

The Sin and Fall of Adam and Eve

Genesis 3:1-24
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The entire question about why sin has been included in the plan of God for human beings is ultimately something which we cannot answer. The Genesis account tells *how sin entered* the human race, but not *how sin came into being*. Questions about the origin of evil simply cannot be answered. Those answers are wrapped up in the mysteries of God's eternal counsels.

We learn in **Genesis 1 and 2** that the first man and the first woman were created as upright beings. At the conclusion of the creation week, we are told that **"God saw everything He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31)**. That included the creation of man, but now in **Genesis 3** we learn about *the fall* of Adam and Eve from their state of perfection.

The first man and the first woman lived in a beautiful Garden and shared a pleasant life in a sterling environment. They were innocent and perfect creatures who were created by a perfect God. There was no taint of sin in the lives of Adam and Eve—but then something happened.

There was a great fall! As a result, men and women today find that it is easier to do wrong than to do right. We have a natural bias toward evil. One of the far-reaching results of Adam's sin is that the human heart **"is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17: 9)**. The sin of Adam and Eve affects all mankind.

This section is a pivot point of the Bible. If the account in **Genesis 3** is only a storyteller's tale, and is not true, the rest of the Scriptures are meaningless.

Because Adam was our representative, sin entered the entire human race—and so all are **"under sin" (Galatians 3:22)** — which means that *every human being is under sin's grip*. We have inherited a sin nature. The disposition to do wrong lies deep in each

individual's life. One tragic result of Adam's sin is the fact that every human being has been born with possibilities for evil engraved in his nature.

The Bible does not teach that men and women began at the bottom [as savages], and slowly but surely climbed upwards. Rather, the message of the Bible is that mankind started at the top and fell to the bottom. Like Humpty Dumpty, there has been a great fall.

Adam and Eve *were given a test*. It started with one single prohibition. There was a certain tree in the center of the Garden of Eden, of which Adam and Eve were not to eat. But upon the suggestion of the serpent, they rebelled against God's clear instruction and chose to disobey His command. The Bible record of the fall of Adam and Eve is the only adequate and reasonable explanation for the present condition of the human race.

The Bible account of the "fall" explains the tendencies toward doing wrong, even in the natures of little children. It also accounts for the presence of evil in the world that has been made by a perfect Creator. The account in **Genesis 3** does not fill in every detail, but the major truth about the fall is altogether clear.

1. The Temptation and Fall into Sin (3:1-7)

When God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in the Garden, and He instructed them to "tend and keep it" (**Genesis 2:15**). That was followed by a command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for in the day they would eat fruit from that tree, they would "surely die" (**2:16-17**). God had given a command, and it was enough to test their obedience to Him.

The Bible says that *the serpent* was the instrument of the temptation. The real tempter is identified as Satan in **Revelation 12:9**. It was the devil who deceived the world. The devil is the enemy of God, and it was Satan who questioned God's right to place a prohibition upon Adam and Eve. Satan stated the exact opposite of what God had said to the woman. He said, "You will *not* surely die" (**Genesis 3:4**).

Adam surely shared with Eve the command which God had given him [before Eve was created] about the trees in the Garden (**2:16-17**). Apparently Eve felt that for all practical purposes, God had given them everything—and the one single restriction was very trivial (3:2-3), She said, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden" (**3:2b**), but the fruit of one tree, we are not to touch or to eat."

Eve seemed satisfied with the restriction, but Satan implied *that if* God is a good God, He would not withhold anything from them. Satan's major premise was, *Restrictions*

are not good, and since God's plan is restrictive, His plan is not good. That argument marks the difference between the “broad” road and the “narrow” road which Jesus talked about in **Matthew 7:13-14**.

Adam and Eve decided that God was wrong and that the serpent was right. They made a willful and deliberate decision to *defy* God's authority and determined to decide themselves what was good and what was evil, instead of listening obediently to the voice of God.

Satan assured Eve that she would not die if she ate of the forbidden fruit, but that she would have new knowledge. The woman believed Satan rather than God. She examined the forbidden fruit, partook of it, and gave some to her husband **(3:6b)** — but the sin of Adam and Eve *was more than* merely eating the forbidden fruit. It was disobeying the revealed word of God. It was believing the lie of Satan. It was placing their own will above God's will. And as a result, there were some severe penalties.

But someone will say, *Why did God allow man to be tempted? Why didn't He create Adam so that he could not have done wrong?* The answer most likely is this: God could have created Adam without the capacity for sinning—but then Adam would not have had a free will; he would have been a mere machine. God was not desirous of having His creatures love Him and obey Him because they were *forced* to love Him, or because there was *no other alternative*. He wanted them to act as they did because they wanted to! So God created man with the potential for evil *and* for good, and gave humans the power to choose whichever they wished. Adam and Eve chose to do evil.

When Adam and Eve made the wrong choice, they deliberately acted against better knowledge and decided to defy God's Word, and as a result of the great tragedy, mankind fell from the created state of innocence and fellowship with God—to the present state of alienation from God.

