

**The Majesty  
of**

**God**

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**The Nature of**

**Sin**

*a study of the glory of God and  
the reality of sin in Genesis 1-3*

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,  
thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou  
eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

*Genesis 2:17*

## **Genesis 1**

- 1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*
- 2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*
- 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*
- 26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.*
- 31 And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*
- 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.*

## **Genesis 3**

- 1 Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'*
- 2 And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:*
- 3 But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'*
- 4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:*
- 5 For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*
- 6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

# The Majesty of God

## The Nature of Sin

### Contents

	<i>page</i>
<b>I. Creation of the World.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Difficulties in knowing God .....	3
God's purpose is faith.....	5
<i>First Principle: The Majesty and Glory of God.....</i>	<i>6</i>
1. God is One.....	7
2. God is personal.....	7
3. God is powerful .....	8
4. God is good .....	9
5. God is intelligent .....	12
6. Other aspects of God .....	12
<b>II. Creation of Man .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Man is different from the animals.....	13
Man in God's image .....	15
Man's experience before the Fall.....	18
<b>III. The Fall .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Delegated authority.....	21
The devil.....	22
The devil's strategy .....	23
The temptation of Eve .....	30
<i>Second Principle: The Reality and Nature of Sin .....</i>	<i>34</i>
Essence of sin .....	34
The consequences of sin .....	38
<b>IV. Cain, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel .....</b>	<b>38</b>
Cain: The spread of the consequences of sin .....	43
The Flood: God judges sin .....	45
The Tower of Babel: Splitting into nations.....	45
Summary.....	43
<i>Appendix: Christ Died for the Ungodly (Horatius Bonar) .....</i>	<i>46</i>

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# The Majesty of God

## The Nature of Sin

### I. Creation of the World

#### *Difficulties in knowing God*

##### *We are dead*

Man needs a revelation from God! This is because we are “dead” to God in our natural state. We are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). If we are to live spiritually, it only will be by God’s giving new life to us because “we were dead in sins” (Eph. 2:5). It means we have no contact with God, even though He is all around us. We have no capacity to receive Him.

You can be “dead” to many things. Have you ever seen a man walking his dog without a leash? When the dog gets too far away, the owner will blow a special whistle. You hear nothing, but the dog instantly jumps to attention: the ears go up and he is all alert. The dog hears an urgent, shrill call, but to man it is as if nothing is happening. This is the way natural man is toward God.

Another example is the room where you are. If you are near a city, it is filled with all sorts of electromagnetic waves: radio and television stations, short waves, microwaves. But we neither hear them nor are even aware of their presence. It is as if they do not exist. We have no contact with them *until* we get a proper receiver, one which enables us to establish a connection.

In the same way, God is here; He is all around us—He is not far off. But being dead to God, we have no awareness of Him. With water, we can test it by putting in our hand to tell if it is hot or cold. With God, we can make no such direct assessment.

##### *Our thoughts are deceived*

This does not mean that we do not have thoughts about God. On the contrary, we are thinking of Him all the time, either directly or

indirectly. Even from our earliest years, we begin to be aware that there is some power greater than ourselves; we start to form some impressions about what He must be like. And this continues throughout our whole lives.

What is incredible is that we think our own impressions are right! We even use them as a measuring stick to assess God. For example, when a hurricane strikes, many innocent people suffer. Natural man thinks that God cannot be in control, because a “good God” would not have allowed it to happen. Or they say that God is not altogether trustworthy, because He did, in fact, allow it to happen. They think they are right about God: they are challenging His character; they are actually indicting Him, charging Him with wrongdoing in their own eyes. They think they know better than God what is “right.”

These natural assessments of God are influenced by two things: the nature of man and the devil. Let’s use you, the reader, as an example. Assuming that you do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, when things go well for you, do you thank God for His goodness to you? No, when things go well, it is just the nature of man to think, “I’ve done a pretty good job with this.” We see this in parenting, work accomplishment, even in churches.

But when things go wrong, do you blame God? Do you think that God is not good, or not trustworthy, or both? Somehow it is always God’s fault but never His credit. People have to be taught to be thankful, but they never have to be taught to be bitter. Why? Herein is seen the influence of the devil: he helps you form your opinion of God. He knows you do not have direct contact with God, so he comes to you and says, “What kind of God would allow that?”

This is why we need Scriptures like the first two chapters of Genesis. Without meditation on what God shows us there, man comes to the place where he thinks, “God is just a little bit bigger than I am; He knows just a little more than I do.” We have hundreds of thoughts about what God must be like. But if we truly want to know Him, we must dump most all of our conceptions. The speed of your growth in knowing God is directly related to the speed that you remove your prior conceptions, so that you can take in a fresh assessment of God—who He is—based on the Scriptures alone.

#### *It is a fallen world*

You cannot learn everything needful about God from the world around us. Certainly there are many things one can learn: two wonderful examples are God’s vast offering in the variety of colors and

textures, and His detail in the intricacies of the genetic code. But the world we live in is cursed because of the Fall. There is a limit to what we can learn about a perfect God from an imperfect world! All that He has made has been tainted by sin.

Many boys love to pick up small wildlife, and they enjoy watching films about nature. The films of lions chasing a herd of zebras are tremendous. But it is not tremendous to see the lions catch a zebra and begin tearing into its flesh while it is still alive. It is not tremendous to see vultures eating rotting carcasses. Nature is sometimes not a very attractive place. Indeed, violence and destruction often occur. Because of the curse, the day-to-day survival of the fittest is actually what is happening in nature.

But God's character is not this way. Rather, "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench" (Isaiah 42:3). Hence comes the difficulty of sorting out in nature what is representative of the true character of God and what is representative of the resulting curse from the Fall.

### ***God's purpose is faith***

Revelation is God's revealing Himself to us through the created world and the Scriptures. Revelation is not given to bring us to knowledge; it is given to bring us to *faith*. Knowledge is just an interim step to the real objective: faith in God.

Faith is never intended to be blind. To illustrate, suppose that a man is married with a two-year-old son. If this little boy somehow manages to get onto the roof of the house, he can get down safely by jumping to his father. His jump is not one of blind faith because he knows his father. The child trusts in the knowledge of his father as one who loves him; he is not jumping to a stranger. Likewise, we will trust only those whom we know to be trustworthy.

In chapters one and two of Genesis, God reveals many facts about Himself so that we can know Him. And the knowledge has one purpose: it shows that we can come to Him by faith—a measured assurance that what He has revealed of Himself proves Him to be reliable and trustworthy. In these chapters we learn that God is powerful and in complete control. God's purpose in giving this knowledge is to bring us to a place of *practical faith* in Him.

A good example of practical faith is found in the experience of a young woman who was a missionary in the Middle East. She believed that the Lord was leading her to travel to a different town across the desert, and the only means of transportation available was

by foot. It was dangerous to travel in the desert for two reasons: there were robbers and there were packs of wild dogs. (Wild dogs are especially dangerous in the desert because there are no trees to climb as a way of escape.) Therefore, she hired a group of Arabs as guides. Unhappily, they were superstitious; halfway to the destination, they sensed “bad omens” and insisted on returning to their starting point. They encouraged the missionary to go with them, but she believed that the Lord desired for her to continue on by herself. Her prayer at that point would have been, “Lord, keep away the robbers and the dogs.”

As she continued walking in a ravine, she looked up and saw a pack of dogs coming over the hill. She knew that unless God intervened, this was her end. There was no use running—that would have changed only the place where she was to die. So she decided to stand her ground and watch the events of God’s plan unfold. The dogs came charging straight at her; when only a few yards away, they suddenly turned and went running down the ravine.

Remember the lesson of Genesis 1 and 2: God is in complete control. He always is, but most of the time it does not seem like it to our natural senses. To grow in faith we *must* leave the places of unbelief. When we do, God will bring tests to help us give them up completely.

There is, of course, a great deal more about God which He reveals later when there is opposition to Him. You never know a person fully until you see him tested in all circumstances. There may be confidence in the knowledge possessed of a friend, but new knowledge of that friend may emerge in an unexpected trial. In much the same way, God’s holiness can only be demonstrated in contrast to moral impurity. At the beginning of Genesis there was no impurity; everything God created was pure and untainted. (Later, when this all changed by the entrance of sin, there was clearly a need for God to reveal a new aspect of His character.)

### ***First Principle: The Majesty and Glory of God***

*“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”—Gen. 1:1*

“In the beginning, God...” As the Scriptures open, God tells us a number of fundamental things we must know about Him. Through



Creation, God reveals to us *His majesty and glory*.<sup>1</sup> If people do not know God, this is always the place to start. What, then, are the things God first revealed to us about Himself? Let's look at some specific aspects of the nature of God.

### **1. God is One**

God is uncreated; all else is created by Him. Sometimes people start to think in terms of dualism, where there are two Gods, one good and one evil. Certainly there is evil which is centered in the devil, but the devil is not a god. Putting evil as a coequal force against God is to deny God's sovereign rule over all else. If the devil and every demon were to oppose you directly, and God was for you, then you would win (Rom. 8:31)! The reason the devil seems so strong is only because God has delegated to him the earth as a realm of influence; it has nothing to do with his relative power. There is only one true God; He is the only one for us to know as God.

### **2. God is personal**

God is personal. While it is not true of animals, God made man personal so that He could fellowship with man. A problem in "professing Christianity"<sup>2</sup> is that men want to love God at a distance only. But He has designed us with personality for the purpose of intimate fellowship with Him (1 Cor.1:9). His personal nature includes His preferences, interests, desires, and emotions.

If you do not deal with God as a personal God, you make Him into an abstract "force," a limitless bank account which either pays or withholds based on your own performance. This is a big deception in the New Age movement, eastern religions, and many of the science fiction space movies of our day. There is no concept of personal sin; you just either cooperate with or fight against the "force."

Without knowing God as a personal God, you start dealing with Him like you deal with the government. When the highway speed limit is 65 miles per hour, you can choose to go faster and feel like

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<sup>1</sup> This is the first of many principles which God reveals to us in the Old Testament. The other in Genesis is "the reality and nature of sin."

<sup>2</sup> "Professing Christianity" is the visible church of all people who claim to be Christians. Not all within this group are in fact truly converted (Matt. 7:21-22, 25:11ff; Luke 6:46). The key is whether or not a person has sincerely turned to God. When God does give that person a new heart, he will genuinely turn (repent).

you are not offending any “person”—because the government is not a person.

Marriage, on the other hand, is very personal; it is the most intimate relationship between two human beings. We see most clearly the extent of the personal nature of God in this: ultimately He wants to fellowship with us as His bride.

