

This is the account of how man moved from being God-centered to being self-centered. It is a sad story because mankind was meant to live forever. He was made to live forever in delight and in total communion and friendship with God. Obedience is at the heart of us having a “walking” relationship with God. When we are disobedient, we choose for ourselves what is right and wrong. That is playing God, for only God decides what is right and wrong. Let’s get into the text.

The Temptation and Fall of Man



3 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?’” (Genesis 3:1, NKJV).

We begin the story with the “serpent.” Yet, there is no explanation of who the serpent is. Those who read this text in ancient times had little clue of exactly who the serpent was. I believe the first mention of the fallen being in Eden is found in the following verse from Ezekiel. ¹³ *You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. (Ezekiel 28:13a,c, NKJV).* The book of Revelation, written by John around 80 AD, finally unmasks the identity of the serpent. ² *He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; (Revelation 20:2, NKJV).*

The first thing we see the serpent do in the conversation with Eve is to question what God has commanded. Notice how he twists the reality of what God has said. “Has God indeed said, ‘you shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’” God never told Adam and Eve that they couldn’t eat from “every” tree in the garden.

² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ 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.’” (Genesis 3:2-3, NKJV).

Eve is adding to what God has said in saying that God told them not to “touch” the tree. Dr. Fruchtenbaum says that she was probably just telling the serpent what Adam had told her. Otherwise, this would have been the first sin, and would have been the fall. But there is an important moral lesson here. We are told repeatedly in scripture that we should not add to or subtract from what God says in His word. Prager, in his “Rational Bible,” puts this quite succinctly by saying: “This also applies to the words of human beings. Misquoting someone or adding to their words to reinforce what the person said – even when done with good intentions – is not only immoral, it can easily lead to catastrophic results.”¹ It is just dishonest.

¹ The Rational Bible, p. 49, Dennis Prager

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ 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.” (Genesis 3:4-5, NKJV).

Now that he has enticed the woman, the serpent doesn't just question God, but he tells a blatant lie. He suggests that God has made this commandment for His own good and not for the good of man and woman. He intimates that God is a liar. He did this because Satan himself is a liar.

Jesus called Satan the “father of lies.” *“When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44c, NKJV).* Satan almost always has a partial truth in what he presents, but in this case, it was just enough to keep Eve engaged in conversation. Satan tells Eve that in their disobedience, they would know good and evil (which was true). He left out the part about sin and losing their immortal status. The deception is what their “eyes would be open to see.” Satan then sold a false benefit to her, saying, “You will be like God.” What he was saying was, “you can make up your own rules about right and wrong.” He redefined in Eve's mind what it meant to be God.

Think about how he attacked Jesus on the Mount of Temptation. Each time, he tried to redefine what God would do when he said: “If you're the son of God, command these stones to turn to bread.” Then he said, ““If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you’ (see Matthew Chapter 4). He was trying to redefine in Jesus' mind what it meant to be God. He was challenging Jesus' identity.

When Satan came and tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God, he made them think that to be “like God” they needed to make up their own rules. They wanted to play God. Satan created doubt in their minds as to what it meant to be like God. They were already like God because they were made in His image, but **Satan redefined being like God as meaning “making up your own rules concerning what is good and bad.”**

⁶ 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. (Genesis 3:6a, NKJV).

Eve was then carried away by three things. These are found in the words of John in his first Epistle. *“¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:16-17, NKJV).*

And this is EXACTLY what Eve succumbed to. She saw that the tree was good for food, which appealed to the lust of her flesh. It was “pleasant to the eyes.” That's the lust of the eyes. Finally, she saw the tree as “a tree desirable to make one wise.” That was the pride of life.

She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6b, NKJV).

Note that Adam was right there with her, and he let her take the first bite. When he saw that she didn't die, he also took a bite. Adam not only refused to protect his wife from the serpent, but he was abdicating any leadership role in the temptation.

⁷ 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. (Genesis 3:7, NKJV).

Their eyes were indeed opened up, but in a horrible way. I think it is interesting that the word "naked" here in Hebrew is *ay-rumim*. The word "naked" was also used in Genesis 2:25, but it is *a-rumin*. It is evident that this was a different kind of nakedness. Something had drastically changed. They suddenly had shame. They covered themselves. They were now filled with fear of God and were totally focused on themselves. They now "knew that they were naked," and they were ashamed.

⁸ 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. ⁹ Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:8-10, NKJV).

It is interesting that God called out to Adam. This is because God had given the prohibition to Adam and not Eve. Now God was holding Adam accountable. For the first time, Adam and Eve were now fearful of God. Why? Because they had disobeyed Him. God calls out to Adam asking, "Where are you?" God, of course, knew exactly where Adam was. Adam avoided the question and started down his own line of thinking.

¹¹ 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?" (Genesis 3:11, NKJV).

God was giving Adam the opportunity to confess what he had done, but Adam failed the test. He began to make excuses.

¹² Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." ¹³ And the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." ¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent: (Genesis 3:12-14a, NKJV).

Adam answers by blaming GOD. He is implying that if God hadn't given him the woman, he would have never gotten into the problem. It is so easy to blame others when we fail. Adam then blamed Eve. This brings to mind that we can be ruled by God or by self. And let me tell you, a person ruled by self will never admit they are wrong about anything. Self never accepts responsibility. Self always shifts the blame. Self always blames others. I call this the "blame game." The questioning now moves to the woman. God asks, "What is this that you have done?"

The woman then shifted the blame to the serpent. She said: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Notice that God asks nothing of Satan. He knows Satan, He knows that he is the enemy, and He knows there is no reason to question him. Satan doesn't just act evil, he is evil. So God passed judgment on Satan.

