

THE FALL OF MAN

Genesis 3

In the divine counsel which preceded the creation of man, the proposal was, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Genesis 1:26. The Bible then declares "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Genesis 1:27. It is thus evident that man was a being of great dignity, a person with the God-like faculties of intellect, emotion and will. Man was made a rational being. He was created a holy being. It was great for him to be made like God in his intellectual excellencies, but it was his greatest glory to be made like Him in his moral perfections.

After God had made man in His own image, He placed him in perfect surroundings in the beautiful garden of Eden. He gave him very congenial employment, and above all the inestimable joy and privilege of direct fellowship with Him. It is difficult to refrain from contemplating the happy condition of the primeval pair. They walked in the unclouded light of the divine countenance. Their souls were filled with love and peace and joy. Every desire was gratified, and every want was supplied. Their hearts were lifted in thanksgiving to God and their voices were lifted in praise for the blessings bestowed upon them in richest profusion.

How beautiful must have been the garden which "the Lord God planted eastward in Eden"! In it was to be found "every tree pleasant to the sight," whose "fruit was good for food." One can imagine that on every hand were flowers of thornless beauty and sweetest perfume, birds of brilliant plumage and richest voice, while the river which "went out of Eden to water the garden" sent forth its limpid stream bright by day and musical by night.

In the midst of this garden God placed two trees: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of this latter tree gave insight into matters beyond what God knew to be best for man. Of the fruit of this one tree man was forbidden to eat on pain of death. In love God warned of the penalty which would be incurred if His prohibition was violated.

I. The Tempter.

How long Adam and Eve remained in a sinless state it is impossible to say. Conjecture is useless and vain. While Adam and Eve were enjoying their wonderful surroundings, they became acquainted with a very beautiful animal called the serpent. At that time the serpent did not resemble the writhing and ugly reptile which bears that name today. It is not at all surprising that Satan selected one of the most beautiful animals as a medium of temptation. He indwelt the body of the serpent and used it as a vehicle of expression as he approached and tried to corrupt the creation which God had made in His own image. The serpent was merely a tool in the hands of Satan who tried to thwart the purposes of God, and to rob man of his blessedness.

II. The Temptation.

It is interesting to note how Satan made his approach to Eve in order to get her to disobey God's explicit command. He approached her when she was alone. The serpent excited her curiosity by speaking to her. He raised a suspicion about God by the question which he put to her, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Thus he sowed the seed of broken confidence in God's Word. He simply sought to decoy her by raising a doubt in

her mind. Let us note the steps in the temptation.

1. Doubt of God's Goodness. Genesis 3:1.

It was as if the serpent had said, "Is it really true that God has restricted you from the use of every tree in this delightful place? Are you quite sure that you are not mistaken?"

As to God, Satan's first insinuation was that He was unfair. His remark implied that if God had really loved them, He would not have restricted them in this manner. He further implied that for no justifiable reason God had made a difference between the fruits of the garden and was deliberately withholding the best from the use of Adam and Eve. He was insinuating that God was withholding something from them that would be beneficial to them, and that He did not want them to have all the good things that were coming to them.

When God placed Adam and Eve in the garden He emphasized the liberty with which He invested them. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" save one. But when Satan spoke, he concealed the privileges and harped on the single prohibition. Keeping out of sight what God had done for them, the unnumbered gifts and proofs of love everywhere, the serpent fixed on the one thing denied and brought it forward in a way calculated to awaken hard and evil thoughts in the mind of Eve.

2. Distortion of God's Word. Genesis 3:2-3.

By her answer Eve clearly revealed that the poison of doubt which Satan had injected into her mind was beginning to do its deadly work. She exaggerated the severity of the prohibition, and minimized the danger of transgression. She spoke as if God were a hard master and a lenient judge.

In this connection, it is well for each of us to remember this threefold principle and be guided thereby in our study of the Bible:

- (1) Take nothing from it.
- (2) Add nothing to it.
- (3) Change nothing in it.

Eve made the foolish mistake of doing all three of these things:

(1) She took from the Word of God.

God had said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat" save one; but Eve omitted "freely" thus making God to appear less bountiful than He was. "Ye shall not diminish from the word which I command you." Deuteronomy 4:2.

(2) She added to the Word of God.

God had said of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: "Thou shalt not eat of it." But in her reply to Satan, Eve declared that God

had also said: "Neither shall ye touch it" which He had not. "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." Proverbs 30:6.

(3) She changed the Word of God.