### **3. *God is powerful***

“And God said,...” (Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26). God spoke, and it came into existence. There was no exertion or effort. Creation was not by working but by speaking. Nothing was “hard”; there was no sense of deterioration or need for repair.<sup>3</sup>

In this day, we should be more impressed by this than all mankind before us. We know much more about the vastness of creation than did prior generations, and this knowledge is growing rapidly. When Aristotle was investigating the universe, he tried to count the stars. He reckoned there were about 10,000 stars because that was all he could see. In the Middle Ages, men working together estimated there to be 20,000 stars. There were even long debates about whether there were one or two stars at particular points in the sky. In the 1400s, the telescope was invented; men anticipated with much excitement the answer to the debates about those particular points. Imagine their surprise when they discovered that some of those points contained ten stars!

When telescopes became more powerful, they saw “clouds” in the sky. These turned out to be entire clusters of stars, eventually understood to be galaxies: multiple suns, many with their own planetary systems. In 1973, the estimate was 100 million galaxies, each with 100 billion stars! In 1991, the upper estimate, the absolute limit to what science could imagine was out there, was one billion galaxies, each with 100 billion stars (you cannot count out loud to one billion in your lifetime). When the Hubble (space-based) Telescope was first used in 1995, this had to be increased significantly, to 100 billion galaxies, many with 200 billion stars (or more)!

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<sup>3</sup> If God created without effort, why did God “rest” on the Sabbath, the seventh day? Jesus Christ said, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). The seventh day was man’s first day after God had made him. The reason God “rested” on the seventh day was in order to enter into this fellowship with man, to give man the privilege to get to know Him! God’s work was completed not just when everything was created, but when it was functioning correctly (for fellowship) as He had designed it.

This is a big universe. Note that light travels at 186,000 miles per second. Light takes about one second to get to the moon and eight minutes to travel to earth from our sun. The closest star is four light *years* away! And at this time the furthest known galaxy is 10 *billion* light years from the earth!

After what you have just read, meditate on this truth: God spoke at one point in time, and all was in place. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament [earth] sheweth His handywork” (Psalm 19:1). Sooner or later, God will test your belief about His power. Will you believe that He is powerful enough to overcome your particular problem?

#### **4. *God is good***

When the lady missionary was watching the dogs as they charged toward her, it is doubtful that she questioned God’s power to stop them. The only real question was: *would* He? The Psalmist asks with us, “What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:4). The biggest reason men reject God is because they do not think that God cares about them; they do not believe that God is “good.”

But at each step in creation, “God saw that it was good.” The great truth in Genesis 1 and 2 is not His power or intelligence, but His goodness. There are several aspects of His goodness revealed to us which are important for us to understand. Perhaps the most important is His moral goodness. Everything in Him is pure, upright, and good. We will see this more when we consider the Fall.

#### *God’s goodness functions perfectly*

God created everything in a moment, and it was all exactly correct the first time. There were no adjustments or fine-tuning, no “factory recalls,” no trial and error to get it right.

Nothing we ever do is exactly right the first time. We get it right only through practice—“Practice makes perfect.” In creative writing classes it is often said, “Good writing is rewriting.” In automotive engineering it is said, “Good engines are old engines,” meaning not old in use but proven designs, where there has been time to get all the flaws worked out of them. In a new computer program, there are always “bugs” which require repeated testing and “debugging” before the program will work correctly.

But God got it all right in one step. We have full eclipses on the earth only because the moon is proportioned to be the exact size needed to cover the sun at the distance it is from the earth. When

God said, “Let there be light,” all the spectrum of light was produced; this includes both that which causes photosynthesis in plants, and the infrared rays which warm the earth. What God does is always good the first time.

God’s goodness functions perfectly in the lives of those who truly belong to Him as His children; all that happens to Christians is for their perfect good. Why, then, are we so afraid to trust Him? If we try to take over God’s working in our lives, we create enormous stress, effort, noise, errors, and problems. But when we trust in His goodness, there is rest, joy, and peace.

*God’s goodness is beneficial*

God’s goodness is flowing with blessing. He even uses the consequences of sin to bring blessing—to work it out for good (Rom. 8:28-29).

In contrast, most people weigh out the pros and cons when making life decisions, either consciously or subconsciously. They make a list of both the good and the bad that will come from a particular choice, and they choose the one that will have the most “good.”

This is plainly seen with medicines which have lists of side effects. Each medicine has a prescribed benefit, but there is always a warning; you take it only if the anticipated benefit is greater than the side effects. In fact, everything we do involves some gain and some loss: when we buy an ice cream cone, we gain five or ten minutes of pleasure, but we have lost forever the money it cost to buy it.

Conversely, there were no side effects when God created. *All* was beneficial. When God does something, there is blessing in it on all sides; there are no negatives anywhere. This is seen in Adam being given dominion over the earth. Included in this was the responsibility to name all the animals himself. God could have done it and simply told Adam, but God gave the privilege and the freedom to man. Adam was truly free to be and to do what he wanted in God’s earthly creation. There was one and only one restriction for Adam, but no long list of “Thou shalt not....” Everything else was permitted. All the restrictions of Law and all the negative consequences came about only because of the Fall.

Even the stars are there for man’s benefit; God gives them to tell us about Himself—to display His power and vast magnificence. But we manage to distort this purpose: we look at the stars and wonder if man could live on another planet or perhaps find life in space. The focus becomes man-centered instead of God-centered.

Please note that Adam was not focused on himself during this period of time. Today many are occupied with what they like and dislike. But Adam was totally content in the Garden, even without a wife. It was not because of Adam's complaining (as the Israelites did thousands of years later), but because of God's beneficence that He said, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). God was concerned with the good of man when man didn't even know that he had a need.

*God's goodness is abundant*

How much space does one man need? Those who grew up in frugal environments often heard, "Enough is all you need." Many people today are "thrifty" or have to live in need of even basic supplies. Often these notions are carried over to our concept of God; we think we never can expect abundance from God. Indeed, He may withhold it from many in this day, but only because of the Fall. Everything about His character speaks of *abundance*.

This was wonderfully evident in the Garden of Eden, which was destroyed in the Flood. From the description in the Scriptures we can conclude that it was very large, probably hundreds of square miles—larger perhaps than Adam could have walked on any given day. God gave it to him in abundance to enjoy.

Yet man asks, "Does God love me? Will God provide for my needs?" It is true that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). But this is only because of the Fall. Our sinful nature now prohibits us from enjoying such abundance without falling prey to pride, selfishness, and covetousness. We cannot handle more than we have because we would hurt ourselves with it. It would be like a six-year-old boy asking for a pocket knife. More might be delightful, but only if we could handle it. With God's true abundance, even the best of us would tend to ignore God and consider ourselves self-sufficient.

The reason why there were over 600 commands given in the Law is because man's fallen nature needed them. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). God alone knows our hearts, and He knows that we must follow Him absolutely—because our own choices would be bad for us.

Instead of these restrictions, what we see before the Fall is the true heart of God: abundant blessing and abundant choices for Adam. God could give him these because he had no fallen nature.

But as soon as Adam fell, God had to take even Adam out of the Garden. It was no longer good for him to be there!

### **5. *God is intelligent***

God wants us to be amazed at creation—and we should be! Let us look at some amazing examples to catch a glimpse of the wonderful intelligence of our God.

Why do birds migrate? It is actually a difficult question. Some birds use the stars, but how did they ever know to do that? If you look at Monarch butterflies anywhere on the eastern seaboard in the fall, you will see them generally flying in the same direction: south. Every Monarch butterfly migrates thousands of miles each year to one field in central Mexico! But the life-span of this butterfly is less than a year; it is not like flocks of birds, where the new generation follows the older on the migration routes. These butterflies have never been there before, yet they all find the same place year after year. And the brain of the butterfly is much smaller than a pea! What goes on in nature is amazing.

Did you know that man is right in the middle of the orders of magnitude in all of creation? A spoonful of water contains about  $10^{26}$  atoms (10 with 26 zeros after it). If each atom were the size of a Ping-Pong ball, these would fill the earth! Suffice it to say that an atom is very small, yet science has discovered many orders of magnitude smaller than the atom. The smallest of these particles is proportionately as much smaller than man as the universe is larger than man! Every time science discovers the next larger thing, it also discovers the next smaller. Man is just in the middle of all the created universe—and this is not coincidence.

### **6. *Other aspects of God***

We also see that God is *true*: what He says, happens. This is an important ingredient of trustworthiness. When God said, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3), then there *was* light. And the same thing happened with everything God said during the act of creation. Based on creation, therefore, we never have a cause to doubt what God says.

God is also the perfect *judge*. He is watching over all the earth and seeing everything that happens. One day there will be a reckoning, an accounting, where every thought, attitude, word, and action will be brought to light and judged, according to God’s perfect righteousness.

## II. Creation of Man

### *Man is different from the animals*

The creation of man is a creation apart. It is different in kind than all the rest of creation. Even though the biblical record concerning this is very short, that fact only increases the significance of the words used, especially when they are decidedly different words and actions from those used for the other acts of creation.

*“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” – Gen. 2:7*

#### *1. Means of creation*

In the other acts of creation, God spoke and it came into being. But with man, God “breathed into his nostrils.” This was a deliberate act of creation, a specialness reserved only for man. The “breath of life” given is also indicative of this. The creation of man was distinct from all other aspects of creation.

Today there is a great effort by society to diminish the difference between human beings and animals. We hear of the intelligence of dolphins and chimpanzees and even the artistic ability of elephants! But man is separate—a creation apart. He is to rule over all the rest; his life is categorically different from the animals.

God tells us this in order that we might adjust our thinking. To the extent that you have adopted an evolutionary perspective, or an identification with the animals as your “co-habitants” on planet earth, you must drop it. You must conform your thinking to what God has shown us very clearly in these opening chapters of Genesis.

*“And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth.” – Gen. 1:26*

#### *2. “Let Us”*

This brief word alone tells us that the act of creating man was different from all the other acts of creation. It was made special in that there was deliberation among the Godhead, giving it a unique place of importance.

#### *3. “Have dominion”*

Man was given dominion over everything in the whole earth. To have dominion means to rule over or to exercise authority over. It

was a clear hierarchy of only two levels: man was on top, and all else was underneath.

By implication it is possible that even the weather was included in man's dominion! It is indicated in another biblical passage that the devil exercised some influence on the weather (Job 1:19). If this is true, it is not because he is a god; he was able to usurp the authority of man at the Fall because man abdicated his God-given authority over everything.

