

The Power of the Gospel

6

Back to the Beginning

In the last lesson, we began exploring the second quarter of the Gospel – the part that deals with the problem of self. To refresh your memory, read again the following scriptures:

Read Romans 6:6-11

Read Galatians 2:20

Read Galatians 6:14

In order to understand why God has chosen this way of dealing with your old self, we need to examine the roots of the old self. We need to take a look at how the problem began.

Through One Man

Read Romans 5:12-21

In this passage, Paul is summarizing the nature of the human predicament. Read through the passage once more, this time noting how many times Paul uses the words “one man.” If you mark your Bible, we suggest that you circle those two words each time they are used.

Paul’s purpose in this passage is to show how the human problem came through one man (Adam) and thus the answer to that problem also came through one man (Christ). He compares the results of the “one man’s disobedience” with the results of the “one man’s obedience.”

This passage of Scripture is absolutely vital to a proper understanding of the Gospel. Right down through history, God has dealt with humankind through representative men. Kings and priests stood as representative men before God, representing God to the people and the people to God. Even in war, a single man or group of men would sometimes represent the entire army in battle (read **2 Samuel 2:12-17**). The story of David and Goliath is a classic example of how this works.

Read 1 Samuel 17:1-53

When David and Goliath met in battle, they were not fighting as individual men.

They were representing their respective armies. The army of Israel was “in David” as he fought, just as the army of the Philistines was “in Goliath.” If David won, he won for his whole army. If he lost, his whole army lost with him.

In the same way, human history has been shaped by two representative men. The Bible declares that the whole human race was “in” these two men, for they stood representing mankind before God.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:22

These two representative men were:

- Adam – also called “the first Adam”
- Christ – also called “the last Adam”

Read 1 Corinthians 15:45

The first Adam

When Adam sinned, it was not just a personal thing between him and God. He was representing the whole human race. Adam had been created in the image of God (**Genesis 1:27**). But sin marred that image, and Adam passed that marred image to the following generations, right down to you. This is because at creation God put a natural law into motion. Every living creature was to reproduce after its own kind. God had intended that Adam reproduce generations of offspring in the image of God. Instead, he reproduced generations of sinners (**Romans 5:12**).

When you were born, you were born into Adam. You inherited his marred image and you also inherited his judgment. The Bible calls this state of condemnation and separation from God being “in Adam.”

The last Adam

God did not try to fix up fallen humanity. He decided to put an end to the race of Adam and begin a whole new race of humanity. So Jesus became God’s new representative of the human race. In the same way that the problem came through one man, Adam, so the answer would come through one man, Christ.

Read again Romans 5:18-19

When Jesus died, he became “the *last* Adam.” Notice that in this verse he is not called “the *second* Adam.” If you are running a race, there is a big difference between coming in second and coming in last. If you are last, it means there are *none following*. As the last “Adam,” Jesus died as the last of the race of Adam. There would be no other Adams following him, for God had crucified the whole of fallen humanity on the Cross in Christ.

Understanding the significance of representative men, let’s take a deeper look at exactly what took place in the Garden of Eden. For just as the repercussions of Eden’s rebellion have shaken the earth down through the generations of mankind, so the repercussions of the Gospel’s answer are now shaking the world.

Back to the Garden

Every calamity we watch on television, every atrocity we read about in the newspapers, every instance of human misery we see in life around us, *all* these can be traced back to the events that unfolded in the Garden of Eden, at the dawn of human history. So for us to fully appreciate the scope of the problem that the Gospel deals with, let's go back to the Garden to the point of sin's entry into the world.

Read Genesis 3:1-6

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their disobedience set off a chain reaction of events which directly affected you and the world you now live in. When Jesus came into the world, he was sent with a specific purpose to fulfil. On the Cross, he was going to undo all the damage that had been done by the action of Adam and Eve and to make it possible for mankind to get back on course for the original purpose for which God had created them.

