

Sunday, April 11, 2021 | What No One Told Us About Parenting

Week 1 | Romans 5:12-21 | "Born Broken"

Announcements

- Michael Cuocci
- Special prayer requests:
 - o For the Slaters in the Republic of Ireland, it's unlawful and a criminal offense to hold or attend a religious service. They even arrested a Pastor last week during Easter.
 - o For the Brother's family in the loss of their unborn baby girl at 20 weeks

Today, we'll start a new four-week series called 'What No One Told Us About Parenting.' This series seeks to answer questions about some of the most demanding areas of raising a family. And while this isn't an exhaustive study, this course will help parents make the right decisions with some of the biggest challenges they face in life.

The first topic we'll be tackling is a child's nature.

Undoubtedly, there are good things about being a parent. Kids are cute. They love unconditionally. They are high energy and expressive about some of the most common things. You get to hold them when they're little. Watch them take their first step. Watch as they have their first taste of ice cream. And watch them as they learn how to ride a bike without training wheels. These, and many other things like these, are all the good bits about parenting.

However, for every good side, there is a dark side. Kids, while cute, can be ugly. In one minute, they'll hug your neck and tell you they love you, while the next minute hit and fight you to avoid going to bed. Their energies are boundless, which is excellent when they're on a playground or playing outside, but when it's time to sit still and listen, that same energy turns them into rebellious little monsters. While watching some of the "firsts" take place in their lives are memorable, there are also habits that kids intuitively pick up which play on repeat day in and day out, which one would soon like to forget (e.g., cocky attitude, selfishness, lying, etc.). These, and many other things like these, are all the bad bits about parenting. And these bad bits are a direct result of a child's nature.

The question I had when Piper first began to walk and talk was, "Who taught my perfect little princess to be so nasty?" Now, I wasn't totally oblivious when we had kids. I knew how messed up they can be. After all, I had been a kid myself, and I knew how disobedient I was growing up.

In fact, my mother often said that if it wasn't for Jesus getting a hold of my heart, I'd be a life-long resident of the state's penitentiary. But being a kid is one thing, and having a kid who also looks like you, talks like you, and acts just like you...is another thing entirely.

Parenting, at its core, is trying to deal with a smaller, cuter, and *meaner* version of yourself. Parenting is trying to raise a child who has a *twisted* nature. Parenting is striving to love and nurture a human being that has been *born broken*. Again, I knew this to be true intellectually, but understanding it experientially is far more illuminating. Every parent, at some point, asks themselves, "Where did my kid learn to be so bad?" And the answer to that question is that the kid never had to learn to be bad. They never had to learn how to lie, manipulate, and disobey. No. They had to learn this bad behavior because they were born with an evil nature. And doing bad things is one of the most natural things for a kid to do.

This is actually the very point Paul makes in Romans 5.

READ: Romans 5:12-21 (ESV)

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— ¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's [Adam's] trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one-man Jesus Christ abounded for many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the result of [Adam's] sin. For the judgment following [that] one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.¹⁷For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one-man Jesus Christ.

¹⁸Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹For as by the one man's disobedience, the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience, the many will be made righteous. ²⁰Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, ²¹so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul is making a contrast between two figures:

i. Because of Adam's disobedience, all of his descendants are exiled.

- And to be a descendant of Adam, one need only to be born.

In theological circles, this is what is known as the doctrine of original sin. We have a physical death because we are, all of us, born spiritually dead. We were, all of us, born broken. We were, as the old saying goes, “dead on arrival.” Paul’s point in Romans 5:12 is that “since sin and death entered the world through one man, so also death spread to all people since all sinned.”¹ Just as children inherit their parents' complexion, the human race inherited its bad behaviors from its first parent: Adam. And the evidence of that inheritance is death. Sin is a result of our fallen nature, which we received from Adam, and death results from our own sinful actions. We sin because we are fallen. We die because we sin.

Now, this is utterly opposed to a secular worldview which proposes that humans are not inherently good or bad. Instead, we are nothing more than the accidental by-products of nature and nurture, which has randomly evolved the human species on this tiny speck of dust we call earth. In fact, even earth is nothing more than an aimlessly drifting hunk of rock that rockets through this hostile and mindless universe until all the stars finally run out of fuel and all life effectively freezes to death. This event is affectionately referred to as the “Big Chill,” the “Big Freeze,” or the “heat death of the universe.” Viewed through this lens, this means that humankind is no more significant than a swarm of mosquitoes or a host of pigs. Chance, and chance alone, made it so that we evolved opposable thumbs and can walk on two legs making us the dominant species on this planet.

But whether you're a human, a pig, or a mosquito, the end is the same: oblivion. And if all is by chance, and that existence itself is nothing more than a happy accident, and if the ultimate end of the universe is nothing more than nothing at all, then truth can be whatever you make it to be. This is because you, and you alone, are the god of your own destiny. You are the ultimate truth in your own little universe, and you can be and do whatever you want to be and do. You were not born broken. Instead, you are the culmination of millions of years of trial and error. Far from being born broken, you are actually the best this world has to offer.

