

What Is Man?

Lesson 3

The Curse of Sin

Forum



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What Is Man?

Lesson Three: The Curse of Sin

Discussion Forum

With

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Question 1:

What were some of the consequences of Adam and Eve's fall into sin?

Dr. Philip Ryken

As we open up our Bibles and turn to the third chapter of Genesis and see the decision that Adam and Eve made to eat the forbidden fruit, it's hard not to read that passage with a deep sense of sadness, because we live in a world that is broken, and it's broken because of the consequences of sin. And there are all kinds of consequences of sin. We see that already in Genesis 3. We see Adam and Eve ashamed of what they've done, which is why they hide from God. They are guilty of sin, which is why they don't have a good answer when God comes to correct them for their sin. They feel guilty about what they've done. They are alienated from one another. One of Adam's first impulses is to blame Eve for the fact that she was the first to sin. We're also estranged from God. And that's true, that's evident as well in what Adam says, because he doesn't just blame Eve, he blames God for giving him Eve, and there's a sense already that there's an alienation from God that's a consequence of sin. And then as you continue on in the Scriptures, and you see Cain murdering his brother Abel, and as you see lying and deception and greed and lust and pride and all of the other sins that flow from that first sin, and even creation itself, the very physical world around us, is burdened by the sin of humanity, and it's longing for a day of redemption. And it's a great sadness that has come into the human race because of sin. But I also want to say that that sadness is not without hope because God has a plan of redemption that deals with *all* of the consequences of sin, and God deals with the consequences of sin in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Dr. Frank Barker

Well, according to Romans 5, some of the effects of man's fall into sin, it says by one man — talking about Adam — sin entered into the world and death passed on to all

men, for that all sinned, and the meaning is all sinned in him. He represented the whole human race, and when he sinned then his guilt was transferred to the whole human race. Also, his corrupted nature was transferred... Then when Adam had children that corrupt nature was passed on to his children so the whole human race came into existence with this corrupted nature and rebellion against God. And so, that was one of the effects. Of course, another effect was that this curse was on the whole earth so that the earth would not bring forth the fruit as it had, and it would bring forth all kind of diseases and that type thing. So, the whole world is in bondage. Now it says when Christ comes back, that bondage will be released — in Romans 8 — but it had lots of effects.

Dr. John McKinley

The consequences of humanity's fall into sin extend, in a first place, to destruction of relationships and capacities that humanity was built with. So, in relationship with God there is loss of that, there is separation, and that leads to the unraveling of everything else the human is supposed to do and the connections that humans are supposed to have to each other and to the environment. So, within ourselves, human beings now are trying to bear this burden of being the center for their lives, instead of God being the center, because our fall into sin, we're now trying to relate everything to life as ourselves at the center, and that is too much for us. It crushes us and leads to all kinds of identity issues and pride in the first place, and these illusions that we can be in the place of God. In relationship to each other, we are constantly trying to use each other, and competition and hostility still living with ourselves in the first place, instead of God in the first place, and so you have a destruction of relationships. Right away, with Adam and Eve, it shows, and as the human race unravels you have people murdering each other very quickly. In relationship to the created world, you've got chaos in creation where you have now storms and animals destroying each other. Everything is now hostile to life because humanity was supposed to order creation under God's rule, to live in ways that is for well-being. But now, having misled creation, cut off from God, everything is kind of off the tracks, and now things are destroying and self-destruction is just working its way out through all the extension of creation.

Question 2:

Why does God hold all of humanity accountable for Adam's sin?

Dr. Steven C. Roy

In the third and fourth centuries, in the debates between Augustine and Pelagius over sin and grace, Augustine's position was that God did hold all humanity accountable for the sin of Adam, that original sin. He affirmed that all humanity, all subsequent humanity, inherited from Adam both legal guilt and moral corruption. And this position of Augustine, over and against that of Pelagius, was affirmed by the church in the Council of Ephesians in the year 431. And that has been the dominant position

in the church ever since. But the question then is why? Why would God hold you and me and all subsequent humanity both legally guilty and morally corrupt as the result of this original sin of Adam? Augustinians have affirmed in general that that is because of a unique and special closeness that exists between Adam and all humanity. Now, among Augustinians, there are two primary ways of explaining this closeness. There is a position that's been called "realism," which was the position of Augustine himself, and many others, that accounts for this closeness because of Adam being the first human and the biological head of the human race, and in a very real sense all humans are "*in*" Adam. Even as an example would be how the author of Hebrews argued that Levi, the founder of the Levitical priests, was in the loins of Abraham when Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, who was the forerunner of the order, the priesthood that Christ himself would one day have. So, realists would say that this connection is *natural*. The other view among Augustinians has been called "federal headship," which says that the closeness between Adam and all subsequent humanity is *covenantal*. They would argue that Adam is the covenant head of a covenant of creation that God had with all humanity. And so, as covenant head, Adam represents us all, and so his actions — in this case, his sin — is rightly held, we are held accountable for that. In an analogous way, Paul will argue in Romans 5 that Christ is also the covenant head of his people of the covenant of redemption. And so, even as Adam's sin was transmitted to the people of his covenant, so Christ's righteousness is as well. My own position is that of federal headship. I think this best fits the covenantal structure of Scripture as a whole. It accounts for the comparisons that Paul makes in Romans 5 and also in 1 Corinthians 15 of Christ as the second Adam whose righteousness, obedience and righteousness also impacts his people. I think this best accounts for the reason why God holds all humanity accountable for that original sin of Adam.

