

LEAD! A.7 Man's Rebellion

In Which We Reject God's Dominion, And Pay The Price

When God created the world, He gave us (mankind) dominion over all the plants and animals. But it was not an unconditional grant: rather, we have a [responsibility](#) to take His already "very good" [creation](#) to the next level, by filling the earth with [His image](#).

And if we fail in that responsibility, the price is high...

Adoration

[Psalm 51](#)

Bible

[Genesis 3:1-19](#)

Our story begins at [Eden](#), in the [garden](#) where God has [placed](#) the [man](#) and [woman](#) He created. Alas, even in [paradise](#) there can be a [snake in the grass](#):

Now the [serpent](#) was more [subtil](#) than any [beast](#) of the [field](#) which the [LORD God](#) had made.

The [serpent](#) is identified in [Revelation 12:9](#) as [Satan](#), who is thus either disguised as or possessing the snake. That is also the simplest explanation for its 'subtlety' and the ability to speak -- not to mention what it says:

And he said unto the [woman](#), Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not [eat](#) of every [tree](#) of the [garden](#)?

Which uses a question to imply the exact opposite of what God **did** say, in [Genesis 2:16](#):

And the LORD God [commanded](#) the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

Eve quickly corrects the serpent:

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the [fruit](#) of the trees of the garden:

But of the fruit of the tree which [is] in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye [touch](#) it, lest ye die.

However, her version is actually stricter than what God told Adam in [Genesis 2:17](#) -- which does **not** proscribe touching:

But of the tree of the [knowledge](#) of [good](#) and [evil](#), thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

Conversely, she doesn't explicitly identify it with knowledge of good and evil. It is unclear whether Adam hadn't communicated God's commands accurately, or if Eve simply misremembered. Either way, God's instructions seem to have lost something along the way -- and the serpent is quick to exploit the opening.

He starts by directly contradicting God:

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

Then switches to simply telling a half-truth:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your [eyes](#) shall be [opened](#), and ye shall be [as gods](#), knowing good and evil.

This idea of being "as gods" is the root of Adam and Eve's fall, as well as [Satan's](#) -- and probably ours. As we've been discussing all along, our ultimate calling is to be conformed to God's "name" -- His image, character, and purpose. The opposite of that is setting up ourselves -- our own knowledge, preferences, and character -- as our personal standard of right and wrong; in other words, setting ourselves up "as gods."

Of course, the choice is rarely presented that crudely. Instead, we are shown something we find appealing even though God has forbidden it -- for reason's we don't (or can't) understand:

And when the woman [saw](#) that the tree [was] good for [food](#), and that it [was] [pleasant](#) to the [eyes](#), and a tree to be [desired](#) to make [one] [wise](#), she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat

The woman was [deceived](#) -- in body (food), soul (beauty), and spirit (wisdom) -- and fell into sin.

Perhaps surprisingly, Adam wasn't similarly deceived, yet apparently gave in simply at his wife's request:

and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

And even though Eve fell first, Adam is the one held responsible for its effect on humanity, as we see in [Romans 5:12](#):

Wherefore, as by one [man sin](#) entered into the [world](#), and [death](#) by [sin](#); and so death passed upon [all](#) men, for that all have [sinned](#):

This is known as the doctrine of [original sin](#), and (in the Reformed tradition) the related doctrine of [total depravity](#). Put simply, it means that all of humanity is tainted due to Adam's sin, and incapable of true goodness on our own (see "Explore More" for more detailed treatments). This is in stark contrast to modern secular beliefs in the [perfectibility](#) or [innate goodness](#) of humanity.

Note that depravity does **not** mean "we are always as bad as we can possibly be", but rather that "we are never as good as we ought to be." In short, because of Adam's sin (for reasons much debated and ultimately mysterious), we are all fated to "[sin](#), and fall short of the glory of God" -- that is, fail to live up to His name.

This is in fact what happened to Adam and Eve. Their eyes were indeed opened -- but they didn't feel like gods; in fact, they were filled with shame at the nakedness of their humanity:

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they [were] [naked](#); and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves [aprons](#).

In direct contrast to their earlier condition in [Genesis 2:25](#):

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not [ashamed](#).

That is usually how it works. When we are in total submission to God, we are at peace with ourselves. But the more we try to be our own God, the more we feel our own shortcomings (much as we try to deny it). The resulting shame is a consequence of sin that Satan (and the world) never warns you about in advance.

In many ways it is a foretaste of Hell itself, in that it pulls us away from God's presence:

And they heard the [voice](#) of the LORD God [walking](#) in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife [hid](#) themselves from the [presence](#) of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

In fact, this separation from God may well be the "[immediate death](#)" God warned them about earlier.

Yet despite their disobedience, God continues to [seek them out](#):

And the LORD God [called](#) unto Adam, and said unto him, [Where](#) [art] thou?

Adam blurts out the ugly truth -- or at least part of it:

And he said, I [heard](#) thy voice in the garden, and I was [afraid](#), because I [was] naked; and I hid myself.

