

Studies in the Westminster Confession of Faith

Newtownabbey Free Presbyterian Church

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Chapter 6 Part 3

Romans 11:32,36

Chapter 6 - The Fall, Sin, and its Punishment.

Section 1: Our first parents being seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. ⁽¹⁾ This their sin God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory. ⁽²⁾

Scripture Proof Texts: (1) *Genesis 3:13; 2 Corinthians 11:3.* (2) *Romans 11:32.*

This section of chapter six teaches the following four propositions:

1. Upon being placed on Probation in the Garden of Eden our first parents sinned.
2. Our first parents were seduced to commit this first sin by the work of the devil.
- 3. The particular sin they committed was their eating the forbidden fruit.**
- 4. God purposed, in permitting sin to enter the world, to overrule it for His own glory.**

The entrance of sin into the world cannot be explained on natural and rational grounds or by the operation of the law of cause and effect. Some have described the entrance of sin as an accident, others as a caprice in our first parents [a sudden and unaccountable change of mood or behaviour]. It was certainly not a reasonable act but a wholly unnatural and irrational one. Sin is entirely self caused. There was no prior sinful act by, or inclination in, our first parents by which to account for their disobedience to God.

The first sin originated in the will and spread to the rest of man's constitution. The Shorter Catechism says in answer to question 13: *Our first parents being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.*

It is worth remembering that one of the most important descriptions of sin found in the Scriptures is *'the mystery of iniquity'*, *2 Thessalonians 2:7*. In studying the entrance of sin into the world we are exploring a great mystery that can only be known, and understood, by divine revelation and not human understanding. We must be careful to understand the entrance of sin into the world within the framework set forth in the Scriptures.

3. The particular sin they committed was their eating the forbidden fruit. The eating of the forbidden fruit is described as the first sin actually committed by man in our world. No doubt, our first parents were guilty of sin in their hearts, before they committed it with their hands.

The eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin that was *'finished'*: *When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death, James 1:15.* Sin commenced in the will, darkening the judgment of our understanding, searing the conscience of our first parents not to fear the consequence and *finished* in the outward action of eating the forbidden fruit.

To some the eating of a piece of fruit [There is no Scriptural evidence that it was an apple] may appear a very trivial matter, and is often the butt of ridicule and derision by sceptics and Bible deniers, who seek to portray God as quibbling over a trifle.

In considering this act of our first parents, we must remember that, in eating the forbidden fruit, they transgressed an express prohibition of the Most High God. The first sin, though formally the violation of the command not to eat the forbidden fruit, was ultimately a violation of the whole moral law of God. The whole moral law was bound up in this Eden command, *James 2:10: For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*

This disobedience was rebellion against the divine Lawgiver, and a renunciation of His authority. This sinful act manifested a spirit of monstrous infidelity, base ingratitude, diabolical pride and gross apostasy on the part of our first parents and all their posterity. In eating this forbidden fruit our first parents showed a contempt of divine authority, disbelief in God's Word, discontent with their lot in life, belief of Satan's words, selfish pride and self centred ambition. This sinful act was aggravated by virtue of:

- (i) the One who was sinned against, namely an exceedingly bountiful and ever gracious Creator;
- (ii) those who were guilty of it, namely, creatures freshly formed from the dust of the ground by the hand of God, untainted by sin, and laden with benefits;
- (iii) the precept violated, it being such a plain and simple command;
- (iv) the place where it was committed, the Garden of Eden being a place where every plant, every creature, and every scene, displayed the bounty of the Lord, and proclaimed His eternal goodness;
- (v) the results which followed, which were not to be limited to themselves, but extended to their descendants, whom, for a momentary gratification, they ruined for ever.

The eating of the forbidden fruit was therefore no trivial, unimportant action. God's response was perfectly justified and in keeping with the heinous of that first sin.

4. God purposed, in permitting sin to enter the world, to overrule it for His own glory. That God from all eternity designed to order all things to His own eternal glory has already been proven in the previous chapters on God's Decree, Creation and Providence. These chapters have shown that God overrules all things even the sins of His creatures for good and that the chief end of all of God's purposes and works is the manifestation of His own glory.

A. A. Hodge said on this section of chapter six: *This first sin was permissively embraced in the eternal purpose of God.* Hodge also went on to say: *God did certainly foreknow that if such a being as Adam was put in such conditions as he was, he would sin as he sinned. Yet, in spite of this certain knowledge, God created that very being and put him in those very conditions; and having determined to overrule the sin for good, he sovereignly decreed not to intervene to prevent, and so he made it certainly future.*

On the other hand, God did neither cause nor approve Adam's sin. He forbade it, and presented motives which should have deterred from it. He created Adam holy and fully capable of obedience, and with sufficient knowledge of his duty, and then left him alone to his trial. If it be asked why God, who abhors sin, and who benevolently desires the excellence and happiness of his creatures, should sovereignly determine to permit such a fountain of pollution, degradation, and misery to be opened, we can only say, with profound reverence, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

In permitting this sin to enter the world God purposed, through it, to display His infinite love, grace and mercy. Through this sin entering the world mankind would come to know God in a way never possible if sin had not entered the world. One of the proof texts for this section is *Romans 11:32: For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.*

It was because sin entered that God's own dear Son also came into this world and tabernacled among men in order to redeem a people to Himself and bring them into union with God through the Son. Saved and restored sinners know God in a greater way than Adam ever did prior to the Fall. *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen, Romans 11:36.*