Dr. Guy Waters

God holds all people, except for Jesus Christ, accountable for Adam's sin, because Adam, when he sinned, sinned as our representative in a covenant that God made with Adam, and in Adam, with human beings, his posterity. The response to that on the part of many is, that's not fair. How can God punish me for something that someone else did? And I think a couple of things are helpful to remember. First, that God is sovereign, and he is free to set up this covenant because he is our Maker, and he did so for good purposes. Second, we should remember that salvation comes to sinners along those lines. Jesus Christ came into the world as second Adam, and he bore the curse, and he won life for his people as their representative, and to any who puts his trust in Jesus Christ then all that he has done as representative becomes theirs. And that's not fair, but that's the grace of the gospel. And so, when we are concerned or when we hear people expressing concern about fairness, then we should invite them and ourselves to look to Jesus Christ for the grace that God has lavished on those who would come to him.

Question 3: Why did God allow Adam and Eve to sin?

Dr. John McKinley

We wonder why God would allow Adam and Eve to sin because he has the power to prevent them, and he's good, and so why not stop the problem that's going to cause all this distress to many people in creation? And it seems that God is wanting to create good, but bring creation to perfection by upholding their freedom all the way through. And so, to get a free creaturely response, for us to relate to God and enjoy him and honor him without being controlled, he has to also permit us to misuse that freedom temporarily. So, the long-term plan is to shut down on sin forever, but in the meantime he has to let us do some damage, and including damage to ourselves, knowing that he has the solution for it, where he's going to enter into the system and take the curse upon himself. So, he lets them sin because he wants to support freedom, he wants us to have relationship with him, and it's not something that's going to thwart his purposes of bringing creation from good to perfect and complete and safe with him forever.

Rev. Agus G. Satyaputra, translation

God allowed Adam and Eve to fall into sin because, firstly, God wanted to create mankind in his own image. God was not pleased to create a robot, and he didn't want to create a robot, because robots don't have the freedom to do anything — including sin. But in the image of God, in God's desire to create man in his image, it included within it man's freedom. God gave human beings freedom so that mankind would really be human, because a person without freedom is a robot, not a human being. And because God wanted to create human beings with freedom, he then allowed sin to happen, as a consequence. But God didn't allow the consequence to negate the possibility of hope, because before mankind fell into sin, God already knew everything, and he had even already prepared a Savior, long before mankind fell into sin. In other words, in reality here were the options: create human beings as robots or create human beings with freedom. And God chose mankind as human beings with freedom, with all the consequences.

Dr. Ken Keathley

When considering the Genesis account, chapters 1, 2 and 3 — God creating the heavens and the earth, creating Eden, populating it with Adam and Eve — the question is always going to come up, well then why did God allow Adam and Eve to sin? The thing to remember is that they're not the original sinners. You might as well take the question back one step: Why did God create Lucifer knowing that Lucifer would rebel and become Satan? The Bible doesn't give us any type of elaborate answer to that question. Whenever the serpent shows up in Genesis 3, he is already cunning and devious with no backstory. And so, the quick and short answer to that question is that the Bible doesn't give us a good and thorough answer to it. There are several things that we do know, though... God is not the author of evil, nor is he the author of sin. The fact that he created a world in which there are genuinely and truly

morally responsible human beings and beings above us, angelic beings, who are morally responsible and evidently have the ability to choose and make moral decisions, it is clear that God thought it was better to have this world than to not have this world, and we are going to have to trust his wise and good choice in this matter.

Question 4:

How does God's moral law in Scripture reveal his character?

Dr. Bruce Baugus

When we think of the moral law, we obviously are thinking about the summary of the moral law in the Ten Commandments. And if we look at the Ten Commandments, we can see that this too is a revelation of God, for example, God being the most glorious, the best, the perfect, the incomparable, and so on. With that being the case, how could there be a moral law that would ever command the worship of anything other than God, that would ever even permit the competitors to the exclusive worship and devotion of God by his creatures? If we think about God as so glorious that he alone reserves the right to establish images and likenesses of himself, which he, of course, has done in humanity, how could he grant that to anyone else who would obscure that glory and skew the knowledge of God by whatever they might manufacture? God, in his divine being, though, is a personal God who has created us to be in personal relationship with us, and so having not given us visible images and idols that signify him, he gives us something far better and far more intimate, and that is his name, and gives us the right to call on him by his name. This is a great honor and privilege. And this is all revealing to us who our God is and what kind of God that we have, a God that provides for us sufficiently and invites us to rest in him fully and in his provision for us. And of course, he establishes for us the Sabbath as a principle of rest and looking to him and leaning upon him... And he is a God who is ever faithful and true. So, when we look at the Decalogue, what we're really seeing from one side are things that we are to do because on the other side we're seeing who our God is and what is worthy of him.

