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B0541 – October 16, 2005 – Major Bible Themes
Chapter 26 – Man: His Fall

- I. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL**
- II. THE HISTORIC FALL OF MANKIND**
- III. EFFECTS OF THE FALL**
 - A. Immediate**
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I. THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Chafer begins the chapter by saying, “The problem of how sin entered the universe is a question which every system of thought encounters.” In fact, historically, the biggest intellectual problem facing Christians has been the “problem of evil”. “The suffering and evil which we see all about us seems to cry out against the existence of God—at least a God who is both benevolent and almighty.”ⁱ The problem of evil is often stated.

1. God is completely good
2. God is completely powerful
3. Evil exists (happens)

Evil cannot be imagined away as Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddie proclaimed. Nor could she deny its reality when she struggled with terrible physical ailments during her final years. In a well-known passage by Russian novelist Dostoevski, he stirs our emotions with an account of the wickedness of men toward little children. Ivan makes his complaint to Alyosha.

People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that’s a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel....

I’ve collected a great, great deal about Russian children, Alyosha. There was a little girl of five who was hated by her father and mother... You see, I must repeat

again, it is a peculiar characteristic of many people, this love of torturing children, and children only...It's just their defenselessness that tempts the tormentor, just the angelic confidence of the child who has no refuge and no appeal that sets his vile blood on fire...

This poor child of five was subjected to every possible torture by those cultivated parents. They beat her, thrashed her, kicked her for no reason till her body was one bruise. Then, they went to greater refinements of cruelty—shut her up all night in the cold and frost in a privy, and because she didn't ask to be taken up at night...they smeared her face and filled her mouth with excrement, and it was her mother, her mother did this. And that mother could sleep, hearing the poor child's groans! Can you understand why a little creature, who can't even understand what's done to her, should beat her little aching heart with her tiny fist in the dark and cold, and weep her meek unresentful tears to dear, kind God to protect her?...Do you understand why this infamy must be and is permitted?...Why, the whole world of knowledge is not worth that child's prayer to 'dear, kind God'!

Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature—that baby beating its breast with its fist, for instance—and to found that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect on those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth.”

“No, I wouldn't consent,” said Alyosha softly.ⁱⁱ

This is a serious issue. We have to take evil seriously. We cannot avoid it and we, as Christians must have an answer for evil. The world presses on us that they cannot believe in, worship and adore a God who permits such atrocities as war and murder, greed and lust, dishonesty and lies, hatred, infidelity, cruelty, poverty, racial hostility. What about the evils of the natural world such as birth defects, parasites, attacks of violent beasts, radioactive mutations, debilitating diseases, deadly cancer, famine, crippling injuries, typhoons, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. We've got to face the facts: evil is not imagined, it is real and we must deal with it as Christians. We say that God is completely good and we say that God is completely powerful but atheists say these two are logically incompatible. If God were completely good then He would remove evil. Since He has not then the only explanation is that He is not powerful enough to remove it. If He is powerful enough to remove it then He must not be completely good since He has not removed it. Thus, the God of Christianity cannot exist. How do we deal with this apparent paradox?

I would empathize with an unbeliever who takes evil seriously. As a Christian I must argue that the so-called “problem of evil” is not a problem for the believer but a problem for the unbeliever. First, an unbeliever must be able to prove that there is evil in the world. If he can’t prove that these things are evil (such as the story of the little girl) then there is no problem saying God is completely good and God is completely powerful. To prove that there is evil in the world he must have standard of reference by which he can compare events and designate one as “good” and another as “evil”. There are three basic sources unbelievers turn to find a standard.

1. majority opinion
2. individual belief
3. the greater good

First, many unbelievers turn to “majority opinion” for a standard of deciding whether an event is deemed “good” or “evil”. However, just because a majority of the public approves of a certain action does not make that action “good”. Ethics cannot be reduced to statistics. What happens if majority opinion changes in later years?

Second, seeing the deficiency of “majority opinion” unbelievers often turn to an “individual’s belief” in order to find a standard. In other words, the standard for deeming an event “good” or “evil” is up to the individual. This all sounds fine and good until someone else’s standard for what is “good” or “evil” conflicts with our own. We could never say that another’s actions are “evil” because they have chosen those values for themselves. Thus, if an “individual’s belief” was the standard then his judgments could never be mistaken, unless he happened to misunderstand his own feelings.

