**7The Effects of Sin**

**Summary and Conclusion**

Titus 3:3-7

Introduction:

1. In recent studies we have surveyed a variety of views regarding the effects of sin.

2. We have asked, “How are men affected by Adam’s sin? Are we guilty by birth or by practice? Are we unable to respond to God? Or are we able to keep God’s commandments?

3. We have observed that those holding to the teachings of Augustine, including Lutherans, and those associated historically with Calvinism hold to a doctrine known as “original sin.”

4. The idea associated with this theory is that Adam’s sin made all his descendants guilty and so affected their will that they are not able to respond to God appropriately.

5. In this lesson we will summarize this teaching with a commonly used acrostic that defines the chief points of the theory and consider what the Scripture says by comparison to these chief points. Finally, we will offer an alternative view, that I believe is consistent with Scripture and ask you to decide for yourself what you understand the biblical text to mean.

Discussion:

I. Earlier in this series of lessons we observed that death is the effect of sin.

 A. God said, “From the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, you shall not

 eat from it, or touch it, or you will die.”

 1. When Adam and Eve ate this fruit they began to die physically. They were cast out

 of the Garden of Eden and separated from the “tree of life” thus all of us die

 physically as a result of being separated from the “tree of life.”

 2. But spiritual death was part of the effect of sin.

 a. Adam and Eve died spiritually.

 b. Those of Isaiah’s day died spiritually. Isa. 59:2 says, “Your iniquities have made

 a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face

 from you so that He does not hear.”

 c. Eph. 2:1ff says, “You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you

 formerly walked according to the course of this world . . .we too lived in the lusts

 of our flesh indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature

 children of wrath.”

 3. Without the intervention of God eternal death is the consequence.

 a. In Matt. 25:41 Jesus said, “Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire

 which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.” Verse 46 adds, “These

 will go away into eternal punishment.”

 b. This is described as the second death in Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8.

 4. All these are the natural results of sin.

 a. They are not the result of a capricious God who delights in the punishment of

 people.

 b. He is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

 B. Our relationship to God is marred. Our relationship to one another is marred. And our

 relationship to the creation is marred.

 C. If we have learned anything in this study we have learned that sin has a powerful

 effect.

 1. It makes us sick and wounds us (Isa. 1:5; Jer. 17:10).

 2. God can actually give us over to lusts and degrading passions to a depraved mind

 (Rom. 1:24-32; 2 Tim. 3:8).

 3. Our consciences can become seared (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

 4. We can be darkened in our understanding (Eph. 4:18); held captive by the devil to

 do his will (2 Tim. 2:26); enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:6, 16-20); helpless (Rom. 5:6).

 Paul asked, “Wretched man that I am. Who will set me free from the body of this

 death?” (Rom. 7:24).

 5. Let us not think that we can overcome the powerfulness of sin on our own

 strength. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers,

 against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual

 forces of wickedness. We need the armor of God and the strength of His might in

 order to stand. See Eph. 6:10ff.

II. The Augustinian/Calvinistic tradition says that mankind was so affected by Adam’s sin that we are all totally depraved.

 A. **Total** **depravity** means that the entire human race is so marred by the sin of Adam that

 we are totally unable to respond to the gospel and turn to God in faith. Luther called it

 the bondage of the will. Louis Berkhof said, the sinner “cannot change his fundamental

 preference for sin and self to love for God, nor even make an approach to such a

 change” (Systematic Theology, p. 247).

 1. This total inability is fundamental to total depravity.

 2. Because man is totally unable to believe in the gospel by his own choice this

 tradition says God must make the man alive spiritually before he can have faith, and

 that God unconditionally chooses those He will make alive.

 B. **Unconditional election (aka. unconditional predestination)** is founded on total

 depravity. The idea is that God unconditionally selected certain ones to salvation

 before the world began. This presumption then leads to the third point.

 C. **Limited atonement.** The idea here is that since God unconditionally elected certain

 ones to salvation before the world began that would mean that the work of Christ on

 the cross was not for everyone but only for the unconditionally elect.

 D. **Irresistible grace.** Since man is totally unable and since man cannot respond to the

 gospel without God first acting on him to give him life, then God must act irresistibly to

 bring the elect to life or to regenerate him. God gives them the faith that they cannot

 have on their own ability.

 E. **Perseverance of saints (“once saved always saved”).** If faith is given

 unconditionally and irresistibly then once it is given by God it can never be lost. After

 all God has unconditionally chosen these to salvation before the world began.

III. What does the Scripture say? (Time will not allow us to address all the passages used by Augustinian tradition to support these points. This study will call attention to passages that, in my judgment either contradict or call into question each of these points.)