Dr. Patrick Nullens

How do we come from the Law to the character of God? The center of our Christian ethics is God himself. We have a theocentric ethics. He reveals the good. Micah 6:8 is very important; there Micah, says the prophet: God has given — “reveals” — the good. And so, he is the center, his personality is the center. First of all, the word “law” is a problem. The Latin, *lex* — “law” — has a very ... static idea of something that is unchangeable, that is not moving, while God is interacting with us and with his people through the Scriptures, so it is not a static thing. “Torah” means direction; it's referring to the directions of God. God gives us directions, and that's why we have to read the Law always together with the narrative aspect of the Bible. Read the stories and try to understand from the stories how the Law is applied and what does that tell us about who God, in fact, is.

Rev. Agus G. Satyaputra, translation

In all of God's Word we can find God's character behind everything. It's true that, in certain forms, we find that it involves human lives, involves human history, but if we see the essence of God's law, then it actually goes back to God, who gave it. If we believe that it is from God, and see God behind everything, that also reveals God's character, and God's character is revealed in context, in his laws, in his commandments, in his ordinances, in his guidance throughout the Holy Bible. Consequently, when someone reads the Holy Bible from front to back, he is, in reality, engaged in relating, attaching, connecting with God's Word, wherein, certainly he can know God's character. Someone who reads the Holy Bible, studies it will become much closer to God and will become more like God in his character.

Question 5:**How does love for God motivate obedience to God?****Dr. Jay Haley**

One of the important aspects from Scripture that we learn in terms of relationship with Christ is that Christ makes the point that if we love him that we are willing to obey his word and his command. And Christ doesn't say this in a vacuum. He demonstrates it very forcefully in his life. If we take, for example, John 13 as Jesus enjoyed the Last Supper with his disciples before he goes to the cross, we see he does something extraordinary. He takes off his outer clothing and he takes a cloth, and he goes to each disciple one by one and he washes their feet. He does something that only a servant does. And so what Christ manifests in this episode is the whole principle that Paul points out in Philippians 2, that Christ, the eternal Son of God, was willing to pour himself out as a bondservant in obedience to the Father to be the one mediator between God and man. And why did he do that? Why would he be willing to commit himself to such a thing as this? And the answer is because he loves the Father. Not only does he love the Father and willing to be obedient to him, he loves us. And so he told his disciples later on in John 14, he told them very clearly, "If you love me you will keep my commandments." And so, he points out that the impetus for our obedience to Christ himself is demonstrated in our love for him. And so, the point that also Christ makes, which is a hard saying for some, he says, if you don't love me more than anyone or anything else in this world, you are not worthy of me. Well, what is Christ saying? He's saying just as I loved you, so must you love me, and anything that supersedes your love for me is evidence of the fact that we're not in real relationship, because you don't understand my love for you and, therefore, outside the work of the Holy Spirit, unable to do that which I've called you to do in love.

Rev. Gao Zhen, translation

The Bible describes loving God as obeying him. Jesus says, “If you love me, you will obey my commandments.” This has very deep implications for our relationship with God. If we are to God as merely a servant, or as a slave to a master, then there would be fear [in the relationship]. But if it's a relationship of love, then there is no fear in serving and obeying God. When we love God, we delight in submitting to him, so we offer, deny, and sacrifice ourselves willingly. This kind of love pleases God, so he equates it with obedience.

Question 6:
Since love for God and neighbor summarizes the law, is sin fundamentally unloving?

Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

We hear in Scripture that love for God and neighbor is the fulfillment of the law. And this raises the question, is sin fundamentally a lack of love? Well, ultimately, when you peel back the layers of the onion, that's probably true. And yet, because love has become such a cliché today, a mere sentiment, we don't really get very much traction in the truth by making that observation. We need to go back and remember that the biblical vision of loving is affectionate self-giving for the benefit of a valued other. And really, when it's understood that way, it cuts right to the heart of the fallen human spirit. At the heart of our human natures in their fallen state is a passionate self-interest and self-regard that is so fierce and so consuming that it enables us to trample on others. It is ultimately selfishness to the height of intolerant trampling on all that threatens or is perceived to threaten our pure self-interest and self-indulgence. Christ came by his Spirit to make us new inside with a capacity to open up this hard shell of narcissism and create space for the inconvenient other, and it is in that capacity to widen the sphere of our self-interest to encompass the God who created us and makes claims upon us, and encompass the neighbor who needs us and needs our compassion, that we begin to turn the corner and move in the direction of God's best and leave behind the characteristic odor of sin.

