

Of the Sin and Fall of Our First Parents.

by John Gill

The sermon explores the sin and fall of Adam and Eve, emphasizing their roles, the influence of Satan, and the theological implications for humanity.

Scripture: Genesis 2:17, Genesis 3:6, Lamentations 3:37, Acts 2:23, Romans 5:12, 2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:13-14, James 1:15, 1 Peter 1:20, Revelation 12:9

Topics: "Free Will", "Sin"

Description

John Gill preaches on the sin and fall of Adam and Eve, emphasizing how they transgressed God's command and fell from their original state of integrity into sin and misery. He explains that Eve was deceived by the serpent and, despite her initial innocence, succumbed to temptation, leading Adam to also sin by heeding her. Gill highlights that their fall was not caused by God or Satan directly, but rather by their own choices and desires, illustrating the nature of free will and the consequences of disobedience. He stresses that while God foreknew their sin, He did not compel them to sin, and that Adam's transgression has lasting implications for all humanity. The sermon serves as a reminder of the importance of obedience to God's word and the dangers of temptation.

Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 3--Chapter 8

OF THE SIN AND FALL OF OUR FIRST PARENTS.

The law that was given to our first parents, and the covenant that was made with them, were soon broken by them; "They like men" (or like Adam) "have transgressed the covenant" (Hosea 6:7), they continued not long in their obedience to it, and in that state of integrity in which they were created; but sinning, fell from it, into an estate of sin and misery. 1. First, I shall consider the persons sinning, the same to whom the law was given, and with whom the covenant was made; the common parents of mankind, Adam and Eve; first Eve and then Adam; for Eve was first in the transgression, and then Adam; though Adam was formed first, Eve sinned first (1 Tim. 2:13,14). 1a.

First, Eve, she was beguiled and deceived by the old serpent the devil, to eat of the forbidden fruit, by which she sinned and fell from her original state; her sin may be thought to begin in holding a parley with

the serpent; especially on such a subject as the forbidden fruit; she might have suspected that there was some design upon her, by introducing such a subject of conversation, and by so extraordinary a creature; and therefore should have broke off at once, and have abstained from all appearance of evil, from everything that tended, or might be a leading step unto it; though there is what may be said in excuse of her, that she took the question put to her, to be a very harmless and innocent one; and to which, in the innocence and integrity of her heart, she gave a plain and honest answer: some have thought she failed in the account she gave of the law concerning the tree forbid to be eaten of; both by adding to it, saying, "neither shall ye touch it"; and by diminishing the sense of it, "lest ye die", or, "lest perhaps ye die"; as if it was a question or doubt with her, whether they should die or not, if they eat of it; whereas God had said, "Thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17).

But she is to be defended in all this; for though touching is not expressed in the prohibition, it is implied; since the fruit could not be plucked from the tree, nor taken in the hand, nor put to the mouth, without touching: besides, this may be considered as an argument of Eve's from the lesser to the greater, that if they might not so much as touch the fruit, then most certainly not eat of it. And as for the other phrase, "least", or "lest perhaps ye die", this does not always express a doubt, but the certainty of the event that would follow; (see Ps. 2:12).

But her sin lay in giving credit to what the serpent said, "Ye shall not surely die"; in direct opposition to the word of God, "Thou shalt surely die"; which she now began to doubt of, and disbelieve; and for the strengthening of which doubt and disbelief, the serpent might take of the fruit, eat of it himself, and not only commend it as a most delicious fruit, but observe to her, that she saw with her eyes that no such effect as death, or any symptom of it, followed upon his eating it; and he might further suggest, that that superior knowledge and wisdom to the rest of the creatures he had, was owing to his eating this fruit; and that if she and her husband did but eat of it, they would increase and improve their knowledge, as to be equal to angels; and which, he observed, was known to God.

Now upon all this there arose a lustful inordinate desire of eating the fruit, it being of so lovely an aspect, so good for food, and having such a virtue in it as to make wiser and more knowing; so that at once there sprung up in her, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life": hence she inwardly sinned, before she eat of the forbidden fruit. Much the same progress may be observed in her sinning, which the apostle James observes of sin in common; "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (Jam. 1:15), for lust being conceived, she could no longer abstain, but took of the fruit, either from the serpent or from the tree, and eat of it, and so finished her transgression; and not content with eating it herself, but she gave to her husband to eat of it also; who either was with her, or at some distance, to whom she went directly, with some of the fruit in her hand, as may be supposed, eating it all the way she went; and when she came to Adam, held it up to him to look at, as most lovely to behold, and commended the deliciousness of it; and no doubt used the same arguments with him to eat, the serpent had made use of with her; and he hearkening to her, eat of it, and sinned also.

