



2 Cor. 3:18

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The Art of Water-Walking

David Clayton



One of the most unusual events which occurred in the experience of the disciples of Jesus, took place one dark night on the sea of Galilee. As they sat exposed and helpless in the boat they beheld through the gloom a mysterious figure approaching them apparently walking on the surface of the water. Their terrified cries brought the reassurance that the eerie figure was none other than Jesus and their fear was replaced by a sense of awe.

What happened next is not easy for me to understand. It is difficult to follow the workings of Simon Peter's mind. I cannot quite put myself in his shoes and see myself making the same kind of request which he made. But the record is plain. Upon hearing that it was Christ, he instantly called out, "...Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." (Matt 14:28).

Peter did not make this request in order that his faith might be strengthened. The wording of his request makes it seem that he was saying, "I am not sure that it is you, but if it is you, then tell me to come and I will come." If Peter had been uncertain of the iden-

tity of the figure on the water would he have dared to venture out of the boat? I don't think so. He knew that it was Jesus and it was on that basis that he made his request. What is more difficult to understand is, what was his motive in asking? Was it simply that he wished to experience the thrill of walking on water? Was he thinking of what a great story he would have to tell his grandchildren? Was it that he was so anxious to meet Jesus that he could not wait until He got into the boat? None of these suggestions make much sense, but what is certain is that Jesus immediately spoke one word. Without hesitating He said, "come."

Jesus' response is as puzzling as Peter's request, but it was not untypical of the way He operated. There rarely ever was a time when He denied the request of any person no matter how unreasonable or unrealistic it seemed. For example, when He was asked to turn water into wine in Cana of Galilee, He complied, even when it seemed that it was contrary to His plans. There was no apparent need to grant Peter's request. On the surface of it, it seems that Peter just wanted to get a thrill, or to show off to the other disciples. Whatever the reason, Jesus told him to come, and immediately Peter stepped out of the boat and began to walk on the water.

It was as easy as breathing. Peter had never studied the theory and practice of walking on water. He had never trained himself to walk lightly, he had never discussed the mental and spiritual attitude or the physical qualifications necessary to successful water-walking. His eyes were fixed on Jesus

and on the strength of that single word, spoken by lips that could neither lie nor fail, he stepped out of the boat in perfect peace and confidence. No human being will ever be able to explain the mechanics of what happened. It is useless even to think about it. Perhaps the sea suddenly became as solid as stone, or maybe Peter became as light as a helium-filled balloon. Probably none of these options is correct, but the plain fact of the matter was that he was involved in doing something which was impossible, and he was doing it with no effort.

What was the secret of Peter's successful walk that night (for as long as it lasted). What were the vital elements necessary in order that walking on water could be successfully carried out and – let us not forget – maintained.

First, there was the word of Jesus. That single word, "come," was backed up by the integrity of a life in which there was no shadow of guile, no variability nor shadow of turning. It was spoken by lips which had never lied, nor ever been involved in idle jesting. There was no question that the word carried the stamp of infallible truth and authority.

Secondly, there was the presence and

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion of the truths committed to the Advent movement, as believed and taught by the early Adventist pioneers. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

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power of Christ. In Him was power which had never failed to perform even the most seemingly impossible tasks, even to the raising of the dead. In Him there was the assurance of infallibility and omnipotence.

Thirdly, there was the faith of Peter. It was not bravado which caused Peter to step out of the boat in the perfect confidence that he would walk on water. It was not mere suspicion, or hope, or the thought that it might be possible. With his eyes on Jesus there was not a question in his mind as to what would happen when his feet touched the surface of the water. When he found himself walking on the water, he was not the least bit surprised. He had known exactly what would happen and that was the reason why he had stepped out without a life jacket, without a life-line, and without asking any of the other disciples to standby in case of an emergency.

We may not know exactly what thoughts went through the minds of Peter and Jesus that night, but we can be confident that this remarkable miracle has been recorded and preserved in order that we might learn some vital lessons from it. Who knows, perhaps it is the very reason why Jesus

consented to Peter's request. Jesus performed many miracles while He was here and while not all of them were recorded, in each of those of which the Bible speaks we can find vital truths and principles which have powerful lessons to teach with respect to the Christian life and how it is lived.

In Romans 1:16 the apostle Paul tells us,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Rom 1:16)

In these miracles of Jesus we most often see the power of God applied unto physical restoration. Paul says that the gospel is the same power, but applied to salvation. In both cases it is the power of God. There is no difference in the way that healing is applied in both cases, only that in one case, the body is affected and in the other the soul, the mind, the spirit is affected. Why should we believe that it is a more difficult thing for God to heal the spirit than it is for Him to heal the body? The truth is that the miracles of Jesus are full of lessons which, properly understood will enable us to grasp the most critical principles necessary to the healing of the soul.

So let us see what lessons we may glean from Peter's extraordinary achievement.

The most obvious lesson is that the victorious Christian life is not difficult. It is no more difficult than walking on water. Both tasks are of course, humanly impossible. No amount of will-power, concentration, dedication, or studiousness will enable a person to perform either task for even one single second. Humanly speaking, they are impossible, yet, both await only one thing, that is the faith of one who simply believes the word of God. Faith in that word makes the impossible not only possible, but easy and effortless.

