

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

16 November 2014

Topics

A.M. Bible Class:

Acceptable worship (Hebrews 13:15)

A.M. Lesson:

Biblical dispensations of time (Hebrews 1:1-4)

P.M. Lesson:

Jesus will return (John 14:1-6)

Wednesday:

Romans 2

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" Psalm 122:2

Thinking through the sin problem

F. LaGard Smith

In this article, F. LaGard Smith discusses the appropriateness of the popular terminology "sin nature." The article is an excerpt from his excellent book *Troubling Questions for Calvinists*.

What do you think of the proposition that all sin is a twisting of that which is good? Have you ever before considered that the evil desires of man's "flesh" or "sinful nature" [as reads NIV1984] are perversions of the *legitimate* desires of the body? (Chapter 1 of Romans is the definitive treatise on inversion of the natural, created order from good to evil). Gifted with a life-sustaining desire to eat and drink, for example, we pervert that desire into drunkenness and gluttony. Gifted with the natural desire for sexual expression, we pervert it into all sorts of sexual immorality. Having the need for at least minimal possessions, we pervert that innate need into covetousness, greed, and theft.

To say that we have a "sinful nature" is to say that we have a nature that is capable of being

perverted from the legitimate to the illegitimate, from the natural to the unnatural, from the pure to the polluted. (To borrow from Augustine: "Evil is making a bad use of a good thing").

As Screwtape explains to Wormwood [two demons in C. S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*], "There are things for humans to do all day long without His minding in the least—sleeping, washing, eating, drinking, making love, playing, praying, working. Everything has to be *twisted* before it's any use to us."

It's crucial to note that not everyone "twists what is natural" in precisely the same way as everybody else. Some struggle with sex or drunkenness; others with idolatry; still others with hatred, jealousy, or anger. Even within genetic lines of offspring, the sins of the family vary widely from generation to generation and from individual to individual. Have you ever wondered why that is? Or, indeed, why some individuals persist in sinning more often or more heinously than other individuals?

Surely something other than some nebulous, amorphous, universal "sin nature" is going on here. If all of us have inherited from Adam and the same depravity and sin nature that inevitably inclines us toward sin, how does one explain the fact that our commonly-shared "sin nature" manifests itself in such diverse ways?

Even more to the point, how does the theory that “we sin because we are sinners” actually work? When you move from theory to practice, in what way does one’s supposed natural inclination to sin actually end up making sin happen in one’s life? Is there some intangible power force coursing through my body influencing me to entertain lustful thoughts? Or some inner instinct compelling me to tell lies? Or some evil inclination in the innermost part of my moral fabric seducing me into envying what my neighbor has?

The closest we come to a scriptural answer to all these questions is found in James 1:13-15: “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

Which merely begs the further question: If we are enticed by our own evil desire, where does *it* come from? Does it arise *of necessity* out of an innate, inherited depravity and deviously sinister “sin nature,” or does it come from the free, voluntary, and willful perversion of legitimate desires?

Undoubtedly the most objective way to test these two competing explanations is to roll the tape of history back before the original sin, depravity, and any supposed inherited “sin nature” ever came on the scene. Since the culprit behind our sins and mine supposedly is a debilitating depravity resulting from “the Fall,” how do you explain the sins committed by two individuals who unquestionably were *not* burdened with such depravity? How, if at all, is the supposed progression from one’s depravity to one’s sin (or from one’s pervasive “sin nature” to specific, identifiable sins) to be distinguished from whatever process prompted Adam and Eve to sin *before* “the Fall?”

As all agree, Adam and Eve did not sin because they were sinners; they became sinners because they sinned. Wholly unshackled by original sin, depravity, or some necessitating “sin nature,” the first couple were dragged away by their evil desire to eat forbidden fruit. In precisely the same way, you and I are dragged away by our evil desire to taste forbidden pleasures and set ourselves up as superior to our Maker.

AFTER EDEN

by Dan Lietha



The Gospel is Good News. But Jesus never said it was easy news. The central truth of the cross is death before life, repentance before reward. Before His Gospel can be the Good News of redemption, it must be the bad news of the conviction of sin.

—Charles Colson

News

Fifth Sunday special offering will be this month on November 30.

Louella Briggs is out of town until December.

Tatyana Knowlton is being treated for Macular Degeneration.

Potluck is today after assembly.

Prayer List:

Joy Gibson, Janet Radar, H.L. Boling, Mike and Sandy Cavasos, Nic and Ani Self.