2. The Consequences of Disobedience (3:8-21)

Adam and Eve committed one simple act of transgression against God; it had far-reaching consequences. The results of Adam's sin included both *judgment and grace*. There was shame and fear and estrangement from God, but already in (3:15) there was the promise of a Savior.

a. Conviction and confession (3:8-13)

God brought immediate punishment because of the sin of Adam and Eve. **Verses 8-13** describe the shame and fear and estrangement from God which Adam and Eve experienced as soon as they had sinned **(3:7)**.

God asked several questions very soon after they had sinned — **verses 9, 11, and 13**. The questions were asked not to *gain information*, but to *compel confession*. Both Adam and Eve confessed their sin when they said, **“and I ate” (verses 12-13)** — but they tried to evade responsibility for their actions by blaming others. Adam even insinuated that God was partly responsible but blaming others did not prevent the couple from receiving the consequences.

Terror and dread now paralyzed Adam and Eve, even though the Lord did not approach them with harshness. He was seeking through tenderness to elicit a favorable response — but Adam and Eve began to offer excuses and tried to pass the responsibility on to another. When the Lord confronted them, Adam blamed *God*— and Eve! He answered, **“The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree” (3:12)**. And Eve blamed *the serpent*! She said, **“The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (3:13)**.

Each basically said, “It’s not *my* fault.” Fallen human nature tries to weasel out of difficulties by blaming others, even blaming God, as Adam did: **“the woman You gave to...me” (3:12)**.

The section which follows describes the penalties which God pronounced upon the individual parties that were involved in the fall.

b. Condemnation and judgment (3:14-21)

The *judgment upon the serpent* was that he should crawl in the dust and even feed on it. He would move from place to place by slithering his way on the ground and would be hated by humans. The serpent may not have been crawling on his belly when he approached Eve in the Garden, but now he would be a loathsome reptile **(3:14)**.

The words, **“And will put enmity between you and the woman” (3:15)**, declare that the time will come when the **“Seed”** of a woman **(3:15)**, shall bruise Satan’s head. The words of **verse 15** were spoken to Satan. God said that an individual from among the woman’s Seed will deal a deathblow to Satan—and even though the devil seems to be doing his worst as the current age of grace moves on, one day the Seed of the woman will crush him, and Satan’s doom will surely come. Jesus will bruise Satan’s *head* [a

deathblow]; Satan shall bruise Jesus' *heel* [cause suffering]. So, way back in **Genesis 3:15**, God told of the time when Jesus (the *Seed* of the woman) would crush Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit (**Romans 16:20; Revelation 20:10**).

The *judgment upon the woman* was a declaration that now there was to be submission to her husband's leadership, that conception would be multiplied, and that there would be increased pain in childbearing (**3:16**). Some Bible students believe that the clause "**Your desire shall be for your husband,**" speaks of the woman's natural desire to bear children and thus fulfill her maternal instinct.

The *judgment upon the man* was that now he would be doomed to physical hardship, to toil and labor by the sweat of his brow, and to struggle against thorns and thistles all the days of his life. Work would involve difficult toil, and there would be disappointing vexations. Adam's pleasant work in the garden had now become toil and would be done by the sweat of the brow. Weariness would become his daily experience (**3:17-19**).

There was also a *curse upon the earth itself*. God said, "**Cursed is the ground for your sake**" (**verse 17b**). Formerly the earth had yielded its produce abundantly and freely, but now, as a result of the curse, one can find great stretches of wasteland on every continent of earth. And there are typhoons and tornadoes, blizzards and volcanoes, terrible deserts, and savage beasts. There is a corruption in all nature. All things [living and nonliving] tend to wear out, run down, and grow old. Food spoils and decays. Automobiles wear out. Gardens produce weeds. The whole creation is travailing in pain, waiting for the deliverance that will come when Jesus returns (**Romans 8:21-22**).

The text states that Eve was the mother of each person (and of each clan of people) on earth (**3:20**). **Verse 21** explains that God made coverings of animal skins to replace the inadequate "**fig leaves**" (**3:7**) which did not fully provide concealment of the nakedness which Adam and Eve sensed after they had sinned.

The consequences listed in (**3:14-19**) are the immediate results of Adam's sin, but in addition to these, the New Testament writers explain that there have been *far-reaching results*. Since Adam sinned, each human being has become involved in his transgression. **Romans 5:12** explains that "**just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin...death spread to all men.**"

As a result of Adam's sin [because he was our representative], sin entered the entire human race—and so all are "**under sin**" (**Galatians 3:22**) — that is, every human being

is *under sin's grip*. We have inherited a sin nature. The disposition to do wrong lies deep in each individual's life. One of the tragic results of Adam's sin is the fact that the entire human race became depraved and corrupt.

The fall of man explains why the human heart has a bent toward sinning. ***The New England Primer*** says it well: "In Adam's fall, we sinned all."

Every human being in his natural state, since the time of the fall in **Genesis 3**, is a sinful selfish, fallen creature, who stands in need of a complete transformation. This is not the popular view of human nature, but it is the biblical view. We like to cherish the idea that while we are not perfect, at least we are good at heart. That is not true.

