

HHoeh_Sin_and_Human_Nature

I would like to address a topic this evening which is not unrelated to the world's situation.

The subject is sin and the nature of man, which automatically brings to our attention the origin, cause of sin, and necessarily the nature of Christ who made it possible to defeat sin in the flesh.

If we are to understand the role of sin, if we are to understand the nature of man, we do need to go back into the history of this work and learn a little more about why human beings, how we came to be what we are, and what Christ had in mind when initially the one whom we know as Christ spoke of the fact that someone would descend from Mother Eve to take upon himself what Adam and Eve failed to do.

To take upon himself the responsibility as high priest, the responsibility as savior, the responsibility to undo sin and undo the works of the devil so that righteousness would triumph and the world at large should live at peace.

Long ago this was in fact written in the 1940s I believe.

The question of why we cannot have peace was addressed by the church through then the pastor of the Eugene Orgen congregation because this was before the headquarters was moved here.

And a very fundamental question was addressed.

It's one that to my knowledge world leaders have never addressed or understood.

It's one the church should understand but hasn't focused on because we don't often sit down and discuss some of these things.

After all there's so many more interesting movies in Hollywood to talk about.

That is many of these things ought to be table talk instead of the kind of subjects that entertain people.

But these topics often go unthought out.

Can there be peace among human beings and among nations without the penalty of war having been paid so that peace may be established? In simple terms the question that was posed by Herbert Armstrong then the pastor of the Eugene church is can we have peace if there is no one who has paid the penalty of war who has paid the penalty for murder and hate? Well the answer is there can be peace.

That is the message of the church because someone indeed made it possible to have sin forgiven.

The sin of hate, the sin of murder, the sin of war and all these things that man does can be forgiven.

And if they can be forgiven because a penalty was paid, someone died, someone suffered before he died, then God can indeed forgive because he can accept the fact that someone offered himself in place of man, in place of man having to die for his sins.

Someone has already done that in order now that God can set his hand and remove this terrible tragedy.

A unique thing has beset the world for the last 50 years, let's put it in those terms.

It didn't just start 50 years ago, but we had with World War II the end, the final resolution of problems that had been set in motion in the last century.

Earlier in the last century, it's hard to realize we're moving in the direction practically of 200 years ago now, we began the last phase of what we might call the world of the Middle Ages, the beginning of modern times.

And with the fall of Napoleon, a certain curtain was drawn and a new perspective occurred.

And the last century was a time, the first time in all history, in which the great states of Europe, in the name of freedom of marketing, in the name of lifting the savages and the primitives to new levels, in the name of bearing then the white man's burden, later on a certain people would want to bear the yellow man's burden, we discovered that the bulk of Africa and much of Oceania, major parts of South Asia, were in fact acquired and great empires were established.

In the establishment of these empires, we have what we call jealousy and greed, vanity and pomposity.

Some empires were more likely to be described by one than the other.

But there wasn't a single empire that didn't have some problems, and so this led to a terrible war, because the great empires of the world could not solve the problems that they thought they carried on their shoulders, the white man's burden, to help people who had no understanding, ultimately proved that the peoples of Europe had no understanding, or they wouldn't have been in the war they were.

They could have avoided it, but now they couldn't have avoided it if there weren't a God, and if there were no intervention of God.

But that war was never solved on the battlefield, because November in 1918 was not the ultimate defeat of any power, it was in fact an armistice.

And what was not solved is the remaining battles that were not then continued.

But between 1939 and 1945, the war broke out again, and this time it was settled on the battlefield.

It was settled in the towns.

It was settled in the cities, with the total collapse of one of the major powers.

That period, ending the colonial period in principle, came to an end, and in the case of the victors, it was only a matter of one to three decades before the rest of the colonies were divested.

Then we began, late in the 1940s, a struggle with a new empire, and that continued, let's say, from 49 to 89, just in round figures, because indeed the power was established in Eastern Europe in 1949.

But by 1989, it was over.

One of the two great powers had collapsed.

Now, all during this time, there was no solution to our problems in this world, neither in the United Nations, nor in the struggle between the superpowers.

No one knew, other than with the threat of nuclear war, how to settle the problem of people living at peace.

Now, you cannot solve that problem unless someone has taken upon himself the penalty or the consequences, and unless you were willing to address the causes.

Now, we are listening to a leader, that man, the President of the United States, who has in unusual terms spoken of a new world order.

The 1930s heard another kind of man speak of my new order.

He committed suicide in 1945.

That new order, destined to be a thousand years, didn't last more than 12.

But a new order is now being proposed in which the one surviving superpower cooperates with the United Nations.

And since the United Nations does not have military superpower status, it must use a nation that still has superpower status.

Now, the Soviet Union has super-military power status, and most certainly is not able to use it.

The United States is still capable of using it.

And we are now expending that superpower that we have accumulated.

And it is being expended in an attempt to get all nations to see that we must stop occupying our neighbor's territory and come to peaceable terms if there are questions of border, questions of monetary compensation, or whatever it may be.

So we have become engaged in a military struggle.

The United States is today fighting a military war through the cooperation of the United Nations as a whole, through the financial support of two fundamental nations, but not military support to any extent, who were defeated some 45 years ago.

There is, however, in the Middle East another kind of war occurring.

It is a war that we didn't really anticipate would be part of it.

