

~Lesson Two~

God's Love and Our Sin

(God's love deals with our sin)

Before sin came into the world, everything was perfect! Adam and Eve got along with God perfectly. They got along with each other perfectly. The world was a perfect place. I don't think we can begin to imagine the world in its perfect state, since we are now held within the grasp of sin. God knows all things, even the "what ifs", so He knew our state of perfection would be fleeting. He knew before He created us that we would rebel against Him. He knew we would choose what a tree had to offer instead of Him. He also knew His love for us would find its strongest avenue through a tree. This week we will study how we became God's enemies and why He needed to become our Sacrifice.

Day One Sin and Its Consequences

1. **Read Genesis 2:16- 17 and Genesis 3:1- 15.** Write down any insights and applications the Spirit is giving you from these verses.

Since God created all of us in His image, we have a free will. He gave us a free will so we could freely choose to love and obey Him! Don't you want people to choose to love you? This freedom also gave us the choice to be in a relationship with God. Sadly, Adam and Eve chose to use God's incredible gift of freedom to do the opposite of what He wanted.

Their choice brought death into the world, and made us all God's enemies. Their disobedience brought the concept of sin into our world and put us in bondage to it. We became enslaved to it and had no choice but to sin. We could say, sin became their (and our) slave master.

Their choice also brought the knowledge of bad into world. (Let me remind you, before Adam and Eve chose to disobey God's one command there was only good in the world.) Bad is defined as the opposite of good and is explained by various words. These words are: ugly, hurtful, painful, unhappy, inferior, wrong, hideous, confusion, fearful, unfruitful, insecure, mean, and evil. Have you ever thought about how very different things would be without the knowledge of bad in the world?

Their sin brought the state of eternal death into the world as God told them it would. Ephesians 2:1-3 explains that sin puts us in a state of death and rebellion towards God.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (NASB)

What saddens me is that Adam and Eve chose to trust in or rely on themselves and the talking serpent, who was actually Satan (Revelation 12:9). They did this instead of trusting in God, who had just created them to love them. Some people doubt that God created anything, but Adam and Eve were there right after He created the world they lived in. So there was absolutely no excuse for them to doubt God. An important concept to remember is: You either trust in God and what He thinks is best or by default you are trusting in what you think is best. Satan is always at the root of *not* trusting God.

2. Adam's and Eve's perfect relationship with God, who created and loved them, was shattered. They were now in a state of death because they chose to be. They were now captives of Satan and of their evil desires. They had rebelled against God and were now His enemies. They had lost their freedom of choice - whether to sin or not, because they were enslaved to it. (Our freedom of choice whether to sin or not, is given back to us through belief in Jesus Christ and what He did for us. This is because He redeems us from slavery to sin.) **Read Romans 3:23 also 5:6-10, and Ephesians 2:1-7** and summarize what these passages are saying to you.

3. Remember Adam and Eve did not have a sinful nature until after they chose to disobey God. From Genesis 3:1-6, why did Adam and Eve choose to disobey God? (Think of why you disobey God and it will help you answer this question.) Before we become Christians, there is no way we could obey God because we were held captive by our sinful nature. When we become a Christian, we are set free from our sinful nature so we can obey God. However, as Christians we can still wrestle greatly with disobeying God because our sinful nature is still with us. What do these thoughts say to you about how difficult it might be for you to choose to obey and trust God? What helps you to choose to obey and trust God? (As you struggle with obeying and trusting God, just remember what awful consequences can come from not.)

4. From Genesis 3, what type of world did we end up with because of sin? (Just think of the definition of bad.) How did Adam's and Eve's relationship with God change? Is your relationship with God the same way? Ask God if you are hiding from Him (minus the fig leaves and trees)? Be as specific and truthful as you can with your answers.

5. From Genesis 1 and 2, what type of world did God want us to live in? How did God want our relationship to be towards Him?

Day Two We are All Sinners

God's Word teaches us that we all are sinners just like Adam and Eve. This is because we are born with a nature that can only sin. A sinner is someone who disobeys God. Romans 3:10-18 says,

...as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one. Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their paths, and the path of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." (NASB)

King David said, in Psalm 51:5,

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. (NASB)

It surely is reasonable to think that it is unfair that what Adam and Eve did thousands of years ago affects us today. The sad truth is, we all would have eaten from that tree! If you doubt that, just ask yourself, "Do I really obey God even some of the time?" As a Christian, I would dare say, the number of times I sin in a day far outnumbers Eve's sins in Genesis 3. Ouch!

