

Series: God Saves #1425

Title: Romans 8.29b

Before the Fall, After the Fall

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. Last time we talked about the theology of Jonathan Edwards and his definition of free will. Today I want to draw our attention to another of our theologian friends and he is Augustine. Edwards drew what he believed about human free will from Augustine, among others, and so let's transport ourselves back to the 4th and 5th centuries and visit with Augustine. Earlier this week I told you who he was, and why he matters to our ongoing discussion on the doctrine of predestination.

What I, and I know many of you believe about original sin and the fall of Adam and Even in the Garden in Eden, was helpfully clarified and taught by Saint Augustine. Let us be sure to define a couple of terms before we get to his main point related to the human will. I just mentioned the terms. The first is "original sin." What do I mean by original sin? The sinful condition in which we are born. Original sin is the *condition* of sin. Every baby is born a sinner. We all have a sinful nature. We sin because we are sinners. No one has to teach a child to sin, in case you have not noticed. Every human being who has ever lived was a born sinner (with the one exception of Jesus Christ). Same with all who have yet to be born. By original sin we mean, including Augustine, the sinful condition in which we are born.

The second term we have to define is "the Fall." What do we mean by the Fall? The Fall is the term we use to describe what happened in Genesis chapter 3. The historic event that is described in that chapter is when Adam (the first man) disobeyed God, eating of the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and thereby bringing sin and death into the human race. Romans chapter 5 and verse 12 is very helpful here. Romans 5.12 says, "**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...**" That verse describes the Fall of man (how Adam's sin brought sin and death into the human race) and original sin (how death spread to all men and all women, because all sin).

Pursuant to human free will we must always remember that we are all by nature sinners. We are *not* born in a state or condition of innocence. We are *not*. All of us have a fallen and radically corrupt nature. And here is the key: our will is, therefore, full of sin and radically corrupt. As we said yesterday, our will is *not* neutral. From the very moment of our birth, we have the will to sin.

Let's see how Augustine explains this. Again RC Sproul helps us, because he puts Augustine in twenty-first century language. Stick with me here. By God's grace I will do my best to explain this. The state or condition of Adam *before* the Fall (*before* his sin) gave Adam two possibilities. Adam had the ability to sin and Adam had the ability not to sin. That is straightforward. Adam has a choice: he has the ability *to* sin and he has the ability *to not* sin.

Adam looks at that tree in the Garden and he knows God has said not to eat of it. But Adam has the ability *to* sin (to eat of the tree) and Adam has the ability *to not* sin (to not eat of the tree).

But *after* the Fall, the state or condition of Adam *after* the Fall (*after* his sin) changed. After the Fall Adam had two possibilities. Adam had the ability to sin and the *inability* to not sin. I better let that sink in on a Friday! The ability to sin is easy to understand. Adam had that ability before and after the Fall. But the term "inability to not sin" may strike you as confusing. So, think about it for a moment. By the inability to not sin we mean that Adam was unable to not sin. This is what we mean by original sin. Remember what I said earlier? Original sin is the sinful condition in which we are born. Adam is changed by his first sin. It put Adam in the sinful condition and now he is unable to *not* sin.

Put another way: the ability to *not* sin is lost in the Fall. I repeat: the ability to *not* sin is lost in the Fall. How terribly tragic!

However, even in tragedy there is good news! Here we all are, after the Fall of Adam and Eve, living in original sin. We are able to sin *and* we are unable to not sin. That is how severe is the grip of sin in our lives. *Until* God sends His Son Jesus Christ into this world to live, to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, to resurrect from the dead, giving all who believe in Christ spiritual *life*! We who are Christians were once spiritually *dead*. We were able to sin and we were unable to not sin. But now Christ has made us spiritually *alive*! And this puts us, by God's pure grace, back in the same condition Adam lived in *before* the Fall. Now we are able to sin and able to *not* sin.

Listen: the only way we are able to *not* sin is Christ has set us free from the power of sin. We have been liberated from sin by Jesus. And this is the term Augustine used: *liberty*. He said that non-Christians have a free will but lack liberty. In other words, people who are not Christians, are able to sin *and* are unable to not sin. They have no liberty. They live each day in bondage to sin. But Christians, ah that's a different story. People who trust in Christ are able to sin, yes, but we are also able to *not* sin. We have liberty. We live each day no longer in bondage to sin. We must say: thank God and praise the Lord!

Once again, God has to move. God has to do something to transform our sinful, radically corrupt will. He has to resurrect the dead, and we are the dead. We are dead in sin. We have no ability not to sin. We are unable to not sin. *Until* God acts. Until He resurrects us from spiritual death and breathes into us life. Then sin has no power over us. Sin cannot keep us dead. We have been made alive by Christ. We are kept alive by Christ.

Yes, Christians still sin. We will not be perfect until we get to heaven. *But*, the Holy Spirit gives us the supernatural power to resist sin; not to sin. And when we get to heaven, when we dwell forever in the new heavens and the new earth, guess what? Brothers and sisters, we will be able to *not* sin and we will be unable to sin! I will say that again: in heaven we will be able to *not* sin and we will be unable to sin! There is no sin in heaven. There is no temptation to sin in heaven. Sin is completely done away with. I cannot wait to get to heaven!

Now that may be a lot for you to take in. Or, it may not. But can I make a suggestion? I think it will be very helpful to you if you read what I have just said. And if you listen to this again, at least one more time, maybe more. And you can do both by visiting our website. Just get online and punch in godisministry.org, that's godisministry.org. The very first podcast you see in the list of podcasts in the center of the homepage, press the play button. You will also notice a link there marked "Read Along." If you press "Read Along," you will have the transcript of this broadcast and podcast. Read it.

Better yet, read it while you listen. This will help your understanding of today's content. Visit www.godisministry.org and on the homepage find the first podcast at the top of the list of podcasts. The title is *Before the Fall, After the Fall*. Simply click the play button. Right there is also the "Read Along" link. Click that and you will see today's full transcript. Follow along as you listen. Take some notes. Make sense of what has been said. This is easy to do, and I encourage you to do it today. Godisministry.org.

Sometimes, I actually think most times, we need to hear truth again and again before it takes hold in our minds and hearts. Our website exists to help you with this. Please take advantage of what is on the site, completely free of charge to you. On Monday we will continue understanding human free will and predestination. Join us then because God Is.

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