

HUMANITY AND SIN  
GENESIS 3:1-7; 9:1-6

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Are people basically good, or basically bad? Do they naturally tend to do what is right and good? Or is their tendency to be selfish and go astray? It is an important question. The decision we make about that question affects the way in which we will relate to our mate, how we will parent our children, how we will run our businesses, and what our general expectations will be of ourselves and others as we go through life.

Our topic is civil government. If we are going to have good civil government, we have to make a determination about what people are like. For that will determine how they need to be governed. There was a guy by the name of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (PROJECTOR ON--- ROUSSEAU) who lived in the 1700s. He was originally from Geneva, but he ended up in Paris. He started writing about people and government. Perhaps his most famous work was *The Social Contract*. Its opening lines are famous among political philosophers: *L'homme est ne libre, et partout il est dans les fers*. "Man is born free, and he is everywhere in chains."

People are born free. They are naturally good. But they are in chains. Why? Because government structures put them in chains. The French monarchy is evil. It keeps people in oppression. What is needed is direct rule by the people. Get rid of the monarchy. Get rid of most governmental structures. Let people have direct democracy. A few years after Rousseau died, French revolutionaries followed his advice. His book was labeled by some as the Bible of the French Revolution. The revolutionaries got rid of the monarchy. They set up citizen committees. They tried to rule by direct popular consent.

What was the result? Disaster and chaos and anarchy. People were being sent to the guillotine right and left, including the leaders of the revolution. Eventually this guy Napoleon Bonaparte stepped in and brought some kind of order out of the chaos.

Rousseau was convinced that people are basically good. He knew that he was good. He once proclaimed, "**The person who can love me as I can love is still to be born.**" He also added, "**No one ever had more talent for loving.**" (Johnson, *Intellectuals*, p. 10) Rousseau took a mistress. He did not see any need to get married, although he finally did some 25 years later. He had already come to believe that the Bible, our owner's manual, is outdated and obsolete. By Therese he had five children. This lover of humanity convinced Therese to allow him to drop all five off at a French orphanage, where children were known not to survive for very long. The infants were abandoned by Rousseau without even bothering to be named. Such was the inherent goodness of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

A hundred years later another thinker and writer made important judgments about the nature of humanity which were to have a global impact. Karl Marx (KARL MARX) said that people are basically good, except perhaps for capitalists. Although there is no evidence that Marx ever set foot in a factory or a mine, he was convinced that the proletariat, the workers, were good. The economic system is evil. If the capitalist economy is overthrown, we can achieve a classless society controlled by the proletariat, and everything will be great.

As Dr. Phil says, "So how is that working for you?" Anybody wish that they could have lived in Stalinist Russia, or Mao's China, or Castro's Cuba? One member of our congregation did have the experience of living in prison in Castro's Cuba.

There was another great philosopher who had a more accurate analysis of humanity. Some of you may be more familiar with him. His name was--- Pogo. (POGO) He insightfully observed: "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

In our study of the Bible's view of civil government we have seen from Genesis 1 that God is the sovereign Ruler and Creator. He created us in the image of God, which means that life should be protected from the womb to the tomb, we humans have the right to rule, and we are creative creatures who should be encouraged by government to be creative. We saw in #2 that we humans have a responsibility to work, we should have freedom of choice, and we have a responsibility to obey legitimate government. We also saw that marriage and the family comprise another institution created by God which should be defended and protected by civil government.

I.

Today we are going to further explore the nature of humanity and the kind of governance we need. From the first seven verses of Genesis #3 we will find that **THE FIRST SIN PRODUCES SINFUL HUMANITY.** (PROJECTOR ON--- I. THE FIRST SIN PRODUCES SINFUL HUMANITY) The story begins in v. 1 of Genesis #3: **"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden"?"**"

Thus we have our introduction to the historical account of the origin of sin in humanity. The serpent is introduced without any explanation about his background. The pattern of temptation that is used with Adam and Eve will become a pattern that is familiar to us today.

I take it that this serpent was a real creature. He appears to be the mouthpiece of Satan. Perhaps he was chosen because he would later be an object of worship in much of the ancient world. It is only later in the Bible that we learn that Satan was a fallen angel. Genesis does not provide us with any explanation about his origin or about the origin of evil in the first place. There are hints later in the Bible that there was some kind of rebellion in heaven which preceded this encounter with Adam and Eve.

