

**“Our Biblical Worldview”  
(6) The Fall of Man into Sin**

In the five previous Sundays in which we have addressed this subject, “Our Biblical Worldview”, we have given our attention primarily to God’s initial work of creation and what it reveals about God and us, the people He created. And so, we have given a fair degree of our focus on the opening chapters of Genesis and had thought of moving elsewhere, but then realized that we should address in some detail the entrance and nature of sin into God’s good world. This is certainly a central component of a biblical worldview. The problems that this world is having, the problems that each of us are having, stems from the root of this first sin of Adam, that is first recorded in the third chapter of Genesis. In this passage we may learn much about the tempter who would lead us into sin, of the nature of temptation to sin, and of the causes and effects of sin itself once committed. We will read Genesis 3 in its entirety.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

<sup>2</sup>And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; <sup>3</sup>but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”

<sup>4</sup>Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup>For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

<sup>6</sup>So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup>Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

<sup>8</sup>And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”

<sup>10</sup>So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

<sup>11</sup>And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

<sup>12</sup>Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

<sup>13</sup>And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup>So the LORD God said to the serpent:

“Because you have done this,  
You are cursed more than all cattle,  
And more than every beast of the field;  
On your belly you shall go,  
And you shall eat dust  
All the days of your life.

<sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel.”

<sup>16</sup>To the woman He said:

“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;  
In pain you shall bring forth children;  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
And he shall rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup>Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’:

“Cursed is the ground for your sake;  
In toil you shall eat of it  
All the days of your life.

<sup>18</sup>Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,  
And you shall eat the herb of the field.

<sup>19</sup>In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread  
Till you return to the ground,  
For out of it you were taken;  
For dust you are,  
And to dust you shall return.”

<sup>20</sup>And Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

<sup>21</sup>Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

<sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— <sup>23</sup>therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup>So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

How did evil come to exist in the creation that God had made so “very good?” Why is there duplicity, treachery and betrayal, excruciating pain and heart-wrenching suffering in God’s good creation? Why is there hostility, enmity, division, and unspeakable acts of violence and injustice? Why is there certain death in the world in which God had created all living things? The Bible provides the answer in this narrative of the fall of Adam and Eve our first parents. Here is the fountainhead from which has flowed into history all that disappoints and defeats, damns and destroys. This was the entrance of sin into God’s good world.

God the Creator had graciously given life to Adam and Eve. He had placed them in a perfect environment having given them all things to enjoy, but with one prohibition—they were forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 3 we see the response of our first parents to their Creator, who had been so gracious to them. Eve, being deceived by the serpent, led Adam to transgress God’s commandment. Through his sin Adam incurred for himself and for all his posterity God’s curse with its consequences. What might have at first appeared to the reader of this early Genesis narrative to be a trifle prohibition with an overreaction by God for man’s insistence on eating some fruit, in the following chapters of Genesis, man’s sin is shown for what it was in reality. We should summarize some of the events recorded as a result of sin.

With the entrance of this monstrous evil of sin came horrendous consequences for the human race and the world in which it inhabits. Pride, anger, hatred, and murder arise in one brother toward another (4:1-15). The world soon became a dangerous, violent place, even as the population of the world increased and civilization developed (4:16). Nevertheless, there were some people who called on the Lord even in these dark times, for it is evident that God was preserving for Himself some who would serve Him (4:25-5:32). But they, too, are corrupted (6:1ff), and over time their number become few in proportion to the mass of humanity whose wickedness and violence increases unabated (6:5, 11f). God purposed to destroy all life that He had created (6:6ff), and would have done so completely had not Noah found favor with Him (6:8f). God destroyed the inhabited earth by means of the flood, but preserved Noah, his family, and a remnant of all other living things, through which He again would populate His world (6:13-9:7).

After the flood waters receded, God made a covenant with Noah and his descendants, promising them that He would never again destroy the world by means of a flood (8:21f). God commissioned Noah and his sons with the responsibility He had originally given Adam and Eve. He said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (9:1). But it was apparent that the flood had not removed sin entirely. God gave laws which precluded violence and death (9:2-6). Noah’s own son sinned grievously incurring a curse on his descendants (9:20-27).

Again, the population of the world increased (10:1-32), and the people again turned from serving God (11:1-5). Finally, when they made a tower which signified their defiance of God openly, and it was clear that they would unify in their rebellion against Him, God caused the people, who had but a single language, to be scattered over the face of the earth, thereafter speaking different languages, thereby preventing their reunion (6-9). However, through the whole course of this period of history, God preserved for himself a remnant through which His promise of redemption would be realized. The section concludes with the genealogy of Shem leading to Abram, through whom God would work His purposes (11:1-32). We will now trace in some detail this record of the entrance of sin and, its consequences.

## I. The temptation

We read in Genesis 3:1, “Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” It would seem that no sooner were our first parents established in God’s garden that they were at risk having paradise lost to them. The opening statement portends evil and danger, and the need they had for vigilance. But if they, in their purity before the entrance of sin, were vulnerable to deception and were in need of watchfulness, how much more are we, this side of sin, insecure in our standing, we who have our senses seared and judgment impaired? The serpent was more clever at deceiving than they were clever at detecting him. They were ignorant of his devices.<sup>1</sup> They should have observed the serpent and strove to be wise so as not to become its prey. Nevertheless, in spite of the serpent’s cleverness and their own naiveté, things would have been okay had they maintained their obedience to God’s Word. The evil one has no power over a man or woman who uses God’s Word rightly and obeys it fully (cf. Matt. 4:1ff).

