

# DAILY DOSE OF DOCTRINE

December 10-14, 2007



December 10, 2007 **Results: Gender Conflict**

*"...your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you."<sup>1</sup>*

One of the immediate effects of the Fall was a fracturing of the relationship between Adam and Eve. Guilt transformed complete trust and understanding into a shame, fear and confusion. The betrayal of blaming one another compounded it and God 'sealed' this alienation in his judgment upon Eve by making the man her ruler or 'head'.

The reality of this 'curse' is evident in the Bible and in almost every culture on the planet, ancient and modern. Polygamy commenced with Lamech<sup>2</sup> and the oppression of the female half of the human race began in earnest.

People frequently charge the Bible with sanctioning misogyny. In fact, the Mosaic Law provided protection for women and the Old Testament exalts marriage and family life. Jesus and Paul challenged the mores of their day in the way they related to women and Christianity initiated the long, winding road to equality between the sexes.

Christians who perpetuate 'headship' teaching should realize that they are preserving a 'fallen' pattern of relationships. Before Christ we were under the curse of the Fall and women lived under the 'headship' of their husbands. Because of Christ's death on the cross, the bondage of sin is broken and we are a new creation. In that new creation, the original relationships are restored, *"where there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:16b (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 4:19-24

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 3:28 (NIV)

December 11, 2007    **Results of the Fall: Death**

*“He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and also take from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.”<sup>1</sup>*

Unlike the angels, humans were not created to be inherently immortal. God’s creation intent was that we would in fact continue to “eat of the Tree of Life” and live forever. In other words, human life was sustained by his creative power and, if we had not rebelled, it would have gone on without end.

When we sinfully pushed God away, we cut ourselves off from the source of spiritual and physical life. Death, the cessation of life, entered human experience.

While death is sometimes welcomed, this is only so because life has become too hard or painful to continue. Death is not our ‘friend’. It is our greatest enemy because it robs us of what should have been ours: unending relationships, aspirations, accomplishments and glorious experiences. Death is a thief and each one of us is its victim.

The good news is that, *“if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!”<sup>2</sup>* By his suffering and Resurrection, Jesus has destroyed the power of death and he offers eternal life to everyone who will put their trust in him. So:

*“Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ ‘Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?....Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!’<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:22b (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Romans 5:17 (TNIV)

<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:55, 57

December 12, 2007      **Imbedded Hope**

*“And I will put enmity  
between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and hers;  
he will crush your head,  
and you will strike his heel.”<sup>1</sup>*

In the midst of the judgment and discipline which God delivered after the Fall, he also extended grace. While life would be hard, it was not immediately taken away. He clothed them<sup>2</sup> and the resources of Creation were still at their disposal.

He also gave them the first promise of the salvation that was to come.

Although Satan had gained a hold over humanity, his mastery was far from complete. While tainted with the experiential knowledge of evil and a predisposition to sin, there still remained much of the good ‘divine image’ in us. Though enslaved to sin, we are not resigned to our captivity. We rebel against the strongholds of sin and evil in this world and there is ‘enmity’ between us and the evil one.

And, God gave to brokenhearted, downtrodden Eve the promise that One of her children would conquer this Evil one. Jesus, born of a woman (but not a man) would come in due course. The devil would strive against him and wound him with nails through hands and feet - but not a killing wound. Instead, Christ would deliver the ‘head-wound’ at Calvary that has defeated the evil one forever.

The first of many prophetic promises of the coming Messiah was made in the Garden itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:15 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:21

December 13

## Total Depravity

*“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”<sup>1</sup>*

‘Total depravity’ is a phrase often misunderstood. It is not meant to imply that the image of God was erased from human nature at the Fall so that there is no good in humanity. On the contrary, we know that there is much that is good, right and just in the human spirit. Beautiful works are produced, charitable deeds are done and love and grace are frequently evident regardless of religion or worldview. Humans are also inherently ‘spiritual beings. We need and seek a higher purpose than ourselves and almost all religions seek to overcome evil and connect men and women with the divine.

The term ‘total’ is instead meant to stress the seriousness and extent of the effects of sin. It indicates “(1) that the inherent corruption extends to every part of man’s nature, to all the faculties and powers of both soul and body; and (2) that there is no spiritual good, that is, good in relation to God, in the sinner at all, but only perversion.”<sup>2</sup>

In other words, all of us and all that we do is impacted by sin. Even our good works may be affected in their results or our true intentions. This concept of human nature flies in the face of Enlightenment affirmations of the essential goodness of the humanity. Scripture<sup>3</sup> and human history testify to our ‘depravity’ rather than our ‘goodness’.

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 4:18 (TNIV)

<sup>2</sup> Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, p. 247

<sup>3</sup> Eg. John 8:34 Romans 7:18-23; 8:7; 2 Tim. 3:2-4, Titus 1:15; Heb. 3:12

December 14, 2007

## Total Inability

*“I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me...?”<sup>1</sup>*

Human beings, apart from God, are able to do many good things. As individuals we can accomplish works that are right and loving. Corporately we can enact moral laws and combine our resources for positive purposes. In the religious sphere we can perform rituals and sacrifices and strive to do things that we know would please God.

But all of these things fall short in the quest of atoning for our sins and making us righteous before God. Like someone trying to build a bridge across the Grand Canyon with a few hundred dollars worth of lumber, our religious activities and works are completely useless when it comes to bridging the gap between ourselves and God. In fact they are worse than useless because they perpetuate the myth that our condition really isn't all that desperate and we only need to try a little harder to get there by our own efforts and goodness.

The history of the Old Testament drives this fact home. Even when God reveals religious truth, clearly lays out the commandments and sets up a system of sacrifices to deal with our failings, we can't do it on our own strength. We do not need a better system or more willpower. We need a Saviour.

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7:18, 24 (TNIV) See also John 15:4-5

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9 (TNIV) See also John 3:5; 6:44; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 3:5; Hebrews 11:6