#### 4. *"In Our image, after Our likeness"*

This is a wonderfully descriptive phrase which is filled with meaning. Let us spend some time here, because the self-image/self-esteem teaching of our day has distorted God's meaning quite significantly. Perhaps we can understand the intent of God with two illustrations.

Firstly, man's being in the image of God is like the relation between an object and its *shadow*. The building you are in at this moment casts a shadow on a sunny day. From the shadow, you know something about the building; for example, a rectangular building cannot cast a round shadow. But there is much you cannot know by simply studying the shadow; you cannot know what goes on inside the building or how old it is. In the same way, your shadow is your own "image"; it is like you. But it is not *you*; it is different from you in a thousand important ways.

Secondly, it is like the relation between you and your *photograph*. In your photo, anyone can see the glory of the actual person who is you, especially if it is one of those "glamour shots." They can tell a lot about you, but there are also many limitations. From the photo, others do not know the sound of your voice, your personality, your athletic ability, your emotional maturity, the extent of kindness and love in your heart, etc.

This is one of the key problems in human thinking. We look at ourselves and think, "God must be like me." No, we are like God, "made in His image," but this does not imply that He is like us. We think, "If I feel this for that person, then God must feel it too." It must always be remembered, as pictured in the illustrations of the shadow and photograph, that we are the *reflection* of God's image, not identical to it. In this measured way we are like God, but there is a limit placed on the resemblance between God and man. It is important not to go beyond this limit or make assumptions about the resemblance that are not true.



Indeed, we are like God in some specific ways. The problem with us as fallen men is that we want to be like God in the ways we are not, and we do not particularly care to be like Him in the ways we are. One of the effects of the Fall is to turn men backwards from the way God intended.

To be clear, being after God's "likeness" is *not a physical* likeness. God does not have a "body." The Bible speaks of His "hand," His "wings," and even His "feathers" (Psalm 118:16, 57:1, 91:4). These are figures of speech called *anthropomorphisms* (from *anthro*—man, and *morphe*—form). The Scriptures use them to help us understand certain aspects of God's character; by giving a description of physical aspects to which we can relate. When the Scriptures say that God desires to cover us with His "feathers," it means that He has a tender, compassionate, protective care that is somewhat similar to a hen toward her chicks.

### ***Man in God's image***

Once again, man is unique in all creation because he is created in God's image and likeness. Exactly how can this be seen?

#### ***1. Mental likeness***

Our mental capacity is the ability to think, to reason things through, to consider conceptual thoughts, and to associate abstract ideas. Abstract ideas would include things like loyalty, love, compassion, patriotism, etc.

Man has the unique capability, like God, to enter into the thoughts and emotions of another, even though he has not actually lived that person's experience. He can be loyal, for example, to someone he has never even met.

Animals absolutely cannot do this. A dog can respond to a repeated identical circumstance exactly as it did in the past. But if it "growls," it is not because the dog has an inner attitude of hate; it simply has been taught to respond with a growl in that situation.

#### ***2. Moral likeness***

We are like God morally, and in this we are distinctly different from animals. This moral likeness has three components:

- a. *Mind*: It requires a mental capacity to grasp an abstract *moral standard*, a list of what is right and wrong.
- b. *Will*: It requires a will which can *make choices*, to come to yes-or-no decisions about alternative courses of action.

c. *Conscience*: This is a tool God has placed within us which *tells us* if we have acted rightly or wrongly.

The *conscience* innately compares the *choice* we make to the *moral standard*. If you are told, “Don’t walk on the grass,” and you walk on the grass, you will get a message about it from your conscience. The conscience is formed by the mind choosing what to believe as true. Emotions only disrupt the conscience; they cloud its objectivity and make a black-and-white situation into a complicated “gray area.” It has been said, “Emotions are the waves on the sea of conscience.”

Animals have none of this. They cannot compare alternative choices to a standard. The Monarch butterfly, for example, gets to Mexico by God-given instinct, not by comparing road markers to a map as a frame of reference in its mind. Neither can animals control their *drives*. Man has drives also, but he has the God-given ability to control them. If a dog is hungry, it cannot choose to leave a bowl of food alone simply because the bowl belongs to another dog. It cannot take in a moral standard of personal property or of sharing with others. You can paddle the dog until it associates pain with eating out of the wrong bowl. When it dislikes the pain more than it likes eating the food, then it will avoid the wrong bowl, but only because you have formed a stronger habit (avoiding pain). It has no moral capacity to choose what is “right” the way that man has.

Please note that what God gives, man perverts. We are not inhabiting the earth with the animals as co-equals, as some suppose. Recently there was a serious question given by some extreme environmentalists: who should live, a healthy dog or a deformed child? The answer was the healthy dog, based on the reasoning that the dog could have a better quality of life. No, the earth was given to man to have dominion (rule) over it. Only man has a moral likeness to God.

### 3. *Social likeness*

Animals like to flock together for procreation and for protection, but this is by instinct. They have no capacity to enter into the emotional experience of others.

Man, on the other hand, has a strong desire to fellowship with others. One person can genuinely identify with and feel the same emotion that another person is feeling because of circumstances being experienced. You can actually enter into another’s experience of painful grief or blessed rejoicing in close, personal intimacy. You can enter into the emotions of a fictional person who does not even

exist, as in a good book or movie. This identification can exist even at a distance, across hundreds of miles or years!

Why did God give these capacities to man as part of being made in His image? There is only one reason: to give you the capacity to know Him. Let that sink in for a moment: God made you in His image in order to give you the unique ability *to know, love, fellowship with, and share the thoughts and emotions of the living God!*

Augustine said, “God, Thou hast made us for Thyself; we are restless until we find our rest in Thee.” Another said, “There is a vacuum in the heart of man, which was made for God and which only God can fill.” The reason you were made differently from the animals is so that you, *you personally*, can enter into fellowship with God.

Why did God make us moral beings? The only way we could enter into the love of God is by having the capacity to love. Love is making a choice for the sake of another. If we were like animals, we could respond to a master, but only by instinct or learned behavior (reaction to a stimulus). There would be no moral choice involved. Fellowship with God is based on our making the right moral choice—of our own will—which He has given us the special capacity to exercise.

Why did God give us social capacity whereby we can enter into the heart of another? Only so that we could enter into God’s own heart. To be alive eternally is, “that they might *know Thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3). God did not call us to serve Him, but to *know* Him. God did not create us because He needed helpers! No, rather, Jesus Christ died, “the just for the unjust, that He might *bring us to God*” (1 Peter 3:18).

The great waste of human capability is to use these capacities to serve ourselves. We take the capacity to love and waste it on wondering whether others will love us! The capacity to love is not given to help us become popular with others. Relationship to other people is important, but it is designed to be secondary. Relationship to God is designed by God Himself to be primary in our lives.

Along this same line, we also waste our God-given talents when we use them primarily to enjoy the world’s entertainments. We take a potential good that God has given which can be used for God’s glory, and we allow hundreds of hours every year to slip through our fingers in the pursuit of our own personal pleasure.

All God wants is for us to walk with Him. If you walk with Him, then He does the rest, doing His work toward others through you. He is quite capable of causing great blessings if you will only get to the place where God wants you to be. That place is *fellowship with Himself*! He has created you first and foremost for this.

### ***Man's experience before the Fall***

#### ***1. Enormous intelligence***

We know Adam had enormous intelligence because He named all the animals. And he did not need to be reminded of those thousands of names, even after just one time through! This is incredible. Most people have trouble remembering their social security number or the birth dates of their parents.

It is disturbing to the evolutionist to think that man is deteriorating in intelligence.<sup>4</sup> The evolutionary view of increasing intelligence does not hold up in history. It is true that we have more information and technology now—these are developed over time. But the reality is that man was most probably at the apex of his intelligence in Adam.

#### ***2. No death or aging***

Adam was never sick; there was no disease in the Garden at all. He was perpetually young and strong. People reach their peak physically around the age of 20, and after that it is all a fading away: “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: ...surely the people *are* grass” (Isaiah 40:6-7).

#### ***3. Dominion***

As stated earlier, the whole earth was Adam's to rule. And it was a friendly earth. There was little or no toil for food, mainly just to pick the fruit when desired. The mosquitoes didn't bite, the sun didn't burn, and the lions didn't attack.

#### ***4. Fellowship with God***

We need to notice the free and easy manner of this fellowship. In our approach to fellowship we tend to err on both sides: we treat God too casually, or we freeze up into a cold formality with Him.

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<sup>4</sup> What is actually happening to us over time after the Fall is that we are becoming more beast-like in our morals. The increase in crime, drugs, social diseases, pornography, and the degeneration of the environment in most public schools should be enough to convince anyone of man's steep moral decline.

Reverence is good, as Moses discovered at the burning bush when God told him to remove his sandals for it was holy ground. Removing the sandals was a sign of humility. Why did God require it? It was because Moses, like us, had a heart prone to pride. A healthy reverence for God's holiness and majesty is very needful for us.

But Adam had no sin nature. He was able to be totally free and easy in his fellowship with God. It is good for us also to be "free" in our approach to God, as long as we also remember our place with reverence. We must avoid an "unholy familiarity" with God who is holy.

#### *5. Unlimited freedom*

Before the Fall, Adam did not strive constantly to remember to obey God. In contrast, after the Fall we have many commands that demand our obedience. Just to speak "the truth in love" requires great diligence to obey faithfully (Eph. 4:15). But Adam had only the one restriction: avoid eating the fruit of one particular tree. That is the entirety of the restrictions upon him. Adam had virtually unlimited freedom over all the earth.

God is not interested in putting us in bondage. He has designed our fellowship with Him to be free and easy. But He knows our hearts, so He *has* to put restrictions on us—He has to protect us from ourselves. With our sin nature, and the devil on our back, and the world pressing in upon us, what would we do with virtually unlimited freedom? It would be terrible. The planet would be a vigilante zone with suffering at the hands of others on every side.

It was all so very different before the Fall. God had a wonderful freedom for Adam—a simple life with one purpose: walking with God.

#### *6. Responsibility*

*"Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion...over every living thing..." – Gen. 1:20*

Adam's enormous freedom was a wonderful privilege given by God. But it is important to realize that all privileges carry with them responsibilities.

A responsibility is a choice that has consequences. It is quite different from a restriction, which is something we should not do. While God placed on Adam only one restriction, He gave Adam many responsibilities in the Garden: to rule over the earth and bring it into subjection. Under God, Adam was responsible and his choices

had consequences: the earth was to prosper under his rule. The text implies that Adam fulfilled these responsibilities with joy and pleasure by the grace of God. It was only when he violated the one restriction that everything changed.