Another lesson which we learn is that the accomplishment of the task is en-

tirely the work of Christ. What did Peter do to help Christ? What did he do to prepare the way for the miracle? What did he do to prepare himself to do the impossible? The answer is, he did absolutely nothing. All he did was believe the word of Christ. That was all. When he believed that word, he stepped out of the boat and into the world of the impossible. The task was Christ's, the preparation was Christ's, He took care of the physical difficulties. All Peter did was believe in Him and in His word. Is the method of overcoming sin and living the victorious life any different? Do we help Christ? Can we do anything at all to make the work easier? No, all we need to do, all we can do, is believe God that He has accomplished our salvation, our sanctification, our righteousness in Jesus Christ.

Yet another lesson which is most vital, is the lesson of the need to maintain our focus. Walking on water was not an event which transpired and passed in a single moment. It required maintenance, not just for a moment but for many steps over a period of time. Peter started out well, but he did not maintain his focus. If his journey had been 10,000 miles long and had taken him a year, would it have required anything different along the journey than it had at the beginning. How different was the walk than the start? There was not a bit of difference. The same method by which he started was the method by which he continued. Did the journey become more difficult? Was there a time when he had to concentrate on the steps which he was taking? When he had to think about the techniques of the task? Absolutely not!! All he had to do was simply keep his eyes on Jesus and ignore all distractions. In that relationship Peter *did* the impossible. In that relationship he *maintained* the impossible. He only failed when he took his eyes off Christ.

Is it the same for the Christian walk? It is interesting that the Christian journey is often compared to a walk in the Bible. We are admonished to "walk in the spirit," to continue to walk in the

Lord Jesus as we have received Him etc. The emphasis is on the maintaining of the original experience, the original focus. When we have faith in Christ we have found the only method that is needed and that will ever be needed to receive each and every blessing of God.

The fourth important lesson is the lesson of the need to avoid distractions. This cannot be over emphasized. When Peter walked on water, he was in effect a supernatural being. He did what mere humans cannot do. With eyes on Christ, he entered the supernatural world and exercised the powers of the world to come. But there were several distractions which rivaled Christ for Peter's attention that night.

- (a) There was the majesty of the wind and the waves to be admired.
- (b) There was the terror of the storm.
- (c) There were the admiring, awe-struck disciples in the boat.

(d) There was the contemplation of the stories he would have to tell his grandchildren.

His task, his only task was to keep his eyes focused. He had no need to learn the theory and practice of water-walking. All he had to do was keep focused on Jesus and ignore the distractions, but in the face of all that was going on, this was a challenge and it was one which he failed to meet properly. He allowed his attention to be drawn from Christ and immediately sank into the water. This is the same situation which faces us today. Nothing can defeat us, we will not sin, we will not be overcome by the enemy. We can do this as simply and easily as Peter walked on water. The only condition is that we focus on Christ and His word in faith, and that we keep our eyes focused on Him.

The question is often raised as to how a Christian may be absolutely victori-

ous over sin. The real question is, how can it be otherwise if we truly have faith in Christ and His word? There is no failure in Christ, only in man. When we trust in Him, He will do the job and He will do it perfectly. We have only one thing to fear and that is, that we may take our eyes off Him. There lies our great danger.

So, let us take heed. No matter how mountainous the waves are, no matter how awesome the distractions, no matter how men may admire and commend us, no matter how Satan attempts to intrude vain thoughts into our minds, let us never permit ourselves to be distracted. He is our hope, He is our life, He is our everything. Believing this and living by it is our only safety. May God help us that we may learn the art of walking on water. If we do not know how to do this, it is unlikely that we will ever learn how to overcome sin.



The Issue of Original Sin

Over the centuries as we would expect, sin has been discussed, examined and defined in many different ways. Most Christians, including the protestant reformers and many of the Adventist pioneers came to regard sin as being more than merely the committing of wrong actions, but as including and perhaps especially being, a ruling negative force in the nature of the carnal person. The Catholic theologian Augustine referred to this inherent evil in man by the term "Original sin," and this term was adopted by the protestant reformers who more or less accepted the idea of this inherent evil inherited by man.

In examining the concept of "original sin," I discovered that though the reformers accepted the concept of original sin, yet their understanding of some differed in some respects from the Roman Catholic understanding and even from the understanding of other reformers. It is a mistake to believe that the term "original sin" has the same meaning regardless of who uses it. As best as I could discover, what all those who hold, or held to it have in common, is the concept that human beings are naturally depraved as a result of Adam's sin and that this depravity makes them from the moment of birth, condemned, unacceptable to God and lost.

Some went further than this and concluded that man was not only inherently evil as a result of Adam's sin, but that he was also **guilty** of Adam's sin. This was especially

evident in the Roman Catholic concept of original sin and is apparently the root reason for some of their strange practices and beliefs. For example, Roman Catholics baptize (sprinkle) infants and believe that in this act they remove the stain of original sin (referring to the guilt). This in their theology qualifies the child for eternal life. The doctrine of original sin has also gained notoriety because of the claim of the church of Rome that Mary, the mother of Jesus was born without the stain of original sin. When these two doctrines are associated with the term "original sin," then it is evident why this doctrine is viewed with great suspicion by many Seventh-day Adventists and especially those who regard themselves as "reformers." However, while the term is not specifically used by the early Adventists, the concept as it was held by many of the protestant reformers was plainly taught and believed by many of the SDA pioneers including A.T. Jones and E.J. Waggoner as well as Ellen White.

What is most interesting is the fact that Ellen White several times wrote that men are born **guilty** because of what Adam did. The quotations may be found in the article beginning on page 9 of this publication.

I am not qualified to say whether or not Ellen White was wrong or right when she made those statements, but it certainly should make us think. At the very least, we need to carefully re-examine what we believe on this matter of sin.

