

## WHAT HAPPENED IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN?

### *GENESIS 3:1-7*

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This study is concerned with what actually happened when Adam fell in the Garden of Eden as recorded in *Genesis 3*. A wise man once said something to the effect that if a person is "wrong on the fall, they are wrong on it all." In essence, this is true. But before we go to *Genesis 3*, let's first consider the effects of Adam's fall as recorded in *Romans 5* and how this shows the necessity of salvation by God's free and sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. We will consider what happened in the Garden of Eden in this context.

***Romans 5:12 – Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:***

God the Holy Spirit by the Apostle Paul reveals God's way of justifying sinners based on the ONE ground of salvation, the imputed righteousness of Christ. He does this by comparing the role of Adam, the first man, in the fall of all whom he represented with the role of the Lord Jesus Christ in the redemption of all whom He represented. Sin came by ONE man, Adam, and the whole human race, all whom he represented, sinned, not personally, but in the person of our representative, Adam. Sin came into the world through the first man Adam, and death (spiritual and physical) passed, or literally, "*spread to all men*" because "*all sinned*" in Adam. This means the whole human race, each individual, were legally constituted sinners on the ground of Adam's one sin. In what sense did each individual participate in Adam's sin? The whole human race in Adam became guilty by **REPRESENTATION**. Adam was the federal head and representative of the whole human race, so that when he sinned, all of his posterity sinned, again not personally, but in the person of our representative Adam. According to the covenant of works all men represented by and born of Adam stand under death and cannot be saved. All who are born of Adam also in time receives from Adam a sinful fallen human nature. Death passed through from father (Adam) to son (the whole human race).

***Romans 5:13-17*** is a parenthesis that explains how that just as condemnation and death are the fruit and effect of Adam's sin, justification and life (salvation) are the fruit and effect of Christ's obedience unto death (His righteousness). This sets forth one of the most profound, vital, and unique truths of Christianity ó **JUST AS ADAM'S SIN BROUGHT DEATH UPON ALL WHOM HE REPRESENTED,**

CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (the merits of His obedience and death) BROUGHT JUSTIFICATION AND ETERNAL LIFE OF ALL WHOM HE REPRESENTED. In other words, our personal sinning is merely the fruit and evidence of our connection with Adam, and it only evidences our death in and by him. By the same principle, we do not become justified by personal obedience or anything that proceeds from our persons. We become justified by Christ's righteousness imputed, or legally charged, to us. Our personal obedience is merely the fruit and evidence of our connection with Christ.

- *Romans 5:18 – Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. {19} For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

The term “**all men**” here must be qualified because “**all men**” without exception are not condemned to eternal death. Some have been chosen by God unto salvation. Also, “**all men**” without exception do not receive the “**free gift**” of “**justification**” and “**eternal life.**” Some perish eternally without Christ. However, the method of condemnation and justification are the same in principle. Sinners are justified through the imputation of Christ's righteousness just as they were guilty through the imputation of Adam's guilt. Just as the whole race of humanity was **lost** through the representative act of the first Adam, God's elect are **saved** through the representative act of the last Adam ó the Lord Jesus Christ ó

- *1 Corinthians 15:21 – For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. {22} For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

We can conclude then from God's Word that sinners are saved in the same manner in which they were lost -- THROUGH THE ACT OF A SUBSTITUTE AND REPRESENTATIVE. As Adam, by his one transgression, brought guilt to all who were connected with him, so Christ, by His act of righteousness (His sinless life and substitutionary death) brings justification and life to all who are connected with Him. This is why we must insist that to deny the doctrine of total depravity and to promote universal notions of the atonement is to deny the Gospel ó God's promise of salvation and final glory based on the righteousness of Christ. Many believe that a person can be saved believing such God-dishonoring, Christ-denying, man-exalting doctrines, but in reality herein lies one of the main evidences of total depravity as we consider what

actually happened in the fall of mankind through Adam.