The Word of God is, however, where the serpent would direct his subtle efforts. He attacked the man through the woman, by deceiving and leading her to stray from obedience to God’s command. **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) wrote of the devil’s ploy.

It was his policy to enter into discourse with her when she was alone. Had she kept close to the side out of which she was lately taken, she would not have been so much exposed. There are many temptations, to which solitude gives great advantage; but the communion of saints contributes much to their strength and safety. He took advantage by finding her near the forbidden tree, and probably gazing upon the fruit of it, only to satisfy her curiosity. Those that would not eat the forbidden fruit must not come near the forbidden tree. *Avoid it, pass not by it* (Prov. 4:15). Satan tempted Eve, that by her he might tempt Adam; so he tempted Job by his wife, and Christ by Peter. It is his policy to send temptations by unsuspected hands, and theirs that have most interest in us and influence upon us.

He first, broaches the subject, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (3:1). In introducing the matter, the serpent first questions the *content* of God’s Word which had been given to them. It is a question of *what* God has said. It is important we know the substance of God’s Word so we may have assurance and confidence when challenged or tempted in this fashion. But underlying the question is the notion of *why* would God say it. Why would God forbid anything? Would not *all* trees be available? Would God deny *anything* that you would desire? When the question of *why* God would forbid something is offered by some, it reveals the heart of a rebel looking for an excuse to violate God’s command. Eve’s response was a

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<sup>1</sup> “Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:10). Adam and Eve were ignorant of his devices.

correct one (3:2f). She reveals her clear understanding of what God had told them.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, “she intimates that they would be most ungrateful if, instead of being content with such affluence, they should desire more than was lawful.”<sup>3</sup> God richly supplies us with all things lawful to enjoy (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17). It is ingratitude toward God when we long for forbidden things. The serpent would lead them away from faith in God. He would sever them from God’s Word--the law which had been given to them to establish their boundaries.

But seeing that Eve knew what the content of the Word was, the tempter chose to deny the Word forthrightly. He said to her, “You surely shall not die!” (3:4). He attempted to show that the consequences of violating God’s Word, which had been so clearly set forth, would not be realized. He anticipated the resistance to such a notion that she might have posed. But how could this be that you will die? And if you will not die in violating this command, *why* would God have given this prohibition? The serpent deceptively declared, “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5).

Before us, then, are some ways in which we may see the devil, who is the tempter<sup>4</sup>, come to us in order to lead us into sin. Let us consider a few of these.

***First, the tempter will come to you when you do not suspect, and address the temptation in your weakest area.*** For Adam, it was through Eve to whom he would likely yield. **John Calvin** (1509-1564) wrote,

His subtlety in tempting was, that he set upon Eve first because he thought she was weakest; he knew he could more easily insinuate and wind himself into her by a temptation. An expert soldier, when about to storm or enter a castle, observes warily where there is a breach, or how he may enter with more facility; so did satan the weaker vessel. He tempted Eve first, because he knew, if once he could prevail with her, she would easily draw her husband... Satan knew a temptation coming to Adam from his wife would be more prevailing, and would be less suspected. Oh bitter! Sometimes relations prove temptations. A wife may be a snare, when she dissuades her husband from doing his duty, or entices him to evil.<sup>5</sup>

***Second, temptation will come in a manner that leads you to doubt the essential nature of God as He has revealed himself in Scripture.*** You need to be discerning to recognize this when it comes. We have already considered what God is like as He revealed himself as Creator. The serpent would have Eve question the nature of God that had been so clearly demonstrated to her in the creation. (1) The serpent would have Eve question God’s *goodness*, and thereby His love, kindness, and generosity, thinking that God would deny her something that was in actuality good. (2) Eve was to discount God being *righteous and just* in punishing her transgression, if she did eat of the fruit. (3) Perhaps the serpent would have her doubt God’s *sovereignty* in that He could bring about the consequences, which had been declared to her. (4) Certainly he would have her doubt God’s *right to rule* in restricting her behavior. How could God forbid this to her? (5) Eve was to doubt God’s *wisdom* in withholding something that would make her wise. (6) She was to doubt His *immutability* in that she could eat of the forbidden fruit and yet God would change His mind about the consequences. If we have been grounded in our understanding of the nature of God, we should make effort to reinforce that understanding lest it erode and make us vulnerable when the tempter comes to us. Knowing what God is like provides one with protection and preservation through much temptation to sin.

***Third, temptation will come in a manner which would lead you to elevate your reason above God’s revelation when making decisions which affect your life.*** This is the error of rationalism, which claims you are capable through the thinking process to come to truth about God and how He would have you live *apart from Scripture*. We do not reject reason or logic, but we subordinate it to God’s revelation of His will in Scripture. **John MacArthur** pointed out the relationship of revelation and reason in his book on discernment:

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<sup>2</sup> Granted, God did not say “or touch” in his original prohibition (cf. 2:17), and dying was not the penalty for touching, but Eve was right in the sense they had no business fondling that which was forbidden to them to eat. Stay clear of the place of temptation all together. Some tempt the devil to tempt them by toying with forbidden things.

