

There are certain sayings, bits of sage advice that parents have been passing down from generation to generation. Lets' see how many you know?

- An apple a day.....? keeps the doctor away.
- Don't eat sweets before dinner, or you'll.....? lose your appetite.
- Don't swim for an hour after eating, or you'll.....? get cramps.
- Don't make me pull this....? car over.

Did you notice that all these wise warnings also speak of the consequences in ignoring their advice. This morning we are going to see how an important bit of fatherly advice given by GOD to Adam & Eve went unheeded and the terrible consequences it caused for every human who lived thereafter. But this topic of universal human consequences resulting from Adam & Eve's sin first needs a bit of historical setup to better help us understand it.



We read from Paul's letter to the Romans (5:12) *That*

*just as sin came into the world through one man,
and death came through sin,
so death spread to all
because all have sinned.*

Romans 5:12

Paul had earlier written that everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). Now, in this portion he makes a historic connection between Adam's sin and everyone's death, but he goes on to point out that since everyone also sins, that our own sin also inevitably leads to our own death as well. Then one chapter later, Paul explains why sin always leads to death: "*For the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23.)" **Simply put, to commit any sin always causes a death of sorts.** Thus, though Adam was the first one to bring sin and death into our world, every human who follows Adam's sinful lead will also die.

Now, since Paul's largely Jewish Christian audience was well versed in the story of Adam and Eve, he didn't have to go into much detail concerning the historic consequences of Adam's sin. All Paul needed to point out here in Romans was that if the disobedience of one significant person – Adam – was capable of bringing negative consequences for everyone, then the obedience of another significant person - Christ Jesus – can also bring positive consequences to everyone who follows him; since Adam's sin led to death for all, Christ's obedience can lead to salvation for all.

But since we modern westerners don't really know the story behind the fall of A&E, perhaps a bit of explanation will help us better understand how Adam's **SIN** could

sentence us all to **DEATH** and thus how Jesus' obedience could offer us all new life. For this, we need to go back to Genesis chapter 3, to pick up the story from there.

However, let me caution you here to pay closer attention to the meaning of these two words. That which can be labeled as "**sin**" is so much more than just "doing bad things." And **death** actually describes a reality that is dramatically different from what most people think it is. We will get to these definitions in a moment.

The first thing mentioned in this story of human rebellion is a **serpent**. While many people are terrified by all things slithering, believing that the only good snake is a dead snake, well deserving of the curse God had put on it back in the garden, I would disagree. Snakes are actually quite beneficial to the environments where they live. Thus, while I would prefer that the poisonous variety not live near me or my pets, the nonpoisonous are welcome to stay in my yard and dine on as many vermin as they can catch.

After all snakes like every other animal were created by GOD, it says so right there in the first verse. And as such, all snakes were originally created "very good." So I don't know if this snake symbolically personified Satan, or if Satan actually took the form of a snake for the purpose of tempting Eve; the text is not clear. But certainly, we should not blame every snake for what happened back there in the garden.

I do know that Satan is directly linked to the serpent who was doing the tempting of Eve, because that connection is made for us in the book of Revelation. *[The angel] seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years ... so that he would deceive the nations no more,*" (Rev 20:2-3, see also Romans 16:20). Thus, whatever creature was doing the tempting in the garden, it was the voice & thoughts of the devil that A&E were hearing.

The next questionable thing about this story is Eve's reaction to the snake. Or actually, her lack of a reaction. After all, she is having a conversation with a snake!

- Was this a normal every day event?
- Did the other animals in the garden also talk?
- or was Eve possibly snacking on a few funny mushrooms growing in the garden?

Again, the text is not clear. What is clear is that Eve seemed oblivious to the danger she was in. Obviously she had not heard the wise warning about not talking to strangers; especially strange snakes who were tempting her to disobey God.

Now, temptation is not a sin. We each face temptation every day. Sin comes in how we respond to that temptation. The serpent did not force Eve to disobey God. There was not any physical contact nor were any threats made. Eves' action was done voluntarily. So the excuse "*The Devil Made Me Do It,*" doesn't hold water. But, the same

tools the serpent used with Eve – temptation, doubt, deception, and desire – he still uses against us today.

To launch his temptation, the devil first created **doubt** in Eves' mind by **exaggerating** the truth. "*Did God say, "You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?"*" By this simple over statement phrased as a question he got Eve and Adam – remember Adam was right beside her – to begin questioning God's wisdom. This is still one of the devil's favorite forms of attack; getting us to question whether God or we know what's best for our lives.

Next the serpent shifted to **deception**, offering the pair two deadly half-truths. Realize that the most effective lie is often a half-truth, letting people hear what they want to believe. "*You will not die ...* Thus the devil denigrated God's good intentions, insinuating that God was lying to A&E for His own purposes; "God is hiding something from you."

