

Consequences of the Fall

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Loss of Original Holiness

Last week we saw with dismay and sorrow how the cunning serpent tempted Eve, and how both Adam and Eve succumbed to the deadly temptation, disobeyed God, and ate the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

No matter how many times we read it, our hearts grow heavy with the weight of what Adam and Eve had and lost. Made in God’s image and given everything they needed for a happy, blessed life, they "exchanged the truth about God for a lie" (Rom. 1:25).

This is the Original Sin and we will now see its consequences, but before we do let’s review the devil’s strategy in tempting Adam and Eve and see how it applies to us today.

B. The Devil’s Strategy in Review

Satan’s strategy is to get us to disobey God and commit sin. The same pattern is repeated with the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, and with all of us.

1. First, Satan attempts to sow doubt about what God has said; then
2. He directly contradicts God’s word – he calls God a liar; and then
3. He appeals to certain human desires: in this case the threefold appeal of the forbidden fruit;
 - a. The fruit was pleasing to the eye;
 - b. It was good for food; and
 - c. Desirable for gaining wisdom.

Tragically, the strategy worked with Adam and Eve, as it does so often in our own lives.

C. Disobedience – Abuse of Freedom

Adam and Eve abused their freedom and declared their independence from God, if not by words, then by their actions. God put them to the test, and they failed miserably.

The Catechism sums up the fall as follows:

- "Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command.
- This is what man's first sin consisted of.
- All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in His goodness.
- In that sin man preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned him.
- He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good." (397-8)

It is a grim scene indeed in which the only glimmer of hope is that things can't get any worse.

D. Love Has to be Tested

Adam and Eve were tested by God to prove and confirm their love for Him. The only way they could have passed the test was ***to live by faith***. Although they could not see God, they had His Word of commandment and many evidences of His goodness.

The visible serpent and the sensual appeal of the forbidden fruit were challenges to them, but they could have relied on, had faith in, and trusted the goodness and mercy of the invisible God to overcome the challenges.

E. No Pain - No Gain!

Had Adam believed God and acted on that trust, he would have thrown himself into combat with the intruder, even if it meant suffering.

This, after all, was the covenant God had made with him. God's gift of blessedness in the Garden would be preserved through obedience to His simple command.

- Love of God would have made Adam willing to do whatever it required to protect God's name, his bride, and the garden.

But Adam chose self-love; self-preservation. The rest is history. If there were no hope in this history, it would have ended there. God would simply have blotted everything out and started over again.

F. Is there Hope for the Future?

That the story continues at all means that there is hope, even if it is only modest. As we move on through the rest of the details of Genesis 3, we want to be on the look-out for more signs of hope.

This is going to take a special kind of sight, however, because immediately after the fall, the light in the Garden starts to dim. There will be the chill of a dark shadow casting itself over what was once luminous in its glory and perfection.

- How will the human creatures be different?
- What will they say to God?
- What will He say to them?
- And, for the burning question, what will He do to them?

The answers to these questions will occupy us for the next while.

II. DISCOVERY AND EFFECT

Genesis 3 now begins to describe the effects or consequences of original sin. Man and woman have come to know evil, and it shows, initially, in a most direct way – in their bodies.

The inner harmony described in Genesis 2 is broken, and concupiscence enters the human heart which has now become a battlefield between love and lust. [Concupiscence is a disorder in our desires that inclines us toward sin].

Adam and Eve's friendship with God is also broken, and they flee from his presence, so that God would not see their nakedness and discover their sin. As if their Creator could not see them!

The harmony between man and woman is also fractured; he puts the blame on her, and she puts it on the serpent. But all three share in the responsibility, and therefore all three are going to pay the penalty.

Read: Genesis 3:7-13

[7] Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

[8] And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

[9] But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

[10] And he said, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

[11] He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

[12] The man said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."

[13] Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."

A. First Consequence of their Sin

Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked

The first consequence of their disobedience is a radical change – a rupture - within Adam and Eve. The text says their "eyes were opened." We know that their eyes were open before they ate the forbidden fruit, so what can this mean?

We are told right away: *"they knew they were naked."* They were able to see that something was very wrong with them – something had changed.