What is Sin?

The question of what sin is, is not merely an academic one, but is of great practical importance and one which has critical implications for those who desire to be free from its power and dominion. Our approach to the question of how to overcome sin will be determined by our understanding of what sin is. Do we need to prove that? It seems that this is a self-evident fact and needs no further explanation. If I am dealing with impurities on the outside, then I need soap, if in the stomach, then I need a purgative, if in the nature, then I need something more than either of those. Do we see the point? So it is important that we define sin properly if we are ever to overcome it completely. If we do not understand the true nature of sin, then obviously we will always be using the wrong method in an attempt to get rid of it. The record of the history of God's people would indicate that for the most part they have had a wrong understanding of the true nature of sin.

The most fundamental question in this respect is this: Is sin an action or is it a state? To rephrase it, is sin something we do, or is it more accurately described as what we are?

If sin is an action, then obviously the approach to overcoming sin would focus mainly on the task of putting an end to those actions which are sinful. However, if sin is a state, or what we are, then the only way to overcome it is to somehow escape from our sinful state or to change from what we are to something, else. This is the important fact. Our definition of sin will determine how we approach this issue and that is of vital importance. One method is doomed to failure, the other is God's method and the only way to success.

SIN'S DEFINITION

The most well-known definition of sin and the one which is most often used is found in 1 John 3:4. It says,

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for

sin is the transgression of the law. (1 John 3:4)

On the surface of it this text seems to be pretty straightforward. It seems to indicate that sin occurs when we transgress the law or when we disobey it. This would indicate that sin is an action. However It is interesting to note that most translations of the Bible render this text differently than the King James Version.

Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. (NRSV)

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. (NKJV)

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. (NIV)

Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. (ASV)

In all these translations, sin is not defined as an action, but rather as a noun. They all say, "sin is lawlessness, making sin a state or a condition rather than an action. The original Greek rendering of the text justifies this translation.

There is no doubt that some will object strongly to this idea that sin is more than an action. If we are to accept such a concept, then surely we need stronger biblical evidence than this. Is there such evidence? There is in fact, an abundance of such evidence.

Sin is mentioned in several other places in the New Testament and in such a way that it seems that it is being defined. For example we have 1 John 5:17 and Romans 14:23. They say,

All unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17)

.... whatsoever is not of faith is sin. (Rom 14:23)

The second text is particularly interesting because it shows us that it is possible to sin even in the midst of the most pious duties if the motivation for these

actions is not faith. There we have a suggestion that sin may be more than our actions and may be something that goes far deeper than simply the act of disobedience. But isn't this exactly what Jesus said? What is His meaning in the following verses?

(Mat 5:27-28) Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: (28) But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Jesus makes it plain that sin has to do with more than merely the outward actions, it has to do with the motives and the intents of the heart. Transgression of the law lies not only in the outward disobedience, but in the state of mind which cherishes and breeds that outward disobedience.

So then we see that the law condemns not just our actions but also our motives and intentions. This is because the righteousness required by the law goes much further than our behaviour. The law, being God's law and therefore being as righteous as God Himself, cannot be satisfied with any degree of righteousness which is less than that of God Himself!! This leads us to a further question; if the law condemns not just our **actions** but also our **motives**, does it also condemn the **nature** which invokes or breeds those motives and actions? Let me make the question clear:

NATURE IS CRITICAL

Our actions begin with our thoughts, motives and intents. Therefore if these are wrong, then our actions are bound to be wrong. But what is it that leads to wrong thoughts, motives and intents? Again, we have a very plain answer from Jesus Himself:

(Mat 12:33-35) Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for

the tree is known by his fruit. (34) O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. (35) A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

According to Jesus, the reason why a man does evil things is because he is an evil man. Likewise the reason why a man does good things is because he is a good man. The reason for the kind of fruit which a tree bears is the kind of tree it is. The only way to ensure that the fruit is good is to change the kind of tree, or the nature of the tree. Is this what Jesus is saying? It is very difficult to escape His meaning. Therefore, a man has evil motives, intents and thoughts only because he is an evil man.

Now if the law condemns a man for evil deeds and for evil thoughts, does it also condemn him for being an evil man? Does the law of God, demanding the very righteousness of God, excuse a man whose very nature makes him only capable of evil thoughts and actions? Jesus referred to these people as a “generation of vipers,” or, in other words, “the children of snakes.” Was He being poetic or abusive, or was there some deep-seated truth in His words? The fact is, He was stating a fundamental truth. It was the same truth which He declared when He said, “*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do ...*” (John 8:44). It was the truth that the problem with these people was their nature, the life that was in them. They were the children of Satan, the seed of vipers and therefore could not do better. Before they could improve they first of all had to have their nature changed. They needed to be born again.

Let us consider something else. Jesus taught that only God is good (Mat 19:17). Yet in the verse quoted earlier, Jesus says that the “**good man** brings good things out of the good treasure of the heart.” If God alone is good, how

is it that Jesus refers to men as being good? Obviously, they are good only because they have become one with God so that He is living in them. That is the reason why they are able to bring good things out of the heart because the good God dwells there. The law can find no fault with such men because to do this, it would have to find fault with God Himself.

MORE THAN ACTION

Now this idea that sin is primarily a state rather than actions is taught many places in the Bible and not just in the verses above. In Romans chapters 5, 6 and 7, the apostle Paul refers to sin in a way that makes it clear that sin is more than mere actions. Let us look at a few examples:

(Rom 5:19) For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners ...

