

Genesis, Part 5 The Fall

Temptation and Sin

The following verses from Genesis chapter 3 provide the record of the historical fall of man. This passage is a perfect case study of temptation and free will. Adam and Eve were the first of mankind to populate the earth and they lived in perfect environment in fellowship with their creator, thus sin cannot be blamed on environment.

Adam was told they could not eat of just one tree in the Garden. The question is why did God set this limitation when the fruit from all other trees were permitted to be eaten? Simply put, they had a choice to obey Him or disobey Him. In order for Adam and Eve to truly be free, they had to have a choice.

God's purpose was to create a world in which His glory could be manifest in all its fullness. The universe was created to display God's glory (Psalm 19:1), and the wrath of God is revealed against those who fail to glorify God (Romans 1:18–25). The world that best displays the glory of God is the world we have—a world that was allowed to fall, a world that was redeemed, a world that will be restored to its original perfection.

God's wrath and God's mercy display the riches of His glory, but we cannot see either without the fall of mankind. We would never know grace if we had never needed grace. Therefore, all of God's plan—including the fall, election, redemption, and atonement of mankind—serves the purpose of glorifying God.

When man fell into sin, God's mercy was immediately displayed when God didn't kill him on the spot. The ultimate exhibition of God's glory was at the Cross where His wrath, justice, and mercy met. The righteous judgment of all sin was executed at the Cross, and God's grace was on display in His Son's words, "Father, forgive them" (Luke 23:34). God's love and grace are manifest in those whom He has saved (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8–10). In the end, God will be glorified as His chosen people worship Him for all eternity with the elect angels, but the wicked will also glorify God, as His righteousness results in the eternal punishment of unrepentant sinners

(Philippians 2:11) and the final execution of Satan's sentence to the Lake of Fire. Without the fall of Adam and Eve, we would never truly know God's justice, grace, mercy, or love.

Verse 25 of chapter 2 says, "The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." This emphasizes their complete innocence, as they are tempted by Satan. They have never before been exposed to guile and have no reason to suspect it, but that is no excuse for their actions. How often have we been deceived by someone we trusted?

Gen 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" ² And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' "

In chapter 3 we see Lucifer, now Satan, in the form of a serpent. The word is *nachash* and means a serpent or snake. He is traditionally seen as a snake that beguiles Eve. Temptation often comes in a disguise. This is that magnificent angel we saw described in Ezekiel 28:12-15, but it is after his fall. Satan is now the adversary of God, and that shows in this scene playing out in chapter 3.

Verse 1 says he was "more crafty than any other beast of the field that God had made." "Crafty" is *'aruwm* and it means crafty, subtle, or shrewd. He wasn't just brilliant, but he was cunning in the negative understanding of the word. Deception is his favorite tool, and he smoothly maneuvers Eve into what may appear to be a sincere theological discussion.

The familiarity pictured here suggests this may not have been the first encounter between the two, or at least there was more to this conversation than recorded here. Satan subtly changes God's words to distort the truth when he asked the question, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" The KJV translates it this way, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" The question and tone suggests she had explained the prohibition prior to Satan asking the question. Satan makes the prohibition sound harsh and restrictive.

Much has been made of the fact the serpent *talks* to Eve. Why didn't Adam and Eve find it strange that an animal was speaking to them? That the Serpent speaks seems foreign to us today; snakes don't talk. We should remember that this was the Garden of Eden and everything was brand new, thus a talking serpent may not have seemed strange to Eve. Given that Adam and Eve had probably only been alive a matter of days, it is not unreasonable for them to believe that animals were capable of speech. In fact, the dialog suggests this may not be their first conversation. Some have argued that during this period of perfect environment that all creatures could communicate with man and the ability to speak was lost at the judgment after the fall, though the Scriptures do not explicitly support this. We do have an example of the Lord speaking through a donkey in Numbers 22. There are examples of demons indwelling humans and speaking through the human. It is not unreasonable to have a fallen angel such as Satan indwell a serpent or even take the form of a serpent and speak through it.