3. The Expulsion from the Garden (3:22-24)

There was some truth in Satan's lie to Eve, when he said to her that she would become like God (**3:5**). When Adam and Eve were driven from the garden, some angelic beings were stationed at the gate to prevent man from eating of the tree of life (**3:22, 24**). If Adam and Eve would have partaken of the tree of life, now that they had sinned in defying God's clear command, they would have lived forever in their sinful state. It would have involved living *unendingly* in bodies subject to sickness and infirmity.

The expulsion from the Garden of Eden had a twofold purpose. It was both a *punishment* and an *act of mercy*. God, in an act of mercy, barred Adam and Eve from the garden now that they had rebelled and sinned against God—so that they might not *take also of the tree of life* and live forever in their sinful state.

The Lord, with loving concern, kept Adam and Eve away from eating fruit that would make them immortal (**2:23**), and thus have had them live forever in the sad condition to which sin had brought them.

It is in **Genesis 3** that we learn about what is commonly called "the original sin." The teaching about the "original sin" is not a description of a quaint story about a garden with an apple. It is an explanation of what is wrong with all of us. It is an attempt to answer the question—"From where comes all this evil, in us, and around us?"

In the New Testament the Apostle Paul speaks about the sin of the first man, Adam, and then says that "through one man's offense, judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation" (**Romans 5:18**) — and declares that "both Jews and Greeks...are all under sin" (**Romans 3:9**). The verse does not say that all people *commit* sins, nor does it say that all people *are* sinners [even though we are]—but the text clearly says that all are

“under sin.” That is, every human being has inherited *the sin nature* from Adam (**Romans 5:12**), and thus each man, woman, and child down through the years has been a prisoner of sin. Adam’s sin has predisposed every descendant of his to be infected with a sin nature. We are programmed to do wrong!

All of us want to feel good about ourselves, yet deep down within, we know that we’ve made our share of blunders in life. We’ve done things that are wrong. We have not always been absolutely honest. We’ve had impure thoughts. We’ve made unwise decisions. We are far from perfect!

The concept of the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden may not make a lot of sense in its own right, but it helps make sense of a lot of other things in life!

When we hear of Susan Smith drowning her two young children, or the brutal beating and killing of a little two boy by a twelve-year-old relative, or the mass killings in Africa [Rwanda and Sudan], or the murder of innocent people in Red Lake High School [in northern Minnesota], or the massacre of young Amish girls [in a school in Pennsylvania]—we should recognize that these are not *abnormal* happenings, but are the product of self-centered natures resulting from the Fall.

Human beings, because of the far-reaching effects of the original sin [the resulting human depravity], are given to pride, greed, lust, hatred, impatience, jealousy, laziness, and procrastination. Those who talk about efforts to bring about major change in society often refuse to accept the Bible account of the original sin as a fact.

The Bible teaches that God created man in His own image but that humans fell and became sinful. Liberal theologians do not believe that man’s original nature has been corrupted; rather, they view human nature as being intrinsically good, and having the potential of developing further. What is needed, they say, *is not* some radical transformation by grace from without—but instead, more education to nurture the strengths and ideals that are within man.

Believers need a new recognition of their sinfulness. Our Sunday best is a facade to cover up the darkness that we know lurks inside us. We must restore our awareness of sin—and hate it, fear it, flee from it, and grieve over it. We will never feel the need for salvation if we don’t know that we have done anything wrong. Our natures are depraved, and we are inclined to do wrong—*not that* at every point we are as bad as we possibly can be, but that at no point is anyone as good as he should be!

1. When God looked at His creation, from the biggest star He had made, to the tiniest blade of grass—it brought joy to His heart. God said of the creation, “Indeed it [is] very good” (**Genesis 1:31**).

2. Depravity does not mean that man is in a state where he never does anything good at all. Occasionally we find traces of the divine image, but it is always marred. Depravity does not mean that every sinner lives as wickedly as he possibly can, and that unsaved people cannot perform deeds of kindness—but it does mean that corruption has entered every faculty of man’s being. Most people have some nice qualities, but underneath the surface each one has the potential for evil. In one moment, a man can do a noble deed; in the next moment he can become almost like a beast.

3. New Age advocates teach that people must remember the presence and potential of the divine nature that is within them, and so they view Christianity as a pernicious influence because its message teaches universal sin.

4. Sometimes people ask why the Fall of man should hang on such an insignificant matter as eating a little fruit from a tree. Actually, the sin was not in the eating of the fruit, but in the disobedience and the rebellion prior to that act. Christians receive a new nature and then use spiritual disciplines to stimulate the growth of the new nature, and to depress the pull of the old nature.

5. John Taylor, an English minister of Norwich, cried, “What a God must he be, who can curse his innocent creatures before thy have a being. Is this thy God, O Christian?” (From ***Original Sin: A Cultural History***, Alan Jacobs, reviewed in ***Christianity Today***, July, 2008, page 54).

The article published here is adapted from the ***BOTC Commentary on Genesis***, written by Harold Martin and published by Brethren Revival Fellowship.