

## ***For All Have Sinned***

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I recently brought up the notion of “original sin”, and how it is my understanding that **sin is not an inherent trait of the human genome** as a result of Adam’s disobedience in the Garden, which is what many have been taught to believe. Let me demonstrate.

Genesis 2 says...

*And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Gen 2:8-9 KJV)*

*And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Gen 2:15-17 KJV)*

So the consequence of eating the forbidden fruit, we’re told, was death.

Then in chapter 3 it says...

*Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

*And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. (Gen 3:1-7 KJV)*

Notice, the woman understood the commandment from God and the consequence for breaking that command was death.

Then, the serpent flat out contradicted God by saying, “ye shall not surely die”, and then proceeded to tempt her by feeding her desire. Some might think the serpent was tempting her

ego, by saying “and ye shall be as gods”, but the fact that he follows it up with saying “knowing good and evil”, makes me believe he was tempting **her natural desire for wisdom**.

Notice the woman’s response, she understood the serpent to be saying that it was “a tree to be desired to make one wise”. And she rationalized away the instruction of God and ate of it, and then gave it to Adam to eat.

A desire for wisdom is not necessarily an evil desire. It is natural to want to know things and understand. That is how God made us. That is not what was “sinful” in the situation.

What was sinful was her disregard of God and His instruction. She chose to heed the serpent instead of God and ate the forbidden fruit. That was her sin.

And then man chose to heed the woman instead of God and ate the forbidden fruit. That was his sin.

When it came time to receive their just compensation we read:

*And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

*Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.*

*And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (Gen 3:14-19 KJV)*

Notice, the penalty for Adam’s sin included the ground being cursed, and we see he was sentenced to return to the earth out of which he was taken.

But we also read starting in verse 22:

*And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of*

*Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life. (Gen 3:22-24 KJV)*

At this point, Adam and Eve were denied access to the tree of life. I used to assume that they had not eaten of that tree at that point, but now I'm thinking they probably had and that was part of their ability to remain alive eternally.

The exile from its access seems to me to be directly related to the consequence of their sin. Had they stayed in the Garden, they would have been able to access the Tree of Life and live for ever, but due to their sin they had to be cut off from that place, ultimately resulting in their demise.

## Paul Says: "For All Have Sinned"

There is a predominant teaching within Christianity that says we are all born into sin and our flesh is innately sinful. The crux of that teaching is based on texts found in Paul's letter to the Romans.

### ➤ **The Romans Road**

Many years ago, I was taught a "Plan for Salvation" called, "the Romans Road". It was an evangelism tool to spread "the gospel message": a series of various verses primarily from the book of Romans, strung together to formulate a "plan of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ".

The underlying premise of this is that "**we are all sinners by nature and choice**", "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and "there is none righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10), "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" (Romans 5:12).

However, does Genesis teach that we are all *innately* sinners?

## Death is the Result of Sin, but Sin is a Choice We Make

As I previously presented, Genesis establishes that the one man through whom sin entered the world was Adam, and the consequence of that sin was death. Adam and Eve were removed from their access to the Tree of Life, so death passed upon all men thereafter since all those who came after Adam were also denied access to that tree.

But does that mean all of mankind are considered sinful by nature? No. Let me demonstrate again from Genesis.

Chapter 4 says of the first generation to come after Adam:

*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

*And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. (Gen 4:1-5 KJV)*

At this point, there is no sin committed, as I understand it. Cain and Abel both brought an offering to the LORD (YHVH), and YHVH had respect (or regard) for Abel's offering, but not for Cain's. This doesn't mean that Cain sinned, just that Abel's offering was taken notice of, whereas Cain's wasn't.

And as a result of this, Cain was "very wroth and his countenance fell". He was angry, but he had not sinned.