Now, keeping these great truths in mind, let's go back to **Genesis 3** and examine the precise nature of Adam's fall. Since it affected so many, all whom Adam represented (the whole human race), and since the only hope of salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam, the Representative of the whole election of grace, it would do all of us good to understand the exact nature of the fall. It is through an understanding of the fall of Adam as a representative and redemption by Christ as a Representative that we come to understand right and wrong, according to God's testimony, and understand what it is to be lost and to be saved. Consider how the natural man judges saved and lost. Consider their standard of judgment, and we will begin to see the true nature of total depravity.

## **I. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND ADAM.**

The relationship between God as sovereign Creator and Adam as creature was a covenant relationship ó

- ***Genesis 1:27 – So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. {28} And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.***

God created Adam and Eve in His own image. This mainly refers to the fact that Adam and Eve possessed all the qualities of character that God communicates to humans. God has communicable attributes and incommunicable attributes. For example, God is holy and He created Adam as holy. On the other hand, God is immutable. He has no beginning and no end. But Adam had a beginning, and being a creature could never be immutable. Creation by definition means change. Adam and Eve were holy both in their state (their persons) and in their character and conduct. They were not immutably holy, but they were holy. They were sinless. Adam was the first man, the best and the most intelligent man. He was the crown of God's creation.

The covenant agreement into which God entered with Adam was a covenant of works. God as the supreme, sovereign, righteous Creator, entered into this covenant with

Adam, the first man. God appointed Adam as the representative and federal head of the entire human family. Adam stood as a responsible, rational creature. The terms of this covenant were very simple ó obey God and live; disobey God and die.

- ***Genesis 2:16 – And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: {17} But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.***

God promised Adam eternal, spiritual life if Adam would obey the commandment of God perfectly, and God added the threat of death should Adam sin in the least detail. Adam already had spiritual life but the difference between the spiritual life of original man and the spiritual life of redeemed man is that Adam's original life was mutable. Adam being a creature was subject to change and, therefore, liable to fall. This is the nature of a creature. Only God is immutable! This might give us a clue to one of the greatest mysteries concerning God's reason for ordaining the fall of mankind in Adam. We know, first and foremost, it was His own glory in the redemption of mankind by saving His elect through the Lord Jesus Christ. But also this may have been the only way that God who is immutable could have eternal, unbroken fellowship with mutable beings. Think about it ó How can the Immutable have eternal fellowship with the mutable? It boggles our minds. God has not revealed all things to our finite minds.

So God put Adam to the test. The objective test of the covenant of works was in the ***"tree of the knowledge of good and evil."*** This tree represented God's sovereign authority and **His** standard of good and evil, along with His sovereign right to determine good and evil. It is God, not man, who is the standard of good. It is God, not man, who determines what is right and what is wrong. So the welfare of the whole of humanity depended upon Adam's obedience because Adam represented the whole of humanity. It is important to remember that this covenant of works was never intended to be a covenant of salvation or redemption. There was no provision in this covenant of works for mercy or grace. There was no remedy for disobedience and no way of recovery in this covenant. Disobedience meant swift and certain death with no hope of salvation in this covenant of works. This is the reason God reveals plainly that ***"by deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3:20).*** This is another reason why we who believe the Gospel must insist that all who believe in a universal atonement are lost and do not believe the Gospel of God's grace. Universal notions of the atonement automatically make salvation conditioned on the sinner. This reduces salvation to a covenant of works. Anyone then who believes salvation conditioned on sinners in any way is seeking an impossibility, because he is

seeking salvation based on the terms of a covenant that provides no salvation.

**Salvation and recovery is according to the terms of another covenant, a covenant of grace, through another representative, the Lord Jesus Christ, the last Adam.**

The Gospel is the preaching of the terms of this covenant of grace. It is a promise of salvation conditioned, not on sinners, but on the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner's Substitute and Surety. This reveals the absolute certainty of the salvation of all whom He represented based on His righteousness alone without our works and efforts as pertaining to the ground of salvation. Salvation cannot be conditioned on anything proceeding from a sinner's person or character and conduct at any stage and to any degree. God must be glorified, Christ must be exalted, and all boasting must be excluded in sinners.