<sup>3</sup> John Calvin, **Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis**, trans. John King (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Watson, **A Body of Divinity** (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), p. 139.

When **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) was summoned to the Diet of Worms in 1521 and asked to recant his teaching, he replied, “Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience would be neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand I can do no other.

Luther’s well-known formulation, “Scripture and plain reason,” is the only basis on which we can properly ground true spiritual discernment. *Discernment* is the ability to understand, interpret, and apply truth skillfully. Discernment is a cognitive act. Therefore no one who spurns right doctrine or sound reason can truly be discerning.

Authentic spiritual discernment must begin with Scripture-revealed truth. Without a firm grounding in divine revelation, human reason always degenerates into skepticism (a denial that anything can be known for certain), rationalism (the theory that *reason* is a source of truth), secularism (an approach to life that purposely excludes God), or any number of other anti-Christian philosophies. When Scripture condemns human wisdom (1 Cor. 3:19), it is denouncing not reason per se, but humanistic ideology divorced from the divinely-revealed truth of God’s Word. In other words, reason *apart from* the Word of God leads inevitably to unsound ideas, but reason subjected to the Word of God is at the heart of wise spiritual discernment.<sup>6</sup>

***Fourth, temptation will suggest to you that you yourself must experience something in order to understand it, or to determine whether it is true, good, or right.*** We wrongly think, “How do I know unless I have tried it?” or, “How will they know unless they are exposed to it?” The temptation is for you to think that by experiencing something you will be better able to deal with it. I have known Christian parents who have thought it is an okay thing to allow their children to be exposed to a measure of evil thinking that it will enable their children to deal with life better. This is never the case. Being exposed to evil so as to incite imagination and defile the conscience is never good. It is not true that you are able to assess evil more completely and fully by having been exposed to it or having experienced it. It is always better to be pure, holy, and undefiled. Once innocence is lost, it can never be restored.

As a pastor, I have encountered this notion frequently by Christians: my assessments of issues or circumstances have been challenged on numerous occasions based on this principle, “you have not experienced it, and therefore you cannot possibly know to speak to my situation.” Others have charged me with being inept to deal with problems because as a pastor I have “lived a sheltered life and really do not know what it is to live in the real world.” They have bought into the serpent’s lie in which he said that by tasting the fruit they would be better able to know good and evil. The opposite is true; experiencing sin always has detrimental effects on assessing truth (as we will see when we consider Adam and Eve’s responses to God). It is the one who knows the Word of God thoroughly who is best equipped to assess and speak to the problems of sin.

Related to this is the notion in these days that education is the answer to all societal ills. They say that ignorance is the greatest of evils. “You must hear and know all perspectives.” “One must be aware of all experiences before you can make an ‘intelligent’ judgment on matters.” This underscores sex education philosophy. They think, “All sexual behavior, even deviant behavior, must be thoroughly discussed and graphically portrayed in order for children to be able to make decisions respecting these things in life.” This fails to distinguish between innocence, which is good and should be preserved in children, for once it is lost it is never regained, and ignorance, which must be replaced with truth. Again, Calvin wrote,

Because the desire of knowledge is naturally in all, happiness is supposed to be placed in it; but Eve erred in not regulating the measure of her knowledge by the will of God. And we all daily suffer under the same disease, because we desire to know more than is right, and more than God allows; whereas the principle point of wisdom is a well-regulated sobriety in obedience to God.<sup>7</sup>

***Fifth, the tempter’s design is to lead you to first desire, then grasp for that which is forbidden, thereby causing you to lose all that had been so freely given to you.*** How many have lost all they have because they have coveted that which was unlawful! Soon Eve would have none of the fruit from any of the trees to which

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<sup>6</sup> John F. MacArthur, **Reckless Faith: When the Church Loses its Will to Discern** (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994), pp. xiv, xv.

<sup>7</sup> Calvin, **Genesis**, p. 151.

she had full access, because she would have that one fruit that God had forbid to her. Many forfeit God's best, because they long to have what appears to be better, but what God has forbidden to them.

One once said, "All of Satan's apples have worms." The tempter will entice you with sin that he makes to look attractive and satisfying, but it is only to lead you into committing that sin so as to enslave you further to that sin and to himself. Sin never satisfies temptation fully. Sin may temporarily cause temptation to subside, but then it comes back stronger than before. Moreover the devil has a hatred for man, because man is the image of God whom he hates. He would destroy you, if he could, for he would destroy God, if he could. His hatred of God led to a hatred of man, and his hatred is seen in his ingenuity to make you fall.

