

Anyone in here have a tough day yesterday? How about last week – any problems you had to deal with? How about last month? Anyone face some opposition in September?... anything you had to struggle with, or worry about?

Ever think about this...

Why Is Life So Difficult?

Because reality says it is... Anyone who says it's not, is just fooling themselves.

I mean when the One through whom all creation was made... tells us – 'life is gonna be tough'... you can bet it will be. Here's Jesus...

"In this world you will have trouble." John 16:33

When the One who demonstrated on a cross the epitome of love tells you that life will be so unkind that it'll seem as though the entire world is against you... You can take Him at His word.

"If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you." John 15:19

And it's not just the outside world fighting against us... but... oddly enough... we'll often discover that the enemy can be very close to home... Paul explaining that...

"I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me... waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law at work within me."

Romans 7: various

Ever wonder why this is?

Why we, the people of God... will undergo... all those things... trouble and hatred, experience the confines of imprisonment... fighting battles against evil that are waged right here from w/in... undergo persecution of all kinds... all...just because we love and desire to follow Jesus?

Now if we include our brothers and sisters throughout the entire world... They're dealing with persecution on a whole other level altogether...

Unlike us here in America they can personally relate to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians he was going thru...

"I have been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. I was beaten with rods, I was pelted with stones. I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food..." 2 Corinthians 23-27

That was written by a man who – experienced all of that on a daily basis...right up until the day he was beheaded for his faith in Jesus Christ.

Here's my question: Why do these things continue to be so prevalent? Still, today? I mean hasn't the world become much more refined/ more civilized?

You'd think – more civilized would mean more tolerant... more understanding – more charitable – more accepting.

We've had the benefit of history show us... hatred only leads to more hatred.

Why hasn't good evolved and replaced all this bad? I gotta believe the vast majority of people – would much rather have good taking place... than bad... right?

Who wants to go hungry?

Who wants to be persecuted, be hated... or imprisoned merely for their faith?

Surely no one in their right mind wants that...

And that's another thing... why are there so many people who aren't in their right minds? Why can't everyone see the evil that's so prevalent and the mindless things being done every day... and do whatever they can to stop it?

Anyone else spend time thinking about this stuff?

Well, brothers and sisters, there's one answer which brings to clarity all these questions.

One word that covers the tragic state of the world in the first century as well as the tragic state of the world in the 21st century...

Any guesses?

Sin

Essentially everything that isn't deemed good – by God's standard can [100% of the time] be traced back to sin Without exception...

Truth is: Sin accounts for every hardship, every difficulty, every painful experience, every disease, every betrayal, every lie... every heartache, every sadness, every sorrow, every tragedy and catastrophe and every death, that has ever... or will ever... take place in this world...

If something results in sickness, or pain or anguish of any kind... then it's sin that's responsible.

Are you saying ... that my sin is responsible for...let's say my heart disease?

Not exactly... I mean it's possible your sin could be responsible but – that's not the point I'm attempting to make this morning... [But if your eating habits are gluttonous – and your gluttony is the cause of your heart disease, then I suppose the sin of gluttony could be responsible]

But right now, I'm not talking individually or specifically as to what our personal sin has led to...

This morning I'm talking collectively/universally about what the origin of sin itself has led to... original sin.

That moment in time when sin was first conceived in the garden of Eden and brought forth into all the world and...

God's perfect/eternal earth... became irrevocably contaminated – and set on the course of destruction.

It all happened through the disobedience of mankind... and from that point forward it has been solely responsible for every -

Harmful, destructive, evil and immoral activity that has ever taken place in the world... AND it is the reason every living thing on this planet will one day end in death.

Including mankind.

“... Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” Romans 5:12

How many of you realize death was not in God's original plan for us?

We were to live eternally – with Him – on this planet – evermore... But sin kept that from happening.

Sin became responsible for everything having an ending... Plants, animals... and most notably – the physical lives of man.

God allowed Adam to eat from all the trees except one... the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, warning him that [if he did] death would result.

“The LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Genesis 2:16-17

Once that happened... there was no going back.

“The LORD God said, ‘The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden.’” Genesis 3:22-23

God's plan from the beginning included eternal life as well as God having daily communion with His creation... Sin changed that.

God could not allow sin, of any kind, to dwell eternally with Him...

It's why he had to banish Adam from His presence.

God, in His infinite wisdom and b/c of His unconditional love for His creation, created mankind with the 'freedom of choice.'

I suppose God could have left out the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from Eden... eliminating any chance Adam had to disobey the LORD.

But... that would have also eliminated Adam's choice of being able to choose to obey God or choose to disobey God.

Note: Don't underestimate the power of obedience.

Do you know what the Bible says the significance of obedience is an indication of?

Here... this is what Jesus says it's an indication of... He actually says it 4 times in John Ch 14.

“If you love me, keep my commands. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching.” John 14:15,21,23-24

Obedience to God is a demonstration of our love for God!

If we're not given a choice – to obey or disobey... then there's no way for us to demonstrate our love to Him!

I suppose God could have created us like puppets – controlling our every thought, every word, every action... but that's not who He is...

