

The Sin Obsession (Part 2)

Romans 3:23-26

July 14, 2024

Many people find it much easier to compartmentalize their lives and justify their inconsistencies. Consider this story. A man and his girlfriend went through a fast food restaurant drive thru. **They bought a bucket of chicken to take on a picnic.** While the couple was placing their order the manager was doing a cash register change over as he did every day at that time. As usual he placed the daily receipts in an empty bucket.

By accident the restaurant worker gave the couple the bucket full of the day's receipts. When they arrived at the park and opened their bucket, instead of chicken, they found \$800. The man immediately drove back to the restaurant to return the bucket of cash. The manager was so relieved when the couple walked in and returned the \$800 that he said, **"Let me take a picture and get your names.** We want to get your picture on our Facebook page because you all are some of the most honest people I have ever met." The man quickly responded, "Oh, no, no, no." Then he leaned over and whispered to the manager, **"I don't want our picture and names on social media** because this woman I'm with is married to someone else."

President Harry S. Truman was considered to be an outstanding Baptist layman. At the beginning of WWII President Truman issued a proclamation which said "The bombing of helpless and unprotected civilians is a strategy that has aroused the horror of all mankind. With pride I say that the United States consistently has taken the lead in urging that this inhuman practice be prohibited."

On August 6, 1945 President Harry Truman, stood on the deck of the battleship "Augusta", right after the first atomic bomb was dropped, and proclaimed "this is the greatest thing in history."

People are inconsistent, or maybe it would be better to say are human. No matter how hard we try, and I believe most people try to live consistent lives, it is difficult.

Have you ever heard someone point out that the Bible is full of contradictions, loaded with inconsistencies? They are right, if we read scripture closely and pay attention there are plenty of places where a verse or passage contradicts another verse or passage.

For example, our passage today in Romans says, "Everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's glorious standard, and all need to be made right with God by his grace, which is a free gift. **They need to be made free from sin through Jesus Christ.** God sent him to die in our place to take away our sins. We receive forgiveness through faith in the blood of Jesus' death. This showed that God always does what is right and fair, as in the past when he was patient and did not punish people for their sins. **And God gave Jesus to show today that he does what is right.** God did this so he could judge rightly and so he could make right any person who has faith in Jesus.

The Apostle Paul wrote in this passage that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," and yet Jesus himself said in the Beatitudes, "blessed are the pure in heart," implying that one's innermost being is untainted. **Even in the Genesis creation story,** prior to the fall of Adam and Eve, God's original pronouncement upon all creation, including the Adam and Eve, is that they are "good."

But this is the Bible, which some believe to be completely inerrant, with no mixture of error, and they take it literally. But remember humans wrote the **Bible and humans are inconsistent and consistently fallible.** If there is anything consistent across the board about humanity, it is that intentionally or unintentionally, we are terribly inconsistent.

My philosophy when it comes to contradictions in scripture, especially when it is between something Jesus said and something that someone else has said or written the tiebreaker goes to Jesus. **I will take the words of Jesus over Moses, Abraham, any Old Testament prophet** or New Testament writer. I will talk about this in more depth in a few weeks when I talk about how my deconstruction journey has informed how **I view and read the Bible and How Paul's writings** have influenced the theology of the early institutional church and Christianity as a whole.

Let's get back to this obsession with sin that I was talking about last week. The doctrine of original sin which is what I talked about last week is problematic from every feasible angle of a reasonably thinking person. **So the question is, why do so many people believe it?** People once believed the world was flat and the earth was the center of the universe, but once they were given more accurate information they eventually adopted the new view(for the most part). And yet, people hold onto religious beliefs despite their absurdity and the absence of evidence.

Religious truth is often held to a different standard. It gets a pass in terms of how we typically determine the truth of a proposition. When a religious belief appears unfounded or illogical, we often hear the phrase, **"God's ways are not our ways."** It's considered the height of arrogance to think one can comprehend the ways of God with the human mind. After all, God is "omniscient" or all-knowing.

Let's say you believe there is a God who rewards and punishes people, and that our eternal future of heaven or hell hangs in the balance. If the authoritative people (clergy, Bible scholars) impart a set of beliefs you're expected to uphold to remain in good standing with God, **then you could be persuaded to accept in any number of absurd things.** The alternative would be to question them, but in doing so a person could be jeopardizing their standing with the Almighty. So the short answer to why people who should know **better believe nonsensical religious ideas is fear.**

This is true in other areas of life as well. If the last several election cycles and the **one we are currently in has taught us anything** it is that fear is a powerful motivator for people who should know better to believe nonsensical things. But that's a possible sermon for another day.

There is a further inconsistency in the logic of this obsession with sin; **have you heard of the doctrine of regeneration?** The doctrine of regeneration states that **God first changes a sinner's nature to make them receptive to the message of Jesus**, and thus make it possible for the sinner to repent of their sins. Here is the question, if God can change a person's nature, **the so called nature of original sin** why was Jesus' selfless act of sacrifice necessary. Why doesn't God just change everyone's sinful nature?

One last thing before I close this out. If we boil this sin obsession down, take it to its logical end we come to a startling realization. A realization that shocked my socks off **because I never saw it** until recently.

For this sin obsession: from Adam and Eve's original sin, that we all are born bad, **to ideas that sin makes us revolting to God** because God is perfectly holy, that God will not bless us and will discipline us if there is sin in our life, sins of commission and sins of omission; **for all of it to be true then God** (the one eternal Spirit) would have had to send Jesus to save humanity from himself (the one eternal Spirit). Please forgive me for using that masculine pronoun but I couldn't figure out a better way to say that.

The early church fathers and the first institutional church knew this so they had to create all of these convoluted doctrines to explain these nonsensical theological and religious ideas. **These church**

leaders became theological contortionist – stretching, bending, twisting and beating theological ideas into submission until they became religious doctrines that somehow managed to hold several absurd notions together, if only hanging by a thread.

I have come to the point in my life that I cannot and I refuse to believe that God created a sin system that would require Jesus to be used as a pawn to save humanity from the very one that created them. I just can't believe that.

The doctrine of sin is a lie. Religion, the early church fathers and theologians created a problem that doesn't exist to establish itself as the cure and keep itself in business.

Now, what does all that mean for communion and what we will be doing in just a moment? I'm glad someone asked that question. **I think it means we should shift our focus** from remembering Jesus as the instrument that God used to overcome and forgive our sins **to remembering Jesus, God's Son, the earthly**, physical representation of God, the one eternal Spirit; and remembering that God and Jesus are continually present with us through the Spirit that dwells within us. **When we gather at this table we are celebrating** the ever abiding Spirit of God and our communal relationship with God and each other. **Because it is in this ever abiding and communal relationship we share** with God and each other that we find strength, hope, joy, guidance, peace, comfort, encouragement, and support that include physical, emotional and spiritual bonds. Every time we come to this table we are celebrating the eternal relationship we share with God and each other.

Amen