Dr. Matt Friedeman

Jesus taught that the love of God and neighbor summarized the law, and the question would be, therefore, is sin fundamentally being unloving? And I think there is a strong case to be made for that. It's really interesting who Jesus asks us to love, however. Love of God, that's kind of obvious, but love of neighbor? Recall that in the Luke account the answer to the question, “How may I obtain eternal life?” is answered with love of God and neighbor, but then it goes on to say, “Who is my neighbor?” And it talked about in terms of a race story; it talked about a needs story. It talked about someone bleeding by the side of the road, so, boy, that encapsulates a lot of love. I've got to reach out to someone who I ethnically don't like. I reach out to someone who's in tremendous need who might put me in a position to get hurt in the next several miles of this road. And then, of course, Jesus teaches, yeah, but I want

you to be loving towards even your enemies. And so, boy, there's all kinds of real challenges in this. Love of God and neighbor? It's standard, but I think it almost comes too easily off our lips. It's a major challenge in the Christian faith.

Question 7: **What do theologians mean by the term "original sin"?**

Dr. David VanDrunen

What theologians mean by "original sin" is the sin with which each of us is born. So, each of us individually are born as original sinners. And there's some variation among theologians as to what exactly that means, but in the mainstream of the Reformed theological tradition, there are really two aspects to this original sin. One aspect is the idea that we are guilty in Adam, that we are all in this covenant and organic union with Adam as he fell into sin, and we are now guilty. We are born in sin because of Adam and we lie under God's judgment because of that. And I think this is a very important point that Paul makes in Romans 5. Well, there's a second aspect to original sin, and that might be referred to as our original corruption. It's not just that we are born under God's judgment or are conceived under God's judgment, but from our various earliest days, our natures are corrupted. As Paul says in Ephesians 2, we were dead in our transgressions and sins. So, not only are we guilty in Adam, but it means we also add to our own guilt every day. We are prone to evil, and apart from God's grace, his sanctifying grace for us, we will continue to sin and to be unable to please him.

Dr. Glen G. Scorgie

The term "original sin" is one of those standard theological phrases... Original sin has to do with the first-ever willful disobedience of human beings in our representatives Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. But the doctrine of original sin affirms more than that this actually happened. It also affirms, and this is very important, that somehow the consequences of that first sinning are transmitted intergenerationally through the centuries to all human beings, and that this is an intergenerational transfer, a recycling, a repetition that no one escapes, that we're all implicated universally. Now, this is a big mystery. Some people plead that it's unfair. The truth is we don't fully understand, or at least have a Christian consensus on this mystery, but empirically it seems very plain that this is what's going on. And that's the doctrine of original sin.

Dr. John Hammett

The term "original sin" is used by theologians with two different meanings. The first is referring to Adam's first sin, so the actual original sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden. More often we're using that term "original sin" for the consequences flowing from that sin. So, what's happened to human nature as the result of that first sin? And the reason why we have to ask that question is we find in our experience that humans,

all humans, from birth onward have this propensity so that they instinctively seem to act in wicked ways. No one has to teach a child how to lie or be selfish. They come from the womb already equipped to be that way. It begs the question, why? Were we made this way? We say, well, no. There's been, between the creation and now there has been a Fall, and the original sin has affected all of us. And whether we see that simile, that Adam was somehow the head of us, in terms of being in the loins of Adam, whether this is a representatively — he was our representative — but in some way there's some connection between what happened to Adam and Eve and the fact that all humans follow in their footsteps. And so, when we talk about original sin, we're talking usually about the consequences. What happened to us, to human nature, as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden?

Question 8:

Why did humanity's fall into sin have such terrible consequences for humanity and creation?

Dr. John McKinley

Yeah, we wonder why when Adam and Eve sinned it affected more than just them. Why did it affect other people? And why did it affect the rest of the creation? We have a statement that “cursed is the ground because of what you've done” — what God tells Adam in Genesis 3 — and it seems that God has created human beings to be not stand-alone things, but we're a corporate family tree, and what the first human beings did affects all the rest of us. And then he also created human beings in a tight relationship with the creation. So, the details of this show up — Genesis 2:7 — the man is created from the ground, and the ground is the *adamah* and the man is the *adam*, and we were created to rule creation from creation. And in effect, it was put into our hands, and we led creation away from God. So, within humanity we brought pollution on ourselves. It's a twisted family tree, and everybody is created out of that twist. And so, God is creating people through procreation, but he's using warped wood, as I think Kant said, and so he is creating them, but they are distorted. And then creation is suffering the chaos of our mismanagement. The salvation comes by God becoming a man and steering creation back to him; so us, individually, but then the whole creation. And Paul gives us this link in Romans 8, that the creation is desiring to be free from its bondage to decay, and the freedom is the children of the sons of God.

