

Sin - Whose Fault Is It? by Jeff Strite

Genesis 3:1-3:19

OPEN: One of the most popular Christian Hymns of all time was written in the 1700's by a man named John Newton. Does anybody know the name of that hymn?
(Amazing Grace)

It's such a popular hymn that it has been sung by numerous singers down through the years including such artists as Arlo Guthrie to Fats Domino, Joan Baez, Destiny's Child, Mahalia Jackson, Judy Collins, Aretha Franklin, Rod Stewart, Johnny Cash and Elvis Presley.

It's been sung acapella, it's been played on pipe organs and bagpipes, pianos, and guitars and it's been sung by everyone from Opera singers to rock stars.

I read the comments of one person who believed "Amazing Grace" was America's most beloved song. So, this morning I want you to sing the first verse of that great hymn along with me.

"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see."

ILLUS: Some time back I was visiting with a friend who loves to play the piano. He was playing songs from a songbook his mother left him and I was looking over his shoulder trying to sing the songs he played. At one point he turned the page and there was "Amazing Grace". And he began to play it and I began to sing. But the words were different than those we just sang.

These are the words I saw on the page:

"Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved SOMEONE like me"

My friend had scratched out the words "a wretch" and penciled in "someone".
Now why on earth would he do that? Why would he scratch out the words "A WRETCH" and replace them with the word "SOMEONE?"

Well, because he didn't like this idea of himself being a wretch.
He didn't appreciate the idea that he would be called a sinner.
It offended him.

Now, of course he was wrong.

HE WAS A SINNER.

We're all sinners.

Romans 3:23 tells us "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

And the Ephesian Christians were told that before they became Christians they were

- "dead in (their) transgressions and sins..." Ephesians 2:1
- And "were by nature objects of wrath." Ephesians 2:3

And the Apostle John wrote that "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." 1 John 1:10

In other words – Jesus said he'd come to die for all of us because we'd sinned, but if we say we've never sinned, then we're telling Jesus He didn't die for us and we really don't need His sacrifice. If we said that we'd be accusing Jesus of being a liar.

Now, while I was visiting with my friend he got quite worked about politics. Have you ever been around someone who gets worked about politics? You could see his blood pressure rise and his face turn red. And he began to go on a tirade like a machine gun telling me how much he hated this politician and that senator or congressman. Of course, they were all Republicans and he made no bones about the fact that he regarded all Republican politicians as evil and unprincipled animals.

Now, my friend didn't like to think of himself as a sinner but he had no trouble branding every Republican that ever lived as being sinful.

And you know what (pause) he was right.

Every Republican that ever lived has been a sinner.

And let me let you in on a secret: so is every Democrat who ever lived.

And every Libertarian, every Tea Partier, every Liberal, and every Progressive.

You name the political party or persuasion and I'll guarantee you - they're all sinners.

Some may be better at sinning than others... but they're all sinners.

And so are we!!

The question this morning is not IF we're sinners:

The question is: How did we end up that way?

Whose FAULT was it that we ended up being prone toward sin?

Well, in Genesis chapter 3 the blame gets passed around to just about everybody.

1st we have Adam. Who does he blame?

That's right - Eve

God says to Adam "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

(Notice God didn't ask him who was at fault. He asked what Adam had done)

The man said, "The woman you put here with me— she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

It's not MY fault... it's HERS.

It's like he wasn't even there at the time.

It's like she put the fruit in his hand and it just... leaped into his mouth.

He couldn't help himself.

ILLUS: It's kind of like the story of the little boy who hit a playmate. When his parents confronted him and asked him how could he have done such a thing he replied:

"Well he hit me back FIRST."

ILLUS: I heard of a woman who'd been divorced by her husband. He'd left her and ran off with another woman. Whenever they got together he'd blame HER for the marriage breaking up. He was verbally abusive and arrogant as he ticked off her faults and weaknesses.

Now, she already felt guilty (most people who go through a divorce do). But when she told her preacher about ex-husband's blaming her as if he'd had nothing to do with destroying their marriage, the preacher smiled and said:

"You do realize – if YOU are not at fault - HE has to be."

This tendency of blaming others is as old as creation... and it's just as useless.

It didn't work for Adam and it won't work for you or me.

And this is one of the peculiarities of what people do when they've caught sinning.

People who sin often get angry and put down others around them.

They might show their anger toward the person they've wronged.

Or they could aim their fury at someone they felt could have stopped them from sinning.

Or they could let loose on someone they feel is in a position to judge their actions.

BUT they get angry at someone else because - if that someone else is not at fault - they have to be. And they can't live with that. So they pass the blame around a little bit so

they don't feel so bad.

If you or I ever catch ourselves getting angry at others when we've sinned... we've got the problem! We've begun to eat from the same fruit Adam did. And it does not satisfy. The guilt will still remain.

Now what's interesting in Genesis 3 is that Adam isn't only one passing the buck. Eve blames someone too.
Who does she blame? (Satan)

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"
(Again notice that God didn't ask her who influenced her to do it).
The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Genesis 3:13)

In other words – the devil made me do it.

