

## The Fall of Us All

<sup>14</sup> So the LORD God said to the serpent: "Because you have done this, You *are* cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> And 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."

<sup>16</sup> To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you." <sup>17</sup> Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. <sup>19</sup> In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:14–19)

What's wrong with the world? I asked ChatGPT that question, and in case any of you think that ChatGPT is an objective, neutral artificial intelligence, without programming leaning it one way or the other politically, this should dissuade you. Here's ChatGPT's summarised version of what is wrong with the world:

"The world is a complex place, and there are many challenges and issues facing it. Some of the major problems include:

1. Climate Change: The Earth's climate is changing due to human activities like burning fossil fuels, ... leading to global warming, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events.
2. Poverty and Inequality: Billions of people around the world live in poverty,
3. Political Instability and Conflict:
4. Environmental Degradation: Pollution, deforestation, habitat destruction, and over-exploitation of natural resources
5. Health Crises: Infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, and inadequate healthcare systems pose significant challenges to global public health, as evidenced by events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. Discrimination and Social Injustice: Discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation leading to systemic injustices and denying equal rights and opportunities to marginalized groups.

Well that's enough to tell me not to ask ChatGPT any really important questions. Because if you ask the Bible, "what's wrong with the world" that will not be its answer.

Sometimes we speak of the Bible's big story, the grand narrative that the Bible gives to explain life. Every religion or philosophy has some kind of overarching story that tries to explain human existence, life and death, morality, life after death, meaning and purpose. The Bible's grand story is sometimes told in four words: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation. The Bible teaches that we are here because of the direct Creation of the one true and living God, who made us, and all of the universe without evil or curse.

The second movement is Fall. The Bible teaches that the two families of God, the heavenly family of spirit beings, and the earthly family of mankind, both experienced a fall: a rebellion. This introduced evil, death, the curse, suffering and judgement. The third word is redemption. God sought to buy back, deliver and rescue those who would submit to Him through the Incarnation and atonement of the eternal Son. The fourth word is consummation: this world will not simply lurch on in its cursed and fallen state. God will bring history to a climax with His Son's return, earthly kingdom, judgement, and eventual new creation. Creation, Fall, Redemption, Consummation.

You cannot understand the Christian worldview if you do not understand what the Bible means by the Fall. Without the Fall, you cannot understand the other three words. You cannot understand how a good God could have made this world, with all its evil. Without the Fall, you cannot really understand the redeeming work of Christ, the meaning of the cross. Without the Fall, you cannot understand why the Consummation will be even better than the first Creation.

Religions and philosophies that have no Fall have no plausible and consistent way of diagnosing the problems around us. They have no serious remedy for evil and crime and suffering and abuse and tragedy and calamity, because without knowing the disease you cannot know the cure. Without a knowledge of the Fall, you can never truly understand humanity. You will see the good he does, and think he is an angel, and then when you see the evil he does, you will have no explanation. But when you pick up the book of Genesis, you have a satisfying answer: image-bearers of God turned from their Creator, and are now twisted, bent, warped creatures with godlike capacities.

So what is meant by the Fall of Man? We understand the basic idea: man has introduced sin into the world, and now we have guilt, and shame, and hiding from God.

But the Fall is not just what man *did*; it is what man became. Man's Fall changed the world we live in; it changed the human body and soul, and it changed the sort of creatures we are.

So to understand what the Fall produced, we must read God's pronouncement of judgement on Adam and Eve. We're not going to consider verses 14 and 15, as we recently studied them in a sermon we called Christmas in Genesis. Our focus today is on God's pronouncement on Adam and Eve. As we look at what God announces, we'll see how the Fall brought difficulty, death, and depravity.

## **I. The Fall Brought Difficulty to Our Commission**

<sup>16</sup> To the woman He said: "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; In pain you shall bring forth children; Your desire *shall be* for your husband, And he shall rule over you." <sup>17</sup> Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. <sup>19</sup> In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread.

