

New City Catechism

Question 14: Did God create us unable to keep His law?

Answer: No, but because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, we are all born in sin and guilt.

Romans 5:12

Begin today by watching the Commentary Video (it's really good!)
Then answer these questions...

- Have you ever thought about the fact that no one had to teach us to be selfish, say "Mine!", and throw fits when we don't get our way as little children?
- Why is this? What did we inherit from Adam?
- Was this God's plan?

Let's look at another example of this that comes from an early church leader and bishop named Augustine, who God used to bring Christianity to many in Europe through his writings...

The Pear Tree Incident

"Everyone, come on! Over here, across the road! Look at those!" Into the quiet North African night, broke the shouts of a gang of young boys, Augustine among them. They were outside the wall of a pear orchard, their laughter echoing through the town's dark, empty streets.

"We're almost to your house, Augustine, are your pears as big as these?"

"Bigger," answered Augustine, "And twice as tasty."

"How do you know? Have you ever tried these to see?"

"No, but I would if I could. Why don't you dare me?" Augustine said.

"I have a better idea," another said. "Let's climb the wall and see how many we can take down tonight. We don't have anything better to do." "Done!" cried the others, as they scaled the wall and lunged for the nearest branches. The furious sounds they made gave way to snapping twigs and thudding pears. Unconcerned with hiding their deeds, the boys laughed hysterically as they brought the pears down. Any neighbor who overheard, were fearful of the groups size and said nothing. And so, in a short time, the boys succeeded in amassing large piles of pears.

"Now what will we do?" asked the boy who suggested the scheme in the first place. "I'm not even hungry."

"I know, let's take them to the hogs," Augustine said. And so they did.

Years later, after Augustine had come to the Lord and became a church bishop, he heard about a British church official named Pelagius who was teaching a different gospel truth than what God had given the apostles.

"We are not sinners at birth," taught Pelagius. "Adam's sin does not affect us. Adam was a bad example for us, but there's no link between his sin and us. It's possible for anyone to keep from sinning for his whole life, as in fact some besides Jesus have. The ability to be saved through personal righteousness is within every man. We must simply choose not to sin."

"No!" Augustine said! "Our souls were profoundly ruined from the time of Adam's fall. He represented the human race and the whole race fell with him." Augustine recalled the pear tree incident from his youth. He had stolen, not because he was hungry or because he had no pears of his own. He had stolen simply for his enjoyment of the crime itself. He did it for sheer wickedness' sake. Evil was in him. So Augustine challenged Pelagius with the truth that we cannot do anything on our own that is righteous in God's sight. Our hearts are wicked and this wickedness has been passed down to us from the time of Adam.

"Even though the pear tree sin was ugly, I enjoyed committing it," Augustine confessed. He said that he had loved stripping the trees of their fruit, not because he loved pears, but because he loved the destruction itself. And he knew that if he believed Pelagius' lie- that he was innocent in his own heart- that he would love God less because he would not see his need for God's mercy through Christ. "Who can help me, other than he who penetrates the dark places of my heart with his brilliant light?" Augustine asked.

Now read Romans 5:12

- What happened to every future person when Adam sinned?
- What proves to each of us that we each have a sinful nature?

Please make use of the New City Catechism app or website
Commentary, Prayer, and Song as you see fit.