

## Week 37

# Man: The Fall

### Key Verse

**Romans 5:12** Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind because all sinned.

## + Introduction

*Paradise Lost* is an epic poem written in blank verse by the 17th Century English poet John Milton. First published in 1667, it consisted of ten books with over ten thousand lines of poetry. It is considered to be Milton's masterpiece. The mammoth poem concerns the biblical story of the Fall of Man: the temptation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.<sup>1</sup>

The first lines of *Paradise Lost* are as follows:

"Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit  
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat..."

Even today, we have to deal with the ramifications of man's first disobedience. The Fall of humanity started in the most blissful of settings, a perfect garden – a garden that had four rivers through it and an abundance of trees and vegetation. There was great freedom in that garden. Everything that Adam and Eve would ever need or want was at their fingertips. God had established only one parameter: not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Their actions had consequences not just for them but for all humanity.

The Fall of Man is detailed in Genesis 3. Matthew Henry, in his commentary on Genesis 3 writes, "We have here an account of the sin and misery of our first parents, the wrath and curse of God against them, the peace of the creation disturbed, and its beauty stained and sullied, all bad, very bad."<sup>2</sup> In his commentary on Genesis, W.H. Griffith Thomas makes this statement about Genesis 3: "It is hardly too much to say that this chapter is the pivot of the Bible, for if we take it away, the rest of Scripture becomes meaningless."<sup>3</sup>

With the exception of the Creation, the entrance of sin into the world is the most far-reaching event in the history of the world! The rest of the Bible is the story of God redeeming man from his sinful state. To make light of the seriousness of sin and its effects is to diminish the impact of the entire Bible – to miss the point entirely!

Some look at Genesis 3 as an allegory or myth. Others call it poetic or symbolic – just man’s attempt to explain the events. None of these explanations is satisfactory. This story is God’s revelation to us – of real people, Adam and Eve, and real events. The New Testament assumes that this narrative is literal history. The genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 traces His lineage all the way back to Adam. Romans 5:18-19 refer to sin entering the world through “one man” (Adam), and so through “the One” (Jesus Christ), the many will be made righteous. The Genesis account is literal history. If we adopt a lesser view, the story loses much if not all its impact. Let’s break it down verse by verse.

## + The Tempter

**GENESIS 3:1** *Now the serpent was more cunning than any animal of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”*

As we look at the story from Satan's point of view, the tempter, it quickly becomes clear that he is distorting what God had said.

Sin and temptation start with the tempter himself. He is called a “*serpent*.” There are different views about this portion of the story. Some take it literally that this was a snake. Others think it was Satan being described as a snake. Still, others believe it was not a snake as we know it, but some sort of beautiful creature.<sup>4</sup> If we take the story literally, then it is probably best to take this detail literally, too. The reality is that Satan was the tempter regardless of his form.

There was an agenda in this encounter. The word translated as “*cunning*” is the Hebrew word “*Aruwm*.” This word means subtle, shrewd, crafty, sly, sensible.<sup>5</sup> This reveals the character of the serpent. Notice part of the meaning of this description is subtle and sly. So often, we look for the big dark demonic things to be wary of in our lives. Satan does not always come in the form of something that would automatically scare us, though most of us would be afraid of a talking serpent. However, in this setting, we do not see any fear in Eve’s response. She did not immediately turn away because of the discussion. Rather, she engaged in the conversation, as do we sometimes when we encounter the subtly and slyness of the tempter.

## + The Temptation

**GENESIS 3:1B-5** *And he said to the woman, “Has God really said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”<sup>2</sup> the woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;<sup>3</sup> 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.’”<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent*

said to the woman, "You will not surely die.<sup>5</sup> 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."

Throughout the ages, Satan is consistent in that he wants to steal, kill, and destroy. He wants nothing more or less than for us to be separated from God. In these verses, Satan, as the serpent, captures the attention of Eve first with a question.

It was a simple question, nothing harmful in a question: "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" In the question, there is a seed of doubt planted. Satan will often begin in such a way, simple and casual. Thus, his craftiness subtly began to take shape. There was nothing inherently wrong with the question. The problem was not with the question; rather, it was with Eve answering the question.

Eve could have easily ignored the serpent. Though admittedly in the midst of the garden, a talking serpent probably would capture anyone's attention. Eve began this brief conversation with the serpent, which means she let her guard down.

