Satan was directly related to the tragic fall of the human race. The first human pair had an ideal existence in the Garden of Eden. They enjoyed conscious existence, human companionship, productive occupation, nourishing food, ample water, entertainment, and religious experiences in fellowship with God (Genesis 1:27-3:8); but tragedy fell.

Enticed by Satan to disobey God, man fell from the blessed position and freedom he formerly enjoyed. He was cast out of the Garden with no possibility of return. His fellowship with God was broken. His innocent relationship with his fellow human being was defiled. Physical death and spiritual death came upon all his posterity. He was henceforth in bondage to his own mortality and guilt of sin.

We believe in the “hereditary and total depravity of man in his natural state, involving his fall in Adam,” That is the doctrine of “total depravity.”

Doctrinally stated, this is what we believe concerning the fall of man. “We believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but by choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defence or excuse”—J. Newton Brown.

“Hereditary and total depravity” does not mean that an infant is born already condemned to hell, nor that every man is as wicked as he can be, nor

that each one is guilty of all possible sins, nor that one has no conscience, nor that he suffers an absence of any moral qualities whatever. No, “total” depravity means that man's entire nature—mental, moral, spiritual, physical—is sadly weakened by sin. “Hereditary” depravity means one is weakened toward sin by virtue of the nature he received from his parents. Being so weakened in all areas of his nature, man will sink forever deeper into sin, unless he is rescued by divine grace.

Human nature is depraved nature. Each who shares human nature suffers under depravity. God declared it to be so. **“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”** Romans 3:23. **“For in thy sight no man living is righteous,”** Psalm 143:2. **“... By one man's disobedience many were made sinners ...”** Romans 5:19. You share man's depravity. It is for that reason that you, and all other humans, must be saved in order to go to heaven.

There is a “cure” for depravity. Praise God! It does not come through a reforming of the old nature, but through the receiving of a new nature. The person who trusts Jesus as personal Savior is “born again” by the Holy Spirit (John 3). Thereby he becomes “a new creation” in Christ Jesus (II Corinthians 5:17). As all those in the “old Adam” (the natural man) share depravity and curse, those in the “new Adam” (Jesus Christ) share deliverance and salvation.

Does a person truly need deliverance? Yes, indeed! Depravity results in acts of sin. Acts of sin alienate a person from fellowship with God, disrupt his social relations, cause suffering in body and mind, and condemns him to death. Sin is serious! Deliverance is imperative.

The Bible makes it quite clear that man's deliverance from sin cannot come from within himself. **“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away,”** Isaiah 64:6. **“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one,”** Job 14:4. There is man's dilemma. He is a sinner and unable to do anything about it.

At that point the grace of God comes into glorious view. God came to sinners, not as a destroyer but as a deliverer. It is written, **“... Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound ...”** Romans 5:20. Through faith in God's Son, the believing sinner is “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” because “the gift by grace” is “eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,” Romans 3:24; 5:15; 6:23. **“The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men ...”** Titus 2:11. You are included in the scope of His grace. The Bible speaks of Jesus as Him “in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of

sins, according to the riches of his grace,” Ephesians 1:7.

It all fits together. (1) Humanity was stained by sin so completely that its ruin was irremedial. (2) God moved redemptively in a mercy and love which is incomprehensible. (3) Jesus died to become a Saviour to all who trust Him. Put those three precepts together, mix with penitent faith, and you have redemption needed, provided, and applied to the rescue of men and the glory of God. Human depravity finds its answer in divine redemption.

Questions

1. What is sin?
2. How did sin enter human experience?
3. What is “hereditary and total” depravity?
4. How is Satan related to human depravity?
5. How does Satan appeal to depraved natures today?
6. Why is Satan a person of evil?
7. How did Adam’s sin in Eden affect you?
8. What is the “cure” for human depravity?
9. How does Jesus' death bring forgiveness to you?
10. How can you help someone find Jesus as Savior?