Back in Genesis 1:28, God blessed Adam and Eve with a life calling:

<sup>28</sup> Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:28)

The blessing was: have plenty of children, multiply as families across the world. Plenty of families will be needed to do the second part of the blessing: subdue the earth and have dominion over it. Work the earth, invent ways to tame it, shape it, use it, farm it, develop it. Turn the whole world into a garden. But now the blessing turns into a curse.

What we find is that God announces a curse on the first part of this blessing on Eve, the *be fruitful* part, and a curse on the second part on Adam, the *subdue the earth and take dominion* part.

Eve receives a judgement on her sin, both of which apply to her calling, which is family. The first is

that childbearing itself will now be filled with pain. Eve, the mother of all living, will experience agonising pain in that area where she is most fulfilled. Modern medicine has reduced this, but not removed it. This implies, the human body is now under the curse. In its fallen state it is now weakened, susceptible to great pain and disease. Paul speaks in 1 Timothy 2:15 of a woman saved in childbearing, which I take to mean she is saved from the stigma of the Fall by teaching the next generation rightly.

The second is that she will now have a sinful desire to dominate her husband, but he will rule over her, and often not with gentleness. Compare 4:7: If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.” (Genesis 4:7) Here the Lord tells Cain that sin is ever trying to dominate Cain, but he needs to resist it. So Eve will now lust for her husband's authority, and her husband will often rule her in a crushing way.

God is not giving men permission or a mandate to treat women harshly; He is announcing the state of the world in its now fallen state. Woman will sinfully long to rule men, and men will often retaliate with harsh, domineering, demeaning treatment of women. The sad history of how women have been treated in most times, places, and societies proves the truth of these words. Women have been abused, used, oppressed, harmed and demoted. Among the religions of the world, only the faith that came from the Scriptures has taught kindness, chivalry, mutual respect between the sexes, and men nourishing and cherishing their wives.

*Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth* is now going to be filled with physical pain and relational sorrow.

God now turns to Adam and announces that the task of subduing the earth is now going to be uphill all the way: Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. <sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. <sup>19</sup> In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

The ground will be unyielding and difficult. Instead of fruit, you will get thorns and thistles. Often your work will be fruitless and frustrating, and often it will bring you the very opposite of what you worked for: pain and piercing sorrow. Sweat, exhausting toil, back-breaking labour will now be the path to take dominion of the world. Again, man is no longer the strong king of creation. His body and intellect will now suffer degradation, weakening, devolution, and with it, more difficulty.

This implies as well that all of creation shares in this fallenness. Thorns and thistles implies creation now has what is hostile to itself, plants that choke other plants, a ground that does not respond. Creation will now include competition between species, hostility, predation, and the agonies of pain, disease, deformity, death. Paul describes the state of creation itself after the Fall:

<sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected *it* in hope; <sup>21</sup> because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. (Romans 8:20–22)

When you watch a nature documentary, do not believe the narrator's comments that this is the way it is supposed to be. What you are observing is both creation and fall. You are seeing original beauty, and a subjection to futility and corruption: death, pain, suffering.

Creation no longer is man's friend. It is now hostile to him. The elements will now be violent: Floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, droughts, hail, hurricane. Rogue animals will actually hunt man, bite, maul, sting and poison him. Instead of possessing the kind of power over creation that Jesus

had when on earth, man will now be a tenant in a dangerous world, whose control he gave over to Satan at the fall.

In short, man's very role on the earth is now cursed. He cannot be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth, unless grace comes to him, unless there is redemption.

Why is life difficult? Why is it filled with frustration, setbacks, accidents, calamities? Why do things perpetually go wrong? Why are there diseases, losses, hostilities? Because the Fall brought a curse on our blessing. Everything is now filled with the corruption of difficulty.

But the worst part of the Fall is what God announces at the end of these verses.

## **II. The Fall Brought Death to the Creation**

Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return.

The Fall brings many things: sin, enmity between men, physical and emotional pain, disease, deformity, a hostile world. But the worst of these is the loss of everlasting life. Man is no longer immortal. He will age, weaken, and die.

This is what God promised back in 2:16-17: <sup>16</sup> And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; <sup>17</sup> 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 surely die." (Genesis 2:16–17)

The Hebrew behind that phrase is literally "in dying you shall die". It communicates the absolute certainty of Adam's death.