Now this accusation has a little more validity than the one Adam tried.
In I Timothy 2:14 we're told that "Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor."
Thus, Satan DECEIVED Eve.
And God punished him for it.

In fact, in Luke 17:1-2 Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied round his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin."

God despises those who deceive others and lead them into sin. Anyone who tempts another to sin is regarded by God as being as evil as Satan himself.

Does that mean Satan CAUSED Eve to sin?

No. He deceived her into making the choice she made but she made the choice.

But Satan did deceive her.

In fact, that's what Satan is good at.

The Bible tells me that Satan is a LIAR.

He's our ADVERSARY.

He SCHEMES against us.

He desires to DESTROY us.

And he even masquerades, trying to pass himself as an angel of light.

But Satan has his limitations. He can't force us to sin.

He can tempt us.

He can trick us.

He can deceive us.

BUT HE CANNOT MAKE US SIN

Sin is our choice and always has been.

So whose fault was the sin in the Garden? (Adam and Eve)

That's right.

But the question for me is this: how could they be so stupid?

Think about it. They've got it made.

They have a personal garden filled with every fruit and vegetable they could ever want to eat. They have every creature every created as a personal pet and companion. They can climb trees, dance in fields of flowers, shower under cascading waterfalls and sit with their feet in streams filled with fish.

And best of all they get to spend time with God every day.

This is about as close to heaven as it gets.

And yet they threw it all away for a bite of a forbidden fruit.

How could they be stupid?

Well, it seems to me they did what they did because... they didn't trust God.

Satan deceived Eve by asking her "Did God really say...?"

With that simple question Satan forced Eve to try to recall God's command about that tree she wasn't to eat from. He used that question to plant a doubt in her mind, making her question if He really said what He said.

And then Satan accused God of lying

"You will not surely die... For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:4-5

"You're not going to die (Satan smirked) you're not even going to get sick! There are no consequences to your choices. God LIED to you!

And you know why God lied?

He lied because He knows that when you eat of this your eyes be opened and He

doesn't want that.

o He doesn't want what's best for you.

o He doesn't want you to have fun.

o He doesn't want you to enjoy life to the fullest.

o He wants to keep you fat, dumb and happy.

Because He knows that – once you eat of the fruit – you'll be just like him, and that's not going to happen. He's too jealous to allow you to do that. He wants to keep you under His thumb. He wants to control you.

And so Eve begins to think "Maybe the serpent is right" and then she begins to look at the tree with new eyes.

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and ALSO desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it." Genesis 3:6a

Do you think Eve had suddenly gotten hungry? Probably not!

Do you think that perhaps there were NO other trees in the Garden that were pleasing to the eye and good for food? No.

Genesis 2:9 says "the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground— trees that were PLEASING to the eye and GOOD for food."

Suddenly she began to see the tree with new eyes. It wasn't because she was hungry or because it offered a more delicious fruit than any other tree. What she really saw was that the tree was ALSO desirable for gaining wisdom. Wisdom that God had LIED to her about.

And so Eve chose to disobey God.

And she disobeyed because she didn't trust Him.

But at least SHE had an excuse – she was deceived

BUT Adam wasn't deceived.

1 Timothy 2:14 says "Adam was NOT the one deceived..."

Well, if Adam wasn't deceived, why did he take of the fruit?

Well (this isn't explained in Scripture, but I've got a pretty good guess)

Adam believed God.

He just didn't trust Him.

Think about it: God said that the day they ate of the tree they'd die.

So... Eve eats of the tree.

And what's going to happen to her? (She's going to die).

Adam was going to lose Eve. He's going to lose this woman whom he said was "... bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh..." Genesis 2:23

He loves her and now he's going to lose her.

And I think that Adam reasoned in his heart: "I don't want to lose her.

But God will kill her for this.

God's doesn't UNDERSTAND how important this woman is to me.

And I can't trust Him.

I can't trust Him to take care of this the right way.

I can't trust Him to fix the problem... so I've got to do it myself."

So I think Adam reasoned:

"If I eat the fruit too... God won't kill both of us. He might take one of us, but not both because He loves us too much to lose us both. So I'm going to force God to fix this problem on MY TERMS." And so (I believe) Adam tried to box God into a corner so he could keep this woman that he loved.

Adam and Eve lost their closeness with God because they didn't trust God.

And that's one of the major reasons we fall into sin. We want something but we're not willing to trust God to supply what we need. That's one of the reasons God's Word has the command "do not fear" 365 times. That's why the Bible stresses so heavily that we need to "wait upon God" and why it repeatedly tells us that God cares for us and has a plan for our lives.

Not trusting God leads many people to do sinful things to attempt to what God would have done had we only been patient.

Now, there one last person who is blamed for sin in Genesis 3.