There are two trees in the midst of the garden, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen 2:9). She replied that God had told them they could eat of any tree in the Garden, but of the tree "in the midst of the garden" they cannot eat. (Satan identifies that tree as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in verse 5.) There is nothing magical about the fruit. It had nothing to do with the physical qualities of the fruit itself that made it significant; it was the way that God was using it.

Then she adds that God told them, "Neither shall you touch it, lest you die." It is recorded that He actually said, "For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen 2:17). (It should be translated "dying you will die," a reference to two deaths: a spiritual death and a physical death.) In the recorded Word, God said nothing about touching the tree. Was this assumed? Did God give this limitation elsewhere that isn't recorded?

In defense of Eve, God's prohibition against touching something is seen elsewhere in His Word. The children of Israel were ordered not to even touch Mount Sinai under penalty of death in Exodus 19:12. Ancient Jewish sources argue that Eve added to God's law, whereas some ancient Christian sources state that Eve got it right, and God did tell them not to

even touch the tree. Scripture clearly charges us not to add to or take away from God's Word (Prov 30:6; Rev 22:18-19). Eve made this statement while she was in a sinless state before she ate the fruit, but there is no Scriptural indication that her statement was a sin for her. First Timothy 2:14 says she was guilty of being deceived with no mention of any other sin. Besides, if Eve thought God told her not to touch it and she did, that would have been a sin for her as argued in Romans 14:13-23 where it says not to do anything against your conscience. Either it was a stated limitation that went unrecorded or it was implied in the prohibition, but even if she only *thought* touching it was a prohibition, for her to do so would have been a sin.

And another point: Adam was standing right there according to verse 6 yet he never challenged Eve on the touching statement.

Gen 3:4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.
5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Satan attacks the truth of God's word and, in verse 5, he will attack God's benevolence and goodness toward humankind.

"You will not surely die." This is an outright lie and comes from one who has experienced the ravages of sin. The Hebrew form of this sentence is in a striking intensified form. Satan *strongly* denies God's statement and makes a tragic half-truth statement "that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened".

He then went on to suggest that God's motives in the prohibition were not pure, that God was holding back something from them, that by eating they would be "like God knowing good and evil". The serpent was suggesting that experiential knowledge was a desirable, God-like quality which the Creator was jealously reserving to himself.

I submit that what mankind is doing today is exactly what Satan claimed, that they would indeed "be like God". Consider that mankind claims he can change his sex based on feelings denying science, he can marry anyone (or anything) he wants, have sex with anyone at anytime, kill his own babies for the sake of convenience, and that morality is merely relative to

what one thinks it ought to be, and that may be different for you than it is for me. All that we see around us today is man playing at being their own gods but in a very unlike God manner.

Gen 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

Eve studied the tree. It appealed to her in three ways:

1. Physically the tree was appealing, for it was “good for food”.
2. Because it was “pleasing to the eye,” the tree had aesthetic appeal.
3. Intellectually, the tree enticed Eve because she saw that it had the potential “for making one wise”.

Every temptation we face appears to have one or more of these three appeals. This is what the Apostle John referred to as “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15–17). She imagined more virtue in this tree than in any of the rest, that it was a tree not only not to be dreaded, but *to be desired to make one wise*, and therein excelling all the other trees.

Eve surrendered to the temptation. She partook of the forbidden fruit and thus committed the first act of human rebellion against God. “She also gave some to her husband *who was with her*.” This suggests Adam was present and a party to the conversation she had with the serpent. “And he ate.” Eve immediately gave the fruit to her husband, and offering no resistance, he joined his mate in the transgression.

This begs the question: Why did Adam not exercise his leadership role and responsibilities and step into this conversation to end it before Eve ate the fruit? Adam knew full well what was going on, so why didn’t he do something about it? Why did Adam allow Satan to even come into the garden? He should have taken control of the serpent and thrown him out. But he didn’t.

When Eve first bit into that fruit, nothing happened. No fireworks, no lightening bolts. Maybe her husband saw that nothing had happened, so he

also doubted that God had told him the truth about the tree. The Bible simply states she gave it to Adam and he ate of it. What if Eve enticed Adam? “Go ahead and eat some, sweetheart, it’s delicious, and nothing happened to me.” He thinks about it. Maybe she says, “You should not take all this God stuff so seriously, Adam. It’s delicious. Come on, take a bite.”

