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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Man in His Fall, or How Did Sin Arise in Man?”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we turn again to Thee through the Lord Jesus Christ who has died for us, and who lives for us at the right hand of the throne of God. We thank Thee for his high priestly ministry, and we thank Thee that he teaches us the Scriptures in order that we may be built up in the faith. May, Lord, he teach us in this hour through the Holy Spirit, may we be edified in the truth, and may our Christian life be different as a result of the information that is communicated to us through the Spirit. We commit all who are present to Thee, and we pray that this class may minister to them. And that the end, the goal, the aim of all of our study may be the glory of our great God and Savior through Jesus Christ.

And we ask this in his name. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the first in a series of studies on “Man in His Fall”, and our subject specifically tonight is “How Did Sin Arise in Man?” So will you turn with me to Genesis chapter 3, and will you listen as I read the first six verses of chapter 3, and then one verse again in Romans chapter 5. Genesis chapter 3, verse 1 through verse 6.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman; Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden? And the woman said to the serpent; from the fruit of the trees of the garden, we may eat. But from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, Ye shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.”

It has often been commented that Eve does not give specifically the words that our Lord is said to have said in chapter 2, verse 16 and verse 17, for he said simply, “From the fruit of the tree, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat.” Well, he said nothing about touching it. It is often also been said concerning that, that this is the first revised version of the Bible. Now, that probably is a little unfair, and I’m not really sure whether Eve is responsible here for something that is particularly heinous or not. But it is to be noted that she does add slightly to the word at that point.

“You shall not eat from it or touch it”, she said, “lest you die.” And the serpent said to the woman; You shall surely (or you surely shall) not die. For God knows that in the day that 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 tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eye, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”

Man in His Fall – oh, I did say I was going to turn to Romans chapter 5. So we must do that. Romans chapter 5, verse 12. Romans 5, verse 12. I’m sure this is one of the half a dozen most important texts in all of the Bible. Romans chapter 5 in verse 12.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.”

“Man in his Fall, or How Did Sin Arise in Man?” And first, a few words of introduction. The problem of evil in the world has been thought to be one of the profoundest philosophical and theological problems. The reasons for this, I think, are evident to most of us. In the first place, the power of evil is great and universal; no one in this room has not seen some evidence of the great and universal power of evil. But not only that, it is a puzzling, continuous blight upon creation. We look about and we see that the very thing that is designed to glorify God is also blotched by this terrible, puzzling thing “evil” that exist among us. There is not a single one among us who has not had some experience, either experientially or in our observation of this dark enigma of life. For long stretches of our human existence, we seem to go along with no unusual thing happening to us. We seem to live normal, ordinary lives, but suddenly evil appears. And if it doesn’t appear in our life, it appears in the lives of those who live about us. It almost seems as if something happens that “is like a broken axle in this smoothly rotating machine of life” as someone has said.

Think, for example, of a plane crash, and then as you read the newspapers, you look and see that on that plane was some outstanding scientist who had information that might be the blessing of the human race, but he is lost. Or some unusual scholar who was possessed of certain information that was valuable for human beings. Or think of some earthquake that occurs, and the hundreds, and often thousands of people who are lost, it seems, without any significance whatsoever, but they are gone. Or think of a war like Vietnam. Whatever we may say about it, we can say this about any war. Think of the thousands of people whose lives are snuffed out without any particular reason. I’m not speaking about our own men in the armed forces, for surely, we at least understand why our government has thought that the risking of their lives is necessary. But think of the hundreds and thousands of people who are innocently exposed to the bombs and other means of warfare. Now, think of the lives that are snuffed out without any real

experience of human existence, as you and I know it. Or think of something simple like a little child, three years old or two years old, who wanders out of its back yard, wanders down the alley, wanders in an open door, walk over by a swimming pool, falls in when no one is there, and we read in the newspapers that that little child has been drowned.

How can you explain things like this? Or think of the death of some particular Christian. I remember one young man, particularly, who graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary, a man with unusual promise as a missionary leader. At a very young age, relatively, he had become a leader in a mission board with supervision over a number of missionaries on the foreign field. He developed a brain tumor, and was dead some years ago. How can you explain that? Or think of some man. I think of my own experience of an outstanding Christian theologian, who had a great deal to communicate to us. He wrote one book, which is a mine of information on the topic that it is concerned with. He was a theologian. He was in the process of writing a systematic theology. He was in constant pain all of his life and was unable to finish the work that he wanted to do. How can you explain these things? Evil is a matter of daily experience and it touches the life of every one of us. So when we think about the problem of evil, we’re thinking about something that is of great significance to us.

