

Understanding Man, Part 5 2-12-17 *"The Fall of Man"*

Sonya Thomas is a woman from Virginia who weighs 105 pounds. 105 pounds. But, in her prime, she out-ate, over-consumed a 400 pound male to win the International Federation of Competitive Eating contest. First of all, I am disgusted to learn that there is such a thing as the International Federation of Competitive Eating. But then I am exceedingly perplexed as to how a 105 pound female can be the champion. One of her contests involved eating fruitcake. Sonja put down five pounds of it in 10 minutes. Now listen, I don't understand how people even eat fruitcake, much less how a petite woman can be the champion at it. There is something basic about gastroenterology that I am clearly missing. How a 105 pound woman can be the world eating champion is a mystery, but only one of many mysteries. People are very hard to figure out. Humans are complex and confusing in body and in soul. As an old friend used to say, "People are crazier than anybody." God, in His word, does not choose to explain to us everything about ourselves but He does speak to us about what is most important. The things we need to get, He explains.

The question we have addressed for four Sundays is "What is a human?" We have learned from God's word that he or she is a special creation of God whose purpose is to subdue and govern the earth. He is the image of God and a creature consisting of body and spirit. These things explain much about man but we come now to look at man from a different angle. Before we read God's Word about man's condition I shall read the words of a few notable non-Christians. Immanuel Kant said, "*Man is radically wicked.*" Thomas Hobbes says, "*Man is a wolf that ravages his fellowman.*" Hegel said, "*The natural heart is the enemy to be fought against.*" Von Schelling says, "*All are born with a dark principal of evil adhering to them.*" The communist Engels says, "*Greed and the lust for power are the levers of historical development.*" Karl Marx wrote, "*Man has become alienated from himself, leading to bestial savagery. Everything is under the influence of an inhuman power. The world itself is perverted.*" These insightful men, apart from the Bible, looked at history, looked at humanity, looked at themselves, and turned aside in horror. They say with a collective voice, "*Something is wrong!*" And anyone who refuses to look at the world thru the rose-colored glasses of the good-humor man must see and admit that something is terribly, terribly wrong. But what man can only observe God can explain and He does so in Genesis Chapter 3 - the tragic story of the fall of man. Genesis 3:**1-5** (NLT) *The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild*

animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?" 2 "Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied. 3 "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.'" 4 "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman. 5 "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

Then verse 6 records that great turning point in history **6-7** (NLT) *The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. 7 At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.* We begin immediately to see the results of this faithless and disobedient act. Changes began to take place in Adam and Eve, radical or root changes. It says **7ab** *At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame.* An uncomfortable self-consciousness took hold of this couple. You say, "What's wrong with self-consciousness?" Well, just think about yourself. Isn't self-consciousness a problem for you? We all know that when we forget ourselves we do fine. Two things I have done a great deal of in my life are preaching and playing basketball. In both activities my biggest handicap is self-consciousness, that awareness that, "Oh no, here I am with all these people watching. Ahh!" When that hits us we begin to fumble and stammer and blush. The athlete chokes, the student blanks out and I tell you, some of you are paralyzed by a case of terminal stage fright. Why? **7ab** *At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness.* Man was not made this way. He was made to focus outside of himself.

But, self-centeredness dogs us every day and interestingly enough we find today what Adam and Eve found - that clothing helps us. This literal first family discovered their nakedness, felt shame, and immediately got their Singer out to stitch together some fig leaf skirts. You react the same way. When naked in a group you feel really insecure. Remember the Jr. High locker room? Uh-huh. There when you need pockets the most you don't have em. But the nicer you're dressed the better you feel. That's why some women, when they get depressed, find it uplifting to buy a new dress. You know what it's like to look good, to feel good about yourself. Adam and Eve tried that from the start. **8-10** (NLT) *When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the Lord God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the Lord God among the*