So let's take a look at each of the seven effects of Adam's fall, and then parallel them with the seven results of the Gospel.

Self was deified

Read again Genesis 3:4-5

Note the nature of the temptation that Satan presented to the man and woman.* It was not simply about a delicious piece of fruit. The serpent declared that by disobeying God, the pair would have their eyes opened to another level of wisdom. "You will be like God," he said, "knowing good and evil [for yourselves]."

This was the nature of the temptation that Adam and Eve responded to. By taking the fruit, Satan assured them, they would become like God. The original Hebrew also has the meaning of "become like gods [in your own right]."

Adam did not become an atheist when he ate the fruit. Furthermore, he had no intention of rejecting God outright. His intent was to redefine their relationship. He would become a god in his own right and able to dictate the terms of his relationship with God. He would be able to discern between good and evil, right and wrong, for himself, without needing to rely on God for guidance. At that moment in time, when they disobeyed God, they effectively deified themselves. They became the gods of their own lives.

Ever since that fateful day, people have lived self-deified lives. We live in a world of billions of little gods, all seeking to determine their own destiny, some rejecting God outright, others seeking to know God, but on their own terms.

Herein lies the essence of the "old self." The old self is a deified self. It demands

* The temptation was not simply to Eve. The Bible indicates that Adam was also present (note [Genesis 3:6](#)), although he acted as the "silent partner." This was, in fact, Adam's first error, for he had been given the responsibility of guarding the Garden, yet he abdicated his responsibility by remaining silent during the temptation.

the reins of control. It seeks out God, but on its own terms. It is the center of life, the final arbiter of right and wrong, the majesty to which others must bow.

God's intention was for you to be God-dependent, God-conscious and God-centered. But through the fall of Adam, you inherited an "adamic nature" which was self-dependent, self-conscious and self-centered. Self had become god.

This old self - the deified self - is the problem which stood between God and man. Underneath every sin is the root of self-centeredness, self-interest and self-effort. So built into his plan of salvation a very important factor that would reverse this problem of self-deification: the factor of *faith*.

Read Hebrews 11:6

Have you ever wondered why faith is so central to God's plan of salvation? Well, it is only faith that cuts to the root of the problem of self. Faith means that you are totally dependent upon God. It places you back into God-dependence, God-consciousness and God-centeredness. If we try to gain salvation through self-effort, we are back under the same sin that Adam committed. If we try to live the Christian life in self-effort, we are doing exactly the same thing.

Read Romans 14:23

As far as God is concerned, any action outside of the parameters of faith in him is defined as sin. This is because anything outside of faith is a product of the deified self – the "old self" which is the mortal enemy of God.

The knowledge of good and evil became the guiding force

Read again Genesis 3:5-7

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, the Bible says "their eyes were opened." In a twisted sense, Satan had spoken the truth – or better put, a half-truth. Adam and Eve did gain a new capacity – the ability to judge between good and evil. But this ability was now askew. God had originally intended them to have this ability, but with that ability centered in him. Now the ability to judge between right and wrong was centered in themselves.

Note how this "knowledge of good and evil" was first applied. They realized they were naked (**verse 7**) and so they made their own moves to cover up that nakedness. From the very first moment of sin, self-effort came straight into play.

At the core of the temptation to Adam and Eve was the lure of "wisdom" (note **verse 6**). This same wisdom – the independent ability to judge between right and wrong – is the basis upon which every government legislature has been established and every university curriculum founded. This being "wise in your own eyes" (**Proverbs 3:7**) is turned upside-down by the Gospel.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-30

The wisdom of the Gospel turns the wisdom of the world upside down. The two

are totally incompatible because they are centered in two different places. The wisdom of the Gospel is centered in God. The wisdom of the world is centered in self. But when the Holy Spirit begins to convict a person's heart of sin, a true wisdom – a “knowledge of good and evil” that is centered in God – comes into play. This is why the Bible says:

“The fear of the Lord is the *beginning* of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (**Proverbs 9:10**).