But perhaps it hints at the idea that from the moment Adam sins, death will begin, decaying and corrupting until it finally claims the life.

It also shows that more than one kind of death will be at work in Adam: both a living death and a final death. When Adam fell, he instantly died spiritually. He was cut off from God, now a creature of darkness, hiding and avoiding God, instead of communing with him. And this spiritual death, this continual dying would linger on, even while Adam was physically alive, and approaching death. A spiritual death and a physical death. And, without redemption, that spiritual death would go on forever.

Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death. Death passed upon all, for that all have sinned, says Romans 5:12.

Death was not part of the original plan. Man was conditionally immortal. First Timothy 6:16 tells us that God alone has immortality in Himself. But God granted man a conditional immortality, contingent upon living in a faith-filled life of obedient trust. Had man not eaten of the tree, possibly we would have been confirmed in righteousness, and lived with bodies that replenished and renewed themselves perpetually.

Those who believe that humans are innocent and born sinless and only learn to sin later need to answer this question: why do babies die? Babies have not yet committed personal sins. If they are born sinless, then they should be like Adam pre-Fall, conditionally immortal. They shouldn't die. There should be no infant death in the womb. But we know the huge infant mortality rate of our race, meaning that death has extended to all of us, including those in the womb.

But what about animal death before the Fall? Did animals die before Adam's fall? First, the Bible

regards animals as alive in ways that plants are not. The Bible speaks of all creatures that have breath in them, souls, *nephesh*. Plants are not in this category, so when Adam and Eve picked fruit or ate it, that was not death in the biblical sense.

But what about the death of creatures, insects, swarming fish, birds? Some Christians think there was animal death before the Fall, either due to Adam's sin working retroactively, or Satan's fall, or even because God made animal death normal and a part of evolution.

But the Bible consistently teaches that sin brought death. In evolutionary theory, death brings improvement to all the species. In the Bible, sin, and specifically man's sin brings death to the world. So I think the consistent testimony of the Bible is that the pre-Fall world will be just like the new heavens and new earth: no death at all.

But some object. First, how did carnivores live without killing other creatures? Second, wouldn't the world have been quickly overwhelmed with too many creatures without death? In the first place, no, God restricted the diet of all creatures to vegetation pre-Fall. Carnivores became such in a post-Fall world. Second, we do not know all the factors of that world. There could have been a kind of sterility that would have come in once a certain population had been reached. God's providence over that unfallen world would have taken care of the precise balance needed. As it stands, it did not take long for Adam and Eve to fall, because their first children were conceived and born after the Fall.

### III. The Fall Brought Depravity to Our Children

Now there is something that is implied in these verses. When God says that Eve's childbirth will be painful and her husband will rule over her, no one takes that to mean that this would only apply to Eve, and then her daughters would have a fresh start, and there'd be no pain for them. When God says Adam's toil will be painful and frustrating, no one takes it to mean that Adam's sons will be born without this problem. No, we understand, that this curse now passes down to Adam and Eve's descendants. Above all, the curse of death is not something God is announcing only on Adam, but on all Adam's race.

This then is implying what the New Testament teaches explicitly: the doctrine of original sin. The doctrine of original sin says that the first sin, the original sin of Adam tainted the whole race, that every human being related to Adam somehow shares in the guilt of that first sin, and therefore also faces pain, sorrow, suffering, and death.

How does this work? The classic verse is Romans 5:12: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned— (Romans 5:12)

Sin and death entered the world through the one man Adam. But sin and death spread to all, because everyone shared in Adam's sin. We share in it in two ways: imputed and imparted sin.

First, the guilt of the first sin is **imputed** to us through Adam's headship. When Adam was the first man, the whole race was one man with his wife. Then the race became their children and then their children's children. But in the Garden, what would become 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, and eventually 8 billion, was then all concentrated in Adam. And as the race was in him, he acted as the whole race.

