

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-5 Inherited Nature

It was an exciting day. Sopa and her husband, Kamnan, had invited relatives and friends to a celebration in honor of their newborn daughter, Malai. Everyone was making a big fuss over how beautiful Malai was. Kamnan's 12-year-old son, Atid, stood in the background looking at relatives he had not seen in years. Suddenly a man stopped in front of him and looked intently into his eyes. It was his father's elder brother, Uncle Aroon. "Kamnan, your son Atid looks just like you." Aroon said. "I remember you, when you were about Atid's age. The similarity is striking."

And so it is, that children inherit attributes from their parents. These may affect their physical appearance or their personalities. There are some things that are inherited that are not specific family traits. These are universal to all human beings; two eyes, two ears, a nose and a mouth, hands, and a body designed to walk on two feet. There are also basic personality traits such as the ability to love.

At the most basic level are the traits that we call instincts. These are the things that no one has to teach a child. These are the things that every child does on their own. Self-preservation is one of these instincts. When a baby is thrust under water they somehow know to hold their breath and open their eyes. Self-preservation is a powerful instinct. Underlying all instincts is the basic desire for pleasure and the desire to avoid pain. This desire for pleasure drives human sexuality. This inborn human programming drives all of our basic instincts such as self-preservation, self-gratification, and selfishness. No one has to teach a child any of these self-oriented instincts.

Now some theologians teach that every person inherits a sinful nature and because of that, everyone sins. They thus incur guilt and shame that separate them from God. Some would even argue that every child is already born with the curse of sin that has been handed down by every generation since Adam. But if this were true, that would mean that every baby who died before coming to an age of understanding right from wrong, would still be guilty of sin. Would a loving God condemn a baby based upon a curse bestowed upon them from ancient ancestry? Theologians have wrestled with this question for over a thousand years.

There is a way that helps to understand this inherited desire to sin and it does indeed start with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When God created Adam and Eve, he programmed them with basic instincts that were necessary for the survival of the human species. These are the instincts we have just discussed. These instincts are neither good nor evil, but are necessary for the individual to survive. We notice that all of these instincts are self-centered. If left unbalanced, they would result in people being unable to have relationships with one another. So, God created in humans one additional instinct. That is a desire to have relationship with him. It would be the relationship with God that would balance man's instincts towards selfishness.

In the Garden of Eden, both Adam and Eve's instinctive desires for self were completely balanced by their relationship with God. But Satan appealed to Adam and Eve's desire for self. He argued that eating the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil would make

them like God. Satan was appealing to their basic instinct of self. The Bible says, “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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate” (Gen 3:1-6, NASB).

We all have an instinctive desire to eat. This is self-preservation. Eve saw that the fruit was good for food. We also have an instinctive selfish desire to have that which we find beautiful. Eve found the fruit to be a delight to the eye. Finally, we all instinctively desire things that will increase our self-worth and thus feed our pride. Eve saw that the fruit was desirable for gaining wisdom. In these three basic instincts we find the root of almost all temptation. The apostle John wrote “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1John 2:16, NASB).

Now it is not wrong to be tempted. Jesus himself was tempted by Satan in the wilderness in these same three ways. Temptation is not sin. But when we give into temptation, that is when we commit sin. When Adam and Eve gave into their basic instincts of self and ate from the tree, their relationship with God was broken. Once the intimate relationship was broken, there was no way to restore it. For when man broke the relationship with God and sinned, man became unholy. But God is holy. He cannot connect himself to or have relationship with that which is unholy.

This left mankind in an awful situation. He was created for relationship with God. There is a yearning inside man to have relation with God. But sin has created an unholy condition within man that makes this intimate relationship impossible. Man was now out-of-balance. On one side are man’s basic instincts for self. On the other side—balancing self—should be God. Instead, there is now a God-shaped hole and all that is left is self.

Every person is born neither good nor evil. But every person is born out-of-balance. As a child grows, his instincts toward self quickly become apparent. By the age of two there typically is a power struggle with its parents as the child attempts to demand their own way. These selfish instincts always lead to sin. Mankind has not inherited a sinful nature, but rather, has inherited a broken relationship with God.

The lesson is **important** because it explains the human nature to sin.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God created man for holy relationship. When man sinned and became unholy, the relationship with God was broken. This left man’s basic instincts of self, unbalanced, thus leading everyone to selfish desires and sin.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. God created mankind with basic instincts. What one word describes what all of man’s instincts are about? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said, “All of man’s instincts are about self,” you are correct.
2. What was God’s plan to balance a human being’s instincts toward self? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you answered that God made human beings to have a relationship with him to balance self, you answered correctly.

3. What kept God from reestablishing relationship with Adam and Eve after they sinned?
[Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said that their sin made them unholy, and that a holy God cannot be connected to something that is unholy, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it as many times as is necessary to learn this concept of inborn human instincts and the need for self to be balanced with God. Then explain this concept to someone. Make sure that you can effectively communicate this concept by telling the story of Adam and Eve's sin in your own words.