No wonder Paul says that we constantly need “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation *in the knowledge of him*” (**Ephesians 1:17**, KJV). True wisdom is centered in our knowledge of God. He, after all, is “the only wise God” (**Romans 16:27**).

Sin and death began to reign

The effects of Adam's fall were horrendous. As *The New Living Translation* phrases **Romans 5:12,17**:

“When Adam sinned, sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned...The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us...”

Now while we often think of death as being the ultimate cessation of physical life, the Bible tends to interpret a wider scope to death. Yes, physical death was the natural outworking of sin, but note that in **Genesis 2:17**, God wasn't lying when he said:

“...you must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

Even though it took their sin several hundred years to outwork in their physical bodies, death was an everpresent reality in five ways:

- Spiritual death – separation from God – now defined their lives
- Emotional death – the effects of shame, guilt and fear – began to destroy relationships and emotional well-being
- The forerunners of physical death – sickness and aging – began to take their toll
- The grief of death – when loved ones died – entered human existence
- The fear of death now gripped their lives

Read Hebrews 2:14

“Sin and death” go hand in hand throughout Scripture (**Romans 5:12; 7:13; 8:2; 1 Corinthians 15:56; James 1:15**) and lie at the core of the old self. Note how in Romans Paul uses two phrases as synonyms for the old self – the “body of sin” (**Romans 6:6**) and the “body of death” (**Romans 7:24**).

If you read **Genesis 3:7-12** again, you will see the nascent old self, with its newly established “knowledge of good and evil,” beginning its relentless work in Adam and Eve's lives:

- They felt shame (**verse 7**)
- They tried to cover themselves (**verse 7**)
- They hid from God (**verse 8**)
- They felt fear (**verse 10**)
- They tried to justify themselves by blaming others (**verse 12-13**)

At the Cross, Jesus conquered the effects of sin and death. At the Resurrection, God reversed death and broke its hold over our lives. For the Christian, we now have a new reality in operation: "...through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death" (**Romans 8:2**).

A curse came on human life

Read Genesis 3:16-19

God had created human life to operate in dependence upon him. God was our life-source and the source of our blessing. When Adam became separated from God, he entered into the curse of a life devoid of God's presence. Sin carries a curse with it.

Read James 2:10

Things did not get any easier when God revealed his righteous standards in the Law of Moses. In fact, they got even more complicated. The old self flared into overdrive, trying to keep the standard of God's holiness in its own strength, and this set off the cycle of sin and death with vengeance (read again **Romans 7:14-24**). For now the "curse of the law" (see **Deuteronomy 28:15-68**) compounded the "curse of sin," bringing into stark relief the incapacity of the old self to live up to God's holy standards.

But the good news of the Gospel is that Jesus didn't just die for our sins; he actually took the curse of sin and the curse of the law upon himself.

Read Galatians 3:13

On the Cross, God not only crucified your old self. He also crucified the Law itself. The "written code" of God's righteous requirements were good and just – a true reflection of God's pure holiness – but they rightly demanded God's judgment against our lives. If the old self could have kept the commandments of God, then blessing would have been yours. But since the old self *had no ability* keep God's Law (**Romans 8:7**), then the shadow of a curse constantly hung over your head.

All that ended at the Cross. Christ actually became the curse for you. He suffered the full consequences of your breaking God's Law. His death abolished the written code and set you free from its curse!

Read Colossians 2:14

Instead of a curse hanging over your head, you now have "every spiritual blessing in Christ." This is part of the Great Exchange described in the Gospel: The curse that should have been yours was exchanged for the blessings that belong to Christ!

