

People on the move The book of Numbers Lesson 9 4Q 2009

The Sin of Moses and Aaron

What was the sin of Moses and Aaron? How would you define sin?

- Is it a commodity transferred from person to animal in a ritualistic way, or perhaps from sinner to Savior?
 - Can sin be transferred?
- Is it bad deeds, evil acts, bad behavior?
- Is it a condition of heart and mind which is incompatible with life?

Recently I had the opportunity to speak with over 350 Christian high school students. I passed out cards and asked them to write down their answers to the question, “What is sin?” Here are a few of their responses:

- An act against what God stands for
- It is something that separates us from God
- To do something that is morally wrong
- Anything evil or unjust
- Something that brings us down
- The absence of anything good/anything not of God
- Doing anything you know in your gut is wrong
- Bad stuff
- A bad thing that Satan discovered and brought upon us
- The cause of all pain and suffering
- When you do something you feel guilty about
- Anything that makes God unhappy
- Something to be forgiven
- Whatever you do wrong and you don't even care what you did

And the following two answers were submitted by more than 10% of the students:

- Sin is not following the 10 Commandments
- Sin is going against the will of God

How do you hear these responses? Can you categorize them into groups or classes?

- sin is bad behavior, an act of disobedience, something we do wrong; or,
- sin is some evil commodity, entity, element, “some thing” or some “stuff” that separates us from God or makes us unhappy.

What do you think of these answers?

Three students saw sin differently. These three saw sin as:

- The absence of love
- The opposite of God’s character – sin is being selfish
- Focusing on self. It all started with Satan and how he wanted to be greater than God. This is the root of all evil.

They saw sin as a state of being, a defect in character, a deviation from God’s heart of love.

How do you answer the question, “What is sin?”

Does it make a difference how we define sin? Why does it make a difference?

- As a doctor, one of the first skills we are taught is how to diagnose, because if the diagnosis is wrong, then the treatment is usually wrong.
- Likewise, how we diagnose what sin is helps us understand God’s treatment plan so that we can cooperate more effectively with Him to experience healing of heart and mind.
- Understanding what sin really is helps protect us from accepting as true one of the many false “remedies” or false gospels being promoted around the world.

So what is the right diagnosis? The Bible says, “Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.” (1John 3:4). Sin is being lawless or without the law or being outside the

law. The old King James Version says, “sin is transgression of the law.” But we have to answer the next critical question – what law?

Before we can understand what sin is, we need to know what law is being broken, what law is sin out of harmony with? There are two primary ways of describing God's law:

1. A legal enactment by the Creator of the universe. An imposed set of rules to which created beings are required to adhere upon threat of an imposed penalty by the Creator of the law.
2. A principle, emanating from the Creator, upon which life is designed to operate or function. Deviations are inherently incompatible with life as the Creator designed it.

From these two ideas two separate ideas of sin have emerged and subsequently two very different “gospels.”

- One version argues God is arbitrary and imposes laws upon His creatures that they must obey. When the law was broken, God, in order to be just, had to impose penalties upon His creatures. This view sees sinful mankind under the legal condemnation of God and without hope of life eternal, unless the “legal penalty” is paid.
- Sin, in this view, is disobedience to an imposed law, rule breaking, bad behavior. Very much like the high school students’ description of “not following the 10 Commandments.”
- This view of the law leads to the entire penal substitution “gospel.”

But what if the law of God is not enacted, imposed, legislated or decreed? What if God’s law is something entirely different? If that were the case, wouldn’t sin be something different than mere rule breaking? And wouldn’t the treatment or solution

for sin be something other than legal payment? What does the Bible teach is the law of God?

- Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:10)
- The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Galatians 5:14)
- If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. (James 2:8)
- Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40, Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 6:5).

The Bible teaches that God’s law is the “law of love”! The “law of love” is not something God “created,” but is the life principle that emanates from God's very being, because “God is love” (1John 4:8). Love is not enacted or legislated or in any other way imposed. It is simply the natural order of all things emanating from the God of love. This law of love is the design template upon which God constructed life to operate and is described in scripture as, “[love is] not self-seeking” (1 Corinthians 13:5). In other words, love is other centered and outward moving. The law of love is the law of giving.