trees. 9 Then the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He replied, "I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked." We see here that fear had entered man's life. **11-12** (NLT) "Who told you that you were naked?" the Lord God asked. "Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?" 12 The man replied, "It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it." Yes sir, Adam faced the facts and took it like a man; he blamed it on his wife. And on the God who gave her to him. Eve, on the other hand, took it like a woman. She said, "The devil made me do it." **13** (NLT) Then the Lord God asked the woman, "What have you done?" "The serpent deceived me," she replied. "That's why I ate it." And now the curse **14-16** (NLT) Then the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live. 15 And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." 16 Then he said to the woman, "I will sharpen the pain of your pregnancy, and in pain you will give birth. And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you." Woman, oh my, what a life of grief belongs to you! You've been cursed with desires that can lead you to ruin. You want to be married to a man. And so often that man causes you more pain than pleasure. You're not sure what's worse, being single or being married. **16ef** You will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you. And you want to be a mother, until you become one and then you're not sure what's worse -- being a mother or being childless. The whole process of gestation, delivery, and mothering is fraught with pain and it's easier for you today than for any mothers in history. This pain is the result of **sin**.

17 (NLT) 17 And to the man he said, "Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat, the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. Work is a four-letter word for most of you. Why? Because of this curse on the man - his work will be painful and frustrating, and when it's all done he will die. **20-24** (NLT) Then the man—Adam—named his wife Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live. 21 And the Lord God made clothing from animal skins for Adam and his wife. 22 Then the Lord God said, "Look, the human beings have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!" 23 So the Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. 24 After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty

cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Now we find man removed from the garden, and most of all, exiled from the presence of God. Why? Because of sin. Because of sin we know self-centeredness and shame and fear and parental pain and marital pain and frustration and death, which is separation from God. That's all in Genesis 3! But what we learn from the whole Bible is that **all** one's problems and pains as a human being results from sin. Open your eyes to the world around you and see a world of woe, a veil of tears. As Woody Allen puts it, *Life is terrible, lonely and miserable. And ends way too soon.*

Ours is a blighted planet. Our race is full of suffering. You see starvation in Sudan, war in Syria, war and death and conflict between families and colleagues and neighbors and nations. We live under the dark cloud of a nuclear doomsday or a chemical attack or another 9-11. You can't look and think without realizing what a mess this world is. How can this be? The evolutionary optimist is puzzled. The sentimental theist who talks of "the good Lord" has no answer. Human suffering shouts to us that something is **very** wrong. How could God have made such a messed up world? The Bible says God put man into a no-problem paradise. What's the answer to why all the problems? Sin, sin, sin, sin. And dear people, you cannot understand the world apart from a doctrine of the fall. You cannot understand human history apart from the fall. Genesis 3 tells us our world is fundamentally flawed and crooked. Genesis 3, with the rest of Scripture, tells us that all the perplexing and agonizing problems of human existence find their explanation in sin. Man, through Adam, fell and that fall gave rise to a world of iniquity. When Genesis 3 is over - what comes in Genesis 4? Cain murders his righteous brother Abel and the rest of Scripture displays for us the wickedness of men and the suffering it brings. By Genesis 6:5 *Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* Open your eyes to the sin and misery of this world! How can I describe it! Our problems today are legion. But it's never been significantly better and that is sadly true. Picture before you that abused four year old with hollow eyes; look at the drugged out teenager, the drunken old man. Consider the millions who have been and are tortured for righteousness sake, who have seen their children taken or killed. Think of the pictures you've seen of German prison-camps, of the ravages of war. What misery exists in South America and the mid-East and the ghettos of our world! All a result of sin and the more sin, the more misery. As sex-sin abounds in our land we are ravaged by venereal disease, human-trafficking, abortion and fatherlessness. The