When a man is determined on revenge, it is strange how cunning he is to find out opportunities to vent his spite. Let a man have enmity against another, and let that enmity thoroughly possess his soul, and pour venom, as it were, into his very blood, and he will become exceedingly crafty in the means he uses to annoy and injure his adversary. Now, nobody can be more full of malice against man than satan is, as he proveth every day; and that malice sharpeneth his inherent wisdom, so that he becometh exceeding subtle.<sup>8</sup>

One might think that Adam and Eve had little chance of withstanding this foe. But had they simply trusted God that He had dealt with them and instructed them rightly, and had they simply obeyed His Word, they would have been okay. The responsibility of their fall was fully upon them, and we have been suffering for their transgression ever since. However, it should be recognized, any one of us would not have acted differently than they. After their temptation, came their transgression.

## II. The transgression

The serpent's ploy was successful. Having had Eve's thinking adjusted to view matters in a different perspective, she "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was desirable to make wise, she took from its fruit and ate, and gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (3:6). After she received her education from the serpent and having embraced its reasoning, Eve now viewed the fruit in a different way.<sup>9</sup> Before, there was no desire for the tree, for a loving, all wise God who ruled over her had placed it off limits, and she and her husband had been content with that prohibition. But now, she was making the decisions of good and evil apart from God's will. Now the fruit of the forbidden tree was desirable for her, and she would not deny herself, but would have it. Adam, too, with what seems to be no hesitation and no compunction to resist, joins in the feast. Eve gave the soul poison to him, and he ate it down. Eve was as many: "those that have themselves done ill are commonly willing to draw others to do the same" (Matthew Henry). When they both tasted the fruit, they both tasted death, but it was through Adam's sin that death passed upon all men (cf. Rom. 5:12).

Now, a natural response might be, "Okay, man sinned. But is God's reaction fair play? Would He, should He, punish the world because of this infraction? Is death and eternal damnation a just recompense for eating a piece of fruit?" And it is this kind of natural response which characterizes worldly thinking (and our natural thinking), which has an extremely important bearing on becoming mature Christians. A mature Christian, according to the Word of God, is a Christian who has become a discerning Christian, one who has acquired the ability to discern or distinguish between truth and error, good and evil, and right and wrong (cf. Heb. 5:12-14). If we are to be mature, discerning Christians, we are to shift our understanding from our own perception and assessment, which is adversely affected by sin, to perceive and understand the world in which we live from God's perspective, based on what He has revealed in His written Word. And one of the major impediments to discernment is the inability (or refusal) to see sin as exceedingly sinful. Therefore, it is important that we consider the nature and gravity of the transgression of our first parents, because our sin also renders us incapable of right thinking. We may say several things respecting this matter.

***First, Adam and Eves' sin was, in the truest sense, dehumanizing.*** God created mankind to live before Him in holiness and happiness, ruling the creation on His behalf. This is what God desired humanity to

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<sup>8</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, **The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit**, vol. 46 (Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Publications, 1977), pp. 613f.

<sup>9</sup> This is what often happens when ungodly professors have finished spoiling their students' minds. Parents should beware of the kind of instruction being fed your son or daughter for your thousands of dollars in institutions of "higher learning."

experience, but was lost to him through sin. Thankfully, however, His people will yet fulfil this purpose of God in the kingdom of God. Sin, however, robbed man of his exalted place as a master of creation and put him in the place of a slave to the devil. In one act, Adam and Eve dethroned and degraded humanity from where God had placed them. They defaced the image of God of God in themselves so that no longer would the glory of God be shown forth by them. Should not God have regarded their defection in the most serious and severe manner?

**Second, Adam and Eves' sin resulted in the dimming of their knowledge of God and His will.** The result of this was ignorance and foolishness respecting the true nature of God. From that time onward God dealt with a people who were ignorant, uncaring, and unresponsive to Him. We would quickly become impatient with someone whom we invited into our home but who soon forgot whose house it was and began to behave as it were his own. But that is the state of fallen man. He lives in God's world irrespective of God's ownership and His laws. After this initial sin of Adam and Eve, God would have to deal with the mass of humanity living in His world in this way.

**Third, Adam and Eves' sin was the cause of all subsequent sin.** All the sin of all the sinners of all time had their source in this first sin. All violations of God's will may be seen as stemming from this sin. It was a root sin that has grown and has born every ugly and poisonous fruit that mankind has consumed since that first sin. All heartache, all misery, and all suffering due to sin has come into the world by their sin.

**Fourth, Adam and Eves' sin brought misery and suicide for themselves and by it they caused the murder for all their posterity.** All death passed on all humanity because of their (his) failure. Their sin was against a holy God, which separated them from God. There is no life apart from God. Unholy sinners abide in death, separated from God. If a father caused suffering for his children due to his purposeful neglect or failure, would he not be held in contempt by the world? Compound all the misery of all time due to Adam's neglect and failure heaped upon all the "innocents." Should not God hold him in contempt and bring great wrath upon him? If only Adam and Eve could have known the horror that they were unleashing upon the world, the unfathomable and inestimable measure of sin that would follow from that one deed, they would have agreed with God immediately that no penalty or punishment would be too severe coming from Him.

**Fifth, the sin of Adam and Eve crucified Christ, God's Son.** Ultimately, their sin led to and caused Christ's suffering and death, as does all sin of God's people. God's "severity" upon their transgression was justified, if not mercifully tempered in the light of what Christ would have to endure due to their sin.