Next, he offered a **false reward**: *Your eyes will be opened, you will be like God.*" But, A&E, being made in God's image, were already like God, they just weren't God and never could replace God with their own self-control over their own lives; which is exactly what the devil was tempting them to do.

Exaggerate, denigrate, offer a reward; this is the basic art of deception as practiced by the devil from the earliest of days and it is still working.

Now combine deception with our own un-disciplined desire and that is how temptation leads to sin. "*The woman saw that ...the fruit was pleasant to the eyes, and...desirable.*" **Think of all the sin that desire alone brings.** It is the root cause of stealing, murder, adultery, lies and so many more. We don't need the devil to tempt us to sin; but he is certainly glad to help us down that path if we want to go there.

So was it due to her own innocence, her naiveté to the ways of sin that caused Eve to so easily fall to temptation? Or was the Devil merely helping A&E follow through with a thought they were already toying with? Again the text is not clear. But James the brother of Jesus, flatly warns Christians away from falling into this trap of temptation fueled by desire: *No one, when tempted, should say, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it;* (James 1:13-14).

Temptation is always out there, it is how we respond to it that will either keep us safe or get us in trouble. As Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians ...

No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it
(1 Corinthians 10:13).

Of course you may ask why was this Satanic serpent allowed to freely enter into the garden in the first place? Surely GOD could have forbidden the entrance of evil into HIS garden paradise, couldn't HE?

But HE did not.....**And that is the key to understanding, our responsibility for our own sin.** Without getting into another debate over pre-destination versus free-will here, let's just go with what we know. **Genesis 1:26** tells us that God said, *Let us make humankind in our image.* Is GOD confined or limited in what HE can do,or is GOD free to do as HE chooses? So, if GOD is free to act as HE chooses & we were created in God's image, should we not also be free to choose?

- GOD could have created us as robots only capable of obedience but not disobedience.
- GOD could have sealed up Eden & forbid Satan to enter.
- GOD could have exiled Satan anywhere else but to earth,.... but HE didn't.

We were created to live in fellowship with GOD, ...**but we were also originally created with the ability to freely accept & love GOD, or to reject GOD.** That statement is easy to say, but it is the single most important decision anyone will ever face; when given the opportunity, whether to accept or reject God from their life. However, a completely free choice is what A&E by their actions denied everyone who was born thereafter.

God said, *'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die* (Genesis 2:16-17).

When you look at the sad cultural divisions tearing our own nation apart and when you see the human suffering that exists around our world today, it is hard to imagine that all of this resulted from a single act of disobedience. That seems like a very harsh punishment for eating a piece of fruit, doesn't it? I've never heard any parent say "Clean your room, or you will surely die;" "Brush your teeth, or you will surely die."

Shouldn't GOD have set the bar a little bit higher? Shouldn't humanity's introduction of sin come at a much worse level of transgression than just eating a bite of fruit? What if GOD's only command had been, "*Thou shall not kill*"? Would that have worked? No, it would not. As proved by Adam and Eve's first son who went on to become the first murderer. God had also warned Cain that the temptation to sin was crouching there right beside him, and that if he did not master it, it would master him.

On the surface, it doesn't make sense to us that sin entered our world in this manner. After all, What is the significance of one fruit over another? The answer is that there is no limitation or line in the sand that GOD could have placed on mankind that eventually would not have been crossed; if we refuse to master our own temptations they will always master us.

There probably was nothing magical about the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, it was simply put there as a test -- would A&E faithfully obey a command even if they didn't understand it? The consequences of which both for A&E were warned would be **death**, what they did not know was that their death would thus be passed along to the of humanity as well.

Now if Adam and Eve were simply childlike and naïve to the ways of sin, the idea of God planting and pointing out to them a tree that could kill them, would seem to be like leaving a loaded pistol on the coffee table for your three-year-old to play with. This tells me that Adam and Eve already knew and were more aware of their world than we give them credit for. They should have been more wary of the devil's lies.

The simple explanation is that in planting that tree, GOD had to give A&E a legitimate free choice for them to be truly "like God." If they could only choose to do good then they would be less than "made in God's image." Ironically, having the choice, while continuing to refuse to choose evil would have made them even more "like God." Which was the brilliance of the devil's deception. For having chosen to disobey actually made A&E less like God than if they had resisted the devil's temptation.

God is not interested in our obedience for obedience's sake, as everyone who learns to trust and follow Him will soon discover, God has a servant's heart and God cares for us like a parent. As our parent, **God wants us to trust Him enough to obey, even when we don't understand everything that He is doing.** We may have been made in God's image with the ability to choose, but we are not God, we don't know what he knows; so when in doubt, as an old hymn sings, we need to "*trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus.*"

Warning Israel against similar acts of faithlessness, the prophet Hosea reminded them that this is what ultimately got A&E into trouble. (see also 1 Samuel 15:22).

