

PART 2: The Beginning of Sin and the Promise of Redemption

The second part of our Genesis Bible study will cover 2:25—3:24 and deal with the beginning of sin and the fall of mankind from the trusting relationship God intended. Learning the pattern of what causes us to sin will help us avoid sin. Likewise, better understanding the consequences of sin will encourage us to be more obedient in our walk with the Lord.

Beginning in Innocence:

We will begin our journey with the final verse of chapter 2 immediately after the creation of man and woman. Genesis 2:25 states: *“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”* A young child, although completely naked, will run into a room full of strangers without any thought of shame or guilt, and will not be judged harshly by those present. The child is unaware they are doing anything wrong and those watching understand that the child doesn't understand that they shouldn't expose their nakedness to strangers. Adam and Eve were as children and completely innocent. Mankind was instructed by God to multiply which we understand necessitates sexual relations. They felt no shame in their nakedness before they disobeyed God and sinned. Only after Adam and Eve sinned did they become self-conscious of their naked bodies. Embarrassment, shame, and awkwardness followed, creating barriers between themselves and God. After they sinned they put on fig leaves (barriers) and hid from God.

Ideally, a husband and wife should have no barriers, feeling no shame exposing themselves to each other or to God. In marriage, a lack of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual intimacy usually precedes a breakdown of physical intimacy. In the same way, when we fail to expose or attempt to hide our sins and secret thoughts from God, we shut down the lines of communication we have with Him. God always intended for intimate, sexual joy without shame between a man and a woman given to each other and joined together by God in holy marriage. A failure in maintaining openness (exposing everything) between a married couple, leads to separation caused by barriers formed as we hide things from one another. The same happens in our relationship with God. When we try to hide or deny our sin rather than confess it openly, we create a barrier between

us and God. God seeks an open relationship with us where nothing is hidden. Jesus Christ has paid the price for all our sin, so let us confess our sins and be forgiven.

Chapter 3: The Fall of Man

Chapter 3 depicts the fall of mankind out of a right relationship with God. The fall is caused by sin—disobedience of God’s command, and is contrary to God’s will for our wellbeing. God placed mankind in a garden paradise and gave us everything we need to be healthy and fulfilled. Scripture states we were placed in the garden to “cultivate” and “keep” it. We understand this to mean God gave man work so we would experience fulfillment, and responsibility for watching over and guarding the garden so we would have purpose. Within the garden God placed the tree of life to provide eternal life, and He established one rule for us to follow—do not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He warns us of the consequences of breaking the one rule—we will die. Thus, God places us in paradise and provides through two trees a choice between life and death. Life comes through obedience and death through disobedience.

Verse-1: *“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’”* The Hebrew word translated as “serpent” literally refers to a “hissing snake” and generally was associated with evil. While the word is generally used to depict a snake, through the greater context of the Bible we understand this particular snake to represent Satan. Obviously, snakes are not capable of speech as is this serpent. Ezekiel 28 speaks of a highly esteemed and very beautiful guardian angel which once walked in the Garden of Eden, but fell from grace and became ugly because it rebelled against God. The Hebrew word translated as “crafty” also means “cunning” but in this case can be seen as deceiving. The serpent is of the “beast of the field.” Remember that the Hebrew meaning of “field” is an open plain which has been cultivated and prepared for planting, and is considered the opposite of an established garden or vineyard. The implication is that the serpent has entered the garden from the outside. This is supported by the particular Hebrew word used for “beast” for this is the word that infers a “wild beast.”

Greatest in importance is what the serpent does. The serpent “tempts” Eve by questioning and casting doubt on what God has commanded. The serpent is initiating an

invitation for Eve to sin. He is attempting to redirect Eve's attention from the abundance which God has given her to the one thing God has forbidden.

Verse-2 & 3: *“And the woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.’”* You may note that Eve adds the further stipulation that she is not to “touch” the forbidden fruit. The Hebrew word translated as “touch” literally means “to smite, beat, strike, or punish,” and it infers a “physical contact that causes harm.” Eve's words make it clear that Adam has clearly communicated God's rule regarding the tree and the severe nature of the consequences for breaking it. Her statement reinforces our understanding of a shared openness and a clear communication both between Adam and Eve, and God and man.

