

Pastor Don Nelson

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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“BY OUR HANDS? FOR OUR SAKE! ADAM AND EVE”
Genesis 3:1-24; Romans 5:12-19

- **“I do not understand what I do. [The good] that I want to do I do not do, but [the wrong] I hate I do ...I have the *desire* to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the *good* I want to do; no, the *evil* I do not want to do – this I keep on doing.”**

- That is Romans 7:15, 18, 19, but it might as well be me talking. I want to {Eph 4:2} **“Be completely humble”** – then I take pride in my humility. I want to **“be gentle”** – then I speak harsh words. I want to **“be patient, bearing with”** others – then I get irritated by minor annoyances. I want my {Jas 2:17} **“faith”** to be **“accompanied by action”** – then I prioritize convenience ahead of *agape* love.

- It is not that I suffer continual defeat. Like {2 Co 5:17} **“anyone who belongs to Christ”** I have **“become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun”** inside me! Jesus has forgiven my guilt, and He is liberating me {Rom 6:18} **“from slavery to sin.”**

⊕ But here is the paradox: the more God changes me, the more I realize my need to be changed. The deeper God’s transforming power penetrates my heart, the more rot and ugliness it exposes. Today, I am aware of inner corruption I did not even know existed five years ago.

I love the LORD God with more heart, soul, mind and strength than ever. I love my neighbors better than before. At the same time, I see the chasm between God’s

perfection and my sinfulness gaping wider and deeper than I used to imagine.

- Why do I fail to **“do... the good I want to do”**?

Why do I keep doing **“the evil I do not want to do”**?

- Part of the answer is in Genesis 2 and 3.

- In Genesis 2 God creates the first humans.

Adam and Eve enjoy boundless beauty, endless discovery and gratifying work in paradise. They relate to the created order in perfect harmony and have pure, unbroken intimacy with each other and the LORD God.

Our heavenly Father imposes only one prohibition ~ {2:16-17} **“You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will certainly die.”**

The pair already has practical knowledge of obedience and its blessings. Now the LORD plainly marks out sin for them and alerts them to its danger. In wise kindness the Creator draws clear boundaries and makes the warning as obvious as can be.

Still, wouldn’t it be easier if the Almighty made it impossible to sin? Wouldn’t it be simpler if He compelled the man and woman to comply with his will?

- ♥ Remember, love for God is defined by purposeful submission. For Adam and Eve, as for us, intentional obedience is the substance and sign of love for God.

Mindless, mechanical, robotic compliance is great in a machine, but tragic in a person. God desires our love, and compelled obedience is not love.

♥ On the other hand, God's love consists of life-giving compassion. Unearned generosity and mercy are the substance and sign of God's love for us.

Is it generous to coerce love? Is it merciful to use fear or violence to make someone love you? No! That is abuse. That is assault. That is terrorism.

God loves us perfectly and longs for us to love him back, yet God never forces himself on anyone. For their love to be real, the couple must obey freely – as must we.

■ Eventually, they do not. Genesis 3:6 records their fall into sin: **“the woman”** takes **“fruit from the tree ...in the middle of the garden”** **“and [eats] it. She also [gives] some to her husband, who [is] with her, and he”** eats. They trade innocence for guilt, honor for shame, trust for mistrust, oneness for discord, and intimacy for alienation.

How does this relate to me doing the wrong I do not want to do, and not doing the good I want to do?

📖 Their failed rebellion is called the original sin not only because it was the first to happen but because it is the origin of our inherited tendency to sin.

☑ Each of us is accountable for our particular sins; but blame for our general condition of sinfulness rests on the shoulders of our first parents. {Sotirios} **“Original Sin is hereditary....As life passes from [Adam and Eve] to all their descendants, so does original sin. We all participate in it.”**

☐ Please turn to Romans 5:12 ~ **“sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.”** Now verse 19 ~ **“For through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners.”**

When Adam sinned {NLT} **“sin entered the entire human race. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for”** in Adam **“everyone sinned.”** **“Because one person disobeyed ... many people”** (all of us, actually) **“became sinners.”**

☑ It's like the role of genetic predisposition in alcoholism. I believe the two main factors in alcoholism are poor coping skills and certain genes interacting in particular ways. Both are usually present in full-blown addiction.

