

Effects of Fall - Problems Arising From the Fall

Part 2

by John Murray

John Murray explores the theological implications of sin and its relationship to God's sovereignty and human responsibility in the context of the fall of man.

Duration: 48:53

Scripture: Job 26:14, Matthew 22:37, Romans 9:20, Romans 11:33

Topics: "Fall Of Man"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher explores the question of why God decrees sin. He acknowledges that we cannot fully understand God's reasons for allowing sin, but emphasizes that the ultimate purpose of all things is the glory of God. The preacher discusses the nature of faith and its connection to sin, highlighting that faith is unknowing and lawless in this fallen world. He also addresses the pervasiveness of God's law and how it relates to the subject at hand. The sermon concludes with the reminder to trust in God's sovereignty and to bow in faith before His will.

Transcript

I'm dealing with the problems that arise in connection with the fall of man. I dealt first with the ontological problem, then with the psychogenetic problem, and I certainly have a dispensational problem, which is simply this. Why did God decree sin? Of course, that the ultimate end of all things is the glory of God, the glory of God.

That is the teleology that must always govern our thinking. The question here is why did God choose this particular way of manifesting His glory? It might be said, of course, that He decreed sin in order that there might be the more magnificent display of His glory in the condemnation of sinners and in the salvation of His people, but that hardly answers the question why He decreed sin as the particular way of manifesting forth His glory. It is ours to bow in humble adoration and say, In the words of Scripture shall not the judge of all the earth do right? And if we are disposed to say, Why hast thou made me thus? We should remind ourselves again of the inspired reply to our fellow man that replies against God.

And the thing formed, say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? I do not believe we can give an adequate answer to that question. Why God decreed sin? Because it is hid in the unrevealed counsels of His will. We cannot know the almighty unto perfection.

It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know? We see but the outskirts of His ways, and how little a portion is heard of Him. How little a portion do we know of Him, for touching the almighty we cannot find Him out. And therefore I think it is better for us to recognize that in reference to this great mystery of iniquity and the decree of God with reference to it, the foreordination of its occurrence and the accomplishment of it in His holy providence, clouds and darkness go out above Him, but justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne.

And with that I think we must leave this question, as we must also leave other unsolved questions which arise in connection with the origin and the continuance of that which of all things is the contradiction of God, the contradiction of His glory. Now though these problems arise in connection with the origin of sin and persist in connection with the continuance of sin, nevertheless, we must not think that it is only in connection with the biblical doctrines that problems arise. We can eliminate these specific problems if we deny the Christian doctrines on which they are wed.

But if we deny the Christian doctrines, we do not eliminate difficulty, and we cannot offer a more satisfactory interpretation or solution if we try to tone down these problems, or at least tone down their acuteness on a less consistent Christian basis. I repeat, if we tone down the acuteness of these problems on a less consistent Christian basis, let us ever remember that we only land ourselves in greater difficulty because we shall find ourselves struggling with the inconsistency of the attenuated version of Christian truth which we try to retain. The attenuated version of the Christian faith.

This doctrine that has been presented involves incomprehensible mystery for us, incomprehensible mystery. But it is the only doctrine that preserves the two pillars upon which our Christian position is based, namely, the absolute, all-inclusive sovereignty of God on the one hand, and human responsibility on the other. And these two are correlative, because without the absolute, all-inclusive sovereignty of God, there is no human responsibility.

And without human responsibility, there can be no holy sovereignty for God. No holy sovereignty for God in reference to this subject of the origin of sin and evil, for then we should be unable to justify the evils which follow in the wake of human history. Now the humble Christian mind, the humble Christian mind is content to contain these unresolved questions and resolved problems.

Now why does the humble Christian mind contain these unresolved problems, or be content to contain them? Simply because it belongs to his very conception of the living God. His very conception of the living God is that God himself is incomprehensible to human understanding, not inapprehensible, but certainly incomprehensible. And the more we extend the circumference of our knowledge respecting God, the more we come in contact with the incomprehensible mystery of his being and of his family work.

Again, the true conception of the living God means that the truth of his authority, of his justice, of his goodness, not his truth. The overwhelming privilege of God's harmony, wisdom, justice, goodness and truth. And it is the very apex of Christian piety, trusting God, and it is the foundation of Christian piety, as we are confronted with the unresolved problems of God's decree and providence.