Now, the discussion of solutions to this ultimate problem, we’re going to reserve for a little later time because in our schedule I do have one message or two on “The Great enigma, or The Problem of Evil”.

Now, what we’re interested in tonight is something a little different. I am not sure that I will ever be able to solve the problem of evil. I doubt that it is possible for us to solve the problem of sin. G. C. Berkhouwer, one of our greatest theologians, a Dutch theologian who is alive today, whose books are very valuable for theologians, has said concerning sin, “We are of the opinion that an explanation for sin is truly impossible.” Now, perhaps we should say it’s impossible, and leave it at that, but we will attempt later, to try to give some guidelines for the solution of the enigma of evil.

What we’re interested in tonight is the entrance of evil into this world and on the point the Bible speaks unhesitatingly. Romans chapter 5, verse 12 says, “For this cause, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for all have sinned, or all sinned.” So we’re not in doubt, so far as the entrance of sin into this universe in which we live is concerned. Sin entered this human existence through Adam, and so that is something that we can be absolutely sure about.

Now, tonight, let’s first take a look at some of the historical views regarding the origin of sin, and then we’re going to look at the scriptural explanation. Only a few particulars, Capital A - The Church Fathers. The Greek church fathers tended to discount the connection between Adam’s sin and those of his descendants. They tended to think that there was no real connection between the sin of Adam and the sin of other men. This teaching culminated in Pelegianism, which denied any vital connection between Adam’s sin and our sin. Now, that type of teaching, as you know, and as I’ve been trying to emphasize, is not only contrary to the Bible, but it also is contrary to common sense as well.

The Latin church fathers taught with increasing clarity that man’s sinful condition had its origin in Adam’s sin. And that teaching, the teaching of the western fathers culminated in Augustinianism. The great theology of Augustine, the Latin church father. He emphasized that men are both guilty and polluted in Adam. That is, we are under the judgment of God because of our connection with Adam’s sin, and also our nature is polluted as a result of the sin that Adam committed. Semi-Pelagianism is an attempt to bridge the gap between strict Augustinianism and Pelegianism, and semi-Pelegians admitted the connection in Adam but held that it only accounted for the pollution of sin. They were unwilling to grant that we were guilty because of Adam’s sin.

Now, moving on to the Reformers, and their times. The Reformers shared Augustine’s view. As you know, it was Luther and Calvin and the other Reformers who really resurrected some of the leading features of Augustine’s theology. And they were

responsible for spreading abroad teaching that, in these respects, was eminently biblical. So they shared Augustine’s views. The Socinians, who were heretics in the days of the Reformers, they tended to accept the views of Pelegius. While Arminians who, again, are those who sought to be in the Christian stream but not so extreme as the Reformers, they tended to move toward semi-Pelegianism acknowledging that we do receive our sinful nature from Adam, but we are not guilty because of Adam’s sin.

Now, modern views. Under rationalistic influences, the doctrine of “The Fall and Sin” was discarded in the centuries that followed the Reformation. The idea of sin was replaced by the idea of evil. Men did not like to speak of sin, but they did speak of evil, and they explained the presence of evil in various ways. The German philosopher Kant, for example, said that, “The problem of evil was a problem that really existed in the super sensible sphere.” That is, it is beyond us, and he admitted that he had no real explanation for the problem of evil. Schleiermacher, a German theologian also of the last century, said that, “Evil was to be traced to the sensuous nature of man.” Now by the way, if you read the newspapers and listen to the comments of those who have any kind of philosophical comments to make on humanity in the present day, you will often find them echoing the sentiments of a Schleiermacher. Now, that is really our problem rests in the sensuous nature of man. Ritschl, another nineteenth century theologian said that, “Sin really exists in human ignorance.” And this, I think, is still popular in the twentieth century. Men really think that the source of much of the evil in the world is man’s ignorance and if we can only educate man significantly then we will not be troubled by evil.

The Evolutionists saw man developing into an ethical being with an indeterminate will. How an indeterminate will can rise from a cell that did not have any will at all, is something no Evolutionist has ever been able to explain. “And that this will”, they went on to say, “is the only cause of sin.” In the twentieth century, perhaps the leading theologian who is not in the precise line of the Reformists though he wouldn’t object to

what I’m saying very much, Professor Karl Barth. He saw sin as the mystery of pre-destination. He said, “Sin originated in the fall.” But he sought to explain the fall away as a non-historical event. That is, we were not really to think that these events happened precisely as they appear to happen according to the record in Genesis. This is a saga.