Satan gained authority over the earth

One of the most serious consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience was a transferal of authority from Adam to Satan. Adam had been given authority over the entire world (**Genesis 1:28**). But in obeying Satan and disobeying God, Adam transferred his allegiance as a vassal* of God to being a vassal of Satan. From then on, Satan became "the prince of the power of the air" (**Ephesians 2:2**, KJV) and "the god of this world" (**2 Corinthians 4:4**, KJV).

When Satan came to tempt Jesus, he was able to say, without fear of challenge:

"I will give you...[the] authority and splendor [of all these kingdoms], for *it has been given to me*, and I can give it to anyone I want to" (**Luke 4:6**).

Read Ephesians 2:1-3

This is the description of your life outside of Christ. You were under Satan's thumb and God's judgment. But **Ephesians 2:4** begins with:

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy..."

In the midst of this intolerable situation, God's mercy intervened. At the Cross, Satan's authority was broken on two levels:

- Satan's authority over your life ended (**Colossians 1:13**)
- Satan's authority over the world was revoked (**Colossians 2:15**)

Read 1 John 3:8

The Cross was the dividing line in human history between Satan's tyranny and God's mercy. This is what the Gospel proclaims! And the Gospel's message of emancipation from Satan's heavy hand is for you, your family, your friends, your community and for all the nations of the earth. No wonder the Gospel is called good news!

Judgment became man's destiny

The judgment of God became the destiny of everyone "in Adam." We were "pre-destined" in Adam toward judgment and hell.

Read Hebrews 9:27

As we have already seen in previous lessons, the judgment of God was not *eliminated* at the Cross, it was *satisfied* at the Cross. Nor is the old predestination simply cancelled. It was exchanged for a *new* predestination. Now, "in Christ," you are destined toward glory and heaven.

Read Romans 8:29-30

This change in predestination is what the Gospel declares so emphatically. You

* The authority given to Adam was part of what is known as a "suzerain-vassal" relationship. A vassal exercised authority under the umbrella of his feudal lord (the "suzerain"). When Adam disobeyed God and obeyed Satan, he effectively swapped allegiance, coming under a new suzerain, Satan.

once had “wages” awaiting to be paid at the end of the day (**Romans 6:23**), but now, because of the Cross, you have been given a gift - the gift of a new destiny!

The glory of God departed

When their new-found “knowledge of good and evil” kicked in, the very first thing that Adam and Eve became aware of was their own nakedness. Up till that time, they had been naked but unaware of that nakedness, for they had been clothed with the glory of God. But at the moment of disobedience, the glory of God departed.

As we have seen previously, sin is actually defined as falling short of God’s glory (**Romans 3:23**). In his sinful condition, man could not survive in the full splendor of God’s glory (**Exodus 33:20**), yet this was the glory God had planned for each one of us to live in.

Read again 2 Corinthians 4:4

The Gospel is described as “the gospel of the glory of Christ.” And that is exactly what it is. For in the Gospel, not only is the glory of Christ *revealed* to us, it is also *opened* to us to experience and live in.

Read again Romans 8:29-30

This is God’s plan, unveiled in the Gospel. God’s Spirit is progressively conforming us to the image of Jesus and his end goal is that we will be “glorified.”

Read 2 Corinthians 3:18

The Effects of the Fall Reversed

In summary, we have seen that there were seven principal effects of Adam’s fall:

- Self was deified
- The knowledge of good and evil became the guiding force
- Sin and death began to reign
- A curse came on human life
- Satan gained authority over the earth
- Judgment became man’s destiny
- The glory of God departed

Each and every one of these effects was reversed at the Cross! This is the proclamation of the Gospel – total restoration to God’s plan and purpose.

The Gospel is a simple Gospel, but it is also a deep Gospel. Every day is a discovery of new depths to the truth of what God accomplished in Christ on the Cross. There is no end to this discovery. Far from being something we learn when we first come to the Lord and then go on to “deeper truths,” the Gospel has depths that will take the rest of eternity for us to uncover.

The Online Bible College can be accessed at www.online-bible-college.com