

## Newsletter October 2012

In this newsletter we shall briefly discuss the disastrous fall of man that resulted in mankind's total separation from God, which is also spiritual death. As we do so, we shall use edited excerpts taken from *Comprehensively Reformed Christianity*, Book I, Chapter 2.3.

God created man in his own image. In doing so he gave man the incredible ability and responsibility to reflect God's own glory as he exercised dominion over every living thing on earth (Ge.1:26, 27). When God placed the man, Adam, in the Garden of Eden to tend it (Ge.2:8,15), he was not subjected in any way to death, but was allowed to partake freely of eternal life. In the beginning, man knew God personally and walked with Him in the garden. Adam lived in the glory of God and had great worth and freedom in that glory.

Seeing that it was not well that man should dwell alone (Ge.2:18), God created a vast array of animals, but none of them was found to be a suitable companion for Adam (Ge.2:19,20). Whereupon, God created a corresponding human being that was formed out of Adam's own body, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, and He gave this wonderful creature to Adam for an intimate life companion and helper (Ge.2:21-23). Adam called her "woman" because she had been formed out of the body of a man, and then he later named her Eve, since from her would come all future generations of mankind (Ge.3:20). Both lived freely together in intimate innocence enjoying each other and the glory and favor of God who had lovingly created them.

However, not all would remain tranquil in the garden in which mankind both served God and delighted in his presence. Satan, a spiritual being whom God had created, should have acted as a protective covering for Adam and Eve's innocence (See Book I, Chapter 2.4). Instead, he rebelled against God out of jealousy and personal pride, and taking occasion of God's sole prohibition given to Adam (Ge.2:17) he deceived Eve. Satan through the form of a serpent approached Eve saying, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden" (Ge.3:1)? Eve reasoned within herself that that was so, but then God had also said that if she ate of the forbidden fruit from a certain tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she would surely die (Ge.2:17). The serpent lied to her saying, "Ye shall not surely die" (Ge.3:4). The forbidden fruit of the tree looked tantalizingly good to eat, and Eve came to believe that if she ate of it she would become wise and made clever like the serpent, and in doing so gain for herself the same wisdom as God (Ge.3:6). So it was that through Satan's cunning lies Eve yielded to Satan's deception and ate of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil (1Ti.2:14; Ge.3:13).

What we need to understand is that God's prohibition was made to *protect* man, not to deny him some wonderful experience as Satan had suggested to Eve. God sought to protect mankind against the disastrous effects of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Mortal man could not digest it and live lest he presume to displace his Creator. The "fruit" was poison to him — it would destroy him, and he must surely die if he partook of it. Therefore, we find that Satan, to attain his own evil purposes, which was to usurp the glory of God for himself (Is.14:13, 14), sought to ruin mankind for God's purposes by having Eve acquire knowledge of evil. Satan further intended this action to bind mankind to himself as his own worshipers and slaves through the continual commission of sin.

Adam was not deceived by the serpent but was instead tempted by Eve (1Ti.2:14; Ge.3:17). It is most certain that Adam profoundly loved Eve; it was precisely because of that love he had for her that she was able to tempt him. Unlike Eve, *Adam was not deceived*; he knew with certainty that what he was doing was in direct violation of God's express will. That is why we speak of Adam's sin and not Eve's. Adam did not call upon God when he discovered what Eve had done, but rather chose to take matters in his own hands and in so doing had already committed sin. Adam partook of the "fruit," exercising an illicit self-knowledge that elevated him to be forever burdened with the

knowledge of evil. Therefore, the first man and woman, who in the beginning knew only God, who alone is good without even a shadow of evil, were now burdened with a continual temptation to do evil deeds that had become embedded in their nature through their impossible attempt to elevate their own self-worth to God's level.

Man in effect had told God that in the future he would decide for himself what was good and evil, and would stand on his own intrinsic worth apart from that which God had placed on him when he was created. However, man has no intrinsic worth apart from that which God had imparted to him through close association with Himself. Furthermore, man's notion of what is good or evil cannot be absolute nor in accordance with truth, but instead is strongly influenced by his own desires and various lusts that are inherent in the flesh. Each man will go astray in his own way (cf. Is.53:6). Man, without God's close guidance must surely error and in doing so commit sin both in thought and in deed. Without the close companionship of God, he is a lost creature unable to fulfill his intended high purpose in life.

The immediate result of "their eyes being opened" to illicit knowledge was a feeling of deep shame — a feeling that they could never have known if they had continued to believe and trust God. They attempted to cover the sudden awareness of their nakedness with fig leaves (Ge.3:7). The beings, which had before intimately walked with God, now hid from his presence (Ge.3:8). The man, Adam, sensing his own worth, blamed his act of disobedience on the woman (Ge.3:12). The woman for the same reason blamed her own disobedience on the serpent (Ge.3:13).

"Unto the woman [God] said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Ge.3:16-19).