Now, this is a symbolical presentation of non-historical truth. This is truth that is in the realm of *geschichte* but it is not in the realm of history, the kind of history that one may authenticate. This is the kind of history that one cannot authenticate. And so what is presented in Genesis is really a picture of eternal truths. It’s true. Man is evil. And in this account, we do have an account of the story of evil that is true theologically, but of course, there was no Adam, and there was no Eve, and there was no Fall in this same historical way in which it is presented in the Bible. But the Fall apparently did occur, and man’s sin is a reality.

Professor Barth was probably the one man who did the most toward the destruction of liberal theology in the 20th Century. For it was he who so proclaimed the sinfulness of man. Granted, it seems to rest upon a very strange foundation to us, but the liberals accepted his ideas, and he so proclaimed the evil of man that he convinced them that their liberalism, many of them that their liberalism, was surely not good religion. And many of them became Barthian in their theology, acknowledging that men were evil though, of course, they did not find the solution to it in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Well, Barth went on to say that, “Man’s sin is bound up in his creature-liness, but the story of paradise gives us the cheering news that we need not always remain a sinner.”

As I’ve expressed to you before, I personally believe that the secret to understanding the Bible is to understand its teaching concerning sin. And I do not think that we can really understand biblical truth until we understand sin as it is set forth in Scripture. So let’s turn to the Old Testament, and let’s look at Genesis chapter 3 first. Tonight we want to simply trace the rise of sin in man as it is presented here, and I want to conclude with a problem or two which I am going to present to you to stretch your

mind over the next week. I hope it won’t explode. Mine is about to explode with it. I’m trying to pass it on to you. So let’s turn to Genesis chapter 3, and let me say a few things about this account, first of all. This story is historical. It is not mythological. The preceding and following contexts are historical, and since the preceding contexts are written as if they were historical narrative, and the following context is written as if it were an historical narrative, there is no reason to regard Genesis chapter as anything unusual. The kind of language that is used in the Hebrew text is ordinary narrative discourse, and so it seems to me that there is no philological reason why we should think of this as anything but an historical account.

Well, someone might say, “But what about all of those mythological accounts in the Near East about the fall of Man?” Well, that is true. We do have evidences of the fall of man in ancient Near Eastern accounts. We do have evidences of the fall of man in Grecian stories. And we also have some stories of the fall of man that arise out of Tuscany too. But I think that I would agree with many who regard them as a rude form of speculation, it appears to me that the simplest way to explain these accounts of the rise of evil is to regard them as memories of the biblical account. This account goes back behind them and if this a true account, why should you not expect to have some memories of this account in the literature of other peoples of those geographical locales.

Another thing that I want to express as my opinion is this; the serpent I regard as a real serpent. It is not simply, a symbol of evil. It is not a symbol of erring reason. It is not a symbol of sexual desire. He is regarded by Moses as being among the animals of the Garden. It would not make a great deal of sense to substitute for the serpent, the word “Satan” as if the serpent simply stands for Satan. Now, Satan was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made because that would make Satan one of the beasts of the field. So I think the serpent is a tool of Satan, but it was a real serpent, so far as I can tell.

Furthermore, the Tree of Life. We have said just a little about this, but the Tree of Life was the source of life, whether inherently, Adam and Eve were to partake of that tree and God was to give them life from the actual partaking, or whether it was a sacramental thing that is, they were to partake, and God would infuse life, prolong life, by his power. Well, that is not given. That is not stated specifically for us, and so we don’t have to try to solve that problem. But it was the source of life.

And the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was also the tree of knowledge. There is a definite knowledge that is committed, that is committed to Adam and Eve when they partake of that tree. Now we read for example in chapter 3 in verse 7, “Then the eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked.” Verse 22, “Then the Lord God said; Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.” So it seems evident that before this, Adam had the ignorance of happiness and innocence, but now he was happy. He did not know what sorrow is, and he was innocent because he did not know what sin was. After he has acted in disobedience, he is no longer happy, and he has come to know what sorrow is, and he always knows now by experience, what sin is. When he ate, he attained this fatal knowledge, with its limitations.

Another thing that I think that we should notice, just looking at this account in the general way, it is evident that sin is an intruder from without in the human race. We cannot regard sin as a kind of good in the making. It results in a spoiled good. It is true that some people say that sin is part of human nature, but that is not true. Human nature has existed before sin was found in it. And so, consequently, sin is not a necessary part of human nature. Now, it’s a necessary part since the Fall, but it is not a necessary part of human nature. Our Lord, of course, is the perfect illustration of that fact. He was totally man, but he did not have any sin.