Dr. James K. Dew, Jr.

Christianity says that when Adam sinned that the whole creation is now cursed, and there's a result of that for us as well. We fall as well; we stand guilty before God, we are in need of salvation. And it's a very normal and natural question ... for someone to ask, why? And I think that we have to go back and look at those statements in Genesis 2:16-17 and then Romans 3:23 as well. In Genesis 2 it says, “Don't eat this

fruit, and the day you do it you shall surely die.” In Romans 3, the Bible says that the wages of sin is death. And so you have this, it looks like a formula, where God is saying, “If you sin, I will kill you.” And the natural question to ask is, why? What is the logic or the rationale behind sin and the resulting damnation and destruction that comes to the earth as the result of that? That’s the natural question. And I think what we have to remember is, first of all, who God is. So, we say a lot of different things about God, and we could list a lot of those attributes right now, but let me just mention one. God is the creator, which means as Creator he’s the one that gives life. He’s the fount of being and the fount of existence. He’s the one that brings us into existence and gives us life. Let’s just stop right there. What is sin? Sin is by definition a turn away from God into something else. And so, when we put those two ideas together we can see that God is the giver of life, the fount of life, *life itself*. Sin is a turn away from God. Where we were designed to turn to him, we now turn away from him, which means in sin we turn away from God, which is life, which is then a turn into death. So, the rationale behind this statement, “You eat this fruit, you die,” “the wages of sin is death,” is not just some arbitrary decision on God’s part — “Oh, I know what I’ll do. I’ll kill them if they disobey me.” No. It’s a recognition that, “I made you; I give you life; seek me because in seeking me you seek life. If you turn from me, you turn out of life, and you turn into death.” And so, I say to students a lot of times, “Listen, you were made for a particular thing, you were designed for a particular thing, and that is relationship with God. And when we turn away from that, that life-giving relationship to God that has horrible consequences for me, for you, for everybody, because a turn away from God is a turn into death and destruction and damnation as such. And so, this doesn’t look like to me to be some arbitrary decision that God makes in heaven in eternity past somewhere. It seems to me that it follows logically and clearly that when we turn away from God we are thus bringing death and destruction on ourselves as a result of that.

Dr. Jay Haley

When God created the heavens and the earth, that we learn from the creation accounts in Genesis, after he created all that we see and humanity, he decreed that it was “good.” But he was saying there, one of the things God is saying is, that which he created perfectly reflects his will in his creation, and that which reflects God’s will reflects God himself. And so, at that point in creation, before the Fall, you see that humanity exists in perfect relationship with God Almighty, humanity obeyed the word of God; humanity did, Adam and Eve did that which God had called them to do. Yet, after the Fall, when Adam and Eve decided at that point that they no longer wanted to be subservient, so to speak, or obedient to the will of God, they decided they wanted to be God themselves. And as such, what happened after the Fall is that relationship, that perfect reflection of God in his image was destroyed, not completely, but it was marred to the point that no longer could even creation enjoy this relationship with Almighty God in view of humanity’s willingness to turn their back on this relationship and become gods of their own. And this speaks, of course, of the necessity and the need for a reconciler between God and man, one who would come and renew the image of God that was spoiled in the Fall.

Question 9:
How did God show mercy to Adam and Eve, even when giving the curse in Genesis 3?

Dr. Daniel Treier

God showed mercy to Adam and Eve even in giving the curse in Genesis 3 in a number of significant ways. First and most basically, God didn't destroy the creation he had made. He certainly, in his holiness, would have had the right to do so, but he did not. Secondly, not only did he not destroy the creation, but he goes and finds Adam and Eve, and he speaks to them. Already we have redemptive revelation being initiated by God... Even when they would prefer to hide in their guilt and shame, God pursues them. Thirdly, we can say God doesn't just speak to them, but God provides even further for reconciliation. God provides the garments to cover them in their shame, and this may also indicate the beginnings of atonement, something gesturing toward sacrifice, so that not only shame, but guilt is going to be addressed. Fourthly, we can say that God will not leave rebellious humans in their self-destruction. His barring them from the Tree of Life is not merely judgment. It is also, ironically perhaps, life-giving. We see that this is so if we look at the Tower of Babel episode, and we see what aggregated human potential might choose to pursue and might threaten to accomplish if left to itself. So, God barring humans from the Tree of Life now, keeps them from destroying themselves in combining moral autonomy with this drive for immortality. Instead, the flaming cherubim suggests that people will now only be able to come into God's presence when they pursue the cultically-provided means through having their sins atoned for that God makes possible. Then and only then, may people come into God's presence and have life. So, fifthly, we might speak of God showing this mercy in terms of the concept of preservation. God doesn't destroy the creation, but God doesn't simply leave it in its fallen state, and God doesn't instantly and comprehensively redeem it, but God preserves it for the sake of redeeming it. And that signals something very significant about what God is ultimately going to accomplish in his redemption. He's not going to redeem us out of earth and its cursed history, he's going to redeem us by transforming that earth and the meaning of its history into a new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness dwells.

