

**GROUNDS OF FAITH CAFÉ: “Genesis” (Subtitled: Is there a snake in your Garden too?) Further subtitled: Lessons from the Garden! Genesis Lesson 3 (3:1-13): Some Summary Thoughts**

Revelations from the “Fall” of man... “According to Genesis 1:26-27, mankind – male and female – is made in the image of God and appointed lord of creation. This is the greatness of human beings. In Genesis 2:7, the first man is depicted as being made from the dust of the earth with all the weakness of clay and, as the story unfolds, subject to temptation, sin, sickness, and death. This is the wretchedness of the human condition. For all the greatness, human life is derivative, dependent on the Creator for everything. And so, there is revealed the paradox of dominion and dependence.” (Ferguson, *The Church of Christ*, p. 137).

Several observations from 3:1-13 seem relevant:

- First, “temptation” --primarily the temptation to deny our creaturely status and thus rebel against God is inevitable. The deceiver convinced Adam and Eve that they could live life on their own terms, dangling before them the promise that “...*you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (3:5). Fundamental to most of man’s problems is the desire to be our own god. However, to know (know about/ experience) good and evil is very different from the ability to discern good from evil and thereby not succumb! The ability to discern the differences is a character trait attributed only to the Divine, including the Divinely-birthed human – Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- Second, rebellion against God is typically neither a single act nor immediate. In sequence, it appears that we gradually move through stages: we listen to words other than God’s; and begin to “see” items or objects no longer through “spectacles of faith” (Martin Luther’s wonderful description). This “new sight” leads to newly awakened “desire” (note that, as part of His punishment, God will re-orient woman’s “desire” to be for her husband, 3:16). We analyze this new sensory input, conclude it has “benefit” for self-gratification rather than “harm.” Then, we rationalize our move away from trusting dependence upon God to an independent exaltation of our “selves.”
- Third, the serpent’s deceit includes making God a “topic of conversation” rather than a partner in communication. What if Adam and Eve had gone back to talk **to** God rather than talk **about** God?
- Fourth, “*truth*” (the very essence of who God is, i.e., His character – remember Jesus describing Himself as “*the way, the truth, and the life*,” John 14:6) is rejected by mankind. Man’s character conforms to its new deceit-filled understanding. By choosing godlikeness over creatureliness, we adopt new character traits – those of the “Deceiver” – and so we now lie, cast blame, deny, deceive. Guilty and hostile ourselves (having experienced “shame,” 3:7), we project that guilt and hostility onto others (Adam’s blame upon Eve, and ultimately back upon God, 3:12). In exchanging the truth about God for a lie, we begin to “see” God differently – as full of caprice, contradictions, hostility, lust, and retribution (all projections of our fallen selves).
  - One result is: With newly perverted, distorted “sight,” we no longer “see” God as He is – His nature, His Divine Character. Thus, we lose our vision of God as He is.
  - A second result is equally disastrous: the “Fall of man” also caused us to distort – *and blur – the divine image in ourselves*, rolling it in the dust, as it were. Instead of being loving, generous, self-giving, thoughtful, merciful – as God is and as God intended for us to be – we became self-centered, miserly, unloving, unforgiving, and spiteful. Created to image, and thus represent, God in all that we are and do, we learned rather to bear the image of the Evil One, God’s implacable enemy.

In place of communion with the Creator, having purpose in His creation, we became rebels, lost and cast adrift, creatures who broke God’s laws, abused His creation, and suffered the awful consequences of fallenness in our brokenness, alienation, loneliness, and pain. The picture drawn later in Scripture of this condition is that of the sheep going astray (Isaiah 53:6; 1 Peter 2:25) or the rebellious, know-it-all son, living in a far country among the hogs, consigned to eating their food (Luke 15:11-32).

Genesis 2-3 calls us once again to “see” as God intended us to “see.” Like Adam and Eve, God questions us. The questioning has little to do with gathering information; rather, it involves self-revelation. As we answer God’s questions, “*Where are you?*” “*What have you done?*” (and later, “*Why are you angry?*” [4:6]), we can begin again to see ourselves as God sees us. And, by engaging God directly again through His Word and in prayer, we return God to His rightful position as a conversational partner, not some obscure topic of conversation or debate.

As we read the rest of chapter 3 next week, we will complete the paradigm established as a consequence of man’s rebellion (sin) – punishment for sin and then renewal/redemption from sin. And, by knowing “the rest of the story,” we can even exult in the fact that humanity ultimately triumphs over temptation, sin, and punishment through one man – Jesus Christ – the offspring (seed) of woman.