



MAN'S NEED OF CHRIST

QUEST LESSON D-2

The Problem: A teenager who had failed to live up to his parents' expectations was heard to ask, "Why am I like this? Why can't I be the kind of person I want to be and you want me to be? I don't understand why doing right is so difficult. I didn't ask to be brought into a world like this, and I can't figure out why sin is so easy and good is so hard. Why did God make me this way?"

His father, who was a dedicated Christian, answered patiently, "Have you considered that it really wasn't God who made us this way? Certainly, He was the Creator. But it was never His intention that our world should be like this, or that we should have such a struggle to do right. The fact is that there is another power in the world, leading people's minds in the wrong direction, preventing them from realizing their potential as personalities and characters, and inducing them to act in ways very contrary to what they know to be for their best good. God isn't responsible for your problem. The devil is."

The young man looked somewhat incredulous and replied, "But who in the wide world is the devil? Where did he come from? And why does God allow him to torture people in this way? How do I get out of his control and do the things that God wants and that I want?"

The explanation that followed involved an unfolding of the deeper meanings of human existence as they are presented in the word of God. The young man had asked questions that have exercised the minds of philosophers and theologians for centuries. The answers these great thinkers have given are as various as the shapes of snowflakes, and none of them solve all the problems. Fortunately, God has not left us to flounder through life in doubt as to why our natures are so imperfect and why it is so difficult to be noble, pure, truth-loving people.

There was a Teacher who mingled with the common people in Palestine about 2,000 years ago who had the answers. He taught so simply and with such authority that many were convinced that he was more than a mere human being. In fact, His life and work gave very strong evidence that He was the Son of God who had come to show us how to live and to suffer the retribution for our failures. The answers Jesus Christ gave to the questions asked by the young man make more sense and are more practical and realistic than those provided by any other thinker in history. His answers were taken up by the New Testament writers to whom He had given instruction. Using both the Old Testament, which Jesus had accepted, and the additional light He had imparted, they were able to explain very clearly why our human dilemma is so serious, why we have such terrible struggles with wrongdoing, and how we can become new people fulfilling the expectations that God has for us.

We turn now to their writings to discover some of the most important truths about life.

Objectives

First, we learn what the Bible says about man as he was when he came forth from the hand of the Creator.

Second, we note the results of our first parent's decision to disobey God.

Fourth, our need is for power from above. Human willpower is not enough. Depending on psychological techniques ultimately leads to very partial success.

Fifth, God has demonstrated untiring efforts to save us from our human weaknesses and from the constant harassment of evil forces. What God has done for us already and will do for us in the future provides the most inspiring reassurance.

I. Man's Original Perfection

As they come forth from the hand of the Creator our first parents were perfect in every feature. Their minds were pure and holy, their bodies free from evil appetites. They had nothing within urging them to sin. They had no bias or propensity toward evil. They were in constant communion with God, and to do His will was their constant delight.

The Word

1. In whose image was mankind originally created? Genesis 1:26-27.
2. What kind of spiritual standing did our first parents enjoy? Over what dominion did they rule? Hebrews 2:6-8.
3. Who was the Creator of this ideal world and the perfect beings who inhabited it? John 1:1-3, 14; Colossians 1:15-16.

Explanation: Created in the image of God both physically and spiritually, mankind was an absolutely perfect being. The Bible teaches that God is free from all moral impurity. He is perfectly righteous with no tendency to sin. That is how He intended humans to be. Adam and Eve were so perfect and so close to God that life for them was literally heaven on earth. Their creator was the same Jesus Christ who centuries later came to earth as a man to die for their failure. Not only was He the Creator, but the Redeemer from sin. His purpose at every stage has been to populate our world with sinless beings and to provide for them an environment free from wickedness, suffering, and death.

Relevance: Understanding man's perfect condition as he came forth from the hand of the Creator, enables us to grasp God's ideal for us. Of course, we cannot in this life have the perfect bodies and minds that Adam and Eve originally had, but we can seek, by God's grace, for spiritual purity and freedom from sin. Restoration to the complete ideal of life as it was in Paradise will be provided for believers when Jesus returns the second time.

II. The Results Of Man's Fall Into Sin

The spiritual problems we struggle with today are the result of sin. Our natures are morally fallen because our first parents decided to disobey God. We have added to the problem by choosing sin ourselves. But it was the original fall of Adam and Eve that brought separation from God and weakened human nature.

The Word.

4. What were the two terrible results of Adam's fall? Romans 5:12, 17-19.
5. What is the spiritual state of children born into a world of sin? Psalm 51:5; 58:3.
6. What dominion did mankind lose when he chose to sin? Genesis 3:17-19; Hebrews 2:8 (last part).

Explanation: There is a sense in which Adam's sin brought death and sinfulness upon the entire human race (Romans 5:12, 17-19). Mankind lost the right to live on without death. Every child of Adam is mortal, subject to death at the end of life. "For the living know that they shall die" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). That would never be so if man had not chosen Satan's way instead of God's. We would still be living as perfect beings in a perfect world.

After the fall of man into sin, his nature was weakened so that he now lacked the ability to overcome temptation. His nature was depraved, and his willpower weakened. His mind could not be controlled without special power from above, and his appetites craved for evil. This is what the Psalmist refers to when he says, "Behold, I was sharpened in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). It is not that the newborn baby is guilty of any sin; it is innocent because it has never committed any act of sin. But its nature is fallen and, unless transformed by the power of Christ, will always be separated from God.