James 2:10 teaches us a sobering truth: that if we obey God completely, then disobey Him just once, we are guilty of all sin before God.

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. (NASB)

Remember one sin brought death and changed the entire human race. Creation has also been greatly affected from human rebellion against God.

Here's a little extra thought about questioning our bent towards sin. For some reason, some people think God doesn't see their sin if they hide it. I guess trying to hide our sin is part of our sinful nature because Adam and Eve tried it as well. The fact is, God knows when you sin whether you think so, or not. He knows everything. This is a good time for us to learn about how God knows everything, and how He is always present.

*God is Omniscient, in other word, He knows all things.
God is Omnipresent, or He is always present.*

From Psalm 139 it is clear that God knows everything about us. He knows every thought and motive we have (1 Corinthians 4:5). God is always present no matter where we are or what we are doing. We can't hide from God! He has seen you at your best, and He has seen you at your worst, and still He loves you so very much!

1. **Read about God's knowing all things and always being present from Genesis 16, Jeremiah 23:23-24, and Matthew 28:20.** Write down any insights and applications that the Spirit is giving you from these verses.
2. What does the knowledge that God is all knowing and always with you mean to you? Use a Bible verse in your answer. (Examples: When I am ashamed about what I've done, shouldn't I call upon God who knows everything about me, but loves and forgives me anyway? (1 John 4:10) When I am alone and afraid shouldn't I seek after the God who is always with me? (Psalm 139:7))
3. **Read Genesis 4** - chapter 4 shows us clearly that sin passed onto future generations along with its awful consequences. What were the sins of Genesis 4? What were the consequences of those sins? How do you think Adam and Eve felt about what happened in this chapter? Remember they were living with the knowledge that their sin would affect all future generations.

Day Three

Adam and Eve Chose Death Instead of Life

1. **Read Romans 5:6-10.** What did Jesus Christ do for you? Remember He did all of this for you because He loves you!

Adam's and Eve's rebellion against God brought death just as God said it would. Death doesn't mean "extinction" as you might think, but more "a separation from." Their fall into sin caused a separation with God, which is spiritual death. This break in relationship with God was immediately evidenced by Adam's and Eve's hiding from Him, and blaming Him and each other for their sin. As soon as they sinned, their bodies also began to age. The outcome of this aging would be physical death.

If you think about it, we seem to live in a world that highlights death. Just turn on our news, and you hear how full of senseless violence and death our world is. Just this year, one guy killed 32 people without any emotion or apparent conscience. Human relationships, in general, seem to gravitate more towards division rather than harmony and peace. Just read the statistics on divorce. Just study history and it turns out to be a study on wars. Most bodies, on the average, have a few good decades, after which the effects of age and disease start becoming apparent. Just print "anti-aging" on something and it will sell. Just talk to anyone and they will have a health problem or know someone who does. Creation also seems to be at odds with us, or we could say, we are at odds with it. Just think of the practice of breeding and raising dogs so they can kill or be killed. Just try to keep bugs out of your house and you feel like you should wear a toxic waste suit.

God never wanted us to live this way! He created Adam and Eve to live in a world that was without sin and death. He made them to have eternal life, but they chose eternal death. God wants us to have eternal life as well, but we choose eternal death too. Did you know we choose death every time we sin, because the result of sin is death? 1 Corinthians 15:56a says, "...the sting of death is sin." A world with no sin is a world without death. I know it doesn't make any sense to me why Adam and Eve chose death over life, but we do the same. I think this would be a good time to learn about God being the source of life.

God is the source of all life

2. **Read about God being the source of life from Genesis 1:1, John 1:1-4 & 14:6, Romans 6:23, Revelations 22:1-5.** Write down any insights and applications that the Spirit is giving you from these verses.

3. What does God being the source of life mean to you? Use a Bible verse in your answer. (Example: When physical death seems to be everywhere; I need to remember that God didn't choose death for us but wants us to have life. (Romans 6:23))

Do you remember that death means separation not extinction? Why did death bring separation with God? It's because God is holy and can have nothing to do with sin. It is very important we remember God is holy, so let's learn about God being holy.