On occasion we will call upon a real character whose name is changed to Artis in order to protect the innocent. Years ago Artis went to a Christian college and was immediately confronted with a big rule book. He liked it because he thought the rules would be good for keeping the rowdy students under control: “no drinking alcohol” and “be in bed by 23:00” for example. But Artis soon discovered that the students were violating the rules on every side. Why? Quite simply, the rules were not enforced; in actual practice, there were no consequences for irresponsible behavior. The rule book was there only to put the parents at ease, not to assist the students in responsible choices with their good in mind. With God, however, there is always a consequence for each choice we make; He wants us to be responsible beings.

### 7. *Fulfillment*

Think about this: Adam had no wants and no needs! For most people today that seems impossible. Everything around us in the world is designed to create material or emotional wants—TV commercials, advertising billboards, and even peer pressure (when others have *it*, and we do not). But Adam had perfect contentment before the Fall. He had extraordinary fellowship with God and wonderful, continuous harmony in marriage. All his needs were totally fulfilled.

Moreover, his sense of fulfillment set him truly “free.” Freedom is more than simply not having to obey someone else’s rule book. Adam was *secure*; he was safe in God at all times. Adam was *satisfied*; he had no sense of wants or needs. And Adam had *sufficiency*; all of God’s resources were available to him so that he never felt incapable or frustrated. He had all of this freedom because of his fellowship with God.

To summarize, before the Fall man had enormous intelligence, dominion over the entire earth, fellowship with God, virtually unlimited freedom to go where and do what he wanted, complete fulfillment, and only one small restriction to observe. There was no death or aging, no sickness or accidents, and no long list of rules to follow. He lived in a perfect world.

### III. The Fall

Compared to creation before the Fall, the world today is in a miserable state. There is sin on every side: hatred fills the earth, sickness and suffering abound, and anxiety is at an all-time high. There are drugs, abortion, infanticide, genocide, terrorism, and forceful oppression. In India, you can be born on the street, grow up on the street, and die on the street—never having had a name, a family, or a home. On top of all this, half of the planet is fighting every day against the environment just to survive.

Why is there so much misery and strife? It is because man's sin has separated him from God. Man not only wants to avoid God, in his "enlightenment" he debates whether God even exists! The nation of Israel was given the book of the Law; it was a large book because there was so much sin to be addressed. The simple life God intended for us has become difficult and complicated, disguised by a deceitful enemy, a complicated world, and a sinful flesh. Our fallen flesh listens to the enemy and loves the world. It has brought us to the point where, as a philosopher has said, "Even in the best of places, men live lives of quiet desperation." So many people think to themselves, "I am tired of living, and afraid of dying."

How did this come to pass? All was perfect in the Garden, but it changed drastically and dramatically in a moment of time.

#### ***Delegated authority***

We must realize that it was Adam, not Eve, who had the responsibility of the race on his shoulders. It was Adam who had been given the authority over the earth and the responsibility to submit himself to God by observing the one restriction. Biblically, God made the man and gave him the authority. He made Eve from the man and gave her to him to help him in his responsibility. To be clear, Eve was not inferior to Adam; she simply was created by God for a different role from Adam. Temptation came by Eve; the Fall came by Adam.

Even though Adam had all the authority, it was given upon the condition of his obedience. All authority is delegated from a higher authority and is conditional. You obey a policeman who is directing traffic, but only because he submits to the police chief who submits to the city council, and so on. If any were to go against their higher authority, they would be out of a job; their authority would be taken away.

Artis had a construction job, and often had to sign out for materials from the supply depot. If he had begun signing for the requested quantity, plus some for himself to take home, he would soon have been out of a job. All authority exists on condition of obedience within the prescribed limits.

God made Adam, and then made him the lord of the earth. The one and only condition upon Adam to keep his authority was to observe but one restriction: do not eat the fruit of one particular tree.

We must keep this one restriction in perspective. It was not as if there were only a few trees from which Adam could choose to eat. No, the Garden was great in size, probably hundreds of square miles, and filled with abundant trees. In addition, although the Garden was a special place, Adam did not have to stay exclusively in that location. The whole earth was given to him for dominion. And the earth was lush: 25,000 miles in circumference and filled with millions of trees. In this entire earth, there was but one tree that was restricted. Adam could have gone for a long time and not even seen the tree!

In this abundance, God set one tree in one place to put one restriction on Adam—*just one!* He could not eat the fruit of that one tree. He could touch it, pick it, juggle with it; he could even decorate his home with it. But he could not eat it.

God gave this one restriction for one purpose: that Adam might know that *God was God*. As God's special creation, Adam had to be able to demonstrate submission to God through moral choices. The tree was that daily opportunity to show his submission to God, to learn to carryout responsibility. While God had given Adam abundant blessing in the Garden, Adam was still the creature, not the Creator.

### ***The devil***

In Genesis 3 we are introduced to the third main character of the Bible. We have seen God, and then man, and now the devil makes his first appearance. He is not named here specifically, but is manifested as the "serpent."<sup>5</sup>

We are told some facts about the devil in the Bible. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself told us:

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<sup>5</sup> To remove any doubt that it was in fact the devil confronting Eve in the Garden, he is called the "serpent of old" in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2.



*“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” – John 10:10*

What was the devil’s purpose?

*To steal:* to steal from man the authority which God had given him. The devil cannot stand to be under authority. He wants to be in control. No doubt he saw Adam in control of that beautiful world, and he wanted it for himself.

*To kill:* to kill the man himself. The devil is a murderer; he cannot give life, so he seeks to take it. He sought to kill man by getting him to violate the law of God, resulting in actual spiritual death.

*To destroy:* to destroy the fellowship and praise that man had with God, and even the glory of God in man. This is the potential to be God-like in our character, not in omnipotence but in holiness and love. The devil’s aim is to warp the character of man, so that it is like the devil in impurity and selfishness instead of like God.

The devil is capable of nothing but destruction. He may have been the highest of created beings at one time. But he rebelled against God and has been set on exalting himself above God ever since by any means (Isaiah 14:12-15).

Contrast this with what Jesus told us about Himself: Jesus came to give us abundant life. Adam, in fact, enjoyed this abundant life of fellowship with God. Jesus came that we might also have this same life.

Very few people really believe these fundamental truths:

- When God asks something of you, it is for life. Instead, at such times people often doubt whether God loves them at all.
- When sin is tempting you, it is for the purpose of your own *destruction!*

People today say they “hate evil,” but in truth they do not; secretly they love their selfish pleasures and the world’s ways. They say they “love God,” but they do not; secretly they are suspicious of God and inclined to enjoy the devil’s ways versus their own Creator.

### ***The devil’s strategy***

The devil’s goal was simple: to cause man to give away to him the authority which God had given to man. God allowed this because he created man with the capability to make moral choices. And He sovereignly allows man to experience the consequences of those choices. (It is this capacity for moral choices that allows man to enter into fellowship with God.)

How would Adam give his authority away to the devil? There was only one way: to take himself out from under submission to God. This submission was symbolized by the one restriction God had given to Adam: he was not to eat from one particular tree (and be content with enjoying all the remaining others!). It was a place Adam could not go, a point where he had to acknowledge that while he had authority, it was not the final authority—God had the final authority. But if he would submit himself on this one point to God's authority, God would delegate to him authority over all the rest. This God-given authority is what the devil coveted—the right to rule over all the earth.

This was not an easy goal for the devil. It was hard to find an area where Adam could be tempted. Adam:

- had but one restriction to live under, and it was an easy one
- was not hungry
- was not in a narrow place; instead there was blessed abundance and variety (If there had been only manna to eat, perhaps Adam would have desired a “taste-temptation.”)
- had plenty of space to explore
- had no wants; he was perfectly fulfilled
- had no fear concerning the future
- had no sin nature (On this point we can't identify with Adam. Viewing this situation *with* a sin nature produces a very different response. For example, if God had said that the only sin was *not* walking on two feet, then men would be crawling! It is just *in* us now to want to cross God in order to be independent. We are filled with selfishness!)

Succinctly stated, this was the devil's dilemma: how do you get a man who has *everything* to give it up in exchange for *nothing*?!? The devil's strategy was to go after Eve, and to be able through her to get to Adam. This is a common strategy of his. When there are godly parents, his approach is to attack the children, and through them attempt to bring down the parents. When there is one godly spouse, his approach is to attack the ungodly spouse, and through the latter to bring down the former.

But how did the devil manage to get to Eve who was as blessed with abundant life as was Adam?

### 1. *He lies.*

The devil has nothing to offer, so he has to convince man that what he does have to offer is something, when it is actually nothing. The devil approaches each one of us just as he did Eve, using *doubt* and *dissatisfaction*. He creates doubt that God is telling the truth in His commands to you, and dissatisfaction with what God has provided for you.

The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was most probably not uniquely special in any way. It was just one of many trees, but one that was marked off by God as a restriction. There is a theological debate about whether or not the tree was intrinsically “spiritual” which would have given a spiritual perception they otherwise could not have known. This is possible, but not necessarily so. The knowledge of evil which they gained from eating the fruit of the restricted tree came most likely from first-hand experience of sin, of violating God’s command and experiencing that sin’s consequences.

The key is this: if the devil was to get Eve to eat of the tree, he could not tell the truth. “He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44). Further, the devil is not only a liar, but a “deceiver.” Most people lie at certain times to protect themselves. They tell a “little lie” to avoid embarrassment or inconvenience. The devil never lies for this purpose. When he lies to you, it is always so that he might *destroy* you (John 10:10). His intent is malicious without exception. Deception is precisely this: lying with the intent to destroy.

God, on the other hand, is always truthful. Being a Christian involves a responsibility to tell the truth always. When things are not totally truthful, as they never are when under the influence of the devil, situations are filled with potential for error and trouble. When true Christians go out to witness for the Lord, they must always tell the truth. Have you ever noticed that Jesus Christ never flattered anyone? He spoke positively about someone only when there was a notable excellence about them.

Artis likes to fish. He uses little live minnows as bait on a hook at the end of a leader line. With thousands of minnows in the water, how does Artis get the big fish to go after his one little minnow? It’s simple: when the big fish comes around, the other minnows swim

away. Artis' little minnow tries to swim away too, but it can swim only until it reaches the end of the leader line.