But if this is true, why is there still so much wrong in our world? And, if we've had all this time to figure out life, why do we still bicker with one another, fight and kill each other? It seems far more likely that the longer we, as species, exist, the worst we become. What if, instead of this secular worldview being correct, the scriptural worldview is? What if, instead of the universe being the by-product of chance, it is the intentional result of a Supreme Designer? What if,

¹ Schreiner, Thomas R., *Romans*, Second Edition, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2018), p. 279.

instead of a universe that will eventually die a death of cold, existence will go on for all eternity in one form or another? What if, instead of truth is whatever a person wants it to be, it is objective and transcends time and space? What if, instead of human nature as neither good nor bad, it is, in fact, inherently evil?

In theological circles, this is what is called “human depravity.” Depravity simply means that it is in our nature to do wrong and to turn away from God. In other words, we are born bent in the wrong direction. We are not sinners because we sin; instead, we sin because we are sinners. There is our nature (sinful), and then there is the expression of that nature (sin).

Now, at this point, you must be wondering, “How does this apply to parenting?” This is important to understand because, in parenting, it's easy to focus on the symptoms of a child's sinful nature and then forget to address the actual cause. We do more harm when we care more about their behavior than we do about their hearts.

Little Johnny lies not because he doesn't know it is wrong to lie; he just likes to lie. And yes, we should correct and disciple little Johnny when he lies. However, we must also remember that little Johnny lies because little Johnny has a lying heart, and, as parents, we can do nothing to correct the heart. Only Christ can repair the heart.

So, yes, we must graciously correct and loving discipline the poor actions of our children. But more than a child needing correction, they need transformation through the life-changing power of the Gospel. Only the Gospel can effectively address our children's sinful natures.

In fact, this is precisely the second point that Paul makes in our passage.

ii. Because of Christ's obedience, all of his descendants are exonerated.

- And to be a descendant of Christ, one needs only to believe.

Paul points out that Jesus Christ's atoning work was more significant than Adam's work which condemned the whole world. The disobedience and death of Adam was the disobedience and death of us all, a truly remarkable achievement in its own right. But the obedience and death of Jesus was the obedience and death of all who believe, a much more extraordinary achievement. Jesus Christ did not scratch the human race and start anew. No. He took what we already were, and He remade, redeemed, and restored us to what we were before. And not only that, He actually made us even *better* than what Adam and Eve were in the garden in that we were given not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of only Son of God!

“Adam and Christ are the two most influential individuals in human history, and believers can take confidence because they belong to one who has overturned all that Adam introduced into

the world.”² Adam started with a sinless world and got it all wrong. Christ began with a sinful world and made it all right. Where Adam took an apple though he didn’t need to, Jesus took a cross though he didn’t have to. Jesus not only brought good into our world, but He also undid all the evil wrought by Adam’s actions (e.g., cleaning up a mess vs. making the mess).

READ: Ephesians 2:1-10 (ESV)

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Once again, you may be thinking, “Pastor, what does this have to do with parenting?” Gospel-centered parenting teaches children that they have a sinful nature that will work against them. This sinful nature will only produce heartache and pain. This defect cannot be cured through education or behavioral management. Our natures do not need to be medicated, mitigated, or managed. Instead, our very nature needs to go through a metamorphose where we die to ourselves and live unto Christ. Our natures need to be transformed through the life-changing power of a belief in Jesus Christ.

So, WHAT’S THE TAKEAWAY?

Every human being is born broken and in need of being born again.

READ: John 3:1-18 (ESV)

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with

² Schreiner (2018), p. 287.

him.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

SO, WHAT’S THE TAKEAWAY?

Every human being is born broken and in need of being born again.

God had no other son but still gave his only Son for fallen humanity. There was only one Son. Jesus was unique. God gave the one and only heir of heaven for us; a royal Prince for mere paupers; His one-of-a-kind Son for run-of-the-mill sinners so that every child who is born broken can be born again and made whole once more.

Out of the immeasurable depths of God's love, he chose to send His Son to die in our place. Out of the immeasurable depths of Man's depravity, some will choose to reject this free gift of salvation. As parents, our job is to rear and raise our children to know their broken natures can be redeemed through Jesus Christ. And as parents, one of the hardest things to realize is that you cannot make this decision for them; they must do so of their own volition. As parents, we

do not force religion down the throats of our children. Instead, we live out a relationship with our God that can be easily seen and easily imitated by our children. May we parent in such a way that our children see Jesus in us so that when they finally meet Jesus on their own, they will feel like they've already met him before in us.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

What No One Told Us About Parenting | Week 1 | “Born Broken”

TEXT: Romans 5:12-21

Gospel-centered parenting teaches that every person has a sinful nature that works against them. Human depravity produced only one thing: heartache. Sadly, this defect cannot be cured through education or behavioral management. The human condition cannot be medicated, mitigated, or managed. Instead, our natures need to go through a metamorphose where we die the death of ourselves and live the life of Christ. Just like every adult, every child needs to be transformed through the life-changing power of a belief in Jesus Christ. Every human being is born broken and in need of being born again.

Pastor’s manuscript can be found here: