

Lesson 44: Chapter 6: Paragraph 1: The Original Sin: Part Two

OUTLINE

The temptation
The sin
The plan

INTRODUCTION

Last week we discussed the original condition of mankind as we looked at the original covenant of works they were in; and the original integrity they had to fulfil the covenant of works. We come today to the historical roots of sin in the first temptation and sin. The second half of the first paragraph reads, 'Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to subdue Eve, then by her seducing Adam, who, without any compulsion, did willfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given unto them, in eating the forbidden fruit, which God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.' We will be looking at this section in three parts, the temptation; then the sin; and the closing remarks about God's plan in the fall.

The temptation

V1, 'Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" We begin with our protagonist, satan. Here called the serpent, the 1689 explaining that 'satan using the subtlety of the serpent.' As a result of this historical moment satan will go on to be called the ancient serpent Rev. 12:9. We are not given an explanation of the mechanics of how satan and the serpent are linked, but we can see that the serpent is linked with the beasts of the field, and had some characteristics making it a useful tool for satan. The common educated guess is that satan somehow possessed the serpent for his purposes, as the demons did the pigs in the gospels. We do not know when the fall of satan took place, whether this temptation of mankind constituted the devil's act of rebellion, or if it was prior to this. Is. 14:12-14 is the traditional place that describes the fall of satan, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' The prophet Isaiah is addressing the king of Babylon, 14:3; but then the prophet seems to leave the man behind and address the principality pulling the strings of the man who was on the rise to being the world's superpower at the time. We have the first sin of satan described as a rejection of God's authority and a desire to take His place and becoming like Him. We see something similar in Ezek 28. In v1-10 we God addressing the 'prince of Tyre' in fall like language; but then from v11, the text addresses the 'King of Tyre' , v12b-15, "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain

of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you.' Pride; rejection of the Creator-creature distinction by seeking to be like God and rejecting God's right to rule us, these we see lie at the heart of the first sin. This is the likely portion of scripture Paul has in mind when he writes, 1 Tim. 3:6, 'He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.' And we will see will be at the core of the temptation of Adam and Eve.

We come to the first exchange between Satan and Eve. Now it should be noted that this high and angelic being who has been put over various aspects of God's creation is in violation of God's creation by possessing this animal. Then we should also note that just as Satan rebelled against the proper creation order of Himself in submission to God he brings an animal, that which is under man to challenge man, another reversal and perversion created by sin. Satan we see comes to Eve and not to Adam. Why did he do this? One school of thought says that Eve only got the command secondhand and would have a weaker grasp on it. Others have thought that this is strategic on the part of Satan because Eve as a perfect woman would not have been combative and defensive but her strengths as the ideal helpmeet would make her more vulnerable. I think both are true but not enough in the text for us to rule on the exact motives of Satan. I think there is some merit in recognizing the ontological differences between men and women where God has made them to differ and fitted them for differing purposes, so that the role of an elder is more suited to men. But I must also admit that this argument on ontological fittedness has its weaknesses if it stands alone. For example, some women are more analytical; post-menopausal women are less moody; older men have less testosterone and are prone to becoming soft on their convictions. Male headship in the home is partly based on the ontological differences between men and women but not exclusively. We recognize that men figure Christ and women the church and because of the gospel we also insist on this order.

It should be noted that Adam was present the whole time, 1 Tim. 2:14 is taken to indicate that he was present but not deceived, 'and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived,' and instead of putting this animal in its place as soon as it raised any suspicions of God, he passively failed to act and let the scene unfold. He failed to stand between his wife and a poisonous viper; he failed to act in his official capacity as teacher and judge; he failed to lead in keeping the garden pure of evil and rebellion, and he did so by exposing his wife to danger.

"Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'? The temptation comes in two parts, the first begins with subtlety the second is more blatantly direct. Satan begins with a question. This question challenges the truthfulness of God by attacking His word, His command. The question pretends inquiry but is just an indirect statement. It then exaggerates God's command, casting the prohibition in a bad light instead of wondering at the goodness of God's commands, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden.' In truth they had access to every tree apart from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil now; and upon their obedience the tree of life. Every single other tree, with its perfect and abundant fruit was free for them to enjoy as part of God's blessing and bounty to them. By this slight of hand an insinuation of a God who loves to prohibit and not be liberal is introduced. Instead of the truth of God's magnanimity in condescending to bring His creatures into such close relation to Himself and to bless them with so much. Instead of a recognition of His great

power that made all things; and the right He has to rule by virtue of being the Creator, and more than that being the best of all beings. Instead of the truth of His holiness, and righteousness, and goodness, Eve allows satan to indirectly cast doubt of the truthfulness of who God is. At this point, the truth about God; the facts of the matter themselves; the good of God's law; and the appropriateness of whatever God imposes in His holy goodness was her defense. But her response reveals she has opened a door to lies.

V2-3, 'And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Eve recounts the law with one addition, 'neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' God never said you couldn't touch it. This legalistic addition betrays that she has already re-construed God's laws to make Him appear harsh and demanding. Our opinion of the good of the rule will inevitably reflect on our opinion of the good of the ruler giver. Legalists reveal their view of a harsh God in the harsh laws they add to His good law.

