

A Very Bad Turn

Number three in a nine-part series on what we believe
September 26 & 27, 2009

Prayer. Intro:

The world seems to be in a mess and I'm not sure we're doing much better as individuals. We've been talking about what we believe. Today we come to the idea that humanity has taken a wrong turn. It is popular to deny the obvious, but evidence just keeps accumulating. Even the most idealistic humanist is losing faith in the *inherent goodness of human nature*. It appears that *we all* have taken a *very bad turn*. We've derailed and we can't get back on track without someone to lift us up.

In our last series we looked at Satan's role in the fall of our race. Understanding his approach helps us *anticipate his probable line of attack*. But the devil's temptation is only that - *just temptation*. He can't *make us* do anything. It all comes down to *our decisions*. So today we'll look at our downward turn from the perspective of the *spiritual choices* involved.

Yes, there was a negative influence in the garden, but it was a choice for the first people to leave God behind. It involved a series of choices. From the very beginning, human history has been the story of one turn after another, all in the same direction, away from God. This downward spiral of poor choices results in people being lost and alone. The example set in the opening act of all creation reveals the pattern that we still follow today. It is a series of disastrous decisions that includes at the outset...

1. The choice to reject God's Word.

Let's start at the beginning to see how easy it is for any of us to wander off to our own way. This time through the familiar material of **Gen 3** we'll focus on human choices, not supernatural strategies.

Adam and Eve had an ideal environment. They reigned over all and reflected the glory of God. The description

depicts beautiful harmony. Nothing was out of order; there was *no pain, no terrorism, no graffiti, and no one overcooked vegetables*; things were great. But anywhere after chapter 3 in the Bible, you see pain on parade. You read of the same things that we see in the headlines everyday. *Hatred abounds. Suffering is widespread.*

Gen 3 describes what happened, what went wrong. **1-3** Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

Note Eve's decision to *add a little something* to God's Word. She went beyond what God had actually said. This is the beginning of legalism. People add to God's Word today as well. We don't take God's Word at face value but feel the need to modify it. I've talked to many people who can't accept the gospel of grace saying, *It can't be that easy!* It's human nature to complicate *the simple way of salvation*. And when we make elaborate lists of *do's and don'ts* we risk causing people to reject the true gospel. *That's not for me! I left my faith because the focus at our church was always on what wasn't allowed: things like dancing! Sundays were like going to prison.* That's what we do to people when we add extra rules to God's Word. **T** - It doesn't have to be this way!

oWe can decide to accept God's Word as the final authority, not adding to it or making up our own rules.

We don't need to invent additions. Let's just accept God's Word as-is. Let's accept Christ himself! Listen to how simple he said it is: **Mt 11:28-30** Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. *Why make it so hard?* Take God's Word for what it says!

T - Today we're just *diagnosing* the human predicament. *Next week* we will concentrate on *the cure*: Christ himself. But if you want to trust him for salvation today, that's OK!

T - Let's see the next choice people tend to make that leads them away from God.

2. The choice to disregard consequences.

This is illustrated in the garden as well. Gen. 3:4,5 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." The next verse tells us she fell for this. She thought she could *escape the results of her choices*, just like we do. But she was deceived; there were *inevitable consequences*. The following verses list all they experienced as a result.

Gal 6:7 - Do not be deceived.... Human nature tries to deny this principle. It's been this way since the beginning. Someone is going to ask, *why is there even a way to go wrong? Were Adam and Eve set up for the fall?*

For their devotion to be real, they had to have the *freedom to choose* an alternative. The *one prohibition* that made *disobedience possible* also made *obedience voluntary*. The tree was a test to reveal their allegiance, or lack of it. It was a reminder that they were responsible to God.

But they disregarded the consequences of their actions and we do sometimes as well. Think of when you break something you bought. If you disregard the directions and throw away the owners manual, if you don't use it according to its design, then you shouldn't blame the manufacturer when the machine malfunctions!

We don't have to be like the guy who won a Darwin award for not thinking of the results of his actions. He drove his Porsche onto a railroad crossing and the bars came down. His car was trapped and a train was coming. He

jumped out and ran straight toward the oncoming train to save his sports car! It worked; the car survived.

Another guy who wasn't thinking of the consequences decided to steal electricity. He figured he'd bypass the meter by running a cable from a high voltage junction box straight to his garden shed. The result was *shocking*.

Fortunately, we don't have to pay the price of denying the truth of consequences.

oWe can decide to no longer play pretend, thinking that we can get away with anything we do.

It's a choice to wake up and admit that *cause and effect really are connected!* You can decide to rise above human nature, sin nature, and *stop banging your head against a wall!* Jesus provides the needed wake-up call into reality.

T - Here's another bad turn we take. It's...

3. The choice to distrust God's goodness.

We see this at the very beginning and it is still human nature. Gen. 3:6a *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.* *I think God is holding out on me and I don't want to miss out!* We follow in her footsteps: *If God is good, then why am I deprived of anything? I'll take what I want when I want it.* We play God and usurp his role. *I don't need anyone over me!* The essence of sin is *self-adherence*: we turn from God and *get stuck on ourselves* telling him *we're none of his business*.