Let's observe the stages of temptation:

1. The serpent sparks and attracts the woman's curiosity by speaking to her.
2. Satan asks her a question that raises suspicion of what God has said. This question suggests to her that God's Word is subject to man's judgment.
3. Satan also draws her into a debate. He implies that God has restricted them from eating from any tree, which is not what God said. In fact, God said they could eat freely of all the other trees (Genesis 2:16). Subtly Satan distorts God's Word.
4. The woman responds by actually adding to what God said. God never said they could not touch it but that they could not eat of it (Genesis 2:17). The woman also mentions the consequences of eating: death.
5. Satan directly contradicts God's Word by saying that they would not die. Satan adds the promise that they would be like God, knowing good and evil.
6. Satan casts doubt on God's character by telling her that God knows this and that is why He has restricted them from eating from the tree.

The slyness of Satan has always caused us to doubt the character and words of God. The primary lie of Satan through the ages is that we can disobey God and get away with it. In fact, he goes even a step further and tells us not only can we get away with it (no consequences), but we will gain all sorts of benefits by doing it. The lies from the Liar continue every day in our world.

## ✦ The Sin

**GENESIS 3:6-8** So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes,<sup>7</sup> 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 waist coverings. <sup>8</sup> they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.*

And then, as serpents tend to do, it struck. This time it was not with a seed of doubt but an outright lie. When Satan, as the serpent, says this lie, notice where the eyes of Eve are looking.

The woman's curiosity was aroused, she listened to the serpent, and she saw that the tree was "*pleasant to the eyes.*" 1 John 2:16 tells us that the world tempts and entices us away from the Lord by the "*lust of the eyes.*"

It just takes a split second for your eyes to be taken off that which is right. Countless accidents occur each year because someone takes their eyes off the road. Countless golf balls have been missed because the golfer takes their eyes off the ball. So Eve took her eyes off of God and the truth of God, maybe only for a split second. The tree looked good. The tree was pleasant to the eyes. The tree was desirable to make one wise. The tree was in the midst of the garden. The tree was accessible. And she took of its fruit and ate; and then she gave it to her husband, and he ate.

With a blink of an eye and a bite of the fruit, sin entered the world. Then the eyes of both of them were opened. They had been given responsibility and freedom. They had been given parameters that were for their own good. At that moment, everything changed with their relationship with God as it became broken.

Griffith Thomas, in his commentary on Genesis, states, "The foundation of all sin lies in man's desire of self-assertion and his determination to be independent of God...he desires to go his own way, to be his own master," <sup>6</sup> Isaiah 53:6 reminds us of this truth, "*All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.*"

Their eyes were opened, and for the first time, they felt shame in their nakedness. Their initial response was to try and hide. Artists have rendered fig leaves covering both Adam and Eve's private parts, yet it is possible they had tried to cover all of themselves in such a way as to hide in their shame. They knew they had done wrong. They had disobeyed God. Sin should always cause us to be uncomfortable, whether ashamed of doing wrong or feeling guilt, which they also experienced.

Verse 8 and following explain that they tried without success to hide from God. How often do we do the same? We disobey God. We sin. We take our eyes off that which is right. We believe the lie, and try to hide both figuratively and literally. Adam and Eve had a personal and intimate relationship with God, yet they hid from Him because of their disobedience.

The woman also saw that the tree was desirable to make one wise. What is wrong with wisdom? Does God not want us to be wise? Yes, He does, but wisdom must come through faith and dependence upon Him. The woman acted independently of God, which is a definition of sin. By the way, the man was just as guilty – he chose to obey his wife rather than God.

The man and the woman both ate of the forbidden tree – they were responsible and accountable for their actions. From an environment in which they had everything they needed, including perfect fellowship with God – they sinned! They moved from innocence to conscience/moral responsibility.

Temptation and sin never come from God (James 1:13-15). Our own lust eventually carries us away. We are responsible; we know right from wrong, and we choose to sin. It has nothing to do with economics, environment, education, or psychological bent. Even though Satan tempts us and he is very crafty, we are responsible. We can never say, “the devil made me do it,” and cop-out on our responsibility.