Third, seeing the weakness of finding a standard in “majority opinion” of a person’s “individual belief” most smart unbelievers have decided that the standard must be “the greater good”. Whatever actions result in the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people are deemed as “good”. If one just thinks about this for a moment he sees how absurd it really is. How can one measure all the future consequences of any given action? How can one possibly know that the long-term consequences of any particular action will not ultimately *decrease* the happiness of the greater number of people? As you can see it is simply impossible for finite minds (even with the help of computers) to measure the future consequences of an action.

These are the only three approaches taken to the problem of finding a standard to measure an action. Since none of them are valid standards then the unbeliever is left without a

worldview that can account for claiming one event is “good” and another is “evil”. He must borrow from the Christian worldview where God is the absolute standard in order to complain about evil. On those grounds the Christian can validly say one event or trait is “good” and another is “evil”. Therefore, only the Christian worldview gives a valid standard for complaining about evil.

The Christian answer to the atheists charge is two-fold. First,

1. **God is completely good**
2. God is completely powerful
3. Evil exists
4. God has a morally sufficient reason for the evil which exists.

This answer does not abandon the Christian teaching of point 1 above. Instead it pushes it to the logical conclusion. If God is completely good then God must have a morally sufficient and good reason for all evil which exists. But does the Bible fit with this conclusion? Let’s start with Joseph and his brothers who started to kill their brother and then decided to make a profit by selling him into slavery (Gen 37:18ff). After years and years Joseph was unrecognizable even by his own criminal brothers and yet Joseph said to them,

Genesis 50:20 "As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

There is an element of the “greater good” argument here, but this shows how God who is omniscient, can take an evil event and know that it will result in the “greater good”. So, what is clearly meant as evil from the human perspective is here turned out for the good but only an omniscient and omnipotent God could cause an evil human act to work out for the good. *Second*, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Was the crucifixion of Christ an evil event? Yes. Jesus Christ was capitally punished under the corrupt human government of Rome. Yet who instituted capital punishment and human government in the first place? God did (Gen 8:5-6). And yet, did God have a morally sufficient and good reason for the crucifixion?

Acts 2:22-24 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- ²³ this *Man*, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross

by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death. ²⁴ "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

Verse 24 says that God has a good and morally sufficient reason to allow this atrocity. *Finally*, the doctrinal conclusion of Paul about all things, including evil things.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose.

Unbelievers may not like our answer but it is an answer. We must therefore press the fact that God is completely good and therefore has a morally sufficient and good reason for all evil that happens.

The second aspect of the Christian answer to the problem of evil has to do with point 2.

1. God is completely good
- 2. God is completely powerful**
3. Evil exists
4. God has a morally sufficient reason for the evil which exists.

God created the universe "very good" (Gen 1:31). Thus, the Christian worldview says three things about evil. *First*, evil is not eternal. It had a definite starting point. All evolutionary worldviews have a significant problem on their hands here. If evil is eternal then evil will always exist.

Second, evil is abnormal. Every believer and unbeliever who recognizes the reality of evil and cries out against it knows deep down in his heart that evil is not normal. All evolutionary worldviews have a significant problem with this as well. In the evolutionary worldview evil is normal. Even though their heart tells them it is not it must be thought of as the normal course of events. Even the evolutionary slogan, "survival of the fittest" affirms this for the unfit must die in order for the fit to live. In evolution, death brings about life. So, death is normal in the evolutionary worldview. Therefore, no evolutionist should complain about evil. Third, and lastly, the Christian worldview teaches that evil will be separated from good. At the present good and evil are mixed but by way of judgment God will use His almighty power to separate good and evil forever. So, Christianity has hope for the future whereas evolutionary worldviews are stuck with evil forever (e.g. Hinduism

and the concept of eastern concept of Nirvana). Evolutionary worldviews have bred philosophies of “despair” as illustrated in the literature of Hemingway and others.

I think I’ve shown that it is not Christianity who has a problem with evil but unbelievers. First, no unbelieving worldview has a valid standard which they can use to even deem one event as “evil” and another as “good”. Second, evil is normal in all evolutionary worldviews. Third, there is no escaping evil in evolutionary worldviews because it is eternal. Christianity has a valid and absolute standard for determining what is “good” and “evil”. Christianity says evil is an abnormal introduction into the universe with the sin of Satan. And third, Christianity says that ultimately God will separate good from evil forever by way of judgment. This is the heart of the gospel message: that there is such a thing as sin, that there is as an answer, the righteousness of Christ and that men ought to believe in Christ to receive that righteousness because there is a future judgment (John 16:8-11).