Here we see that one man committed the act, one man performed the action, one man disobeyed. However, by that one action, many became sinners. How did they become sinners? The meaning is obvious. They became sinners as a kind of being, as a certain kind of creature which was fully committed to sin, which was in harmony with sin by nature. They did not become sinners because they themselves sinned, but rather because one man sinned. To follow the illustration of Jesus above, they became evil trees and consequently could only bring forth evil fruit. They were evil trees not because they brought forth evil fruit, but because they were born that way.

(Rom 6:6-7) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin.

Here Paul speaks of the “body of sin.” What does he mean by this? Notice he says that this body must be destroyed in order that “we should not serve sin.” He implies that this is the only way that we can escape from the service of sin and in fact he says it very clearly later on in chapter 8 when he

says, “*they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*” (Rom. 8:8). The only way to please God and to escape the dominion of sin is to escape from the “flesh” or the “body of sin.” Now if a man cannot please God, can he satisfy the requirements of the law? If God is displeased with such a person, can the law be pleased with him. Obviously the law finds fault with such a person even before he performs one wrong act and condemns him for his state of lawlessness which makes it impossible for him to do good.

(Rom 7:19-20) For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (20) Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

This is a striking passage. Here Paul personifies sin and describes it as a king. Why was Paul doing evil? Why did he find it impossible to do good? Did he want to do good? He did. Did he desire to stop doing evil? He did. So why did he find both of those things impossible to do? It was because “king sin” was reigning (Rom. 5:21) in his body. There was a power, inherent in his sinful nature which enslaved him and bound him to the way of evil. This power he referred to as “sin that dwelleth in me.”

Now if we limit the definition of sin to the transgression of the law, how can we understand this passage? The obvious thing to do is broaden our definition of sin. We must conclude that sin is more than simply the act of transgressing the law, or, alternatively, if we limit the definition of sin to the transgression of the law, then we must conclude that we transgress the law merely by being born with a sinful nature, because in that state, the law condemns us to death. In either case, the real issue we have to deal with is our nature, rather than our actions.



There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.

Henry David Thoreau

What makes men sinners?

What makes a person a sinner? This is a most important question. As we have said before, we cannot properly approach the issue of victory over sin unless we understand what we are up against.

Let us approach this question honestly, with sincere and humble hearts. I am not expecting you to believe what David Clayton says, I am not asking you to believe what the Adventist pioneers said, but the Bible is another matter altogether. If you will not believe what the Bible says, then your honesty really has to be questioned.

A friend of mine is always careful to make a distinction between eisegesis and exegesis. The Online dictionary defines both words in the following way:

***eisegesis** - personal interpretation of a text (especially of the Bible) using your own ideas.*

***exegesis** - "to draw the meaning out of" a given text. Exegesis may be contrasted with eisegesis, which means to read one's own interpretation into a given text. In general, exegesis presumes an attempt to view the text objectively, while eisegesis implies more subjectivity.*

In seeking to answer this question of what makes a person a sinner, we are going to be very careful to do two things. One, to use the Bible, a source with which no Christian may argue, and two, to be very careful to apply the rules of exegesis rather than eisegesis.

Before proceeding let me say this: The word sinner in its most basic meaning as we have come to understand it, signifies one who is committing sin, or one who has committed sin (sin – er). Many of us would insist that a person cannot be classified as a sinner unless he has personally participated in an act of sin. Can it be correct to describe a person as a sinner just because the person was born in a sinful condition and before

the person has committed even one sinful act? Perhaps it is just a matter of how we define words but the important question is, what does the Bible say? Are we safe in using the definitions and the wording of the Bible? It seems to me that since we are speaking of a biblical issue, it is only reasonable that we look to the Bible to determine which words are proper to use. Sure, we are sinners because we transgress the law – because we commit acts of sin. But can we honestly say that this is the only condition under which the Bible describes us as sinners? Let us apply the principles of proper exegesis and see if we can arrive at an honest answer.

WE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Most of us have no problem with the idea that children are born with a "fallen, sinful nature." That is too obvious to deny and besides, the term "sinful nature" does not sound too awful and we often limit it only to what we inherited on the bodily, physical level. But what about the words, "depraved," "corrupt" and "evil?" Are these words too terrible to stamp upon an innocent child? The question is, are they a true description of the child's state? Is not this the natural condition of every single person outside of Christ from the very moment of birth? In denying this do we deny the word of God and the reality of our experience? But let us go further. What about the words, "hopeless," "condemned," "lost?" Surely this cannot be the state of a newborn child who has never himself committed a sinful act!

To understand this issue properly, we must look at mankind as it would be outside of Christ's work and influence. If the punishment for man's sin had not been immediately placed upon Christ, how long would Adam have lived after eating of the forbidden fruit? He would not have lived another day. His probation would have been closed and

all of us would have perished in Him. In other words, his condemnation included us. But even though Adam was granted a life of probation and consequently was able to father children, what legacy did he pass on to those children? In what condition were they born? Were they born with Adam's original heritage when he was created, or were they born with the heritage of the fallen Adam? Furthermore, were they born with only a fallen physical nature or were they also spiritually fallen at birth?

Jesus declared that no man can see the kingdom of God except he is born again of the spirit (John 3:3,5). Let us not ignore these Scriptures. Without this new birth, what is the natural state of **all men**? The truth is, without this new birth, **all men** are hopeless, lost, condemned. If, as Jesus said, such persons cannot see the kingdom of heaven then can we deny that all such are lost and condemned to eternal death?