Bible says it's all sin and God often sums up the human condition in one word. That word is *death*. In Genesis 2:17 God said to our first parents **17** *from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die*. And surely he did. Physical death results from sin, but beyond that men are the living dead, separated from their Maker. Look with me at some portions of Romans. 5:**12** *Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.* **14a** *Death reigned from Adam until Moses* **15b** *by the transgression of the one the many died* **17a** *For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one* **18a** *So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men* **21a** *so that, as sin reigned in death*. I think of Art Garfunkel's song, "Nothing but the dead and dying back in my little town." The world is that little town. Romans 3:**10** *There is none righteous, not even one.* Romans 6:**23a** *The wages of sin is death.* Death in this life and hell to come. What I'm trying to say dear friends is that all suffering, pain and problems come from sin. Not on a one-to-one equation, so that if you get sick you must have sinned. No, no. But, sin is the root of all problems. Our Shorter Catechism question #19 asks this, *What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?* And the answer comes: *All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself and to the pains of hell forever*. The human condition is but a mystery without that understanding. We have, I believe, a weak, weak terribly weak view of sin and its seriousness. May God open our eyes to what sin has done! This is the condition of man in his fallen nature.

Now, I don't know --What is your response when you look out at a sin-sick world? How do you feel when you think about the awful results of sin? Simply sad? I hope you feel more. When you consider the results of man's fallen nature and his sin, when you look at broken families and broken bodies and broken hearts and broken nations, and especially when you let the realities of hell soak into your brain do you come to hate sin? Could it be that there is far too little hate in the church today? Romans 12:**9** *Abhor what is evil*. Abhor it, hate it. Oh, we get stirred up and hate the boss when he's unfair to us but we don't get stirred up to hate sin which is the source of all our trouble. Sin and Satan need to be the object of your passionate opposition. Why's that? Because Christians love people and sin kills people. We hate sin because we love people and sin destroys them. True love demands a hatred of what destroys your beloved. That's the point behind the organization MADD – Mothers Against Drunk-Driving. It is not just an anti-drunk-driving group.

It is a pro-life cause. We need anger, passion, hatred against what is destructive; and sin is the great destroyer. Everything else is just a symptom. When our Sarah Beth was four years old she was diagnosed with leukemia and we received numerous cards from a lot of friends, but the only one I remember was from our little neighbor boy who drew a picture of himself fighting a dragon and the dragon's name was *leukemia*. Interesting. The card expressed what I would like to have done but didn't know how. How do you fight a cancer in your child? There was nothing I could do as a father to fight cancer but I could fight the sin which was behind the cancer and cast my vote against that disease which arose from the foundation of a fallen world. So, what do you do when you encounter suffering in your life or across the globe? What do you do when you see sin-wrought misery in your own family? Don't just get sad - get mad. Turn your sorrow and your grief and your groaning into a hatred of sin which will lead you to righteousness. When I consider the human condition, I find a new commitment to holiness grows within me. I look at the problems of men and determine myself not to be a part of the problem but a part of the cure. The problem is big enough without me. The damage wrought by sin is incalculable and a problem so colossal that it demands the full effort of my life to fight it. For me, the result of today's study is that I want to be a sin-buster. How about you? Do you hate sin? The more I see my sin the more I hate it. But not enough. Do you hate sin? Oh, don't you see what sin has done and is doing? Doesn't it break your heart? Doesn't it motivate you? Oh, but we play games with sin, we toy with it and even treat it like a friend. That's why we don't quit it. God says to kill it! Kill it! Fight it until death. In this world, in your city, in your church in your family, in your own heart and life. A large part of what we are about in the great commission is joining with Jesus to bring to an end the works of the devil. And we will go to the four-corners of the globe to confront and oppose sin and the death that it brings. Billy Sunday is a great evangelist of a century ago who said this about sin. *I'm against sin, and I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot, and I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist. I'll butt it as long as I've got a head. I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old and fistless and footless and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to glory and it goes home to perdition.* Those are the words of a man who loved his fellow man and loved his God and knew that sin is the great enemy of both. God give us, God give you more of a hatred of sin.