II. THE HISTORIC FALL OF MANKIND

Many assume that the first sin was the sin of Adam but it is clear that Satan had already fallen before the sin of our first parents (Gen 3:7). Therefore, as we discussed under our study of Angelology (chapters 22-24), sin entered the universe not through man but through the cherub Lucifer, now known as Satan. Where then did sin originate? It originated in the angelic domain and only later did it enter the human domain.

Romans 5:12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

“The Bible indicates that sin and all its accompanying miseries entered this world through the first transgression of Adam and Eve. And the question with which Adam and Eve were confronted way back then was precisely the question which unbelievers face today: should we have faith in God’s word simply on His say-so, or should we evaluate God and His word on the basis of our own ultimate intellectual and moral authority?

God commanded Adam and Eve not to eat of a certain tree. There was nothing inherently evil in the tree itself.ⁱⁱⁱ Everything God created was “very good” including the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 2:17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

Were Adam and Eve going to trust God's goodness and presuppose His word as absolutely binding? Or were they going to stand over God's word and evaluate it by their own ultimate intellectual and moral autonomy? God was testing Adam and Eve to see if they would attempt to define good and evil for themselves. God had created Adam and Eve with what Ryrie called "unconfirmed creature holiness".

Unconfirmed Creature Holiness

1. "*unconfirmed*" because he had neither passed nor failed a test
2. "*creature*" because his holiness was created and not identical to the uncreated holiness of the Creator
3. "*holiness*" because he was more than innocent. He had a disposition toward holiness.

Even though Adam's disposition was toward holiness he still had the capacity to sin. We could say, "Adam was created sinless but able to sin. Satan came along and challenged the goodness and truthfulness of God, suggesting that God had selfish motives for keeping Adam and Eve from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And at that point the whole course of human history depended upon whether Adam and Eve would trust and presuppose the goodness of God or not. Since they did not, the human race has been visited with torments too many and too painful to many to count (Gen 3:1-7). Thus, my father-in-law said "99% of all suffering is a result of the Fall of man." Ryrie said the hour of man's fall "will always be the darkest hour of all human history;"^{iv} When unbelievers refuse to accept the goodness of God on the basis of His own self-revelation contained in His word, they simply perpetuate the source of all of our human woes, repeating time and again the same error Adam and Eve made in the garden exalting their own intellectual and moral autonomy above God's word. Rather than solving the problem of evil, they are part of the problem.

III. EFFECTS OF THE FALL

A. Immediate

Because of the personal sin of Adam both Adam and Eve became subject to spiritual and physical death. Because of Adam's disobedience Adam and Eve passed into an immediate state of spiritual death. Spiritual death meant that they were separated from God spiritually. The spiritual death of Adam and Eve is the source of inherited sin which is passed on from generation to generation at conception (Ps 51:5).

Because of Adam's personal sin Adam and Eve also immediately began to experience the decay process in their bodies, which ultimately resulted in physical death. The personal sin of Adam is imputed to all men.

Because the Serpent Deceived the Woman the Serpent was Condemned to Crawl on the Ground and Satan Would be Ultimately Defeated. It is drawn from comparison of Scripture with Scripture that Satan took up residence in a serpent which apparently stood erect. God cursed the serpent making him crawl on his belly as a reminder to all ages of men of the original sin incurred in the garden. It is interesting that some medical symbols include the snake. Perhaps this is a reminder that the reason people get sick and die is because of the original sin in the garden. Second, Satan and mankind would be in continual warfare and the seed of Satan would ultimately be defeated by the seed of the woman. The seed of Satan refers to the ultimate end-times Antichrist and the seed of the woman refers to Jesus Christ. This prophecy will be fulfilled on the day of Christ's Second Coming described in Rev 19:18 (cf. 2 Thess 2:8).