God is Holy which means He is completely separate from sin

4. **Read about God's holiness from Isaiah 6:1-5 & 43:3a & 59:1-2, and Revelations 4:8b.** Write down any insights and applications that the Spirit is giving you from these verses.

5. What does God being holy mean to you? Use a Bible verse in your answer.
(Example: When I am tempted to sin, I need to be fearful about committing it, because it separates me from God who loves me. (Isaiah 59:2))

6. We can *only* be holy through a relationship with Jesus Christ, but never on our own. **Read Romans 12:1-2 and Colossians 3:12-14.** Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to live a holy life!

Day Four Sin Brings Punishment

Sin brings punishment and consequences because we are disobeying God's laws and rebelling against Him. The punishment for sin is death and eternal punishment. Romans 6:23 says,

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NASB)

The meaning of death in this verse is both physical death and spiritual death. We all know what physical death is, because physical death is so ever-present around us. However, I think the idea of spiritual death is confusing to most people. This is because it is something we can't see in a concrete sense, but God sure can. Spiritual death means eternal separation from God. Because of the sinful nature we were born with, sin permeates our whole life. God can have nothing to do with sin because He is holy, so we are separated from Him. God still wants to be a part of our lives but He can't be because holiness can have nothing to do with sin. Holiness and sin are exact opposites. Oh yes, sin presents an awful problem because God loves you and wants to be with you!

Eternal punishment takes place in a place the Bible calls hell or other related names. We either have eternal life through Jesus or we face eternal destruction after we die. There is no middle ground! Do you know that God didn't create hell for us? In Matthew 25:41 Jesus states that hell was prepared for the Devil and his angels. The Apostle Paul explains eternal punishment in 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9,

... dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power... (NASB)

God never wanted to punish us! Instead He wants to pour His love upon us. You might be wondering why God does punish us. We know God is God, and that He has the power to do anything He wants to do. Does this mean He really wants to punish us? No! The Bible says that God told Adam and Eve *not* to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (or bad). He did not want them, or us to die! He created us to be with Him, not to be dead to Him. However, since justice and righteousness are His characteristics, He has to fairly and rightly deal with all sin. If He did not He wouldn't be just or righteous. God is also unchanging, so His righteousness and justice do not change. Let's look at God's righteous and just nature.

3. We can only be righteous and truly just through a relationship with Jesus Christ! So as a Christian we can be just and do righteousness. **Read Isaiah 56:1 and Ephesians 4:24** and ask the Spirit to show you how to live a just and righteous life, even in the presences of your enemies. (I must say, I struggle with loving my enemies, and doing what is just and right towards them. Do you? If I am not allowing God's Spirit to control me, I can start feeling I do not need to be just and right with my enemies, because they were not just and right with me. However in Luke 6, Jesus tells me to love my enemies and be good to them. He tells me through His Word in Romans 12:21,

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (NASB)

When God tells us to do something He gives us the power to do it if we allow Him too!)

4. Here's another thought about judging sin: If you have studied sociology you will notice that all societies do punish their perception of wrong. Societies have found people's behaviors, whether good or bad, do influence. This has led them to punish certain behaviors, a certain way. As Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15, people's behavior does influence other people. Sometimes the justice in some societies is very evil and sinful from God's perspective. We need to remember God isn't a cosmic killjoy. He judges and punishes sin because it is for our best as well as society's. Awful sin in a society tends to mushroom and bring about awful consequences. These consequences tend to lead to an environment that is very hard to live in. Just think about how hard it is to live in a neighborhood full of crime. **Read Romans 1:16-32.**

Day Five God Solved the Problem of Sin Through Jesus Christ's Sacrifice

I think by now you understand how destructive sin is in our lives! It is pretty clear something had to be done about it, and that something had to come from God. Beginning in Genesis 3:15, God revealed His loving plan to deliver people from their sin.

In Exodus, God revealed to the Jews it was necessary for them to shed the blood of innocent animals to cover their sins. This is called atonement. In Leviticus, the ideas of expiation (to make amends for) and propitiation for our sin (to soothe or win over; appease) became clearly seen in the word atonement. The sacrificial blood was the means of atonement. Moses, who wrote Leviticus said, in Leviticus 17:11,

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.'(NASB)

Shedding of someone or something's blood means taking the life from them, because life is in the blood. It took death to pay for even one sin, so God chose sacrificial blood as payment for a person's life. This allowed us to have a substitute die for us.