Verse-4 & 5: *“And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”* Here we have the clearest image of how Satan operates. First, the serpent (Satan) lies, telling Eve that what God has warned will not happen—she will not die—and essentially implies that God has lied to her about the consequences of disobedience. Second, the serpent (Satan) redirects her attention from pleasing God to pleasing herself, telling her that she will benefit from her disobedience by knowing good and evil. Third and most important, the serpent (Satan) tempts her into believing she can be equal to God or “like God” through her act of disobedience. Through lies, deception and twisting of the truth, the serpent (Satan) strives to turn us from being God centered to self-centered, from worshiping God to worshiping self. God has provided an abundance of blessing in a perfect paradise. The serpent (Satan) tries to redirect our attention away from all God has given us to that which we don't have. We must not allow Satan to cause us to yearn for things we don't need, but instead count our blessings and be thankful for all that God has blessed us.

Verse-6: *“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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”* The Hebrew word translated as “saw” in this case infers “to see intellectually” or “to perceive.” The Hebrew word translated as “desirable” literally means “to covet” or “to long for.” The

serpent (Satan) has deceived Eve into perceiving the forbidden fruit as good, and he has created within her a strong hunger and longing for something that God has prohibited.

Regarding Eve taking all the blame for the fall of mankind, we should remember that they were one with one another, and there was complete openness between them. It is not clear if they were together and both heard the serpent's tempting words, but clearly both Adam and Eve clearly understood God's command not to eat the fruit. Both chose to disobey and ate the forbidden fruit offered by the serpent. While it is true that each of us has a responsibility not to lead others astray, each of us are responsible for our own choices, and each of us have the opportunity and choice of abiding in God's word or not.

Verse-7: *"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 loin coverings."*

Adam and Eve now are aware they are naked and for the first time feel shame. They cover their nakedness with fig leaves in an attempt to hide their shame.

Verse-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."* The Hebrew word translated as "cool" literally means "air that is being breathed." Adam and Eve likely experienced God's Spirit approaching them, and it is unlikely God was walking through the garden in human form generating the sounds we associate with walking. It is more likely they heard the breath of God, Spirit of God, like the sound of rushing air moving through the garden. Aware of His approaching presence they hid themselves because of their shame. They were ashamed of what they had done and did not want to face God. Perhaps they even hid out of fear of death—the consequences of their sin which God had warned them.

Verse-9: *"Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, 'Where are you?'"* We know that God is all knowing and nothing is hidden from His view. He knows not only what we've done but what we're going to do in the future. Given this understanding, it is important that we note that God is moving through the garden seeking man. God calls out to man even though he has hid himself from God out of shame regarding his sin. God never stops seeking a relationship with us.

Verse-10: *"And he said, 'I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.'"* The man responds to God's call,

revealing that he has deliberately hidden himself from God out of fear because he is aware he is naked. Adam hides from God, attempts to separate himself from God because of his shame. Is it the sin which separates us from God or is it the shame and guilt that result from our being aware of our sin?

Verse-11: *“And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?’”* God’s response seeks to bridge the barrier that man has created. God seeks to continue the open and honest relationship He has enjoyed and intended between Himself and man, inviting the man to confess how he has become aware of his nakedness, and that he has broken God’s commandment not to eat from the forbidden tree.

Verse-12: *“And the man said, ‘The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.’”* This is the first example of the “blame game.” Rather than confessing that he has sinned against God, he blames the woman God has given him, informing God that she gave him the forbidden fruit. This is not an answer to God’s question of who told him he was naked. Eve didn’t tell him he was naked. His awareness and guilt is due to his own sin in eating the forbidden fruit.

Verse-13: *“Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ And the woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’”* The woman also passes the blame, this time to the serpent. What she says is the truth, acknowledging that she was deceived by the serpent and that she ate from the forbidden tree. Both Adam and Eve have become “aware” of their sin—their disobedience to what God had commanded. Neither asks for forgiveness or mercy, but instead blames another for their failure to be faithful to God. Does this continue to be a problem in our lives?