It looks like Artis is being nice, going to a lot of trouble to give the big fish a free meal. In fact, he does everything he can to get a healthy, attractive, tasty minnow as close to the big fish as possible. But Artis' purpose is not for the well-being of the big fish; the real purpose is hidden—a clever deception. As soon as the big fish bites the hook, Artis' whole attitude changes. With every fiber of his being, his entire focus is to get that fish into the boat—and later eat it for dinner!

The key in deception is that it looks good on the surface, but the reality is *very* different. God has given the devil the possibility to influence the world system. The devil has used this influence to make it *totally destructive* to our eternal souls. The devil's deception is twofold: 1) to make the lie look as attractive as possible, and 2) to use the lie for the sole purpose of destruction. The devil set about to steal man's God-given authority over the earth by deception.

## 2. *He offers "life"*

What did the devil offer Eve that she didn't already have? There was nothing new to offer her, so he offered her "life." Real "life" is what men seek today: fulfillment, satisfaction, completeness, self-actualization, recognition, achievement. Please realize that this was what Eve already had in her abundant life with God!

But the "life" the devil offers *does not exist*. This can be seen in the world of television which offers a fantasy that does not exist in reality: there is sin without consequences, destruction without pain or suffering, and compromise without guilt. The producers do not care if it is a deception; it is OK in the name of harmless "entertainment." But it is *very* harmful: it creates an attitude of mind which thinks the world actually works that way. People begin to internalize the "reality" seen on TV; they allow it to overwhelm their conscience and any righteous teaching they have had regarding right and wrong.

The whole world system is basically a lie. The devil is using every part of it to destroy life with God. It seems attractive and fulfilling to get "life" as the world portrays it, to fill what the world says is a "need." But the "need" does not really exist (and if it did, what the world offers would not fulfill it). The fisherman's concern is not really for the fish, but to destroy the fish. The "life" the world

offers is a *deception designed to destroy* the abundant life with God of true believers on this earth.

How does the devil offer “life”?

*a. Focus on the world*

He points to the *world* around you, rather than to *God*. He says “life” is in experiencing the world. Please understand, God gave us all things richly to enjoy (1 Tim. 6:17). There is nothing wrong by definition in enjoying the world. If there were, all Christians would have to become monks like those whose solution in the Middle Ages was to live in caves to be totally separated from the world. They attempted not being *of* the world by not being *in* the world. Even this extreme outward self-denial can lead to self-righteousness, where a person pridefully considers himself more spiritual than others. Rather, enjoying things in the world becomes a problem only when we attempt to find “life” in them!

The life that God wants to give us is not in avoiding the world; it is in knowing God. God’s purpose is not to restrict us. He wants to give us an abundant life if we will love Him with all of our heart.

The devil subtly brings confusion by turning us *away* from God and *to* the world to try to find “life.” It can even include the wonderful love relationships in our homes. The devil tries to get loving parents to find “life” in their children, or wives to find it in their husbands—to get the family to meet the need for “life.” If you do this, you are playing right into the devil’s schemes. But life is in knowing God; then you can truly enjoy the loving relationships which He alone can give.

*b. Always “later”*

The devil’s offer of “life” is *always later*. It always requires just one more step.

Once Artis purchased a new camera and quickly began to enjoy taking photos as a hobby. He would take a good picture, and then see someone else’s better picture, and ask, “How did you do that?” The answer was always, “You need to have one of these.” There was always something more to buy. At first it was a filter, and then a longer lens, and then a “fill” flash, and then a tripod. Artis finally asked, “When does it stop?” The answer was, “It never stops!”

This is just the way the devil works. First he says, “You need this relationship in order to be happy.” So you get into that relationship and he says, “Now you need the relationship and this car.” And then

it is the relationship, the car, and this nice house with a garage for the car, and then a pool, etc. It is always the next thing (Prov. 27:20).

John D. Rockefeller was one of the richest men in the world. On his deathbed he was asked, “How much money is enough?” He answered, “Just one dollar more.”

If you get on the devil’s treadmill in the world, you will discover “life” is always later. The reason is simple: he doesn’t have it to give to you now—or ever—because it doesn’t exist! The point of satisfaction with a fulfilled life never comes. The only thing the devil has to keep you on his fishing line is to tell you there is more later, just a step away, and then you will get there. But there is always another step—the world is the devil’s treadmill. This causes you to lose your “today.” Most people are living for some kind of “next event” to make them happy.

Our God, in contrast, is a “present tense” God; life in Him is fellowship with Him *now*. True Christians have life right now; they are “satisfied” in their inmost being. They have plans and hopes and dreams, but they are not obsessed with them. You can recognize when you have allowed anything to obsess you: when something doesn’t happen as you had hoped, you become upset.

We can know God Himself *right now*. It is not that you can know Him someday, or somewhere else, or when you know more Scripture. His purpose for Christians is fellowship with Him *now*. It was His purpose when you awoke this morning; you could have had communion with Him in time set apart. It is His purpose as you go through the day, seeing Him work all around you in the people and circumstances of life. It does not matter where you are in knowledge or location. If you lay hold of the truth of Christianity, one of the great things that will happen to you is this: you will experience God right now. Your life will become a present tense life. You will be living in the “now,” not regretting the past or depending on the future. You will have a complete satisfaction in your heart—right now.

#### *c. Outside God’s boundary*

The third aspect of the devil’s offer is that it is *always just outside God’s boundary* which is His Law. The devil offers “life” just on the other side of what God has said is good for us, *just across* the line that God has drawn. It is just barely across, within reach, only a step away, so that it seems so reasonable to have it too. The devil says things into your thoughts like, “too bad, you are so close, you almost could have it all; maybe it would be OK this time, just this once.”

Artis was a big football fan. He had watched every SuperBowl since the beginning of SuperBowls; he had seen most of the games of his favorite team as well. Then Artis was saved. He chose to begin using Sundays as a day set apart for fellowship with his Lord. As most everyone knows, the SuperBowl is always played on a Sunday. And for several years, it seemed to Artis like it had to be okay to watch that one event on Sunday—at least to get the “fulfillment” of the SuperBowl. Then one day it dawned on him that he could not remember the names of the teams who played a few years before, let alone remember who won, or what was the score. Those days were stolen away from eternal purposes, and they completely failed to deliver what they had promised.

The devil offers “life,” but it happens to involve something that God has forbidden; whatever that something is, it is just across the line which marks out the will of God. Does it really give “life?” No, there is no long-term satisfaction at all; there is nothing about it that is significant in any way. It is like a big football game where you cannot remember anything about it later. But today, the world is filled with all kinds of things which ensnare people because they think that in them is “life”: prostitution, drunkenness, drugs, pornography, adultery, homosexuality. All are obviously destructive and not satisfying; there is nothing about them like God’s true abundant life. But the devil deceives people into thinking that if they experience it just this once, then they will have “life.”

A Christian woman was convinced, “If I were married, then I would be happy.” An interested man came along with only one problem: he was seeking after God, but he had not yet trusted in Christ. God has told believers not to be unequally yoked in marriage, but that did not stop this couple from getting married. Is it a happy life? No, it can be filled with heartache and disappointment!

You learn of something you really want to experience (like watching an award-winning movie which tells a great story but also contains indecency and profanity) but it happens to be just outside the boundary that God has prescribed for you. So you have a choice: either miss out on “life,” or disobey God. You start to think that that particular “life” is to be experienced in this world. You ask yourself, “Why can’t I?” But as soon as you ask this, you have started down the road of deception on the way to destruction.

The devil managed to convince Eve of this in her perfect circumstances. It is still the same pattern with us today, but the devil’s work

is so much easier. We have to contend with a sin nature, a weak body of flesh, a fallen world, a lack of fulfillment, and an enemy who brings constant deception.

Contrast this with the reality of God. He said, “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting *life*” (John 4:14). Does that sound like God wants to withhold life from you? Quite the contrary, God gives life that is truly satisfying, the abundant life of knowing and fellowshiping with Him.

All this can be had *within the boundaries* which God has set for us. Everything we need for complete fulfillment is inside God’s boundaries. If there were something needful outside His boundaries which is also good for us now, He would have already brought it in. God’s boundaries have nothing to do with cutting us off from anything we really need. The fact is, if it were truly good for us *and* outside the boundary, then God would not be completely “good.” But our God *is* good in the fullest meaning of the word.

### ***The temptation of Eve***

As previously stated, the devil uses *doubt* and *dissatisfaction* in order to tempt us to turn from God’s ways: doubt of His truthfulness, and dissatisfaction with His goodness. The devil’s opening question to Eve, “did God say not to eat of any tree in the Garden?” is obviously wrong (compare Gen. 2:17 and 3:1). But it was only a first step in his deception, and it was the first step in creating Eve’s dissatisfaction.

This is why we must be so careful in what we say about others, and what we believe from what we hear. Whether it be true or not, a part of it will stick in our minds, and we will begin to have just a little doubt about the person. It is the beginning of the devil’s work in temptation.

We need to learn from the devil’s approach to Eve the two ways he brings temptation, even today.

*“Now the serpent... said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, ‘Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, ‘Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.’ And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die...” – Gen. 3:1-4*



### *1. The devil creates dissatisfaction with God's goodness*

What the devil actually was saying in his opening question is this: "Has God withheld the real satisfaction of the world from you?" Of course God had not, but a doubt was created as to whether God really had Eve's best interest at heart. The devil effectively introduced doubt as to whether God really loved her.

Eve's reply indicated that doubt had already crept into her mind. She said, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden..." Please notice that she has misquoted God; she left out the word "freely" (Gen. 2:16). She changed it slightly. She was beginning to think perhaps God was less good than she had thought He was. In this way, she made the blessing of God less than it actually was.

Then she said of the tree, "God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.'" She added something on top of what God had said: "neither shall ye touch it." God had never said this! Perhaps she sincerely thought it to be so, but it was an addition to the restriction which God had placed on her. She made the restriction more difficult than it really was! Eve was already beginning to waver in her attitude toward God, especially in her perception of God's goodness to her.

The most important thing about you is *what you think of God*. That will determine down the line whether you will walk uprightly or not. If you do not think rightly about God, you will have a hard time resisting the temptation to sin.

The devil is always asking you as well, "Is God really good? Can He be trusted?" He is constantly looking for an opportunity to accuse you in regard to God's goodness. You might simply ask, "Why is this happening to me?" But in the question itself, you are doubting God's sovereign rule over you for your good.

Thus, what is the devil trying to do when he tempts you?

- He magnifies your God-given restrictions, and
- He minimizes God's blessings to you: what God has provided out of His perfect goodness for your (ultimate) good.