We can also discern I think too, that man’s problem is not environment. This too is a modern philosophy. If we could just clean up our environment then we would not

be troubled with sin. If we could have a beautiful environment and educate everyone thoroughly, we would not have the problem of evil. Why, these people were members of the original great society. There was no need for anyone to go out on an evangelistic tour telling Adam and Eve, “Come home America”, or anything like that. They had the ideal society and yet, sin arose there.

Psychologists sometime say that, “The trouble with man is his psychological maladjustment.” Marxists like to say that, “The trouble with man, is economic exploitation.” Now, it doesn’t take, I don’t think, a whole lot of spiritual intelligence to see that the Freudians root trouble in psychological maladjustment and the Marxians economic exploitation is based ultimately on the fallacy of a sinless class. For if this were really true, then there should be someone who is not psychologically maladjusted, presumably the psychiatrists are not psychologically maladjusted, and they are the ones who are given by God, the wonderful task of straightening us out.

Let me tell you something. I have never seen a psychologist yet, now, I do have a couple of good friends, I hope they’re not listening, but nevertheless, I believe they’ll understand what I’m going to say. I have never yet seen a psychologist that I would allow to live my life for me. Have you? How much better to be a Christian and allow Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to live his life out in you. And the same thing pertains to the Marxists also because their idea is that if we are to have an ideal society, we must have an ideal set of people which will form the basis of this society, a kind of sinless economic class, and they are of course, the proletariat, but again, this is nothing more than another religion.

Let’s look now at the temptation of man, verses 1 through 5. Why was Eve addressed? Now men, I know you have lots of theories about this, but I’m going to suggest a few, why Eve was addressed instead of Adam. So far as I know, Adam was standing by. Now, some have said he must have been away, but nevertheless, verse 6 says, “She took of the fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he

ate.” So I don’t know. It appears to me as if Adam was standing by, wondering what in the world was going on here, or as later on we learn, he knew full well what was going on, but he did not do anything about it.

Why was Eve addressed? Well, Eve was not the covenant head of the human race. Adam was the covenant head. Everything depended on what Adam did, for he was the federal head. Now, that was by God’s sovereign decree. Now, people do not like the idea that Adam acted as a federal head. I love it. Do you know why? Because I know I would have fallen, and furthermore, I like the idea of having a federal head because if I have a federal head and he falls, then it is conceivable that God might deal with me through another federal head. But if everything rests on me and I fall, then what? So the idea of having a federal head is, it seems to me, a very gracious thing on God’s part. And, furthermore, if a man is a federal head, and he knows that the history of humanity rests upon what he does, well then you would expect him to have some sense of responsibility.

Now, Adam didn’t have enough sense of responsibility, but I’m sure he had a lot more than Eve, because he had a whole lot to lose. And so it’s evident, that perhaps Satan, since he is the craftiest -- now this is, the serpent’s the craftiest animal of the field, and Satan has picked him out as his tool. It’s obvious that he’s very wise. He’s called in the New Testament, “wise”. And it is also said that by his subtlety, he has caused Eve to fall. So it seems to me, he may well have picked out Eve because she was not the covenant head, and she would not have had the same sense of responsibility that Adam had. Now, I’ll pass that out to you, and I’m going to pass you out a couple of more ideas too.

Not only that, but she had received the command indirectly, concerning the fruit of the tree in the midst of the Garden. Adam had received it directly. And so since Adam had received it directly, and she had apparently received it indirectly, she may have been a little more susceptible to doubt. And, finally, if you want to reach Adam, well, the

easiest way to reach Adam, was to reach Adam through Eve because it’s evident that he loved that girl and when she fell, why, he was much more likely to fall. And that is the picture that Paul presents to us in the New Testament. He says that, “Satan deceived Eve, but Adam willingly and with full knowledge of the consequences (but because apparently of his attachment to that girl) he took of the fruit and ate.” So we have then, perhaps some of the reasons why Satan went first to Eve.

Now, it is said concerning the serpent that, “He was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.” How would you describe the serpent? Well, let’s move behind the serpent to the great serpent, the old serpent. What John calls him in the Book of Revelation, “That old serpent, the devil.” How would you describe him? Well, since the serpent was the craftiest of the animals of the field, and apparently he was not an animal that was moving, at this time, on his belly, because that was part of his judgment. He must have been a beautiful animal. And since Satan has used, as a tool, this beautiful animal, it’s not far fetched to think of him as a person who is also beautiful.