***"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. (Genesis 3:14b-c, NKJV).***

It almost seems that the snake that Satan had indwelt had at one time stood upright or had legs or something similar. It now slivers and slides on the ground. In this curse, God is also deifying the serpent. Serpents were worshiped by many in the surrounding cultures. The Egyptians, Sumerians, Canaanites, and others had "serpent-gods."

***¹⁵ 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." (Genesis 3:15, NKJV).***

God says he will put hatred between Satan and the woman. Satan is at war with any and all who follow God. I have told this congregation repeatedly that Satan is out to get us. He comes to kill, steal, and destroy. It ALL STARTED RIGHT HERE. So, this is talking about him being at war with each one of us. It is interesting also that God says the hatred will be toward the "woman's seed." That is her offspring. This is speaking specifically to the hatred that Satan holds toward Jesus. We know that Jesus was born of a virgin. His fleshly side was out of Mary. This is a great departure from the other genealogies in the Bible that flow down through the man. Satan has been at war against Jesus from before the time He was born. God also says here that the serpent, Satan, will only be able to "bruise" **the heel** of that offspring. Satan succeeded in helping orchestrate Jesus's crucifixion, but it was not a mortal wound. That was just a bruising to the heel. Why? BECAUSE JESUS ROSE FROM THE GRAVE, CONQUERING DEATH AND DYING. But Satan will have his head bruised, and it will be his mortal wound.

From our study of Revelation, we know as a certainty that at the end of the Millennium rule, Satan will indeed be thrown into the Lake of Fire forever. He will no longer have any influence on the Earth. Eventually, his head will be crushed.

***¹⁶ 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." (Genesis 3:16, NKJV).***

Notice that God is not cursing the woman. As a result of the fall, He is multiplying the sorrow to her in childbirth. I suppose this would include all of the difficulties that women have with menstruation and childbirth. God says that in pain, you will bring forth children. Then there is this odd statement: “your desire shall be for your husband.” Dr. Fruchtenbaum and other Jewish scholars translate the Hebrew to mean “You will desire to have authority over your husband.” The word *teshukah* is used, meaning a “desire to possess.” The ESV might more accurately render the thought, 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.**”* (Genesis 3:16, ESV). Prager and Alter both disagree with that viewpoint, saying that it means the woman will desire her husband. She will want a husband for all the protection, provision, and satisfaction he can afford her, but in the end, he will have authority over her. Both follow logical thoughts, but I thought I should point out variances in how this is translated and interpreted.

17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife [in contradiction to what God had commanded], 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. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And, you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, (Genesis 3:17-19a, NKJV).

God wasn’t telling Adam not to listen to his wife. God was telling Adam that it was wrong to listen to her when what she was saying was in direct opposition to what God had commanded. Note that God didn’t curse man, but because Adam abdicated his leadership position, God cursed the fruit of his labor. This means that his work to provide for his family will be done in toil. It will be fraught with difficulty. The earth is now under a curse. God didn’t intend for us to get cancer and die. He did not intend for violent events to destroy his creation. He didn’t intend for hatred to reign in men’s hearts as we saw it played out in Hamas’ assault on men, women, children, babies, and other innocents last week in Israel. We were never meant to live with the suffering we now experience. We were meant to live forever (but not in a broken body and not in a broken world). THIS ALL IS THE RESULT OF SIN.

God was telling Adam, “the party’s over.” Life is going to be tough now, and man will have to keep his “hand to the plow” for his entire life. He will now not only tend crops, but will have to contend with “thorns and thistles,” and there won’t be any easy way to do it. Life will have its hardships until each one of us returns to the ground in death. So much of our lives are difficult. It is a struggle. Life is not easy. But, it wasn’t meant to be this difficult. We made things difficult through our own sin and rebellion. But praise God, this is not our lot forever. That is the great hope that Paul talks about when he speaks to the Church in Corinth. There will come a day when we will be made alive even though we pass through mortal death.

21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:21-22, NKJV).

For out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”²⁰ And Adam called his wife’s name Eve [havvah”], because she was the mother of all living. (Genesis 3:19b-20, NKJV).

Then there is that statement that we just don’t like to think about. “For dust we are, and to dust we shall return.” We are now hopelessly mortal in these corrupted bodies, but thanks be to God that we are eternal beings in our souls and our spirits. Adam’s naming of Eve shows authority over her, just like his naming of the animals. He calls her “Eve”. חַוְּוָה which is Havvah, while life is *ḥay* and *ḥayyim*. Eve’s name is derived from the Hebrew word for life, highlighting Eve’s role as the mother of all living.

²¹ Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them. ²² 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”— ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ 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. (Genesis 3:21-24, NKJV).

Apparently, with the Fall of Man, blood was now shed because God clothes Adam and Eve in clothing of skin. And with this, God banished them from the Garden of “Delight” so that they would no longer be immortal. Once mankind fell, God could no longer let them live forever.

Satan tries to lead us astray as well by making us question our identities. He HATES THE IDEA THAT WE’RE MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE. He is leading many astray in the world right now, tempting them to “make up their own rules about what is good and bad.” He always attacks the believer, challenging our identity in Christ. He is a liar and a thief, and let’s not ever forget it.

Whenever we play God and make up rules for ourselves, it always leads to exile and death. We end up in the desert of human existence. It’s like that Josh Williams song “Long Black Train.” “That train (Satan’s way) is a beauty, makin' everybody stare, but its only destination is the middle of nowhere.” It leads to isolation and exile.

Adam and Eve were supposed to make the whole world like Eden. It was a paradise where divinity and humanity walked together. They were innocent and in perfect communion with God, yet Satan sold them a lie. And they believed his lie more than what God had told them. They disobeyed, and sin entered the world. They chose to obey self rather than God.

How about you? Are you sold out to yourself or to God? Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.
--