Verse-14 & 15: *“And the Lord God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly shall you go, and dust shall you eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.’”* Regarding the serpent, “the buck stops here” and so does the blame. The serpent is the source of the evil that has caused Adam and Eve to sin. According the Ezekiel 28, this beautiful cherub once held in highest esteem will now be brought lower than every domestic and wild beast of the

field. The serpent is cursed by God to crawl on its belly and eat dirt all its life. God also declares there will be hostility between the serpent and the woman, and between the descendants of the serpent and the woman. The Hebrew word translated as “seed” means “offspring, progeny or family,” but the word is not plural but singular. The implication is that a particular offspring of the serpent and of the woman will one day clash. The descendent of the serpent will strike the heel of the woman’s descendent, but the woman’s descendent will strike the head of the serpent’s descendent. At the last supper Jesus speaks of Judas Iscariot, the disciple who will betray Him saying: ***“I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’”*** (John 13:18) The Hebrew word translated as “head” literally means “leader, chief or appointed one.” Satan will continue to strike at man; those born of a woman, but a particular man will one day crush the serpent’s head (Satan’s power). We know this man to be Jesus Christ. God is proclaiming not only the serpent’s immediate punishment, but also his final punishment.

Verse-16: *“To the woman He said, ‘I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.’”* There are two different Hebrew words here translated as “pain.” The first one used in the phrase, “I will greatly multiply your *pain* in childbirth,” literally means “worrisomeness” but can also mean “labor, toil, hard work and sorrow.” The Hebrew word in the same phrase translated as “childbirth” actually refers to “conception” and/or “pregnancy.” The implication is that conception and perhaps also pregnancy are going to be more worrisome and laborious than they would have been in the absence of sin. The second Hebrew word translated “pain” used in the phrase, “in *pain* you shall bring forth children,” infers pain in actual delivery of a child. Even though women will have increased pain and worry associated with the entire process of having children, from sexual relations through giving birth, God states that women will still be attracted to men. The Hebrew word translated as “desire” literally means “yearning” and “longing” for their husbands, which infers a sexual desire. The final curse upon women will be that they will be subservient to their husbands. The Hebrew word translated as “rule” means “to reign, govern, and have dominion over.”

History seems to show this curse to be true, in that men have always subjugated women, ruling over them and not treating women as an equal to men.

Verse-17: *“Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.”* The Hebrew word translated as “toil” is the same as the first word in the previous verse translated as “pain.” It continues to mean “worrisomeness” and also implies “labor, toil, hard work and sorrow.” While prior to our falling from grace women would enjoy having children (their work and fulfillment) and men would enjoy working the land (their work and fulfillment), now for both these things will be hard and filled with toil and worry. Essentially, man’s curse will be the requirement of hard work in order to survive and provide for his family.

Verse-18 & 19: *“Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”* The specifics of the curse upon the ground mentioned in verse 17 are not made clearer. The ground will now not only yield good crops of food and fruit but also thistles and thorns, which will make growing food more difficult and laborious. A garden without weeds is much easier to tend than one filled with weeds that must be removed. As a woman’s labor pain has been multiplied, man’s labor in growing a crop has been increased because the ground will no longer yield its crops without much greater toil.

And finally, God informs man that His physical life will now be limited. He was created from dust and to dust he shall return—he shall surely die.

Verse-20: *“Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.”* The Hebrew word translated as “Eve” literally means “life.” This is reinforced by saying she is “mother of all the living.” Here the Hebrew word translated as “mother” doesn’t mean she gave birth to or created all life, but that she is the “mother” who looks out for and cares for all that is living. The Hebrew word for “living” in this case is the root word for “to work, labor and toil.” The woman will “mother” or care for all that works, labors and toils. Man will “toil” and woman will be the “mother of toil.”

Verse-21: *“And the Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.”* The Hebrew word translated as “skin” is most likely a reference to leather or animal hide, but in the majority of cases in the Old Testament the word is used in reference to human skin. It seems unlikely that mankind had no skin prior to their fall from grace. God provides coverings for the man and the woman to cover their nakedness and shame. While God is just and has justly handed out punishment due to their disobedience, God is still compassionate and loving, wanting to comfort His created. created from dust and to dust he shall return—he shall surely die.