Now, we know this is true because the Bible makes very plain to us that Lucifer was a very beautiful being before his fall and, furthermore, we are told in the New Testament that Satan himself is an angel of light. And so the idea of Satan being a beautiful person is thoroughly and imminently scriptural. That is why, I believe, that the anti-Christ is going to be a lovely kind of man who might even deceive the very elect because he’s going to appear so beautiful. And, furthermore, secondly, he is so pious. Because you see, the serpent, the old serpent, is a believer in God. He doesn’t have any problems about religion whatsoever. He is a beautiful, pious believer in God. He is more pious than a nun. And, furthermore, he is more knowledgeable of the biblical teaching than a professor of the Old Testament. He didn’t come to Eve and say, “Now, I want you to know Eve, I’m an ancient Madalyn Murray O’Hair. I’m an atheistic monster and I’ve come to deceive you.” No, he came as a beautiful pious believer in God, and he said, “Let’s discuss religion. Let’s have a class in systematic theology. Let’s have a seminar on

God and the Truth. “Is it true that God has said, you shall not eat of every tree of the Garden?” So you must not have the idea that Satan is some malevolent kind of being or that you would recognize immediately. Not so. He’s the kind of person that would deceive even the very elect. And you can sense this down through the Scripture.

In almost all of the most evil of spiritual beings, you will find this element of beauty, and piety and religion. It reaches its climax, I say, in the anti-Christ who is going to be a beautiful, pious, religious man who will appeal to God, will even perform miracles through his lieutenant. You can see it in Judas, the man who betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ, who was not only an apostle, but a man whom the disciples regarded very highly for they made him the treasurer of the Twelve. When Matthew was there as a person beautifully qualified to be the treasurer, but it is Judas who is. He’s the only Judaite, so far as we know in among the Twelve, and thus, he was the man who probably had a great deal more education, more learning than they because they were the city folk, whereas, the rest of the Galileans, they were the country bumpkins, you know. And so this principle you can see all through the word of God. Here is the beautiful, pious believer in God then, who comes for the temptation.

Notice also, that the first discussion about God is opened by the devil. This is the first discussion about God we have in the Bible. Now, it’s not bad to have a discussion about God, but the first one is originated by the devil. Notice, it is a discussion about God. It is a discussion which he opens up with Adam and Eve about God as a kind of third person. Well this, I think, is the first time that God is referred to in the third person, and that is done by Satan. You see, it is very easy for us to relegate our talk about God to the third person. And we can become very knowledgeable in things about God and have no real conversation with God himself. And so let us never forget, in the midst of all of our theology that we learn, that it is of the greatest importance that you and I develop a knowledge of God that arises out of a relationship to him as a second person to us. So here is talk about God in the third person.

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Now, let’s notice quickly, the steps in his subtlety, as Paul writes in 2 Corinthians chapter 11 in verse 3. He says,

“But I am afraid lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your mind should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.”

The first thing that Satan does is to question the word of God. He says,

“Indeed has God said, you shall not eat from any tree of the Garden, the woman said to the serpent. From the fruit of the tree of the Garden, we may eat, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the Garden, God has said, you shall not eat from it nor touch it, lest you die.”

And so he does not come as you might expect with point blank denials, in the beginning of his testing. He comes questioning the word of God. This is the method of contemporary theologians. They do not come with point blank denials of biblical truth. They do not in the morning in the First Baptist Church or the First Methodist Church or the First Presbyterian Church or the First Unitarian Church or whatever it is, they do not ordinarily come into the pulpit if those pulpits are manned by men that are apostates. They do not come into the pulpit and say, “Now, this morning we are going to read a text from the Bible, but you understand we do not believe the Bible is the word of God at all. It is simply a record of human religious experience, and that’s the only way in which we are using the text this morning.” They do not say that at all. They believe that, but they don’t say it. They do not come with point blank denials.

They enter into the pulpit of Christian churches, and they open up the Bible, and they read the Bible so that you in the audience may gain the impression that they do accept these things. For you see, they can get people to accept them if they act as if they

believe them, and insert their error after they have given the appearance of being, as Satan did, a beautiful, pious believer in God. They do not come and say, “Now, we’ve read of the virgin birth, but of course, we do not accept the virgin birth. We do not think that that is true at all. We really think that what happened, was that Joseph and Mary got into a little bit of trouble, and Jesus Christ has arisen out of this little bit of trouble.” Now, that is not what they say. They would not dare say that, though many of them believe essentially that. They do not come with point blank denials.