Adam, having already forfeited his leadership responsibilities, listened to his wife and took a bite of the offered fruit. Or as one of my teachers once said, “Adam took one look at the Garden, and one look at Eve outside the Garden, and he picked her outside the Garden over God inside the Garden.”

Chronologically, Eve ate first, but theologically, Adam is declared to be the original sinner. He was the head of the race and was responsible for their actions. Eve was deceived, but Adam sinned knowingly.

Sin in the Garden was defined by only one word: *disobedience*. Nothing was stolen, no one was murdered, no adultery – just simple disobedience. Some might today consider the sin of disobedience as being only a minor one, but God considers it so important that it cost Adam and Eve everything.

Judgment

Gen 3:7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. ⁸And 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. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” ¹¹ He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

The effects of sin are discipline. Whereas the man and the woman had life, they now had death; whereas pleasure, now pain; whereas abundance, now a meager subsistence by toil; whereas perfect fellowship, now alienation and conflict.

The consequences of partaking of the fruit were not as expected. Six indications of guilt can be seen in the narrative.

1. The eyes of their mind were opened (as Satan had promised) but they saw themselves as frail mortals, not gods. “They saw that they were naked” (3:7). Before the Fall they were innocent (2:25); now they were guilty. Why their sense of shame focused on their nakedness is not entirely clear.
2. They manifested a kind of cleverness, but not the God-like wisdom which they had sought. They sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths (*chagorot*) for themselves (3:7).
3. They now knew good and evil, but not the way God does (3:22). A sick man has a knowledge of suffering which differs from the insight of the physician who treats him. So God who is omniscient knows all about evil. Man, however, knows evil by experience.
4. They lost their fellowship with God. When they heard the sound of God walking in the garden, they hid themselves. Mistrust, fear and guilt replaced trust and free communion with God. One of the effects of Adam’s sin was that he forgot that God is omnipresent and omniscient.
5. They experienced an embarrassing confrontation with God (3:9–13). The questions God asked were designed (1) to make man assess his sinful condition; and (2) lead him from shame to guilt and then to repentance. “Adam, where are you?” (v. 9). “Who told you that you were naked?” (v. 11). “Have you eaten of the tree?” (v. 11). “What have you done?” (v. 13). God interrogated Adam and Eve, not the serpent. For that Evil One there was no hope. In fact, the serpent said absolutely nothing in the presence of God.
6. They indulged in self-justification. Adam blamed the woman, and (indirectly) God. “The woman *you* gave me offered me some fruit from the tree” (3:12). Sin divides the human race. For her part, Eve blamed the serpent: “He deceived me” (3:13). Both sinners freely admitted their transgression: “And I ate” (3:12f.).

Gen 3:7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

The tragedy of sin can already be seen. Immediately guilt and shame gripped them. Their opened eyes saw only their naked bodies, and they attempted to hide from each other and from God. This has been used by many commentators to assert a sexual nature to the temptation (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3, “the serpent seduced Eve”), but the word really means to deceive or beguile. In any case, their new knowledge was not the blessing it was cracked up to be (cf. Titus 1:15).

Matthew Henry says it best:

“...The eyes of their consciences were opened, their hearts smote them for what they had done. Now, when it was too late, they saw the folly of eating forbidden fruit. They saw the happiness they had fallen from, and the misery they had fallen into. They saw a loving God provoked, his grace and favour forfeited, his likeness and image lost, dominion over the creatures gone. They saw their natures corrupted and depraved, and felt a disorder in their own spirits of which they had never before been conscious. They saw a law in their members warring against the law of their minds, and captivating them both to sin and wrath. They saw, as Balaam, when *his eyes were opened* (Num. 22:31), the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand; and perhaps they saw the serpent that had abused them insulting over them. The text tells us that they saw *that they were naked*, that is, that they were stripped, deprived of all the honours and joys of their paradise-state, and exposed to all the miseries that might justly be expected from an angry God. They were disarmed; their defence had departed from them. That they were shamed, for ever shamed, before God and angels. They saw themselves disrobed of all their ornaments and ensigns of honour, degraded from their dignity and disgraced in the highest degree, laid open to the contempt and reproach of heaven, and earth, and their own consciences. Now see here, *First*, What a dishonour and disquietment sin is; it makes mischief wherever it is admitted, sets men against themselves disturbs their peace, and destroys all their comforts. Sooner or later, it will have shame, either the shame of true repentance, which ends in glory, or that shame and everlasting contempt to which the