For, 1b. Secondly, That Adam sinned as well as Eve, is most certain; for though it is said, "Adam was not deceived"; the meaning is, that he was not first deceived, that he was not deceived by the serpent, but by his wife; and when she is said to be "in the transgression", the sense is, that she was in the transgression first; but not only in it; for Adam was also; hence we read of Adam's "transgression" (Rom. 5:14). And if he was with his wife when she eat of the fruit, as seems from the letter of the text (Gen. 3:6), he sinned in not attempting to detect the sophistry of the serpent; in not defending his wife from his assaults; in not persuading her not to eat of the fruit: in not warning her of her danger; yea, in not using his conjugal

authority, and laying his commands upon her not to eat; for if he was present and silent, he must be criminal and accessory to her sin; but perhaps he was not with her.

But his sin lay in "hearkening" to his wife, to her solicitations and requests, upon which it is put (Gen. 3:17). And she might urge, that they must be mistaken about the sense of the law; that God never meant by it that they should certainly die for eating the fruit, since she had eat of it, and was alive and well; by such insinuations Adam was prevailed upon to eat also. Though some think that he was not deceived by her; that he knew what he did, and what would be the consequence of it; he sinned with his eyes open; knew full well the sense of the law, and what would be the effect of it; but what he did was in complaisance to his wife, and from a vehement passionate love and affection for her; because he would not grieve her; and that she might not die alone, he chose to eat and sin and die with her: but then this was all very criminal; it was his duty to love his wife, as his own flesh; but then he was not to love her more than God: and to hearken to her voice more than to the voice of God.

However Adam sinned, and his sin is more taken notice of than the sin of Eve; and it is to his sin that all the sad effects of the fall are imputed; sin entered into the world by him, and death; in Adam all died; for he being the federal head of all his posterity, he sinned not as a single private person, but as the common head of all mankind (Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:21,22). Some have thought, that if Eve only had sinned, and not Adam, her sin would have been personal, and only affected herself, she not being a federal head with Adam; but she could not have been the mother of a sinless posterity; for "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" and she must have died for her offence; indeed God could have created another woman for Adam; from whom an holy seed might have sprung, had he stood.

But this is all conjecture; nor is it so clear a point that Eve had no concern in federal headship; since though the law was given to Adam, and the covenant was made with him before she was formed; yet it was made known unto her, and she assented to it, and looked upon herself as equally bound by it, and shared in the same privileges Adam did; particularly in having dominion over the creatures; and she was, as he, the common parent of their posterity, the mother of all living; was one flesh with him, and both the one Adam (Gen. 5:2), the head of all mankind. 2.

Secondly, How creatures, so wise and knowing, so holy, just, and good; made after the image and likeness of God, came to sin as they did, deserves an enquiry: To what could their sin and fall be owing? Not unto God; he is not the author of sin, nor tempts unto it; nor is he tempted by it: nor to Satan, only as an instrument, enticing and deceiving; but to themselves, to their own will, it was their own act and deed. 2a. First, Not to God; he forbade it; was displeased with it; and resented it to the highest degree.

Those who are differently minded from us, represent our sentiments about Adam's sin, as chargeable with making God the author of sin; which we abhor and detest. Let us therefore a little consider what concern God had in this affair; by which it will appear that the charge is false and groundless. And, 2a1. What he did not do. 2a1a. He did not restrain the serpent from tempting; nor withhold man from sinning. He could have kept the serpent out of the garden, and laid his commands on Satan, not to tempt our first parents; and he could have hindered the temptation from having any influence upon them; but this he did not: nor did he withhold Adam from sinning, which he could have done; as well as he withheld Abimelech from sinning against him, as he told him he had; and Laban and Esau from hurting Jacob; and Balsam from cursing the people of Israel; he could have done the one as well as the other; but he did not; nor was he obliged to it.

And on the other hand, he did not force nor impel either Satan to tempt, or man to sin; they both acted their part freely, without any force or compulsion. Satan, full of spite and malice, and moved with envy at the happiness of man, most freely and voluntarily entered into a scheme to destroy him, and with all his heart pursued it, and carried it into execution; and our first parents, with the full consent of their wills, and without any force upon them, took and eat the forbidden fruit; none of Adam's sons and daughters ever eat a heartier meal, and with more good will, or with greater gust, than our first parents eat the forbidden fruit; stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret pleasant. 2a1b.

