

The Fall

Genesis 3:6, “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”

Question: What is the root cause of sin?

Key Verses: James 4:6; Proverbs 16:18; 1 John 2:15-16

Jay was a businessman who was easy to envy. His wife adored him, his daughter’s worshipped him, and his employees respected him. His charmed life came to a screeching halt, however, when his wife turned against him and sued for divorce, a settlement that cost him millions. It also cost him much of his business because those assets had to be divided as well. His daughters now won’t speak to him. Why? Because of a child—his child, but not hers. When his wife discovered that their housekeeper’s three-year old shared her husband’s DNA it all unraveled. He lost business, his marriage, his kids, his housekeeper and now pays alimony to two women on top of child support. Sin is costly. But Jay’s story is nothing new. And the original cost of sin far exceeded what Jay continues to pay. Trust me, Jay is a real person. So are you and so is the price you are paying for your sin.

We’ve all felt the effects in our soul like an odor in the room we can’t identify or expunge. It’s called “sin” in the Bible; it’s called psychosis in society. We all have this brokenness we can’t shake or justify. Its affects are explained away in the locker room, made legend in the movies, yet prosecuted in courts of law. From personal peccadillos to systemic evils, sin has stained the fiber of humanity. It all started in a garden.

Though this place seems far away—this pristine utopia —we’ve all heard its migratory call to return. We’ve all stood in Eve’s shadow at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The story is told in Genesis 3. It begins with a naked woman unashamed in the daylight of Eden. A serpent spoke from the limbs of a forbidden tree. Her words betray the clarity of God’s commands not to taste its fruit. Yet the serpent’s crafty seduction proves too enticing to resist. She takes the bait in a bite while her husband stands dumb but not deaf beside her. Her eyes are open to evil, to her naked body, and to her cursed soul. From that ground zero death crept slowly across the globe. This is the story in embryo.

Irresistible Temptation

Eve’s failure in the garden is neither ancient uncommon. This is the shared experience of humanity. So it bears analysis to understand our spiritual predicament. First, we need to understand just what it was that so captured her soul because it is the same thing that captures ours. In raw form, here it is. Eve saw that the fruit was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that it was desirable to make one wise (Genesis 3:6). That’s what she saw but that’s not what seduced her. What seduced her was Satan’s half-truth in the previous verse: “You will

be like God.” That’s it! It is the seduction of self-determination—the promise that we can direct our own affairs and determine our own destinies. It becomes our Achilles heel of pride. Our pride is not merely “a” sin; it is “the sin.” It is the genesis of every rape, every murder, every theft, lie, adultery, and addiction. It is the genetic underpinning of prioritizing our will over everyone else’s good, even God’s. That’s why the Bible continues to echo warnings about pride. “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (James 4:6 & 1 Peter 5:5, quoted from Proverbs 3:34). “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18). “For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Matthew 23:12). “Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up” (James 4:10). These snippets could be extended for pages. The Bible is full of warnings about pride and rife with narrative examples of its catastrophic results. This is a sub-plot of nearly every book of the Bible precisely because it is the Genesis of our human condition. Then again, you probably don’t need to read it in a book since it is likely the core of your own biography. It certainly features heavily in mine.

This is also why we are called to carry a cross, to lay down our lives, to be crucified with Christ. No less radical response can rescue our souls from our self-destructive behavior. It is not self-improvement, self-respect, or self-management that will release us from the grip of sin. It is self-extermination—the annihilation of our pride that alone can bring us freedom. Perhaps this grates against the currents of culture. Nonetheless, it is a cruelty to affirm a disease that ravages one’s soul. No matter how the social pundits spin the freedom of sin, the downward spiral it causes will not be reversed until the human condition is under submission to a power higher than ourselves.

Getting back to Eve, we see that the source of pride can come from three distinct directions. She saw that fruit was good for food, a delight to the eyes, and could make one wise. That parallels a verse that would be penned thousands of years later by Jesus’ best friend, John. “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world” (1 John 2:15-16). These three—fleshly desires, visual cravings, and social position—are the core of Satan’s arsenal, abetted, of course, by our pride—pride of passion, possession, and position. This is so elemental to the human experience that these were the very temptations Satan threw at Jesus in the wilderness. He was tempted by Satan to turn a stone to bread, a form of the lust of the flesh. He was offered all the world’s empires for the purchase price of a simple bow. Hence, he was tempted by the lust of the eyes. Finally, he was challenged to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple so that God would rescue him in the presence of his religious elite, assuring satisfaction from the boastful pride of life.