I say it is the foundation of piety, as we are confronted with the unsolved problems of God's decree and providence, to say, I do not know, but I do know that God knows. It is not only perilous, but it is ungodly. I say it is not only perilous, but it is ungodly to think that we, his creatures, will be able to trace his unsearchable ways.

How unsearchable his ways passed, I am beyond. That applies not only, brethren, to the unrevealed counsel of God. It also applies to his revealed counsel.

Unsearchable, that is to say, his ways passed, finding out. This does not mean that we are to seek to pursue the path of understanding and of knowledge to the very utmost independence upon the data of revelation. That is implicit in our Christian vocation, the fullness of understanding.

But let us ever remember that as we pursue the path of understanding, we shall ever and anon encounter the mystery of God's being, of God's relations, and of God's providence that has passed the limits of human understanding. I say this has passed the limits of human understanding, and it is of the very essence of faith in the living God. We cannot know the Almighty unto perfection.

That is the essence of human consciousness. Recognize that. We are to be content to be his creatures, rather than to aspire to his attributes which are not communicable to us.

Well, that is all. Now we come to the doctrine of sin. We first discussed the doctrine of all, all is not certain.

I did the doctrine of sin, but I think it is probably better to visit as a separate topic. And the introduction to the whole subject of the doctrine of sin, the discussion of the four under a certain caption, and the introduction. Now, in dealing with the doctrine of sin, we have, first of all, to start with the state of mind of this.

So I will just call it the nature of sin. And you may be puzzled by this. First of all, that sin itself is not inherently good.

It is not inherently good. It is true that God overrules sin for good. He overrules even sin for good.

Actually, his redeeming purpose is to make even sin to redound to his glory. And he works so in overcoming sin, in delivering from sin, that greater good is promoted for the redeemed. Greater good, I say, is promoted for the redeemed.

And good is promoted for the apart from sin. But apart from sin. But this does not make sin a good thing in itself.

And that is a rather important consideration. In fact, it is so significant because one of the great abuses of the grace of God is summed up in the formula which Paul reiterates, let us do good, let us do evil, let us sin that grace may abound, or let us do evil that good may come. A complete perversion of truth, of goodness, of grace.

And we may never, that good may never be, we do a little evil in order to promote a greater good. Sin is an evil, and it is a real evil, in opposition to every theory which regards sin as illusion, as illusion. Not only so, but also in opposition to all viewpoints which regard sin as consisting simply in negation, or privation, or limitation.

Negation, privation, or limitation. And of course there has been considerable influence of that conception within Augustinianism, within Western Augustinian orthodoxy. We must remember that sin is something partitive.

Something partitive, and not simply the absence of something else. Just to illustrate that very concretely, as we shall find out later on in greater detail, sin involves a depraved disposition. Already in connection

with the origin of sin, but it involves a depraved disposition.

What? Classic theologians call karma dispositio, depraved disposition, or disposition of gravity. Now, a depraved disposition is not simply the absence of a good disposition. You could conceive of the absence of a good disposition, I mean to conceive in thought, you could conceive of the absence of a good disposition, without having positing a depraved disposition.

That is not the case. That means to say there is no such thing as semi-neutrality. Semi-neutrality, not to speak of neutrality, no such thing as semi-neutrality.

But sin is not only an evil, not only a real evil in opposition to these various positions, but it is also a real evil in opposition to every viewpoint, or suggestion of viewpoint, to every viewpoint, which makes sin a necessity to the promotion of good, a necessity of virtue. It is true you cannot think of evil as opposed to good. It is utterly perverse that you cannot think of good except as it is opposed to evil.

If you take the position that sin is necessary, that moral evil is necessary in order to the existence of good, as the antagonist in view would imply, then logically you are bound. In order to the existence of good, as the antagonist in view would imply, then logically you are bound. If sin is God's bound, and then as far as God's handiwork is concerned, sin is a necessity in rational creation.

But again, immediately reflect on the character of God's handiwork. Sin is a real evil mind, how much does it involve in that very simple proposition. Gentlemen, take notes, real in opposition to illusion, real in opposition to mere engagement, or viewpoint that suggests that good may suppress and sustain the condition of virtue.

No specific evil. It is to be distinguished from those evils which are the consequence of death, and all the evils which have their focus in death are the consequence. But you cannot call these evils, then, sinful.