wicked shall rise at the great day. Sin is a reproach to any people. *Secondly*, What deceiver Satan is. He told our first parents, when he tempted them, that their eyes should be opened; and so they were, but not as they understood it; they were opened to their shame and grief, not to their honour nor advantage. Therefore, when he speaks fair, believe him not.”

The traditional stance that Eve ate an apple is highly speculative. The rabbis say that she ate a fig from the same tree from which they took the leaves to clothe themselves. However, “the fruit” could be a date or some other kind of fruit, or more likely something completely unique and not existing today – we simply do not know. The kind of fruit is not an issue.

The Punishment of the Serpent

Gen 3:14 The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

God said there would be a perpetual struggle between satanic forces and mankind. It would be between Satan and the woman, and their respective offspring or “seeds.” The “offspring” of the woman was Cain, then all humanity at large, and then Christ and those collectively identified in Him. The “offspring” of the serpent includes demons and anyone serving his kingdom of darkness, those whose “father” is the devil (John 8:44).

Conservative commentators are not agreed as to the role of the biological reptile in Genesis 3. The traditional view is that Satan commandeered the body of a snake and in some manner spoke through that reptile. Others think that Serpent is a proper name for the devil. God told the serpent that the snake, crawling and eating dust, would be a perpetual reminder to mankind of temptation and the Fall. He would be cursed “above all livestock and above all beasts” implying he would be feared.

Anything that crawled on its belly was considered unclean by the Hebrews (cf. Lev. 11:42). The rabbis say that God cut the legs off the serpent in

order to make him crawl, but maybe this is similar to the sign of the rainbow of Gen. 9:13 which possibly always existed but now takes on added meaning when used by God in a special way.

“And dust you shall eat all the days of your life.” This phrase may be a metaphor in the Bible to refer to defeat and shame (cf. Micah 7:17). However, in verse 19 Adam is told by God, “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Since man seems to be the major focus of the angelic conflict, especially for Satan, I think this might be a prediction that the serpent’s “diet” will be mankind, in the sense of focusing on man and all he represents for God and His plan and the serpent’s attempt to win his appeal trial.

“And I will put enmity.” Enmity, *’eyd* – distress, burden, calamity, is a word used between persons. “Between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring.” Some translations use “seed”. The woman said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” This expression indicates that the woman was no longer at one with the serpent. When God said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman,” this revulsion of feeling on her part was acknowledged and approved. Enmity with the enemy of God indicated feelings of repentance and reviving confidence in his word with a return to fellowship with Him.

Regarding the reference to her “seed”, there is lots of discussion by commentators. Some say this refers to the children of Satan and of the woman, and in a sense, it does, if you consider the whole of the angelic conflict. But because the next verse uses the singular form “he” and “you” it seems to refer more specifically to the tension between God and the evil one symbolized in the redemptive work of the coming Messiah. It is obvious that Adam and Eve did not understand the ultimate ramification of a yet future Cross, nor probably did Moses, although Moses recognized in Deuteronomy 18:18 that a prophet greater than he was coming.

“He shall bruise your head.” The term “bruise” is the Hebrew word *shuwph* and can mean crush, pound, rub off, grind, or strike. Since the strike is to the head, it implies a strike that is likely fatal. “You shall bruise his heel.” The same word for “bruise” is used here, but the target is the feet and, thus, a non-fatal wound. This all seems to be referring to the Cross. The

wounded heel is the Cross itself that resulted in the death of Christ. The fatal head-strike refers to what was accomplished in that same event: Sin was judged, and at that moment, Satan lost his appeal trial.

The Punishment of the Woman

Gen 3:16 To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

Then God told the woman that she would have pain in bearing children, and that she would be mastered by her husband whom she desired. Man’s sinful nature is taken to the extreme. Jealousy, rape, divorce and godless dominance will characterize mankind’s sexual drive, with the problem of ego added.