This is not to suggest that Jesus’ temptations are on par with our own. After all, Satan’s challenge in the wilderness was a direct assault to the Incarnate God to escape the long

arduous experience of humanity and death. Satan was offering Jesus a by-pass of the cross. Yet Jesus' temptations do mirror ours in that Satan's arsenal is consistent (and consistently limited) in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life. By understanding Satan's schemes, we can more confidently face his attacks. Just reading this on paper seems like an easy victory. Face to face, however, in the heat of battle, we are confused by Satan's central strategy—deception.

Strategic Deception

Satan lied to Eve. He said she wouldn't die if she ate the forbidden fruit. Question: Did she? Actually, no. At least not at that moment. Would she? Sure. We all do. Death is the universal human experience that was not a necessary evil in Eden. The point is that Satan seldom brokers in complete fabrication. That would hardly be an effective strategy. He's not going to say it's raining when the sky is blue. Any fool could see through that ploy. He's not going to argue that addiction will advance your career or that rape will endear you to your victim. Rather, he misdirects, misinforms, and misrepresents. He tricks, trips, and traps with half-truths. When he promises pleasure in a bed or a bottle, he holds up his end of the bargain. In the short-term, Satan seems sincere. What he holds close to his chest is the trump card of long-term consequences. There is pleasure in the pursuit of money, in the buzz of a drug, in the frenzy of popularity, in the power of politics. Make no mistake, Satan seldom makes promises he doesn't initially and partially keep. What he keeps hidden is the price-tag. He never tells you the high price of the tax on sin. By the time we've signed the agreement and turned over the price tag, the charges on the ticket leave us bankrupt, ashamed, alone, and destitute.

Ask my friend Rick. After multiple affairs in ministry, he was outed by one of his lovers. Only then did he start, in his own words, "turning over the price tags". One tag had the name of his wife, another the name of his daughter, another his employment, another his circle of friends. On it went. He plunged into economic disarray, child custody, in-care depression facility, loneliness, abandonment by former friends, church members, and ministry partners. The price-tag extended to his grandchildren, his second wife, his calling of God. Had Satan shared with him up front even one or two of the price tags he never would have jeopardized his life for such transitory and meaningless moments of sexual gratification. Sex with his lovers was cheap and easy, inviting and available. In the heat of passion, he never imagined the ultimate sticker price. Nor do any of us when faced with cheating, pornography, a party, a shady business deal, a simple theft. Only with a decade in the rearview mirror can we confirm the full terms and conditions. We reap the consequences of selling our soul for moments of indiscretion. The price is as high as our God is holy.

Divine Retribution

God cursed Adam and Eve for their mutiny. That's right, it wasn't merely a theft. It was a mutiny. The raging wrath of God is never for the loss of property but the loss of position. He created all matter in days, all manner of flora and fauna. The loss of one fruit from one tree is

hardly a damnable offense. His concern was not trespassing but mutiny. Eve, faced with the prospect of becoming like God, took the bait and bit. It was her divorce of the divine in that momentary indiscretion that was so egregious. This lump of flesh, freshly drawn from Adam's side, had the audacity to challenge his eternal wisdom, his divine plan, his creational genius, and his spiritual authority. So also we commit outrageous dethronement when we acclaim ourselves sovereign. In reality, no human has the capacity to manage deification. This is why, of course, emperors and dictators, not to mention local celebrities, implode under the weight of their own arrogance.

What else do we expect but exile for mutiny. Along with their new vestments of animal skins, they would have to wear the burden of God's curse. The serpent would slither in the dust and ultimately be snuffed out by the seed of the woman (vv. 14-15). The woman would bear children through intense pain and be at odds with her husband with poor odds for prevailing (v. 16). The man would earn a living by the sweat of his brow (vv. 17-19). Though this may seem harsh, in reality, this is discipline more than punishment. Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden for their own good. The Garden was not the goal; the heart of God was. It does no good to live in the luxury of utopia if one is bereft of character, relationships, and Spiritual connection to one's maker. It is God himself, not his garden, that is our home. His gift of working the garden, of procreation, and managing the creation is meaningless without the fellowship of God in the cool of the day.

So too it is with us. In many ways, we live in a utopia with indoor plumbing, technological convenience, medical advances, food at our fingertips. Our lives of luxury and opulence compare well to any garden we can imagine. Yet we sense the curse—the daily deficit of our souls. We know we have a desperate need to fill a spiritual void. All that goes back to the Garden. It is our exile from Eden that cries in our soul for a reconnection with our creator. This curse--this crisis--is the very thing that calls us back to our original destination. The path of return passes through repentance, retracing our steps into submission to our creator. It is there we will find fulfillment, purpose, and salvation in the heart of our Father.

Key Points:

- The core of all sin is pride—the desire for self-determination
- Sin seduces us in one of three ways: pride of passion, possession, and position
- Satan's deception is in half-truths not wholesale lies.

Action Step: If you have unconfessed sin, seek out an accountability partner or mentor. This is the first step back to Eden.