

RETURNING TO GOD

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We find the sad account of the "original sin" in the third chapter of Genesis. This was the beginning of mankind's journey into depravity and sin. After disobedience entered the picture, the voice of God became weaker and weaker between man and God.

There were specific steps that were taken by Eve, the mother of all living, that caused this journey away from God. Adam also took specific steps, but they were different than that of Eve.

I find it interesting to examine Genesis chapter 3. In many ways, the way back to God is to do the opposite of what Eve did in the garden.

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?''' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.''" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 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. Then the eyes of both of them were

opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (Genesis 3:1-7, NIV).

The Bible says that Satan was more "crafty" than any of the other creatures of the garden. We often see pictures of a serpent or snake speaking to Eve in the Garden. However, we have no idea what this "serpent" looked like before the fall.

We find that the Bible describes Satan in a few places, and he is portrayed with splendor and beauty before the fall. The serpent in the garden may have been a beautiful creature before the curse of God was placed on him. Even today, sin can look so attractive.

Ezekiel saw a glimpse of the beauty of Satan (who was an angel) before the fall and he is described as follows:

"You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. 'You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you'" (Ezekiel 28:12-15, NKJV).

It is notable that Satan did not start with an outright lie when he spoke to Eve. The serpent said Genesis 3:1, *“Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”*

Think of this methodology. Satan starts his assault on Eve (and to all of us) by simply posing a question. *“Did God really say that?”*

All temptation starts with questioning God

All around us, in academia, in governments, men and women question the Word of God for its relevance. What God has said, and what the Word of God says has become questioned by small and great. I submit that this is the very beginning of a great fall for any men or women when they begin to say to themselves, *“Did God really say that?”*

The Word of God gives us strong warnings about adding to or subtracting from the Word of God.

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19, KJV).

The next step of the great temptation to Eve, was to offer a half-truth, over a full lie. It was a lie, no doubt about that, but it also contained truths that made it more believable.

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5, NIV).

1. *“You will not certainly die”* said Satan. This was a lie.
2. *“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened.”* This was true.
3. *“And you will be like God.”* This was a lie.
4. *“Knowing good and evil.”* This was also true, but Eve did not know that from the moment of disobedience, it would be difficult to follow good and easy to follow evil.

Half-truths can be more dangerous than full lies. Dr. Anurag Shourie wisely stated, *“A half-truth is even more dangerous than a lie. A lie, you can detect at some stage, but half a truth is sure to mislead you for long.”*

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her; and he ate” (Genesis 3:6, NKJV).

The same three categories of temptation in the above verse are described again in the New Testament as follows:

“For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16, NKJV).

It has been often said that all sin may follow into these categories:

1. The lust of the flesh: *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food,”*
2. The lust of the eyes: *“that it was pleasant to the eyes,”*
3. The pride of life: *“and a tree desirable to make one wise.”*

Borrowing from the inspiration provided by the notes of Dr. Ryrie, we find that their (Eve first, then Adam) self-deception and sin was

more than merely eating the forbidden fruit. It was:

1. Disobeying the revealed Word of God,
2. Believing the lie of Satan, and
3. Placing their own wills above God’s will for them.

Because of this disobedience, Adam and Eve quickly felt something they had never, ever experienced in their lives. They felt a new emotion, a keen sense of guilt.

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves” (Genesis 3:7, NIV).

Very quickly in this story, we find God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. It is hard to believe that God walked and talked with Adam and Eve. They enjoyed a fellowship with their Creator that we can only imagine. They were accustomed to talking with God on a very personal level.

The Lord cries out to the man and says, *“Where are you?”* I can almost hear a cry of loss (if it were possible) coming from God as He shouts out, *“Where are you?”* It was as if the Lord was so accustomed to visiting the garden and would always find Adam and Eve. But now, the fellowship was broken. The voice of God was becoming difficult to hear.

“Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’ And he said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?’ The man said, ‘The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ Then the Lord God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate’” (Genesis 3:8-13, NIV).

Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent.

After a long pronouncement of judgment on mankind because of their disobedience, the Lord made garments of skins and clothed them. This signifies that a sacrifice of blood was immediately necessary. The skins came from animals that had to be slain on behalf of Adam and Eve for their literal covering of clothes. The slain Lamb of God (the Son of God) would ultimately be slain for the payment for sin and for a covering for all of mankind.

Let’s look at this entire sequence of events involved in the original sin, the fall of mankind, in reverse. Through disobedience, mankind fell through decremental steps into sin. Therefore, let us examine the same steps in reverse as we make our journey back into close fellowship with God.

It Begins With A Sacrifice

Our return back to God now starts with a sacrifice. Just as God immediately clothed Adam and Eve with skins as the result of the sacrifice of animals, so our salvation was purchased by the blood of the spotless Lamb of God.

“The next day he (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29, ESV)!

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or

gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God” (1 Peter 1:18-21, ESV).

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15, NKJV).

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph 2:8-9, NKJV).

Let’s be very clear here. Our salvation was purchased in full by the only begotten Son of God. We cannot earn it. We cannot buy it. We can not bestow it on others. It is a free gift that comes from God. There are many things that we do in obedience according to the revelation that God has given at this time. Things that include men not wearing a head covering in church and women wearing a head covering when praying or prophesying in the service, partaking of the bread and the wine in the communion each Sunday worship, and following the simple order of the church with apostolic ministry and the oversight of local elders. However, none of these things “save” us. Our salvation is a gift from God, with no strings attached.

