



The Effects of Sin On Human Relationships

by Elder Harry L. Jackson

The entrance of the concept of sin into the human experience has had a profound effect on the way that people relate to one another. This effect pervades every level of human society, and permeates every aspect of human interaction. God's commandment to Adam to "be fruitful and multiply" was more than an edict to procreate, but also a mandate to form healthy, productive relationships with his fellow humans. God's intention was that human beings should reflect His character by dealing with one another in loving ways, and reproducing themselves in one another by exerting positive influences. When sin came into the world, it introduced a certain dynamic into the character of humankind that prevents us from being truly honest with one another as well as with God, which hinders us from operating in the "image of God" wherein we were originally created.

The primary dynamic of sin is that it causes **separation**. Speaking of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Genesis 2:17), God tells Adam, "For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." The death that God speaks of brings with it two types of separation: the separation of man's spirit from his body (physical death), and the ultimate and eternal separation of God from man (spiritual death). A precursor to this ultimate separation occurs in that when a man sins, it causes a **loss of fellowship** with God. This is a condition that, because of the Fall, is inherent in man in his unregenerate state. Once he (or she) becomes a Christian, when he sins, he experiences this separation as a painful and almost unbearable condition, which generally leads to repentance (Psalm 32:3-5, Romans 2:4) causing the fellowship to be restored. In Genesis 3:4-5, the serpent (Satan) says to Eve, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So then, when satan tempts us to sin, his first agenda is to get us to mistrust God, the implication being that God is lying to us, that He is holding something back from us. He tempts us to **separate** ourselves from God, on the premise that somehow, He is cheating us.

In addition, the guilt and shame that ensues when it is evident to us that we have sinned, causes us to hide, first from each other, and ultimately from God. Genesis 3:7-8 establishes this: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” The sewing of fig leaves and the putting on of aprons speaks of man’s need to devise ways to cover his sin and “look good” in the eyes of first his fellow man, and then those of God. We hide our true selves from one another, and then we use religious trappings in an attempt to impress God with our self-generated righteousness. Of course, God cannot be fooled. And even with people, our “putting on a front” only lasts a short while. Sooner or later, our fig leaves must wither away.

Notice here that once “their eyes were opened, Adam and Eve became ashamed of their **bodies**. In the Garden, there was nothing wrong with their being naked. The climate in the Garden was most likely perfect. What did they need clothes for? It is the presence of sin in the world that has made the sight of an uncovered human body shameful and indecent. Man now spends millions and millions of dollars per year covering himself, and not always for practical purposes. We esteem one another by our ability to cover ourselves (see James 2:1-4). The one who can obtain the best coverings is somehow seen as a better person. All of this is an outgrowth of the initial shame that Adam and Eve experienced when they disobeyed God and “their eyes were opened.” Finally, the Bible says, once they had covered up from each other, they “hid themselves” from God.

Finally, the Bible says, once they had covered up from each other, they “hid themselves” from God. Everything we see in Adam and Eve’s actions speaks of **separation**.

In verse 10 of Genesis 3, Adam explains himself to God. He says three things: 1. “I was **afraid**.” 2. “because I was **naked**.” 3. “...and I **hid myself**.” This indicates that presence of sin brings with it, **fear**.

We know that we have offended the righteousness of God and therefore we fear His wrath (Romans 1:18). We also fear exposure before men. Our sinful nature is what causes us to fear losing “face” before our fellow humans. We labor to avoid being exposed for fear of embarrassment. Also, when we have sinned, depending on the nature of the offense(s), there can be serious consequences for many of the things that we have done. One of the things that satan knows is that if he can get us to hide from one another, we cannot resist him effectively. For instance, if a man is struggling with sexual sin, the last thing that he wants to do is to tell his wife. She might hate him, or lose respect for him, he may think. She may even divorce him. But Satan knows that if she is a truly God-fearing woman, he stands the risk of having her prayers and even the corporate prayers and spiritual weapons of an entire family or church brought to bear against him. That would be too much! So why not keep the shame level high so that each individual is in his or her own corner, fighting his or her own battle, unable to come together, and unable

to pray for one another? The devil knows that the strength of the family (as well as the church) is in its **unity**.

Finally, let us look at what happened in the exchange in verses 12 and 13: “Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” And the LORD God said to the woman, “What *is* this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” What we see in this passage as the result of sin is **blaming**. The man blamed the woman, then God. The woman blamed the serpent. Sin robs us of our ability to take responsibility for our actions, causing us to “pass the buck.” Everything becomes **someone else’s fault**. The white man blames the black man. The black man blames the white. There are those of us who blame the government for our problems. Today, we live in a litigious society. It seems as if someone is constantly suing someone else, because no one wants to be held accountable. This too is the result of the fall.

By using the above analysis, we can see how virtually every failure of human relationships, from individual conflicts, to failed marriages, to war between nations, can be traced to the effect that sin has had on the character of man. God’s intention that we should be fruitful and multiply has been thwarted by our inability to relate to one another in healthy ways because of our sinful nature. This is why Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:19, refers to the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the “word of reconciliation.” Jesus Christ, by His death, burial and resurrection, has paved the way for man to be reconciled, not only with God, but with his fellow man.

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