

Why He Came

The Condition of His Creation

Part 1

Mankind was born into perfect bliss. At humanity's creation man, woman, and beast enjoyed perfect, uncontaminated communion with the Maker. From the beginning they were given free will, so the bliss was partly of their choosing. By choice they understood their place in the Creator/created scheme, that they were something less than the Maker.



But free will naturally includes the option to make a different choice. One day the seed of rebellion that had been built into them took root, grew, and blossomed into full flower. Woman and man willfully forgot their place, and turned against the Maker in a bid to be like Him.



Turning Point



It's an old argument—as old as humanity's second generation. There is “good” from man's perspective, and “good” from God's perspective. Man sees the counterpoint of good and evil in shades of gray, from his own perspective on the level playing field.

“Good” defines actions and feelings that are noble, unselfish, loving, while “evil” defines those things that are antisocial, selfish, angry and cold. Anyone who is “better” than I is good; anyone who is more wicked than I is evil—just as anyone who has more money than I is “rich,” while anyone who has less is “poor.” A billionaire sees most of the world as needy, while someone on welfare sees most of the world as wealthy.

In the economy of eternal salvation, however, these subtleties count for nothing, for God is the standard, and He is perfectly good. There is no one more good than He, there is no one as good as He, and everyone, in comparison, is evil.

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." Romans 3:10-12

As seen from the plateau of earth, this is a bitter pill. By the world's standards this is the epitome of injustice, arrogance, and inequity. To a post-modern society that preaches the gospel of inclusion and relativism, this is gross heresy. And it all goes back to that pivotal moment when Adam and Eve decided they'd rather be equal to God than beneath Him. Prior to that moment, they were subject to their Maker, and sinless. After their rebellious choice, they were still subject to Him, but now the seed of their rebellion had taken root, and would be passed down through each succeeding generation, changing forever the relationship between mankind and God.

one

There is a human goodness, using the word in a corrupt sense, that shows how far man is fallen. An illustration will show what I mean. A spring comes forth from the side of a hill, clear, cold, and limpid, and with a certain metal content from the earth. As the stream flows down through the countryside it becomes

Total depravity does not mean that there is no good in man, but that there is no good in man which can satisfy God.

Donald Barnhouse



Aspects



polluted. Each time man builds on its shores, the stream becomes more foul. If it passes through a village or town, it becomes undrinkable; and if it passes through a city it will bear the germs of death to anyone contaminated by it. And yet there are traces of its original state. The chemical analysis still shows the presence of its original values. And the stream in its depraved state still has its uses. Its flow can carry away the sewage that would mean pollution if left in the city, even while itself becomes more polluted in its task.

So is the goodness of mankind. Adam came fresh from the hand of God, and there was no sin within him. But when he chose to follow his own will instead of remaining in creature submission to the will of God, there entered a death into the human stream which, under the analysis of the great Chemist, is seen [here in His word], Barnhouse

Just about all the corruption and misery on this revolving planet can be traced back to men or women attempting to set themselves in the place of God. Wars are built on man's greed and lust for power, leaving death and destruction in their wake; famine and pestilence are the product of man's moving whole nations about as figures on a chessboard. Flowing out of Eden are all of this earth's woes, given birth when Adam and Eve chose to align themselves with evil rather than good.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Genesis 3:6-7



What is Good

From the earth, "good" is subjective; from the heights of heaven, earthly good does not even exist. From the perspective of earth, people are categorized into groups of good, better and best, or bad, worse and worst. There is, nonetheless, a low-denomination of goodness that is the common currency of our society:

- ◆ A father who is good takes care of his family, and leads a generally upright life without scandal or intrigue.
- ◆ A mother who is good also takes care of her family, nurturing them to make sound moral decisions.
- ◆ A girl who is good remains sexually innocent until marriage; a boy who is good does not try to pressure her onto a different path.
- ◆ A manager who is good treats his or her employees with fairness and understanding, giving raises when they have been earned.
- ◆ An employee who is good clocks in on time and does not steal from the company.

But from the perspective of heaven,

All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. Psalm 14:3

The atheist says, "I am good," or at least, "I am all right." But the believer says, "God alone is good," and "I am only good through Him." God's definition of goodness is righteousness, holiness. To accept the fact that He alone is good and righteous, one must be willing to take a position in subjection to Him.