They do not come and say, “Now, we do not accept the penal substitutionary theory of the atonement. We only say that Jesus Christ is an example like any other man, and illustrates for us how we ought to respond to God in the truth.” They do not say that. They come, using the terminology of scriptural revelation. They say, “Jesus Christ was a sacrifice” but they don’t mean a penal substitutionary sacrifice. They mean some other kind of sacrifice. They mean an example, an exemplary sacrifice. It is that kind of thing that they do. They are following in the steps of Satan, and you and I often, if we are not careful, are misled by this beautiful piety that parades under the name of Christianity.

Satan always aims his “yeas”. “Yea hath God said. And his “ifs”. As he came to the Lord Jesus, “*If* you are the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread”; He always aims his “yea’s” and his “if’s” at the honor of God indirectly first. He will say to Satan, “Is it really true God has created you, this marvelous being that you are, and he’s withheld something from you in the Garden?” And he came to our Lord Jesus Christ and he said, “Is it really true that you are the Son of God as you claim?” And, “The Son of God should be a hungry Son of God. Forty days you haven’t had any food. Is that the kind of Son that God creates?” In an attempt to insert the doubt concerning the truth of God, “Is it true that God has given you thirty years of preparation and now this?” he said to our Lord. Now, our Lord, of course, did not yield one inch. His will was inclined

toward God, and his will stayed inclined for God, but Eve is different and Adam is different.

The second thing that [Satan] does -- for he does not stop with questioning the word of God -- the second thing is, he comes then after he has thrown out his bait and Eve has taken the bait. She has begun to think, and to reason over these things, and to lust after the things that she sees. Now Satan denies it explicitly. He says in the fourth verse, “And the serpent said to the woman; you surely shall not die.” Now, that is a direct assault upon her faith in God. It is a direct contradiction of the word of God. It is the first lie in the Bible. And Jesus, remember, referred to this in John chapter 8 in verse 44. There we read, “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

And so here is a direct assault upon the faith of Eve. He says to her, “You shall not surely die.” In effect, what he is saying is, “Eve, don’t really think that your reaction to the tree in the middle of the garden is a matter of life and death. It’s not a matter of life and death. You shall not surely die. After all, everything does not really hinge on your obedience to the word of God. Everything doesn’t really rest on faith. You shall not surely die. It’s not a matter of life and death. But unfortunately for Eve and Adam, and for you and me, it was a matter of life and death. God said, “In the day thou eateth thereof, thou shalt surely die.” It may not have seemed to be a matter of life and death, but it was a matter of life and death.

Well, that’s not enough. He does not only question the word, directly deny the word, but now he aims his guns at the author of the word himself. And so he maligns the author in the fifth verse, “For God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” This is what we would call, a little well poisoning. You see, God really has some information that he doesn’t want you

to have. He’s really keeping something from you, because you see, he knows that if you go and partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, then well, you’re going to learn his tricks. And you’ll learn his recipes, and if you know his tricks and his recipes, then he won’t be God any more, and you’ll be God. And he’s afraid that you’ll retire him.

He’s afraid that he will become dead after all, and that you will become God. And he’s going to be like Mr. Khrushchev, whom the Russians retired. So he’ll just have to go off and sit on his bench for the rest of his earthly days, and you and Adam will then be Gods. That’s what God is afraid of. That’s why he has said, “You shall not partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” That’s a very clever approach to this woman, and it is evident that it took hold, for in the sixth verse we read of the fall. When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, she listened to a creature instead of the creator. She followed impressions against direct instructions. When she saw that the tree was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she made self-fulfillment instead of God’s glory her goal. And in so doing she sinned.

Now, the sins of Adam and Eve were both internal. It is evident that, by the time Eve reaches the place that she reaches out for the fruit of the tree, whatever that fruit was, she had already sinned in her heart. And so her sin was internal, and it expressed itself in this external picking of the fruit. So, it was an internal inclining toward evil, to use our language that we talked about last week, it was an internal inclining toward evil which led to a volition that expressed itself in an outward taking of the fruit. So the sin was internal. But, my Christian friend, remember that after she has partaken of the fruit of the tree, she’s still a very religious person. She still believes in God. She’s still religious. She hasn’t lost her religion. She’s lost her faith in God, but religion is something else. The text says in verse 6 that “She took from its fruit and she ate.” So simple the act. So hard its undoing.