Just as the writer of Hebrews says that Abram's descendant Levi was in Abram before Levi was ever born, and thereby Levi actually paid tithes to Melchizedek. In other words, Abram's actions were Levi's; it is implied that Levi would have done the same thing. So in the same way, Adam's descendants were in Adam, and his eating of the tree was their eating of the tree. He was the natural head of the whole race, and also the federal head of the whole race: the appointed representative of us all. He represented us, and we were were actually in Him. The Bible teaches corporate guilt in

some cases, and in the Garden, the guilt was credited to everyone in Adam at that moment.

But then the second way we share in Adam's sin is that we redo his actions time and time again. We have imputed Adamic guilt, but then we show solidarity with Adam with personal guilt. We also rebel, go our own way, assert our own will. And we do it from the earliest ages, without any external temptation. From before they can speak, we see in young children envy, selfishness, anger, self-pity, cruelty.

This is not imputed guilt, but imparted guilt. Human beings are born with a guilty, sin-tainted nature. David says in Psalm 51 <sup>5</sup> Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)

The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. (Psalm 58:3) .

We are born sinners. Indeed we are born with what is called total depravity. Don't misunderstand that term. It does not mean we are 100% evil and that there is nothing good in us. It means we inherit a sin nature that affects us in totality, in every part of us. It is not like our minds are sin-tainted, but our wills are neutral, or our bodies have sin's effects, but our emotions are sinless. No, the Bible gives us a bleak account of what we inherit:

His intellect is blinded (2 Cor 4:4), his understanding darkened (Eph 4:18), his mind hostile to God (Rom 8:7), his heart darkened (Rom 1:21), the will is enslaved (Rom 8:7), the whole spiritual life is dead (Eph 2:1) and the whole course of the life is a deliberate rejection of God, a delight in sin and a wilful suppression of His truth (Rom 1:18-32).

Now, some think it is very unfair that Adam's guilt should be imputed to the whole race, or that we should be born now with a predilection towards sin that we cannot change. But bear in mind, that if Adam cannot represent us all in sin, then neither can one Man represent us all in righteousness. Only if Adam can be our natural and federal head in guilt, then a second Adam can be our natural and federal head by paying for the sin, and imputing to us His righteousness. If you throw out Adam as our representative, then you also throw out Christ as our representative.

<sup>17</sup> For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.) <sup>18</sup> Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. <sup>19</sup> For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:17-19)

In fact, this is one of the reasons why angels cannot be redeemed. Angels are not a race, stemming from one original angel. Instead, each one is a separate creation. For the Son of God to atone for angels, He'd have to atone for each one one at a time. But because we are a race stemming from one man, then one man can stand as our substitute and pay for our sin.

In fact, it's my belief that Christ's atonement does extend to Adam's guilt for every human being, leaving only each individual's personal guilt. This is one plausible reason why infants go to Heaven. We've pointed out that the fact that babies die is proof that all humans inherit the guilt of Adam with its death. But Scripture's testimony seems to suggest infants go to Heaven. How? Though the curse is not removed; the imputed guilt that would send them to Hell is paid for by Christ, and without personal guilt, they enter the presence of God. No sinner will be able to blame Adam for going to hell; for as the Second Adam, Christ has graciously stood in the place of all. But those who reject Christ as personal Saviour will have their personal guilt remain, and must face judgement for their own sins.

But here is the good news:

<sup>21</sup> For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:21–22)

<sup>45</sup> And so it is written, “*The first man Adam became a living being.*” The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:45)

<sup>49</sup> And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*. (1 Corinthians 15:49)

The Fall of us all. Our rebellion brought the difficulties of corruption, disease, tragedy, enmity, war. Our rebellion brought death. Our rebellion brought the imputed and imparted guilt of Adam. G K Chesterton answered rightly when a newspaper invited readers to answer the question, “What's wrong with the world?” His two-word answer was, “I am”. I am what's wrong with the world, because I am a son of Adam, guilty of his sin, continuing in his footsteps. Christ's redemption brings the promise of release from difficulty, resurrection from death, and redemption from depravity.

*Adam's likeness now efface,  
Stamp Thine image in its place:  
Second Adam from above,  
Reinstate us in Thy love.*