Because Eve’s “desire” probably refers, in this context, to her prompting Adam to sin, it is better to translate the verse, “Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you” (ESV). The word translates as “contrary” in the ESV is *’el* which is usually translated as unto, toward, with, or against, etc. The Hebrew word, *tâshuwqah*, is translated here as “desire” or “longing”. Walter Kaiser asserts that it can mean “to turn,” possibly in the sense of “to dominate”.

She sought for joy and happiness in the forbidden fruit, but now she has pain in the normal aspect of her life. She wanted to be independent, but now she is totally dependent on her husband. Where there was harmony in the marriage before, now she will be mastered by her husband, and there will be the potential for conflict. With Adam now “ruling” over Eve, her submission to authority is replaced by a need to dominate him.

The Punishment of the Man

Gen 3:17 And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Adam should have been following God's word, but he followed his wife's word and broke God's specific command. He abdicated his authority to the serpent. Because he listened to his wife, the ground will no longer produce freely and abundantly. Adam was given the task of keeping the Garden before the Fall (cf. 2:15), which was a sign of his dominion, but now the task would become wearisome, repetitive, mandatory, and never ending. And even with mankind's labor, the ground yields meager produce.

That word translated "in pain" in the ESV and "toil" in the NKJV is *'itstsabown* which means pain, labor, or hardship. It is the same word used for the pain of childbirth in verse 16. His efforts to bring forth crops for them to eat will be difficult and characterized by hardship. It will bring forth thorns and thistles he will have to deal with in order to simply survive.

"... till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." And there is the promised physical death.

The motifs in chapter 3—death, toil, sweat, thorns, the tree, the struggle, and the seed—all were later traced to Christ. He is the Second Adam, who became the curse, who sweat great drops of blood in bitter agony, who wore a crown of thorns, who was hanged on a tree until He was dead, and who was placed in the dust of death.

These punishments represent retaliatory justice. Adam and Eve sinned by eating; they would suffer in order to eat. She manipulated her husband; she would be mastered by her husband. The serpent destroyed the human race; he will be destroyed.

God also made gracious provisions. Mankind will die and not live forever in this chaotic state, and children will be born so that the human race will endure and continue. Ultimate victory will come through Christ, the Seed (Gal. 3:16) of the woman (cf. Gal. 4:4, "born of a woman").

No matter how hard people try to do away with male dominion, agonizing labor, painful childbearing, and death, these evils will continue because sin is present. These are all the fruits of sin.

Gen 3:20 The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. ²¹ And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

Adam's faith and God's provision are noted in these verses. God would save them and ensure that they would not live forever in this state. Adam's faith is seen in his naming his wife Eve. It is ironical that she is called "Eve" which means "living" when instead of life, she brought death. Adam was looking to the future and not primarily to death. Eve's faith is seen later (4:1) when she named her firstborn Cain because he was "from the Lord".

All God's dealings with people as sinners can be traced back to this act of disobedience by Adam and Eve. God is a saving God, and the fact that He clothed Adam and Eve testifies to that. An animal was sacrificed to provide garments of skin, and later all Israel's animal sacrifices would be part of God's provision to remedy the curse—a life for a life.

It is unusual that humans needed this clothing unless climate and/or other radical changes awaited mankind outside the Garden of Eden. Obviously, climate conditions outside the Garden were not as pleasant as the climate inside the Garden.

The sinner shall die! (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23) Yet he will live if he places his faith in the Lord, who has provided a Substitute. The skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve perpetually reminded them of God's provision. Similarly in the fullness of time, God accepted the sacrifice of Christ, and on the basis of that atonement, He clothes believers in righteousness (Rom. 3:21–26).

Gen 3:22 Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" ²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

Expulsion from the garden proved the hollowness of the serpent's promise that they would not die. For though Adam and Eve continued some sort of life outside the garden, it was a shadow of the fulness of life inside Eden where they had enjoyed intimate fellowship with God. Now the full cost of sin is apparent. It is not just an unquiet conscience (7–8), squabbles with one's dearest spouse (12), pain (16), or the drudgery of daily toil (17–19), but separation from the presence of God, and ultimately physical death (Rom. 6:23).