## **II. THE FALL OF ADAM AND THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE.**

When did Adam fall and what was the nature of his fall? Adam fell when he broke the covenant of works by eating the forbidden fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was not simply the act of eating the fruit that brought about the fall of Adam, and what the fruit was specifically is not important. If it were, God would have revealed it specifically. It was an actual fruit from an actual tree. It was not sex as sex was not forbidden. God had before commanded Adam and Eve to **"be fruitful, and multiply"** (*Gen. 1:28*). To get caught up in such minor issues is to miss the whole point of the story. Adam actually fell before he ate the fruit because in his mind he had determined to disobey God. His eating the fruit was simply the result of his making a judgment and coming to a conclusion **based on Satan's lie**. This is very, very important if we are to understand the fall of man and the real basic evidences of fallen, sinful human nature. It is recorded in *Genesis 3:1-7*.

Satan first began tempting them by challenging God's authority, God's truth, God's promise, and God's threat --

- *Genesis 3:1 – Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? {2} And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: {3} But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. {4} And the serpent*

***said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: {5} For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.***

Notice as God had said of the fruit of this tree, "***Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die,***" Satan's message to Adam and Eve was "***Ye shall not surely die.***" God the Creator who is holy, sovereign, good, wise, and powerful, had set the standard of good and evil. He had told Adam and Eve that it was evil to eat of the fruit of that tree. He had told them that if they ate of it, they would die. But Satan told them it was not evil to eat of the fruit of that tree. He told them it was good and that they would not die. In essence Satan was saying that God is not the only one who can say what is good and evil, who can set the standard of judgment in these matters. Satan in essence told Adam and Eve that they could set their own standard of good and evil ó "***then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.***" A lot of people take this phrase to mean that Adam and Eve in their ignorant innocence did not know the difference between good and evil. This is why many unbelievers look upon this story as a myth describing man's liberation rather than the truth describing man's fall. Adam and Eve knew the difference between good and evil. Adam was an intelligent, rational creature who was made in the image of God. He was the most intelligent human being ever as he was the first man. God did not create Adam as (nor enter into the covenant with him as) an ignorant, irrational, immature child. Adam knew full well what he was doing.

Some say that the phrase, "***ye shall be as gods,***" means that Adam wanted to take God off the throne and replace God with himself. But I believe they miss the point of this phrase. Again, Adam knew full well that he did not create the world. He knew that his power was limited, but in eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, he sought to be "***as gods***" in the sense that he could aspire to be independent from God and set his own standards of right and wrong, good and evil, of saved and lost. This has been the problem with sinful man all along.

Adam and Eve listened to Satan's lie, and Adam made a judgment, a conscious decision, based on Satan's lie. Adam did not believe God's threat or God's promise. He did not believe God. He believed Satan's message ó "***ye shall not surely die.***" Adam fell when he took sides with Satan against God. He sought to set his own standard of good and evil. In essence we could say that Adam sought to set his own standard of saved (continuing in life) and lost (death). Satan spoke peace to Adam and Eve in opposition to God's testimony. The moment Adam did this, he became guilty, defiled,

totally depraved, and spiritually dead.

**This proves that sin is not essentially immorality.** Immorality is certainly sinful, but it is just an effect of a greater, deeper problem. Sin is essentially unbelief of God. Unbelief is what causes man to declare his independence from God and seek to set his own standard of good and evil, of saved and lost. When immorality and selfishness occur, they flow from unbelief, but sin is essentially unbelief. Adam and Eve were the only human beings on earth at that time. They had no neighbors so they could not sin against the second table of the Decalogue which has to do with perfect love to our neighbors. It forbids adultery, murder, lying, stealing, and covetousness. Adam could not have committed any of the sins on which religion majors today. There were no drugs or alcohol, no R-rated movies. Before the fall, Adam and Eve were righteous and holy, and they had free access and fellowship with God.

Adam sinned, and his sin resulted in a two-fold death (physical, and spiritual). By that one sin Adam brought both himself and Eve into a state whereby they were now alienated from God, enemies of God, and allied with Satan under the powers of darkness. Now they were guilty and defiled. And remember, they still had no neighbors. They were still moral in all these areas mentioned before. What was the first thing they did after the fall? They did not get drunk or perform some perverted act of gross immorality. They did not seek to murder each other. They realized their own nakedness and sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves (*Gen. 3:7*). Now this does not mean that they did not know that they were naked before the fall. They knew they were naked, but their nakedness before the fall brought no shame because there was no sin to make them ashamed. Before the fall, they were pure and holy. It also means that after the fall they both realized they were exposed to God's wrath at that time. The fig leaves represent man's efforts to cover himself or shield himself from the wrath of God by his own efforts. This is sinful.