Well, a second thing happens to me when I consider human sin and its miseries. Maybe it happens to you. Besides hating sin more, do you also praise God that Jesus Christ has come to make messed up men right? Christ came to a fallen, broken, sin-sick world because of love. And

notice that fallen man with all his problems did not go crying out to God for help. I hear so often preachers announce that men in our world are hungry for God. But the Scriptures don't say that. Romans 3 says "*No one seeks after God.*" Man, in all his need, does not go to God or ask for God. But God did come to man. Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. This was a sin-ravaged world but Jesus came - the second Adam, to overturn the work of sin. What damage sin did, Jesus came to repair, to make well, to bring life. I John 3:**8cd** *The Son of God appears for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.* When the angel came to Mary in Matthew 1:21 he said **21** *You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.* Sin is the enemy; Christ is the Savior. By His death Jesus was both bearing sin and condemning sin. Jesus is **THE** sin-buster. He is death to sin. Praise the Lord! Isaac Watt's great hymn says, "No more let sins and sorrows grow, or thorns infest the ground; **He** comes to make **His** blessings flow far as the curse is found."

Now, you know, you have lots of folks who are social optimists. Somehow a history of war and crime and hatred and greed has not destroyed their faith in human nature. Friends, it has destroyed mine. If you have no faith in mankind you are in good company. John 2:**24-25** *Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men 25 and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.* And what He knew wasn't good. Jeremiah 17:**5** *Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind.* I have no hope for society itself getting better apart from the radical transformation of individuals. You can't use rotten eggs to get a good omelet. The eggs must individually be made whole. Society can only be saved when the individuals in it are saved. Now, it can be preserved by salty Christians, but you will never have the utopia some envision. Only a heart-changing Savior can change this world for good. I heard Chuck Swindoll tell of a father who was relaxing with a magazine when his young son came up and said, "Hey, Dad, let's play ball." And the tired dad, knowing his son liked puzzles, came up with a quick idea. He took a magazine picture of the earth, cut it into pieces and said, "Here son, go put this picture back together and then maybe I'll play ball." The boy went away to work and the dad was satisfied that it would take his son quite a while since he didn't even know what the world was to look like. The boy came back in five minutes, the picture perfectly taped together and the father was quite taken back by this and asked, "How did you do that?" The kid said, "Easy. On the other side of the page with the world on it was a picture of a man. All I had to do was put the man together and the world came together." Right! Broken man, broken world. Put the man together and

the world will come together – then and only then, and only Christ can do it. But, and this is important, Christ has called **us** to be agents of His redeeming work. We are His ambassadors, calling men to be reconciled to God. We fight sin in the name of and with the power of Jesus Christ. He has called us to that fight. And I wonder, how are you fighting sin for Jesus' sake? How will you fight sin for Jesus sake?

So, I hate sin and I praise God that Christ came to fix our broken race. And finally, when I consider fallen humanity I praise God that one day Christ's work will be complete and paradise will be restored. Rejoice! Did you know that there are three sections to your Bible. Genesis one and two gives us paradise. Genesis 3-Revelation 20 gives us the mess. Revelation 21-22 give us paradise restored by the powerful grace of the Lamb. Genesis 3:24 tells us what God did after man sinned in the garden 24 *After sending them out, the Lord God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.* Man's sin has barred him from the tree of life. Death reigns! Revelation 22:1-2 *Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, 2 in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.* The healing has come. The curse wounds are healed. There is life abundant and eternal. Read this and rejoice 3-4a *There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; 4 they will see His face.* Paradise it is! And chapter 21 of Revelation explains how it came to be. Sin, the cause of all suffering, is abolished. 21:4-5ab *He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."*5 *And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new.* For those who mourn over this sin-wrecked miserable world what better news can there be? For a great problem – a fallen heart, a fallen world, a living death God has provided a great Savior and a great salvation. The enormity of the problem only displays the glory of the Redeemer. So, let us hate sin and let us praise the Savior ye who know Him, who can tell how much we owe Him, let us gladly render to Him all we are and have.