Who He is ...is a God who loves us immeasurably...

“God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Romans 5:8

“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

Mankind had a choice and messed up... Introduced sin into the world... once introduced into the world... it spread everywhere infecting the spiritual DNA of all mankind...

You could say it was like a spiritual Corona Virus...

Physically introduced into the world in Wuhan China... it then literally spread throughout the entire world... affecting every life in some way on the planet...

All viruses can also be traced back to original sin in the Garden.

I found this – which I thought explained original sin pretty well.

“All humans, through the fact of birth, inherit a tainted nature from Adam with a proclivity to sinful conduct [without hope apart from the Mercy of God discovered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.] Original Sin provides us with a biblical understanding of ourselves and casts sinners in utter reliance on God's saving Grace desperately in need of regeneration to the Father.” [let me add, bar none]

Desperately in need of... being the operative phrase here.

The biblical basis for original sin is found throughout Scripture – most notably... this verse written by David.

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Psalm 51:5

Paul echoed what David wrote.

“Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” Romans 5:12

Notice: Paul didn't elaborate here, didn't go into [“some people sin more than others”]

Paul didn't try making the point that there are some people more deserving of the consequences of sin...

And you won't find anywhere in God's Word... a differentiation of people who are worse off and further away from God... based on how much they've sinned...

What you will find is... everyone is equally deserving of the consequences of sin.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

And because of our sin... here's our just compensation...

“... the wages of sin is death.” Romans 6:23

“Not fair,” some say... we shouldn't have to suffer and die because Adam sinned...

If I gave you that impression – I apologize...

Have you ever sinned?

“Yea of course I've sinned...”

Then you just read... “the wages for **your sin**... is that you die.”

Not one person who has ever lived is without sin... so we can go ahead and get rid of that argument. And quit blaming Adam.

You're not going to have trouble... suffer and die one day because of Adam's sin... No, you're going to experience all of that because of your sin...

What is true is that being an ancestor of Adam – you inherited the inclination/tendency to sin... But none of your own sins are Adam's fault!

But there are people who sin a lot more than others... right?

Shouldn't there be some distinction between them?

Why should good people and bad people suffer the same fate?

First of all... your analysis that there are good people... that's flawed.

As often as we've quoted Jesus' take on this ...all of you should now be able to reference chapter and verse.

“No one is good except God alone.” Mark 10:18

The Bible advocates there are only two types of people... and it's not good/bad

There are the 'Righteous' and the 'Unrighteous.' Referred to often in Scripture as the [Wicked]

So who are the righteous? And how does one become righteous? [Good questions]

“The righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.” Romans 3:21-22

Do you possess saving faith in Jesus Christ? “Yes?” You have then been made righteous...

If you don't possess saving faith in Jesus Christ, you are not righteous.

And as such...

“They [the unrighteous] will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.” Matthew 25:46

Tragically there will be religious people missing out on eternal life because they want to believe that God gives out grades based upon how much a person sins...

And since [in their eyes] they sin a lot less than a lot of people... ... they assume an attitude of self-righteousness and justify their moral goodness – believing that will gain them access to God.

King Solomon speaks to those who try figuring out the will of God without any Biblical foundation ...

“Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for them.” Proverbs 26:12

The moment we begin thinking – we are [in any way] deserving of [even one ounce of] God's unconditional mercy and grace... The Bible tells us... fools are better off...

But let's assume [for arguments sake] that [the amount of sin or the intensity of the sin a person commits] does figure into God's plan of redemption... [absurd as that is]

Let's go ahead and look at Adam's sin that he was guilty of...

God told him **not to do** something... but... he did it anyway... That was Adam's sin... that merited expulsion from God's presence.

He didn't kill anyone... didn't commit adultery... [I guess that would have been difficult huh?]

He did something God told him not to do!

Anyone in here ever done that?

I'd like to know of one person who hasn't done something they knew God didn't want them to do?

If you've never committed blasphemy... if you've never stole anything, or cheated someone, if you never took the LORD's name in vain... if you never coveted your neighbor's possessions or treated your parents with contempt... BUT – you have done something you knew was wrong... no difference between you and Adam.

And Adam's lot? **“The LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden.”** Genesis 3:23

So hear me... For the same reason... God cannot allow you to enter the garden of His Eternal Kingdom either. Not with the sin of disobedience hanging over your head... He can't.

Look, you can be considered a good person in the eyes of man yet be considered unrighteous in the eyes of God. [which is the only thing that matters]

How many of you know... there is nothing we can know or learn about the nature of God looking through the lens of human reasoning.

This is why it's essential that you study and learn the Word of God so you can base your lives completely on what it says.

Let's say you were heading into some foreign land where you heard that certain lifestyles, or certain practices could cause you to lose your life... and before you went – you were offered a booklet explaining [in detail] what those practices were... and why you cannot do them...

Would you take time to read it study it... to learn exactly what behaviors to avoid? To save yourself? Of course you would...

What I find incredible – are people who [know full well that one day – their bodies will give out and they will breathe their last breath here on earth] – yet –

They chose to take their chances with what comes next.