**Sixth, sin itself is an abhorrent thing in the sight of God.** Not merely the result of sin is a cause of God's displeasure, sin itself is viewed with infinite contempt. The sin of Adam and Eve was a thing abhorrent in the sight of God.

**Seventh, Adam and Eves' sin is an affront to the glory of God.** God had a personal interest in this matter. It was an affront to Him. It was a blow against Him and everything He stood for. Their sin denigrated His name. It was an insult to His character. It was a rejection of His person. They chose to accept the word of the devil as more true and relevant for ordering their lives than God's own word. It was an act of immense dishonor against an infinite God. But further, it was an act of rebellion against His authority. In this sense it was a revolt, a rebellion, an effort to overthrow the government of God and set themselves up as gods, if not in His place, at least on equal footing with Him. It was a dismissal and refusal of God's Law. As others have described it:

...every departure from the Law of God is an affront to the glory of God, and no sin may ever be called small. The greatness of Adam's sin, as of every other transgression, must be measured, not by itself, 'but by the offence it containeth against God's majestie', and the sensitive believer will be 'apprehensive of the Dishonor of God, by his sin'. 'Sin is the Practical blasphemy of all the name of God. It is the Dare of His Justice, the Rape of His Mercy, the Jeer of His Patience, the Slight of His Power, the Contempt of His Love: It is every way contrary to God.'<sup>10</sup>

The serpent charged God with falsehood and unkindness, as one not worthy to be trusted and obeyed for He was forbidding something that would bring benefit to them. Our parents accepted that testimony and ate of the fruit. It was an act of disobedience, which was born of unbelief. They refused to order their lives submitted

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<sup>10</sup> Ernest F. Kevin, **The Grace of Law: A Study in Puritan Theology**, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1965), p. 48f. in which he quotes several Puritan writers respecting the nature of Adam's sin to God's Law.

to the word of their God, their Sovereign Creator. They would order their own existence and choose for themselves which course they would take. They would be gods to themselves.

At first, how innocent it all seemed! What a trifle infraction! It was only a piece of fruit! But with only a little examination we can begin to see it from God's viewpoint. But have we performed a similar examination of our own sin in this way? Do we see our sin as exceedingly sinful? Can we see the fruit of our failure that will be borne in our acquaintances, our children, our society? Sin always gives way to more sin. Sin in private is never a totally private thing but has broader and often communal consequences. Sin never stands still, but always marches onward step by step, sin by sin, right into the grave, unless God stops it in Christ. Do we see what our sin does to the glory of God? Does it not defiantly challenge His authority and depose His rule and set up Satan's rule in His place? After the transgression of Adam and Eve, we read of the consequences of their fall.

### III. The Fall

The effects of sin began to show themselves immediately. "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (3:7, 8). I could not describe better what occurred than **Arthur Pink** (1886-1952):

No sooner had Adam revolted from his gracious Maker and Benefactor than the evil effects became apparent. His understanding, originally enlightened with heavenly wisdom, became darkened and overcast with crass ignorance. His heart, formerly fired with holy veneration toward his Creator and warm with love to Him, now became alienated and filled with enmity against Him. His will, which had been in subjection to his rightful Governor, had cast off the yoke of obedience. His whole moral constitution was wrecked, had become unhinged, perverse. In a word, the life of God had departed from his soul. His aversion for the supremely excellent One appeared in his flight from Him as soon as he heard His approach. His crass ignorance and stupidity were evinced by his vain attempt to conceal himself from the eyes of Omniscience. His pride was displayed in refusing to acknowledge his guilt; his ingratitude, when he indirectly upbraided God for giving him a wife.<sup>11</sup>

In one sense their understanding was darkened, but in another way "their eyes were opened"--opened to the fact that they had sinned. They knew instantly they had done wrong. "They saw the happiness they had fallen from, and the misery they had fall into."<sup>12</sup> There was shame, remorse, fear, confusion, and loss of peace. But although they were aware of their sin, at the same time there was a loss of clear and true understanding. Their consciences had condemned them. They knew in fact they were guilty, but they did not know fully the degree of their guilt or the measure of the consequences of their action for all time.

Each experience and response of our parents to their sin is typical of all their children when they sin--like father, like son. *First, there is shame and a sense of guilt* (that is, unless the conscience has been seared through repeated sin and the hardening of one's heart). "They knew that they were naked." This itself is a blessing of God that sinners might be humbled so as to seek mercy and grace from God whose law they violated. It is a shame when sinners have so sinned that they no longer feel shame. This reveals a soul who is far from God. Shame of conscience is designed by God to lead a sinner to repentance. But when people glory in what should cause them shame, they have degraded themselves terribly (cf. Phil. 3:19).

*Second, we seek to cover our shame and hide our nakedness from God and one another.* It is possible that Adam and Eve saw they were naked in that the former glory (radiant light) which may have characterized their appearance had departed from them. Given the nature of sin, we seek out many devices to avoid dealing with the consequences of our sin. We will employ every effort to mask our sin using any and all manner of inadequate means, as fragile and temporary as fig leaves, in order to clothe our shame. We resort most frequently to wrap ourselves in coverings of morality, hypocrisy, religiosity, philanthropy, and the like. There is a large wardrobe of garments for every possible occasion, but all we have is inadequate to deal with our

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<sup>11</sup> Arthur W. Pink, **Gleanings from the Scriptures: Man's Total depravity** (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), p. 59.