But we see here in the garden that a person may be guilty before God, no matter how moral he might appear. We see examples of this all through the Bible (ex. Nicodemus, Saul of Tarsus, the Pharisees). The objective of God's command to Adam was faith-obedience. Adam was to obey God because he recognized God's sovereign authority and right, and because he believed both God's promise and God's threat. But Adam chose to believe Satan and disbelieve God. He plunged himself and the whole human race into spiritual death and darkness, and the greatest evidence of this state is unbelief that causes us to seek to set our own standard of saved and lost, which in turn causes us to speak peace to ourselves and to others apart from God's testimony.

Again, here we see the real essence and evidence of total depravity, of lostness, of spiritual kinship with Satan ó

- **(1) MAKING JUDGMENTS BASED ON SATAN'S LIE.** Consider how Eve judged against God's express testimony that the fruit was good to eat ó ***"And when the woman SAW that the tree was good for food, and that it was PLEASANT TO THE EYES, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6).***

Here judgment was based on Satan's lie and upon outward appearance. This is what all men and women without exception do naturally. How does lost humanity judge good and evil, saved and lost? They judge based on Satan's lie and by outward appearance and reputation. They refuse to judge by God's testimony alone (God's truth and doctrine). They judge based on what they in themselves believe to be true (Satan's lie) and by what they see (outward appearance and reputation). This is self-righteous judgment, and it is what Christ taught against in ***Matthew 7:1-5*** and ***John 7:24***. The Apostle Paul wrote against this to the Corinthian and the Galatian churches (***2 Cor. 5:16; 10:5-12***). Read ***Galatians 1:8*** ó

- ***But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.***

The ***"we"*** here refers to an apostle (a person of reputation), and the ***"angel from heaven"*** refers to outward appearance. The Gospel ***"which WE have preached"*** refers to God's Gospel, God's testimony, God's doctrine. So if a person of reputation, or one who outwardly appears righteous unto men, preaches any other gospel, any doctrine other than God's, we are to count that person as lost. This is totally opposite of what we will do by nature. By nature we will always insist on judging this by Satan's lie based on something other than, even opposed to, God's testimony. How many times have you said, or heard others say, "They don't believe the same doctrine we believe, but they are saved because of their godly lives." When we say that a person who does not believe God's Gospel leads a ***"godly"*** life, we are going against God's testimony and taking sides with Satan against God. We are setting our own standard of godliness and calling good evil and evil good. This is the main evidence of total depravity as it covers all lost sinners without exception, moral and immoral.



- **(2) SPEAKING PEACE WHERE THERE IS NO PEACE.** As lost sinners make their judgments based on Satan's lie and by outward appearance against God's express testimony, they will always speak peace to themselves and to others based on things that are highly esteemed among men but an abomination unto God (*Lk 16:15*). Whereas God's testimony says, "*Ye shall surely die,*" they will take sides with Satan in saying, "*Ye shall not surely die.*"

This was always a mark of false prophets in the Old Testament (*ex. Jer. 6:14; 8:11*), and it has always been the way of false religion to establish sinners in false refuges (*ex. Isa. 28:14-18*). God's testimony always sweeps away the refuge of lies as it exposes what we do not see by nature and by natural conscience ó that as long as we are either ignorant of or not submitted to the imputed righteousness of Christ revealed in the Gospel, as long as we are in unbelief, we are lost, and all our efforts at religion and morality are dead works and fruit unto death (*John 3:18-20*). Apart from being convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment (*John 16:8-11*), we will continue in our depravity making our judgments based on Satan's lie and speaking peace where there is no peace (*John 8:44*).