They don't know, they cannot explain... yet - they don't seem all that interested to find out!

That blows me away...

“Oh I'm sure my priest or my pastor will tell me everything I need to know!”

Really? You're going to leave – your eternal existence – in the hands of someone else?

Meanwhile – those same people [not interested in finding out the way to eternal life] work really hard to find out how they can score more points playing Candy Crush!

[Is that crazy or what?]

Our church has never... in its 24 year-history offered more opportunity for people to learn about God and His Word than right now!

- There are two adult SS classes – teaching expressly the Word of God...
- There is a men's bible study and a women's bible study on Wednesday nights – teaching from the Word of God.

There are opportunities for children to learn God's Word... every Wednesday in SHINE as well as every Sunday in Jr Church...

There is a home Bible Study taking place on Monday evenings that I will guarantee teaches directly from the Bible.

And you have three pastors – preaching every Sunday – who are fully committed to teaching and proclaiming nothing but... God's Word...

One thing God's Word is very clear about is – there are those who will receive the gift of eternal life and there are those who won't.

The Bible is also clear – that everyone... regardless of receiving God's Gift or not... will exist somewhere... Either in the presence of God or outside the presence of God.

God's Kingdom will reign forever. The Bible says it will take place right here on earth once God makes all things new...

The only people permitted in God's Kingdom will be those whose sin... has not been held against them... In other words... there are people who are treated by God as though they never ever sinned...

Even though they have sinned?... That's right...

We read it earlier...

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

Ok, now I'm totally confused... If everyone has sinned... and everyone who has sinned... falls short of God's glory which means they are unworthy to receive eternal life with God... then how is it still possible for anyone to go to Heaven?

That's the beauty of God... He has made a way for that to happen. You see it's always been God's desire for everyone to go with Him...

“God our Savior wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:3-4

It's what God desires... but that doesn't mean that's what's gonna happen.

Remember free-will?

That comes into play here...

God wants us with Him... So He has provided a way for that to happen...

It was John the Baptist who first proclaimed to man – exactly 'how' it was going to happen.

“John saw Jesus coming toward him and said,

‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!’ John 1:29

That's how it's possible...

Our sin [great and small] can be taken away from us...

Removed, forever...

Not tolerated, not excused or pardoned... God doesn't 'look the other way' for certain people...

[He doesn't offer us... A 'get out of Hell free card']

He does offer us... [freedom yes]... but it's anything but free. Our sin was fully paid for... by Jesus.

What we deserve for our sin – is the wrath of God...

But Jesus stepped in front of us and took our wrath – on the cross.

The Lamb of God was sacrificed... for every one of our sins.

That's why we can never say, “God excused our sin.” He didn't excuse it at all – there was a severe penalty paid for... for our sin... It's just that Jesus paid for us!

Remember the verse... “The wages of sin is death?”

Jesus – paid that – He took upon himself our sin... all of our sin... and he went through death for us... so that we might live.

“The death he died, he died to sin once for all.” Romans 6:10

Christ died to sin. Obviously He didn't die to His own sin, for Christ never sinned.

He died for our sin... to pay the wages for our sins. [The wages of sin being death] Jesus paid that – it's why he went willingly to the cross and died.

He died once... for everyone... It was a one-time payment for the sins of everyone who comes to him in faith. And hear me... it has paid for every sin... including all past, all present, and all future sins – regardless. Christ doesn't need to go back to the cross every time someone sins again. He completed the job of dying for the sins of humanity. Brothers and sisters... It's over.

The final 3 words Jesus spoke from the cross were what?

“It is finished!” John 19:30

The payment for your sin and my sin... is what is finished –

Thinking you gotta do something – to make up for your sin... after you have trusted Jesus for it... is not only wrong theology – it is insulting to the LORD.

“Just in case your sacrifice didn't cover all of it Jesus, I went ahead and paid for some indulgences... threw a little extra in the collection plate, and I vow to read the Bible every morning for a month!

Really, that's no different from the Pharisee who stood at the Temple and prayed...

“God, I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.” Luke 18:12

Jesus said this man who gave a litany of his good deeds went home without his sins forgiven...

While the tax collector who simply prayed –

“God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Luke 18:13

Jesus said his sins were forgiven.

The most destructive thing original sin has done... it has Spiritually separated every person who has ever lived... from God our Creator!

And every person [who desires life eternal] without exception – must find a way back to God.

There is only one way... for that to take place...

Peter wrote this...

“For Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”

1 Peter 3:18

If you think you can be reconciled to God... without Jesus bringing you there... you are being delusional.

“No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

That includes tithing, church affiliation, good works, baptism, confirmation, or Bible memorization...

The one thing keeping all of mankind from entering the eternal Kingdom of God is sin... It's also what's made this life so difficult...

But God, in His infinite Mercy – has provided a way for every sinner to still come on board...

This life – this physical life in this world... this place Jesus tells us [is not His Kingdom]

Because of sin it will always be difficult and filled with pain and suffering...

Not so the Glorious Kingdom of God...

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’” Revelation 21:1-5