

THE FALL OF MAN (Continued)

Genesis 3

Prior to their transgression Adam and Eve had enjoyed unbroken fellowship with God. After their fall the results of their sin were quickly manifested. Immediately they had a sense of guilt and shame. Their eyes were opened, and they became conscious of the shame associated with their wrongdoing. Having become conscious of their shame, Adam and Eve at once endeavored to hide it by making for themselves aprons of fig leaves. Instead of seeking God and openly confessing their guilt, they attempted to conceal it both from Him and from themselves. Such has ever been the way of the natural man. The very last thing he will do is to own before God his lost and undone condition. Conscious that something is wrong with him, he seeks shelter behind his own self-righteousness and trusts that his good works will more than counter-balance his evil ones. Church-going, religious exercises, attention to ordinances, philanthropy and altruism are the fig leaves which many today are weaving into aprons to cover their spiritual shame.

These self-manufactured aprons did not remove from Adam and Eve the sense of their shame, for, when they heard the voice of the Lord God, they tried to hide from Him. It was sin which made them afraid of God. Even though they had tried to dress themselves with fig leaves, just as soon as they were conscious of God's presence they concluded that their coverings were not sufficient.

Their action in sewing the fig leaves together and making aprons to cover their nakedness is the picture of the general procedure of the sinner who is conscious of his spiritual nakedness. He attempts by self-effort to clothe himself before God. He may seek to assuage the unrest of his guilty conscience by religious observance. Every religious system in the world, except the true faith of Jesus Christ based on the Bible, exists to supply a particular prescription for the purpose. The raw heathen rites, the pilgrimage to Mecca, the ablutions in the Ganges and the so-called sacrament of penance are all variations of the same theme. A common method of sewing the fig leaves is by seeking to do kind deeds. The Jews of our Lord's time provided the most striking example of determined attempts to incur the favor of God by what Paul called "the works of the law." By these shall no flesh be justified. There is only one way to clothe one's self for God's presence and that is in the righteousness of Christ.

In spite of all their proud boastings, religious exercises and self-manufactured coverings, the unregenerate are uneasy and fearful. Why is it that the Bible is so much neglected? It is because it brings man nearer to God than any other book, and men are uneasy in the presence of God and wish to hide from Him. Why is it that the preaching ministry of the Word is so sparsely attended? People will offer many excuses, but the real reason is because these services bring God near to them. That makes them uncomfortable in their sin; so they seek to flee from Him.

When God sought out Adam and brought him face to face with his guilt, he was given fair and full opportunity to confess his sin. To Adam, God said, "Where art thou?" That was the inquiry of divine justice

which cannot overlook sin, of divine sorrow which grieves over the sinner, of divine love which offers redemption from sin. Here is the picture in miniature of the hiding sinner and the seeking Saviour. We learn from this verse that God takes the initiative and seeks the sinner. No move came from the guilty pair. They were silent, hidden and presumably motionless. We also learn from this verse that God cares for the sinner. Thirdly, we learn that God makes contact with the sinner. He asked him a question which was not only intended to reveal the care of God but was also a convicting query. It could only be answered correctly by a confession of guilt. All of these things are essential in the Gospel approach today.

Why did God say to Adam, "Hast thou eaten?" Why didn't He say, "Thou hast eaten"? It was because nobody ever gets back to God without confession, and He wanted Adam to say what he had done. Instead of making a broken-hearted confession of his sin, Adam excused himself. "And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12). It was the same with Eve. "And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:13). Attempt was made by both to excuse the sin by shifting the responsibility upon others. How marvelously true to life it is in this twentieth century to blame things on somebody else! That's so easy, isn't it? "Well, if I hadn't been in that company, I wouldn't have done that." Anyway, all these subterfuges were unavailing, and man stood face to face with a holy God and was convicted of his guilt and unspeakable shame.

Adam admitted his sin but indirectly blamed God for it. He said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat."

Eve blamed her conduct on the serpent. It is a blessed thing to quit putting the blame on somebody else and to take it on one's self. Do you know what the Lord Jesus Christ did for you? He took the burden of your sin and mine on Himself as though it had been His own.

By allowing the man and the woman to state their cases, the evil was traced to its source. Actually and principally, Satan was responsible for the Fall, and God charged him with it. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:14). Instrumentally and subjectively, Eve was responsible, and God charged her with it. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16). Morally and representatively, Adam was accountable, and God charged him with it. "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:17).

It is interesting to notice that whereas in the inquiry God dealt first with the man, then the woman, and finally the serpent, when He pronounced sentence on each He did so in the reverse order. The serpent--Satan's

instrument--was cursed and became God's illustration in nature of the effects of sin. From being a model of grace and excellence in form, the serpent has become the emblem of all that is disgusting and low, branded with infamy and avoided with horror. As a result of her sin, the woman had to suffer as wife and mother. Motherhood, the most sacred function committed to her, was linked and crowned with sorrow. The lot that fell to man was threefold: first, sorrow, for the man who is a stranger to sorrow has never yet been born; second, toil, for the light and pleasant occupation of Eden was exchanged for burdensome and unending labor, and, whereas the soil yielded spontaneous abundance, it now yields to man the bare necessities of life as he toils in sweat of face and with anxiety of heart; and, third, death, for He said, "Dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." These words remind us of the frailty of our frame and declare the certainty of its dissolution. The heart of each member of the human race is, to use Longfellow's striking simile, like a muffled drum beating a funeral march to the grave. Sin and death are as closely linked together as are cause and effect.

The gloom was not wholly unrelieved; however, for in verse fifteen is revealed the promise and the method of man's redemption. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Here we behold the exceeding riches of His grace. Though Satan had succeeded in bringing about the downfall of man, it was announced that One would come and bruise his head. By woman sin had come, and by woman should come the Saviour. It was announced that there should be enmity between Satan and the woman. The "woman" here typifies Israel, the woman from which came the promised Seed. The children of Israel, being the appointed channel through which the Messiah was to come, became the object of Satan's continued enmity and assault. Two "seeds" are here referred to--"thy seed" and "her seed," meaning Satan's seed and the woman's Seed--the Antichrist and the Christ. "Her seed" is the first announcement concerning the supernatural birth of our Saviour. Thousands of years after this prediction "God sent forth His Son, made of a woman" (Galatians 4:4). The woman's Seed shall bruise the Serpent's head, and the Serpent should bruise His heel. The bruising of the heel of the woman's Seed is a symbolical reference to the sufferings and death of our Saviour, who was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." This has already become history. The bruising of the Serpent's head will take place when our Lord returns in person and power.

Redemption was not only promised in word, but it was also pictured in deed. Man attempted to cover his shame by the leaves of the fig-tree, but this was far too slight a covering. No human covering could suffice, and so we are told with profound significance that the "Lord God made coats of skins and clothed them." This divine clothing took the place of their own self-made clothing; so they were clothed indeed. The mention of skins suggests the necessity of the death of the animals.

Here we have the first revelation of sacrifice and the way in which the robe of righteousness was to be provided. It was a setting forth of the way by which a sinful creature could be saved. It was the initial declaration of the fundamental fact that "without shedding of blood is no remission." It was a blessed illustration of substitution--the innocent dying in the stead of the guilty. From beginning to end, salvation is a work of God's grace.

Finally, the primeval pair were banished from the garden. It was impossible for them to remain in the garden and continue in fellowship with the Lord. Sin always results in separation. Here we see the fulfilment of God's warning. He had announced, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." This not only meant to die physically but also to die spiritually, which is infinitely worse. Just as physical death is the separation of the soul from the body, so spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God.