One of the commentators on Genesis has said, “God will taste poverty and death before ‘take and eat’ become verbs of salvation.” Now, that is an interesting thing, that the very verb that expresses her sin, “take and eat”, these two verbs become the verbs of the salvation in Jesus Christ. Four hundreds of years later, Jesus Christ will die on the cross, and then it will be possible for men to take and eat and be delivered from the death that men died. And she gave to Adam, men we have to hang our heads in shame, and he ate.

Now, when you turn over to the Book of 1 Timothy, you’ll find some lessons that Paul draws from this incident, and I’m going to read this text. It’s not too popular I grant, but nevertheless, here it is in the Scriptures. We read in verse 13, well, I think maybe we ought to go back a little bit and read verse 11. “Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.” 1 Timothy 2: 11. “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” Why Paul? Why such language? Have you not heard of woman’s lib? Betty Friedan is not too happy over this text. Well, Paul explains. “For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived.” Isn’t that interesting? “It was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, the Greek text is intensive; being utterly deceived or quite deceived, fell into transgression. “But she shall be preserved through the bearing of children if the women continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.” Now, that’s the biblical text that says that the woman’s place is in the home pre-eminently.

Now, I don’t mean by that, ladies, that that’s the only place for you, when you raise those children, well then you can become footloose and fancy free. But in the meantime that is the place where you are most fulfilled. Now, some of you’d say, “Dr. Johnson, that’s exactly what I’ve been waiting for. Where is that man?” Well, let me assure you that this really is the best thing for women, and when women do find their place, and out of this teaching they find true happiness as women. Now men have their

responsibilities, and I’ve always said our responsibilities are greater than women, but these are the things that have arisen out of the Fall, Paul says.

The reality of the Fall, regardless of how we may explain some of the details, is something that surely should be evident to all of us. If you were asked by someone to answer the question, “What are the signs of the Fall?” What would you say? Well, this is what I would say. I would say first of all, there is a universal tradition of the Fall. For example, there are illustrations of the traces of the fall in Babylonian texts and Persian texts and Indian texts. And not only are there evidences in Oriental literature, but there are evidences in Occidental literature as well. We have the story of Pandora’s Box, the story of the Apples of Hesperides, Apollo and the Python. In other words, in almost all of our ancient literature, there is a tradition which may be traceable back to the story of the fall in the Garden of Eden.

Further, how can you explain the strange persistence and endurance of evil down through the years? How can you explain the system of education, which we know is necessary? Education testifies that a man has a nature, which makes him a menace to society if he’s untrained. That’s the truth that rests in the claim that education will solve our problem of evil. Now, we cannot effectively control evil if we do not have some education.

All government bears witness to the Fall. What would happen in the United States of America if we had no governmental restraint at all? Well, you already know the answer to that. We’ve had a great deal of that in recent years. The violence, the unruliness, the anarchy, the other types of lawlessness that exist in our society are evidences that the government is not doing its duties as it should. The very fact that we have government, the very fact that God has divinely ordained government as an institution for the control of human life, is evidence of the fall.

Conscience. All men have conscience, the shadow of the broken law. What did Adam and Eve do after they sinned? First thing they did, run off and hide. Now, it was

stupid. They couldn’t hide from God, but they ran off and hid. Then there is the universal presence of evil. No matter where you are, there is evil. Right here is this room, there is enough evil to damn all of us and to wreck this universe. Clarence McCartney, in his discussion of the question, has a very vivid description of humanity. He says, “The sea of humanity today heaves and tosses, tosses, casting up its mire and dirt. We see evil entrenched in our cities. We see it attack our best institutions. We see it in our own hearts.” G. K. Chesterton was an unusual man. He used to twit the liberals. He was a Roman Catholic, but he twitted the liberals in his day, for they did not like to believe in the sin of man. He said, “You want to establish truth by reason, rather than revelation, do you not? But you’ve abandoned the only doctrine that could be proved beyond question empirically, the doctrine of human sin.” And I think that’s true. So Eve took of the fruit. She ate. She gave to Adam, and he ate.

Now, my favorite elder is Howard Prier as you know. And some years ago, in 1963 to be exact, he pointed out in a lesson that he taught, that Eve tried to think the thing through, something which she should not have done. Instead of asking her husband, she should have turned to Adam and say, “Adam, shall I eat?” And I don’t know what Adam would have said, but she did not do that. And then Adam, contrary to his own nature, for he should act out of his intellect and not out of his emotions, for he is not essentially controlled by his emotions. He acted on the basis of his emotion, so they both got out of their own proper sphere, and as a result, they sinned. Adam acting on his emotions. Eve acting independently of her husband. Now, I call that the “elder’s explanation of evil”. It’s not a bad one.

