

“To the Praise of the Glory of His Grace”

The Effects of the Fall – The Need for Grace

Murray McLellan

Genesis 3:1-24

Intro: The Fall – Don’t Miss the Point!

The first few chapters of the Bible lay out the framework for all the rest. Many people read this chapter and get caught up in side issues and end up missing the point. We must understand the fall correctly to understand the rest of the Bible.

1. The evil deceit of the first temptation (v. 1-6)

“*Has God really said...*” (v. 1b) This is very subtle. The enemy is trying to get the woman to make an evaluation or judgment of God’s word. In this temptation to doubt, the focus is on a part – taken out of the whole. It also focuses on the negative, ignoring the blessings, and thus, ignoring the whole context. The serpent does not say, “In light of all the blessings – the garden, a husband, intimacy with God Himself, an absence of death and sorrow and pain – in light of all that, can you doubt His goodness in asking you to abstain from one tree?” Evil couches things in a certain way to make evil look reasonable – even good.

“*You will not surely die...*” (v. 4) To make the temptation more appealing you must deny divine accountability. It is not much of a temptation that says, “Oh, you’ll like it. It will give you pleasure for a brief while, and then you’re going to burn and pay forever!” Therefore, one of the first doctrines to be denied is that of judgment.

“*...you will be like God...*” (v. 5) This is partly true (v. 22a) but a total lie. For man’s attempt to be like God is to achieve it by defying God and outdoing Him as a rival – an enemy. Partaking of this fruit would give man the knowledge of good and evil **within**. God knows good and evil, but He knows evil by omniscience. When these creatures come to know evil, they do not come to know it as God knows it. They come to know evil experientially, from within, and that knowledge means their corruption and their death.

This is not about breaking a mere rule, this sin is utter rebellion. It is a revolt against the glorious God who had so blessed them. It is an act of forsaking God, the fountain of living water, and rebelling to hew out their own cisterns (Jer. 2:11-13). It is wanting to be as God, the center of the universe. It is a treacherous act of mutiny.

“*... she took of its fruit and ate ...and he ate ...*” (v. 6) Here the human beings listen to a creature rather than their Creator. They follow their impressions, not instruction. They make self-fulfillment their goal – not God! Even their judgment that it is good is a usurping of God’s role. What right does this woman or this man to decide what is good or what they need? They are recently formed creatures.

2. The Initial Consequences That Erupted From Man's Sin (v. 7-13)

They now begin to know the consequences of evil. The inevitable fruit of sin is shame. Thus, man hides from God. Adam also deals with the problem on the level of symptoms. He does not get to the root of the problem and confess, "I have done wickedly; I have rebelled."

What about death? God had told Adam that "in the day that you eat of it, you will surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Indeed, man did die. Like a branch broken off from the trunk of a tree, Adam was now cut off from God – the source of all life. He died spiritually. Like a green and leafy branch, cut off from the tree, Adam began to die physically. Ultimately, like a dried branch that is fit only for the fire, man would be damned to an everlasting death in the lake of fire.

3. The Explicit Curse That Was Pronounced Because of Man's Sin (v. 14-19)

The serpent is cursed and will be ultimately crushed by the Seed of the woman (v. 14-15).

The woman is affected. Pain and destructive relationships are two of the effects of the fall (v. 16).

The man is affected. Disorder, weariness, and vanity are the order of the day for one outside of the Garden of God (v. 17-19).

4. The Long-term Effects That Flow from Man's Sin (v. 20-24)

There is hope in the promise of God – the Seed of the woman (v. 20).

There is no going back. The man and the woman are naked in their guilt and shame. They must be covered. God provides for them a covering, and in light of where the Bible goes from here, it is difficult not to see an early foreshadowing of a covering up with a sacrifice (v. 21).

In verses 22-24, we read of the expulsion of man from the presence and paradise of God.

Thus, Adam, our first father, as head and representative of the whole human race, fell from his original righteousness into sin and brought death, condemnation, and corruption upon himself and all his offspring (Rom. 5:12, 18). All of Adam's offspring are liable to the effects of Adam's rebellion against God. Thus, we were all born in a state of enmity with God – spiritually dead. The Word of God is clear, "the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off" (Psalm 37:28b; see also Psalm 21:8-10).

Not only are we sinners by virtue of our birth (our ancestry – sons and daughters of a rebel empire; the kingdom of men) but we too are guilty by virtue of our own sins of rebellion (Rom. 3:10-23). As sons of our father, Adam, our very nature is dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-3). Indeed we are sinners by nature and by choice. We are enslaved to sin and powerless to change our state ... not our ancestry, or our nature.

