

Genesis 3:8-24 **The Fall - Effects**

It had all gone away so quickly. “She took . . . she ate . . . she gave to the man. . .” In a few moments perfection had been lost. In one act of rebellion and defiance, paradise had been lost. One moment of doubt and all was undone.

So fell our parents, and if we were to be honest, so have we all fallen ever since. Sin has not been limited to Adam and Eve alone. We have all doubted, all defied, all rebelled, all sinned. Scripture is clear that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). And we must acknowledge that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Thankfully, oh so thankfully, we can also rejoice that “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

God Questions

Adam and Eve suddenly stopped what they were doing. They looked up. For the very first time they experienced fear, because “they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (v. 8). The afternoon communion they had come to expect and relish in, as they worshipped and fellowshiped with their Creator, was ruined. Almost instinctively, “the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden” (v. 8).

They realized that the feeble coverings they had made from the leaves of the fig plant had not given them the sufficient confidence to meet God. More importantly, even before God made them aware of their sin, they knew they had done wrong. They knew they had not become like gods. We see here evidence for the fact that within any person is an innate sense of the moral good, placed there by God for our benefit. Adam and Eve knew they had sinned the moment they ate the fruit.

Now, we must not think that the anthropomorphic description of God ‘walking’ is meant to be taken literally. Rather it describes the idea of the pleasure of fellowship Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden before the Fall. Walking with God is a favorite metaphor for fellowship. Consider

“Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had other sons and daughters” (Genesis 5:22).

“These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9).

¹“Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him,
‘I am God Almighty;
Walk before Me, and be blameless.
²I will establish My covenant between Me and you,
And I will multiply you exceedingly” (Genesis 17:1).

Yet, as is suggested in the last quotation, this privilege of walking with God was not to be taken for granted. God demanded holiness if He were to walk with His people. ³“If you walk in My statutes and

keep My commandments so as to carry them out, . . . ¹¹I will make My dwelling among you, and My soul will not reject you. ¹²I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people” (Leviticus 26: 3, 11-12).

The verb here is used to describe something that was habitual, not a one time occurrence. But this time, God had not come for only a walk. He addressed Adam, who evidently bore the greater responsibility, “the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, ‘where are you?’” (v. 9). It is interesting that God uncovered their sin in the same way Satan caused it - with a question.

God asked “where are you?” (v. 9) not out of ignorance, but to compel Adam to confess his guilt. There was no possibility for reconciliation if the offending party did not acknowledge their wrongdoing. Yet we must see that the question urged confession; it was not a statement of condemnation. Here at the beginning of sin, we see God as the Good Shepherd. He is the One who leaves the ninety-nine to search for the lost sheep; He is the One who searches for the lost coin.

Realizing that hiding was futile, Adam responded and said, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself” (v. 10). We have all been there, I’m sure. Driven by our sin, our the embarrassment of its discovery, to flee God and take refuge in our own self-pity or self-indulgence.

Adam answered that he had hid himself because he knew was naked. This argument is confusing on one level because he could not possibly believed that he could conceal himself from his Creator with some shrubbery. But also, his answer madeno sense because he had *always* been naked before God. He had been made naked and had never known anything else. He always knew he was naked. The change now was that he felt the shame of being naked.

Unpersuaded, God asked “who told you that you were naked?” Without waiting for a response, He continued, “have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” (v. 11). The follow-up questions God asked were rhetorical. He did not allow Adam to avoid the issue. Adam had always been naked. It was the shame that is new. Why then this shame? Adam’s nakedness was linked to the sin he had committed. Adam needed to come to understand that his shame was related to his sin.

Of course, Adam could have simply answered ‘yes.’ He could have acknowledged his guilt and relied upon God’s grace. He did not. Instead he entered into an explanation that defies understanding. First, Adam said “the woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate” (v. 12). Adam blamed the woman. It is difficult to fathom the lack of family leadership exhibited by Adam in this instance. He quickly resorted to saving himself at the expense of his wife. He made his case that he ate because he was offered the fruit. Whether he understood how weak this made him appear the Bible does not say, but certainly an argument that “I did it because I could” is not much of an argument.

Secondly, he blamed God Himself. We cannot miss the inference that the Eve was “the woman whom You gave” (v. 12). If only God had not made the woman. If only the woman had not been deceived. It was not really his fault. God had made the woman, and the woman had tempted him. Just as the Lord

gave the woman to Adam, Adam complained that the woman gave him the fruit to eat. Therefore God was ultimately responsible, Adam argued. Adam tried to portray himself as the victim in all of this.