Can you guess who? (God)

Adam says "The woman YOU put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." (Genesis 3:12)

On Facebook someone made this comment:

"We were born in sin and God tells us not to sin but He allows the devil to tempt us in ways of temptations which causes us to sin even when we pray for Gods assistance in making the right decisions"

In essence, that man was trying to say that God had set him up for failure.
He couldn't win!
The cards are stacked against him.
IT WAS GOD'S FAULT!

Now, is that true?
Is sin God's fault?
Was it GOD'S fault that Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden?
Well, kinda.

ILLUS: I got to thinking about this – remember the trees God planted in the Garden?
Genesis 2:9b tells us “...In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

Now, I can understand putting the tree of life in the garden.
It's a great tree.
You could eat of it and you'd live forever.
I'm good with that.

But then - God also put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil there.
There's no up-side to THIS tree.
You eat of it ... and you learn things you don't really want to know.
And if you eat of it– you die.
Why would you want a tree like that in your garden?
It would be like planting a poison Sumac tree in the back yard.
Who would do that?

And where did God plant that tree?
Smack dab in the middle of the garden.
He didn't put it at the edge of the garden... or 10 miles away. He put that tree right in the middle of the garden where they'd have to pass by that tree EVERY DAY.

And then it occurred to me...
He put that tree in the middle of the garden where they'd have to pass by it every day.
Every day they pass by that tree.
Every day they have to make a choice – do I obey God or not?

And you know - I've learned that most of us face choices like this every day. Every day

we've got to make choices about whether or not we're going to obey God. And sometimes those choices are hard for us to make.

ILLUS: I'm going to use a fairly pathetic and petty example to illustration to explain this. It happened back when I was in High School.

Do you remember being in High School? Yeah, me too.

And for me that has never been a pleasant memory. I wasn't well liked. I had friends, but for the most part I was an outsider.

Then one day I auditioned for the school play... and I got the part.

I was the leprechaun in "Finian's Rainbow."

Yeah, well, it was an important role for me. I might actually get noticed. I would have an opportunity to shine. And maybe people might like me if I didn't mess it up. I was so excited – I took the playbook home and started going over my lines that very night.

There weren't a lot of them... but they were MY lines.

Then I saw a curse word. Then a 2nd and then a 3rd.

I was a Christian. I'd been raised in the church since I was a little boy. We didn't say words like that in my home. But there they were staring at me. My lines. Lines I'd have to recite if I wanted that part. Lines that had offensive words that embarrassed me just to read.

If I refused to say those words I might lose the part. I might lose my opportunity to be important at school. I might never get another chance at a play like this one.

But I said those evil words I'd insult my God.

And I struggled with that for the better part of an hour. But finally I decided I'd go to play practice, recite the lines... but my character would never say those curse words no matter what the cost. They could take the part away from me, but those words would never be spoken by me.

And you know what happened?

Nobody noticed. Nobody cared. No one seemed to realize. I had struggled for at least an hour with that decision and it didn't seem to matter to anyone else.

But it mattered to me.

It was choice I had to make.

Every day each of us is faced with decisions that can cost us.

And some have made those kinds of decisions, it has cost them their jobs, their friends, their homes. But God says He's watching to see what choices we'll make.

One of my favorite passages in the Old Testament is found in II Chronicles 16:9. It says "the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him"

In other words – God is watching. He’s searching. He’s tirelessly seeking SOMEONE who is willing to choose Him. Someone who is willing to face loss and rejection because God was more important.

And God wants us to know that when we make those choices HE’S waiting to reach down into our lives and strengthen us because we’ve been committed to Him. He’ll be in our corner and fighting beside us.

Romans 8:28 tells us “that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

No matter what happens in our lives, no matter how it comes to pass, God is big enough to reach into our lives and make it right.

CLOSE: One last thought.

Sin came to us because Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And salvation comes to us because we eat from the fruit of another tree.

The tree that held Jesus on Mount Calvary.

And just like God planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden so also He’s placed the cross at the center of our faith. And every Sunday morning, this table is at the very center of our worship. Here on this table is the fruit of the tree that Jesus sacrificed Himself to give us. Here is the bread that represents His body and the juice that represents His blood.

It’s because of the fruit of His tree that we have life with God.

One scholar spoke of the contrast between these two meals by contrasting the trees from which each was harvested.

1. The first tree was planted by God.

But the second tree was planted by man.

2. God forbade man to eat the first tree.

But man is freely invited to draw near and eat of the fruit of the second tree.

3. The eating of the first tree brought sin and death.

But by eating of the second tree comes life and salvation.

4. Adam, by eating of the first tree, was turned out of Paradise, while the repentant thief, by eating of the second Tree, entered Paradise.

(W. Pink, in his book Gleanings in Genesis)

Adam and Eve lost paradise by eating of the wrong tree.

But we are promised Paradise by the blood of Jesus.

And we accept His free gift by:

1. Believing that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God.
2. Accepting that we have sinned and need to repent.
3. Confessing Jesus as our Lord – making Him the master and owner of our lives
4. Being buried in the waters of Christian baptism and rising up a new creature.
5. Living the rest of our lives for Him.