Ah, there's the rub. The human spirit since Adam is far too lofty, too self-absorbed to agree to such an arrangement. When God asked Cain to give a report on the whereabouts of his slain brother, his reply was, "Why should I?" And modern Cains the world over raise a defiant fist, shake it in the face of God, and sneer, "What have you to do with me? I don't need you to define who I am."

The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good. Psalm 14:1

The only reason why we do not more clearly see this foulness is because we are accustomed to it, just as those who work daily among offensive odours at last cease to smell them.
C.H. Spurgeon

TWO

God recognizes only one standard for righteousness: His own. Falling short of that standard is called “sin.” But here again the world is offended: “What arrogance for anyone to set a mark to which we cannot attain! No,” they cry with jaw set firm, “we reject this notion of righteousness. It is a made-up standard—and one we choose to ignore.”

And as God’s standard is ignored, the world’s standards sink ever lower, ever deeper into the muck of depravity—until the human standard of goodness becomes something coarse and profane, something so vile as to cause holiness to retch, and turn away in disgust.



A Bent Toward Sinning

The natural life in each of us is something self-centred, something that wants to be petted and admired, to take advantage of other lives, to exploit the whole universe. And especially it wants to be left to itself: to keep well away from anything better or stronger or higher than it, anything that might make it feel small. It is afraid of the light and air of the spiritual world, just as people who have been brought up to be dirty are afraid of a bath. And in a sense it is quite right. It knows that if the spiritual life gets hold of it, all its self-centredness and self-will are going to be killed, and it is ready to fight tooth and nail to avoid that. C.S. Lewis

Ask any parent: Which is easier to teach your young child—right, or wrong? Which takes more effort from a parent—teaching the path that leads to a morally and ethically upright life, or teaching the path that leads to destruction and decay?

Most parents, of course, would answer that they do not try to teach their child the way of wrong. One reason for this is that it isn’t necessary. A child requires no special instruction in taking the wrong path; leave him alone, and he will find it on his own.

It remains a mystery why there are still so many who subscribe to the philosophy of the inherent righteousness of man—the misguided belief that people are, from the womb, essentially good, and that any evil in them is only picked up along the way from external forces. One doesn’t even need Scripture to disprove that notion. What path does a child take when left on its own? Does the unsupervised child show up on time for her piano or violin lesson? Does he, on his own, choose to go to the library to study, and do his homework?

Why do we need babysitters, if children are essentially good? Just leave them alone and they’ll eat a balanced meal, do their homework, and be in bed by nine o’clock. Right?

Walk through an average neighborhood on a Saturday evening, and at random select a number of teenagers. Hand them the keys to a car, and tell them they are free to do whatever they like—no restrictions. Will they hold a Bible study? Will they collect goods for the homeless, or feed the hungry? Will they reject the offer, choosing instead to stay at home and spend a quiet evening with their family? Or will they gleefully take off at a speed somewhat higher than the posted limit, and spend the night reveling in mischief?

Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Do not bring your servant into judgment, for no one living is righteous before you. Psalm 51:5; 143:2

It’s not that righteousness and goodness do not exist on earth, but that they are the exception, rather than the rule. And what we all need to learn is not evil, but good. Sin is in our genes, it is nestled comfortably into the myriad folds of our brain. It need not be acquired from an external source. Good, however, is unnatural to our senses. Righteousness comes from a decidedly external source: God.

three

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. James 1:13-17 nkjv



The Poison of Asps

From the beginning man has been a liar. And, from the beginning, when he did tell the truth, it was often to ensure that his blame was shared with others. When God confronted the first man about his wrong, Adam did tell the truth.

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Though he didn't give the full story, Adam's response was the truth. What he failed to explain, however, was the reason for their behavior. Adam and Eve had never before been afraid of God; they had never before known that they were naked; and they had never before hid from the presence of the Lord. Then, when he next opened his mouth to explain, Adam gave ample evidence that the 'poison of vipers' was now on his lips. In that first act of rebellion the serpent's venom had been transferred to man; that first intercourse with evil suffused the vile capacity to turn against a loved one into all of mankind. Adam's next words were cold, hard, and calculated.

And (the LORD God) said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Here is the sickening echo of every cowardly excuse devised. Eve was, literally, flesh of Adam's flesh. God had created her from the man's body. They were man and wife, living not only in perfect union with God, but perfect union with each other. They were one. Now all bets were off. Suddenly, with the flesh of the costly fruit still digesting in his belly, Adam's wife was now "the woman," and she was responsible for his downfall. Worse, the man implicates God Himself: Who was responsible? "The woman you put here with me..."