The story continues:

*And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. (Gen 4:6-7 KJV)*

It seems to me that God is essentially telling Cain to be careful with his anger. Sin lies at the door and it desires to have him, but he is expected to rule over it...to not let it have its way. **He had a choice.**

I think Paul is referring to this episode when he writes to the Ephesians, instructing them **to not sin**:

*Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. (Eph 4:26-27 KJV)*

Because we see what happens next with Cain concerning his anger:

*And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. (Gen 4:8 KJV)*

Slaying his brother, Abel, was clearly a sin, according to the Ten Commandments.

*Thou shalt not kill. (Exo 20:13 KJV)*

Did Cain have a choice? Yes. God told him how to remedy the situation ahead of time and warned him what was ahead of him if he didn't. He even told him to rule over it. But evidently Cain gave place to the devil.

John writes in his first epistle:

*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.*

*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

*In this **the children of God** are manifest, and **the children of the devil**: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. (1Jn 3:7-11 KJV)*

So, we see that Genesis does not teach that we are *innately* sinners, but rather sin is something we do, something we have control of, not something we *are by design*.

Given this, then what does Paul mean in his letter to the Romans, when he says, “for all have sinned”?

The answer to that question requires reading the letter from the beginning and keeping all of his words within the context in which he wrote them.

## **Paul’s Letter to the Romans**

Within the first chapter Paul says:

*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.*

*Professing themselves to be wise, **they became fools**, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.*

*For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*

*Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without*

*understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who **knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death,** not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:20-32 KJV)*

It seems to me that Paul is specifically talking about the kind of things that led up to the flood, and thereafter.

When Paul says, “for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature”, I believe he’s speaking of what took place leading up to the Days of Noah as recorded in Genesis 6:1-7:

*And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, That the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose. And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. (Gen 6:1-7 KJV)*

And then I believe Paul is speaking of the events leading up to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of Abraham when Paul writes, “*And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.*”

Paul continues in chapter 2 saying:

*Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.*

*And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

*But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds:*

*To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:*

*But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;*

*But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.*

*For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law;*

*(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)*

*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

Then Paul starts addressing the Jew

*Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For **the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you,** as it is written.*

***For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.***

The problem was that the Jews were not keeping/guarding/obeying the law of God themselves. They were not practicing what they were preaching. They were not upholding what they were teaching. They were causing the name of God to be blasphemed among the nations because *they* were chosen by God to be a light to the nations, having been given instructions by God and told to obey them, but they failed to do so...time and time again.

*Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*

*For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.*

*But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*

*For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.*

*What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;*

I believe this is pointing out that just because someone has or knows the law or even teaches it, does not automatically make them righteous. Even those who have the law and teach on it have been guilty of sin, because they didn't heed the law of God themselves.

Does that mean it is *impossible* to heed the law? No. It means that people in general, both Jews and Gentiles, simply haven't.

Paul continues:

*As it is written,*

- *There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Eccl 7:20)*
- *Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; (Ps 5:9)*
- *the poison of asps is under their lips: (Ps 140:3)*
- *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: (Ps 10:7)*
- *Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: (Is 59:7-8)*
- *There is no fear of God before their eyes. (Ps 36:1)*

All of the references in parentheses above were found in the footnotes of my 1986 NIV Student Bible attributing these statements to various psalms and sundry from the Hebrew Masoretic Text, which is what the Old Testament of the Bible is translated from.

However, Paul is evidently quoting from Psalm 14:1-3 out of the Greek Septuagint:



***For the end, Psalm of David.*** *The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They have corrupted themselves, and become abominable in their devices; there is none that does goodness, there is not even so much as one. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the sons of men, to see if there were any that understood, or sought after [G]od. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become good for nothing, there is none that does good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. (Psa 14:1-3 Brenton)*

Notice however, what is *not cited* by Paul. This whole passage is about **“the fool” who “has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’** They have corrupted themselves, and become abominable in their devices.”