As a consequence of their disobedience, a radical rupture had occurred between the spiritual and the physical, between man and woman; intellect and will; soul and body; man and God, man and nature.

The original unity between Adam and Eve had been broken: fear, distrust, shame, and disunity now entered the relationship. In other words, they began to experience evil.

They were no longer able to be at peace in their nakedness because of lost innocence. They had moved from a state of total love and service towards each other, to one mingled with self-interest and lust.

Not wanting to be fully revealed that way, they make coverings for themselves. Had their bodies changed? No, their bodies remained the same, but their disobedience took away their innocence, leaving fear and shame in its place.

B. Application

To stand naked and exposed before God can cause us such pain that, like Adam and Eve, we try to find ways to cover it. We make excuses, we stay too busy, and we spend our energy criticizing the faults of others.

Ask God for the grace to be honest about those places in your life that you try to cover with fig leaves. He can't heal you if you won't show Him the wound.

C. Second Consequence

And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

Newly aware of their weakness and vulnerability and ashamed before one another, Adam’s and Eve’s relationship with God is also damaged.

- They could no longer face their Creator and Father openly.
- They hid from Him among the trees.

Had God changed? No, He is the same God, but their disobedience fills them with fear, making them want to flee from communion with Him in the Garden.

The second consequence is fear of God and a desire to hide from him.

D. God Questions Adam First

As head of the family, the man is the responsible member, and hence is questioned first. This is the order of creation. His response, an implicit accusation of God [“the woman you gave me”], is the result of sin.

But the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

And he said, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself."

He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

God, of course, knows everything that has happened, but He asks Adam and Eve for an accounting of their behaviour. He does this for their sakes, not His.

- He wants them to put into words what they have done – to assume responsibility for their actions.
- Through this they will gain self-knowledge to recognize how far they have departed from the life God had designed for them.

As a good Father, God wants to hear their side of the story. A Father Who asks His children for an explanation of their rebellion acknowledges that who they are and why they do what they do is important to Him.

His primary concern is for them.

- He gives them an opportunity to confess and ask for forgiveness;
- to accept responsibility for their sin and to cast themselves on His mercy;
- And mercy always means hope!

E. The Blame Game

Sadly, Adam's primary concern is now for himself. He is ashamed of his nakedness and afraid of God, because of his disobedience. He no longer sees God as his all-loving and good Father. Something deep inside him has changed: trust and love have been replaced with fear and shame.

Instead of taking responsibility for not defending Eve from the serpent, Adam blames her.

The man said, "The woman whom thou gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate."

Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."

Adam passes the buck to Eve - and actually to God, by saying the woman God had given him, gave him the fruit – so it's really God's fault! He is defensive, denying that any of the fault is his.

- As he did when the serpent tempted them, he leaves Eve to fend for herself.

Eve, in turn, passes the blame onto the serpent, whom she says "beguiled" her. Can this be the same pair we saw in Genesis 2, perfect companions and co-workers in God's creation?

F. No Repentance or Grief

Incredibly, there is no evidence of repentance or grief, or even remorse, over their disobedience - no crying out for forgiveness. With their new eyesight, they cannot even see how offensive their behaviour is to their Father. It isn't that they are unaware of what they've done. They are unaware of what it means.

As a direct result of their disobedience, Adam and Eve see everything in their world differently.

- First, they see themselves as naked [loss of innocence], which causes shame.
- Second, they see God as One to fear and avoid at all costs.
- Third, they lose sight of each other as helpers and companions.

They are fearful and defensive. Although their bodies are alive, something inside of them has died. It is an internal death, affecting every aspect of their lives.

G. Original Sin

The Church calls this Original Sin (CCC 405).

- Their human nature has been weakened: "not totally corrupted [but] wounded in the natural powers proper to it;
- Subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death; and
- Inclined to sin - an inclination to evil that is called 'concupiscence.'

Yet perhaps the most devastating consequence is that they are blind to it. The new eyesight promised by the serpent has left them unable to see what they have become. What a tragic irony this is!

Consider the words of Jesus:

"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!" (Matt. 6:22-23).

H. Pope Benedict on Sin

"Sin has become almost everywhere today one of those subjects that are not spoken about.

Religious education does its best to evade it. Sociology and psychology attempt to unmask it as an illusion or a complex.