There is often a debate about whether or not babies will be saved but the fact is, even the newborn babies cannot be saved unless their natures are renewed by God's spirit. As they come from the womb they are naturally depraved and unfit to live. Of course, it is true that Jesus died for all men. The price has been paid for all and so, in the case of babies who die incapable of choosing, it seems reasonable to suppose that rather than being lost, they will be renewed by God's spirit in the resurrection and will be saved. The blood of Christ is stronger than the heritage of Adam, and Christ paid the price for all.

However, when they are of the age where they can make conscious choices, the conditions change. Now, none can be saved who do not choose for themselves. Only on the basis of choosing Christ can their condition (state) be changed from sinful, corrupt, depraved, helpless, hopeless, condemned and lost, to a condition of being, righteous, holy, clean, justified, re-

deemed and saved.

THE ENTRY OF SIN

The most controversial passage in the Bible with regards to this question is Romans Chapter 5 verses 12-19. It is this passage which we will examine as we seek to learn what the biblical teaching on this question is.

(Rom 5:12) Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

By one man sin entered into the world: The first part of this verse presents no difficulties. One man sinned and by his action in disobeying God and partaking of the forbidden fruit, sin gained an entrance into the world. It is interesting to note that although Satan was present in the world, this did not give sin an entrance into the world. This entrance of sin into the world, then, must refer to the entrance of sin into **human history** and is not suggesting that Satan was not here before Adam transgressed. This entry of sin was entirely on the basis of Adam's transgression. Why does it emphasize Adam's transgression (one man) rather than Eve's? It does this because Adam was the one who was the head of the human race. All things had been put under him, not Eve. While her actions involved only herself, his actions involved the destiny of the entire human race and indeed the destiny of the whole world (including the mindless creation).

Death entered by sin: Death was introduced, found an entry into human history by way of sin. Therefore sin is the cause of death.

Death passed upon all men For that all have sinned: Notice, the fact that death passed upon all men is only because all men sinned, since man's sin is the cause of his death. This is the interesting part of the verse and indeed it is the part which has been the subject of many controversies over the centuries. The question is, what

does Paul mean by saying, "all have sinned?" This phrase may be interpreted in two ways.

- (a) It could mean that all sinned, in a similar way to how Adam sinned, that is, all men copied or imitated Adam in committing sin as he did, or
- (b) it could mean that all sinned, when Adam sinned. In other words, that Adam's sin was passed on to all men, that is to say that one man sinned and by way of his single action, all of us were made sinners.

Which of these two views is correct?

It is a plain fact that all die because all sinned. That is indisputable (on the basis of Paul's statements). It must be equally plain then that if there should arise a person who had not sinned, then such a person would not die. Sin in us is the reason why all men die. Jesus was the only human who had no sin. He could not have died except for the fact that He was dying in our place. Sin and death had no right and no place in Him except as He was "made sin" for us. Has there ever been any other human who was without sin?

SINNERS BY COPYING ADAM?

If we become sinners only by imitating Adam, that is, by choosing to sin like Adam did, then we must ask the question, why then do babies die? Babies cannot commit sin. They have no knowledge of law, or right and wrong, therefore they cannot transgress. Transgression requires conscious decision to disobey and even in the case of adults, God declares that, "where no law is, there is no transgression." (Rom 4:15). If death comes upon us only because we sin, and babies cannot commit sin, then the question is, "why do babies die? When did they sin?" If we say that the verse means that we sinned similarly to Adam, then we have a dilemma because babies cannot sin as Adam did. They cannot consciously disobey, yet they still die, some of them just a few minutes after birth.

MADE SINNERS BY ADAM'S SIN?

If we take the second meaning of the phrase however, which is that when Adam sinned, all his descendants sinned in him, or became sinners by his action, then the verse makes perfect sense. In the light of that understanding we can see that all men (including babies) die, because all men (including babies) are sinners irrespective of whether or not they commit sin. We sinned when Adam sinned because we were in him when he sinned. We became sinners not in the sense that we personally committed sins, but sinners in that ***we became a certain kind of being who were inherently evil, unable to do good, fit only to be destroyed and therefore condemned to death.*** A careful examination of the verse and indeed of the whole chapter of Romans 5, especially verses 12-19, will reveal that this is what Paul intended to say.

(Rom 5:13) For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

In the next two verses, Paul is proving his point that all men die because of Adam's sin (and that therefore all men are sinners because of Adam's sin). It is important to Paul's argument and therefore it is important that we understand this point. Why is this so? Because only as we understand this can we get the full implications of what Jesus did for us, how He did it and the true meaning of justification by faith. This is the only reason why Paul is taking all this trouble to explain what Adam did and how it affected us.

When Paul says, "until the law," what point in time is he speaking about? He identifies a certain section of this world's history and he says that at that time, sin was in the world. He refers to that time by the phrase, "until the law." What does he mean when he says, "until the law?" He means that there was a time when the law (as given on mount Sinai) was not yet declared unto mankind. During this time,

apparently, the knowledge of God's law was limited and there were people, perhaps many people who did not have any clear idea of how God defined right and wrong. Now in a situation like this, where there is no law, how does God deal with man in terms of sin? Paul gives us a plain answer: He says sin is not imputed (is not charged to a person, he is not regarded as guilty) when there is no law. So, although sin was in the world (men were sinning), this sin was not being imputed to them (God did not regard them as guilty of sin) because there was no law to let them know right from wrong.