God knew animal sacrifices would never bring complete forgiveness for people's sins, since the blood of animals had no power to take away their sinful nature, and intentional sins (Leviticus 4). The only blood that has the power to take away all of our sins is the blood of Jesus Christ. This is because He is the One True God.

God accomplished reconciliation with us through the blood of Jesus. This is because the punishment we deserved Jesus took on Himself, when He shed His blood by dying on the cross. He is our substitute. He died in our place. His sacrifice made amends for our sins and satisfied God's just anger, so we could have our sins completely forgiven and be in a close relationship with God. What sacrificial love!

1. These animal sacrifices allowed people to be able to clearly see their need for the One and Only sufficient sacrifice for their sins, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. **Read John 1:29, Hebrews 9:19-28 & 10:1-4, 10-20 and 1 John 2:1-2 & 4:9-10** and summarize what you learned about Jesus' sacrifice for us. How does Jesus' sacrifice show you He loves you? Take some time and thank God for solving your sin problem through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

God's Word tells us that He never changes, which means His sacrifice for our sins will always take away our sins. Its effectiveness to completely take away our sins will never change because God and His promises are unchanging. I know it is hard for us to understand Someone that never changes! We live in a world, a society that seems to constantly change. One moment our government is talking about this law, and that we have to follow it. Then we hear they are doing something completely different. Your parents tell you one thing, and get upset when you do the thing they told you to do. Your friend told you he would meet you on Wednesday, but he didn't show up, and never bothered to call. Even your church leaders sometimes say one thing and end up doing another. I don't know about you, but it certainly is hard on me to navigate through a world that is almost completely governed by whims of change.

God knows how important it is to our psychological health to have security and to be able to trust. This makes sense because God created us to trust, in order that we will want to trust Him. The more we can truly trust people, the less our lives will be governed by fear, insecurity, worry, and anxiety. If our environment is secure we have peace of mind. If our environment is insecure it can cause great stress. This was evident during and after 9/11. Now is a good time to learn about how we can trust God, because He is faithful and unchanging. (Some psychological info: If you are feeling afraid or insecure, those feelings tend to make you feel worried and anxious.)

God is Faithful-what He says, He does! He keeps His promises and is trustworthy!

God is unchangeable, immutable which means He is always the same

2. **Read about God being unchangeable and faithful from Numbers 23:19, Malachi 3:6, 2 Timothy 2:13, Hebrews 13:8 and James 1:17.** Write down any insights and applications the Spirit is giving you from these verses.

3. What does God being unchangeable and faithful mean to you? Use a Bible verse in your answer. (Examples: When I am wondering about what I can trust in because everything always changes, shouldn't I trust in the God that is always the same? (Malachi 3:6) When no one is faithful to his word, I need to trust in God's Word because He is always faithful. (James 1:17))

4. Because God is unchanging, His love for you will never change! What does this mean to you? Have you ever loved someone but they were unfaithful to you? How did it feel? I hope you can feel secure in the knowledge God will never be unfaithful to you!

5. If you are a Christian you should be asking the Holy Spirit to keep you faithful. We can be faithful by keeping God's Word, and by saying and doing exactly what we mean. The world of psychology calls this congruence. God calls it faithfulness. **Read Matthew 23:23, Galatians 5:22-23 and James 5:12.** Now write a prayer asking God to help you be faithful. If you are faithful, you will be as unchanging as you can be.

6. **End of the lesson application:** Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind one thing you learned from this lesson that He wants you to remember and make a part of your life. Be quiet before God and wait on Him to tell you. Write it down and ask Him to help you to do it!

This is going to sound odd, but get a newspaper and skim over some headline news and circle each story that hints of sin. Sin is anything that is not in God's will. The point of this activity is to give you a better understanding of sin's grip on the world. (It would be a good thing to pray for the people in these articles, if you have time.) If you are doing this study in a group setting, bring the newspaper to class and share your insights on sin.

Bibliography

Many of my ideas on atonement, bad and evil, and death that I share in this lesson were obtained from the following sources.

Atonement

John F. Walvoord & Roy B. Zuck, **The Bible Knowledge Commentary - Old Testament Edition**, p 174-175, 199.

Bad/Evil

Spiros Zodhiates, **The Complete Word Study Old Testament**, definition of Ra, the Hebrew word meaning bad, wicked, evil, etc.

Death

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