

SRM14054 Mem. Day Weekend 5/25/2014
 “Pass It On: Sin and Regeneration”
 Titus 3:3-6 et al.

In the May 22 Crosswalk.com devotional this week, Alex Crain comments on Memorial Day: “Begun as a ritual after the American Civil War to honor fallen soldiers, Memorial Day seems to have broadened in recent years. Many people view it as a day to remember deceased friends and loved ones, regardless of military service... What is of interest is the fact that there even exists a universal human urge to honor the dead.”

He points out that a Christian worldview provides a consistent and satisfying explanation for it, while an atheistic evolutionary worldview does not.

“How do invisible realities like love, honor, and dignity evolve by random processes in a purely material universe? These are enduring aspects of human personality. Each is non-material, but each is very real. Deep down, we all know that they exist. Yet atheistic evolution, which says that these things can be nothing more than the product of chemical reactions in our brains, renders them meaningless.”

In this year’s Mother’s Day to Father’s Day series we are considering six basic elements of our Christian worldview to “Pass on” to children and others. We started with the Bible’s Sufficiency, Clarity, Authority and Necessity.

Then last week, God's Creation of the world and everything in it, including human beings, in His image, which should lead us to worship and serve Him above all else.

It is because we are created in the image of God that the love, honor and dignity we express on Memorial Day came to be. As Crain writes,

“The image of God is something which humans cannot contain or fully eradicate. Sooner or later it pokes out and finds expression. In an unguarded moment, the God-denier looks into the eyes of his beloved, or cradles a child or grandchild in his arms and knows deeply that the love he’s experiencing is not a mere product of bio-chemistry.”

This morning’s “Pass it on” is what the Bible says about Sin, Death, humanity’s fall, and regeneration.

Our church’s Affirmation of Faith says,

"We believe that all men and women are sinners by nature and by choice and are therefore under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit"

Using again the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith Rewritten in Modern English, (1999, revised ed. 2001 Andrew Kerkham), I invite you to consider what the Bible says about Sin, Death and the Fall, which makes regeneration necessary.

Our basic text is Titus 3:3-6 (NKJV) For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

1. What does the Bible say about our sin?

Titus 3:3 describes the natural man in first His inward nature and then his outward behavior: [above].

What else does it say? What is sin?

ILL: A mother had just finished a lesson on Christian behavior. "Now, Billy," I asked, "tell me what we must do before we can expect to be forgiven for our sins."

Without hesitation, Billy replied, "First we gotta sin

Sin is missing the mark of God's perfection. Sin is any failure to measure up to what God requires, or any disobedience to his commands.

Leviticus 5:17 (NKJV) "If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity.

James 4:17 (NKJV) Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

1 John 3:4 (NKJV) Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.

Sin is inherent corruption: Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV) "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"

Sin originates in our hearts: Matthew 15:19 (NKJV) For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.

The result of sin is separation from God, loss of communion with God, and his wrath, and all miseries in this life, and death, both physical, spiritual and, potentially, eternal.

Separation: Genesis 3:24 (NKJV) So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Loss of communication: Ephesians 2:12 (NKJV) that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Wrath: John 3:36 (NKJV) He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Life Miseries: Gen. 3:16-19 (NKJV) To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you." Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

Death: Romans 6:23 (NKJV) For the wages of sin is death, AND

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 (NKJV) those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Trans: So the result of sin is separation from God, loss of communion with God, and his wrath, and all miseries in this life, and death, both physical, spiritual and, potentially, eternal.

2. Everyone sins by nature and by choice.

We call this in theology Original and Actual sin.

Original sin = sin in your nature.

It is our natural inclination to be independent from God, which we inherit from our parents.

It is the root of our Actual sins.

The London Baptist Confession, after speaking of the first sin of Adam and Eve, says (6.2) "By this sin our first parents fell from their original righteousness and communion with God. We fell in them, for by it death came upon all; all became dead in sin and totally defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body."