Any student rule-book always looks bigger than it actually is. When Artis was a new college student from out of town, he was living on his own for the first time. With no one telling him what to do, he could arrange his days as he desired: rest when he wanted to, study when he decided to, attend classes or not; he even had a three hour window to eat each meal in the dining hall. He had amazing freedom for the first time ever. But the student rule-book looked

huge; it seemed that there were so many restrictions, when in fact he was experiencing great freedom.

The devil gets your eyes off your blessings by making the restrictions look terrible. This is why he leads you to the borders of your possibilities. If you are in an enormous rolling meadow, he will lead you to the fence! It may take some days, but he will get you there; all the time he is pulling you there.

Once there at the fence, he will make you feel like you are in a pen that is completely enclosed. You do not feel like you are in a pen until you see the fence, but when you do see it, you realize that you in fact can *not* go anywhere you want. And this is the essence of our selfish wills: deep on the inside, we demand the right to make the final decision about what we can do. We see it in the two-year-old, and if we are honest, we see it in ourselves throughout our lives.

One characteristic of those who have not learned to walk with the Lord is that they always want to know the definitions of the “fence.” They want the border defined very clearly because they do not intend to walk more than six inches away from it; in fact, they intend to live as close to it as possible. Their focus is not to enjoy the big meadow of abundant life in God, but to see how close they can get to God’s border and still not sin. Carnal people gather on the edge of the possibilities God has given. The devil is lurking there.

Artis used to have a goat named Coco whose purpose was to keep the grass trimmed in a large field nearby. During the day she was attached to a 30 foot rope so that she could graze. As you may know, goats have very long tongues. Often Artis was amazed to see Coco at the end of the tightly stretched rope—so much so that it was gagging her. She was down on her knees, sticking out her tongue the maximum amount, barely touching the leaf of a plant which was just beyond her reach. The amazing part is that there were hundreds of identical plants within the circle of her rope!

One student, when confronted with the new rule-book at his school, began to ask questions. One of the rules was, “Do not eat food in your room.” He tested the limits with his questions, which included: “Is the bathroom part of the room?” “Is candy food?” “Is drinking eating?” Obviously, he wanted to get as close to the line as possible.

We are all the same in this. Eve was right next to her “fence,” the only tree that was restricted. She could have been two hundred miles away and she would not have thought about the tree. By minimizing

her blessings and maximizing her restriction, the devil caused Eve to completely forget about the greatness of her life. Her focus was on one tree!

If Eve had walked in the greatness of her God-given possibilities, then she would not have been in trouble. Today it is the same; a “fence” mentality is a very wrong focus. Instead, we should each say to ourselves, “How far away can I get from that border? God said that is the beginning of what is not good for me.” This is the good place where temptation is removed. We are told to flee temptation (1 Tim. 6:11, 2 Tim. 2:22). In the *middle* of the expanse of our God-given possibilities is where we will find the greatest ease in fellowship with God. Think over what these possibilities are in your life, and live *there*.

## *2. The devil creates doubt regarding God’s truthfulness*

The effect upon Eve of the devil’s questions was to become *dissatisfied* with God’s goodness to her. In addition, she began to *doubt* the truthfulness of God. The devil directly contradicted God when he said, “Ye shall not surely die.”

God has said that we shall reap what we sow (Job 4:8, Hos. 10:12, Gal. 6:7-8), that there are consequences for our moral choices. But you will meet people who say, “I know it says that, but I do this or that [in violation of the Scriptures], and I have peace.” However, violating the ways of God and saying “I still have peace” is a very serious offense in the eyes of God.

*“And [if] it come to pass, ...that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The LORD will not spare him...” – Deut. 29:19-20*

Temptation always involves doubting that what God has said is really true. In fact, people hope that truth is *not* what God has said. They hope they can sow and not reap; they hope they can sin and not have consequences; they hope they can live without God and die without hell.

You, therefore, must commit yourself to live by what God says. Otherwise you can be deceived into thinking that what God says is not good for you is, in fact, “good” in this particular situation.

*“For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

*“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food...” – Gen. 3:5-6*

Eve saw that the tree was good for food. No doubt it was, like all the other trees God had provided. There is always an *element* of truth in what the devil says. Sex is thrilling, but outside of marriage the thrill is only for a moment. Jumping off a building is also thrilling momentarily, but you would never do it. Why? Obviously, once you have jumped, there are inescapable consequences for your choice; all else that comes with the thrill follows immediately and of necessity. Scripture says there is pleasure in sin, but only for a season (Heb. 11:25), and that the end of it is death (Prov. 14:12, Rom. 6:21).

There was also an element of truth when the devil said, “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). This was true in a sense: after eating from the tree, Adam and Eve knew the reality of sin, knew how different it was from God’s holiness, and were for the first time responsible to provide for themselves. But whatever seemed attractive in being “as gods” was a deception; unlike God, they now knew evil only by way of *experiencing* evil. And this happens to each one of us as well, whenever we succumb to sin’s temptation.

A good example of this is to suppose that you want to know what it is like to be in prison; thus you go to be locked behind bars. You *do* find out how evil it is, and by contrast you know more about how great freedom is. But then you discover that you are left in the place of evil. What a shock that would be! This is what happened to Adam and Eve: they knew good and evil by experiencing evil, and they were left in the place of evil!

## ***Second Principle: The Reality and Nature of Sin***

### ***Essence of sin***

How often have we heard, “You can do what you want as long as you do not hurt anybody”? Indeed, Eve was not trying to hurt Adam or even God. She only ate the fruit; she did not throw it or steal it. Her eating of the fruit would not make Adam sick. In its essence,

what Eve did was not malicious. Nor was Eve shaking her fist in God's face. What, then, is the reality and nature of sin?<sup>6</sup>

### *1. Selfishness*

The essence of sin is not in hurting anyone or even in being mean. The essence of sin is *selfishness*. A sin is a selfish act: setting up one's interests as more important than submission to God.

Eve became more concerned about her own well-being than she was about God's right to rule. I am tempted to sin when my view of my well-being is more important to me than my submission to God. The sin Eve committed is this: she made herself the final authority in her life. I sin when I put myself in God's place and make myself my own final authority.

There was nothing wrong with eating the fruit of the tree except for this: God had said not to eat it. The only reason for that tree being marked off was to represent God's authority over them. God was not limiting their freedom, but He made the one restriction so that they would recognize their dependence upon Him. If Eve had said "no" to the encouragement to eat the fruit, she would have fulfilled all God expected of her. Why?—because she would have acknowledged that God was the final authority over her life.

### *Repentance*

Today we are confused about repentance. What does it mean to repent of sin? It is not to change your conduct. You can obey many Scriptures and still not be righteous. What makes you righteous in the sight of God is making Him the final authority of your life which He rightfully is. When you say, "God is the final authority of my life," then you have repented in a true turning to God. At that moment, you are also turning away from being your own final authority.

This is the moment when you have turned from yourself, turned from finding your life in this world, died to self, and denied yourself (Luke 9:23). To die to self is to die to all your plans, interests, desires, hopes, dreams, hobbies, and all you seek after for your own sake and think that you have a right to have (Luke 14:33). It doesn't mean that everything wrong will leave your life. But it does mean that there has been a fundamental shift—from your being in final authority to God's being in final authority.

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<sup>6</sup> This is the second universal principle about Himself which God teaches us in Genesis.

People argue, “Do I have to obey God in everything in order to be saved?” This is one of those clever trick questions crafted with the unknowing assistance of the devil. Firstly, no, you will not be *able* perfectly to obey God in everything because you still have the flesh—you are not perfect. Secondly, yes, you will *want* to obey God in everything; the reason is not to earn His favor but because you love Him and want to please Him. You will want to obey Him in everything because you have turned to Him and made Him the final authority of your life. There will not be one situation where you insist, “Well, this time I think I need to do this even though it is different from what God wants me to do.” You have already given God the final authority.

Adam and Eve *lost* their special fellowship with God when they chose to make themselves their own final authority. God, through Jesus Christ paying the penalty for sin, *brings you back* into fellowship with Himself when you turn through Christ to God, putting Him back in the position of your final authority.

Life with God is finding your security, satisfaction, and sufficiency only in Him. Sin is trying to find these three things in the world. Repentance is giving the control of your life back to God. This is the nature of sin, repentance, and saving faith.

#### *“Professing” Christians*

Many of those who call themselves Christians are only “professing” to be so. They may have “invited Jesus into their hearts,” and they may claim to know God. But you can tell that their attitude toward their own lives is, “my life for my sake.” It may be even, “my life for God’s sake.” But it is definitely not, “Christ’s life for His sake.” They are still the final authority in their lives, and as such they have not truly turned to God.

Their attitude toward the Word of God is that they want to interpret it their own way, especially whenever it gives a command that crosses their own will. But if you hold one area back from God, you are still claiming for yourself the right to be the final authority in your life.

In Eve’s case, there was only one area that she would not submit to God. It does not have to be a whole lifestyle or a multitude of sins. It comes down to the one area which you may hold dear, the one in which you will not submit to God.

Your life might look pretty good overall; you may be an exemplary person or “Christian.” But if you have not given God *all* of

your heart, without reservation, then you have not truly submitted to Him as God in your life. If you withhold one thing, you withhold everything. This is because whoever has the final authority in that one thing is the god of your life. This is the essence of sin, to claim for yourself the final authority in your life.

## *2. Because God said so*

Sin is sin not because it is hurtful or arrogant or any of a hundred other things. Sin is sin because God said it is sin. You cannot define sin and leave God out of the definition. That is why men are having such a hard time with ethics today. They try to define right behavior without God. What they finally end up with is everyone doing what is right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25)!

It does not matter what arguments you can find for the benefits of a particular action. People think living together before marriage has benefits: getting to know each other, being sure, knowing what they are getting into. But it doesn't matter how many benefits there are in your situation; if God said it is sin, it is sin, regardless of the pros and cons.<sup>7</sup>

What makes something wrong is simply that its action is against God. People try to remove God from it; they try to reason it all out according to their understanding, and it no longer seems like sin. But God said, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." (Pro. 3:5-6).

Certainly there are harmful consequences of your sin—to yourself and very often to other men. But sin is against men only secondarily. When Cain killed Abel, Abel suffered (Gen. 4:8). But Abel's suffering was not what made it sin. It was rather that Cain was against God's way; he wanted to make his own way work instead (Gen. 4:3-7).

This is the nature of sin: it is primarily against God. It has as its root a selfish bent toward choosing our own will over God's will. And, it becomes "sin" simply because God in His sovereign rule over us has said so.

