

CHAPTER SIX: THE FALL OF MAN, SIN AND ITS PUNISHMENT

The Origin of Sin: The Fall

1. *Man, as he came from the hand of God, his creator, was upright and perfect. The righteous law which God gave him spoke of life as conditional upon his obedience, and threatened death upon his disobedience. Adam's obedience was short-lived. Satan used the subtle serpent to draw Eve into sin. Thereupon she seduced Adam who, without any compulsion from without, wilfully broke the law under which they had been created, and also God's command not to eat of the forbidden fruit. To fulfil His own wise and holy purposes God permitted this to happen, for He was directing all to His own glory.*

(a) **How God made man** (line 1). Adam and Eve were perfectly suited to the garden into which God put them. In this sense there was nothing lacking in them that was the cause of their downfall (Genesis 1:31, Ecclesiastes 7:29).

(b) **The Adamic Administration** (lines 1-3). The arrangement God made with Adam in Genesis 2:16-17 is sometimes called the 'Covenant of Works' because it depended upon Adam's obedience. The threat of death upon disobedience implies that if he had obeyed they would have been given 'life', a higher life than that with which they were created, with no possibility of sin, no death, and the closest possible communion with God. Two reasons:

1. The tree of *life* was also in the midst of the garden and they had never eaten from this tree (Genesis 2:9, 3:22-24).
2. Christ, the second Adam, has obtained *life* for us (Romans 5:17,18,21).

We say that Adam was put on *probation*, for the test of his obedience to the command not to eat of the tree of good and evil was only to last for a specified time (known to God).

(c) **The Fall** (lines 3-6). Read Genesis 3:1-6. Eve was deceived, but Adam sinned with his eyes open (2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:14). From this first sin we learn sin is breaking the law of God (1 John 3:4); sin is going our own way (Isaiah 53:6), following our own thoughts and desires; sin is judging the word of God and obeying only if it seems good to me.

(d) **God's purpose in the Fall** (lines 6-7). God was neither the author nor the approver of the sin of Adam and Eve. He had the power to prevent it happening, but chose not to do so because He had a higher purpose to fulfil, the glory of His Name in both showing mercy and judgment upon sinners (Romans 9:22-23).

Our Participation in the Sin of Adam

2. *By this sin our first parents lost their former righteousness, and their happy communion with God was severed. Their sin involved us all, and by it death appertained to all. All men became dead in sin, and totally polluted in all parts and faculties of both soul and body.*

3. *The family of man is rooted in the first human pair. As Adam and Eve stood in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of their sin was reckoned by God's appointment to the account of all their posterity, who also from birth derived from them a polluted nature. Conceived in sin and by nature subject to God's anger, the servants of sin and the subjects of death, all men are now given up to unspeakable miseries, spiritual, temporal and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus Christ sets them free.*

(a) **Representative sin.** "Their sin involved us all,..." and "As Adam and Eve stood in the room and stead of all mankind,..." Adam's sin not only brought consequences upon himself but also upon the whole human race. The whole human race fell when Adam fell because in his probation he represented us. We call him our 'representative head'. Note the following two passages: Romans 5:12-19, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22. Two arguments from these passages show the truth of 'representative sin':

1. Romans 5:18-19 clearly teaches that because of the *one* sin (“trespass”) of the one man Adam condemnation has come upon *all* men.
2. Our salvation comes by the representative obedience of Jesus Christ. This is the way God deals with us: we are condemned because of Adam’s one sin, and we are justified by Christ’s act of righteousness.

(b) **Original sin.** “All men became dead in sin,...” and “...who also from birth derived from them a polluted nature.” Original sin is the sinful nature with which all men are born (Psalm 51:5, Ephesians 2:3). We inherit this from Adam through birth. Because this is our nature, all men are “totally polluted in all parts and faculties of both soul and body.” This is what we call ‘total depravity’. ‘Total’ = every part of us has been thoroughly affected by sin, our bodies and our minds and our hearts. See Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 3:10-18.

(c) **Our natural state and the need of salvation.** As sinners we have two problems:

1. We are guilty – because of the one sin of Adam, and we are guilty (= liable to condemnation) because of our own personal sins. We need God to justify us.
2. We are polluted – because of our nature, needing the cleansing of regeneration (John 3:3-6, Titus 3:5).

Actual Sin

4. *The actual sins that men commit are the fruit of the corrupt nature transmitted to them by our first parents. By reason of this corruption, all men become wholly inclined to all evil; sin disables them. They are utterly indisposed to, and, indeed, rendered opposite to, all that is good.*

Why are all men sinners in practice? It is because of original sin, the sinful nature with which we are born. We are not sinners because we do acts of sin; we sin because we are sinners by nature. We must trace sin to its roots in our hearts (Matthew 12:33-35, 15:16-20). This is why children do not need to be taught to practice such things as lying, for it comes naturally to them (Psalm 58:3). Do not think of sin as originating outside a person, in things or places. “To the pure, all things are pure” (Titus 1:15). Rather, we are tempted because of the sin that is within us (James 1:13-15). We do acts of sin because we have minds that cannot understand the truth (1 Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 4:18), and desires that love evil (Ephesians 2:2-3). The result is that nothing we do can be called “good” in the sight of God. Nothing proceeds from faith (Hebrews 11:6), nothing is done out of obedience to God. Therefore, *every* act of an unbeliever is a sinful act, even religious acts. Remember it was the religious Pharisees who were most condemned by Christ because of their self-righteousness. Because of our sinful natures we are therefore totally unable to do anything that is good (Romans 8:7-8). This is the seriousness of our sinful condition by nature.

Sin in the Christian

5. *During this earthly life corrupt nature remains in those who are born of God, that is to say, regenerated. Through Christ it is pardoned and mortified, yet both the corruption itself, and all that issues from it, are truly and properly sin.*

Sin remains in every believer, called ‘indwelling sin’. We do not reach perfection through being regenerated; that waits until we are given new bodies at the resurrection. In this life we have to fight against sin that indwells us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 7:14-25, 8:12-13, Galatians 5:16-17). This “corrupt nature” that remains is called the ‘flesh’. Note that not only the actions that proceed from the flesh are sinful, but also the flesh itself. Our condition, as well as our acts, are sinful; and God requires perfection in our character as well as in our acts. The depth of sin within us as a Christian is one thing we learn as we grow in grace. The nearer we grow to God the more we see our sinfulness (Luke 5:8). So it is totally wrong for any Christian to claim perfection, either in nature or in action (1 John 1:8-10).