It is a political war, a war for the minds of a people, in this case the Arab people.

World War II was preceded by a struggle to reunite, to bring together the various Germanic groups, whether they were in Germany, the Free City of Danzig, Austria, Czechoslovakia, or anywhere else.

Now we are finding while a military struggle is occurring, there is a new sense of Arabism.

That is, why should foreign powers intrude in the Arab world, powers not centered in the Arab world, because the fundamental issue is oil? Would Europe expect the Arabs to intrude in European affairs because Europeans do not know how to settle their problems in parts of Eastern Europe? No, the Europeans wouldn't think of that.

And so the Arab notices as a whole that what we discover is other people sense that they have a certain freedom to intrude in this part of the world, because it is the same as saying that if it is left to the Arabs to decide the decisions that will be made can be so dangerous as to threaten the world's economy and the world's safety.

Now why do we have these problems? Well the answer of course is we have some remarkable men like Saddam Hussein who has certain ideas.

How do these ideas get lodged in a leader? And why is it that in some nations you can have a leader like that? How is it that the United States did not have President Saddam Hussein? How is it that Iraq did not have President Carter? Now I say that because perhaps of all presidents he was one of the most remarkable in thinking that the kingdom of God, you see, was essentially the world order.

And we must treat everyone in terms of morality and judge political things that way.

So that is said partly out of contrast and the remarkable difference between these two men.

One could hardly say that President Reagan would have played quite that contrast because he was a man who understood the extension of military power.

We need to ask ourselves how is it that the Japanese conceived before World War II that the rest of Asia was unable to cast out the European and part of their duty was not only to create a co-prosperity sphere for Asians but to carry the yellow man's burden and oust the Europeans of which we were the primary representatives.

Now most Americans never realized that was part of their approach.

What drives some people to feel that their view of the world or their part of the world is the right one? Well now we have heard it proclaimed that we have a just war.

And for the first time a question of a just war is now being addressed.

In modern terms this is a just war we are told from the perspective of a democratic society.

Now from the perspective of a non-democratic religious institution of great antiquity we are told this is not a just war.

So the primary historic religion of Western Europe has taken the view that what is not a just war is going to have to be examined.

So we are in the position today where we discover political leaders, religious leaders cannot agree on what is or is not a just war.

Now one would think perhaps that religious leaders ought to know.

One would think that the people who are in political office and essentially reflect these religious traditions should not take the opposite view.

So we not only have different views, we have politicians taking one perspective, religious leaders but not all taking another.

And then we have of course those who take the view of Saddam Hussein that this is indeed a just war.

And that's why they have stood up to the world's superpower.

So there are three views of whether this is a just or a holy war.

They may use another term but the principle is the same.

How is it that men's minds can come to such divergent conclusions that the only way to solve it is as General MacArthur said through the crucible of war.

That it could not be solved by sanctions and indeed it could not because sanctions are not the solution to all the world's problems.

And this gets back then does it not to asking why we have people whose nature seems so different from country to country and so many times so similar.

These things are remarkable. There are many similarities and many differences in human beings.

Human beings do not all have the same problem. They do not all have the same historic experience.

What makes for these differences and what makes for the similarities of hate, jealousy, murder, greed that typify societies.

Yet within societies there may be people who aren't typified by these.

I have met Arabs and of course ties. I've met numerous other people. I've mentioned both of those just because I can say things individually.

I've met people who were not motivated by greed. Not everybody is. I've met people who were not motivated by hate.

Not everybody is motivated by hate. But you cannot enter into a military machine to kill someone else without realizing that you cannot learn the art of war without being taught to hate your enemy.

That's the starting point. Not how to pull the trigger. Not how to unload the bomb. But how to hate your enemy.

That makes it possible for you to pull the trigger to unload the bomb.

So we are confronted with so many differences and so many similarities.

We have people in the world who would die for Sunday as a Sabbath. We have those who would die for Friday as a day of rest.

We would have those who would die for the Sabbath, the seventh day.

So you have many religious controversies. And look at the politically economic controversies.

Look under the impression that communism is reforming. Yes, communism is reforming.

I think you should be careful how you spell it with a hyphen.

It is having to reform its position, having in a sense internally collapsed on the basis of greed and selfishness.

So what do we need to look at? How did all this happen to the human mind? I turn to the book of Genesis. Now here we happen to have a revelation that tells us a little about attitudes.

It starts out with a remarkable perspective. There is a human being who converses with a divine person or personage.

This divine personage discovers, as he would have expected, that this human being is cooperative.

Out of the ground, the Lord God, verse 19, formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air.

He brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name.

So Adam gave names to all the cattle, to the birds of the air and to every beast of the field.

Now what we find here is the spirit of cooperation.

Adam didn't start to argue. Adam is pictured here as simply cooperating.

After a certain event later transpired, God brought to the man a woman and he brought her to the man.

And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man.

Now he understood what the Creator God here was doing.

He didn't say anything derogatory. He was in a cooperative spirit and frame of mind.

Now that's a remarkable perspective. That's in the second chapter of Genesis.

Now in the first chapter, we simply have the statement, God said, let us make man in our image according to our likeness.

And then it goes further. So God created the man in his own image.

Then God blessed him and said, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.

Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the fowls of the air and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

Now of course, today we have those who don't think we should be fruitful or multiplier at least should have abortions as a right.