Verse-22 & 23: *“Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’—therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.”* Again as in Genesis 1:26 we hear God referenced in the plural “Us.” We cannot know with any certainty if this is a reference to the Trinity or God and His angels. But God makes clear that mankind now holds something new in common with God in that we have gained knowledge of good and evil. Before the fall we enjoyed a relationship with God through which God provided for all our needs and even gave us fulfilling, satisfying work to do. Like disobedient children, we exercised a choice to be independent from God, making our own choices between good and evil, and living according to our own will. In a way, we have taken on some of the characteristics of the serpent, becoming cunning and crafty. God understands that we will now take from the “tree of life” even though we no longer deserve the right to its life sustaining fruit. Through our disobedience we have chosen a different path, a path that will teach us to appreciate God and the benefits of a relationship with Him. That path is beyond the paradise God intended for us. It is a path through the wilderness where we will have to work hard to sustain ourselves, and life will be hard. God will continue to watch over us and already has a plan for our redemption.

Verse-24: *“So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.”* God forces man to leave the garden and stations the cherubim, which is a powerful, high ranking winged angel or angels. This is the type of angel that will stand over the mercy seat of the Ark of the Covenant. God places a

flaming sword at the entrance of the garden to prevent any access to the tree of life. Access will continue blocked until the end of the world when all those who have put their faith in God will again enjoy life in the paradise that God has prepared for them.

Conclusion:

So what have we learned in Part-2 about the fall of mankind? First and foremost, that God desires to be in a loving and trusting relationship with us through which He can care for us and we can enjoy a good and fulfilling life. He wants nothing to come between us or to separate us in that loving relationship. This is what is provided for us in the beginning in the Garden of Eden. He created a place for us, which was both extremely beautiful and provided for all our needs, even our need to have something fulfilling and satisfying to do. The man's role was to tend and watch over the garden and find satisfaction and fulfillment in his work. The woman's role was to be partner to the man and experience fulfillment through bearing and caring for children.

The second deals with the relationship between the man and the woman. God intended for men and women to find wholeness through marriage. Marriage relationships, like the relationship between man and God was to be open, honest and loving, with nothing being allowed to come between the couple and separate them. There should be no shame and nothing to hide in right relationship, where everything is open and honest and shared.

Third, we learned about how evil works and how Satan intends to tempt us to focus on what we do not have rather than on the many blessings God has given us. Satan desires to destroy our relationship with God and with each other by causing us to change our orientation from God centered to self-centered. Even in marriage, Satan would have us look at what our spouse is failing to do for us rather than the many ways they bless us. Turning inward and focusing on self, rather than being thankful for all we have causes us to sin and creates barriers which separate us from God and from each other. This results in shame and guilt, which leads to hiding our guilt, becoming deceptive and further separation.

Fourth, we can see how God is always calling us back into a right relationship but this requires true repentance and admitting our guilt rather than deceiving ourselves and attempting to pass our sin onto others. From the very beginning God has had a plan for

our salvation and redemption. Through a descendent of the woman He would reconcile the world to Himself and restore the right relationship lost in the fall. God's plan of salvation would come through Jesus Christ who would be the sacrifice for all sin.

My personal theory is that our fall from grace in the Garden of Eden was not only part of God's plan but necessary. By this I don't mean that God made Adam and Eve sin but that He allowed them to and knew they would. From the very beginning God gave us free will to make our own choices. He also warned us and gave us clear consequences of what would happen if we made bad choices. The rule and rules He has provided us have never been about controlling us but for our own well-being. God placed us in a perfect paradise where we had everything we would ever need to enjoy an eternal life in peace and be fully satisfied. God wanted to be in a loving relationship with us but He also wanted us to choose to be in that relationship with Him of our own free will. For us to make a choice there must be an alternative, and so He placed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden and allowed the serpent to tempt us. Adam and Eve made a wrong choice and we have all suffered the consequences of their choice. But each of us has the opportunity to choose for ourselves. Through Adam and Eve we have all learned that we have a choice and what the consequences of our choices will be. Through Jesus Christ God has provided us with the Way back to Him, Jesus having paid the price for all our sins, our wrong choices. When we choose to make Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and put our faith in Him, our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled to God. We can then live our lives striving every day to be obedient to God's teachings and live in a right relationship with Him. Even though we may fall again and again, God will never stop reaching out to us, helping us to overcome our faults and flaws. Not by our perfection will we enter the paradise God has prepared from the beginning for us to live eternally with Him, but through the perfection of His one and only Son, Jesus Christ.

(This Concludes Part-2)