God had said: "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die"; but when Eve quoted the words of warning she said: "Neither shall ye touch it lest ye die" and by doing so changed an absolute certainty into a mere possibility.

Thus Eve disparaged her privileges by misquoting the terms of the divine permission as to the other trees, overstated the restrictions by misquoting the divine prohibition and underrated her obligations by misquoting the divine penalty.

3. Denial of God's Warning. Genesis 3:4.

Satan observed that the pernicious seed had taken root in Eve's heart and she had really begun to question the love of God. But, not being content with sowing the seed of doubt, Satan propagated a lie by saying, "Ye shall not surely die." He proposed only a slight change—just the one word "not" to be inserted—"ye shall not surely die." Here is a splendid illustration of the clever way in which Satan works. He first gets people to doubt God's veracity, and then he gets them to dispute His word. When he gets them to doubt, he has them in his grasp.

4. Deception as to the Consequences. Genesis 3:5.

In addition to the perversion of truth, and the injection of an unholy ambition into the heart of the tempted, Satan got her employed in an occupation which was wrong. He took her mind away from God and got it occupied with sinful pleasure. This is always disastrous. Nothing will get a person into sin any quicker than to get his eyes off the Lord and on self.

Having insisted that God had cheated her out of life's highest privileges, Satan appealed to Eve's pride by promising her two things provided she would eat of the forbidden fruit: that her eyes would be opened, and that she would be as a god, in that she would know good and evil. In this temptation there was an appeal to the physical, the aesthetic, and the intellectual. She looked at the fruit, and it appealed to her as something good to eat. She beheld its appearance, and it appealed to her eyes. She thought of what it would accomplish in making her wise. By disobedience she came to know good without the power to do it, and evil without the power to resist it. She was deceived. In her case we see how disobedience presented itself, and justified itself to her. She judged of the tree and its fruit entirely in the light of what the serpent had said, and not at all in the light of what God had said. How solemn is all this! How often we reason ourselves into believing that wrong is right! When God and His goodness are left out, the sight of the eyes and the judgment of the mind are sure to be wrong.

III. The Transgression.

Eve's temptation was threefold. There was the lust of the flesh—"good for food"—the appeal to the physical nature; there was the lust of the eye—

"pleasant to the eyes"—the appeal to the aesthetic nature; and there was the pride of life—"tree to be desired to make one wise"—the appeal to the intellectual nature. Beyond these three things Satan has nothing to offer a man.

Having heard Satan's falsehood and concluded that God had dealt a little unjustly with them, Eve decided to disobey Him and partake of the forbidden fruit. Of her own volition she made the choice and therefore stood guilty before God.

When Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, she went immediately and influenced Adam to do likewise. How true to life that is! Oh, that God's people were as zealous to get other Christians to do right as sinners are to get others to join them in their sin.

While Eve was beguiled and sinned under deception, Adam sinned, as we say, with his eyes open. He knew what he was doing, and with purpose linked his destiny with that of his wife, while he cast the blame of his act on God, saying, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Genesis 3:12; Adam was far more inexcusable than she, because he acted intelligently as well as voluntarily. He knew what he was doing. His sin also had a far more important connection with the human race than the sin of Eve. The man, and not the woman, was to be the head and the representative of the race. We are therefore told that "by one man sin entered into the world," Romans 5:12, and that "in Adam all die." I Corinthians 15:22.

Prior to their transgression they had enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God. After their fall the results of their sin were quickly manifest. Their shame was revealed in the loss of the boldness of innocency, felt in an accusing conscience, and seen in the loss of self-respect. Whereas they once welcomed the presence of God and found delight in His fellowship, they became ashamed and afraid in His presence and sought to hide from Him. Sin always causes a person to try to flee from the presence of God. No sinner can stand the ineffable light of His presence. Adam and Eve did what people have continued to do, namely, to attempt to cover their shame by the works of their own hands. But sin cannot be covered with fig leaves or with any works of men.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God their perfection was marred. Their sin brought upon them terrible penalties, and also defiled their posterity. On account of their disobedience, God was forced to pronounce judgment. His first judgment was on the serpent, the vehicle of Satan (v. 14). His second judgment was on Satan himself (v. 15). His third judgment was upon Eve (v. 16). And because of her transgression the travail of childbirth came upon womankind. God's judgment upon Adam was even more sweeping in its scope (vs. 17-18). The ground was cursed and the burden of labor was introduced. God pronounced judgment upon him in the form of physical death (v. 19). His last judgment was that of expulsion from the garden of Eden.