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The Origin of Evil

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Genesis 2:25-3:7

There is a sense in which everyone knows it when they see it. Better yet, they know it when they experience it. When it happens to them, even the most vile of persons will lament the injustice of it all.

At the same time, evil is a slippery thing. Think about the pantheist--i.e. the person who believes that God is in everything and everything is God. If that is true, then how do they determine what evil is? Evil has to be divine. They would never say this, but if they were consistent they would have to admit that evil is really non-existent.

The same goes for the Atheist. If there is no moral lawgiver, then who is to say what is morally right? If we are all just a random blob of particles, or if the basic premise of life is that the strongest shall survive, then who's to say what is good and what is bad?

I actually have seen one atheist admit this. He could never live it out, but theoretically he was trying to be consistent. He posed a question to some Christians in a debate. He recounted a gruesome rape and murder that had occurred and then asked, "If God is good, how can he permit such things to happen?" I then asked him how he determines that such a thing is "bad"? In his own words he said, "I don't really believe that there is a distinction between good and evil." It was obvious by the way he said it that he really didn't mean it. He was just trying to be consistent with his views during the debate. Everyone else just laughed at him because it was such an absurd statement.

But that's the conundrum: When it comes to this whole thing we call evil, there is a sense in which people are groping around in the dark trying to grasp it.

All this is to say that the existence of evil is a question that every worldview and belief system must attempt to answer. And that is exactly why this section of Scripture has been given to us.

In this passage the Lord gives us the answer. The book of Genesis is the book of beginnings. It tells us about the beginning of the world, the beginning of man, the beginning of marriage. Now it tells us about the beginning of evil.

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And you'll notice that the Passage starts off by telling us that there was a time when evil did not exist. There was a time when perfection was the rule of the day.

I. The Absence of Evil [2:25]

This is why I began our reading with the last verse of chapter 2. In that verse we see the complete absence of evil. It says, "The man and woman were both naked and they were not ashamed."

This is telling us of the original righteousness that Adam and Eve possessed. Man's original state was that of complete innocence. He was completely pure, loving only that which was good and having absolutely no inclination towards evil at all.

And it is something that we cannot fully comprehend. Our lives are so mingled with sin that we can't even read this verse without having a perverted thought. At best, we laugh at the thought of two people prancing around a garden in the buff.

But it was true. The only thing that Adam and Eve had as garments was their skin, and they were perfectly innocent in it. There was nothing that would cause them to blush or recoil from one another. Rather it was the complete opposite. When one would catch a glimpse or the other their only reaction would be perfect praise for the natural beauty of their beloved.

We find here that their lives were a perfect display of devotion to God. Or, as Kenneth Hughes has said, "Loving God was as natural as breathing, and as effortless!"

This is important for us for two reasons. First, it shows us that good and evil are not equal and coexistent powers. A while back our brother Craig showed us the Ying and the Yang, the black and white tadpoles that look like they are wrestling. That symbol represented a philosophy of life. That good and evil are two equal and coexistent powers. The two have always existed beside each other and have always fought each other.

As we see here, that is not true. Evil has not always existed. That wasn't part of the original design of things.

But there is another reason why we should note this original state of things. The absence of evil at the beginning of time helps us see that God is not the cause of evil. When it comes to the whole complex of evil we have to understand that it is an intruder. It is an invasion into the created order. It was not part of the original design of things.

One of the things we are prone to do is lay the blame upon God. We'll say that God made us this way or something to that effect. But the testimony of Scripture is that God is in no way to be associated with the cause of evil. He did not create us with any sort of inclination toward evil in any way.

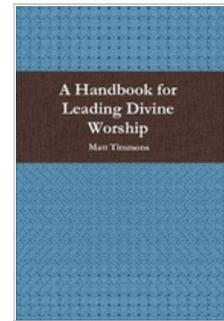
He did make us with the ability to lose this innocence, as we will see in just a moment. We do not doubt that Adam, in his original state was a free to choose evil (posse peccar, as Augustine would put it).