<sup>12</sup> Matthew Henry, **Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible**, vol. 1 (Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), p. 26.



conditions. God Himself must clothe us in His righteousness in order for our shame and nakedness to be covered. When God approached, the weakness of their covering became obvious. All our sham coverings and lame excuses will be stripped away one day and what we are in reality will be judged by God. There can be no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we must render account (Heb. 4:13).

Nevertheless, we would just as soon face this later than sooner, so ***third, we attempt to run from God rather than face Him with our guilt.*** They heard God coming so they fled from His presence. Sinfulness cannot and will not dwell with holiness. Righteousness and unrighteousness cannot be yoked together in fellowship. They are unequal, unsuitable, and incompatible partners (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14f).

***Fourth, we ignorantly think that we can flee from Him.*** We wrongly believe that we can avoid His detection or consequences for our sin. As Adam and Eve hid from God, so sinners flee from the true presence of God.

But we feel we must flee, for ***fifth, we fear God's wrath due to our sin.*** After God called for them, Adam voiced their concern. "I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

***Sixth, we might be willing to confess the effects and pain sin brought to us, but we are resistant to confess outright the sin itself.*** God must drag a confession from us. All the while God was very gracious in His dealings with this fallen pair. He came to them in the cool of the day to commune, not in the day in the heat of passion, not at night when fear would have been compounded.<sup>13</sup> He came walking, and calling. It was the approach of a friend, not an enemy. He gave them ample opportunity to confess and face their sin. "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (3:11). God knew what they had done, but He wanted to hear their confession.

But this leads us to a ***seventh*** response to sin: ***we avoid assuming full responsibility by shifting blame to another.*** Adam said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate" (3:12). Here Adam reveals that he now loves himself supremely. He does not love his neighbor as himself for he blames Eve rather than assuming responsibility himself—"It was her fault." Neither does he love the Lord his God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength, for he blames God for having given him the woman—"It was God's fault." But then Eve learns well from her husband, for she blames the serpent (3:13). We think that the blame game serves us well when we have been discovered. It does not appease God, however, for we see that He dealt with each one according to his/her works (3:14-19).

Your ability to discern will be greatly enhanced if you can identify these actions and reactions that fallen men and women exhibit when they sin. Do as God did toward them in that He dealt with them directly and forthrightly. Do not settle with diversions or lame excuses. Go to the heart of the matter: "What have you done?" "In what ways have you failed or violated God's Word?" But, of course, avoid doing these things yourself. But go after them in the manner God did, persistently, yes, but also patiently, seeking their reconciliation by getting them to face their failure. Lead them to recognize and acknowledge their transgressions of God's Word which has resulted in them being in the mess they find themselves, and then assure them God can lead them out of it, if they humble themselves, seek His empowering grace, and trust Him.

#### **IV. God's pronouncement upon those involved in this sin**

God now begins to speak to the threesome. He first addressed the serpent, then He spoke to Eve. Lastly God spoke to Adam.

##### **A. God spoke to the serpent**

We read in Genesis 3:14f of Lord's pronouncement of judgment upon the serpent. "So the LORD God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this,  
You are cursed more than all cattle,

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

And more than every beast of the field;  
On your belly you shall go,  
And you shall eat dust  
All the days of your life.  
<sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel.”

God addressed the serpent. For the first time we see a clear indication of a spiritual personality having animated the serpent. Until this point we have been careful not to identify the serpent as anything but that, but it is clear to the Christian reader that it was satan who had used the serpent to further his ends. The devil is called “that old serpent” and he is referred to as having been a liar and “murderer from the beginning”, a clear allusion to the serpent (Rev. 12:9; John 8:44). God cursed the serpent, but in doing so He gave indirectly a word of promise to His people. A time would come when a Champion, a Conqueror, who will be born of woman, would render a fatal blow to the serpent (devil), implying a deposing of the devil’s authority and the recovery and restoration from the fall of all of God’s people, which he had caused that day.

Here is the first word of redemption in the Bible, and the first, albeit “obscure intimation” of a promised messiah.<sup>14</sup> It is called “the first gospel”, the *protoevangelium*. God said to the serpent:

“And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her Seed;  
He shall bruise your head,  
And you shall bruise His heel.” (Gen. 3:15)

It is but a few words, but glorious in prospect. Right at the entrance of sin, its exit is declared. The expression, “seed of the woman” may be best understood not to be an immediate reference to a single individual, hence Jesus Christ, rather, it is speaks of collective humanity; although humanity will suffer affliction and pain--”you shall bruise him on the heel”; nevertheless, ultimately humanity, which springs from the woman, will encounter victory over the serpent (cf. Rom. 16:20).<sup>15</sup> However, down through sacred history the “seed” ceases to be identified with all humanity through physical descent, but through God’s narrowing selection a spiritual seed emerges which eventually culminates in Jesus Christ. In this way He may be regarded as the “seed of the woman”.<sup>16</sup> Who is the “seed of the serpent?” It is a reference to the reprobate, all those that align themselves with the serpent and do his bidding (cf. John 8:44; 1 John 3:8). All those damned by God on judgment day are the serpent’s seed, his offspring. The devil is their god (cf. John 8:44).