- Sin is stepping outside the law of love, breaking its circle of life’s normal operation, severing the outflow of selfless giving, violating the construction protocols for life. In other words, sin is “lawlessness” or being outside the design template of life, outside of love. Sin is taking rather than giving; selfishness rather than selflessness.

Thoughts? Then with this in mind what was the “sin” of Moses and Aaron?

Failure to love, failure to put God and others first. Self rising up and taking over the motives of the heart and the actions of the life. And, because of their position why was this so much more serious?

If we saw our pastor walk into the Tent of Meeting, saw the pillar of fire come down and meet with him there, saw him walk out with his face all aglow and then come and speak to us, would his words and actions have significant impact?

SUNDAY

Read third paragraph, “The water gushed...” thoughts?

What idea about God was communicated by Moses’ action in striking the rock? What happens in the heart/mind when we believe God to be angry, wrathful, severe, unforgiving?

Does this give insight as to why God had to deal with Moses the way He did? What was God trying to say to the people?

Read bottom red section – thoughts? Are we powerless, helpless, just floating along in life waiting for the next event to trigger some angry emotion and hope, when it happens, we can restrain ourselves, or, can we take purposeful actions to reduce the likelihood that we will react with irritation and anger? What are some of those steps?

- Meditation on God’s word
 - It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. DA 83
 - Why might this help?

- By beholding we are changed, we learn the truth of God's love, we learn methods, tools, truths which we intelligently internalize
 - We learn of God's character and experience greater trust in Him
 - Science has revealed that daily meditation on themes of other-centered-love actually causes the Anterior Cingulate Cortex (where we experience love, altruism, empathy) to grow stronger. The ACC is directly wired into the fear and anger centers and calms them. Thus, not only do we experience cognitive growth, relationship growth but our brains actually change and we are less capable of responding in irritation and anger.
- Physical exercise
 - Produces proteins that keep the brain healthy and calm the emotion centers
- Good sleep
 - Sleep deprivation decreases the efficiency of the prefrontal cortex and increases irritability.
- Avoiding brain destroying poisons (alcohol, tobacco, drugs) which diminish the effectiveness of the prefrontal cortex and thereby increase violence, aggression, acting out
- Avoiding theatrical entertainment
 - Theatrical TV develops the primitive emotional centers and hinders the development of the prefrontal cortex and leads to more violence, attention problems and acting out
- Altruistic endeavors
 - Strengthens prefrontal cortex, calms the primitive emotional centers and leads to reduced stress hormones, lower blood pressure and better health
- Other ideas?

MONDAY

Read first paragraph “Chapter 20...” – thoughts? What lessons can we learn from the history of those who came before?

What mantle are we picking up? Are we picking up the gospel mantle or some other thing? Do we see our generation making the same mistakes of the past, resting satisfied on truths already discovered by previous generations or are we pressing forward, always wanting to grow, advance and experience more and more of God’s truth?

- Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word, and discourage any further investigation of the Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion. {GW 297.2}

The fact that there is no controversy or agitation among God's people, should not be regarded as conclusive evidence that they are holding fast to sound doctrine. There is reason to fear that they may not be clearly discriminating between truth and error. When no new questions are started by investigation of the Scriptures, when no difference of opinion arises which will set men to searching the Bible for themselves, to make sure that they have the truth, there will be many now, as in ancient times, who will hold to tradition, and worship they know not what. {GW 298.1}

I have been shown that many who profess to have a knowledge of present truth, know not what they believe. They do not understand the evidences of their faith. They have no just appreciation of the work for the present time. When the time of trial shall come, there are men

now preaching to others, who will find, upon examining the positions they hold, that there are many things for which they can give no satisfactory reason. Until thus tested, they knew not their great ignorance. {GW 298.2}

And there are many in the church who take it for granted that they understand what they believe, but, until controversy arises, they do not know their own weakness. When separated from those of like faith, and compelled to stand singly and alone to explain their belief, they will be surprised to see how confused are their ideas of what they had accepted as truth.

Thoughts? Have any of you, through controversial dialogue, been driven to study and discovered there were ideas previously held that didn't make sense? Have any of you struggled to give explanation for what you believe, finding that it was hard to explain? How can we improve this situation?