The Scripture is clear on the fact that Adam was a free agent. God had given him the ability to choose. But that is not the same as saying that He made us inclined to sin.

God's original design was that man should enjoy perfect tranquility. Or, in the words of the children's catechism, "God made man holy and happy." If anything, the state of Adam's innocence and the original righteousness with which he was endowed would incline him



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innocence and the original righteousness with which he was endowed would frame him towards contentment in obedience.

But of course, this is not how things ended up. Even though Adam and Even enjoyed a time of perfect tranquility, it eventually came to a screeching halt. The first six verses of chapter 3 recount this for us.

II. The entrance of evil [3:1-6]

And we see that sin entered the world through the disobedience of one man. Adam took the fruit and he ate. It was nothing other than a direct transgression of the one command God had given. Through this we see what evil really is. Evil is sin. It is disobedience. It is rebellion against God and His law. You remember that God had given Adam one command, "Do not eat of the fruit of this one tree. All the others are free for you to partake of, but this one is off limits. You must not eat of it."

But Adam did not obey. He chose to defy that command.

And the moment he bit into that fruit, history changed.

YOU must keep in mind that Adam is not just acting for himself here. He is acting as the federal head of mankind. The actions of this one man are the actions that are applied to us all.

Now, there are people who object to this kind of thinking. Many people say, "That's not fair!" Why do I have to be accountable for his actions?

We have to remember that Adam was acting as our representative. And this is something that we do all the time. In a few weeks, you will be going to the ballot box and electing people to represent you in Washington. These officials that we elect are charged with the duty of acting on our behalf. And the choices they make, of course, are essentially our choices. Their decisions affect each and every one of us. If they choose to raise taxes, then your taxes will be raised and you have to comply.

That's how a federal system works. And here we are to understand that Adam was acting as our representative. He was the head of Eve, and the head of all the human race. Just like you fathers. You men are the heads of your home, and everything you do affects the rest of your family. As the head, your decisions have repercussions for the rest of your household. It might even have repercussions for generations to come.

That is how it was in the beginning. Adam and Eve were our first parents. And the decision of Adam to rebel against God had serious repercussions for the rest of the human family. All the sons of Adam and all the daughters of Eve were plunged into sin by his act.

Now you might say, "Well, if I were there I would never have done such a thing!" I hear this accusation quite often. To which I respond by saying, "OH PLEASE! Spare me such foolery!"

You and I fall into sin a thousand times a day. I wonder if Satan even bothers to contend with us. We are too easy of a target. It takes the sport out of it! With the amount of sin in our lives and the feeble ability we have to resist temptation, such a thought that we would be better than Adam is ridiculous!

What's more, we shouldn't think so little of Adam. God would not create a schlub. Adam had to have been a noble creature. We already saw that he was endowed with innocence, and we know from his naming of the creatures that he was created with a supreme intellect.

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The reality is that the best man was presented for the job. And despite this, he failed the test, and the ruin of mankind was made complete.

This act of course, did not spring entirely out of the blue. We see that there were some promptings that led to it. And that is the main substance of what is recorded in these verses. The passage tells us that there were a number of things that led up to Adam's eating of the fruit.

And there are so many things we could talk about here. The most important thing to note though is that this all transpired because of there was an attack upon God's word and God's order.

Satan's method was a two pronged strategy. He attacked the word and he went after the woman.

There is a great deal we could say about Satan's attack on God's word. But I want us to focus on the other point of attack. I think it is a lesson that all the men in this congregation need to think about.

You notice that he didn't initiate his advance by going straight to Adam. He posed his question to Eve. His advance against humanity was to get at Adam in a round about way.

When you imagine this scenario, don't think that Eve was all alone. We tend to think that it is almost as if she's getting mugged in a back alley all by herself. That's not the way it happened. The context reveals that Adam was right there. It says in verse 6 that she gave the fruit to her husband who was with her. And what you should see is that Adam's fall is already underway.

As the head of Eve he should have stepped forward and put an end to it right there. He should have been zealous for the Lord and said, "NO! WE WILL HAVE NONE OF THIS!" And he should have grabbed his wife's hand and ran.