God did not withdraw any favour from man he had bestowed upon him, nor any power and strength to stand which he had given him; for when God does anything of this kind, it is by way of punishment for a preceding sin or sins; but no such punishment could be inflicted on Adam, because as yet he had not sinned; but God left him in the full possession of all the powers and abilities he had conferred upon him; so that he could have stood if he would; he did not indeed grant him new favors, nor give him additional power and strength, which he was not obliged unto; he gave him enough, had he made right use of it, to have continued in his integrity; and to have resisted every temptation.

Now these negative acts of God could never make him chargeable with being the author of Adam's sin and fall. 2a2. There are other things which God did do, or acts which are ascribed unto him, relative to this affair. 2a2a. He foreknew the sin and fall of Adam; as he foreknows all things that come to pass in this world, which none will deny that own the omniscience and prescience of God; and if God foreknew the most trivial and contingent events that befall any of his creatures; then surely such an event as the fall of Adam, so important in its consequences, could never escape his foreknowledge; now God's foreknowledge of things future flows from the determinations of his will; he foreknows that things will be, because he has determined they shall be.

Wherefore, 2a2b. God predetermined the fall of Adam; this fell under his decree, as all things do that come to pass in the world; there is nothing comes to pass without his determining will, "Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?" (Lam. 3:37), nothing is done, or can be done, God not willing it should be done: that the fall of Adam was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God is certain; because the sufferings and death of Christ, by which is the redemption of men from that sin, and all others, were ordained before the foundation of the world; and which must have been precarious and uncertain, if Adam's fall was not by a like decree (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Pet. 1:20), but then neither the foreknowledge of God, nor any decree of God, laid Adam under a necessity of sinning; it is true, there arises from hence a necessity of immutability, that is, that the things God has decreed should unchangeably come to pass, but not a necessity of co-action or force; as Judas and the Jews sinned freely, the one in betraying, the other in putting Christ to death; so Adam sinned freely, without force or compulsion, notwithstanding any decree of God concerning him; so that these do not make God at all chargeable with being the author of his sin; he and he alone was the author of it. 2a2c.

God permitted or suffered Adam to sin and fall, which permission was not a bare permission or sufferance; God was not an idle spectator of this affair; the permission was voluntary, wise, holy, powerful, and efficacious, according to the unchangeable counsel of his will: he willed, and he did not will the sin of Adam, in different respects; he did not will it as an evil, but as what he would overrule for good, a great good; he willed it not as sin, but as a mean of glorifying his grace and mercy, justice and holiness: and that this was not a bare and inefficacious permission, but attended with influence, is clear; because, 2a2d.

There was a concurrence of divine providence attending this action, and influencing it as an action, without which it could never have been performed; as divine providence supports every wicked man in his being throughout the whole course of his vicious life, and so while he is sinning; the same providence upheld Adam in his being, while he was eating the forbidden fruit; otherwise, as Eve could not have stretched out her hand and taken of the fruit of the tree and eaten it, so neither could Adam have put forth his hand and taken it of her.

The influences of divine providence concur with every action, be it what it may, as an action, since all live, and move, and have their being in God; every action, as an action, is from God; but the obliquity, irregularity, and sinfulness of the action, is from the creature: wherefore God is not the author of any sin; as he is not the author of sin in any man, notwithstanding the concurrence of his providence with every action of his, as an action, so neither of the sin of Adam. 2a2e.

God may be said, by planting a garden, and that particular tree of the knowledge of good and evil in it, and by forbidding him to eat of that fruit, to afford an occasion of sinning to Adam; but had he not a right, as the Lord of the world, to plant a garden; and as a sovereign Lord to plant what tree he pleased in it, and to forbid the eating of it, without being blamed for it? especially when he gave to Adam a power to abstain from it, had he made use of it; and God can no more on this account be chargeable with being the author of Adam's sin, than by giving wealth and riches to a wicked man, which are occasions of his sinning, by consuming them on his lusts. 2b.

