

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (1)

A Meditation on Genesis 3:8-13

Before looking at the consequences of Adam's sin, I'd like to back up a little, so we can understand the responsibility that God placed on Adam—the responsibility that he failed to fulfill. Genesis 2:15 says, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” Two tasks are assigned to Adam in the garden. First, he is to “work it,” which means cultivate and beautify the garden, and eventually the whole world. Second, he is to “keep it,” which means guard the garden against all intruders.

The Hebrew word *shamar*, translated “keep” in Genesis 2:15 (ESV), means keep, guard, watch or protect. The same Hebrew word is found in Genesis 3:24, and is translated *guard* (ESV): “He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard (*shamar*) the way to the tree of life.” “Keep” is an unfortunate translation, because its ambiguity leads us to think that it means something like “weed and feed.” So we picture Adam as a gardener, when he was so much more than that; he was also called to be a watchman and a warrior, who would stand guard and ward off all intruders, even killing them if necessary to protect his bride and everything else in the garden.

The significance of Adam's vocation is highlighted when we recall that the garden of Eden was the sanctuary, where the LORD God walked and talked with man; it was the Holy of Holies, where the Creator communed with his image bearers. Furthermore, because of the two trees, which represented the covenant, it was the place where one would come face to face with life and death.

Adam was called to be the guardian of the garden and the covenant, and he was to guard it with his life. But Adam failed, so he was essentially fired and the cherubim took over his job. Genesis 3:23-24 tells us that Adam is still to work the ground, but no longer is he to guard the garden, which he was sent away from. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

In Genesis 3:1 we have an intruder, the serpent, who we should note is compared to the other *beasts* of the field—“the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field.” This serpent enters the garden and flies over to the woman, with Adam *right by her side*. Genesis 3:6 makes it clear that when the serpent engages Eve, Adam is not off in the distance smelling the roses oblivious to what is going on. The reason why it appears that Adam is absent is due to his silence—a guilty silence, since he should have protected his bride.

You might be wondering where it says that the serpent “flew” toward the woman. I'm not going to be dogmatic about this, but a few comments about the serpent are warranted. First, contrary to all the pictures that we've seen in the children's Bibles, the serpent may have been a dragon, and not a snake. In Revelation 12:3, for example, Satan is called a “great red dragon,” which may be equivalent to a serpent, since Revelation 20:3 puts these two images together: “And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil.” And in Isaiah 14:29 we have a reference to a “*flying* fiery serpent.” So whatever kind of animal the serpent was (or is), it seems that it had the ability to fly. Biblical evidence is lacking for the “fire-breathing” dragons that are common in children's tales, unless I've overlooked it.

When God curses the serpent, he says, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life” (Gen. 3:14). We tend to think that the serpent had his legs cut out from under him, but perhaps it's more accurate to say that it had its wings clipped. If the serpent was a dragon, this would also help explain why Satan chose that beast to speak through—perhaps it was big, glorious and intimidating, in addition to being *crafty*.

But regardless of what specific kind of beast the serpent was, we're in no doubt about what Adam was supposed to do when this beast approached his bride and blatantly denied God's Word, in an attempted to get Eve to break the covenant. I submit to you that he was supposed to do precisely what the last Adam, Jesus Christ, did: Crush the serpent's head. Since the first Adam failed to protect his bride, the garden and the covenant by killing the serpent, mankind would have to wait for the second Adam to slay the dragon. This of course is the promise of Genesis 3:15, the Proto-Evangel, the first gospel: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” And at the cross, Jesus crushed his head (Heb. 2:14).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (2)

A Meditation on Genesis 3:7-13

Instead of slaying the dragon, Adam and Eve sinned and sided with the dragon, bringing an end to Paradise. Thomas Boston said that in this one sin, Adam and Eve broke every one of the Ten Commandments. To paraphrase Thomas Boston they broke the first commandment when they chose new gods. When they ate the forbidden fruit they made their belly their god; they made themselves god; no, they made the devil their god, when they conspired with him against Yahweh.

They broke the second commandment when they refused to worship God in the way that He had prescribed. The third commandment was broken when they took the name of the Lord in vain, despising His attributes, whereby He makes himself known through His justice, truth, power, etc. They profaned God's ordinances, that sacramental tree. They violated the fourth commandment when instead of relying on the Sabbath for God to meet their deepest needs and desires, they tried to fulfill their longs through their own work.