But you get the feel that the first human beings here didn't raise all sorts of arguments or questions.

God said, see, I've given you every herb that yields seed, which is on the face of all the earth and every tree.

To you it shall be for food.

No statement made. Who do you think you are telling us what we can eat? Then God saw that everything that he had made was very good, not argumentative, not carnal.

And so we have an interesting perspective.

We are told in the book of Ecclesiastes without turning there that God made man upright.

Now he really did make man upright, of course.

But he also made him upright in the sense that we are dealing with his attitude, with his state of mind.

Then there appeared a serpent.

And the attitude of the serpent now is different.

Has God indeed said, you shall not eat of every tree of the garden? Now he didn't say, God said.

He just asked the question, has God indeed said that? And so he was posing a question.

He was posing a challenge.

He was, in fact, a tempter.

The woman said to the serpent, it would have been wiser not to address him, but let her husband talk to the serpent first.

But a little inexperience there.

And then she begins a discussion.

And it tries to explain.

So her attitude is sincere.

You cannot question that.

And then the serpent let go his little dart.

You shall not surely die.

And so the woman was deceived.

The dart with the woman was not.

But she's sincere and she has become deceived.

So what is remarkable is that you have a situation in which in these two created personages, our ancestors, it was possible to deceive the one person's mind.

So one human being might be deceived.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, it certainly looked that way.

It was pleasant to the eyes, desirable to make one wise.

Now God had never said it wasn't good for food.

He simply said, it's off limits.

And they hadn't argued about it.

They accepted that.

And Eve tried to explain that God had indeed said, you're not even to touch it, stay away from it.

So what did she do? She took of its fruit and she ate.

And now it was all confirmed.

Not only was it beautiful, not only would it make her wiser.

Yes, she had understood something that in fact God had never explained.

You shall not surely die.

She was wiser and she was deceived in thinking that.

So also she gave to her husband with her and he ate.

Now at this point they realized far more.

Elsewhere in the New Testament that is we are told that Adam knew better.

Adam knew this was not true.

He knew that he should not take it.

He made a decision.

The serpent was wise enough not to challenge Adam.

The serpent came to the woman.

Adam made the decision that he would not, in fact, try to keep his wife from doing this.

He cooperated when he knew better.

How can you explain what Hitler did if he did it all by himself? We have to conclude that the Germans indeed must have cooperated with him.

How can you explain everything that was done by Stalin? No, it wasn't done by him.

There were many who cooperated.

So one of the things you learn here, which is basic to the world's problems, is one, that you can be deceived.

And two, even when you know better, you often cooperate and get involved in sin.

It's a very important lesson.

Because people would rather save their own hides, as we say, than they would stand up and be willing to risk theirs so someone else would not have to die.

Adam, in this case, showed that as a human being there was a very terrible flaw.

That when he knew better, he still went ahead and did it because it was the easier decision to make.

He didn't have to argue or try to persuade his wife.

He thought that they would get along better this way.

The next generation, one son kills another, so you see how well they worked their problems out.

All right.

They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

And Adam and his wife disappeared from immediate vision.

And the Lord God called out to Adam, where are you? And then he answers.

He tips himself off very clearly.

He was not an experienced liar yet.

I heard your voice and I was afraid.

Now, there are a lot of people, of course, having heard the voice of their leaders, they are afraid.

That's one of the fundamental reasons we have whole nations who pounce on others.

They have been afraid.

They haven't decided in the first place that theirs is a just cause, a holy war.

They simply are afraid to say no.

Sometimes they're simply afraid of war.

There can be cowardice.

In this case, one form of cowardice is complemented by another.

Adam simply was afraid.

He didn't want to be embarrassed because he had acquired some knowledge that he hadn't had before, misknowledge.

Now, who told you that you were naked? I skipped the background of that because you've all read this before.

I'm quite sure.

Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat? Now the man speaks up.

Now notice the attitude.

The woman was deceived.

She wasn't sure that that was wrong.

The man knew it was wrong.

Now, who was to blame? The woman whom you gave to me.

One problem was the woman.

And you brought her here.

You should have known better.

She gave me the tree.

Oh, incidentally, I ate.

You know how he put that? His part is the last.

The woman and you, that woman again, and I ate.

Now, God saw here a very bad attitude.

Now, isn't it remarkable how quickly this developed? Because before you see none of that as everything is described in Genesis 1 and 2.

So he says to the woman, what have you done? And she admitted that she had been deceived, but it does not appear to have changed her mind very much.

Now, she admitted that surely because it was embarrassing not to.

And human beings don't like to be put in an embarrassing situation.

And so God deals with them in an unusual manner, certainly hardly to be expected if this was a man-made myth.

A certain punishment came upon the human family.

We are now introduced to one of the most important understandings in the Bible.

Let's go back to the first chapter again so we get the picture.

We are told, let us make man in our likeness.

So God created man in his own image.

Now, that's all we are told here.

They are created.

Now, how are they created? So we must go a bit further to chapter 2 again.

Now, you're all familiar with it, but let's just take note carefully.

We discover the Lord God-formed man of the dust of the ground, chapter 2, verse 7.

And he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being or a living soul.

The word being in the New King James is the word soul in the authorized or King James Version.

Man was formed of the dust of the ground, and man was a creature who breathed.

The source of the life that was in the man came as a result of the fact that he was breathing.