The problem isn’t with mankind being innately sinful; the problem is that generally speaking, mankind is foolish, saying in his heart that there is no God (denying Him), and **they have corrupted themselves, and become abominable in their devices, their doings.**

Paul continues in his letter to the Romans:

*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

*Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

The law helps us see our sin when we don’t do what it says to do, or when we do what it says not to do. It shows us how we err. And the fact is, mankind in general has at one point or another in our lives behaved as the fool, denying God. We have corrupted ourselves and become abominable in our devices.

I know *I’m* guilty of having done this in the past. I don’t recall specifically saying there is no God, but I know I have behaved in such a way that violated His instruction, regardless of whether or not it was deliberate.

Paul continues:

*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;*

*Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

*Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for **the remission of sins that are past**, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

*Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. (Rom 1:1-3:31 KJV)*

So, this says to me that Paul, while pointing out the error of mankind and his propensity to sin, is not declaring man to be sinful in nature.

### *What about Yeshua/Jesus?*

Many believe that Yeshua/Jesus himself cannot be simply a man because they understand him as being someone *without sin*. We have been taught that it is impossible for man to be without sin...that it's against our human nature, but that is not true. It *is* possible, and ultimately those who are born of God are expected to live without sin.

But praise be to God our Heavenly Father for His tender loving mercy. For when we slip up, forgiveness of sin is available when we confess and repent of it. Eventually the goal, though, is to no longer commit sin. And we know this is possible because of the example we find in Jesus Christ, a fellow son of man who lived without sin.

Some insist that Jesus never sinned a day in his life. I used to think this was true, but now I don't think that is necessarily the case. Where does it say that Jesus never sinned a day in his life? That is assumed.

Presently I believe that Jesus had to learn right from wrong, as we all do, and when he faltered he had to be corrected. This is part of the development process in all of us. But when he reached the age of accountability, when "the child shall know good or evil", I believe he "refused the evil" and "chose the good". (Isaiah 7:16)

But that doesn't mean he never faltered.

In the prophecy spoken by Nathan to King David, concerning his seed, particularly the Messiah who would build a house for God and whose kingdom God would establish, we're told God said:

*I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. And when ["ean" G1437 – "if/in case"] he happens to transgress, then will I chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the sons of men. (2Sa 7:14 Brenton)*

This says there would have been discipline issued if he had transgressed, indicating to me that transgression would have been possible. But he follows that up with:

*But my mercy I will not take from him, as I took it from those whom I removed from my presence. (2Sa 7:15 Brenton)*

In the past I understood this passage to only be referring to the time in which the seed of David sat on the throne of his father, but now I'm thinking perhaps not. Perhaps this is speaking over the course of the whole man's life.

Regardless, the fact that it indicates the possibility of transgression indicates to me that the Messiah ought to have the ability to transgress. Whether Yeshua/Jesus did or not after he learned right from wrong, from what I can tell, is debatable.

The bottom line is the Bible demonstrates that humans have the capacity to *not* sin, that it is *not* a part of their DNA structure to sin. Rather, the propensity for mankind to *choose* to sin is clearly prevalent, not just within the uncircumcised population but also within the circumcised nation.

### *So whatever happened to Cain?*

God gave Cain an opportunity to confess his sin:

*And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother?*

But Cain did not confess his sin; he chose to hide it.

*And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?*

But God sees it all.

*And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*

I think, as a result of Cain's unwillingness to own up to what he did, Cain was not only punished for his sin, but was banished from God's presence.

*And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.*

*And Cain said unto the LORD, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.*

But then when Cain realized the severity of his punishment and cried out in fear for his life, it seems to me that God had mercy on him. He put a mark on him so as to protect him from death by his fellow man.

*And the LORD said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. (Gen 4:9-15 KJV)*

Nonetheless, he was still banished from God's presence:

*And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. (Gen 4:16 KJV)*

So, I say, let that be a lesson to us.

Should we ever find ourselves in the position of sinning against God, I think it's best that we quickly own up to our transgression, lest we be cut off from the presence of God.