Andrew Abernethy, Ph.D.

When you look at Genesis 3, which depicts the fall of humanity, where Adam and Eve have sinned, and they're hiding in shame, God's calling out to them, and they're doing some blame shifting, and as God kind of works through the curses, first to the serpent then to Eve and then finally to Adam, we see a lot of dimensions of curse. There are some bad things that are going to be coming about as a result of their sin. But what we see following the curses is a remarkable display of God's mercy. As

they're made to leave God's presence in the Garden and depart from it, God kindly makes them some animal skin clothing, which is a remarkable, remarkable display of God's care for his people. Even though they had sinned against him, he was concerned about their well-being outside of the Garden. And this little sign shows that God's not done with humanity yet, and this prepares the way for the rest of the story, where God continues to pursue humanity outside of Eden with a hope of redemption.

Dr. Jeff Lowman

One of the great testimonies of the grace of the Lord is that he comes to Adam and Eve immediately after the sin, immediately after the Fall, and he comes to them in his mercy and his grace. He speaks to them, first speaking to the serpent, and actually, as he speaks to the serpent — and in speaking to the serpent he's speaking to Satan — he gives a promise, he gives a testimony of God's grace. And what he says is that there will be enmity between the serpent's seed and the woman's seed... But then he makes a promise when he uses the word "her seed" because it's the only place in Scripture where "her seed" is used. Usually it refers to *his* seed. But here, in the very beginning of the book of Genesis, you have a reference to one who is going to be born of the line of the woman, which would be the virgin birth. It's an incredible way that the Scripture fits together. And in doing that, he also says that, of her seed, this one will crush the head of the serpent, and the serpent will strike him on the heel. And so, he is speaking about the coming of one of the line of the woman, this one who will be uniquely born, and that he will mortally wound the serpent, he will mortally wound Satan. And that promise, which is really the unfolding of the rest of Scripture as it brings about the truth that God is going to send a Redeemer, that he's going to send a Messiah who will come through the line of the woman and who will redeem his people. We also see in that promise the fact that the serpent will strike the seed of the woman on the heel, but it's interesting that through that striking, that through the cross itself, the serpent head is crushed and God's people are redeemed.

Rev. Dr. John W. Yates

In Genesis 3, when Adam and Eve are cursed by God and evicted from the Garden, I think one of the surprising things we see is the evidence of God's mercy in the midst of that discipline. You see it first when he clothes them, he provides to cover their nakedness and their shame. The second thing he does is — we see it as punishment, but there's an element of kindness in it — in the actual eviction from the Garden, the Tree of Life is still there. They could still hypothetically partake of the Tree of Life and live eternally in their rebellion. To put a barrier between them and the Tree of Life is to keep them from eternal rebellion. The third thing that he does is, he provides a way for them to continue living within his creation. It's broken, it's fallen, but he continues to bless them with life. Now death is at the end, and death is a part of the curse, but there's also an element of mercy in the curse of death, because we aren't left to live eternally in our rebellion... While death is foreign and alien within God's good creation, there's an element in which it's a mercy. We aren't condemned to eternally live in rebellion against God.

Question 10:
How has sin affected our minds, behavior and emotions?

Dr. Jay Haley

In the Garden, before man fell into sin, God created humanity to perfectly reflect his own glory, his own nature. And so, in that state, Adam and Eve were able to engage in a relationship with Almighty God in a way that truly reflected his glory. They thought the things that God would have them to think. They thought in terms of God himself and the things that God would have them to do. They did the things that perfectly reflected the law of God and the will of God. They strove to do things that pleased him, and the things that, their emotional state, so to speak, their emotions were always reflected upon Almighty God. They wanted to do everything, if you will, in a way that brought glory to his name, and they demonstrated that before the Fall. After the Fall, however, we see a devastating effect on how we function as human beings, and so no longer was is our mind steadfast on thinking about the things of God and yearning to do the things of God. That which once was filled with light now has become filled with darkness. No longer, now — in our behavior, the things that we do — do we naturally seek to do the will of God. Rather now, that which we formerly did that perfectly conformed to the law of God, struggles to do the things which bring glory to his name. And emotionally even, that which formerly in the Garden before the Fall was pure and operated in perfect unity with the living God, now is chaotic and subject to all manner of swayings and deceptions. This is what happens, or the effects of sin, in the life of anyone. And again, it speaks to the fact that we needed a Redeemer, someone who can come and renew this image that had been destroyed by sin.