The genetic half of the equation is beyond human control. The alcoholic didn't ask for the predisposition, their parents did not want to pass it along. There is no moral guilt attached.

Poor coping skills are another story. Childhood environment, hard circumstances, faulty thinking, and bad choices can play into it, yet the alcoholic has alternatives and is ultimately responsible for their destructive actions.

Likewise, my general sinfulness is a condition I inherited from ancestors going all the way back to Adam. I did not ask for it. My parents did not ask for it. There is no moral guilt attached to it.

My particular thoughts, words and deeds of sin are another story. Original sin, environment and circumstances may help to explain but never justify my actual sin. I am ultimately responsible.

Is there any hope? Absolutely!

🌟 Building on our analogy, a genetic predisposition to alcoholism is not destiny. Some people have all the relevant genes and never become

addicted, even if they drink. Others become addicted, but break free and live in sobriety. In the same way, we are not condemned to live as slaves to our inherited sinful nature.

□ Please keep your finger in Romans and go back to Genesis 3.

■ Verses 7-19 outline the consequences of the original sin. It is pretty bleak. But there is good news, too!

☼ 1st, God continues to act in our best interests.

■ In verse 21 the Creator meets Adam and Eve's needs for physical protection and personal dignity by clothing them, even though they do not deserve it.

■ In verses 22-24 our Father in heaven does not let them eat from the tree of life. It sounds like retribution; but immortality in a sin-sick world would be hell.

Imagine the laborer toiling at meaningless work day in and day out without ever coming one day closer to retirement.

Imagine the social reject facing endless centuries of humiliation, anxiety and aching loneliness.

Imagine the political elite taking office, forming invincible alliances, gaining and building and exercising power forever.

Imagine the torturers perpetually refining their techniques on victims who cannot die.

God acts in the best interests of Adam and Eve and their descendants, even after the fall.

☼ 2nd, God announces his plan to save us.

■ In Genesis 3:15 He warns the serpent, **“From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”**

The Father foretells Satan's failed attacks on his Son, and his Son's successful defeat of Satan when He conquers the grave. {NLT study note} **“A strike on the heel is not deadly, but a crushing blow to the head is.”**

☼ 3rd, God gives his Son for our salvation.

□ Let's flip over to Romans 5 again.

■ The apostle Paul describes our inherited sinfulness. Then, in verse 15 he writes ~ **“If”** [i.e., *since*] **“the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the man!”** {NLT} **“This one man, Adam, brought death to many through his sin. But this other man, Jesus Christ, brought forgiveness to many through God's bountiful gift.”**

The crucifixion was necessary on account of our sin. Figuratively speaking, it was by our hands that Jesus died on the cross. Yet Jesus went willingly, so great is his love. For our sake He gave his life.

■ And verse 19, **“just as through the disobedience of... one man”** (the first Adam) **“the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of ... one man”** (Jesus, the second Adam) **“the many will be made righteous.”**

The old Adam still hangs on inside me. That is why the good **“that I want to do I do not”** always **“do, but”** the wrong **“I hate I do ...I”** often **“do.”**

• But praise God! **“It is no longer I myself who do”** wrong, it is my inherited sinful nature **“living in me”** (Romans 7:17).

✪ There are two people inside, battling for control: the old man who serves sin, and the new man who serves goodness. Because of Jesus, the new man is the real me, the Don Nelson that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit intended me to be right from the beginning.

By the grace of God that new man will come out of top. When he does, my lament that “**what I do is not the good I want to do**” will be dead and buried forever.

This is good news of great hope for you and me and everyone who struggles to fulfill the law of love.

And it is good news of great for those of us who agonize over a husband or wife, a son or daughter, a brother or sister, a loved one or friend who is in bondage to their old self, who lives in obedience to sin, who might not even “**have the desire to do what is good.**”

That loved one will never be perfect in this life. They will always have to contend with that old man, that old woman.

Yet God’s grace and salvation overflow through Jesus. By his love and mercy, life and liberty can come even to the most wretched sinner.

They can belong to Christ. They can “**become a new person.**” **If they do, their “old life [will be] gone; a new life [will begin]”** in them. And they will be made righteous.

Thanks be to God!