Also, Adam failed to honor his Father in heaven. Our first parents neglected their duties to the family. Eve acted without advice from her husband. Adam, instead of admonishing her, sinned with her. They forgot their duty to their descendants. Therefore, their days were not long in the land which the LORD their God gave them. Adam broke the sixth commandment. In fact he was the greatest murderer that ever lived. By this one act he was cutting the throats of all his posterity; and he was a self-murderer too. They broke the seventh commandment by giving into their lusts, and consequently they were overcome by a lack of self-control. The eighth commandment was cast aside when Adam committed theft. He was a thief and a robber in taking that which was not his own; he took that which belonged to God alone. They broke the ninth commandment when they bore false witness against their closest neighbor in the garden of Eden, the LORD. Their eating said, "God cannot be trusted, he's a liar, we will not die." Finally, they violated the tenth commandment by coveting that which they weren't entitled to have. They refused to be content with all that God had given to them.

So often we think, "It's just one little sin. What harm can it cause?" We learn from Adam and Eve that the answer is immeasurable harm, with consequences beyond our wildest imaginations.

Immediately following Adam and Eve's sin they came to the shocking realization that sin doesn't deliver what it promises. Satan had promised them divinity. He told them that they would be like God, knowing good and evil. But what they received wasn't what they wanted. It was a huge let down for them. A life of sin will always be a life of disappointment. Do you know what Satan and sin do next time to cover their tracks? They lie—again—and say, "Just a little more, and then you'll be happy." Yet sin only produces what C. S. Lewis described in *The Screwtape Letters* as an ever-increasing desire with an ever-diminishing return. Paul described it this way, "Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more" (Eph. 4:19, NIV). Joel Beeke has noted, "You might get what you want, but be careful because you may not want what you get." Think of the high school student who engages in pre-marital sex and contracts an STD or gets pregnant.

Adam and Eve also experienced an overwhelming sense of shame and guilt. "Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked" (Gen. 3:7a). They felt completely exposed, which is how unbelievers will feel on the day of judgment (Heb. 4:13). On the heels of this embarrassing awareness came a frantic and pathetic attempt to cover their shame and guilt. "And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths" (Gen. 3:7b). It didn't work.

In the end, sin always produces fear that causes us to hide from the one who loves us the most. "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 in the garden" (vs. 8). Adam and Eve are not hiding from a serial killer or Jack the Ripper or even the devil; they're hiding from their loving, heavenly Father who has entered the garden the commune with his children, but they sadly don't want to commune with Him. This is the most tragic of all the consequences of sin.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (3)

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God could have abandoned Adam and Eve at this point, but He didn't. The following confrontation that ensues is a picture of mercy and grace. "But the LORD God called to the man and said, 'Where are you?'" (Gen. 3:9). Doesn't God know where Adam is? Of course He does. And how foolish of Adam to think that he can hide from an omnipresent God (Ps. 139:7-12). When God says, "Where are you?" He does so to call Adam out of hiding.

If God had never called Adam out, do you think Adam would have ever come out from hiding among the trees on his own? He wouldn't have; he would have died running from God. It is a Pelagian fallacy to say that fallen man is seeking God. He is not seeking God, he is hiding from God...he is denying God's existence...he is cursing God...perhaps he thinks he is God, but the one thing he most emphatically is not doing is seeking God (Rom. 3:11). Jesus said, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed" (Jn. 3:19-20). Apart from the sovereign intervention of God, man is unwilling and unable to seek God. Jesus was clear, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (Jn. 6:44). And this is what is happening in the garden of Eden, the Father is graciously drawing Adam back to Himself.

Adam responds to God's call, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself" (Gen. 3:10). Adam confesses his fear, but not his sin. This confession is an obfuscating half-truth, and not surprisingly, it isn't the most important half. God isn't taken in; He presses a little further—a reminder that God will settle for nothing less than full confession. "He said, 'Who told you that you were naked?'" (vs. 11). So often arrogant people say, "When I get to heaven I'll have some questions for God!" As if God were the one on trial. But it is the other way around: We will be in the dock, and God will ask us the uncomfortable questions. Like Job, men will prepare their case (Job 13:18), but when God finally arrives, He will be the only one asking the questions (Job 38:1f).

Adam answers God, but he is still less than forthcoming with his confession. "The man said, 'The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate'" (Gen. 3:12). If I can embellish Adam's answer a little, he says, "I was doing just fine, minding my own business, but then *you* gave me that wicked woman." Adam blames Eve, and he also blames God for giving Eve to him.