Dr. Dinorah B. Méndez, translation

I believe that sin has affected human beings in a holistic manner. We have said that human beings are holistic, made up of intellect, of mind, of emotions, behavior, will, physical body. And sin has also affected holistically. It has affected our way of thinking, our way of reasoning, our emotions, and even our physical bodies. And even the creation, truly, has had a cosmic effect from [our] having disobeyed God. It affected creation because when God made everything, he said everything he made was good; everything he saw was good, but when sin entered this dimension, or into creation, everything was affected holistically, and that is why human beings are affected in every area, and creation is affected in every area, because sin separates us from God. It separates us from our Creator. It puts up barriers in our relationship with God. So, human beings are affected and all of creation — the whole universe, let's say — is also affected by sin.

Dr. Josh Moody

Sin has had a pervasive effect on our minds, thoughts, emotions, the whole way that we're internally wired in our behavior... So, even the most beautiful things, which

reflect our made-in-the-image-of-God nature and reflect the goodness of God and his grace, his general grace in the world, the fact that they are also tainted by sin screams our depravity by contrast... And so, the effects of the Fall on our nature are all-pervasive and, therefore, lead us to cry out for a sovereign rescue. In many ways, the departure point for heresy is to have a too-small view of our depravity, which then leads to an insufficiently great view of the necessity of sovereign grace... So, we must hold onto this doctrine and realize that it takes us intention and in combination to the need for sovereign grace and, therefore, leads us to rejoice in that grace as we receive it.

Prof. Brandon P. Robbins

The question of how sin affects our minds and our emotions and really the whole thinking process is definitely among debate within Christian circles. Of course Romans 1, according to Paul, says that by nature — because of the Fall, right? — man suppresses what should be known about God in our unrighteousness. But Jesus even says that the men of his day can determine things by looking at the sky and figure out whether it's going to rain or, you know, be able to determine the seasons, so it depends on what you mean. For some, the natural man, outside of being regenerate or having a new mind in Christ, is unable to really see the things of God because they, by nature, suppress that truth in our unrighteousness. But they can know some things, right? They can learn about math: 2 plus 2 equals 4. They can know things like, this is a circle and this is a square. They can understand propositions. But do they rightly apply those things? Do they have true biblical wisdom? Of course not, because the beginning of true wisdom, right, is the fear of the Lord.

Question 11:

What do some theological traditions mean when they refer to humanity's state of corruption after the Fall as "total depravity"?

Dr. Scott Manor

The term total depravity is really the first of five main points within what we would call "Calvinistic" theology, or Reformed theology. And the idea there is that, as the result of sin, mankind has become completely depraved. And that means in terms of breadth; from who we are, to what we think, to what we do, sin has affected each and every part of us. And so, that's what total depravity is. There's not a part of us that's inherently good. It's been misunderstood often by people thinking that total depravity is less of a sort of a *breadth* idea of sin affecting everything and more of a *depth* idea, that we are as sinful as we could possibly be, that nothing that we could ever do could be understood as anything other than just the pure bottom depths of depravity and sin. And that's not really what the concept of total depravity is meant to convey. Total depravity is meant to just say that there's not a single part of us that stands on its own as being worthwhile or good.

Vincent Bacote, Ph.D.

A term like “total depravity” is an easy one to misunderstand because it could make us think, well, if humans are totally depraved, then people are guaranteed to act as bad as they can possibly act. But that’s not the point about total depravity. Total depravity is not about how *bad* people will act, but it’s about the extent to which sin affects us as human beings. So, total depravity means that there is no part of us as humans that’s untouched by sin.

Dr. Bruce L. Fields

Grappling with the area of total depravity, let me first of all try to describe what it is not, and this is the realm by which much in terms of misunderstanding can take place. Total depravity, for example, does not mean that I, you, will commit every sin. To speak of total depravity does not mean that we are as bad as we can be. No, I think we can still progress along that way. Total depravity does not mean that you and I are incapable of doing anything good. By “good” I mean that which benefits others... Total depravity does not insist that we are incapable of doing things that could be regarded as admirable, sacrificial, for the sake of others. What total depravity basically encompasses is the reality of the pervasiveness of sin. Sin pervades *all* that we are, meaning even in our best thoughts, even in our most noble intents, self-centeredness, a certain self-glorification are also evident. It is essentially total depravity that contributes to the understanding whatever we do in terms of what we assess as good, or what others may assess as good, is still shot-through, is still contaminated before God. All our righteousness is as filthy rags before him. And total depravity is basically the element of the doctrine of sin that helps to explain why that is. It kind of just totally disqualifies us before God of doing anything that would somehow merit his favor, merit his acceptance.