None of you would leave this room if you couldn't get your breath anymore.

We'd all be dead right here.

We are dependent on the breath of life.

The story, however, is not finished because we are told.

The Lord God commanded the man saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, verse 16, And of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, You shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die.

Now, there are two points here I would like to mention.

Was it possible for this man to die? The answer is yes.

What gave him life? The physical thing.

God, of course, is the one who imparted it.

I'm not talking of the who, but what? Was the breath of life? You take away his breath and he would perish.

And so it is possible for the man here to be seen as clearly mortal.

Further, it says, Just read it, That if you do what is not right, You eat of that tree, you will surely die.

You will die, not some part of you.

You is the conscious person here.

The conscious atom.

As you will die, as you simply will go to a real sleep, a deep sleep, Deeper than anything, that's called death.

Adam was not going to continue to live and his body died.

He didn't say you will continue to be conscious and go on living.

And I'm going to separate your conscious soul or your conscious spirit from your body and your body will be shed and die and turn to dust.

It is the conscious person.

You see, this is why, and all of us should be able to spot this problem immediately.

If there is an immortal soul or an immortal spirit that has the ability to be conscious on its own, it would be impossible to knock you unconscious.

Now, maybe your brain wouldn't function, but you would know that you're still conscious.

But you know if somebody hit you hard enough on the head that wasn't damaging or fatal, you could be knocked unconscious.

Your body is still living and you can be unconscious.

There's nothing immortal that would survive so that you would simply know that the brain was knocked out, but you know what's going on.

Consciousness rests in the you.

You, that part that was made of the dust of the ground.

That's what Adam was.

Made to be the most remarkable, complex being in this physical realm.

So here we have not only the nature of man.

Adam is not immortal.

He does not fall.

He simply can do a deed that is wrong that we would call sin.

So Adam could sin.

And by nature being mortal, he could die and be sentenced to death.

But there was the alternative.

God put another tree in the garden.

That other tree was the tree of life.

And then if he would eat of that, he could live forever.

So we won't go into that.

There was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life.

The tree of life is introduced in verse 9.

You're familiar with those areas.

Now the fact that he wasn't immortal is indicated by the evidence that there was a tree of life he had to take from and that in so doing he could eat and live forever.

And because of the fact that God had made such a commitment that indeed God decided that they must be driven from the garden.

That has given us in chapter 3.

Lest he put his hand and take of the tree of life and eat and live forever, verse 22, God drove them from the garden.

So the nature of man is fundamentally clear from these three chapters.

Man is mortal and the remarkable characteristics are two.

One, that you can easily be deceived.

And two, that you can often try to justify yourself having, for example, cooperated out of a certain fear, not to upset things, always concerned and making the wrong decisions when you know better instead of facing up to what ought to be done and making the right decision.

Adam was a wimp.

He had to blame somebody else.

That was very sad, but it set the human race in the wrong direction.

And the characteristic, of course, goes further.

It shows the spirit of accusation, the lack of the willingness to cooperate with God.

And it leads, of course, to bad attitudes that must have been reflected.

You did this, you did that, and they blamed each other and the two boys grew up in such an environment and there were differences and their attitude reflects something.

One son is different from either parent and the other is apparently worse than either.

And Cain gets worse and worse.

Then he finally rises up and slays his brother.

And so there was hate, there was jealousy, self-justification and cowardice.

Couldn't face up to things.

And all of this happened because a certain intrusion occurred.

A spirit was more cunning.

Now it's done in simple terms.

But let's go now to another area of the Bible.

The New Testament tells us something more about what's going on.

In the book of Ephesians, chapter 2.

And you, Ephesians, were made alive who were previously dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world.

So there's something about the world around us that we tend to copy the world around us.

Maybe want to feel that the world likes us or we don't want to be singled out.

Maybe we like what the world offers.

You walked according to the course of this world.

And according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, an expression that might not be altogether clear, this Prince of the Power of the Air, this spirit who works in the sons of disobedience.

He has a certain power and he exercises that power through the air in the sense, as it had been described earlier in the last decade and the previous one, with parallels to modern concepts of television and radio broadcasting.

That is, this serpent, this prince, this ruler, if you please, this spirit, influences and has power and in fact puts ideas, spirit ideas, evil ideas, moods, attitudes in the minds of people, little people, big people.

We are affected by the world around us that has already been built by those affected by the devil.

And we are also directly affected by the Prince of the Power of the Air, this one who works in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves so that we yielded to the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and are by nature the children of wrath just as others, whether you're converted now or not, that's the way we were.

Now, lust in English has only one general connotation, that is evil.

We have the word desire, which can be a good or evil desire, but lust is simply an evil one.

Lust may be exploited to be charming and money-making, but it's still on the evil side.

The old Anglo-Saxon and Germanic languages didn't have that division.

If you had a need or a desire for something, we would say in German Ich habe Lust.

I have a desire for it.

It doesn't mean I have lust.

If you were hungry, you have a need or a desire for food.

If you're thirsty, if you're cold and must put something on to keep warm.

So, we discover that the flesh has natural propensities.

You do need to feed the body, you do need to feed the mind.

We have things that must be done in order to keep us alive.