(Rom 5:14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

In spite of the fact that sin was not imputed to men (they were not regarded as guilty in the eyes of God) because the law was not yet proclaimed and they were ignorant of it, yet, they were dying. Death was reigning. Why were they dying? What caused death to rule over all men during this period. Now we may say Adam and Eve died because they disobeyed

the command to not eat the fruit. We may also say that people after the time of Moses (the giving of the law) die because they disobey the ten commandments, but between Adam and Moses, during the time when there is no recorded law given by God, why did men die? Why did death reign over men during that period even though they had not sinned in the same way as Adam (that is, they did not sin in deliberate disobedience to a specific command of God as Adam did)? Since they did not deliberately transgress the revealed laws of God, and yet they were dying (death reigned over them), then the only conclusion to be reached is that Adam's sin is the reason why they died. Adam's sin and not their own was the reason why death reigned over them. That is the point Paul is making and this is the way he reasons it out and proves it in these three verses.

When we understand this, then we have no difficulty in getting his point in verses 18 and 19 of the same chapter.

(Rom 5:18-19) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (19) For as by

one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Adam killed all the human race. **All** men were condemned by the offence of **one**. In our personal absence, without any input on our part, we were made sinners, condemned and killed by Adam. This became our reality as soon as we were born.

In the same way, Jesus brought life to the human race. **All** men are justified by the righteousness of **one**. In our personal absence, without any input on our part, we were made righteous, justified and made alive by Christ. This becomes our reality as soon as we are born again. All that remains is for us to receive the reality through faith. By simply believing the declaration of God that He has done all these things for us in His Son. This is true justification by faith.



Be A Berean

It is possible that this issue of our newsletter will stir a great deal of discussion and perhaps even dissent. It is not our desire to disturb God's people and to create controversy. However, it is our heartfelt and sincere conviction that the proper understanding of the issues discussed here is critical, and will determine the nature of our Christian experience. Therefore we are opening up these questions, and presenting these thoughts, and ideas that you may read, think and pray about them. My plea is that we read carefully but also with an **open and honest heart**. We believe that if you read in this spirit, you will see the truth in what we have presented here. May our Father bless you.

KAY-KAY ARRIVES

The long wait is finally over. For Karleen and Howard it must have seemed like forever but finally she has arrived. October 30 was the joyous day when Kay-kay (Karshena Karleen) Williams first saw the light of day. When she finally arrived it was as much a thrill for the enraptured parents as it was a relief for she weighed 9.5 pounds at birth and Karleen had been feeling every ounce of those pounds in the days leading up to her birth.

Thank God, the delivery was a safe one and all is well. However, Howard and Karleen are brand new at the business of parenting and your continued prayers will be appreciated.



Comments from the Pioneers

E.J. WAGGONER

We get this lesson in the fifth chapter of Romans: "For as by one man's disobedience [what was the result?] many were made sinners." ***By whose sin were many made sinners? - Adam's. Then we come into the world sinful, don't we?*** The inheritance we get from our parents, - their characteristics, their tendencies, their evil traits, - you can see in any child. You can see the father in the child again, and all the evils that his parents committed, not only father and mother, but grandfather and grandmother for generations back. All the evil that they did for generations stamped that impress upon them, and that evil has stamped its impress upon us. We need not argue that. We know it. We all recognize that fact, because it has been discouraging, I doubt not, to many of us; and we have often taken it perhaps as an excuse for a failing, saying, "I inherited it." We say, "I cannot change this, because it is a part of my nature. I inherited it from my father or my grandfather." Take the tendency to drink. It is handed down through generations. It comes often from generations back, but it surely shows itself. Now these things are not fictitious: they are ourselves, aren't they? They are a part of our being, - they make us what we are: and we cannot change that. We know that we do not have to try to do these evils. They come out spontaneously.

Now take the whole verse. We have no difficulty with the first part, and if we accept the conclusion, we shall be happy:-

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Verse 19.

How is it that by the disobedience of one we have been made sinners? - We have inherited it. And now, by the offer of one in the flesh, we are to be made righteous in the same way.

We have the contrast. Just as we came to be poor, fallen, sinful creatures, even so we shall be made righteous. What is righteousness? - Doing right. Then many shall do right; that is clear. And how will many do right? - By the obedience of One. Well, then, if I am made righteous by his obedience, if I do right by his obedience, where does he obey? - In me. What am I doing? - Letting him, submitting to the righteousness of God. (*EJ Waggoner - General Conference Bulletin, 1897 - par. 6-9*)

So Adam died, and because of that, every man born into the world is a sinner, and the sentence of death is passed upon him. Judgment has passed upon all men to condemnation, and there is not a man in this world but has been under the condemnation of death. The only way that he can get free from that condemnation and that death is through Christ, who died for him and who, in His own body, bore our sins upon the cross. He bore the penalty of the law, and suffered the condemnation of the law for us, not for Himself, for He was sinless.

"As by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin . . . even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." What is the free gift? It is the free gift by grace and it appertaineth unto many. The work of Adam plunged man into sin; the work of Christ brings men out of sin. One man's single offense plunged many into many offenses, but the one man's obedience gathers the many offenses of many men and brings them out from beneath the condemnation of those offenses. (*EJ Waggoner - 1891 General Conference Lectures No. 9*)

A. T. JONES

The question is, Does the second Adam's righteousness embrace as many as does the first Adam's sin? Look closely. Without our consent at all, without our having anything to do

with it, we were all included in the first Adam; we were there. ***All the human race were in the first Adam. What that first Adam—what that first man, did meant us; it involved us. That which the first Adam did brought us into sin, and the end of sin is death, and that touches every one of us and involves every one of us.***