Scripture declares otherwise. “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone” (James 1:13).

God did not respond to Adam’s plea. He simply turned to Eve and asked, “what is this you have done?” (v. 13). Eve chose to follow Adam’s line of reasoning. She answered, trying to shift the attention of her Creator, “the serpent deceived me, and I ate” (v. 13). Her response was similar to the man in that she expressed no contrition. She, too, tried to blame another (though to her credit she at least did not try to blame God). And, Eve acknowledged that she had, in fact, been deceived.

It is worth noting that God did not question the serpent. There was nothing to gain. God was not interested in the serpent’s salvation. God had no plan for that creature’s redemption. There was no point in that being acknowledging its sin. The serpent, or rather Satan, had made the decision to rebel against God and not opportunity to reconcile was ever to be offered. The serpent was of no concern to God in this case.

God Judges

Having gathered what evidence He could, God pronounced judgment. The order in which God judged reversed the order of the questioning. He began by dispensing with the serpent, then moved on to Eve, and finally to Adam. There also is a pattern to be observed. First, there was a penalty announced by God, as well as a description of the consequences. For the serpent, that penalty was humiliation and the consequence was defeat by the offspring of the woman. For Eve the penalty was pain in childbirth and the consequence was defeat in her conflict with her husband. For the man the penalty was difficult labor in agriculture and the consequence was defeat in his conflict with the ground.

God began with the serpent.

“¹⁴The Lord God said to the serpent,
Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;
¹⁵And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel” (v. 14-15)

As the serpent was considered more clever, so now it became more debased. But we must not think that there was a sense in which this described a literal punishment. That is, God did not condemn the serpent to literally eat dust. One cannot take this narrative as an etiology as to why snakes do not have legs.

The serpent's punishment was fourfold. First, it was cursed. To be cursed by God was no little thing. In fact, the idea of a curse was to be taken very seriously in Israel.

“⁸You shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you. ⁹If there is anyone who curses his father or his mother, he shall surely be put to death; he has cursed his father or his mother, his bloodguiltiness is upon him. ¹⁰If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death” (Leviticus 20:8-10).

The second punishment was for the serpent to crawl on the ground. While some Jewish scholars have long interpreted this to mean that at one time the serpent walked about on four legs, or even upright, there is no biblical argument for this. There was no literal change in the anatomy of the serpent. Third, it is to eat the dust of the earth. Just as the serpent did not literally lose its legs, so too the serpent does not literally eat dust. These were simply metaphors for humiliation.

Finally, the serpent was to be destroyed by the seed of the woman. This concept of enmity refers to the intense hostility of nations at war. For example, “thus says the Lord God, ‘because the Philistines have acted in revenge and have taken vengeance with scorn of soul to destroy with everlasting enmity’” (Ezekiel 25:15).

This enmity describes a lifelong struggle that endures throughout all human history. Interestingly, the term ‘seed’ allows for reference not only to a line of descendants, but can also refer to a specific individual. This hope for a ‘seed’ is crucial to Genesis, especially at certain turning points in the narrative.

After the flood - “⁹Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth” (Genesis 9:9-10).

At the call of Abram - “¹Now the Lord said to Abram,

“Go forth from your country,

And from your relatives

And from your father's house,

To the land which I will show you;

²And I will make you a great nation,

And I will bless you,

And make your name great;

And so you shall be a blessing;

³And I will bless those who bless you,

And the one who curses you I will curse.

And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3).

Verse 15 has been called the *protoevangelium*, and has been taken for centuries to be a foreshadowing of the gospel. Beginning with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus through Augustine, the Reformers, and the modern evangelical Church, the context of the struggle between the ‘seed’ of the woman and Satan has been seen as referencing both the struggle between Satan and humanity in general, and as a specific prophecy of Christ in particular.

“Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, ‘and to seeds,’ as referring to many, but rather to one, ‘and to your seed,’ that is, Christ” (Galatians 3:16).

“²¹For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming, ²⁴then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. ²⁵For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet” (1 Corinthians 15:21-25).

God also pronounced judgment on the woman.

“To the woman He said,
“I will greatly multiply
Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you will bring forth children;
Yet your desire will be for your husband,
And he will rule over you” (v. 16).

The pain in childbirth is simple enough to understand. More complicated is the change in the relationship between the man and the woman. In terms of her relationship with her husband, we must understand rightly what is meant by “desire for your husband.” It has often been explained as sexual desire, but that hardly makes sense with the added statement that “he will rule over you.” Better, perhaps is the idea that this speaks to a struggle for mastery between the genders. The ‘desire’ of the woman is to control her husband, to conform him to her will. That he will rule over her, that is, that she will have to conform her will to his, and thus fail in her attempt, is the point. In other words, their relationship was no longer a reign of co-stewards over God’s creation. Now they will try to reign over each other.