On the other hand, and of course the human family continuing from generation to generation, but on the other hand, how are we going to fulfill these necessary needs? Do we steal in order to get food? Do we get involved in prostitution? Do we fulfill sexual desire? Do we covet something because you would like to have it? Because it pleases your mind or your eyes? So, you see the human body or the flesh has certain needs that justly need fulfillment.

But how should we fulfill them? The answer is we should do it according to the revelation of God, who reveals how to do so.

You don't steal for food, you don't commit adultery, you don't lie to get ahead, you certainly don't kill or murder, you don't covet.

You know, you go through all of those, you pay proper respects.

You should so guide your mind and the flesh that you live in accordance with the law of God, the revelation of God, the example of Jesus Christ.

But there was another spirit.

God said a certain thing and another spirit said, has God really said that? You've got to question him.

You can't take God for granted.

I mean, who does he think he is? I mean, how do you even know there's a God? I mean, there isn't one.

And you know, it goes from one to the other until finally people come up with every possible explanation.

What we discover then is the world affects us.

The devil affects us.

And we are affected in mind and in flesh.

The desires or lusts of your flesh and of the mind, fulfilling the desires of the mind, can be vanity or whatever.

So we discover the remarkable thing that human beings started out to be quite different from the way they have ended up.

You read what Paul describes here, and it's hard to imagine in Romans 1, Mother Eve fulfilling some of those descriptions.

It's hard to imagine Adam fulfilling some of those descriptions in chapter 1 of the book of Romans.

But that was a depraved society.

So what we do discover, very important, is the reason we all have gotten in this condition is that we all have walked according to something other than the walk we should have.

Instead of following in the footsteps of the Almighty, we have followed in the footsteps of the world and of the devil and of our own uncontrolled desires.

We haven't learned to govern ourselves until God reveals we should.

Until God reveals we should and brings us to the place where we begin to want to do that.

A new attitude takes place.

Now human nature starts out in very simple terms.

God made man upright.

Adam's attitude was neutral.

There was no hostility.

It was positive in the sense that it was cooperative.

You don't have any hostility, but Adam had to be instructed.

It's a very simple nature, if you look at it that way.

Nothing that would stand in the way of communicating with God.

But all that came to be changed.

There was hostility, there was argument, and the spin-off lies and murder and violation of God's law.

Because now the man was motivated by something else.

But what is inherited from one generation to the other is not all this.

We all learn these things as we grow up.

Little babies aren't born with all these rotten, to use another term, attitudes.

These ugly attitudes.

But you do discover that it happens often very soon.

That one after the other, bad attitude can get started.

And parents have to be on guard at the beginning, from birth.

We all are responsible for allowing how our human nature has been shaped.

Some nations are able to live at peace with each other better than other nations.

Some people are simply able to live at peace with others in ways that other people don't.

It all depends on how far we each have strayed.

Just as Adam differed from Eve, so men and women differ and women from women and men from men.

We have worldly men and worldly women.

We have people who even become possessed.

It was hard to explain looking at the eyes of Mussolini without realizing that there was a power that had possessed his mind.

When you read the story of course of Adolf Hitler, there were really three.

The congenial Hitler at tea at four o'clock.

Hitler, whose eyes seemed to stare vacantly as he rode to a meeting.

And the Hitler who electrified his audience so much so that the nation followed.

Never, never questioning whether they ought to.

They suppressed every such idea.

So now we have a very good perspective.

When you read Genesis 1-3, and I have kept simple chapters you haven't wandered all over the Bible.

We have alluded to Romans 1, which is a chapter of the depravity of the Roman world.

But the cause of that is laid out here.

Now of course the devil has power.

It speaks about the power of the ruler or the prince of the heir of this world.

So there is a power.

And that power is expressed ultimately through human governments, God ordained human governments.

That they should do what is right in administering justice in a world that as a whole is cut off from God.

Sorry, Romans 14 gives a nice description of some things there that should be had.

I should say 13, excuse me, Romans 13, the first seven chapters, seven verses.

So we have a description, but Paul said we've got to pray for governments.

That if we don't pray that we can lead a peaceable life, we can have a situation where a Napoleon arises in Europe, a Stalin arises in Mother Russia, a Hitler arises in Mussolini, a General Tojo, where you can have all sorts of problems.

Just imagine what it was like for years under Mao in China.

Now there were many evils before, but not all evils suddenly disappeared.

The Chinese have had to wake up to what they've sometimes done to themselves as a people.

And now look what's happened in the Middle East, look what's happened in Iran and in Iraq.

Look what happened in Uganda.

Sometimes something inexplicable.

The average black in Uganda was nothing like Idi Amin and those who followed.

I've been to Iraq.

You couldn't explain all the evils that have taken place simply on the basis of ordinary Iraqis.

I know an Iraqi who was a student and a fact is he was at the level of a faculty member, I believe, at UCLA.

Very, very interesting person.

If he were seated here with me, I don't know what his status today is, but if I were to ask him fundamental questions of life, you would discover that my answer from a previous Bible study and his answers from his experience and what he has learned from the Koran would essentially be the same.

Completely different from the present situation in that tragic country.

No, not all Iraqis, not all Arabs, not all Germans, although most of them, no, they're not all the same.

Everybody, in a sense, develops his own stature in terms of character.

There are certain opportunities through which human nature can be expressed in the violation of God's law.

It can be defined on those ten points of the law or you can look at it in terms of other things.

