

"The Fall"  
a sermon from Genesis 3  
by Pastor Phil Henry  
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Mercy Hill Presbyterian Church  
Glassboro NJ

The Fall raises four questions: from what did Adam, and all mankind, all of humanity, fall in the first place? Why did the Fall take place? What was the result? And if there is a solution, what is it?

### I. From What Did the First Humans Fall?

#### A. *the first humans were perfect in every way*

1. They enjoyed peace
  - a) with creation
  - b) with one another
2. they were content because they were happy and they were happy because they were good.
3. they knew the difference between good and evil: good was to enjoy what God had made; evil was to reject God's goodness and (in that sense) seek to redefine it.
4. they thus were innocent, and ignorant: like a little child, God didn't want Adam to know anything about wickedness

#### B. *this perfection is summarized by saying that they perfectly and fully lived a God-centered life:*

1. all their good, all their happiness, all their pleasure came from Him
2. they were happy to do all their work for His glory and honor.

### II. Why Did the First Humans Fall?

#### A. *Four Errors are revealed in the conversation the woman had with the serpent:*

1. God's Truth was questioned: Satan's initial question "smuggles in the assumption that God's Word is subject to our judgment." (Kidner, 67)
2. God's Word was exaggerated: this is a favorite tactic of the enemy.
3. God's Word then was over-corrected by Eve: she magnifies God's strictness (a pattern many have followed since then). (Kidner)
4. Finally, God's Word was flatly contradicted: the offer was intoxicating; to be "as God" and to become that way by being smarter than him made God, not the Serpent, the real enemy.
5. A fifth error is implicit: Adam, our text says, "...was with her."
  - a) Whether he was "with her" in terms of close physical proximity or not isn't exactly clear

- b) What is clear is that wherever he was, he should have been engaging the serpent--even more, defeating it.
- c) Luther: Satan attacks adam, as it were, from beneath.

*B. What is Original Sin?*

- 1. There were, as we have seen, many errors and sins, even, leading up to the one which is called The Original Sin: eating the forbidden fruit.
- 2. But the Story treats only that one action, by Adam, as the so-called Original Sin.

*C. What was "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil"? Why was it so bad?*

- 1. the context places the emphasis on the prohibition rather than any particular properties of the tree: it is simply shown as something FORBIDDEN.
- 2. It is not helpful to ask what it stood for by itself; in fact, this was part of Eve's error in the first place. "What is it, really?"
- 3. As it stood, prohibited, it represented the alternative to discipleship: to be self-made, taking one's knowledge, values, and identity--image, even--from the created world in defiance of the creator. (Kidner, 63)

### III. What Was the Result?

*A. There were three main results:*

- 1. **shame**; they clothed themselves because they saw that they were naked. The Hebrew word for shame means disturbed or disquieted: they had an "overpowering consciousness of a deranged inner harmony, a disturbed satisfaction with themselves, with the world, and with God." (Delitzsch)
- 2. **death**:
  - a) spiritual separation from God symbolized by man's hiding from God. For the first time there is fear of God instead of love; this is the surest sign of spiritual death.
  - b) physical death was also entailed, as well as eternal death as punishment as well (Augustine, quoted by Kidner)
- 3. **chaos and disorder**:
  - a) in the curse, instead of bearing fruit without undue toil or hardship, thorns and thistles will spring up.
  - b) by extension, Adam's fall has brought the whole created universe into a state of shock: see Romans 8:19, "creation groans as a woman in childbirth awaiting her redemption--and more specifically, the redemption of man."

*B. In total, the first humans became like God, but had been sold a false idea of evil*

- 1. they were told it was something "beyond good."
- 2. They were tempted with wisdom, sophistication, greatness, and ultimately greed.
- 3. As a result, they became both like God and unlike God.

4. they took to themselves to literally defining for themselves what was good and what was evil.
5. but the knowledge of evil meant they no longer wanted to be good, no longer loved each other, and no longer felt love for God and one another, instead, they felt angry and selfish in their wicked hearts.
6. theologians speak of the noetic effects of sin:
  - a) sin infects not only our actions but our attitudes
  - b) we are sinful in our thoughts, words, emotions, as well as our behaviors.
  - c) total depravity doesn't mean we are as bad as we could be, only that every part of our persons, body and soul, is tainted by sin.

#### IV. What Is the Solution?

##### A. *What happened?*

1. As a consequence of their sin, the first humans were removed from Eden: "God cannot allow evil and wickedness to remain in His presence."
2. But as God approaches them in judgment (they hear him coming in the Garden), he is also taking his first steps as God Our Redeemer.

##### B. *Remember the context:*

1. at the time of this writing, Moses and the people were leaving Egypt and preparing to enter Canaan.
2. They questioned whether this was God's plan; these chapters teach us that our Redeemer is strong and merciful and just and holy.