## **B. God spoke to the woman**

Next, God spoke to the woman. “To the woman He said:

“I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;  
In pain you shall bring forth children;  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
And he shall rule over you.” (Gen. 3:16)

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<sup>14</sup> E. W. Hengstenberg, **Christology of the Old Testament** (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1970), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, **Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes: vol. 1, The Pentateuch** (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1978), p. 101.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p.101. Consider the narrowing of the seed to Seth, then Shem, the Abram, then Isaac, then Jacob, ending in Jesus of Nazareth who vanquished satan winning deliverance for the nations who believe on him.

The Lord declared that the woman would have difficulty in child birth. It is with hard labor that a mother gives birth, and it is through hard labor a child comes into the world, in which he faces more labor all his days.

In addition to difficulty with childbirth, a woman has difficulty with her husband. She “desires” her husband and is placed in subordination to him.<sup>17</sup>

The woman had also broken through her divinely appointed subordination to the man; she had not only emancipated herself from the man to listen to the serpent, but had led the man into sin. For that, she was punished with a *desire* bordering on disease, and with *subjection* to man. “And he shall rule over you.” Created for the man, the woman was made subordinate to him from the very first; but the supremacy of the man was not intended to become despotic rule, crushing the woman into a slave, which has been the rule in ancient and modern Heathenism, and even in Mahometanism also--a rule which was first softened by the sin-destroying grace of the Gospel, and changed into a form more in harmony with the original relation, viz., that of a rule on the one hand, and subordination on the other, which have their roots in mutual esteem and love.<sup>18</sup>

The idea that a woman “desires” her husband is not in the sense that she loves him intensely, but that she wants to control or master him. She does not want to be ruled by him, but to rule over him.

Apart from this verse, the Hebrew word translated as “desire” is used in two places in the Old Testament. It is in Song of Solomon 7:10 in which the woman speaks of her beloved’s intense love and longing for her. “I am my beloved’s. And his *desire* is for me.” If its usage in Genesis 3:16 is the same as there, then God is telling Eve that she will have an intense longing or desire for Adam. However, the context of Genesis 3:16 is God pronouncing His judgment upon them for their sin. This interpretation sounds more like a blessing than a curse. Further, it would have been more suited to conditions before the fall rather than after--an ideal in God’s good creation rather than something having entered after they had sinned.

The other occurrence of the Hebrew word is in the same context of the early portion of Genesis. In Genesis 4:7 Cain was warned about the danger of sinning due to his anger toward God for having rejected his sacrifice. Sin is personified as a ravenous beast crouching at the door and it *desires* him, *but* Cain was to master it.<sup>19</sup> Just as sin wanted to master Cain, but God had commanded Cain to master or rule over it, so Eve would want to master her husband, but her husband was appointed to rule her. God has ordained that a husband be the head of his family and a man is no man of God if he lets his wife dominate him. She will desire to do so, but if he lets her, they both will be miserable. The man who obeys his wife to do wrong rather than to obey God to do right duplicates Adam’s sin. The fall resulted in the wife not willingly submitting, and it resulted in the husband not lovingly leading--he wants to dominate, so does she. Behind every angry woman feminist I look for a jerk of a husband, or father, or series of boyfriends, who tried to crush her through domination. Through his abuse and her rebellion and bitterness, she became an angry, unforgiving, living protest to him.

### C. God spoke to Adam

God spoke to the worst last. To Adam, God said, “Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, “You shall not eat of it”:

‘Cursed is the ground for your sake;  
In toil you shall eat of it  
All the days of your life.

<sup>18</sup>Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,  
And you shall eat the herb of the field.

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<sup>17</sup> I understand these words speaking of marriage relations between husband and wife, not simply between any man and any woman. God was speaking to Adam and Eve in their role as a husband and wife, bread winner and mother.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 103.

<sup>19</sup> It should also be recognized that the conjunction translated in the clause “*and* he shall rule over you” in 3:16 is the same word translated as the adversative in 4:7: “*but* you must master it.” Thus, if it is translated as an adversative in 3:16 it may read, “And your desire will be for your husband, *but* (or *nevertheless*) he shall rule over you.”

<sup>19</sup>In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread  
Till you return to the ground,  
For out of it you were taken;  
For dust you are,  
And to dust you shall return.”

Could Adam be the greatest offender of the three? Was he as guilty as Eve? Much more so, for although she was deceived, Adam was an out and out rebel. But was he worse than the devil himself? Yes, the devil could only tempt to sin, he could not make a single sinner. Adam made a whole race of sinners (Rom. 5:12). Adam took an entire race which should have remained willingly submitted to God and transferred its loyalty and service to the devil. Since that time humanity has chosen to serve the devil. The devil might have used a serpent, thereby consigning through God’s judgment to crawl in the dust throughout its existence, but Adam corrupted the whole cosmos. Adam was the sinner above all other sinners. No one has ever sinned since, who sinned against more knowledge or more privilege. No one has ever sinned since, who had more ability not to sin than Adam.