 A. Total depravity/inability.

 1. Ezekiel 18:1ff.

 2. Lk. 8:8, 15.

 3. Matt. 23:37.

 4. But does not Rom. 8:7-8 say that one is not able to subject himself to the law of

 God? The mind set on the flesh is not able to, but the mind set on the spirit is able

 to.

 5. Jn. 3:16 says, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that

 whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

 6. Rom. 1:16 says, “The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who

 believes.”

 7. The invitation of Rev. 22:17 says, “The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come.’ And let the

 one who hears say, ‘Come.’ And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who

 wishes take the water of life without cost.”

 8. Joshua challenged his generation. “Choose for yourselves today whom you will

 serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or

 the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house,

 we will serve the Lord” (24:15).

 9. While men are powerfully affected by sin it seems everywhere that he is not totally

 unable to receive a gift from God. He certainly does not deserve it, but he can

 accept it.

 B. Unconditional election.

 1. The Bible does speak about people being chosen (Rom. 16:13; Eph. 1:4).

 2. But the evidence indicates that we are chosen in Christ, as a result of “listening to

 the message of truth and having believed” (Eph. 1:13).

 3. This election is conditioned upon belief in Christ. His sacrifice pays the penalty for

 our sin. By placing our belief in what He has done we can be saved. Thus the

 election is conditioned upon our trusting in Him. Col. 2:12 says we are raised up

 with Christ by faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

 C. Limited atonement.

 1. Jn. 6:40 says, “This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son

 and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last

 day.”

 2. Jn. 3:16 says, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that

 whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

 3. 2 Pet. 3:9 says, “God is not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to

 repentance.”

 4. “Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). Not just some of the ungodly!

 5. Rom. 5:18 says, “Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all

 men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to

 all men.”

 6. These passages indicate that what Jesus did on the cross provided benefit to all.

 While all may not accept it the benefit is available. Jesus’ atonement is not

 limited, but sufficient for all.

 D. Irresistible grace.

 1. Lk. 7:30 refers to the Pharisees and lawyers “rejecting God’s purpose for

 themselves” when they rejected John’s baptism. While God is not willing that any

 should perish and extends His grace to all not all accept it.

 2. It is not irresistible.

 3. If salvation is founded on faith and faith is defined as “trusting in what God has

 done for forgiveness” then it is not irresistible. Men can choose not to believe and

 one can choose to stop believing.

 E. Perseverance of saints.

 1. Heb. 3:12ff warns against falling away.

 2. Heb. 6:1-8 warns against falling away.

 3. Heb. 10:36-39 speaks of shrinking back to destruction.

 4. Gal. 1:6 speaks of deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ.

 5. Gal. 5:4 speaks of those who have been severed from Christ and have fallen from

 grace.

III. If total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of saints is not consistent with the biblical record what is the truth?

 A. Men are severely affected by sin.

 1. Adam’s sin results in us being born outside the Garden of Eden. Physical death

 therefore occurs because we do not have access to the tree of life.

 2. Our personal sin damages us. Scripture says that we are spiritually dead because

 of our trespasses and sins. We are enslaved to sin; held captive by the devil; sick

 and wounded; given over to lusts and degrading passions; darkened in

 understanding. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood sources, but the world

 forces of darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness.

 B. God is the only force powerful enough to deliver us.

 1. We cannot deliver ourselves.

 2. But we can place our faith in what He has done in Jesus Christ, who has paid the

 penalty of death for us.

 3. It is God who raises us to spiritual life (Col. 2:12-13).

 4. His Spirit has revealed the message of the cross. His Spirit raises us to new life.

 His Spirit is active in the washing of regeneration and in our renewal (Titus 3:5).

 5. His Spirit softens our hearts by communicating what God has done in Jesus Christ.

 C. Titus 3:3-7.

 1. Our previous state (3).

 2. The kindness of God intervened (4).

 3. He saved us (5).

 a. Not on the basis of deeds which we have done.

 b. By the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

 c. Poured out upon us richly through Jesus our Savior.

 d. And so we have been made heirs of eternal life.

 4. But since it is conditioned upon our faith in what God has done (Titus 3:8) if we

 stop believing and thus return to our former condition we deny the very means of

 forgiveness and fall from grace.

 C. Rom. 10:6-13.

 1. The word of faith is preached.

 2. It is believed in the heart.

 a. Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.

 b. Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

 3. With the mouth one confesses.

 4. So the good news of what God has done through Christ is preached. People hear

 it. Their hearts are softened by God’s kindness. They place their trust in what

 God has done and He raises them from the dead (Col. 2:12). They maintain their

 trust in what God has done and put to death the deeds of the body and

 continually rely on Him for forgiveness.

Conclusion:

1. Sin’s effects are powerful. But God is more powerful.

2. We must trust in His power and His gift of life secured on the cross.

3. Will you accept this gift?