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<sup>7</sup> Living together before marriage with sexual relations is fornication, and God has said that fornication is sin—Rom. 1:29, 1 Cor. 6:18.

## ***The consequences of sin***

*“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; And...Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the man said, The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” – Gen. 3:7,8,12*

Many false concepts are overthrown in the chapters following the Fall. There are two effects of sin: universal and personal. An example of a personal effect of sin is how one selfish act of adultery can damage a good marriage forever. It is totally contrary to “life” as presented on television. The consequences of adultery affect many people: the spouse, children, parents, and friends. And it affects them for the rest of their lives.

The universal effect of sin began immediately in the Garden and has flowed down through history, affecting everything and everyone in the world. Remember that before eating of the fruit Adam had been totally satisfied: there was wonderful fellowship, no sickness, and he had total authority over all the earth. But God had said, “for *in the day* that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*” (Gen. 2:17). Adam died that day. What did that death look like? What were the immediate and lasting consequences of the Fall? There are nine consequences that should be named and specifically understood.

### ***1. Self-consciousness***

Adam was *self-conscious* for the first time in his life. We cannot really relate to an absence of self-consciousness. Most people spend most of their time thinking about themselves: how do I feel? am I having a good day? what should I do now? will they like me? do I look okay?

How do we know that Adam was different originally from the self-preoccupation that we are so used to in ourselves? He had a loving nature before the Fall; his only concern was for God and for Eve. As soon as you think of yourself, you have fallen from love, for love “seeketh not her own” (1 Cor. 13:5). Even fallen men know this: after a disaster, they are most satisfied when they have given themselves unselfishly to others. In fact, it is a measure of how far we have fallen that it takes a major disaster to get men to forget about themselves for a few moments in time.

Adam fell, and the first thing that happened was that he noticed himself (Gen. 3:7). We see the effect of this today in how the whole of western society is infected by psychology. The focus is all on self:



self-image, self-esteem, self-realization, self-fulfillment, self-satisfaction, self-centeredness, self-actualization, etc. People either wonder what others think of them (“does my hair look good?”), or they go to the other extreme and do not care what any one thinks. Both are signs of extreme selfishness.

## 2. *Guilt*

Adam felt *guilt* for the first time. He was now not only conscious of self for the first time, but also conscious of wrong. Adam always had a conscience, but now for the first time in his life it was a guilty conscience. A famous psychologist once said, “Ninety percent of the people with psychological problems could be cured if they could get rid of a guilty conscience.” They failed others and themselves; they should have done this and not that, or they shouldn’t have done this and done that instead. Guilt turns the whole inward man askew; a man with a guilty conscience cannot think completely rationally until the guilt is removed.

Our conscience is given by God to tell us when we have missed God’s standard. We are all responsible for training our conscience to think like God thinks, according to His standards of right and wrong. But even without training, God has built into our conscience the innate ability to know basic right from wrong.

Adam was guilty for the first time and his whole inward peace was disturbed. When David had a guilty conscience, he said it was as if his bones were rotting within him (Psa. 32:2-3)! You will never have peace until guilt in your conscience is removed.

Psychology’s solution to guilt is to blame others for problems. This is so different from the biblical solution: to accept responsibility for sin, to confess it to God, and to receive His forgiveness through Jesus Christ (James 1:9).

## 3. *Sense of inadequacy*

Adam had a *sense of inadequacy*. He did not know what to do with his nakedness. Before, God had given him sufficiency in everything; now he had responsibilities for which he felt inadequate.

If you want to be the god of your life, God will give you the right to have the appearance of final authority. But then you discover that you are not capable of being God and inadequacy comes in. The whole responsibility of your life is on your own shoulders. Most men live with a huge sense of inadequacy. Even those with big egos, who

feel very adequate in this life, realize their inadequacy—either as they approach death or immediately thereafter.

#### 4. *Fear of God*

Adam feared God for the first time. He heard God coming and he ran to hide! What a contrast this was: before he was so joyful in open, intimate fellowship with God; now he was hiding from Him in the bushes!

He had good reason to fear God. He had violated God's only restriction and he knew it. He had claimed to be his own god in direct rebellion; he had greatly offended his Creator and Friend. So they heard those terrible, negative words: "What is this that thou hast done?"

#### 5. *Spiritual death*

There are three aspects of death: spiritual, physical, and eternal. They all contain its essential feature: in death man is cut off from conscious contact with God. You are cut off from contact, but not disconnected—God, after all, upholds all things, and it is in Him that we have our very being (Heb. 1:3, Acts 17:28).

The loss of conscious contact with God or separation from Him does not mean that God is no longer omnipresent: God is all around us all the time (Psa. 139:1-13). When God "comes" to Adam in the Garden, it is a term to describe to our minds the manifestation of His presence. God was always there; He saw every aspect of the sin being committed, but He was not visibly manifested to them.

Adam now immediately experienced this first aspect of death—*spiritual death* (1 Cor. 6:23, 15:56; James 1:15). He no longer had the capacity to fellowship with God: he was cut off from *spiritual contact* with God even though God was omnipresent.

The example of radio waves is the best one to help us understand this. The radio waves are here; they are all around us whenever we are near a city. But we can have no contact with them. We are *dead* to those radio waves. And we will continue to be dead to them until we get a proper receiver—a way to be able to perceive their presence and to hear their message.

#### 6. *Physical death*

The second aspect of death is physical, and it began for the entire human race at the moment of the Fall. By physical death we mean the process of decay in which our bodies are winding down. Individual cells are wearing out and must be continually replaced. We do

not see the process of decay at first because the process of growth and development overwhelms the decay for the first 20 years or so of our lives. But we are all physically “dying” (aging) every day of our lives.

The unavoidable end result of this process of decay is a final, physical death, where we cease to breathe on this earth (Rom. 5:12-14). But we do not cease to exist; God has created us to exist eternally. This is the third aspect of death, which is *eternal death*—separation from God that lasts eternally. This is our condition forever and ever (Rev. 21:8) if we have never trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ alone there is eternal life for all who trust in Him (Acts 16:31, 2 Tim. 1:10, Rev. 21:4).

If a man passes through *physical* death while in the state of *spiritual* death, he enters into *eternal* death. Where physical death finds you, eternity will hold you.

God made a gap between spiritual death and physical death, between sin and its just punishment. We tend to expect God to judge sin earlier than He does. When we see sin and then no immediate punishment, we think God either does not really care about sin, or He is not in control. The reason for this time delay is to give men the responsibility for repentance. God allows suffering during the same period as a consequence for sin, and to get our attention that all is not okay. At the last judgment of God, every man will be without excuse (Rom. 1:20), because every man will have had time for repentance.

#### *7. The experience of God's anger toward sin*

God hates one thing, and that is *sin*. Sin is the only thing to which God is opposed. He hates it constantly—with a passion and without compromise. This is terribly perverted in our day by psychology which tells people that they somehow deserve good self-esteem. The conclusion people can come to is this: if I am unattractive, then God doesn't love me!

Nothing could be further from the truth. God's favor toward you has nothing to do with your appearance, intelligence, money, possessions, family, or religious works. His favor toward you has only to do with Jesus Christ! If you come to God through Jesus Christ, where you trust in His death on the cross alone as all the payment for your sin, then you not only receive eternal life from God, but also “*all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ*” (Eph 1:3). This

is the abundant spiritual life which God designed for Adam, given to us today through Christ.

What else does God require in order to have this life? *Nothing!* Your entire responsibility before God is to deal with your sin through Christ. May the Lord bring this truth home to each of our souls, and quicken us truly to apply it to our hearts.

#### 8. *Contention between men*

Adam knew that he was in trouble with God, and what did he say? “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat” (Gen. 3:12). Our first response when confronted with our sin is to pass it off onto someone else, to make it out to be someone else’s fault.

Notice the arrogance here: Adam says, “the woman whom *Thou gavest*” to me, as if it were God’s fault! Men try to make it ultimately God’s fault that they sin. They say, “If I were more attractive, then I wouldn’t be so self-centered.” Or, “If I had more money, then I wouldn’t steal.” Or, “If my parents had loved me, then I wouldn’t be so insecure.” Or, “If I hadn’t gotten that bad break, then I wouldn’t be angry.”

Adam was supposed to be protecting his wife, but under pressure he protected himself first. No doubt it created contention in their relationship. This is the attitude of men everywhere. I will help you if I have enough left over after getting all my own needs met. Men will give money to others, but only after all their own bills are paid.

You can tell when someone is serious about turning to God. He will use words like, “I have sinned.” You know he has sincerely repented when he does not add on anything about another’s partial guilt. You know he is sincere when he does not claim in any way to be a “victim” of someone else’s action. The “victim” mentality can be an escape to avoid taking full responsibility for my own sin by blaming it on another. The Scripture says, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13).

Artis used to coach volleyball. In a team sport, everyone has his position to play—his own responsibilities for the sake of the team. When Artis would tell a player to get back in position, some had all kinds of reasons why they should be where they were instead. Normally the reason given was that someone else was not in his own place. Rarely did players respond, “Yes, I was wrong.”

You are responsible for your life. It does not matter how many others are wrong, or how many pressures you are under. If you are not submitting to God in your heart, you are sinning.

One year after David's sin with Bathsheba, the prophet Nathan came to rebuke him. David's response was, "I have sinned" (2 Sam. 12:1-15). This was a moment of complete humility for David; it was an indication of his greatness in God's eyes.

When selfishness has hold of a man, he will not acknowledge his own sin. He will do anything to blame another. Men want the final authority in their lives; but if something goes wrong, they do not want the responsibility. We want the authority without the responsibility.

#### *9. The curse came upon mankind and the world*

As a result of the Fall, spiritual and physical death came upon all men, and a curse upon creation. The world would no longer naturally yield up its fruit to men. Now there would be toil and trouble, hard labor, even hunger.

We must meditate on these things so that we will come to hate sin the way God does. Sin is terrible! In ourselves, it is never to be tolerated or minimized. If we saw how terrible it truly is, we would never be tempted to accept it so easily.

The following chapters in Genesis make this more clear. They are given so that we may be "fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10).

## **IV. Cain, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel**

### ***Cain: The spread of the consequences of sin***

If we just saw the experience of Adam, we would not be clear as to how serious is the sin problem. But in chapters 3 to 11 of Genesis, the Word of God goes on to describe life in those days. We see in vivid detail the complete and devastating consequences of sin as it spread throughout the world—with a terrible effect on mankind.