Jesus Christ, the second man, took our sinful nature. He touched us "in all points." He became we and died the death. And so in Him and by that every man that has ever lived upon the earth and was involved in the first Adam is involved in this and will live again. There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. Every soul shall live again by the second Adam from the death that came by the first Adam. - *A.T. Jones General Conference Bulletin 1895 - Sermon 14*

J.N. ANDREWS

"The offense" spoken of in these verses is thus seen to be ***the transgression of Adam, which made sinners of all the human race.*** Before the second Adam comes to die, the law must enter, to show the greatness of the first Adam's transgression. (*J.N. Andrews - Why the law when it entered, came only to the Hebrews - par. 13*)

ELLEN G. WHITE

We have reason for ceaseless gratitude to God that Christ, by his perfect obedience, has won back the heaven that Adam lost through disobedience. ***Adam sinned, and the children of Adam share his guilt and its consequences;*** but Jesus bore the guilt of Adam, and all the children of Adam that will flee to Christ, the second Adam, may escape the penalty of transgression. Jesus regained heaven for man by bearing the test that Adam failed to endure; for he obeyed the law

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The Nature of Sin

In addition to having a proper and realistic definition of sin, we also need to have a proper understanding of the nature of sin.

The Bible makes it clear that man is a sinner by inheritance. The Adventist pioneers including Ellen White support this fact. A question remains, however, just how was this sinfulness passed on from Adam to his descendants. Was “sin in the flesh” the presence of something transferred to us in our genes or was it the result of something which was taken from us because of Adam’s sin? Does sin in the flesh reside only in the genes, limited to the degeneracy of flesh and blood, or does it impact also upon the mind and the spirit? Is man depraved simply because his literal flesh is weak or is he inherently evil in his spiritual makeup?

It seems evident that this sinful corruption includes more than merely the physical makeup of man for the following reasons:

a. The Bible says that all men were made sinners by Adam’s sin (Rom 5:12,19). If this status was only on the basis of man’s physical degeneracy, then it would mean that Jesus was also a sinner since he partook of man’s physical heritage, being “made of the seed of David according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3),” having taken upon him “the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2:16),” having been made “in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3).” But since Jesus was not a sinner, then it cannot be the flesh which we inherit which makes us sinners.

b. When we are born again we lose the status of sinners. We are no more condemned and in fact sin has lost its power over us (Rom. 5:1; 6:14). However, we still exist in the same physical bodies. There is no change to the literal bodies. Therefore, it is clear that the change which takes us from being sinners to saints is not a bodily

change.

c. Paul says that we should be transformed by the renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). This makes it clear that the real problem and the seat of sin, is the mind and not the body.

If we can understand what happened when Adam and Eve sinned, then we will have a better understanding of the nature of sin.

When Adam disobeyed God and partook of the forbidden fruit, what happened to him? What happened to change him from being a perfect man to a lost sinner? God had told him that in the day that he should eat of the fruit, in that day he should die. What did God mean by that and was the sentence carried out that day? We tend to think that God changed His mind or that the provision made by Christ cancelled God’s decree, but in actual fact, God’s decree was in a sense carried out that very day. Let us notice two things which happened.

First of all, Adam became immediately aware of the fact that he was naked and became afraid of God. His relationship to God changed. Secondly, he immediately began to degenerate physically. His life force began to run down and eventually ran out when he was nine hundred and thirty years old.

But it is the spiritual change which took place in Adam which is of most interest to us. The Bible describes man in his natural state as being dead.

(Eph 2:1) And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins:

(Eph 2:5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

(Col 2:13) And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together

with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Alienated from the life of God, sold under sin, the slave to evil nature, habits and desires, man is spiritually dead. The question is, how and when did man get into that condition? From what we have seen already, this is the natural inheritance which we receive from Adam. When he sinned, he died a spiritual death and this is a part of the legacy which he passes on to his descendants. But what is this spiritual death? Is there some way that we can describe it more fully?

GOD ALONE IS GOOD

Let us take note of an indisputable truth. God alone is good. This is what Jesus taught and if we can understand and appreciate the significance of this, most of our difficulties with this question will be over. It stands to reason that if God alone is good, then all that is outside of Him is evil or sinful. The only way in which any creature in the universe may ever become good is if he is united to God, or has the life of God within Him. Does this make sense? If this is not true, then it would mean that anywhere we see anyone who is good, then we would have a right to believe that that person is God. But since there is only one God and He alone is good, wherever we see good, then we know that God is dwelling within that individual, not that that person is God.

Now the Bible testifies that when God created the world, everything was “very good.” This included Adam. In this sinless, “good,” state, it is obvious that Adam had the spirit of God dwelling within him and this was manifested in the perfect love, joy, peace, etc. (Gal. 5:22,23) which were manifested in his life. When he disobeyed God an immediate change was apparent. His peace was gone, his love was marred, he immediately began to accuse his wife, his joy was gone, he became afraid and unhappy. This can only be because the spirit of God had departed

from him. In effect, Adam became spiritually dead and this happened to him immediately. He did in fact die that very day, just as God had warned him would happen. While physical death came upon him slowly, spiritual death was immediate.

Adam's subsequent sinful state was not as a result of his degenerate, dying body, (sinful body) but rather, because he was spiritually dead (sinful spirit or mind), cut off from the life of God.

We should note that Paul sometimes refers to the source of our problem as being "sinful flesh," "the body of sin," or other similar terms. However, the context of his statements make it plain that he is speaking not of the biological flesh, but rather of the *fleshly or carnal mind* (Rom. 8:7) which is the real source of our sinfulness.