The devil sees that he has made an opening for himself, he can now freely and openly contradict God as he casts off subtlety and comes out with blatant denials, v4-5, 'But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" The command of God clearly said, v16-17, 'And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'" There is not uncertainty in the sentence, 'you shall surely die.' But the devil denies a clear statement by God daring in the face of God's vice-regents to speak blasphemy before them, but he dares because he sees that Eve has already turned a jaundiced eye upon God. The devil rushes to follow up this radical rebellion with an apparent motive. He uses a contorted logic to come up with some sort of explanation that paints God in a bad light and make his denials all the more believable. Killing two birds with one stone he can both deny the truth while getting our first parents to believe a lie about God. V5, 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" Here the devil makes out that God is insecure and jealous, and as a result is miserly in allowing Adam and Eve access to the fruit. We must here recognize the lies that lie behind temptation to make sin appear good. There are lies about God that we need to believe, in this instance that God is bad in giving us restrictions, bad in denying us, that he is driven by motives other than those of His own perfect goodness, love and wisdom. We must believe that God is a liar, that He will not punish sin and does not command us for our good but for some other purpose. There are lies that we believe about ourselves. Just as satan denied the Creator-creature distinction and sought to be like God, a false view of our creatureliness is assumed. That sin can improve us in a way that is better than the holiness God calls us to. That we can ascend the role of creature that owes obedience to God. That we can sin without consequence and make a future contrary to what God has said will happen. Then there are the lies we believe about the sin itself. Sin makes all sorts of promises but it lies. If Adam and Eve had obeyed they would have learned the knowledge of good and evil, the benefits of the good and by negation avoiding evil. They would be confirmed in holiness and have a knowledge of good and evil like God's indeed, where you do not have to sin in order to know the evil and wrongness of sin. The empty promise of sin is that it would deliver this promise, but it only delivered death, and a knowledge of good

it could no longer have, and a knowledge of evil it could not escape. By disobedience the nature of the knowledge is reversed had they obeyed. They believed that sin would not result in judgement but in some self-made happiness. In every sin we commit we choose lies over truth; we choose to believe lies about God, ourselves and our sins.

The sin

Now we come to the sin itself. Now technically, various sins have already been committed. Adam has sinned in not leading His wife; Eve has sinned in not turning to her husband and by believing the lies she is confronted with. Both have sinned in several ways, and have already in their hearts eaten of the fruit as it were. But now we come to the sin proper. The confession puts it this way, 'then by her seducing Adam, who, without any compulsion, did willfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given unto them, in eating the forbidden fruit.' In the past there have been some wrong presentations of the garden that makes Eve out to be the femme fatale who beguiled an innocent Adam, that through her nakedness and sexuality coaxed an unwitting Adam into the act. The confession recognises Eve's part in giving the fruit to her husband, but makes very clear the guilt in his case is greater as he 'without any compulsion' willingly broke the law. The Savoy speaks of both being seduced, the 1689 is not laying all the blame on Eve, but is merely putting more of the historical narrative into the text. The 1689 is at pains to emphasize the free decision in the sin, the sin was not under any compulsion. The free will of the creature was not violated in any way by God.

V6, 'So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.' Traditionally this sin has been equated with John's description in 1 John 2:16, 'For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.' Self-deceiving she tells herself a new story about the fruit. She repurposes the fruit in God's will where it served as a test for humanity to prove through their obedience the authority of God and by their obedience triumph and gain a new state of glorification where they would be confirmed in righteousness forever. She sees something in it to satisfy a basic urge, it must have had a beautiful appearance, and it was fruit after all and fruit was for eating. She put perceived personal good, and seeking our own good is not evil in itself, above seeking the good of honouring and obeying God. If we compare the fruit to our sexuality, we can come up with all sorts of ideas about how it can be used to satisfy ourselves, all the while rejecting the purpose that God has given to it. Her desires above God's desires, these take precedence and recast the fruit to serve them. The desires of the eyes. The fruit looked good, but how poor a perspective this has become, the fruit was so much more than its appearance. A person with a good body and looks does not equal a good person. Just because something is now pretty and appealing does not negate what God says it is and what it is for. This aspect of the fruit, that it was a delight to the eyes was enough to contentedly distract from the danger it posed by virtue of God's command. The death it contained was not written in its appearance but that does not mean it is not there. And then there is the seeming practical value of the fruit, it will make one wise, and wisdom is a good thing after all isn't it? The entrance of God's word gives light, but this is a counterfeit wisdom that we manufacture where think we know better than God; and so we self-help

ourselves into what we think will be a better result than what obeying God can bring.

But these are just dressed up excuses. Rebellion, disobedience, is what is actually happening, not exercising dietary discretionary choices; beauty appreciation; and self-improvement, no matter how well we dress it up.

The confession stresses the nature of sin as willfully transgressing the law of their creation. This agrees with other definitions of sin. Like the WLC:

'Q. 24. *What is sin?*

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable creature.'

The WSC:

Q 14: What is sin?

A: Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

1 John 3:4: Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.'

The plan

The 1689 then adds a note that has already been discussed under God's Decree, 'which God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory.' Here we have it reiterated that sin falls under God's sovereignty; that it was permitted by God; and that this permission was not out of some wicked intent, but in fact results in the glory of God. At least we can say that it results in the demonstration of the glory of His grace as He is a willing Savior of sinner's, and in such an incredible display that it is through the willing giving and death of His Son Jesus Christ that unworthy sinners are saved. And it was for the demonstration of His holy justice where sinners both human and angelic would receive exactly what sin against God deserves. We do not have the wit or information to contradict this biblical claim, and we wait in faith for the day of Judgement to fully reveal all that God has done. On that day there will be the verdict of guilty upon those who have rejected Him, and their justice will be apparent. On that day there will be the verdict of not guilty upon all those who are in Christ and God shall be praised for the amazing salvation He has wrought. But we must not forget that God Himself will be vindicate don that day as His glory now fully manifest will put down any insinuation that sin is small and does not deserve to be punished. We shall see Him in His holy glory and the truth of His goodness and holiness will be beyond dispute.

We will continue next week looking at the effects of the fall.