"we fell in them": Romans 5:12 (NKJV) Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned--

Romans 3:10-19 (NKJV) As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.

They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.)

The Confession speaks the inherent corruption of sin this way: (6.3) "By God's appointment, they were the root, standing in the place of the whole human race. The guilt of this sin was imputed to, and their corrupted nature passed on to all their posterity by ordinary birth. Their descendants are therefore conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, the servants of sin, the subjects of death and all other miseries—spiritual, temporal, and eternal—unless the Lord Jesus sets them free."

The supporting Scriptures include these:

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 (NKJV) But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep....

For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.

David: Psalm 51:4-5 (NKJV) Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight-- That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

Psalm 58:3 (NKJV) The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NKJV) And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

Everyone sins by nature and by choice.

3. We are totally fallen creatures.
The Bible says man is "totally depraved."

- This doesn't mean man is as bad as he can be, but that sin has corrupted every part of his nature.

- Its result is that every good thing he does without God is really for himself: Romans 8:7-8 (NKJV) Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Actual sin = sin by our choice. It includes things we decide to do, think about, & make our goals.

“Lostness” is described in John 3:18 (NKJV) He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

London Baptist Confession: (6.4) “All actual transgressions proceed from this original corruption. By it we are completely incapacitated and disabled, antagonistic to all good and entirely biased towards evil.”

Romans 8:7 (NKJV) Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

Colossians 1:21 (NKJV) And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

But in the face of sin, God offers mercy. He saves people because of His Mercy, Titus 3:5-6

(NKJV) not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

ILL: Lee Strobel: “Billy Graham has ministered to people throughout the world for five decades. He has preached to over 110 million people in eighty-four countries. In addition to these who have heard him in person, he has been heard by countless others through radio and television. Three million people have responded to his invitation to receive Christ or make a recommitment. There is no question that Billy Graham has made a significant impact for Christ. Yet, all of these efforts will not gain him entrance into the presence of Christ. Every person is saved by the grace of God, not good works.

This is why Regeneration is necessary. Regeneration is a Spiritual change done in a person’s heart by the Holy Spirit in which the sinful nature is changed, and a person is given the ability to repent of sin and trust in Christ.

It is the new birth: a miracle. Regeneration is an inner work of God, often ignored.

Conversion is the outward result.

Why is Regeneration necessary?

Because Jesus said it is necessary: John 3:3, 5, 7 "In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." ... 5 "Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit." ... 7 "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"

It is necessary because we are born Spiritually dead: Eph 2:1 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,"

ILL: When translator Des Oatridge, working in Papua New Guinea, came to the words "born again" in John's Gospel, he asked his native co-translator to think of a good way to express it. The man explained this custom:

"Sometimes a person goes wrong and will not listen to anybody. We all get together in the village and place that person in the midst of us. The elders talk to him for a long time. 'You have gone wrong!' they say. 'All your thoughts, intentions, and values are wrong. Now you have to become a baby again and start to relearn everything right.'"

It was the answer Des was looking for. Today the words of John 3:3 in Binumarien reads "No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he becomes like a baby again and relearns everything from God's Word." [Topic: Regeneration, Index: 2154]

Does this mean Christians no longer struggle with sin? No!

Baptist Confession (6.5) "During this life, this corruption of nature remains in those who are regenerated. Although it is pardoned and put to death through Christ, yet both this corrupt nature and all its actions are truly and actually sin."

Romans 7:18 (NKJV) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.

1 John 1:8 (NKJV) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Romans 7:23-25 (NKJV) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Action: Agree with God that in your own nature, there "dwells no good thing", and repent of it.

Ask God to grant you faith to overcome your unbelief.

Ask God to make regeneration a reality in your life.

Alex Crain: “When a non-Christian friend, neighbor, or family member brings up the subject of Memorial Day, ask them why they think humans honor their dead. Seize the occasion to start a conversation that points others to their Creator whose image they bear.”