Spiritual death, the separation of man's spirit from God's loving companionship, had already taken place, and physical death would follow later as their physical bodies no longer being nourished from the "tree of life" necessarily deteriorated over time. Man, by his very nature, continually partakes of sin, denies God's Word, and walks in his own council apart from the guidance of Almighty God. Because of man's self-knowledge, he is now forbidden to eat of the "tree of life" and is, therefore, made subject to physical death (Ge.3:22,23). Furthermore, because man has attempted to elevate himself to the level of "a god" through his own craving and pitiful pride (Ge.3:5), he experiences separation from God's love through *his own choosing* (Ro.8:7). No longer does man walk with God in the cool of the garden, but is barred from the garden by a "flaming sword" (Ge.3:24). (But, we should take note that the way to eternal life was not destroyed or closed, but only well guarded against any entry by sinful man)!

When we speak of eternal separation from God, it should be obvious that this does not include separation from God's wrath. Eternal death is a perpetual state of the knowledge of God's extreme displeasure and the resulting punishment for sins that were committed in this life. Eternal separation means that we can have no direct communication with God and are separated from his many benefits and love forever. That is the ultimate horror of man's fallen state wherein his soul when it leaves his body through death is destined to occupy Hell — the place of eternal torment (cf. Book I, *The doctrine of Hell*, page 480).

From generation to generation, the offspring of Adam continued to partake of the knowledge of evil, and man continues to elevate his self-importance, denying God, seeking his own glory, and

walking in spiritual darkness (Ro.1:28). That is the state of the world in which we live today. Spiritually blind men leading other blind men in never-ending circles of sin, evil, and war. Man does not know the ways of peace because he does not know God. Our ways are corrupt, our thoughts are evil, and our graveyards are full of the dead. Such is the nature of the curse that Satan precipitated on all mankind when he induced Adam to sin; such is the disastrous fall of man; such is the strength of original sin that “in Adam all die” (1Co.15:22).

Therefore, are *none righteous* (Ro.3:10; 3:23), for in setting about to attain our own self-righteousness in an attempt to make ourselves acceptable before God, we only turn further away from Him (Ro.10:3). No effort of our own can change the fallen nature we have inherited, because our works come from our own sinful and ill-gotten knowledge of evil. Thus, mankind has become a bondservant to sin (Jn.8:34). He is bound hand and foot by a relentless taskmaster that will not release him. No longer can a man’s choices truly produce anything that is purely good, but must constantly terminate in evil results even when he set out to do that which is good (Ro.7:19). What a miserable creature we are without God; in our gluttonous search to increase our own knowledge we are drawn directly toward the depths of Hell, and we have not the will to resist the pull. As we can plainly see, man’s only hope is divine intervention, and that must be a *unilateral intervention*, because man, being a servant to sin, has no will to assist. His will is in bondage.

Would God forever condemn his own creation without making an effort to save him? No, but neither can God accept man as he is, full of evil and rebellion. Nor can He merely forgive the unforgivable without repentance. To do so would be a continual affront to God’s holiness, and further banish mankind to a state of worthlessness forever. We surely realize that God was not taken by surprise by the fall of man, nor did God take delight in the separation of Himself from man. Nor, as some wags have put it, “was the cross like an ambulance sent to the scene of a wreck.” For even while pronouncing the necessary sentence upon man, God predicted Satan’s defeat, predicted Christ’s sufferings, and promised the coming Messiah: “And I will put enmity between thee [Satan] and the woman [Mary], and between thy seed and her seed; it [Christ] shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” (Ge.3:15). Even as woman (Eve) was a part of the transgression by tempting Adam, so a woman (Mary) would take a part in the salvation of man (1Ti.2:14,15; Mt.1:21).

The Good News, the Gospel, is that God, Himself, has intervened in the rebellious history of sinful mankind and glorified one man, the man Jesus Christ, that “as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1Co.15:22). If death came upon all men because of the sin of Adam and because they are Adam’s descendants, could not the righteousness of a perfect man be imparted to those who accept him and walk in his ways? Nevertheless, a perfect man could not be found from all the mortal generations of Adam. Because of their inherited nature, all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God (Ro.3:23). Sin is a terrible degradation of man’s true worth resulting in the corruption of “God’s image,” in which man was first created, and is a continual affront to God’s holiness.

It was therefore necessary for God to send his own Son to take on the likeness of sinful flesh of man, to die in the place of those upon whom judgment should rightly fall. Nevertheless, it was not possible that the grave and death could hold Him who is the Son of the living God (Ac.2:24). In raising Jesus from the dead God is now free to justify all those who would accept Him as their savior and head. Those who would believe in God’s Son are translated (born anew) into his kingdom wherein they have eternal life. In Jesus, the second Adam, is the hope of all mankind. Here is true knowledge and wisdom: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn.3:36).

*Arthur J. Smith October 2012*