Sin looked relatively innocent when Eve simply ate of the forbidden fruit. It would be easy to think it was no more harmful than a child getting his hand caught in the cookie jar. But that one act brought in *selfishness*, and selfishness has many disastrous consequences. Adam was cursed, forced out of the Garden, and found that

the world now fought him at every turn. Life for Adam became an on-going battle.

After the Fall, fellowship was no longer easy—it required sacrifice in order to approach God. We will learn why in Leviticus, and why Abel's sacrifice was accepted while Cain's was rejected. The significance of this story (Gen. 4) is Cain's response when his sacrifice was rejected by God. Cain should have asked God what was wrong. But instead Cain chose to be angry with his brother because his brother's sacrifice had been accepted. If Cain had yielded to do what was right (asking God), everything still would have been okay. But instead of yielding to do what was right, Cain chose to destroy what—in his mind—was “wrong.”

This is a common attitude in the world. People are not interested in doing what is right, but they get excited about stopping those who do what is “wrong” in their own view. Why do they even care about those who want to lead a moral life if they can practice their immorality anyway? It is because of the nature of sin in men.

Cain and Abel were only one generation away from the parents who had known true fellowship with God. And Cain concluded that he should kill his brother. How serious was the selfishness that entered into the Garden? It had gone from eating fruit to murder in just one generation. *Sin is serious!*

If you are selfish in your own life, how do you think you will respond to others? The nature of selfishness is that it grows with each generation. What parents do in moderation, the children will do in excess. It is in the nature of sin to grow.

Several years ago there was a photo in the newspaper of a minor car accident in Los Angeles. A man's new car had been bumped. He is shown stepping out of the car with a pistol and shooting the other driver, who had made a small mistake and bumped his precious new car.

If you will not bend to God, you will not bend to any one else either. A civilized society can help to rein in the most violent outward expressions of selfishness, but it flares up none the less. And inwardly all the while, there is a constant and complete rebellion against God. Inwardly, people want to do away with those who get in their way—in particular those who, by the rightness of their conduct, communicate that “my way” is wrong.

Just as Adam had done at the Fall, Cain did not want to admit that he was wrong. If he had admitted it, then he would have had to

change his conduct, to make a different choice. But he did not want to change his conduct. Cain killed his brother instead, whose right conduct had caused Cain to feel guilty. And God saw it all.

You could say that Eve was refined in her sin. But once God's limit is removed, there is really no limit as to what man will do. Today there is genocide in many countries around the world, and terrorism all around us. It is the working out of the same spirit that plucked the fruit: if you get in my way, I will assume the position of God in my life.

*“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.” – Gen. 6:5-6*

Where does this sin lead? We have one of the most horrifying verses in the entire Word of God in verse 5: “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination [intent] of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Men had reached the point where no matter what they thought, the thoughts going through their minds were only evil all the time. There was wickedness in everything—all the time!

How serious is sin? It is vitally serious. Adam's children did not eventually go back into a Garden-like situation. Instead of becoming godly again, the whole race had become wickedly ungodly!

### ***The Flood: God judges sin***

#### ***1. God's ability to deal with sin***

When God sent the Flood as judgment upon the earth, we learn that God is able to deal with His creation completely and at any point in time. The fact that you declare independence from God does not make you independent of God. He simply does not always choose to deal with you *immediately*.

The story is told of a man who went to an evangelist and said, “I'm going to curse God to His face, and if He thinks He can stop me, let Him strike me dead.” And he proceeded to curse God. Nothing happened. Then the man sneered at the evangelist and said, “See there; what do you think of that?” The evangelist said only one thing: “Do you think you can exhaust the patience of God in only five minutes?”

God had said to Adam, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). In the moment that Adam ate, death

came—and it was irreversible. But it did not show itself until years later. God can judge men at anytime. He could have judged the earth via an immediate worldwide plague, but He chose to judge via the Flood in order clearly to save some by His intervention.

## 2. *Sin is in human nature*

Noah had a bent toward righteousness by the grace of God. In addition, Noah had seen God's fierce judgment upon sin firsthand. God had even made a covenant with him not to judge the earth in this way ever again (Gen. 9:11-17). Surely after the Flood, we would think, Noah would bring an end to sinning.

But in the biblical account, the next thing recorded was that Noah got drunk! How could this be? The only answer is that he had inherited from Adam the same fallen nature which had entered into Adam at the Fall. You cannot remove sin from the world through judgment unless you destroy every last person from the earth. Every person, including Noah, has inherited this sin nature from Adam.

The fact is, sin was *still abounding* after the Flood. The following two truths are in evidence:

- sin is in the race—it is in you and every person on the earth;
- the fear of judgment is not enough to make a man righteous.

The fear of punishment will control the manifestation of sin; it can limit the expression of our evil hearts. We have all seen this. There were times when you were growing up that you were angry with your parents. But you knew that if you expressed that anger, you would lose some privileges, or worse! So you chose to keep quiet about it on the outside, but on the inside, you were as angry as you could be. The fear of punishment can slow down outwardly sinful actions, but it will not change your heart.

From the Fall, we learned that God's blessings will not stop sin. Here we learn that God's promises of judgment will not stop sin. A person who has seen the truth of God's punishment upon sin will often realize that they are going to hell. But even this threat of punishment will not stop them from sinning. It is an example of the complete self-centeredness of the human heart. A man would rather have his own way and be punished, than submit to God and be blessed. That is human nature. Men will "bend," they will temporarily modify their behavior to get some benefit, but they will not submit to God's authority over them.



### ***Splitting into nations at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11)***

The Tower of Babel shows us the universal character of sin, the universal attraction of its spirit, and how it affects mankind. That spirit of sin is the unity of men for the glory of men, where men say, "We all have to stick together for our own ultimate well-being, so that we can be something." Men cooperate to do great things, like the international space station, the Olympics, the global environmental movement, the World Trade Organization, or even just being a fan of a football team. Then they say, "We *are* great!" This is the Babylonian spirit which surfaced at Babel in Genesis, and is finally put to an end in The Revelation (the last book of the Bible).

After the Flood, God purposefully took a determined series of actions to slow down the spread of sin. The world population was clustered together in the city of Babel for the mutual benefit of men. God split it into nations by causing different groups to begin speaking different languages. The inability to communicate across national borders because of language does much to slow down the spread of evil.

Now when one nation got out of line, God would deal with that one nation. He did not have to deal with the world as He did at the Flood, because the evil had not spread throughout the entire world. And, the way was prepared for God to select out one nation to be His chosen vessel to manifest His glory.

The creation of nations was a great blessing. While it did not save anyone, it did slow down the spread of evil. This is still true today.

### ***Summary***

It is always better not to sin, no matter what your reason for wanting to do so. Your thoughts can come with an evil power. Sin might whisper in your ear, "If the thought of adultery is adultery (Matt. 5:27-28), then I might as well commit the act itself rather than just have the thoughts!" This is always unbiblical thinking, because it leads you to sin twice: one sin is your thought and the other is your action, and both have bad consequences.

Sin always has terrible consequences. The devil is constantly trying to convince you that it does not matter if you sin. God is always trying to show you that it does matter, trying to warn you over and over that you will reap what you sow. *Beware of sin and flee to God!*



# Christ Died for the Ungodly

by Horatius Bonar (Scottish, 1808-1889)

This article is included that the reader  
also may see the good news in Christ.

*“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth,  
and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only  
evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).*

The divine testimony concerning man is, that he is a sinner. God bears witness against him, not for him; and testifies that “there is none righteous, no, not one”; that there is “none that doeth good”; none “that understandeth”; none that even seeks after God, and, still more, none that loves Him (Psa 14:1-3; Rom 3:10-12). God speaks of man kindly, but severely; as one yearning over a lost child, yet as one who will make no terms with sin, and will “by no means clear the guilty.”

He declares man to be a lost one, a stray one, a rebel, a “hater of God” (Rom 1:30); not a sinner occasionally, but a sinner always; not a sinner in part, with many good things about him; but wholly a sinner, with no compensating goodness; evil in heart as well as life, “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1); an evil doer, and therefore under condemnation; an enemy of God, and therefore “under wrath”; a breaker of the righteous law, and therefore under “the curse of the law” (Gal 3:10). The sinner not merely brings forth sin, but he carries it about with him, as his second self; he is a body or mass of sin (Rom 6:6), a “body of death” (Rom 7:24), subject not to the law of God, but to “the law of sin” (Rom 7:23).

There is another and yet worse charge against him. He does not believe on the name of the Son of God, nor love the Christ of God. This is his sin of sins. That his heart is not right with God is the first charge against him. That his heart is not right with the Son of God is the second. And it is this second that is the crowning, crushing sin, carrying with it more terrible damnation than all other sins together.

“He that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John

3:18). “He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record which God gave of his Son” (1 John 5:10). “He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). And hence it is that the first sin which the Holy Spirit brings home to a man is unbelief; “when he [the Holy Spirit] is come he will reprove the world of sin because they believe not on me” (John 16:8-9).

Man need not try to say a good word for himself, or to plead “not guilty,” unless he can shew that he loves, and has always loved, God with his whole heart and soul. If he can truly say this, he is all right, he is not a sinner, and does not need pardon. He will find his way to the kingdom without the cross and without a Saviour.

But, if he cannot say this, “his mouth is stopped,” and he is “guilty before God.” However favourably a good outward life may dispose him and others to look upon his case just now, the verdict will go against him hereafter. This is man's day, when man's judgments prevail; but God's day is coming, when the case shall be tried upon its real merits. Then the Judge of all the earth shall do right, and the sinner be put to shame. This is a divine verdict, not a human one. It is God, not man, who condemns; and God is not a man that He should lie. This is God's testimony concerning man, and we know that this witness is true. It concerns us much to receive it as such, and to act upon it.

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isa 45:22), a “just God and a Saviour” (v21). “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isa 55:7).

Turn your eye, the eye of faith, to the cross and see these two things—the crucifiers and the Crucified. See the crucifiers, the haters of God and of His Son. They are yourself. Read in them your own character. See the Crucified. It is God Himself; incarnate love. It is He who made you, God manifest in flesh, suffering, dying for the ungodly. Can you suspect His grace? Can you cherish evil thoughts of Him? Can you ask anything further, to awaken in you the fullest and most unreserved confidence? Will you misinterpret that agony and death, by saying either that they do not mean grace, or that the grace which they mean is not for you? Call to mind that which is written—“Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitia-

tion for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

*Taken from the book: God's Way of Peace, also available from Chapel Library.*



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