When it came her turn, Eve showed herself a suitable companion to the one who had just weaseled out of his responsibility, for she, too, had received a dose of the poison that would be forever on the lips of her seed.

*Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."
Genesis 3:8-13*

How quickly they had fallen. How quickly they had acquired the skills of sin. Only a short time earlier their union had been described in glowing, even loving terms: 'flesh of my flesh,' 'cleave to his wife,' 'one flesh,' and

*The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.
Genesis 2:25*

Now there was shame. Now there was division, distrust, doubt, anger. And Eve gave birth to Cain, then Abel, and though they surely did not go out of their way to teach their children the ways of sin, the poison was just as surely passed down through them. The venom of deceit was now a permanent fixture in the genus *Homo sapiens*. So when the jealousy of Cain for his brother, Abel, caused mankind's first murder, we already have the full flowering of the lie.

Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed

*Their throats are open graves;
their tongues practice deceit.
The poison of vipers is on their
lips. Their mouths are full of curs-
ing and bitterness.
Romans 3:13-14*

For as the opening of a grave reveals the death that is within, so the opening of the human mouth reveals the death that is in the heart. As an earthly physician can look into the mouth and discern the physical state of the digestive tract, so the great Physician looks into the mouth of man and declares the state of his heart. It is a grave. In it is corruption and death.
Barnhouse

four

Not a word from their mouth can be trusted; their heart is filled with destruction. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongue they speak deceit. Psalm 5:9

him. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Genesis 4:8-9 nkjv

He knew. The blood and sweat and dirt from stashing his brother's body were still upon him. But in only one generation the lie had been born. And the lie is still alive and well. In fact, the lie defines today's culture; it is the foundational premise upon which today's society is built. Dishonesty, deception, rancor, duplicity, coarse speech, and vile hatred hidden beneath the syrup of tolerance. These are now the well-practiced fruits of the first man's rebellion.



Certainties

*But your iniquities have separated you from your God;
your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.
For your hands are stained with blood,
your fingers with guilt.
Your lips have spoken lies,
and your tongue mutters wicked things.*

*No one calls for justice;
no one pleads his case with integrity.
They rely on empty arguments and speak lies;
they conceive trouble and give birth to evil.*

*They hatch the eggs of vipers
and spin a spider's web.
Whoever eats their eggs will die,
and when one is broken, an adder is hatched.*

*Their cobwebs are useless for clothing;
they cannot cover themselves with what they make.*

*Their deeds are evil deeds,
and acts of violence are in their hands.*

*Their feet rush into sin;
they are swift to shed innocent blood.*

*Their thoughts are evil thoughts;
ruin and destruction mark their ways.*

The way of peace they do not know;

*there is no justice in their paths.
They have turned them into crooked roads;*

no one who walks in them will know peace.

*So justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not reach us.
We look for light, but all is darkness;
for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. Isaiah 59:2-9*

The period bridging the late Sixties and early Seventies was a time dripping with the honey of peace and love for all mankind. Hippies and flower children preached the gospel of universal brotherhood, the end of all war, free love and unencumbered sex—all washed over by the acrid haze of hashish and marijuana.

The lead singers in the choir for this worship were the four Beatles, and their anthems—both during and after their years together—included such titles as "Give Peace a Chance," "Love," "Strawberry Fields Forever," and "All You Need is Love." The best known of these paisley paeans is surely John Lennon's "Imagine":

*Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today...*

*Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace...*

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one*

*Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world...*

*You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one*

John Lennon had it right: The concept of universal peace in our time must include an absence of heaven, since God makes it clear in His word that on this side of the great Judgement Day man will always be at war with man, that nation will always rise up against nation, and that anger and hate will always trump peace and love.

Jesus told his disciples that the turmoil will still be going on even when he returns to lift out His people.

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation,

and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.
Matthew 24:3-8

The world will never “live as one,” because it is not in man’s heart to do so. The utopian society is a myth perpetuated by those who reject the power and dominion of God, in favor of what they believe to be the inherent power of man over his own destiny. In 1980 John Lennon was shot to death on the street outside his New York apartment by someone who hadn’t signed on to his concept of universal love and understanding.

There will always be those willing to take life in order to satisfy their own willful gain. The process of life on this earth is not a dignified, courteous chess game, but a vicious, muddy Rugby scrum. There will always be the tyrant, the egomaniacal dictator, the power-mad President willing to sacrifice mother’s sons to pursue their own self-centered agenda. These will not pass away in our time, but will remain—indeed, proliferate—until Jesus Himself returns.