What lessons can we learn from those who went before? Anything that might help us hasten the day of the Lord? When the gospel of the kingdom goes to the entire world the end will come, what is the gospel? Has any generation actually taken the gospel to the world or some other message?

TUESDAY

Read second paragraph "However much they..." thoughts? Why did they grumble? Was it because they kept focusing on themselves and took their focus off of all that God had done and was doing for them? Do we ever do this? What can we do to protect ourselves from falling into a similar trap today?

So what did God do to help them focus their minds more clearly? He stepped back so they could see what life would be like without Him – and what did they discover?

Parents, have you ever had a child that was unruly, difficult to deal with, you were constantly intervening to try and protect them but all they did was complain, and criticize? Did you

ever just step back and say okay, if that's what you want go ahead, knowing they were going to get injured, but realizing they would never learn if you didn't? Is that what God was doing here?

Do you notice, how God was working in love to open the minds of the people, but how Satan has twisted God's actions so that many teach God was actively punishing, inflicting penalties, being mean, harsh etc.

WEDNESDAY

Read Numbers 21:5-9

- They spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!" ⁶ Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸ The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived. Numbers 21:5-9

The lesson then says, "How again do we see Moses in the role of intercessor? Why, especially now, did the people need an intercessor?" - thoughts?

Why did the people need an intercessor? Because they didn't know God! Because they believed lies about God, because they needed someone to reveal the truth about God to them! Why do we need an intercessor? Who is our intercessor? What is Christ interceding to accomplish?

- For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form. Col 2:9
- Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. John 14:9
- God was in the Son reconciling the world to himself 2Cor 5:19

Was Christ's intercessions for mankind only?

- For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Col 1:19,20
- "While we rejoice that there are worlds which have never fallen, these worlds render praise, and honor, and glory to Jesus Christ for the plan of redemption to save the fallen sons of Adam, as well as to confirm themselves in their position and character of purity. The arm that raised the human family from the ruin which Satan had brought upon the race through his temptations, is the arm which has preserved the inhabitants of other worlds from sin. Every world throughout immensity engages the care and support of the Father and the Son; and this care is constantly exercised for fallen humanity. Christ is **mediating** in behalf of man, and the order of unseen worlds also is preserved by his **mediatorial** work. Are not these themes of sufficient magnitude and importance to engage our thoughts, and call forth our gratitude and adoration to God?" {RH, January 11, 1881 par. 4}

Thoughts?

Read second paragraph, "There are about..." thoughts? Does this have any bearing on how the wicked will die in the end? Does it have any bearing on the plagues that fall in Revelation?

One of the founders of our church put it this way:

- "I was shown that the judgments of God would not come directly out from the Lord upon them, but in this way; They place themselves beyond His protection. He warns, corrects, reproves, and points out the only path of safety; then if those who have been the objects of His special care will follow their own course, independent of the Spirit of God, after repeated warnings, if they choose their own way, then He does not commission His angels to prevent Satan's decided attacks upon them. It is Satan's power that is at work at sea and on land, bringing calamity and distress, and sweeping off multitudes to make sure of his prey, and storm and tempest both by sea and land will be, for Satan has come down in great wrath. He is at work. He knows his time is short and, he is not restrained; we shall see more terrible manifestations of his great power than we have ever dreamed of."
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Thoughts?

THURSDAY

The lesson reviews some of the early fighting with the nations of Canaan – what do you think about this? Why did the Israelites have to fight?

What was God's plan?

My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. ²⁴ Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces. ²⁵ Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, ²⁶ and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.

²⁷ "I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your

enemies turn their backs and run. ²⁸ I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. ²⁹ But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land. Exodus 23:23-30

Why didn't this plan get enacted?

What impact would it have on them? How would you like to march around a city, have the walls fall down and then go in and put to the sword every man, woman and child? Can you imagine what it would be like to enter a nursery school and, with a sword, kill all the children? Do you think doing such a thing could affect you? Did it affect the Hebrews?

FRIDAY

Read second paragraph "Here was ground with which..." thoughts?

Read question 1 – thoughts? No question their healing was an act of God using His divine power – the question – when God heals does He violate His laws? Do miracles occur in violation of God's laws or only in harmony with them – including the laws of nature?