Let me conclude with some observations tonight. I want to mention a couple of difficult matters. As far as the psychology of the first sin is concerned, and remember, when I use the term “psychology,” I’m not using it in the term of a professional psychologist. If you were a professional psychologist, I wouldn’t have to say that, of course. But I am using this in the term of biblical psychology. That is, the truth of how

evil arose from the standpoint of the inner part of our being. I said Adam’s sin was two-fold. It was internal, and it was external. Adam within his heart inclined. He was created by God with a will that inclined toward God. He had what theologians call, a con-created will. That is, a will that was created at the same time as his creation, inclined toward God. He was created holy. He was created with a will that inclined toward God so that his will was holy. His inclinations were holy. But in Adam’s heart, there occurred an inclining toward evil, and as a result of that inclining toward evil in his inmost being, he then chose volitionally. As a result of what had taken place in himself, he then chose. Remember the will, in the sense of a choice or volition, is a secondary agent. And so he chose and ate. That’s the psychology of the fall.

Now, I’m coming to the problem. If neither unfallen man, nor fallen man can begin a holy volition, in other words, if Adam created in the garden of Eden, but not fallen, could not create a holy volition. It was created by God when he was created. How can he begin an evil volition? How is it possible for an evil inclining to arise in the heart of a man whose inclining is toward God? Now, it is true that the fallen man cannot begin a holy volition because he’s in bondage to his sin. We’re going to talk about that when I devote a night to man’s will, God’s will, and free will. Why can man ruin himself, but he cannot save himself? Is that a problem to you? It should be. Here is a man created holy. How can evil arise in a holy heart if that is his basic inclination, created by God?

Now, I think it’s an even harder problem in the case of Satan because you see, Satan had no outward tempter. Adam, at least, had an outward tempter. It probably, as I said, an even harder problem in Satan. So are you looking for a solution? I cannot give it to you. I don’t know the solution to that. It seems to me, it is evidently taught in the word, but how it can come to pass, I don’t know. Now, if you were to say to me, “Well, Adam didn’t have that inclining toward holiness. He was kind of neutral.” Then, I come back again to what we were saying two or three weeks ago, “Then, he did not really have

a will.” For you see, you cannot have a will that is not inclined. It’s not a will then. The very nature of a will is that it is inclined. The same thing is true of cognitive knowledge. You cannot have cognitive knowledge without knowledge. And so when we speak of Adam being created with the knowledge of God, there must be some content there. And if he had a will, and a will is part of human nature, there must be some inclining. So we cannot fall back on that explanation. Well, we’ll save that. Perhaps we shall come to a solution ultimately.

Let me conclude with just a word or two. Here in Genesis chapter 3, we have the solution to the enigma of life. We may not understand how evil arose in Adam, but we know that it was through Adam that evil came into this human race and this human existence which we are experiencing. The world has lost its peace, because it’s lost its peace with God. And as a result of the fall of man, our life is lived in the shadow of death.

If you were to go out to Seattle, Washington, and if the day would be clear, and inhabitants of that area do tell me that it is occasionally clear. Most of the time I’m there, it’s not very clear, but I have seen Mount Rainier. One day, in my many days in Seattle, I saw it. There it is that great giant mountain that overlooks all of that area. The days of the citizens of Seattle are lived in the light of Mount Rainier. They look off at Mount Rainier. They can always see it out to the south and to the east. All day long, from morning to night, they live in the shadow of Mount Rainier. Well, since the fall of man, our lives are lived in the shadow of sin and death. That’s why people say, “You know, I’ve got to do this. I’ve got to do that. I’ve got to do the other thing.” Why? “Before I die.” And thus, as a result of understanding Genesis, I come to understand my own human existence. It’s lived in the shadow of death, sin and death. All of us, we shall die, but even our death may be transformed by the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ who has died a death for our death that we may live. Then death is a physical thing for us still, but it is no longer the enemy that it once was. If you are here tonight and you’ve never

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believed in Jesus Christ, the message of the Gospel is addressed to you as a sinner, and as one destined to die. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

May God, the Holy Spirit, work in your heart, inclining you toward him. Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful for this revelation of our human existence. How true it is for it meets all of our experience, is confirmed by the ministry of the spirit in our hearts, is revealed to us pre-eminently in the pages of holy Scripture. O God, help us to live our lives in the light of these basic truths.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.