Placing God’s Will Above Our Own

When faced with temptation, Eve placed her will above God’s. She made a conscious decision to follow her will, above what God had shown her to be His will.

In our journey back to God, we must learn and consciously choose to place God’s will above our own. Hebrews chapter 11 lists many examples of men and women who learned to choose God’s will over their own. Some examples include Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Noah, Joseph, Moses, Rahab the harlot, Gideon, Barak, David, Samuel and many others.

We are told of Abraham’s decision to follow the will of God over his own as follows:

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:8-10, NIV).

One of the greatest examples of choosing the will of God over one’s own will, was that of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had come to the garden, knowing that in a few short hours he would be nailed to a cross. He was very aware of the excruciating pain of slow suffocation on the cross, but his biggest agony, I am sure, was not the physical pain that was about to come. It was the fact that for a few hours, all the sin of the world, past, present and future, would rest on Him. God Himself would temporarily have to look away from His Son as He bore the sins of you and me as well as the whole world and shed His blood to purchase our redemption. Never had the Son of God not known the sweet presence of God. However, for a few moments, even God could not look at the sin that was laid upon Him. Jesus dreaded this moment that was about to come. He prayed that “if it were possible, let this cup pass from me.” In other words, He was saying, “God, if there is an easier way for this to be completed, let’s do it.” However, he

continued, “Thy will be done.” It was no easy choice for even the Son of God to make. He chose God’s will over His own.

“Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. 40 When He came to the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. When He rose up from prayer, and had come to His disciples, He found them sleeping from sorrow. Then He said to them, “Why do you sleep? Rise and pray, lest you enter into temptation” (Luke 22:39-46, NKJV).

We Must Not Believe The Lies Of Satan

As we read in Genesis chapter 3, we find that when faced with temptation, Eve believed the lies of Satan. In this instance, it was the lies mixed with half truths, which made the lies more deceptive. We are told that Satan is the father of lies. When speaking to the religious zealots of His day, Jesus said the following:

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44, NIV).

We are inundated today with lies that come from the father of lies himself, Satan. These lies are all prefaced with placing the question, “Did God really say?” Some of these half-truths lies, on some level even make sense.

I once heard a president of the United States say that it should be lawful to be able to marry a person that you love. This all sounds good, but it was a veiled approval of homosexual marriage. This demonstrated the danger and the power of a half truth. And yet the following scripture plainly states:

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Matthew 19:4-6, NIV).

When I was a child in school, I was told that we came from monkeys. Slowly, changes occurred, and we became the humans that we now are. It was implied that the extreme complexity of human life was nothing more than a giant cosmic coincidence, which left our lives with no meaning. As a child, I wondered why people did not have pictures of monkeys on their walls as a reminder of their ancestors.

I recently read an article in a scientific paper that stated the excitement in the scientific community that methane gas had been discovered deep in the earth. It was said that this methane gas may have contained the bacteria, etc. that eventually seeded all the life that is around us. I chuckled to myself thinking that the story gets sadder and sadder. According to science, my ancestors were not monkeys, they were nothing more than methane gas!

The Bible says that God created all that there is, more than what you can see. The Bible tells us specifically that God “made them (specifically) male and female.” We were designed for a purpose. Our lives have meaning, “Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26, ESV).

“By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s

command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Hebrews 11:3, NIV).

Please don't think that I am diminishing science. We thank the Lord for the great scientific knowledge that has been discovered through the years. This is all part of God's command to man to *“take dominion over the earth.”*

Sir Willam Thomson, Physicist, (1824-1907) said, “Do not be afraid of being free thinkers. If you think strongly enough you will be forced by science to the belief in God, which is the foundation of all Religion. You will find science not antagonistic, but helpful to Religion.”

Sir Ambrose Fleming (1849-1950) pioneer of electronics said, “There is abundant evidence that the Bible, though written by men, is not the product of the human mind. By countless multitudes it has always been revered as a communication to us from the Creator of the Universe.”

Max Planck (1858-1947) pioneer of quantum physics said, “Both religion and science need for their activities the belief in God, and moreover God stands for the former in the beginning, and for the latter at the end of the whole thinking. For the former, God represents the basis, for the latter – the crown of any reasoning concerning the world-view.”

Obeying The Revealed Word of God

Eve disobeyed the revealed word of God. There was much that God had not revealed. However, God did reveal His word that they were not to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In the hour that we live, we are so blessed to have the Word of God so available to us in many forms. You can purchase a Bible today in the translation of your choice, or you can download many versions of the Bible on your electronic tablet.

Yet, much of the Bible is revealed, and much is yet hidden. We are responsible for walking in what God has revealed to us in this hour in which we live. It takes a conscious choice and decision to obey. It is not always easy, but our eternity depends on our obedience.

Don't worry about what is hidden in the Scriptures, or what is yet to be revealed. We have enough truth revealed thus far that we should be busy walking in the “present truth.” Here are a few scriptures that speak of the revealed word of God.

*“For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the **present truth**” (2 Peter 1:12, NKJV).*

*“...the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been **revealed** to His saints” (Colossians 1:26, NKJV)*

*“...having **made known** to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself” (Ephesians 1:9, NKJV)*

“...which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 3:5, NKJV)

“He (Jesus) answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matthew 13:11, NKJV).

Let us consciously make a choice to obediently walk with God through the door that was opened to us by Jesus Christ.

“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:3-6, KJV). ✝

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