Yet man’s rule was not to be like that dominion he held over the beasts. He was not to ‘dominate’ (Genesis 1:28). He was no more to rule over her dominantly, than she was to have as much pain as possible in childbirth. That the relationship and the pain are real and true was the point, not that either was to be taken to extremity.

Modern feminism has challenged some of the biblical understandings of this particular verse. The issue is the extent to which the penalty for sin altered the condition of the woman. That is, does scripture say that the reason that woman was subject to the man is a result of sin? The answer is no. Woman was created as a helper to man, which we discussed last week. The relationship between the genders was established at creation. The Fall simply meant that this relationship would no longer be natural and easy. It was now to be difficult for the woman to submit. Just as there was no physical change in the serpent, the serpent was humiliated. Just so, the condition of the woman as child bearer and helper to her husband was

likewise unchanged. The penalty was pain in the experience of childbirth and tension in her relationship with her husband.

The final pronouncement was against Adam.

¹⁷Then to Adam He said, ‘because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, “you shall not eat from it”;

Cursed is the ground because of you;

In toil you will eat of it

All the days of your life.

¹⁸Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;

And you will eat the plants of the field;

¹⁹By the sweat of your face

You will eat bread,

Till you return to the ground,

Because from it you were taken;

For you are dust,

And to dust you shall return” (v. 17-19).

Adam’s punishment related to his role as cultivator of the ground. As with the serpent, God distinguished the reason for the punishment - Adam had listened to his wife and ate the fruit. As with the woman, who in pain would bring forth children, so now the man, in pain and labor would work to bring forth food. The ground was now his enemy, not his servant. To an agricultural and pastoral people such as the ancient Israelites. This was a common thread in their understanding of blessing and punishment.

³If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out, ⁴then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit . . . ¹⁴But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, ¹⁵if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant . . . ²⁰Your strength will be spent uselessly, for your land will not yield its produce and the trees of the land will not yield their fruit (Leviticus 26:3-4, 14-15, 20).

Humankind was also punished by death. Adam’s death was the truth that as he came from the dust, to that he would return. Death was precisely what God had stipulated as the penalty, and it was the ultimate penalty exacted for their sin. There is some debate regarding whether man would have lived forever if he had not sinned. Certainly, death was now certain, as is evidenced by man being denied access to the tree of life, which he had not been forbidden to eat, by the way, before he had sinned.

Adam’s sin spoiled the environment. It suffered with him. Yet there was the promise that, despite the hard labor, Adam would bring forth food from the ground. The same was true of the environment. It, too, will be redeemed.

¹⁹For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

²⁰For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in

hope ²¹that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God” (Romans 8:19-22).

One issue is whether these pronouncements are descriptive or prescriptive. That is, is the punishment a negative consequence that God imposes, are they simply the way things shall be now that sin has entered the world. As philosophical as that question may seem to us, to an ancient Israelite, to whom all things were God ordained, the question would be irrelevant.

God Enforces

The judgment ends on a hopeful note. First, Adam names his wife Eve, “now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living” (v. 20). She was to be the mother of all living. In spite of sin, God’s command to be fruitful still stood. There is to be a continuance of humanity. Second, the Lord made coverings for them both. “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.” (v. 21). God prepared them for the much harsher environment in which they were now compelled to live. There was also the foreshadowing of the Mosaic code, where the blood of animals shall be required as recompense for sin. They also needed the clothes because they can no longer walk before God in innocence. Yet, both of these acts demonstrate God’s grace and provision.

But the judgment had to be enforced. So, “²²the Lord God said, ‘behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’ - ²³therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life” (v. 22-24).

The man and woman were denied what they had not been denied before - access to the tree of life. The serpent had promised they would be like gods, but rather now they are less as men and women. They did not get a throne, but were expelled from the garden. They had gained nothing and lost everything.

They were banished. It was the same language Abraham used of Ishmael, “so Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba” (Genesis 21:14). It was the language of the scapegoat, “but the goat on which the lot for the scapegoat fell shall be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, to send it into the wilderness as the scapegoat” (Leviticus 16:10).

Takeaways

There is no sense that freeing oneself from subordination to God’s Word leads to fulfillment. Adam and Eve were not transformed into liberated individuals each free to develop into their full potential now that they were free from God’s constraints. Man and woman became slaves. Slaves to their sin, slaves to Satan.