Is it just for all humanity to inherit fallenness and separation from God because of Adam and Eve's sin? Consider an illustration: Imagine a woman who is a prostitute. In the process of plying her trade, she contracts syphilis but does not know she has it. Later she marries and has a baby. The baby is born with syphilis. It is condemned to have the mother's disease, even though it is in no way guilty of the mother's sin. Just so, we were born with a disease called "fallen humanity." We were not guilty of what Adam did, but we suffer the results of his fall. No fallen human being, who has not been transformed by the grace of Christ, can ever be restored to fellowship with God. It is in this sense that all humans are condemned resulting from Adam's sin (Romans 5:18). They are not condemned because they are guilty of what Adam did, but because fallen mortals can never have holiness and immortality unless they have a Savior. The death that we die at the end of life would have been for eternity if there had been no Savior.

Relevance: Adam and Eve's sin introduced ruin into our world. They destroyed the perfect union with God that they had enjoyed before they sinned. And they earned for themselves and for their children fallen natures that are out of harmony with heaven. This is why, apart from special power from above, we sin so easily and naturally.

III. The Inability Of Man To Deliver Himself

Jesus and the Bible writers emphasized over and over again that, since the fall of our first parents, it is impossible for mankind to deliver himself from the powers of evil and do what is right in God's sight. We cannot save ourselves, and we cannot overcome in our strength the urges of our carnal natures.

The Word

7. What did Old Testament writers have to say about the impossibility of man's delivering himself? Job 14:4; Jeremiah 13:23.
8. How did Paul dramatize the ineffectiveness of his own willpower? Romans 7:18-19.
9. What is the spiritual state of the person who has not been transformed by Christ? Romans 8:5-8.

Explanation: Fallen human beings have no power to change their own natures or characters. It is possible to improve the outward deportment somewhat by means of education and psychological training, but such techniques do not change the heart. The basic selfishness of the individual cannot be taken away by autosuggestion, mind training, or the exercise of his will. Evil beings will always do evil works of one kind or another, and they cannot change themselves. Paul complained that, in the absence of Christ in his life, he could choose what was good, but he could not put his choice into action. Knowing what is right to do and actually doing it are two different things. The fallen mind does not have the power to reconcile itself to God. In fact, it is opposed to God's will and opposed to the lifestyle of those who are doing God's will.

Relevance: The first step in overcoming the problem of our fallen human nature is to admit that it exists and that we have no power of our own to conquer it. When we recognize our own helplessness, we have taken the first step towards overcoming. That is true not only for the alcoholic and the smoker but for every human being. We all have weaknesses which, apart from special divine power, we cannot rise above.

IV. The Need Of New Life From Christ

The bottom line of Christianity is dependence. No one likes to think that they are a dependent human being. But with respect to the sin problem we all are. Because we have inherited fallen humanity, we must turn to God for the power to be overcomers.

The Word

10. Who did Paul find to be the Deliverer from his sinful habits? Romans 7:24-25.
11. Is there any other way to be saved but God's way? Who provides the only way for us to come to God? Isaiah 45:22; Acts 4:12; John 14:6.
12. What is the only means for us to be righteous in God's sight? Romans 8:9-10; (compare 6:16-23).

Explanation: When Paul invited Christ to live in his heart by the Holy Spirit, his life was changed. At that point he was given righteousness from above, and the power to do God's will. There is no salvation apart from Christ, and there is no deliverance from Satan and his demonic kingdom without Christ living in the heart. Christ is the answer to all our spiritual struggles. When he was fleeing from his brother Esau, Jacob dreamt one night that he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven. God was at the top of the ladder, and the angels were going up and down from man to God. The ladder represented Christ. Jesus said, "Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51). Christ's life and death have linked humanity with divinity. We have access to God through Him, and our pleas for power to live without sin are answered because He is our heavenly Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5).

Relevance: Praise the Lord, there is a way of escape from the sinful habits that bother us so much! Through the power of Christ we can have deliverance. Do you pray to Him for victory when you are tempted to do something that you know is wrong? When He lives in your heart, you can ask for help and always receive it. Ask, believe, and claim His power, and it becomes yours! (John 14:13-14).

V. God's Untiring Efforts To Save Humanity

Salvation from sin through Christ is the result of His sacrifice on our behalf. When Jesus died on the cross, the Deity paid an infinite price for human redemption. It would not have been possible for a loving God to give more than Christ and the Father gave at Calvary. The infinite unity between the Father and Son was broken temporarily, causing infinite suffering for both. This suffering paid the penalty for our sin and earned our salvation.

The Word

13. What did God's gift of His Son make possible for every believing person? John 3:16; Acts 16:1.
14. What did Christ's work on the cross achieve for the individual battling with sin? Galatians 6:4; Colossians 1:20.
15. What victory is ours today when by faith we accept Christ as Savior and Lord? 1 John 5:3-5.

Explanation: The cross of Christ is the central and most important fact of history. Because there He took away our sin, we can have deliverance from a world of wickedness, the dominion of Satan, and the otherwise uncontrollable habits of our lives. God's work to save us is infinite! Jesus Christ is supreme Deity, equal in authority and power with the Father (Colossians 2:9). The sacrifice of Christ was the sacrifice of God. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit suffered equally in paying the price for human redemption. They took away our guilt; and now we can come to God through Christ and receive the necessary power to live as Jesus did. One of the most wonderful promises in the Word of God is found in Revelation 3:21, "To him that overcometh will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Jesus' victory over sin can be ours!

Relevance: DO you believe in Jesus Christ? Have you accepted His sacrifice as for you? Understanding your total dependence upon Him for deliverance from sin, are you willing to submit to His power every time you are tempted?

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. Our wills are not strong enough to overcome sin, without divine aid.
 - b. Adam's children were held by God guilty of his sin.
 - c. There are some sins that can never be overcome.
 - d. Only through Christ can we be saved from sin.
2. Discuss: "The idea that it is necessary only to develop the good that exists in man by nature, is a fatal deception." Do you believe that? What does the Bible teach on that subject?

Further study: Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, Chapter 2.