<p>For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings. But like Adam they transgressed the covenant; there they dealt faithlessly with me. Hosea 6:6-7</p>

GOD did not create us to live in fear of Him. GOD did not create us to be a mind-less machine. GOD originally gave us a completely free-will to either love HIM or to reject HIM. **But when A&E fell into sin, that complete freedom to choose is what they took from everyone born thereafter. This is the disproportionate consequence which resulted from their decision to not trust God.**

The serpent's lie was **"You will not die."** Thus when Eve ate the fruit and did not immediately drop over physically dead, Adam naturally concluded that apparently God had lied to them. So he might as well enjoy a bit of this wisdom fruit for himself ... to learn what else God had not told them. Little did Adam know that with his act of disobedience – listening to Eve rather than God – he and Eve did immediately both die spiritually.

This is where we need to get a better understanding of the actual event of death. **"Death" is not, as we mistakenly think, "ceasing to exist;" death only means that a "separation" has taken place;**

Since we humans are spiritual beings inhabiting a physical body, we can experience two kinds of death, two kinds of "separation:" physical and spiritual.

While our spirits, being made in God's image were designed to be eternal, to live forever, we currently dwell in a physical body that was actually designed to wear out. **Thus at the point of physical death our spirit is simply separated from our worn out physical body.** While that worn out body gets recycled back into the ground, our spirit waits for God to provide it with a newer more eternally equipped body in which to live forever. That is what happens at physical death to everyone.

Now for the person who does not know God or the gift of eternal life offered by Christ Jesus, physical death is a terrifying step into the unknown. but for Christians it is simply a rite of passage – as proved by Christ Jesus – beyond which our next eternal body awaits.

But humans can also experience **spiritual death**, again not meaning that our spirits cease to exist, but rather that **our spirits can be separated from the Spirit of God who made us to live both in relationship with himself and our fellow humans.**

That is what happened when Adam and Eve failed to heed God's warning. **The day they disobeyed God was the day they became spiritually separated from the God who made them, loved them, and had enjoyed walking in fellowship with them through the garden.**

The reason why they had to be separated from GOD is because God is sinless, thus no sin can exist his presence. With their act of disobedience, Adam and Eve became sinners and thus for their own continued spiritual existence, needed to be separated from God's spirit until their sin could be erased. Sadly, since A&E had also been given dominion (rule) over the earth they took both the planet and also their future children into this spiritual death – spiritual separation from God -- with them.

Now, to get a better understanding of what it means to be spiritually dead, spiritually separated, let's learn a larger definition of **SIN.**

- At the first level, SIN is simply anything we do that is evil: disobedience, telling lies, committing murder.
- At a second level, SIN is not doing the good that we know we should do: such as not sharing from our personal abundance, not coming to aid of someone who hurt or suffering.
- At the highest level, SIN is anything that exists separated from God. So when king David lamented that he was conceived and born in sin, he was telling the truth, because he was conceived in and born into a world that was already spiritually dead.

Because of Adam and Eve's sinful act of disobedience they became spiritually separated from God. As God had warned them, they died.... Spiritually. Sadly Every child born thereafter to these spiritually separated parents in their spiritually separated world were also born spiritually separated. And as this now spiritually separated human race multiplied, no longer in fellowship with God, it also became increasingly ignorant of who God really is. Thus sin greatly multiplied among the human race and Satan was easily able to usurp dominion over the earth.

What A&E lost for the rest of humanity was both fellowship with GOD, intimate knowledge of GOD, and a truly free ability to choose for or against GOD. Now being born spiritually separated from and ignorant of who GOD is, we no longer have the free ability to choose for God. These days, our only hope is now if God could come looking for us, to rescue us; to somehow bring us back to spiritual life and give us the opportunity to personally choose for or against His rule over our life. **Which of course is what God next did.**

Apparently even before He began creating our world, God set a rescue plan in place for what HE could do if humanity chose through disobedience to separate from their life giving fellowship with Him. This is what we will learn more about next week, as we look into God's promise to Eve of a future "serpent crushing son."

This rescue operation would take thousands of years, it would run the entire course of human history, it would cost the life of his own sinless son, Christ Jesus, the obedient "Second Adam," to undo the separation caused by both A&E's original disobedience and all the subsequent sins committed thereafter. GOD would have to individually approach each and every human born thereafter, reveal Himself to them, and give them a chance to choose. Now you know the entire history of humanity's struggle with sin and death, and the course of God's rescue plan – as the story is told in our Bibles. But most importantly you know what you need to do when God's Spirit begins speaking to you.

<p>But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved Ephesians 2:5</p>
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It is every non-christians' current state of spiritual death and inability to now choose for God, brought about by Adam and Eve's sin, which Paul refers to when he wrote to the Ephesian believers ...

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved. ... through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life. Ephesians 2:8-9

Let us now thank GOD for HIS love and for HIS desire to seek us out and save us through the efforts of HIS SON, Christ Jesus, offering salvation and restoration to all those who through faith will accept it. And let us pray for everyone else who has not yet met our savior.