It appears to me that Adam was intended to be the leader in his marriage relationship with Eve in the Garden of Eden. Adam was created first. It was Adam who named the animals and who named Eve. It was Adam who was given the ground rules for living in the garden. So it is significant that the serpent does not go to Adam but to Eve. In his initial approach to the humans he is already trying to mess up the divine order.

In the first part of the verse we are reminded that it is the Lord God--- YHWH Elohim--- who created life. It is perhaps noteworthy that the serpent refers to Him simply as "God."

The evil one is subtle in his approach. He initially just raises a question with Eve. He does not deny God's existence. He is not an atheist. He knows that Eve has a relationship with God. He simply focuses Eve's attention upon the one negative rule. He does not want to focus her attention upon the gracious provision of God or upon the great freedom that he has given to Adam and Eve. Look at that one questionable rule.

According to v. 2, "**And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden...'**" When we start interacting with the devil and his forces, we already have a problem. We are getting sucked into his agenda. Eve repeats God's basic instruction, although she omits "any" and "freely."

In v. 3 she continues, "**...but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'**" She has the basic instruction right, although there was no earlier mention of touching the fruit.

Verse 4: "**But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die.'**" Now, for the first time, the serpent casts doubt on the word of God. We know from the New Testament that the devil is a liar. Lying is an essential part of his character. The serpent is not just challenging God's word, but he is challenging God's character. God is a God of love. He would not allow good people to die. He would never send people to hell.

I am not sure that Eve has any conception of death. I suspect that there was no death in the garden. For her death was just a theoretical concept. All that she saw was life and love.

The evil one continues in verse 5: "**For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.**" Now comes the direct attack on the character of God. God is bad. He is keeping something good from you. I am telling you that He is withholding a new and higher level of existence from you.

"Jean-Jacques Rousseau, God's rules about marriage and human sexuality and children are antiquated. They are keeping you from true freedom. Having children is keeping you from giving your full attention to what you were created to be--- a philosopher and a writer who reveals to his fellow countrymen how they really ought to live. You need to get rid of your kids. If you could only do it in the womb before they were born, that would be even better."

For us the temptation is perhaps to think that God does not care because He does not answer our prayers concerning our difficult situation in our time schedule. We live in a consumer society with an expectation of instant gratification. God needs to get with it to be on our time schedule.

The truth is that if Adam and Eve take the forbidden fruit, they will know good and evil, but they will not be able to resist it.

In the first part of v. 6 we are presented with the appeal of the temptation: **“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise...”** This is the problem with temptation. It is so tempting. There is an appeal to the senses. There is an opportunity to be in the know. We humans like to be in the know--- to have the inside scoop.

Eve gave in to the temptation. **“...she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”** We have only this brief description of Adam’s involvement. We don’t know where he was when the serpent was tempting his wife. Perhaps he was around and could have intervened. In any case, he willingly joined Eve in her wrongdoing.

Verse 7: **“Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”** They feel shame toward God and toward each other. In the following verses we find that they go into hiding. Sin prompts them to turn away from God.

In the rest of the chapter God pronounces judgment upon the characters in this great drama. The serpent is condemned to crawl upon the earth. There is an indication of eventual judgment upon him. Women will become subject to the unjust treatment of men. They will have pain in childbirth. Men will be forced to work the ground which will be cursed with thorns and thistles.

The New Testament gives a fuller explanation of the cosmic significance of this event. (ROMANS 5:12) In Romans #5 v. 12 the Apostle Paul writes, **“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned...”** Down in v. 18 the apostle adds (ROMANS 5:18), **“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men...”** We humans stand legally guilty before a holy God because of the sin of Adam. More importantly, for the issue of civil government, we have inherited a sin nature. We have this innate tendency to do wrong, to be selfish, to go astray.

In Romans #3 vv. 10-12 we find a description of our standing before God. (ROMANS 3:10-11) **“None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. (ROMANS 3:12) All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”** This is who we are. We still bear the

image of God, but we have been corrupted. We tend to go astray. We tend to be selfish and prideful. We would rather not be subject to God and His rules.

This is a \$5 bill. (PROJECTOR OFF) It bears the image of Abraham Lincoln. I can fold it up. I can crush it. I could put it through the washing machine. I could put it in the dirt. Abraham Lincoln's image could be muddied and torn, but it would still be there. This \$5 bill would still retain its value. So it is with us. We still bear the image of God. We have great value and worth. But we have been corrupted.