We all have the chance.

Most people violated the law of the Sabbath, but there are a lot of people who wouldn't think of stealing.

No, we don't all express nature in the same way.

That's very important to realize because we sometimes paint the picture incorrectly.

Sin is sin, but we haven't all sinned in the same degree in the same way.

But sin is sin, nevertheless, and brings death.

Even one sin brings the penalty of death.

You see, the mind of man is essentially non-directional in what can influence it.

When I get home of an evening, I'm influenced, well, presumably I'm influenced by my wife.

Then I'm influenced by radio, television, the magazines that might have come in, newspapers which we generally don't read at home, letters, and further conversation.

We're all influenced from the outside, and we make judgments on everything we hear.

Do or do I not like the music? Do or do I not agree with what was said? What is my attitude? We make judgments on all these things every day.

The degree to which we have been motivated by what we learned from our parents, our religion, our society that was positive, the answers will come out generally positive.

And the degree to which the world has walked wrongly, or we had an encounter with somebody who made us sour and not pleasant to be around, those things can shape our thoughts.

We learn to control these things, or we fail to control them.

In so doing, we shape our minds, we shape our stature, we mold our conduct by the things that we experience every day.

We don't inherit this genetically from Adam.

You don't inherit hate from Adam or your ancestors by your genetics.

You can inherit hate from your ancestors by listening to their wicked stories.

If you want to know why there can be no peace between Greeks, Turks, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, just listen to their stories.

Yes, there were awful things done to each other, but they're presented generally one-sided.

And we can say that far more.

We don't have to leave the Western Hemisphere.

We don't have to leave Pasadena.

Prejudice.

It's there.

That we learn from the around.

That is not what you inherit.

It's not a question of the fall of Adam, and we inherit these ideas genetically.

We inherit simply the physical traits and sometimes drug addiction today, because we can affect our heredity in part, but that's through chemistry.

That's not essentially the will of the mind.

That's through chemistry.

But as we are influenced by the spirit of the devil, he started it in Adam and Eve, and that example shows how quickly his ideas and moods can be transplanted in a non-directional human mind.

Now the devil knows that you don't have to influence everybody by the same thing.

The Germans could be influenced by some things that the French would laugh at.

You can influence the Italians by the things that the Germans would laugh at.

You know, if I were to tell you all the things that some people are not tempted by, you would have really a caricature of different peoples.

Some people are, in fact, delighted by certain things and others are delighted by other things.

The Italian family is fundamental to why Italy has never gone to the same extremes that Germany did, because the Germans, as men, are never influenced by women to the same degree that Italian men are.

Now that's speaking in general, but the Germans quickly learned that if you wanted to keep people from fleeing across the border, you don't want to have some woman talk to the guards if they were Italian.

The refugees would quickly escape.

But you put a German there and you bring a lovely woman and the refugees would be captured.

I can tell you that's what happened on the French and Swiss border.

So different people respond differently.

And the devil knows that. The same thing doesn't tempt everybody.

Not everybody is tempted by chocolate.

Not everybody is certainly tempted by wine.

There are a lot of people who can't stand certain alcohols and others who can't stand to be without.

We're not all physiologically, psychologically, mentally or spiritually tempted by the same thing.

It's hard to conceive of some people being led into eating the most unbelievable diet.

And then you go to other countries and you discover that what's not unbelievable there is still forbidden.

We have different perspectives, how we grow up.

Yes, we can all go in different directions.

The devil simply beams to our minds, whatever it is, that we allow in through our parents, through children as we grow up, and we gradually take on whatever we allow to reside in the human mind in terms of moods and attitudes and ideas.

Then God comes along and we learn to home in if he's calling us on his word.

That becomes the standard.

And so we all in a sense must learn to beam in on God's wavelength to use an expression till we are tuned into what he says.

And we don't wander to the left or to the right.

We've had some students at Ambassador College who long since left.

I don't know what political parties, but the noisiest of them became libertarians, a few of them.

I guess they really didn't fit in any other category.

And some have gone after their own personal ideas religiously.

But we must learn to focus our minds on what God says and what he has revealed.

And God revealed something once to Peter.

He said, well, you're the Christ, the Son of God.

How did Peter know? Well, the answer is God had revealed it to him.

Peter had read enough about the Bible in the Bible or in the Hebrew Bible.

The Old Testament, as we now call it in the Christian world, that there was no doubt what the Messiah would be like.

So when Christ came, he was born of Mary.

He didn't have to be born of an immaculate mother because what she gave in terms of heredity was what was normally inherited just by genes.

Mortal, fleshly life.

That's what you inherit.

And in this case, we're not talking of what he inherited in terms of God the Father.

That's not my point to discuss at the moment.

But Christ came in the flesh.

The Messiah came.

The Savior came.

The one who was Melchizedek, high priest, he came in the flesh.

And what he inherited on the fleshly side was everything from his mother.

The Father was not Joseph.

And what he inherited was simply what has been transmitted from generation to generation in terms of physical heredity that can be studied in biology.

Now what he learned upon birth were the things that a Jewish child learned.

He was not having to wrestle with a world in which octopi were served.

Blutwurst was served.

Pork was served.

I'm linking myself here to physical ideas.

In other words, he didn't grow up in a world that would have been certainly filled with such violations that as soon as he was off his mother's milk, he would have been on things forbidden by the law of God.