A Suicidal Arrogance

Adam and Eve sinned against God, and in the tragic aftermath of their rebellion they whined and dissembled, clutching the offending fruit behind their backs even as they disavowed any responsibility for the act. They pleaded for a lighter sentence—but they still held sufficient fear of the Maker not to lie to Him.

As the presence of natural sin took root and matured, it would fall to Adam and Eve’s offspring to demonstrate the fatal arrogance that would not shudder at the thought of God’s potential wrath.

Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?” “I don’t know,” he replied. “Am I my brother’s keeper?” Genesis 4:9

Weep over the suicidal arrogance that permits no fear of Almighty God. Tremble at this indictment.

One does not lie to whom one truly fears. When overcome by a quaking reverence, one can only confess the truth. We cannot respect those to whom we lie, for by its nature, a lie diminishes the worth of the one being lied to. We lie because we imagine we can get away with it, which means we consider ourselves superior to the one who has challenged us.

How does a citizen of the United States feel when watching and listening to the President brazenly lie to the populace? What happens deep inside, on both an intellectual and emotional level? That citizen knows that his or her leader considers himself superior to the one hearing his words. Indeed, that citizen knows that the ‘leader of the free world’ holds the citizenry in utter contempt.

When we fear God so little that we can lie to Him, He knows that we consider ourselves superior. And herein dwells the root cause: pride.

There is one vice of which no man in the world is free; which every one in the world loathes when he sees it in someone else; and of which hardly any people, except Christians, ever imagine that they are guilty themselves...

The essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison. It was through Pride that the devil became the devil. Pride leads to every other vice; it is the complete anti-God state of mind...

If I am a proud man, then, as long as there is one man in the whole world more powerful, or richer, or cleverer than I, he is my rival and my enemy...

There is no fear of God before their eyes. Romans 3:18

Men’s sins have a voice to godly ears. They are the outer index of an inner evil. It is clear that men who dare to sin constantly and presumptuously cannot respect the great Judge of all. Despite the professions of unrighteous men, when we see their unhallowed actions our heart is driven to the conclusion that they have no religion whatever. Inholiness is clear evidence of ungodliness. Wickedness is the fruit of an atheistic root...

If God be everywhere, and I fear Him, how can I dare to break His laws in His very presence? He must be a desperate traitor who will rebel in the monarch’s own halls. Whatever theoretical opinions bad men may avow, they can only be classed with atheists,

...continued

since they are such practically. Those eyes which have no fear of God before them now, shall have the terrors of hell before them forever. Spurgeon

six

As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people; and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you... Lewis

This prideful arrogance has only blossomed and ripened since the days of mankind's second generation. It has spread into a putrid mass that envelops every family, every nation. This generation fears God even less than Cain did, and those who *do* fear God—those who are not afraid to confess this terrible sin—should weep over its ultimate destruction.



Where is the Hope?

afterword

Romans 3:9-18, the text on which this issue has been based, is an uncomfortable indictment of the condition of God's creation. It paints an unpleasant picture of the heart of man. It describes not only the behavior of the unregenerate, but the very base nature which even the Christian carries around deep within. While still upon this intemperate plane, we will none of us rise completely out of the seed planted in Adam's rebellion.

Because of this, believers still sin. Because of this, pastors will still commit adultery, missionaries will steal, and everyday Christians will still cheat on their taxes, scream venom at their husbands, utter profane words, and hate their neighbor.

This is the condition of His creation: mankind. Yet the sorry tale does not end here. For the Lord is a God of grace, of mercy, and of hope.

"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.
Isaiah 1:18-20

God knew, from the beginning of time, that even if men and women were willing, they would never be completely obedient. That is the legacy of Eden. So God sent His Son to take upon Himself our disobedience. God sent salvation in the person of Jesus Christ: to be born and live in humility, to suffer, to die, then to rise up out of the grave, so that every member of His creation might know Him—in spite of his sin.

Good Lord, today
I scarce find breath to say:
Scourge, but receive me.
For stripes are hard to bear, but worse,
Thy intolerable curse;
So do not leave me.

Good Lord, lean down
In pity, tho' Thou frown;
Smite, but retrieve me:
For so Thou hold me up to stand
And kiss Thy smiting hand,
It less will grieve me.

Christina Rossetti

God's joyful, victorious answer to the story of man's depravity will be the subject of Part 2, in the December issue of Aspects.

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned... For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.
Isaiah 9:2,6-7

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