Even the law is trying to get by more and more without the concept of guilt . . . Thus sin has become a suppressed subject, but everywhere we can see that, although it is suppressed, it has nonetheless remained real . . .

At the very heart of sin lies human beings' denial of their creatureliness, inasmuch as they refuse to accept the standard and the limitations that are implicit in it.

They do not want to be creatures, do not want to be subject to a standard, do not want to be dependent . . . Sin, in its essence, is a renunciation of the truth." [In the Beginning . . .]

III. CURSE AND PROMISE

In the face of Adam and Eve's complete blindness to their sin [which brought spiritual death and loss of God's friendship] evidenced by their lack of remorse, what might God have been justified in doing?

We would find no fault in Him if He declared, "You ungrateful wretches - away with you!" But God does not do that.

This is a moment in which we can dare to let hope grow. Does He perhaps still love them?

Read: Genesis 3:14-15

[14] The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

[15] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

A. The Verdict

Having listened to their excuses, and given them a chance to repent – which they refuse - God pronounces the verdict. Why do you suppose God begins His response to Adam and Eve's disobedience by cursing the serpent (vs. 14-15)?

Remember that when God speaks to the serpent, He is actually addressing the Devil. Verse 14 is written in highly symbolic language. What does it mean? In other words, what will the Devil's destiny be, according to this imagery?

I. Satan is Cursed

Satan is the actual villain here. He is God's true enemy. This is not to deny the humans' responsibility, but the first order of business is to address this one who seems to have gained such power over them.

They will not be safe as long as he can wield that power.

- By God's curse, the serpent is destined to be the most wretched creature on earth: cursed "above all cattle" and "all wild animals."
- He will be the lowest form of life,
- a status that will be evident even in how he moves from place to place ("upon your belly"), eating dust, condemned to a posture of complete defeat and humiliation.
- The meaning is clear: Satan has gone from a position of pride and power to one of lowliness and impotence.

- His fall is lightning-quick.

This sudden and irrevocable fall of Satan is a common theme in Scripture, for example, Isaiah 14:12-15.

*"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!
How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!
You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven;
above the stars of God I will set my throne on high;
I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far north;
I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will make myself like the Most High.'
But you are brought down to Sheol, to the depths of the Pit.*

J. The Battle Heats Up

A battle already existed in the rebellion of Satan against God. The difference now is that God is going to extend the battle to include the human beings.

Initially, the humans had been targets of the devil’s wrath against God. But now God is going to enlist the humans on His side. Could the serpent have possibly imagined this incredible twist?

It is the first great reversal in the story of man. From this point on, reversal will be the underlying theme of our human history. Pause now to think carefully about this. However we come to understand ourselves and our world, we must get this one truth firmly in place--God does His work through reversals.

K. The Woman and Her Seed

*I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your seed and her seed;*

This is surely a sign of hope. It means that humanity will not come to an end with Adam and Eve. Even though their disobedience has been severe, Adam and Eve will be allowed to procreate, and mankind will continue.

The serpent aimed his attack on Eve. It was through her act of disobedience that the first bite was taken. It is appropriate that God’s punishment on the serpent should begin with "the woman."

L. Who is the Woman

The "woman" cannot be Eve because whoever this woman is, she is engaged in a battle against the serpent, the devil. Eve has already succumbed to his power.

This "woman" will be God’s co-worker in bringing the enemy to defeat; she will be outside of his power.

The question this phrasing provokes is: Why is there no husband mentioned in this scenario? The only "he" is the seed of the woman, not her mate. How can a woman have a child without a husband?

The Church has always read these verses as being messianic, that is, referring to Jesus Christ; and it has seen in the woman the mother of the promised Saviour; the Virgin Mary – the New Eve.

The “seed” of the woman is the New Adam – Jesus Christ. In a sense, God will begin creation anew through the New Adam and the New Eve.

M. Promise of Redemption

He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

Genesis 3:15 has been called the *First Gospel* [Protoevangelium], because God promises to send someone who will conquer the serpent.

- The serpent will wound the Redeemer, but not seriously, by biting His *heel*.
- The Redeemer will deliver the final and fatal blow to the serpent, by crushing its *head*.
- Power to overcome an angel [Satan] would have to be divine power. Yet this "seed" will be a human being, born of a woman. How can this be?