Whether he intended or not as a little child, you know, parents push things on their children.

They fry vegetables and pork fat.

You name it.

No, he grew up in a world that was free from that because his father and mother and many Jewish families lived circumspectly according to the law.

And then he also went to synagogue, so he heard the word of God.

And one of the things, of course, that he inherited from his father in heaven was the memory of all that he had experienced.

And every time he heard anything from the Bible, he could recall how that arose and came to be a part of the book.

And he could remember all the background, such that we don't have.

He had background, if you want to know about David and Nathan, all that you know is what is written here about David and Nathan.

But he could recall what it was like to have sent Nathan.

What it was like to have to wonder why did David do that? And so he acquired many such things.

But his nature, his human nature was not filled with jealousy, the spirit of murder.

His human nature is the way every human being ought to start out life, as Adam and Eve did, and as most children actually do.

Now, I don't say all because Jesus wasn't born addicted to crack and addicted to alcohol as some tragic babies are.

But that's not because of genetics, that's what the mother has been doing, and it is physically passed on.

So the question you see is, did Jesus have at any time the spirit of the devil in him? And the answer is clearly, without my having to say it, you already know the answer is NO.

We have the plain and simple statement laid in the Gospel of John.

Let me turn to it here, you're all familiar with that.

Jesus was talking with the disciples, and in this particular case he said, the prince of this world comes, or the ruler of this world comes.

And Jesus at that point says that he has nothing in me.

Now, this of course is something that you read the evening of the Passover, and maybe you should read carefully the material, beginning with chapter 13.

And in the book of John, it's of course very clear what we are dealing with.

He has nothing in me.

There was nothing of the spirit of the devil in Jesus the Christ.

There was the spirit of God without measure.

All other human beings, Adam and Eve, have had some influence of the spirit of the devil in the sense of attitudes and moods and influences and ideas.

And uniquely, Jesus was different.

Jesus was absolutely without any influence of the devil in his life.

On his life from the outside is a different thing, but in his life he was not swayed by the world around him.

Now of course the reason should be obvious, and that's been said, and I won't go into this.

Jesus was God in the flesh.

He has lived forever, and in that period of non-time that we call eternity, he has always made right decisions.

Now you learn from the Gospel writer John, who in his epistle 1 John tells us, chapter 3 verse 9, that God cannot sin.

Now let's be sure we understand it.

Just as God, because God's seed remains in him and he cannot sin.

We're dealing here, earlier it speaks about the relationship of God.

Whoever has a relationship and has his nature in him does not sin.

Now why is it that God doesn't sin? Some people think he's in a mold and can't get out and just has to avoid sin because he has no choice.

Oh no, that's not true.

You see, God is not like Zeus.

Zeus, the Greek God, could do everything he wished except he was ultimately constrained and when the fates said no, the fates said no.

There's nothing he could do about it.

He simply couldn't do it.

So the Greeks didn't know of God.

As we know him, they knew of fate.

Fate was some higher power than Zeus.

That could constrain Zeus.

Now there is no higher power than God.

God has perfect control, perfect self-control.

He has never sinned, never entertained sin, never thought to sin.

The universe did not start from the bottom and worked up.

It starts with the top, so to speak.

Without a perfect God, there could never have been this universe.

We can't imagine what it would be like if somebody was simply fiddling with the universe and finally figured out some way to make it work.

It's the opposite.

A great, all-wise God created a universe of unbelievable perspective.

So great, so remarkable, so complex.

That God is all-wise.

We say he's all-knowing, but I would rather put it in other terms.

God knows all that is appropriate to know.

He doesn't waste his time on the knowledge of evil.

So we need to be a little careful with our terminology.

God is all-wise.

He can know anything that he wants to.

If he chooses not to know of our sins and put them behind him, he no longer allows himself ever to think of them.

It's gone.

He will never bring them up.

Never accuse you later after you've been forgiven.

Never drag you in the mud.

So let's understand that.

God is, in this sense, perfect.

He's perfect because he chooses to be.

It's not that he wants to do something else and can't help but be perfect, but he wished he weren't.

God cannot sin because he chooses not to.

Not because he wants to and can't.

Let's get that for sure in our minds.

We are asked, ultimately, to put as a goal.

Before us, that's what repentance really means.

We choose not to sin.

But when we sin, we have someone who can forgive us.

God the Father because someone paid the penalty in our stead.

And that penalty was paid because someone who functioned as priests to the Most High God, someone who said he was a savior long before he was born of Mary, knew what it meant and volunteered from the foundation of the cosmos to yield himself.

To death.

In order that we could be forgiven and not have to pay the penalty of sin ourselves.

But we had to go through this.

The angels sinned.

We've learned that for a second, Peter, rather, to four.

Jude speaks of their sin as well.

But human beings couldn't just start out.

There's nothing that would ever have enabled man to achieve what needs to be done.

Without, in fact, first having the opportunity to truly understand by experience.

Some have to experience it by doing it.

Others are rather more blessed simply by recognizing the problems that others have brought on themselves for having done it.

So we have a very important situation.

We have a recognition that a savior came whose nature was that inherited from Eve and indirectly from Adam through Eve's and Adam's son, through Abraham and ultimately through Mary.

Flesh that had its needs, hunger, pain, lack of sleep.

Yes, the human body can suffer from all of these things.

