

WHY THINGS GO WRONG AND HOW TO PUT THEM RIGHT - Part one

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MAKING THE RIGHT START - FINDING THE ROOT OF THE TROUBLE

Job 5:7 - "For man is born for trouble, As sparks fly upward."

Not many would deny the truth of those ancient words from the oldest book in the Bible. You don't have to go **looking** for trouble (How I wish I had a dollar for every time my mother told one of her four boys that!) - it will come looking for you. And sooner or later, it will find absolutely everyone. There are no exceptions.

We're going to be studying **problems** for quite a few weeks on our Sunday night teaching sessions. The Christian faith is big enough and real enough and practical enough to deal with life as it actually comes out of the box. In fact, it offers the **only** solutions to our **biggest problems**. Only Jesus can deal with the problem of human sin. And only Jesus can deal with the problem of death.

But there are a host of **other** problems. They may not be as big as the problems of sin and death, but they are real none the less. And we need to know how to make our faith practical and workable, not only for our own sakes, but to show the watching world the glory and power of Jesus who is risen and active among us.

Tonight we're going to start by studying the **source of trouble**, or rather, the **sources of trouble** in the present world. You simply can't do anything else right until you determine the **cause** of the trouble you're facing.

Did you hear about the drunk man looking for his lost quarter under the street lamp. Different by-passers felt sorry for him and were all helping him look on the sidewalk for his precious quarter. Finally, after an hour of searching, one of the helpers said, "I can't imagine it being so difficult for all of us to find one lost quarter right here on the sidewalk under this bright street lamp." "O, I didn't lose it here," the drunk said. "I lost it over on the other side of the street." "Then why in the world are we all looking over here?" "Because the light is so much better," replied the drunk.

The same point holds true in this study of life's problems. You have to look for solutions in the right place. And you'd be amazed how many people come to see me about their problems who **simply have never learned to diagnose the source of their trouble accurately**. I spend a lot of time with people simply helping them **start out right** in their quest for a solution so they can **finish right** farther down the road.

Let's get right into this important, practical subject:

There are four, and I think **only** four, sources of trouble this side of heaven. Each of your problems can be filed under one of these headings:

- a) **Problems coming as a direct result of *sin and a fallen world***
- b) **Problems coming as a result of *outside influences***
- c) **Problems coming as the result of *personal choices***
- d) **Problems (at least *apparent* problems) that come as a result of *God's purifying love***

Let's try to go quickly through each of these tonight:

- 1) **UNTIL JESUS COMES AGAIN AND TAKES HIS FOLLOWERS WITH HIM TO HEAVEN, WE ALL LIVE WITH THE RESULTS OF THE FALL IN THIS WORLD**

Let me read seven verses of Scripture you can't live properly without knowing:

Genesis 3:1-7 - "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" [2] And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, [3] but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" [4] But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. [5] For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,

knowing good and evil.” [6] So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. [7] Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.”

We all live each day of our lives affected by those events. In spite of what some may tell you, this is true no matter how Godly you become or how much faith you possess in this world. Before the Fall, man lived in a perfect environment. He did have ***responsibilities***. But he did not have ***problems***. He was working, with the rest of creation, in harmony with the will of God.

Then, both Adam and Eve disobeyed God and brought an end to paradise. Their disobedience sealed the future in ***two important ways***:

a) ***From that moment on, mankind lives in a sin damaged world:***

Genesis 3:16-19 - “To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” [17] And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; [18] thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. [19] By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Romans 8:19-22 - “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. [20] For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [22] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.”

While there is much beauty and majesty in creation around us, the Bible teaches that the whole created realm is ***bent, twisted and warped***. This world is not the way God initially made it. We see the effects of the fall in floods, earthquakes, tornados, famine, and the like all around us. Just watch the news.

When critics of Christianity question the existence of God because of these things, or worse, ***blame*** God for their occurrence, they usually assume an ***unbroken chain of events from the moment of creation to this day***. The Bible makes it clear, however, that such is not the case.

Christians need to understand this clearly. We will, no doubt, see many wonderful answers to prayer. God does so many gracious things for His children in this fallen world. But make no mistake about it, the full ***undoing*** of the effects of the fall will ***not take place in this age***. Sin affects all of us as we live in the created, but fallen world.

But there’s a second way we are all affected by the fall. Not only is the world of nature affected, but we are too:

b) ***Human nature is influenced by the Fall of man.*** In other words, the Bible is clear that, not only is our ***environment*** polluted, ***we*** are affected by sin in our very nature:

Isaiah 53:6a - “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way....”

Isaiah 64:6 - “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”

Romans 3:23 - “....for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....”

1 John 1:8 - “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”

That last reference from John is especially important because those words were written to the church - the New Testament church. True, we don't all **yield** to sin as much as we once did. True, there is **provision** for holiness for those who will abide in Jesus and resist the Devil.

But the point is, the Devil still has something to work with in all our lives. We all must walk in the Spirit, as Paul says, and not **give in** to the flesh. We have an **inclination** to sin that must be overcome and put to death daily in this world. **That's what the fall has done to us.**

We all create much of our own misery in life by giving in to the inward impulses of the sinful nature. Our cruelty, selfishness, impatience, anger, lust, unforgiveness and the like, bring pain and misery and regret to our own souls.

Let's look at the second source of our problems:

2) **EVERYONE ONE OF US FACES PROBLEMS THAT COME FROM *OUTSIDE* CAUSES AND LIE TOTALLY BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO PREDICT OR CONTROL**

This needs to be added to the first source of trouble - the Fall of mankind. While it is true that **all** troubles can be traced to original sin, not all of the problems I face are the direct result of **my own** sin.