All of this has great implications for our understanding of civil government and what kind of governance we need. Human evil needs to be restrained. We need a system of justice. We need a police force. Defunding the police will not make society better.

In a democracy we also need a restraint on evil. Political leaders may go astray. Voters may act selfishly. We may all want a \$15 minimum wage. Why stop there, why don't we make it \$30 an hour? We may all want government handouts. Give us \$600 each. Give us \$1400 each. Why stop there? Why not give us all a new car? Cancel all of our student loans. Let our grandchildren worry about the consequences of such government generosity.

The beauty of our representative republic is that the Founding Fathers recognized this selfish tendency of human beings. They set up a government that has a separation of powers. That term was adopted from another French philosopher by the name of Baron de Montesquieu. He was quoted by our Founding Fathers more than anyone except the Bible. Thus in our Constitution we have a separation of powers. We have a system of checks and balances. We have a governmental trinity of a legislative branch and a judicial branch and an executive branch. None of them have absolute authority. Also we have a legislature with one part that is subject to election every two years. But the other part is elected only every six years. Thus the Senate is intended to be less subject to the immediate whims of a voting electorate.

Successful government must recognize the sinfulness of humanity. We are valuable and important creatures. But we are tainted. We have been corrupted as the result of the sin of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden.

II.

We are going to jump ahead to #9 in Genesis as we find the next major development in our understanding of the role of civil government in human society. In the first six verses of #9 we learn that CIVIL GOVERNMENT HAS THE RIGHT AND RESPONSIBILITY TO ADMINISTER JUSTICE. (PROJECTOR ON--- CIVIL GOVERNMENT HAS THE...) We saw in #1 that man is given the responsibility to rule the earth. Now there is a further refinement of that responsibility.

In the centuries between man's creation and the events of Genesis #9 it appears that humans had a minimum number of rules. But people went badly astray. (GENESIS 6:5) Thus we read in v. 5 of #6: **"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in**

**the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”** What follows is the story of a universal flood. A Russian scholar by the name of Immanuel Velikovsky studied the tradition of flood stories and found that there were scores of universal flood stories throughout ancient civilizations and religions. They find their origin in the Genesis account of true history.

In the Genesis account in Chapters 6-8 we have the story of the flood and the preservation of life through Noah's family and the ark. (PROJECTOR OFF) When the waters recede, Noah and his family and the animals of the ark are released. Noah makes an altar and offers worship to the Lord. The Lord in turn promises never again to bring a universal flood upon the earth. The sign of this unconditional covenant is the rainbow.

In v. 1 of #9 we are told, **“And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.’** Thus the original charge of #1 to populate the earth is repeated. Verse 2: **“The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth and upon every bird of the heavens, upon everything that creeps on the ground and all the fish of the sea. Into your hand they are delivered.”** This appears to imply that before the flood there was not this fear of the animal world toward human beings.

According to v. 3, **“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.”** This would seem to imply that animals were not eaten for food before this. In the original creation account in #1 v. 29 (PROJECTOR ON--- GENESIS 1:29) we were told, **“And God blessed them [man and woman]. And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.’** It would seem that people were vegetarians before this.

Verse 4 back in our passage (PROJECTOR OFF): **“But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”** Mankind may eat flesh, as long as it no longer has life in it.

Verse 5: **“And for your lifeblood I will require a reckoning: from every beast I will require it and from man. From his fellow man I will require a reckoning for the life of man.”** It seems that animals which kill people are to be killed. This idea will be further elaborated in the law of Moses.

Then in v. 6 we have a key principle that has great relevance for human government: **“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”** In #1 humans were commanded to rule the earth. Here there is an important refinement of that principle. People are responsible to kill killers.

There are two basic reasons given for this commandment. The first is that people are created in the image of God. They are sacred in the eyes of God. The most foundational responsibility of government is to protect human life. An attack upon the life of humans is an attack upon God who created them in His image. The second reason provided for

this responsibility to kill killers is that God has assigned human beings this responsibility.

There will be further refinements of this basic responsibility of capital punishment in the law of Moses. God will explain that this punishment is to be implemented for premeditated murder. There are lesser punishments for what we would call involuntary manslaughter. There is an exemption given for situations of self-defense. There will be evidentiary requirements of having two or more eyewitnesses to crimes of murder. Who and how this punishment is to be carried out is not described here. In the law of Moses the responsibility will be given to someone who is called the blood avenger. Judges will also be involved.