Of course, we believe that Adam subsequently repented and was restored to God's favour (through Christ), but the disadvantages which he had introduced upon himself and into the world now made it difficult to maintain that relationship with God where righteousness was his lifestyle. What had been his natural way of existence could now only be maintained by faith the main-

taining of which required a constant battle with distractions and the deceptions and distortions of the devil.

This then is the legacy which Adam has passed on to his descendants and this is the real source of sin. It is the fact that we are born without the spirit of God, in a condition of spiritual death where the only option available to us (until we are born again), is the option to commit sin continually.

The natural instinct of one who is completely forsaken is the instinct to defend self. When Adam was the favoured child of God he was perfectly secure. His food was provided in abundance, he had no fear, no insecurities, he had no need to think of himself. Even though Eve was the only other person alive, all his energies were outwardly directed. He lived only for God and his fellow man (woman). However, when he rebelled against God, suddenly all his security was removed. His covering was gone, he had lost his home, he had lost God's presence and favour, he lost his assurance of life and suddenly he was scared for himself. Without the spirit of God that was all he could do. Suddenly his energies were directed to his own survival, to his own well-being. He became selfish and was

ready to accuse even the very wife with whom he had been prepared to die a few moments before.

There will never be a time that the absence of God's spirit will not bring self-centeredness. When God's spirit is absent, there is no option available except self-centeredness (the need to protect, to justify, to exalt, to defend, to take care of self). It was the evident focus of fallen Lucifer, it was the first instinct of Adam and Eve after they fell. When we understand this it becomes evident that the root, the source of sin is ultimately self-centeredness and that it is this quality inherent in the nature of the man outside of God which makes him a sinner.

Some imagine that if Satan were destroyed our sinning would come to an end. This is wrong, wrong, wrong. By far the greater percentage of sins which people commit are not directly attributable to Satan at all, but to their own sinful nature. Satan may tempt and annoy us, but even though he is the first being who opened the door for the entrance of sin into the universe, he is not the only one who has found that door.



Sin's Door

God could have so established life in the universe that sin could never have entered. There is no sin in God and as long as His spirit dwells in all His intelligent creation, it is impossible for sin to arise because sin and God cannot co-exist. God could have ordained that no one could ever have taken the option of separating from Him, but then, He would have had to destroy free-will and to do that would have been to remove true freedom. Intelligent beings would have been no more than

mindless robots, even if they did not know it.

Free-will is the door through which sin was able to find an entrance into the universe. God gave us free-will and with that, He left a way open by which it was possible for sin to become a reality. There was always the possibility that someone would think, "what if I choose to turn away from God, what then?" As it turns out, someone did and the result is the mayhem which we have been experiencing for the past six thousand years.

Does this have any relevance to the Christian's experience? If when we come to Christ sin is truly dead, then why is there the very real possibility that it can come back to life again, and sometimes does, even in the lives of those who are truly set free in Christ (Gal. 2:18,19)?

Let us remember what sin is. As we have seen it is in essence simply the condition which arises with the absence of God. It is that other side which manifests itself whenever the presence of God is withdrawn. Without God there is no escaping it, it can be compared to darkness. Darkness does not exist in itself as a substantive reality. It is merely the absence of light. Wherever light is absent, it finds an opening and becomes a reality. It is so with sin. As long as God's spirit exists in all intelligent beings, sin can never find an opening to enter the universe, but when by the choice of any intelligent being, God is rejected, immediately sin will appear.

There will never be a time when free-will, will be taken away, therefore there will never be a time when men will not have the option of committing sin. Even in eternity God will not remove the

power of choice. No matter how long we have been in Christ, with self (sin) put to death, if we should step outside by unbelief, even in the years of eternity, immediately, all that would remain is sin (self). If this is to be true in flawless eternity, how much more now, while we still exist in this sinful environment.

We cannot sin while we abide in Christ (1 John 3:6,9). In this state we are perfect, sinless, victorious, free. But if by our carelessness or choice we lose our place in Him by unbelief, then immediately sin comes back to life. If anyone, (thinking he is now so good that he can never fall again) should choose to act independently of God, immediately he would return to sin. Immediately sin would come back to life, because, "there is none good but one, that is God." We shall be good for all eternity only because by our willing choice, we shall remain united to God, the good one.



Open Face

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PIONEERS' COMMENTS

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perfectly, and all who have a right conception of the plan of redemption will see that they cannot be saved while in transgression of God's holy precepts. They must cease to transgress the law, and lay hold on the promises of God that are available for us through the merits of Christ. {ST, May 19, 1890 par. 8}

The mother who follows on to know the Lord will teach her children to follow in her footsteps. The promise is to fathers, mothers and their children. (Acts 2:39) **These dear children received from Adam an inheritance of disobedience, of guilt and death.** The Lord has given to the world Jesus Christ, and His work was to restore to the world the moral image of God in man, and to reshape the character. {13MR 14.1}

Parents have a more serious charge

than they imagine. **The inheritance of children is that of sin. Sin has separated them from God.** Jesus gave His life that He might unite the broken links to God. **As related to the first Adam, men receive from him nothing but guilt and the sentence of death.** But Christ steps in and passes over the ground where Adam fell, enduring every test in man's behalf. He redeems Adam's disgraceful failure and fall by coming forth from the trial untarnished. This places man on vantage ground with God. It places him where through accepting Christ as His Saviour, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Thus he becomes connected with God and Christ. Christ's perfect example and the grace of God are given him to enable him to train his sons and daughters to be sons and daughters of God. {9MR 236.1}