"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'" (vs. 13). Eve, in turn, blames the serpent. This is the origin of "passing the buck," and the first example of the "devil made me do" excuse.

Isn't it fascinating how Adam and Eve went from being omni-potent gods—so they thought—to totally helpless victims in a matter of mere moments? Satan had promised them divinity, the ability to be like God, knowing good and evil. In other words, they were going to decide for themselves what they wanted to do without anybody or any-thing standing in their way. After God confronts them, their response is anything but that which you would expect from an omnipotent being. They basically said, "I have no control over what I do; I'm a helpless victim of circumstance."

Instead of taking responsibility for their actions, people today blame their parents; they blame a poor childhood potty training methodology; they blame their economic status; they blame _____ fill in the blank. They'll blame anybody and everybody before they'll even think of taking responsibility themselves. "The British *Economist* noted with bemusement that in the United States, 'If you lose your job you can sue for the mental distress of being fired. If your bank goes broke, the government has insured your deposits....If you drive drunk and crash you can sue somebody for failing to warn you to stop drinking. *There is always somebody else to blame*'" (John MacArthur, *The Vanishing Conscience*, p. 28).

Accountability and discipline after sin restores dignity. This is why disciplining children is so important. On the one hand, it teaches them that they are not gods, who can do whatever they want without consequences. On the other hand, it also teaches them that they are not helpless victims, who can blame others for their behavior. Dignity results from ascertaining that you are responsible for your actions.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN (4)

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When Adam sinned in the garden, he didn't sin as an isolated, disconnected individual; Adam sinned as the covenantal head or representative of the entire human race. Therefore, all of us have been affected by his sin. Think of it this way: In Washington we have elected representatives, Senators, for example, and we all have to live with the decisions they make on our behalf, whether we agree with their decisions or not. We're all affected by the legislation of our Senators, and similarly we're all affected by Adam's sin.

You might be tempted to think that he didn't represent you very well, but the truth is you and I were represented very well. You might want to protest, "But it seems that he didn't even last 10 minutes." Well, you probably wouldn't have lasted 2 minutes.

As a result of Adam's sin, we all became sinners. Theologians refer to this as Original Sin—Original Sin doesn't refer to the first sin per se, but to the consequences of the first sin that came upon all humanity. Romans 5:19 spells this out for us: "For by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." David confessed, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). Because of Adam we are by nature sinners. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of the world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Eph. 2:1-3). The Bible gives a plain answer to the question: Is man basically good or evil? We could also ask this question to help clarify the issue: Are we sinners because we sin? Or, do we sin because we're sinners? The latter question is the correct one; because of the sinful nature that we received from Adam we sin.

If you still think it's unfair to be represented by Adam, and to have his sin and guilt imputed to us (i.e. credited to our account), then—if you're consistent—you should also think it's unfair to be represented by Christ, and to have his righteousness imputed to us. In Romans 5:14, we're told that Adam "was a type of the one who would come." This is a reference to Christ, who would be the last Adam, and the new covenantal head or representative.

In the next five verses in Romans (5:15-19) we have five comparisons between the first Adam and the second Adam, Christ; we're told how the first Adam affected us, and then how the second Adam affected us. Consider just two comparisons: "Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18-19).

Since Christ is the covenantal head of those who believe in Him, His righteousness, life and resurrection is credited to their account, and it replaces the sin, condemnation and death that our first covenantal head imputed to us. Apart from covenantal headship we cannot explain *how* the righteousness of another, namely Jesus, could benefit us.

Jesus Christ, the second Adam, succeeds where the first Adam failed; the second Adam undoes what the first Adam had done: The first Adam comes to the garden of Eden and sins; the second Adam comes to the garden of Gethsemane and bears sin.

The first Adam is tempted by the serpent in a lush paradise and gives in; the second Adam is tempted by the serpent in a barren wilderness and resists. The first Adam hides from God in seclusion; the second Adam reveals God in the open. The first Adam is guilty and arrested by God in the cool of the day; the second Adam is innocent and arrested by man in the cool of the night. The first Adam abandons the truth; the second Adam is the personification of truth. The first Adam brought sin and condemnation into the world; the second Adam brought righteousness and salvation into the world. The first Adam failed to protect his bride in the garden of Eden; the second Adam protected His bride in the garden of Gethsemane.

The first Adam let the serpent live; the second Adam crushed his head. Consequently, "For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

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