## + The Consequences

**GENESIS 3:9-13** *Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”<sup>10</sup> So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”<sup>11</sup> 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?”<sup>12</sup> Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”<sup>13</sup> And the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*

Although Adam and Eve took their eyes off God, God never took His eyes off them. God knew exactly where they were. God knew exactly what they had done. But God wanted them to own their sin. God wanted them to confess their sin. God wanted them to realize they had chosen to disobey.

God speaks to them. God’s voice is both a horror and a comfort at this point. More than ever, Adam and Eve, in a now sinful state, must hear the voice of God. It is hard to keep our attention focused on His words when our sin is in view, but it is more critical than ever.<sup>7</sup>

Upon hearing the voice of God, they began the ever-popular “blame game.” Adam blamed both God and Eve; the woman “**You**” gave me, “**she**” gave me of the tree, and I ate. He owned his sin after he blamed both God and Eve. Eve blamed the serpent as the one who deceived her, but then she owned her sin when she said, “I ate.” They both confessed before God.

There were consequences because of their sin. These consequences continue to this day. There were consequences for the serpent (v. 14-15). There were consequences for Eve (v. 16). There were consequences for Adam (v. 17-19). The pain of childbirth started as a consequence. Thorns, thistles, sweat and pain in physical work started as a consequence. Physical death started as a consequence. Spiritual separation from God started as a consequence. But redemption was on its way!

## + Redemption

**GENESIS 3:21** *Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.*

Adam and Eve sinned and experienced the consequences. And yet, there is grace in the Fall. Remember, Adam and Eve noticed they were naked; they were ashamed of their nakedness after their disobedience. They tried to cover themselves with fig leaves. But God showed grace.

In the simplicity of this verse, we see the complexity of God's grace. The fig leaves were not going to atone for their sins. Instead, God provided a covering of their physical bodies that symbolized a covering of their sin and disobedience. Blood had to be shed for the skin of an animal to be made into a tunic that covered both Adam and Eve. Throughout the Old Testament, God required the sacrifice of an animal; shed blood to serve as confession before God and to stay in relationship with Him. The prophet Isaiah realized the importance of the covering of God in this relationship.

**ISAIAH 61:10** *I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with robes of righteousness.*

In the New Testament, when Jesus was crucified on the cross, it would be the final sacrifice ever needed. Jesus was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. The blood of Jesus was shed on the cross that you and I might be eternally covered for our sins, thus clothing us with garments of salvation and wrapping us with robes of righteousness.

## + Conclusion

From this story, we not only learn how sin entered the world and death through sin, as we see in Romans 5:12, but we gain practical knowledge about how to deal with temptation and sin in our lives today.

**ROMANS 5:12** *Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all mankind, because all sinned.*

Adam in Eve made a choice that has consequences to this very day for all of us. God showed them grace in the Fall. God covered their nakedness which symbolized the sacrificial covering that would be necessary to be right before God. God showed grace once again through His Son, Jesus Christ, as that final sacrifice, covering us for all eternity.

Satan would cripple mankind, but Jesus Christ would deliver the fatal blow to Satan. Here, the pattern for the rest of human history is set in motion: God vs. Satan; good vs. evil. As stated at the beginning of this lesson, those who minimize or deny sin and the existence of evil miss the point of the Bible as well as the entire flow of human history!

Man cannot redeem himself. Ultimate victory lies in Jesus Christ – through His death and resurrection, we can have victory over sin.

**HEBREWS 2:14-15** *Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, so that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,<sup>15</sup> and free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.*

Remember what Adam and Eve experienced in the midst of the garden is available to you as well. God's grace. God's provision. God's mercy. God's forgiveness. God's protection. God's direction. God's grace finds us right where we are in the midst of the garden, covering us, forgiving us, and walking with us.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise\\_Lost](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradise_Lost)

<sup>2</sup> *Commentary On The Whole Bible* by Matthew Henry, Zondervan Publishers, 1961, page 8; originally published in 1710.

<sup>3</sup> Griffith Thomas, *Genesis, A Devotional Commentary*, Eerdmans Publishers, 1946, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> [www.soniclight.com/genesis](http://www.soniclight.com/genesis)

<sup>5</sup> [www.biblestudytools.com/lexicon](http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicon)

<sup>6</sup> Thomas, *Genesis, A Devotional Commentary*, p.49.

<sup>7</sup> Dixon, Dr. James. *Genesis: Expository Thoughts*. Darlington: Evangelical Press, 2005, p. 91