You can't call them sinful. Disease is not sinful. Calamity is not sinful.

There are certain evils which arise, certain evils which arise from the very protection of God. To be subject to the wrath of God is an evil. Subject to the punishment of sin is an evil.

But you cannot call the wrath of God sinful, and call the punishment which God inflicts sinful. So it's very important to bear in mind the specificity of sin, and this specificity consists, first of all, in the fact that it is a moral evil. It is not merely penal evil or a physical evil.

And here we have to bear in mind what underlies all moral obligations. It is this ought. Sin is aside of this the category of ought, and is therefore wrong.

Sin is not simply unwise, not simply unfortunate, not simply calamitous. Wrong. It ought not.

It ought not. It ought not to be, because it is a violation of law. Law.

So this word ought, or opposite wrong, ought not. This word ought, or its antonym wrong, has no meaning. Apart from standards.

Standards of life. Standards of life. And therefore apart from an obligation which binds us unconditionally.

Binds us unconditionally. Yes, the moral standard is not the highest good, nor the greatest good of the greatest number, but an unconditional imperative. An unconditional imperative.

An imperative that binds the human conscience, and therefore the human personality, apart altogether from extraneous considerations or supplementary considerations. It binds the conscience, therefore the human personality, apart from all other extremes. On the third proposition here, in connection with this is, that the law of which sin is the violation, is the law of God.

The law of which is the law of God. Not the law of reason, not the law of an intrinsic categorical imperative, that is, not the law of a categorical imperative, that receives its sanction from itself, but the law of a categorical imperative receives its sanction from the authority, sovereignty of God. Indeed, a categorical imperative that derives its sanction from the very being, because the law of God is simply the character of God coming to it, or the regulation of thought and behavior, consonant with His character.

And we see the law of God is simply the character of God, or the perfection of God coming to expression, or the regulation of thought and behavior consonant with His character. Now it is here a very common fallacy of thought, a very common fallacy, that God's law is superseded by love, that the law is the law of love. For the Christian law is abrogated, abrogated because it is superseded by a higher law.

Have you heard that, doctor? Well, in the way in which it is frequently used, in the way in which it is frequently used, it doesn't have a proper meaning, in the way in which it is commonly used, the only way in which you could properly speak of the law of love is first of all to denote that law which love possesses. The other way is that you could possibly speak of the law of love because love itself is a commandment, which is a commandment to love. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, for that love itself is a commandment, and in that sense a law, but frequently that expression, the law of love, could denote something which is absolutely impossible, namely that love is conceived of as the law, so that law is superseded by love.

I didn't understand the first thing, the law which is fulfilled by love, that love wouldn't alter the law at all. No, we're just going to deal with that. Or you could possibly use it in that sense, the law of love, namely the law which love fulfills, in the way in which it is frequently understood or frequently used, love abrogates law, and therefore that's the only law that the Christian knows is love itself.

You will remember when we asked the question, what is the commandment in the law he answered, thy God with all thy heart, and so forth, that in this likeness thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, on these two commandments hangs all the law and the prophet, hangs all the law and the prophet. This, O Lord, means to love the Lord with all thy heart, and to love the neighbor as oneself, and this was the law and the prophet, the place of the law and the prophet. How could the law and the prophet hang on love? Just hang on these two commandments, and then take the word of God.

Love is the fulfillment of the law. Love is the fulfillment of the law. It's the law and the idea of love.

The greatest moment for proper thinking and for Christian conduct is that love is not an autonomous, self-directed principle. Love is not a self-directed principle, an autonomous, self-instructed and self-directed. In other words, love does not excarcate the norms by which it is regulated.

Love does not self-excarcate the norms by which it is regulated. Love entails the fulfillment of the law. It is that which constrains to the fulfillment, obedience.

And without law there is no fulfillment, without love there is no fulfillment, there is no obedience. And the term that Paul uses there, it is love that fills up the obedience of the law from beginning to end. But it is not without the law.

And that is what we must bear in mind in connection with sin. Sin is anomia. Sin is anomia.

Lord, if you abrogate law, you abrogate sin. And sin is meaningless except that it is. Now in this connection there is a fourth that needs to be mentioned, and that is the pervasiveness.

Pervasiveness. Pervasiveness. And this is very, very strictly germinal to the subject with which we are dealing.

Only the nature of sin, what constitutes sin, is not pervasive.

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