In order to correctly assess man's terrible condition, we must first and foremost examine ourselves in relation to God. The Bible says that natural man's mind and conscience are defiled (Titus 1:15). Our hearts are corrupt and evil (Eccles. 9:3; Jer. 17:9). Men are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God (2 Tim. 3:4). Thus, man's will is in bondage – enslaved to his desires – his mind and his heart (Rom. 8:7-8). The will cannot choose what it does not understand nor desire. The Bible teaches that man's will is bound and controlled by his sinful nature. This is God's testimony concerning man. God would not tell us anything untrue and He is too kind to say anything too severe.

In addition, we need to understand that:

- sin is the “abominable thing that God hates” (Jer. 44:4).
- God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness” (Hab. 1:13)
- the least transgression of God’s law makes us “guilty of all” (James 2:10).
- “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezek. 18:4).
- “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).
- “God shall judge the secrets of men” (Rom. 2:16).
- “there is a worm that never dies and a fire that is not quenched” (Mark 9:44).
- “the wicked shall be turned into hell” (Psalm 9:17) and shall “go away into everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46) and that nothing ‘that defiles’ shall by any means enter heaven (Rev. 21:27).

God does not grade on the curve. *“The face of the Lord is against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth”* (Ps. 34:16). *“The wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates. Upon the wicked he will rain coals; fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup”* (Ps. 11:5-6). *“God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day”* (Ps. 7:11). *“The wicked shall be turned into hell”* (Ps. 9:17).

In light of this it is clear that natural man is unable to do anything to earn or merit his own salvation. Man in his natural state cannot please God (Romans 8:7-8). Men are wicked in God's sight and totally incapable of doing that which is well-pleasing to Him (Gen. 6:5; Psalm 14:1-3; Eccles. 7:20; Job 15:15-16; Isa. 64:6; Jer. 9:2-3; Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10-18). Do you see the problem? O, enemy of God, do you see the need to be reconciled?

5. The Ongoing Saga of Man’s Rebellion

The results of man’s sin and rebellion against His Creator continue to be unfolded in the Scripture. As the race multiplies, in the very next generation, we see murder. Things descend into such a state that the whole human race is all but annihilated in the flood. After the flood, Noah gets drunk and around we go again. One quickly gets the impression that the only thing that stops God from wiping out the race again, with its continual bent toward sin, is His covenantal promise. Then, God, in His mercy, calls out a man from whom will come a whole new nation – from whom Messiah will come. However, even a brief look at the Patriarchs and you will see that they were not really such a wonderful bunch. By the time you get to the third generation, you have one man sleeping with his daughter-in-law, and another with one of his father’s wives. We see brothers selling another brother into slavery, and that was only because they didn’t murder him, which was their original intent.

Eventually God rescues them from slavery. How do they respond? They erect a golden calf and murmur and complain against God and His ways. Onward the Bible reads with a downward spiral, with endless idolatry, until the end of the book of Judges where you can scarcely read those chapters in polite company! Throughout the Scriptures we see the wickedness of mankind who is at enmity with God. In fact, we cannot read the Old Testament Scriptures wisely, unless we see it anchored in the fall. This is the plight of mankind. This is the burden we bear because we are sinners by nature and sinners by choice. The curse of God is upon us and we deserve it. It is of God’s mercies that we are not consumed! It is not for nothing that the Bible keeps saying God is slow to anger and is plenteous in mercy, for apart from God’s dramatic intervention again and again, we’d be obliterated.

But the other side of the story is that God does intervene! In due course, there arose another Man ... a new Adam!

- ❑ The first Adam was tempted in the glory of Eden; the last Adam in the desert.
- ❑ The first Adam was tempted in lush plenty; the last Adam after a 40 day fast.
- ❑ The first Adam fell to the seduction of Satan; the last Adam obeyed God and wrought our redemption.
- ❑ The first Adam disobeyed and displeased his Father; the last Adam always did the will of His Father and pleased Him so much.
- ❑ The old Adam brought death to all his children; in the new Adam there is life!
- ❑ The old Adam brought a curse into the world; in the new Adam the curse is removed.
- ❑ In the old Adam we find condemnation and despair; in the new there is peace with God – reconciliation and blessing forevermore!

Man is left with no hope in himself. He is unable to do anything about His predicament. How can a blind man make himself see? How can a spiritually dead man make himself live? How can a rebel enemy gain acceptance with a holy and just God? Unless God Himself determines to do something, we're toast. Unless there is a plan of grace, we are doomed.