

THE FALL (1)

A Meditation on Genesis 2:25-3:7

Adam and Eve, Genesis 2:25 says, we're naked and unashamed. This verse almost seems like an after thought, hardly worth mentioning, yet it is a profound statement about man's condition before the fall. The man and his wife are enjoying pure innocence, integrity and openness with each other, as well as with God. We can't even begin to fathom a life without shame, without embarrassment, without guilt, without regret, without skeletons in the closet. Adam and Eve have nothing to hide, which is the holiest and happiest way to live. As one wag put it, "Live in such a way that you wouldn't be afraid to sell the family parrot to the town gossip."

This nakedness is also a sign of closeness and intimacy that is free of obstacles. A counselor mentioned that one time a couple came to see him, because they were having "intimacy issues." They just weren't connecting. The counselor said, "Can you give me an example." The husband said, "I can. For starters I've never seen my wife naked." The counselor asked how that was possible, since they had been married for ten years and had two children together. The husband explained that since the day of their honeymoon his wife would only get undressed if he wasn't in the room, and when they had sexual relations it was only under the covers in a pitch dark room. Adam and Eve have no such issues; they have no issues whatsoever.

If Adam and Eve want to continue to enjoy paradise and all its benefits they must abide by the terms of the covenant. The Adamic Covenant, as theologians call it, is found in Gen. 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.'" In this covenant, as with most covenants, God places life and death, blessings and curses before Adam. The one tree would lead to life (2:9, the tree of life), and the other tree would result in death.

We can also look at the covenant from this perspective. First, there is a *positive* aspect. Adam and Eve are free to eat from any tree they desire, except one. Next, we have a *prohibition*. They may not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Finally, God makes the *punishment* clear. For in the day that they eat of it they shall surely die. I don't know how Adam and Eve responded to the covenant, but I do know how they should have responded. They should have responded like the Psalmist, "I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands" (Ps. 119:10). Don't overlook the fact that seeking God with all our hearts goes hand and hand with not straying from his commands. Then the Psalmist said, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (vs.11). Adam and Eve should have memorized God's commands, and they should have meditated on them day and night. After all, their whole lives literally depended upon obedience to the terms of the covenant. Likewise our lives hinge upon obedience to God's commands, as God sets before us blessings and curses, life and death.

Paul said, "We are not unaware of [Satan's] schemes" (2 Cor. 2:11). Satan's goal for mankind is simple: He comes to steal, kill and destroy (Jn. 10:10). And his strategy to bring about this destruction is to attack and undermine the Word of God. If Satan is going to destroy Adam and Eve he must get them to violate the terms of the covenant. We would do well to pay close attention to Genesis 3, because his strategy hasn't changed since the Garden of Eden, he's still trying to attack and undermine God's Word.

Four steps will lead to Adam and Eve's fall. Step one is doubt. Satan begins by casting doubt on God's Word. "He said to the woman, 'Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" (Gen. 3:1b). He starts by questioning what God has said, and unfortunately this is where it ends for many, because, frankly, they don't know what God has said. They know how their stocks are doing. They know the ERA of all the pitchers on their favorite baseball team. Our minds are stuffed with tons of useless trivia, but we are woefully ignorant of God's Word. Maybe we have half a dozen verses memorized—maybe. When Satan said, "Did God actually say...?" Eve should have shot back without a moment's hesitation, "Yes, as a matter of fact he did say..." When our Lord was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, he responded with three "It is written" quotes—from Deuteronomy, no less. Satan was silenced and forced to leave and come back at another time. Tragically, because Eve failed to respond accurately, she and Adam were forced to leave the garden of Eden.

THE FALL (2)

A Meditation on Genesis 2:25-3:7

If we fail to respond decisively and biblically to the doubts Satan casts upon God's Word, the next step down will inevitably be a distortion of God's Word. Eve's reply to the serpent was abysmal, she said, "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'" (Gen. 3:2-3). In this pathetic answer we have no less than four distortions of God's Word.

First, she said, "We may ___ eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden." This is very close to God's actual words, but she left out one word—"surely," or "freely" depending on your translation. This is a tragic omission though, because "surely" was meant to stress God's goodness and generosity. God created heaven and earth, and the full-ness thereof, and then essentially says to Adam and Eve, "It's all yours. Indulge yourself, enjoy, and find satisfaction in what I have made. All I ask is that you abstain from one tree out of the tens of thousands I have made—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." So what does Eve do, with a little help from the serpent? The same thing we do, she fixates on the one little thing in the entire universe that God told her she couldn't have. She's surrounded by ten thousand blessings, but all she sees is one tree, and wonders, "Well, why can't I eat of *that* tree?"

Next, we see that God's specific command has become ambiguous in Eve's mind. Eve said, "But God did say, 'You must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden.'" Is that what God said? No, God said specifically, "But of the tree *of the knowledge of good and evil* you shall not eat." One theologian commented, "The distinctive mark of theology today is its dreadful ambiguity." We want to be like the Puritans, who "would not have been interested in vague moral uplift; what they wanted was to grasp God's truth with the same preciseness of application with which they held that he had revealed it" (J. I. Packer, *A Quest for Godliness*, p. 114).

Third, Eve distorts God's Word by adding to it. God didn't say anything about *touching* the tree. This is the beginning of legalism, which has more than one definition, but here we can define it as living according to extra-biblical requirements. The danger of legalism is that it leads us away from the true intent of the law. And like ambiguity it leads to confusion about God's exact requirements.

Finally, Eve distorted God's command by downplaying the consequences of disobedience. She told the serpent that God forbid eating of the tree "or you will ___ die." Once again, Eve left out a crucial word, and a crucial phrase. God said, "*in the day* that you eat of it you shall *surely* die." God's command emphasized the immediacy and certainty of the punishment. Satan either downplays the consequences of sin, or else he denies them altogether.

Now that Eve is thoroughly confused about God's original command, she is a sitting duck for the devil. And note that Adam has been standing silently at her side this whole time. The third step down is the blatant denial of God's word. The serpent said, "You will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). After denying the consequences of sin, he touts the benefits: "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (vs. 5). What's Satan implying? God's law is getting in the way of your happiness and fulfillment. And observe how the serpent defines God. He says, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil." To be God is to discern between good and evil, right and wrong. Every time you and I sin, we play God, we usurp his role as lawgiver, and decide for ourselves what is right and wrong.

"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" (vs. 6). The fourth and final step down is distrust of God's Word. Instead of living by faith, Eve is living by sight. The choice is always between God's authoritative Word and our corrupt desires.

"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths" (vs. 7). For the first time they experience shame and guilt, so what do they do? They try to cover their shame and guilt with fig leaves, which represents man's feeble attempt at self-salvation. But we can never cover our sin, only God can. Christ died naked upon the cross bearing our sin, so that by grace through faith in his atoning work we could be clothed in his righteousness.

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