



...therefore the Lord  
God sent him out from  
the garden of Eden, to  
cultivate the ground from  
which he was taken.

*Genesis 3:23*

# Listening to Our Father

*Eighth in a Series*

**I**

In the Christian life, ignorance is not bliss. What we *think* we know can send us down trivial and unprofitable rabbit trails; what we do not know at all can render our faith infantile, aimless, and impotent.

A faith of ignorance is, at root, idolatry, because it is a belief system that disregards God's truth, based on something of your own device.

We have all come into contact with young men or women who never received any parental guidance or discipline, but were allowed by their mother and father to set their own path in life. Being around them is typically an unpleasant experience, for with rare exceptions these unfortunate individuals are utterly self-absorbed and headed down a destructive path.

The Christian's parent is Father God, and absent His instruction His child can bear a marked resemblance to those without benefit of counsel from human parents: an aimless life focused more on himself than Christ.

We receive instruction from our Father through the Holy Spirit, but knowing how best to receive, interpret, and implement that counsel comes from the book that was *written* by the Spirit: the Bible. We receive instruction through the exemplary life of the Savior, and that life is chronicled and explained in the Bible—all of it, from Genesis through Revelation. So a life of faith in Christ without knowledge of the written word is a life in which the child has rejected any parental guidance. He has ceded his guidance and instruction to the fallen world—and himself.

Sadly, even for the Christian, that is a comfortable fit, for even those who belong to Christ, even those who have been converted on a spiritual level, remain wrapped in the flesh of earth. And the counsel from that earth—from its societies and cultures—will be familiar to our base nature, and easily followed.

Here is what God's word tells us: Man is born with a depraved nature.

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God,"  
They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice;  
There is no one who does good.  
God has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men  
To see if there is anyone who understands,  
Who seeks after God.  
Every one of them has turned aside;  
together they have become corrupt;  
There is no one who does good, not even one.

*Psalm 53:1-3*

The history of the human race as presented in Scripture is primarily a history of man in a state of sin and rebellion against God and of God's plan of redemption to bring man back to Himself.

*Wayne Grudem*

Since everyone after Adam is born in sin, then it follows that cultures and societies created by them will be in a state of sin as well. And the liar who started it all with Adam and Eve, is still a liar.

[Jesus said,] "Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

*John 8:43-44*

We are born with a depraved nature; in God's eyes, there is no good in us. Even after conversion we still retain some of that nature, since even Christians can and will sin. Because this world's system is in the hands of a liar—Satan—he does what is natural to *him*: he lies to us, reassuring us that what God says is not true, that people "are essentially good," with only a handful of bad eggs here and there. And because we remain in flesh, our original base nature remains familiar to us, and we want to believe the lie. If we are listening more to the counsel of this world than the counsel of our heavenly Father in His word, we want to believe the lie.



As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."

*Mark 10:17-18*

In this matter, God dwells in a black and white universe—the language of heaven has no word for "mostly good"; it has no word for "sort of bad." In God's aspect, one is either good or evil; since man is born not-good, he is born evil. And since in himself he cannot *make* himself good, he remains evil so long as he remains apart from God through Christ. And, maddeningly, even then the Christian struggles against the lingering influence of his base nature. The apostle Paul eloquently and passionately expressed both the anguish of this ongoing battle, and the solution to it.

For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with

the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me... Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

*Romans 7:14-20, 24-25*



Along with peace, hope, and an indescribable joy, the Christian life on earth consists of a never-ending battle between the flesh and the spirit, between the gravity-like tug of sin and our desire—indeed, our *calling*—for holiness. Part of our ongoing sanctification is that we progress toward victory in this battle; we will not know ultimate victory until we pass the threshold of our heavenly home, but the believer who spends his life taking God seriously will steadily progress closer to it.

It is Christ, not the flesh that accomplishes this, and because of Him our ultimate victory *over* the flesh remains sure. Because of Jesus our Lord, we can have more than just the hope of a someday victory over sin; we can have some of it *now*.

As we give heed to the counsel of our spiritual parent, our heavenly Father, through His word, and as we tap into the power available to us in Christ Jesus, we gain the upper hand in this struggle—perhaps not vanquishing the enemy, but keeping him in his place.

The culture of this earth does not and will never teach us this; it still listens to the counsel of *its* father—the father of lies. But from God's word we learn the truth—the eternal truth, which is this:

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

*Romans 8:1-2*

*Continued...*

*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*

*For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.*

*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.*

*Galatians 5:16-18*