And it wasn't just his zeal for God it was his zeal for his wife. Adam sort of stands there and watches this transpire. And he watches his wife eat it, as if to say, "I'll let her do it first and see what happens. If she dies, I'll know not to do it." It's like saying, "Go ahead honey. You be the guinea pig."

There is a sense in which Adam's eating of the fruit is just the culmination of his sin. He had already abdicated his role as head.

And I point this out because we as men need to recognize what this is saying about our duties in the home. We have the duty before God to lead our families in the fear of God. We have the responsibility to be proactively seeking to maintain the purity of our wives and daughters and our sons.

Our job is to protect and preserve. This is why we are to lead our families in the Scriptures each day. This is why, if need be, we take the TV and chuck it out the window. Or say, "We are not going to let you hang out with so & so anymore." God calls us to be the guardian and protector of the house.

Adam didn't do that. And for that reason, we are where we are. Better yet, "We are what we are."

You might say, "Well what do you mean by that? What do you mean that 'we are what we are?'"

Well, things are different now. Our essential nature has changed. That's what verse 7 tells us. Verse 7 tells us of the repercussions of evil.

III. The repercussions of evil [3:7]

It says, "Their eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths."

Things were suddenly different for Adam and Eve. In this verse you see that they incurred much more than just the guilt of that first sin. Their whole nature had changed. They weren't able to look at each other the same. They were no longer able to frolic about in the garden as they did before. The moment they had tasted of the fruit their whole orientation was transformed.

The poison of sin immediately begin to course through their veins. Immediately they were filled with lust and, along with it, the shame of being exposed.

Of course, the rest of the Scripture will develop us what this means. But we have presented here a quick glance at the depravity of man. Verse seven is telling us that as soon as Adam took that bite, he died.

He didn't drop to the ground and die physically, but he did die spiritually. Man was now dead in his trespasses and sins. The one act of disobedience had permanent damage. The ramifications were significant because now he was utterly opposed to all things good. He lost his original righteousness. That innocence immediately evaporated, and now they were utterly contaminated with the stain and pollution of sin.

So is everyone who had been born of Adam.

That might be a hard statement to swallow. But that is the real truth as to our nature. When it comes to the problem of evil, the real problem is you. The real problem is me. It is what now resides inside of us.

That's not the way we wish to conceive of things. We do not want to recognize ourselves as the real problem. We would like to pin the evil on something outside of us, like our environment or our upbringing. But the truth is we are the problem.

There within our chests is a dark pit of wickedness, the potential of which we cannot fully imagine.

The answer to the problem of evil is to be found right here: There is no one righteous; no not one. There is no one who does good; not even one. No one seeks for God, but all have turn aside and become worthless."

You might say, "Well that is not very Christian of you!" But in reality, it is the most Christian thing to say. Because that is the sum and substance of Christianity.

This is why Jesus Christ came into the world. He came because you and I lost this innocence. It is because we are guilty before God of having broken his law and are under the power of sin. He came to save us from our sin.

The New Testament points out that Jesus comes to earth to be the Second Adam.

The book of Romans, "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."

As we look at Adam, we are sorely disappointed. We see that he failed the test. He failed to remain true to God. But where Adam failed, Christ succeeded. The New Testament shows us that Jesus came to be the new and better representative—the better Adam. For Jesus' life was spotless. He lived the perfect life.

He was tempted, but he did not succumb to it. This is why we say that Jesus is the only Savior. He is the only one who can remove the guilt of Adam's sin. He is the only one who can make us right with God.

So the end result is that you can either be in Adam or in Christ.

And that is where we end today. You must understand that this passage is here to drive you to Christ.

You can either continue about your merry way and remain in the guilt of Adam's sin, or you can turn to Christ.

In the upcoming lessons we will have opportunity to flesh it out, but here we must recognize that "in Adam's fall, sinned we all." And there is only one remedy for this evil: It is the Lord Jesus Christ.

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