Which raises an obvious question, which God of course asks:

And he said, Who told thee that thou [wast] naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

Oops. Having been found out, Adam tries to deflect responsibility:

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest [to be] with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

Note how he manages to blame both God and Eve in one short sentence! God obligingly asks Eve -- who also [passes the buck](#):

And the LORD God said unto the woman, What [is] this [that] thou hast done?
And the woman said, The serpent [beguiled](#) me, and I did eat.

The serpent, alas, has nobody left to blame, so God's judgement starts with it:

And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou [art] cursed above all [cattle](#), and above every beast of the field; upon thy [belly](#) shalt thou go, and [dust](#) shalt thou eat all the [days](#) of thy [life](#):

At this point, the story sounds like it is about "[how the snake lost its legs](#)" -- though the passage doesn't actually say they had legs before this. The more interesting part of the curse is its relational impact:

And I will put [enmity](#) between thee and the woman, and between thy [seed](#) and her seed; it shall [bruise](#) thy [head](#), and thou shalt bruise his [heel](#).

Christians generally see this as (among other things) the [first prophecy](#) of Christ's (her "seed's") victory over Satan, a view supported by a similar phrase in [Romans 16:20](#):

And the God of peace shall [bruise Satan](#) under your [feet](#) shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [be] with you. Amen.

This in a nutshell is a foreshadowing of the entire plot of Scripture, with Satan trying to stamp out God's image on the earth -- with partial success, but ultimate failure -- as God's Son becomes man [born of woman](#) and [destroys all Satan's works](#).

While this gives hope to the woman, that doesn't mean she gets off [scott free](#):

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly [multiply](#) thy [sorrow](#) and thy [conception](#); in sorrow thou shalt [bring forth children](#); and thy [desire](#) [shall be] to thy husband, and he shall [rule](#) over thee.

This verse -- which is admittedly [difficult to translate](#) -- has been the source of much controversy. For one thing, the allusion to childbirth as part of the fall has led many to speculate that Adam and Eve's [original sin was to have sex](#) (and the "fruit of the tree" some sort of Freudian symbolism)!

Clearly, that interpretation is flatly contradicted by God's designing us as [sexual beings](#), not to mention His command to [fill the earth](#). It is nonetheless a popular belief in contemporary culture (partly because many churches used to preach a [negative view of sex](#)), and thus something we need to be aware of and deal with.

A more serious argument comes from [evangelical feminists](#) -- those who claim that "there are no unique leadership roles for men in marriage or in the church." They read [Genesis 3:16](#) as imposing male headship as part of the curse on Eve for her part in the fall; as such, they see it as the job of the church to remove that curse by replacing it with "full gender equality."

While that may be a plausible interpretation of this isolated verse, it ignores the fact that (as St. Paul [points out](#)) Adam was [created first](#) and given [special responsibilities](#) by

-- and [direct accountability](#) to -- God Himself, even before the fall (or Eve). An equally valid -- and more consistent -- interpretation would be that the fall introduced an [unhealthy dependency](#) on the woman's side, and unhealthy dominion on the man's.

In fact, that is exactly what we would expect from Eve substituting herself -- or her husband -- in God's place. Whenever we fail to submit to God's dominion, we set up other things (or people) as idols in His place. These idols can never fill the "[God-shaped hole](#)" within us; and when they fall short, we rebel and fight for control -- which is arguably what is pictured in that verse.

Part of the problem is that such feminists (and even some conservatives) have missed the fact that male headship is primarily a **responsibility**, not a privilege. And it is that responsibility before God that is the basis of His judgement of Adam:

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast [hearkened](#) unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it:

A judgement which means Adam no longer inhabits a well-prepared garden, but must fight the earth for his livelihood:

cursed [is] the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat [of] it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou [art], and unto dust shalt thou return.

If woman's great sorrow is for her children, man's is for his livelihood upon the earth. More soberingly, unlike the woman Adam is given no promise of redemption, only of death.

For Adam's redemption, we'll have to wait for our next lesson...

Conversation

1. How does Satan seek to deceive you? Has he ever twisted Scripture to lead you to sin?
2. Have you ever deeply desired something that God appeared to forbid? How did you respond?
3. How hard is it for you to obey God when His commands don't seem to make sense?
4. Where have you experienced the curse of the fall in your marriage or career?

Decision

- **Repentance:** Where have you sought to be "as gods", deciding good and evil for yourself?
- **Action:** How can you work to reverse the curse in your life, and the lives of those around you?
- **Worship:** How can understanding the price of rebellion inspire us to submit willingly to God's dominion?

Explore More

- [Satan's Origin and Fall](#)
- [Are we punished for Adam's Sin?](#)
- ["Adam's Fall and Mine" by Dr. R.C. Sproul](#)
- [The First Prophecy](#)
- [A New Path to Theological Liberalism? Wayne Grudem on Evangelical Feminism](#)
- [YouTube – Adam, where are you?](#)

For Next Week

Read [1 Corinthians 15](#). What are the most important things to know about Christ?