### III. THE ONLY HOPE OF REDEMPTION.

Only perfect righteousness and holiness can regain and maintain fellowship with God, and this defines God's grace in salvation. God the Father sent God the Son as the Representative, Substitute, and Surety of guilty, defiled sinner's chosen out of Adam's fallen race. The same God who set the standard of good and evil has set the terms and conditions of the redemption of mankind. The Bible teaches that even before the fall God chose a particular number of sinners out of Adam's fallen race and gave them to Christ, God the eternal Son. God conditioned all of the salvation of the elect on Christ and in time sent Christ into the world as their Representative and Surety to fulfill these conditions by establishing a righteousness for them. God revealed this immediately after the fall in the promise of the Messiah ó

- *Genesis 3:15 – And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

Satan brought in the ground of condemnation. The woman's seed (Christ) would bring in the ground of justification by establishing righteousness for those chosen out of Adam's fallen race. This righteousness is the entire merit of His obedience and death for their sins. Righteousness is the condition for salvation. And sinners do not have it by nature and cannot produce it by practice. It has been provided by God through Christ, therefore, it is called the righteousness of God. It is revealed in the preaching of the Gospel of salvation conditioned on Christ alone ó

- ***Romans 1:16 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. {17} For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.***

These truths do not shut sinners out of the kingdom of heaven because all who hear these truths are commanded to believe them, to receive Christ and plead His righteousness as the only ground of salvation, and repent of dead works and idolatry. Sinners are commanded to stop judging by Satan's lie and stop speaking peace to themselves and others apart from the only ground of peace ó the righteousness of Christ (**2 Cor. 5:21**). Any sinner who considers himself or any other sinner saved apart from this gives evidence of total depravity and spiritual kinship with Satan. The only thing that will keep sinners thinking this way is their own self-righteousness, self-love, and religious pride inherited from Adam.

This is an amazing thing when we consider that most preachers spend their time preaching against immorality. Many preachers who claim to believe the doctrine of total depravity usually define it by describing great depths of immorality. They talk about how this nation is "going to hell in a hand-basket" because of alcohol, drugs, murders, homosexuality, and many, many more awful sins. And these things are awful. They are sinful. They are sins we must oppose, preach against, and do our best to discourage. But if these things are main subjects of our preaching, and if these things are the main issues of the repentance we promote, then we will not even come close to the real issues of salvation, of true faith and true, Godly repentance. We may get men and women to reform their lives and repent of open immorality, but this kind of preaching is not God's gospel under which sinner's are brought to true faith and repentance before God. The reason is that the kind of repentance this preaching promotes is legal, self-righteous repentance that is an abomination unto God. By nature, we all think that when we and/or others repent of immorality, that this recommends us unto God or that this is the evidence of salvation and true repentance.

But true, Godly repentance springs from God-given faith. It comes from a saving knowledge of how God can only save us based on the righteousness of His beloved Son. In light of the Gospel, we see that a sinner truly repents of his sins before God when he sees that nothing can save him or recommend him unto God, not even his repentance and reformations, nothing but the blood and the righteousness of Christ. When we by faith see this, then we will repent of dead works and idolatry and give evidence of spiritual kinship to Christ. Consider *1 Corinthians 15:22* once again ó

- *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

All who are "*in Adam*" are lost, guilty, defiled, totally depraved, and spiritually kin to Satan. This is evidenced in many ways in many different persons. Some may be immoral and some may be religious, but the one thing they all have in common is that they make their judgments based on Satan's lie and will speak peace to someone in opposition to God's testimony. We know this by their doctrine. They do not believe God's Gospel, and they set their own standard of judgment. Remember what Christ told the Pharisees when they gained converts to their self-righteous religion. They were convincing some Gentiles to give up an immoral way of life and embrace a religious, moral way of life, and He said, "*Ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves*" (*Matt. 23:15*). All who are "*in Christ*" are saved, justified, made holy and fit for heaven, adopted into the family of God, and certain for heaven in and by Christ. This too is evidenced in many ways. There may be different personalities, different gifts, different levels of growth, but they all believe God's Gospel. They all plead the righteousness of Christ as the only ground of salvation, and they have all repented of dead works and former idolatry. They will not speak peace to themselves and other while ignorant of these things. They judge saved and lost by God's testimony alone.