Weiriness.

Jesus was tired.

He knew what it was like to be hungry.

But he never sinned.

Because from all eternity, he has not only copied the one who is known as the Father, but he has always made right decisions.

It is a habit to make the right decision.

And you know, the more you resist evil, the easier it is to turn away and not to have to sin.

In this world, it's often difficult for some, but you get into new habits.

There's an interesting verse in John 2, 25.

Now, Jesus knows how difficult it is because he dealt with people.

You see, he knew what it was to be hungry again and again.

He knew what it was to be wearisome.

But he had no need that anyone should testify of man, for he knew what was in man.

Jesus knew what was in man.

He didn't have to have it explained to him.

He could see it.

But as high priest, he also had to feel it.

He knew what it was like for others to be hungry.

But as high priest, he also had to be willing to go hungry.

He had to be willing to know what others endure that's called pain.

That's why he had to go through the process of death.

So that no one could say he didn't sense these things.

No one.

And if that's the case, then he can never be accused.

You remember I said not so many months ago, I think it's very important, when we inherit eternal life as a gift of God, then we will be given the opportunity to judge the world.

And we don't judge angels until after we have judged the world for a thousand years.

That is, we will have demonstrated, not to God who knows, but to any angel who might want to accuse.

We have demonstrated that we can administer the government of God.

Jesus in the flesh showed so that no fallen angel and no human being could say that he hasn't proved it to them.

He showed it can be done, that you can overcome sin in the flesh.

Who knew no sin, Jesus never sinned.

He challenged the Jews, which one of you can convict me of sin? It wasn't anyone, because he could show what the law said and their accusations would have proved to be false.

So we have a very important perspective.

The Jesus inherited nature that was not like most people's natures have become.

But what a little child normally is at birth, what Eve's and Adam's were.

He was the second Adam, because he was not like Joseph Stalin and had to wrestle with Stalin's nature.

He wrestled with the devil.

You see, our warfare ultimately is the same as Jesus.

But we have to, in fact, get it out of us, because we've let it come in.

Jesus, shall we say, spiritually warred with the devil and his demons.

Our warfare has also said, Paul in the book of Ephesians, it's not carnal, it's spiritual.

But Jesus wasn't tempted.

Now the devil tried to tempt him.

God tempts no man. God tests men.

God cannot be tempted.

God cannot be tempted because he knows better.

He knows what perfect love is.

He so understands the difference between good and evil that evil does not tempt him.

In that sense, Jesus was not tempted.

He was tested.

God sent Christ here not to be tempted, but to be tested.

But when the devil comes along from the devil's perspective, he constantly thought he could tempt Jesus to do one thing and another.

So it's very interesting to read the book of James.

We'll stop with this.

Not the book, but this small quotation.

Because it's almost nine o'clock.

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God.

Verse 13, that's quite true.

God tempts no man.

God cannot be tempted by evil.

Now he allowed himself as the Christ to be tested.

He can't be tempted by it.

Nor does he himself tempt anyone.

Now that's the correct rendering.

Or you can't say that means test, because God did test Abraham, but God didn't tempt Abraham to sin.

The same Greek word has potentially both meanings, and you must know how to render it properly.

But everyone is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

Now the devil is the tempter.

He tried to tempt Jesus.

For Jesus, it was a test.

And he passed the test, as we say, with flying colors.

Because he was not fooled by this kind of proposal.

Jesus never allowed any desire to entice him.

He made Eve, when he saw a woman, he didn't see her as some kind of sex object.

He saw all women in the same way as he did when he created women.

In fact, he was still married to Judah, because Israel had been divorced.

But Judah was still a wife.

He never divorced Judah.

But human beings, when desire have conceived, give birth to sin.

And ultimately that leads to death.

So now we have a much clearer understanding of what's going on in the world and why different nations and people behave as they do.

That someone came ultimately to pay the penalty of sin for all this.

That we have a human nature today.

That is, in fact, in part the nature of man and in part the nature of the devil.

Because the devil's nature has been changed from one who was perfect in all his ways until iniquity was found.

Demons can distort their nature.

Human beings distort their nature and we want to call it human nature without realizing that it has, in fact, become to a great extent the nature of the devil.

That's why Jesus said, you are the children of your father, Adam.

He said, you were the children of your father, the devil.

His nature you have acquired.

That's why you are liars, hypocrites, adulterers, murderers.

He didn't say that to everybody.

He didn't accuse everybody of the same thing.

He met a Romanese.

And my, he said, I haven't found a man with this kind of faith, not in all Israel.

Well, that was a remarkable testimony.

He saw different things in different people.

So human nature has a certain basic inheritance and we have certain proclivities that go with it that make everyone's conduct a little different from everybody else.

And that's laid out so clearly in Genesis chapter 3.

But God paid for, through Jesus Christ, all these things in order that we can all be reconciled and have all sins forgiven.

And we can come back and have a relationship with Him with the Spirit of God.

We can have the inner man, the new man, that you read about in the New Testament.

The old we bury in the symbolic waters of baptism.

And we start out then living a new kind of life.

We're moving along in a little more than a month and a half.

We'll be at Passover again.

That's remarkable.

So now as you return this evening, do drive safely.

Some of you have nature that you are more aggressive drivers than others.

Some of you are so timid you get in other people's way.

So do get home safely.