

Lesson 17 – Principles 8

The Nature of God, Sin, and the Enemy

Read the Scripture verses below & lesson and then answer the questions that follow on a separate sheet of paper. If you believe this lesson would be helpful to others you know, feel free to share it with them.

This lesson may challenge your theology more than any lesson you have done or will ever do. We are not demanding that you completely buy into what is presented in this lesson but we do ask that you honor (give weight to) the idea of looking at the nature of God and the nature of sin differently.

Let's start with a very basic question: When Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, what made that act "sin." Most likely, your answer is that they disobeyed God. This comes from a belief system where God is a petty tyrant and everything revolves around following His rules. This is why we end up with "art" showing God as that pissed off old white man with a beard and a scowl on His face and a lightning bolt in His hand just waiting for us to screw up. What if this image, this sense of God's nature and character doesn't line up with what Jesus said about our Heavenly Father? (Luke 11:9-13, Matthew 26:6, Matthew 7:11) Did the God who does not change (Psalm 55:19, 1 Samuel 15:29) suddenly change?

What if God has always been a loving Father? What if instead of defining sin with his statement about not eating the forbidden fruit, but rather He warned of sin? What if sin is that which destroys God creation, namely us? And what if God is a good Father doing what He can within His Nature to protect those He loves?

Have you experienced the joy of raising a child? Maybe you've been someone's favorite uncle? Do you remember the days when the youngster had recently learned to walk and it was now time to discover everything in the home by touching it? And all of this touching included the hot stove, electrical outlets, and other things that put the little one's safety at risk. How did you respond? You must have told the child you loved not to touch these things because you were a petty tyrant like God. No? Perhaps potential hurtful things are a part of life and we have a loving Father who desires to protect us from harm while also protecting our free will.

So, it appears the serpent, the enemy, has been so successful at slandering the character of God that he has created a filter through which we see God in a way that we don't quite want to trust Him. Let's look at how he started this mess.

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:1-5 NIV)

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Most of the time you hear these Scripture verses taught from our pulpits, the focus is on the serpent creating doubt in Eve's mind about what God said. As stated above, this comes from the "God is a petty tyrant" point of view. Let's focus more on what the serpent said later: "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good from evil." To rephrase in a less "crafty" way, the enemy said, "God is holding out on you; He doesn't have your best interest at heart." Once Eve was convinced of this idea, she came to another conclusion: "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." (Genesis 3:6 NIV) So, after introducing fear into Eve's thought processes, he convinces her to eat of the fruit and ultimately harm herself through sin. Eve ended up seeing sin as something desirable and God as the petty tyrant Who wanted to keep desirable things from her.

Looking at this from a personal level, how does seeing God as a petty tyrant who wants to keep all of the fun stuff away from you encourage you to trust Him? How does seeing sin as something desirable help you to say "no" to sin? How does listening to the enemy slander the nature and character of God help you to battle against him in the spirit?

1. Name 5 sins you committed before your salvation (or before you got real with God). You probably have enough to choose from so offer up some variety here instead of stating, "I robbed the Chase bank, I robbed the Bank of America ..."
Be specific but we don't need every gory detail.
 - a. For each of the above, share the fear root of the sin, how you chose not to trust God, and what was so destructive to you about the sin that God identified it as sin.
2. Name 3 sin areas you find yourself struggling the most with
 - a. For each of the above, share the fear root of the sin, how you are choosing not to trust God in that area, and what is so destructive to you about the sin that God has identified it as sin.
3. Name 3 things (the more religious sounding the better) that the enemy talked you into that was actually against the will of God for your life.
 - a. For each of the above, share the fear root in you the enemy was speaking to and how it ended up hurting you.