It doesn't have to be this way. God is trustworthy and when we trust him to meet our needs in his way, according to his timing, things work out much better.

oWe can decide to rely on God and not turn to alternative and illegitimate ways to meet our own needs.

We don't even know what's best for us, but God does. And when he speaks, he doesn't want our opinion, he

wants our obedience. If we really understand who God is, if we grasp his nature, we will accept his guidance.

Our sexuality provides a vivid example. Are we willing to believe that God knows our needs and knows what is best for us? Or are we going to meet our needs in our own way and disregard his Word and will? Our sin-nature grabs for temporary satisfaction and misses what matters most. In Christ we *reverse the fall* and *trust in God's goodness*.

T - A fourth disastrous decision in our downward spiral away from God is...

4. The choice to neglect our responsibilities in relationships.

This is also illustrated in Gen 3.
Gen. 3:6b...She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Where was Adam when she was making this choice? Some *leadership* he showed! What about *their partnership*? In the same way today, people tend toward *brazen independence* and away from *mutual interdependence*. We neglect our responsibilities in relationships. And we try to look better by blaming others and even blaming God just like they did. Adam: *You made a mistake in giving her to me.*

This tendency to *place blame* on someone else, even on God, is very common. Charles Colson wrote about how hard people work at evading personal responsibility. We like to think of ourselves as *victims* and try to *explain away* the fact that *we lack peace and freedom because of our own choices*. One day Mr. Colson was speaking in a prison. **Quote from book.**

While *the bad news* is how far we've fallen from God, *the good news* is that *God didn't let us go*. He came to get us in Jesus Christ. *He is our only hope for eternal salvation and he's our only hope for relationships right here.* Because of him...

oWe can decide to never slip into indifference or selfish independence. Maybe one of these describes how

you function in relationships: either *I don't give a rip* or *I'm on my own*. These attitudes aren't exactly healthy for your marriage or your relationship with God. I've seen people change when they decide to follow Christ. They begin to function faithfully in their roles and refuse to disconnect from others around them. While human nature tells us to look out only for ourselves, the Christian life is one of harmonious relationships.

T - There is a final decision we see in this account of the fall and it is another mistake that we tend to make.

5. The choice to avoid an intimate relationship with God.

These next verses are so sad but we can relate.
Gen. 3:7-10 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

It's like that reoccurring nightmare when you are back in Jr. High (*that's a nightmare already*). You're in the hall by your locker and you suddenly realize you are naked. You don't know why you don't have any clothes; that is never explained in the dreams.

Here the prototypes of humanity are cowering in shame. What a pitiful picture. Isn't that what *so many people* do? We're made to experience intimacy with God and with others, but we experience alienation instead.

Listen to this interesting Recall Notice I received:

The Maker of all human beings is recalling all units manufactured, regardless of make or year, because of a serious defect in the central component of the heart. •This

is due to a malfunction in the original prototype units: Adam and Eve, resulting in the reproduction of the same defect in all subsequent units. Some of the symptoms of the defect include: •1. Loss of direction •2. Foul vocal emissions •3. Amnesia of origin •4. Lack of peace and joy •5. Selfish or violent behavior •6. Depression or confusion •and so on. There is good news too:

The Manufacturer, who is neither liable nor at fault for this defect, is providing factory-authorized repair to correct this defect. And Jesus has generously offered to bear the entire cost of these repairs!

The point here is that... ***oWe can decide to no longer miss out on the very reason we were created.*** How?

This involves turning to God. *We all* have taken a wrong turn. Without God we are lost and alone. But with him we experience life as it was intended to be lived. This has been a message on the problem. Jesus is the solution!

Concl: I had a conversation this week in which a woman said she wasn't sure what she could do to be accepted by God. Ever feel this way? These choices we've covered are all too familiar. Like the first people, we've derailed and we can't get back on track without someone to lift us up. Let me tell you what I told her. ***Gospel. Prayer team*** available.

More Meat (unused, disorganized ideas)

From our website: *"Originally created to have fellowship with God, man defied God, choosing to go his independent way, and was thus alienated from God and suffered the corruption of his nature, rendering him unable to please God. The fall into sin took place at the beginning of human history, and all individuals since have suffered these consequences and are thus in need of the saving grace of God."*

We've gotten what we've asked for when we left plan A: a twisted and fallen world.

Rom 5:17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

We are just as free to receive power to obey as we are to fall into disobedience.

Gen 3 - There's a difference between righteousness and innocence. Righteousness is innocence that has been maintained in the presence of temptation. Testing either develops or destroys us. Combine this situation with the reality of cause and effect and the stage is set for potential disaster.

Sometimes we do stupid things knowing full well what will result and end up paying for our own mistakes.

We come to a place where we are tired of paying a price we can't afford.

You've probably heard of the Darwin Awards. They honor those who improve the gene pool by •accidentally removing themselves from it!

Selective submission is not submission. It shows pride, self will.

Adam bears culpability. He was not deceived. 1 Tim 2:14 - "It was not Adam who was deceived, but Eve." He knew what he was doing; he followed eyes wide open.

2 Peter 3:9 - God does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. *Do all repent?* No. *Do some perish?* Yes. Why? Because God doesn't force his will on anyone. Evil comes indirectly from a system in which

there are moral beings with freewill to choose. Rejection of God results in pain and suffering.