

WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW

Lesson 15

Man: His Fall

“PARADISE LOST”

INTRODUCTION

OK, class – pop quiz – who wrote “Paradise Lost”? [TEACHERS: Let them guess]

Answer: John Milton. Now, by that very question I may have re-kindled bad memories of your high school or college English classes. Most of us have not thought about “Paradise Lost” since high school if at all – it is not for the casual reader!

Milton’s epic poem consists of 12 books, entirely Biblical in its theology. The 10 book version was published in 1667 followed by the 12 book edition in 1674, the year of Milton’s death.

The first lines of “Paradise Lost”...

“Of Man’s First Disobedience, and the Fruit
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of *Eden*, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat...”

Another question, class: who is the “greater Man” who would restore us? It is Jesus Christ! In the first 5 lines Milton describes man’s fall, original sin, and man’s Redeemer.

REVIEW: Last week we looked at man’s creation and how special he is in being created in the image of God.

Today, we look at how man fell: the tempter, the temptation, the sin, its consequences and redemption.

The Baptist Faith and Message states, “By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence.” (page 10)

BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The fall of man is found in Genesis 3. In his introduction to Genesis 3 Matthew Henry, in his commentary, says,

“We have here an account of the sin and misery of our first parents, the wrath and curse of God against them, the peace of the creation disturbed, and its beauty stained and sullied, all bad, very bad.” [*Commentary On The Whole Bible* by Matthew Henry, Zondervan Publishers, 1961, page 8; originally published in 1710]

Are we going too far with the gloom & doom? No – to make light of sin and its effects is to diminish our redemption and the price paid for our salvation: the precious blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19).

W.H. Griffith Thomas, in his commentary on Genesis, makes this statement about Genesis 3: “It is hardly too much to say that this chapter is the pivot of the Bible, for if we take it away the rest of Scripture becomes meaningless.” [*Genesis, A Devotional Commentary* by Griffith Thomas, Eerdmans Publishers, 1946, page 46]

With the exception of the Creation, the entrance of sin into the world is the most far-reaching event in the history of the world! The rest of the Bible is the story of God redeeming man from his sinful state. To make light of the seriousness of sin and its effects is to diminish the impact of the entire Bible – to miss the point entirely!

A final introductory word. As stated in our lesson last week, some liberal theologians look at Genesis 3 as an allegory or myth. Others call it poetic or symbolic – just man’s attempt to explain the events. None of these explanations is satisfactory. This story is God’s revelation to us - of real people, Adam & Eve, and real events. The NT assumes that this narrative is literal history. The genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 traces His lineage all the way back to Adam. Romans 5:18-19 refer to sin entering the world through “one man” (Adam) and so through “the One” (Jesus Christ) the many will be made righteous. The Genesis account is literal history. If we adopt a lesser view the story loses much if not all of its impact.

I. THE TEMPTER, Genesis 3:1

From this story we not only learn how sin entered the world and death through sin (Romans 5:12), but we gain practical knowledge about how to deal with temptation and sin in our lives today.

[Read Genesis 3:1] Sin & temptation start with the tempter himself. He is called a “serpent” but did not appear to Eve in the form of a snake as we know it – he would have been repulsive to her in that form. Since this was before God cursed him (verse 14), he would have appeared as a beautiful creature. He is not called Satan here but he is referred to in 2 Cor. 11:3, Rev. 12:9-11 (he is called the “serpent”); 20:1-3. In these verses he is called “crafty” and “a deceiver”. Jesus calls him a murderer, a liar and the father of lies in John 8:44. Revelation 12:10 calls him the “accuser of the brethren”. One of his strategies is to cause believers in Christ to live under a pile of guilt. He tempts us to sin, then when we sin, he piles on the guilt in order to discourage us. He came to the woman in a disguise, concealing his identity and his agenda. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says that Satan disguises himself “as an angel of light”. He is subtle and catches the woman totally off guard.

APPLICATION: We must know our enemy in order to have victory over temptation and sin. Satan will tempt us with the craftiest, most subtle means possible. His method is to entice us little by little, to compromise, to excuse, to rationalize, to cut corners until finally we fall into sin. He knows our weaknesses and he will exploit them. He is a liar, he tells half-truths, he doesn’t tell the whole story, he twists and distorts God’s word as we will see.

II. THE TEMPTATION, verses 3-5 [read]

Let's observe the stages of temptation...

- 1) The serpent excites and attracts the woman's curiosity by speaking to her. In some form he was attractive to her instead of being a slimy, slithering snake.
- 2) He asks her a question which raises suspicion of what God has said. This question suggests to her that God's word is subject to man's judgment. Satan also draws her into a debate. He implies that God has restricted them from eating from any tree, which is not what God said. In fact, God said they could eat freely of all the other trees (Genesis 2:16). In a subtle way Satan distorts God's word. The woman responds by actually adding to what God said. He never said that they could not touch it but that they could not eat of it (Genesis 2:17). The woman also mentions the consequences of eating: death.
- 3) Satan directly contradicts God's word by saying that they would not die. He adds the promise that they would be like God knowing good and evil. He casts doubt on God's character by telling her that God knows this and that is why He has restricted them from eating of the tree.

APPLICATION: The primary lie of Satan thru the ages is that we can disobey God and get away with it. In fact, he goes even a step further and tells us not only can we get away with it (no consequences) but we will gain all sorts of benefits by doing it.