His fall was voluntary. He had a *posse non peccare*, a power not to fall. Free-will was a sufficient shield to repel temptation. The devil could not have forced him unless he had given his consent. Satan was only a suitor to woo, not a king to compel; but Adam gave away his own power, and suffered himself to be decoyed into sin; like a young gallant, who at one throw loses a fair lordship. Adam had a fair lordship, he was lord of the world, ‘Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth.’ Gen. 1:28. But he lost all at one throw. Soon as he sinned, he forfeited paradise.<sup>20</sup>

One older writer sought to show the hideousness of Adam’s sin by showing how he violated all Ten Commandments in the one act of eating of the forbidden fruit.

“Dr. Lightfoot’ expresses it thus, ‘Adam, at one clap, breaks both the tables (that is, both the tablets of stone), and all the commandments. (1) He chose him another God, when he followed the devil; (2) He idolized and deified his own belly, as the apostle’s phrase is; his belly he made his God; (3) He took the name of God in vain, when he believed him not; (4) He kept not the rest and estate wherein God had set him; (5) He dishonored his Father which was in heaven; wherefore his days were not long in that land which the Lord his God had given him; (6) He massacred himself and all his posterity; (7) In eyes and mind he committed spiritual fornication; (8) He stole that (like Achan) which God had set aside not to be meddled with; and this his stealth is that which troubles all Israel, the whole world; (9) He bore witness against God when he believed the witness of the devil above him; (10) He coveted an evil covetousness, which cost him his life, and all his progeny.’”

God’s judgment on Adam and all his posterity had two aspects. *First, the earth was cursed due to Adam’s sin.* Adam’s existence would be one of hardship. The ground was no longer co-operative with man’s efforts after the fall. Before his sin, fruit sprung up naturally, afterward, only with difficulty. There was resistance, a kind of battle has been waged between mankind and the world. It is as though the world itself felt revulsion from the presence of fallen man treading on its surface.

It was of course from the soil that he was taken (Gen. 2:7), and so with its gifts the soil is the motherly basis of his whole life. But this relationship has been broken, resulting in estrangement which is expressed in a silent combat between him and the soil.<sup>21</sup>

Adam would no longer bear fruit to God without much difficulty and the earth would no longer bear fruit to man apart from toil. He rebelled against God, whose rule He had been under, and the earth would rebel

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<sup>20</sup> Thomas Watson, **A Body of Divinity** (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1992), p. 137

<sup>21</sup> Gerhard von Rad, **Old Testament Theology**, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 159.

against him, which had once been under his rule. Adam had been made the ruler of the world. When he fell, that which was under him fell. Similarly, if the leader of a nation is ungodly, the true blessing of God will not be upon that nation. If the leadership of a church is corrupt, the full blessing of God will not be upon that church. If the head of a family is corrupt, the full blessing of God will not be upon that family. However, although the full blessing of God may have been forfeited, God in His mercy may spare a full reprisal on a whole group for the sake of a godly remnant within the group.

*Second, man would return to the earth from which he had come.* God had warned them that if they transgressed by eating of that tree, they would surely die. Here, God confirms His Word. “Dust thou wert, to dust thou shalt return” has been recited at millions of funerals over millions of graves. Joshua one day said about his approaching death, “I am going the way of all the earth” (Josh. 23:14). And so will each of us, unless the Lord returns first. We can thank Adam from whom we sprang.

After God pronounced judgment on all parties involved, He showed himself wonderfully loving, compassionate, and gracious to this guilty pair. Although He had been defied, although His creation had been spoiled and His image defaced, God condescended to them and comforted them. He would not have them ashamed and naked in His or one another’s presence, and so He clothed them. “And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them” (3:21). Many see in this act as God’s instruction to them regarding their need of a sacrifice to atone for their sin and to clothe them with righteousness. And although some would scoff at such a notion, I will not, for several reasons. First, in the next chapter and thereafter, sacrifice is seen to be the normal way of worship. Surely, God instructed them in the right manner of worshipping Him. Second, God had told them the very day they violated His command they would die (2:17). Now it is true they died spiritually in that they became sinners, but did not they expect physical death for their violation? It would seem the death of a sacrificial substitute was in place of their physical death.

By selecting the skins of beasts for the clothing of the first men, and therefore causing the death or slaughter of the beasts for that purpose, He showed them how they might use the sovereignty they possessed over the animals for their own good, and even sacrifice animal life for the preservation of the human; so that this act of God laid the foundation for the sacrifices, even if the first clothing did not prefigure our ultimate “clothing upon” (2 Cor. 5:4), nor the coats of skins the robe of righteousness.<sup>22</sup>

However, although God was compassionate toward them and gave them words of comfort and promise, they were now unfit to dwell in the garden of God. God drove them out. Alienation from God and exclusion from the presence of God are the results of sin. A sinner, one who would be a god, the lord of his own life, cannot dwell in God’s presence. Man was placed in exile from Paradise. Alone and into a hostile world Adam and Eve went forth to make a life together. God would in a measure bless them (cf. 4:1), but their life would be one of difficulty and sorrow, especially as they saw the effects of sin increase in themselves and their posterity. May we ever thank our God for His unspeakable gift in Jesus Christ!

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<sup>22</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, **The Pentateuch**, p. 106.