Secondly, The concern that Satan had in this affair may next be considered; and what he did was not by force or compulsion, but by persuasion; he acted the part of a tempter, and from thence he has that appellation (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), he enticed and seduced by lies and false reasonings, and so prevailed; he is said to beguile Eve, and to deceive the whole world, the representatives of it (2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9), in order to which he made use of a serpent, and not a mere form and appearance of one that he assumed; as is clear from its being reckoned one of the beasts of the field, and said to be more subtle than the rest, for which this creature is notorious; and from the curse denounced on it to go on its belly: and eat dust all its days; and yet it was not merely a serpent, or a serpent only, but Satan in it; as appears not only from its having the faculty of speech, which such creatures have not; but from its being possessed of reasoning powers, capable of forming an artful scheme, and of conducting it and carrying it into execution, so as to gain his point; and from the seduction and ruin of men being ascribed to the old serpent the devil (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9).

Satan showed great craftiness and cunning throughout this whole affair; in making use of the serpent, the most subtle of all creatures, which could easily creep into the garden unobserved, which some other creatures could not; and it might be a very lovely creature to look at, adorned with beautiful spots, and of a bright shining golden color, which, when the rays of the sun struck on it, made it look very lovely, as such creatures in those parts are said to be; all which might recommend it to Eve: she might take particular notice of it, and have a particular fondness for it; it might be very familiar to her, she might wrap it or suffer it to wrap itself about her arms; and what might make her still more fond of it, was its faculty of speaking; whereby she could converse with it about indifferent things; and this familiarity might continue some time before Satan in it made his attack upon her; so that she was used to it, and it was no surprise to her to hear it speak.

Satan's cunning also appeared in going to work with our first parents so early, as soon as they were well settled in their state of happiness, and when they had but just tasted of the pleasures of it, and before the

habits of virtue and goodness were more strengthened, when it might have been more difficult for him to have worked upon them, and gained his point; as also in making his attack on Eve first, and when she was alone, and her husband not with her, to aid and assist, counsel and protect her.

Nor did he discover himself to be what he really was; had he declared himself to be an apostate spirit, that had left his first estate, not bearing to be under the government of God, he was so cruel and tyrannical; had he set out with such outrageous blasphemy against God as this, the woman would have fled from him at once, with the utmost abhorrence and detestation of him, which would have marred his scheme at once; but he begun, seemingly with owning the authority of God; and that he had power to forbid the use of any of the trees of the garden; and only questioned whether he had done so or not; he could scarcely believe that a God so good as he was, and particularly to Adam and Eve, had planted a garden for them, and stored it with all manner of fruit, that he would ever restrain them from eating the fruit of any of the trees, and especially would never inflict death upon them for so slight a matter as that; they must surely misunderstand him, and mistake his meaning: and after this, and more conversation, the woman began to doubt whether God had said so or not; or, however, that her husband had mistook his meaning, and had made a wrong report of it to her, who was not present when the law was given.

Satan perceiving that he had gained ground, boldly affirmed, that though they eat, they should not die; and that God knew that such was the virtue of the fruit of that tree, that it would make them wiser and more knowing, even as knowing as God, at least as the angels of God: the woman by this finding that there were an order of creatures superior to them in knowledge, what with the lovely sight of the fruit, and the usefulness of it, especially to make wiser, took of it and eat, and prevailed upon her husband to do so likewise.

And thus they sinned and fell, not through any force and compulsion, but through the temptation of Satan, and his seduction. Therefore, 2c. Thirdly, The sin, fall, and ruin of man were of himself. It was not through ignorance and want of knowledge that Adam fell; he was created after the image of God, one part of which lay in wisdom and knowledge; he had no darkness, blindness, nor hardness of heart; he knew God, his Creator and Benefactor; he knew his will, he knew his law, and what would be the consequence of disobedience to it; indeed, he was not so perfect but that he might be imposed upon by the appearance of a false good, presented to his understanding, which his will made choice of, under a show of good: nor was it through a defect of holiness and righteousness in him; for "God made man upright", endued him with rectitude and holiness of nature, with a bias to that which is good, and with an aversion to that which is evil; but as he was made mutable, which he could not otherwise be, he was left to the mutability of his will, and so sinned and fell; which is that folly, or rather weakness, which the highest rank of creatures, in their original estate, are chargeable with in comparison of God, the Creator: should it be said, Why did God make man mutable? it might as well be asked, Why did not he make him God? for immutability, in the strict sense of it, is peculiar to God.

Should the question be altered, Why did not he confirm him in the state in which he was created, as he confirmed the elect angels? to which it may be replied, That it is not improbable but that he would have confirmed him, had he continued a little longer in his state of probation. But the truest answer is, that it did not so seem good in his sight; and to show his sovereignty, he confirmed the elect angels; but did not confirm, as not the rest of the angels, so neither man. And this should satisfy.

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