III. THE SIN, verses 6-7

The woman's curiosity was aroused, she listened to the serpent and she saw that the tree was a "delight to the eyes". 1 John 2:16 tells us that the world tempts and entices us away from the Lord by the "lust of the eyes".

APPLICATION: Satan uses physical images and plants them in our minds to tempt us. This is not just sexual lust but could be a lust or longing for anything which can become an idol to us.

The woman also saw that the tree was desirable to make one wise. What is wrong with wisdom? Does God not want us to be wise? Yes, He does but wisdom must come through faith and dependence upon Him. The woman acted independently of God which is a definition of sin. By the way, the man was just as guilty – he chose to obey his wife rather than God.

Griffith Thomas, in his commentary on Genesis states,

"The foundation of all sin lies in man's desire of self-assertion and his determination to be independent of God...he desires to go his own way, to be his own master..." (page 49)

Isaiah 53:6 – "All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;..."

The man and the woman both ate of the forbidden tree – they were responsible and accountable for their actions. From an environment in which they had everything they needed including perfect fellowship with God – they sinned!

Verse 6 states immediate results/consequences. Their eyes were opened, they knew they were naked and they made coverings. This was the beginning of guilt. They moved from the period of innocence to the period of conscience/moral responsibility.

APPLICATION # 1: Temptation and sin never come from God – see James 1:13-15. We are eventually carried away by our own lust – we are responsible; we know right from wrong and we choose to sin. It has nothing to do with economics, environment, education or psychological bent.

APPLICATION # 2: Along with # 1, even though we are tempted by Satan and he is very crafty, we are responsible. We can never say, “the devil made me do it” and cop out on our responsibility.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES, verses 8-24

[read verses 8-10] Guilt led to shame which led to fear. Adam & Eve hid from God. The experiences of innocence and fellowship with God were gone. Guilt, shame and fear can be expressed in one word: separation. Separation is what sin produces in man’s relationship with God. This is the greatest consequence of sin. Paradise was lost! See also Isaiah 59:2 which uses the word “separation”.

Verse 12 – Adam tries to blame the woman who the Lord gave him.

Verse 13 – the woman blames the serpent. Neither Adam nor Eve admits their own responsibility – they played the blame game as many do today.

Verses 14-15 – the serpent is cursed. We will come back to the full meaning of verse 15 later.

Verse 16 – the woman is cursed. She will have increased pain in bearing children; her desire will be subject to her husband’s desire. Her husband will rule over her.

Verses 17-19 – the man is cursed. He will experience great pains in scratching out a living. Notice, work in and of itself is NOT a curse. God gave man work to do before he sinned (Genesis 2:15). The curse is that work will become much more difficult. Death would be his end – he will return to the ground, to dust. Satan promised that they would be “like God” (verse 5) but they end up returning to the dust of the ground.

APPLICATION: When Satan tempts us he never delivers on his promises. Whatever we think we will gain by giving in to temptation never happens. And, of course, Satan never tells us the consequences and there are always consequences. Remember, Satan is a liar first and foremost – he will tell us whatever we want to hear in order to entice us to sin. Then, when we sin, he piles on the guilt.

Verse 24 – the man and the woman are driven from the Garden of Eden. There was no possibility of a return to the old life and relationship with God. Paradise was lost and by no human effort could it be regained. Separation is always the result of sin. But, there is hope! Thankfully, the story does not end here.

V. REDEMPTION, verses 15, 21

Verse 15 - It is fascinating that God mentions the hope for mankind as He pronounces the curse on the serpent. The NASB, King James and NIV use the word “enmity” which comes from the same root as

“enemy”. There will be antagonism (enmity) between Satan and the seed of the woman. It then refers to the seed of the woman as “He”. Dr. Tom Constable in his *Notes on Genesis* states, “This is a prophecy of the victory of the ultimate ‘Seed’ of the woman (Messiah) over Satan. Most interpreters have recognized this verse as the first biblical promise of the provision of salvation.”[page 55] Derek Kidner, in his commentary on Genesis, calls verse 15 “...the first glimmer of the gospel.” (1967 by The Tindale Press, London, page 70). Satan would cripple mankind but Jesus Christ would deliver the fatal blow to Satan. Here, the pattern for the rest of human history is set in motion: God vs. Satan; good vs. evil. As stated at the beginning of this lesson, those who minimize or deny sin and the existence of evil miss the point of the Bible as well as the entire flow of human history! Man cannot redeem himself. Ultimate victory lies in Jesus Christ – through His death and resurrection we can have victory over sin. See Hebrews 2:14-15.

Verse 21 states that God made garments of skin for Adam & Eve. Earlier, Adam & Eve had tried to clothe themselves with leaves. God, as a saving God, provides garments of skin for them. An animal was sacrificed in order to provide the garments; blood was shed.

Dr. C.I. Scofield says of this verse, “...a divinely provided garment that the first sinners might be made fit for God’s presence.” [*Scofield Reference Bible*, page 8 footnote 2] This obviously looks forward to the animal sacrifices in Israel which point to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us and for our salvation. See Romans 3:21-26 and 1 Peter 1: 18-19.

APPLICATION/CONCLUSION

God’s question to Adam should ring in our ears as well: “Where are you?”(Genesis 3:9). God was not referring to Adam’s physical location; He meant, “where are you in relation to Me?” Romans 3:23 says “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

So, where are you?

[TEACHERS: Make an appeal here to your class to trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. If time, share your own personal testimony of salvation.]

If you never have before, make this your first real, genuine Christmas – receive God’s greatest gift: His Son!