I'm constantly affected by what I will call **outside** sin in two ways:

- a) ***I live in a world infected by sickness, grief and natural disasters.*** While these are caused by sin (as we saw in the first point) they are usually out of my control. These events come to the godly and the ungodly alike. True, sometimes God intervenes. But it's equally true that sometimes He doesn't. We'll look at some reasons for that later on.

The important point here is that these events will affect **all of us** who live on planet earth. Jesus actually said we could expect these kinds of problems to **increase** with the passing of time as His Coming drew nearer:

Matthew 24:4-8 - "And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. [5] For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. [6] And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. [7] For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. [8] All these are but the beginning of the birth pains."

- b) ***My life is affected by the actions of other people.*** This too is frequently beyond my control. I get transferred to a poorer job and have a tough time financially. Someone drives through a stop sign and hits my car, injuring my wife or child. A foreign power declares war on my country and my house is bombed. These are all examples of troubles that come from the actions of others. I have little or no control over them.

And here's the important point - ***these circumstances are a very poor way to measure your spirituality.*** You will not please God by beating yourself for things you didn't do and couldn't control.

Analyze the following. Which are examples of situations beyond your control?:

- i) A loved one dies in a plane crash
- ii) You plant your crops late and they don't get enough time to grow
- iii) You leave your wallet on the counter at the store and it gets stolen
- iv) You lose your job because of serious illness
- v) Your boss fires you because you always arrive late for work

Now, on to the third source of problems:

3) **MANY OF OUR PROBLEMS ARE THE RESULT OF OUR OWN *PERSONAL CHOICES***

Life simply **forces** us to make decisions. Because we are **finite**, we sometimes must make choices with only limited

information. Those sometimes turn out to be well intentioned but mistaken. Because we are also *fallen*, we also make choices we know full well are attractive, but wicked.

In fact, if you want to simplify it, you can lump all of our choices into two categories:

- a) ***Sometimes we make good choices and things turn out well.*** Most of the time, good choices are increased with ***biblical input and the transforming of our minds - Romans 12:1-2*** - "I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Other factors contributing to good choices are usually ***discipline*** (the ability to put a reign on our own fallen desires) and ***patience*** (giving care and attention whenever possible rather than acting on impulse).

There is also an important sub-point to consider here. ***Sometimes good choices can cause problems as well.*** Sometimes good choices, ***in the Biblical sense***, can cause temporary loss of comfort and pleasure. Good choices are not always going to be popular with friends or even family members.

Good choices, ***in the Biblical sense***, can call for extreme dedication and self-denial. It's easier to bail out of a difficult marriage. But it is still a ***good choice*** to stay with it. It's always easier to give in to temptation than to resist. But resisting is always the ***good choice***.

Here's the life lesson in all of this. It's a dangerous thing to ***measure the quality of a decision simply by the pleasure or immediate satisfaction it brings.***

Years ago Debbie Boone made the song "You Light Up My Life" famous. When she sang those words, "It can't be wrong when it feels so right," every Christian in the world should have stood up and said, ***"Don't be ridiculous! Of course it can! Almost every wrong choice feels right - at least initially."***

- b) ***Sometimes we make poor choices and create our own problems in the process.***

Proverbs 13:15 - "Good sense wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their ruin."

Poor choices - sinful choices - always make life more difficult in the long run. They ***why*** do people make sinful choices? Because they only look at the ***short term results*** of their decision. And sin always comes with attractive bait covering the painful hook.

This is why the Bible always warns of the ***deceitfulness*** of wealth, lust, pride and the like. You never really see what you're going to end up with when you make a sinful choice. Poor decisions are always made either ***without the input God's Word can give*** or they are made ***against the leading of Scripture, conscience, and the Holy Spirit.***

But remember, it is also possible to make a ***poor choice*** that is not a ***sinful choice***. It may still create a problem - like a car accident you experience because you make the choice to get groceries when you would have stayed home if you had known the ice storm was coming. ***Some poor choices are not sinful or immoral.*** They simply come from being finite and not all-knowing. Christians shouldn't beat themselves for these things.

4) **SOMETIMES WHAT WE PERCEIVE AS A PROBLEM IS THE OUTWORKING OF GOD'S PURIFYING LOVE**

We've all heard the question, ***"Why would a loving God allow His people to suffer?"*** There ***are*** valid, Scriptural answers to that question and we need to look at them:

- a) ***God allows us to go through trials and problems to both purify and exercise our faith.***

God does not ***tempt us*** (James 1:13) but He does ***purify us*** - **1 Peter 1:6-7** - "In this you rejoice [talking about the hope of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ], ***though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by***

various trials, [7] so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

God uses problems and trials to *prove our faith* - to exercise it like a muscle - to wean it away from earthly attachments - to alert us to get ready for our true home and reward.

Remember, faith can be *informed* by reading books. But it can only *grow* as it's *exercised* and *used*. And we never stretch our faith until we have a problem.

b) ***God uses our problems and troubles to enable us to minister to others who are going through the same thing.***

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, [4] who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”

Remember, God cares about you deeply. But just because He cares about you deeply *doesn't mean He cares only about you*. God cares more about your *fruitfulness* than your *comfort*. He wants to use your experiences to bless the Body of Christ. ***Whenever you go through a trial, look for someone God wants to bless with your compassion and your help.***

So we've studied ***four sources of problems***. Obviously, it's important to know where you're at if you are to respond with appropriate Scriptural action. Look at each problem you're facing right now. Be honest enough to trace its roots with a prayerful, unbiased mind. And when you do, you will have taken the first step - the first ***huge*** step - in becoming what God wants you to be.

More on this next Sunday night.