Because the Woman was Deceived She would have Pain during Pregnancy and would Desire Her Husband. The woman would now have pain during pregnancy: the period between conception and childbirth. This would include everything from morning sickness, the pain of spontaneously losing a baby, to the childbirth itself. Second, the woman would desire her husband, meaning her inner urge would be to dominate her husband contrary to God's created order (cf Gen 4:7). She would not be able to do this by brute strength because men are stronger but would resort to deceptive tactics to manipulate and dominate her husband. Yet, nevertheless, women will always be ruled by men throughout history.

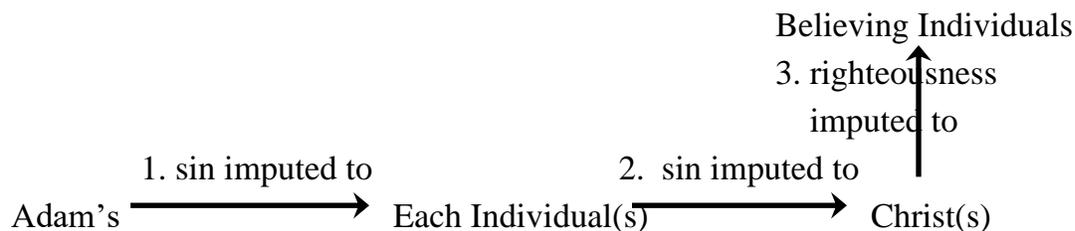
Because Adam Obeyed the Voice of His Wife the Ground Was Cursed and Physical Death Would Result. This is not the institution of labor. Adam was already given the responsibility of laboring in the garden. But now his labor would be much more difficult. Creation would not cooperate with him but would continually fight against productivity. Work would now require a large expenditure of energy to bring forth produce. Lastly, the physical body which God formed from the dust of the earth would return to dust at physical death.

B. Long-Term

Inherited sin was acquired by Adam and is inherited by every person from their parents all the way back to Adam. As David, we were conceived in sin and from that point forward possess a sin nature (Ps 51:5).

Imputed sin refers to the sin of Adam being directly credited to the account of every person. Imputed sin is not transmitted by inheritance but directly from Adam to each individual. The imputation of sin means we are judicially under the curse of sin by our association with our representative Adam. We both sinned in Adam seminally (Rom 5:12) and Adam was our representative (Rom 5:13-18).

There are two other imputations mentioned in Scripture. Not only was Adam's sin imputed to us but the sin of every individual was imputed to Christ on the cross (2 Cor 5:21) and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the one who believes (Rom 4:3).



By believing the righteousness of Christ is credited to the believer's account. This does not *make* a person righteous. Christ's righteousness is not transferred to the individual but to the individual's account. Thus, imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer's account forms the legal ground upon which God can pronounce a person justified and enter into a relationship with the ungodly.

Romans 4:5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

Justification is by faith alone in Christ alone. If a person does not believe in Christ the imputed sin of Adam forms the basis of divine judgment. The difference then between judgment and righteousness becomes one thing: belief.

John 3:18 "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Although many men argue that they are not responsible for the sin of Adam the word of God claims that they do and that this took place so that all men could be saved in the one righteous act of Jesus Christ. If all died in Adam all may be made alive in Jesus Christ.

So, men are not born innocent and then subsequently fall by their first personal sin. They are born fallen sons of Adam. They do not become sinful by sinning, but they now sin because by nature they are sinful. Even though we are all conceived in sin this does not mean that infants and those unable to be held responsible go to hell. Rather, provision is made for those who are not able to believe and all reach heaven. There is an excellent book on this topic called *Safe in the Arms of Jesus* by Robert Lightner. It is a quick and easy read and should be read by all Christians so they can be ready to comfort families that lose an infant or have mentally retarded family members with Scripture.

Personal sin is committed by all men. Romans 3:23 “for all have sinned (missed the mark) and fall short of the glory of God”. Because of our inherited sin, imputed sin, and personal sin we are all “under sin”. There is no escape from the divine judgment of God except for the grace of God. God provided everything by His grace in the person and work of Christ. Now available to all who will come to Christ is righteousness. It is His work which men must rely on and not their own work. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Acts 16:31).

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ⁱ Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready!* (Nacogdoches, TX; Covenant Media Press, 2002), 163.

ⁱⁱ Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready!* (Nacogdoches, TX; Covenant Media Press, 2002), 164-165.

ⁱⁱⁱ Arthur Custance suggests that there may have been some chemical in the forbidden fruit which upon entrance into the human body caused the process of physical death to begin in Adam.

^{iv} Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1999), 236.

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