There are many objections voiced today against capital punishment. Some generally argue that we have no right to take the life of a fellow human being no matter what the crime. This is cruel and unusual punishment. That objection appears to fly in the face of God's original instruction described here. The origin of this objection often lies in the philosophy of humanism, which, in effect, says that we humans are the closest things to gods that we have in this life. So we have no right to kill fellow gods. The Bible says that capital punishment is a matter of divine justice. God's righteousness requires it.

Christian pacifists point to the teaching of Jesus. Jesus said that we are to love our enemies. We are to turn the other cheek. We are not to seek vengeance. We are to forgive those who hurt us. Those statements of Jesus, however, were made in regard to personal enemies. Justice is a responsibility that has been delegated by God to civil government.

In Romans #13 v. 1 (PROJECTOR ON--- ROMANS 13:1) we are told, **"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."** Nero was emperor when Paul wrote those words.

In v. 4 of the same chapter the apostle (ROMANS 13:4) added these words: **"...for he [the governing authority] is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain."** For what purpose does a ruler bear the sword? For capital punishment. The Bible seems to recognize the legitimate role of civil authorities to implement the death penalty. (PROJECTOR OFF)

Thus we have two advances in our understanding of the role of civil government. Human beings are created in the image of God and have great value and worth. But they are sinners. We need government that will enforce moral laws and that will restrain evil. Governors are also tainted with evil. So good government will have mechanisms which will check and restrain governors who do evil.

The other thing that we learn from Genesis #9 is that civil government does indeed have power from God to administer justice. This extends to the taking of the life of murderers.

The picture of human evil is in many ways bleak. It may also seem unfair that we humans today are punished for the wrongdoing of ancestors for deeds done millennia ago. But there is also reason for hope in this. Earlier I read only (ROMANS 5:18) the first part of Romans #5 v. 18: “...**one trespass led to condemnation for all men...**” But the verse continues, “...**so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men.**” Verse 19 adds (ROMANS 5:19), “**For as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.**”

The first Adam put all of us in a situation of trouble. But there is a second Adam. Jesus Christ also served as our representative. Because He was both God and a human being, he qualified to serve as our representative. His death on the cross paid the penalty for our sin. His sacrifice served to satisfy the righteous judgment of God against sin. We enter into the benefits of that sacrifice if and when we put our trust in this Jesus. Our responsibility is to simply exercise a trusting faith in Him. If and when we do that, the Scriptures promise that we receive forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. We become part of God’s family and we are promised to have a home in heaven some day.

Romans #5 v. 1 (ROMANS 5:1) describes the spiritual effect of this decision: “**Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.**” We can have peace with God through trusting faith in Jesus.

Since we are dealing with the exciting realm of French philosophers today, let me conclude with one more story. Albert Camus was an existential novelist and thinker. He was convinced that God does not exist and that life has no meaning. He could not believe that a good and powerful God could allow such pain and suffering in the world. He tried to create meaning by showing love to hurting and suffering people around him.

A Methodist pastor by the name of Howard Mumma was a guest minister at the American Church in Paris for several summers in the late 1950s. During these summers Albert Camus came to visit this Christian minister. They had several conversations. Later Pastor Mumma revealed that Camus told him, “**I am searching for something I do not have, something I’m not sure I can define.**” Mumma gave him a Bible, and Camus began to read it. He seemed to be affected by what he read.

Later Camus unexpectedly asked the pastor, “**Howard, do you perform baptisms?**” He went on to ask about the meaning of being born again. After further discussion the existentialist said that he felt that he was ready for baptism. Camus wanted a private baptism. Pastor Mumma pointed out that the purpose of baptism was to make a public testimony about one’s faith in Christ. Camus agreed to study the Bible further and to postpone making a decision about baptism. His parting words were, “**I am going to keep striving for the Faith!**” A few months later, on January 4, 1960, Camus was killed in a car accident. (Michael and Sharon Rusten, *The One Year Christian History*, pp. 8-9)



We don't know for sure whether Albert Camus exercised saving faith in Jesus. Baptism is not essential to being born again. The point is that we should not keep postponing a decision to trust in Jesus. We never know what the next day will bring. Believe in Jesus! Believe in Jesus!