##### C. *Notice the promise:*

1. God's story promises judgment for sin, but even in the judgment, we see that there is hope, there is a promise of Mercy: the seed of the woman...
2. Yet this promise of mercy is given in the context of the judgment on the serpent. *this shows that redemption is first and foremost about God's rule, and second about man's need for salvation.*
3. But, God's triumph is our blessing: the one who is His enemy is also ours.
4. St. Paul in the New Testament calls our redeemer a Second Adam; which is appropriate, as Adam Himself believes in the promise, as indicated by the title he ascribes to his wife, "Mother of all Living."
5. This Second Adam would come and do battle with the Enemy again; and every where our Father Adam failed, our Savior, Jesus, would succeed:
  - a) He frees us from our sin, John 8
  - b) He opens our eyes, 2 Corinthians 4
  - c) He transfers us from enemy territory, Colossians 1
  - d) He gives us His spirit, Romans 8, so we can understand the things of God, the Words of God, and find our place in His story
  - e) "The unfolding of your Word gives light." Ps. 119:130
6. God then confirms his promise of redemption to these two sinners by covering them with skins of animals

*D. The bottom line: there is hope after death and judgement.*

*E. What does this mean for me?*

1. Like then, so also now: your enemy, the Devil, doesn't want you to see the danger of living in this world. He wants you going through your day with your dukes down, as though you have nothing to fear.
  - a) Men, he wants you standing by and allowing evil and disorder to invade your lives, your homes.
  - b) Women, he wants you questioning God's goodness and order in your lives and in the world.
  - c) People, he wants you yearning and thirsting still for the knowledge of Evil-- not the awareness of what is right and wrong, but the lust for the power to define your own, independent existence.
  - d) He doesn't want you to see the tree as an absolute prohibition, but as a suggestion. Then he wants you to think that you can choose to keep the command or not just like Adam did, when in reality, you cannot: you have fallen and have lost the appetite and desire for that which is good, right, and holy. You cannot live in that way on your own;
  - e) He wants you to think you can still live your life on your own. "He doesn't want you to recognize how pervasive and subtle the message of self-confidence is, whether on TV, online, in church, or just driving down the road.
  - f) He wants you feeling good about yourself as your reason for living: your performance/decisions/reputation/righteousness.
  - g) He wants you distracted from fixing your eyes and thoughts on Jesus, and instead wants you self-absorbed.
  - h) Even your sacrifice for others, he will use to nurture a sense of worthiness in you.
  - i) He doesn't want you asking for intervention from on High: to be freshly convicted of your sin of independence.
  - j) And once you recognize the problem, he wants you striving to abide in Jesus, instead of confessing your unbelief, your dissatisfaction with Jesus and His righteousness.

Additional Notes for sermon on The Fall (or Original Sin)

If God's ultimate desire is to be worshipped and exalted among all peoples, it is evident the adversary, Satan, who is jealous for God's glory, is actively seeking to deprive God of his glory among the nations.

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(Jerry Rankin, from Desiring God Ministries blog on 1/13/2011: [http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/jerry-rankin-on-spiritual-warfare-in-the-global-mission?utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=feed&utm\\_campaign=Feed:+DGBlog+\(DG+Blog\)](http://www.desiringgod.org/blog/posts/jerry-rankin-on-spiritual-warfare-in-the-global-mission?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:+DGBlog+(DG+Blog)))

Satan doesn't want you to see,

the danger of living in this world. He wants you going through your day with your dukes down, as though you have nothing to fear. He doesn't want you to see how impossible it is, to live as you were created to live: dependently. He wants you minimizing the law, dumbing it down to where the Christian life is doable, possible, because you are a mature, responsible, sensible, adult follower of Jesus. He doesn't want you to recognize how pervasive and subtle the message of self-confidence is, whether on TV, online, in church, or just driving down the road. He wants you feeling good about yourself as your reason for living: your performance/decisions/reputation/righteousness. He wants you distracted from fixing your eyes and thoughts on Jesus, and instead wants you self-absorbed. Even your sacrifice for others, he will use to nurture a sense of worthiness in you. He doesn't want you asking for intervention from on High: to be freshly convicted of your sin of independence. And once you recognize the problem, he wants you striving to abide in Jesus, instead of confessing your unbelief, your dissatisfaction with Jesus and His righteousness.

--StrongDave, needing prayer to function more as a Jesus-dependent, so the nonbelievers around him will be wowed and want the joy and peace that has nothing to do with circumstances (please pray now)

There will never be a simple pill to regulate such a complicated disease as addiction. The most important contribution that anyone dealing with addicted individuals can make is to recognize that reversing addiction is not just a matter of giving up something pleasurable but of accepting that addicted individuals have undergone a

formidable reorganization of their brains. Treating an addict requires dealing with every aspect of this reorganization. (from the article, How Addiction Hijacks Our Reward System

by Wilkie A. Wilson and Cynthia M. Kuhn

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