Catechism of the Catholic Church

CCC 411 The Christian tradition sees in this passage an announcement of the "New Adam" who, because he "became obedient unto death, even death on a cross", makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience, of Adam.³⁰⁵

Furthermore many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the *Protoevangelium* as Mary, the mother of Christ, the "new Eve".

Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ's victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life.³⁰⁶

The devil despised Adam and Eve. They must have looked like such dupes to him. He decided he would strike out at God by striking out at them. He made fools of them in short order.

They appeared to be weak links in the chain. So, when God announces that the serpent, as his punishment, will face a battle with human creatures, the woman and her seed, in which he will be defeated, it is a crushing, mortal blow to his pride and arrogance.

We need to linger long enough to let it really sink in. Whatever the devil attempted to rob from humanity - our life, our dignity, our exalted position in God’s family - is more than made up for in the punishment meted out to him.

God will vanquish His enemy through human beings!

That, of course, means that in the midst of the worst thing that could possibly have happened to man and woman, God makes a promise. That promise is so full of hope for them that it swells and bursts into a vision of glory bright enough to make us want to shield our eyes from it.

Who is this God, Who loves His creatures so much to allow them to participate this way in His plan to defeat evil? How could such faithless beings matter so much to Him?

The details we have in the story thus far hardly explain it. We are forced to recognize that behind the words and action that we can see in Genesis is an unseen love that is fathomless, mysterious, unconquerable, and capable of unimaginable displays of power and constancy. What can it all mean??

Summary

1. The knowledge of good and evil that Adam and Eve received from the forbidden fruit was the experience of it. Where once there was only goodness, now there is shame and danger and blame.
 - a. In the twinkling of an eye, although nothing in their environment had changed, everything inside of them had.
 - b. They lost the grace God gave them at creation to see truthfully and live accordingly.
 - c. They lost "original justice"- perfect love of God and man - with their "original sin."
2. Although God would have been justified in eliminating these creatures and perhaps starting over,
 - a. He seeks them out as they hide from Him and tries to draw out from them an accounting of what they did.
 - b. Instead of accepting this as help, they reject it as an intrusion.
3. It appears that God has a plan to continue with mankind, but first He must deal with His enemy and theirs, the serpent.
 - a. He condemns the devil to a life as the least of all creatures (and this was the one who chided Adam and Eve for their creaturely submission).
 - b. Beyond that, He declares that one day, human beings - a "woman and her seed"- will finish the battle begun that day.
 - c. The "seed" will be the one to strike the decisive blow to the devil, but will be wounded in the process.
 - d. Though he will be born of woman, he will have a power that is divine.
4. This pair cannot be Eve and a son she might bear, since she and her husband have already fallen victim to the enemy’s treachery.
 - a. The pair to come will be descendants of Adam and Eve, although not affected by the fall of their original parents.
 - b. They will be in opposition to, not collusion with, the enemy.
 - c. There is no mention of a husband or father.
 - d. These two provoke our curiosity; they are humans worth waiting for.

Questions

1. Did it break your heart to watch Adam and Eve not recognize God’s love for them?
2. Ask God to help you recognize His love for you even when it comes in a form that frightens you.
3. Take a few moments to make sure you fully comprehend the manifestation of God’s love for you in this lesson.
4. If Adam and Eve, in their rebellion, did not stop God’s love, what can that mean for His love for you? You might want to be on your knees when you think about this.
5. Adam and Eve might well have expected God to mete out punishment then and there. But instead, He asks a number of questions: "Where are you? Who told you that you were naked? What is this thing that you have done?"
6. Doesn’t God know all this already? Why does He ask? Is this a sign of hope? Why?
7. When God asks the man if he has disobeyed, how does he respond (vs. 12)? How is the woman’s response similar (vs. 13)?
8. In these exchanges between God and His creatures, there is a glaring omission on the part of Adam and Eve. What is it?

Preparation for Week #5

Read:

1. Genesis: Finish Chapter 3 - RSV Catholic Edition;
2. *Come and see Catholic Bible Study – Genesis*: Chapter 3;
3. The Navarre Bible: Genesis – Finish Chapters 3