Dr. Guy Waters

“Total depravity” is a phrase that describes the condition of humanity in Adam, and what it speaks to is the fact that sin has permeated every part of our being, our thinking, our choosing, our affections, so that there’s no part of the person in Adam that is free from the dominion and presence of sin. It’s sometimes misunderstood to mean that total depravity says that people are as bad as they possibly can be. And that’s not true. People can always get worse. But it refers to the fact that sin leavens the whole person and that sin has lordship over a person. We’re dead in trespasses and sins, and so it means that if we’re to be rescued or recovered out of this condition, it’s not going to come from within ourselves, it’s going to have to come from without, and the good news of the gospel is that that’s just what God has done for sinners through his son Jesus Christ.

Question 12:**Why does the New Testament speak so strongly against teaching false doctrines?****Dr. Matt Friedeman**

I think the New Testament teaches strongly against false doctrines in large measure because a theological statement, whether it's large or small, is a picture of who God is and a promise of what we can become. So, the New Testament, obviously, and the New Testament writers obviously, want us to worship God and honor him with a correct perspective, a truthful, a holy perspective of who he is. The Bible gives us that. But there's much false doctrine out there too, and the false doctrine comes in to give us a false picture of who he is. And when we begin worshipping that false picture, we become like that falsity. We become wrong. We become sinful. We become unholy.

Dr. Douglas Moo

I think the world we live in is one which has a pretty strong practical emphasis these days. We're concerned with getting things done, and maybe we're not as concerned about the truth behind what we do. I think this has affected the church to some degree as well. We say, well, let's just go out and do the work, do the work of Christ for his sake, but let's not worry about what we believe or fight about those things anymore. And yet, when we look at the NT¹, while it is very deeply concerned about how we live, about the practice of the faith, it's also deeply concerned about holding onto to the truth of the faith. God has done certain things in certain ways. He reveals himself as a certain kind of God. And these truths are fundamentally important for the life of the Christian. We can't separate truth and practice. I think the NT ultimately says, in fact, that we are not going to practice the faith well unless we believe the right things about the faith. So, again and again, in the NT, we see authors combatting various false ideas that very quickly arose in the early church, because the authors are concerned to help Christians with their understanding of these things as fundamental to their life in the faith.

Nicholas Perrin, Ph.D.

You know, one of the most surprising New Testament books is the book of Galatians. And I say it's surprising because this is Paul's first letter — at least I believe it's Paul's first letter — and think about how he starts. He starts without a greeting, and every Greek letter is supposed to have a greeting, "Hey, how are you doing?" He skips that and he goes right to the punch, "I am astonished at you Galatians that you are so quickly turning to another gospel — which is no gospel at all." Then Paul goes on to say, "If anyone listens to a gospel other than the one we preached, even if it's an angel" — even if it's someone like Gabriel — "*anathema esto*," let there be an anathema, an excommunication, on such a person. What Paul is saying in his very first letter is that truth matters. And the reason he writes Galatians is because there are

¹ New Testament

well-meaning people following up on his ministry who are saying, “Well, you know, if you really want to be right, if you want to be on the inside, you Gentiles, you need to be circumcised, and we can help you with that.” And Paul says, “Stop! That’s false teaching.” And you say, isn’t Paul overreacting? Not at all, because Paul sees the very gospel as being imperiled by their insistence of bringing about a fuller gospel through the rite of circumcision. So, for Paul, this purity of the gospel is so important and it plays out not just into notions but in practices like circumcision. We see as we continue to walk through the New Testament chronologically, we see that false teaching is a recurring theme again and again. It occurs in Hebrews, in Jude, in Revelation. Here’s why this is such an important topic, is because people on the outside you can deal with. You say, they’re not like us, the people who persecute us. Okay, we’ll huddle together, we’ll proclaim Christ faithfully, we’re not going to buckle on that, but we know, you know, how to deal with that. Which is much more problematic is the wolves in sheep’s clothing because then they can sow confusion. There’s an element of trust there that they can build on, and if the gospel can be deconstructed by simple moves, and maybe people who are well-meaning — again, not vicious people — then this is something that has to be stopped right away. Paul saw that; the apostles saw that; Jesus saw that. And Jesus makes the final appeal. He says, at the end of the day, by their fruits you will know them. When it comes to false prophets, you will have them. They’ll be part of the tribulation, and so it’s not going to be easy. But look at the character of their life. Whatever they say, before you take that on board, contextualize it in who they are. The Bible makes a big deal out of false teaching because it’s such a dangerous element and continues to be such a dangerous element in the church today.

Rev. Clete Hux

The New Testament speaks very strongly about teaching false doctrine simply because God wants his people to understand the difference between truth and error. For instance, you have, in 1 John 4, John explaining the difference between the spirit of truth versus the spirit of error. And all throughout the New Testament, practically every book of the New Testament has something to say about false teachers, false prophecies, false prophets, and whenever you find that, it typically is surrounding the person and work of Christ, who he is and what he did on the cross. So, if the New Testament gives that much evidence of speaking so strongly about false doctrines, it’s apparently very important from God to his people that we understand the difference between truth and error.

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