



Genesis 3 - The Fall

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led by Mary Lowman

Genesis 2:16 – 17

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you will certainly die.”

Genesis 3:1 - 6

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” ² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

There is only this one prohibition—and you can hardly call it a prohibition. It was really nothing hard or difficult—just don’t eat from one tree. There were plenty of other trees, so it’s not like this was a great hardship for Adam and Eve. But it was a critical prohibition, extremely important that they obey, because the consequences of not obeying were dire, to say the least.

This passage raises more questions than perhaps any other passage in Scripture. We will address some of them. There are no answers given for some of them.

First Question: Why did God issue such a prohibition?

Wasn’t this setting them up for failure?

“Here we have the basic ingredients that define human beings as moral beings. God has given them the ability to say yes to him by not eating the fruit of the prohibited tree, and to say no to him by eating its fruit. . . It is a frame of mind that asserts the creature’s will against the Creator’s, that pushes the Creator aside and makes central to everything the pursuit of one’s own egotistical interests and interpretation of life. That is, in principle, what ‘sin’ is. . . It was not the tree, as some think, but the disobedience which had the death in it.” (John Lennox, *Seven Days that Divide the World*, p. 105-106)

Second Question: What was this tree and why did God put it in the Garden?

Scripture does not name the fruit or tell us anything about it. Regardless, this was a test. What is crucial, what is important, is not the tree or the fruit, but the rebellion against God.

God purposely put this one prohibited tree in the Garden to give Adam and Eve the opportunity to choose to obey him—or not! He wanted to love us and be loved by us. That can only happen if humans have the free will to choose to love God. It is not our right to understand all God has done or is doing.

Isaiah 55:8–9: *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts".*

Isaiah 40:28b: *"He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable".*

Ecclesiastes 11:5: *Just as you do not know the path of the wind or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, who makes everything.*

Third Question: What would have happened if Adam and Eve had not sinned?

Since Adam and Eve had the ability to choose sin, to be deceived by Satan, isn't it most likely they would have tripped up sooner or later? But we do not know.

Fourth Question: Why did God allow the Serpent in the Garden?

Who are we—God's created beings, created in love in his image—who are we to ever question his ways, his actions?

What do we know about the serpent?

From Genesis 3 we know:

- The serpent was made by God.
- He was the "most crafty" beast.
- He was Satan in some kind of disguise.
- He just shows up!
- He could talk.
- He boldly approaches Eve and she shows no fear of him.
- He was erect at first, not crawling on his belly yet.
- He lies and he hates God

"Who or what was this serpent whose insinuations triggered such a seismic catastrophe from which the world has been reeling ever since? It appears unannounced on the page of Genesis, simply described as one of the creatures God had made. But that is already telling us something, and simultaneously raising many questions. For this serpent is a creature, so God is ultimately responsible for its existence. Yet it is clearly opposed to God. In other words, Genesis is saying there was already an alien enemy in the earth, a being that, apparently, had the capacity to disobey God, had actually done so, and was now encouraging the first humans to follow suit." (John Lennox, *Seven Days that Divide the World*, p. 108-109)

Other passages about Satan:

Isaiah 14:12 – 14 (NKJV): *How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! ¹³For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation. On the farthest sides of the north; ¹⁴I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'*

Revelation 12:9: *And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

2 Corinthians 11:14: *And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.*

Some things are hidden from us in Scripture and not for us to know:

Deuteronomy 29:29: *The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.*

Romans 11:33: *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

Fifth Question: How is the Serpent able to tempt Eve?

- He lured her with the ambition to be like God.
- He shaded the truth.
- He questions the character of God.
- He exaggerates.

Genesis 3:2 – 3: *And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’”*

- He lies to her.

Genesis 3:4-5: *But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

How often has Satan tripped us up in the same way?

- He causes us to allow the first small doubts into our mind as to whether God is trustworthy or not.
- He exaggerates the truth, appealing to our pride and our selfishness.
- He lies about God, saying that God won't do what God said he would do.
- He convinces us that disobeying God won't really hurt us.
- He tells us that we have a right to “eat that fruit.”

Notice what enticed her:

Genesis 3:6: *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*

- The food was good to eat. It was something to satisfy her appetite.
- The food was something wonderful to see.
- The food would make her wise.
- Then she would have all the power in the world!

Avoid the First Step!

Proverbs 4:25 – 27: *Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.*

1 Corinthians 10:13: *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

Sin Always Begins in Our Minds!

2 Corinthians 10:5: *We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.*

1 John 2:15 – 16: *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.*

We need to understand anew the awfulness of sin.

Isaiah 5:20: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*

Sixth Question: What About Adam?

The Direct Command

Genesis 2:16 – 17: *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

Willful Disobedience

The Bible notes that Eve was tricked by the serpent. Adam was not.

1 Timothy 2:13 - 14: *For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.*

1 Corinthians 11:8 – 9: *For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.*

Passivity and Silence

Adam failed to step in, protect his wife, or stop the transgression. His silence and inaction marked a failure of his leadership role in the garden.

What should Adam have said to Eve?

The Initial Consequences

Genesis 3:7 – 13

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.⁸ And 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.⁹ But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"¹⁰ And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."¹¹ He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"¹² The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Shame

Immediately they knew they were naked. For the first time they knew shame—they experienced the consequences of sin.

Cover-Up

Adam and Eve instinctively know that they need to cover their nakedness. Never before did they need clothes. But sin brought shame, as it always does, and now they have a totally new challenge, a new worry: They have to wear clothes.

Great Loss

There is no way back to Eden for them. The consequences of sin often linger for a long time, even for a life time.

When we defy God and his plan for our lives, his principles, his goodness to us, we can't go backward to the innocence we had before the sin. But there is a way forward, and that is to the cross of Jesus Christ.

Adam and Eve's Reaction

Shifting blame and self-justification become their immediate reaction. They now not only know what it's like to sin, they instinctively try to justify it.

Do you take sin seriously?