

Lessons from Eden

By Al Felder

“Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.” (1 Corinthians 10:11)

When Christ died upon the cross, the Bible makes it clear that He fulfilled the Old Law. In fact, the scriptures teach that upon the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, the Old Covenant was taken out of the way and replaced with a better covenant based upon better promises. We are under the New Covenant today. It is through the New Covenant that we can be restored unto God and worship and serve Him. This, however, does not mean that the Old Covenant is of no use to us today. We find in many New Testament passages the advantages that can be gained through a knowledge of the Old Testament.

The Old Testament contains the most poignant stories of ancient man. Within its pages are contained the greatest accounts of man’s history. Both the good and the bad can be found within its pages. In the Old Testament we can read of great moral victories as well as defeats. It contains accurate pictures of man and his struggles. This, of course, is for the purpose of giving us an example as the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians. There are lessons to be learned and some of the most practical lessons come from the Genesis account of the first man and woman. For just a little while we would like to consider some “Lessons from Eden.”

The first lesson that we would like to consider from Eden is the great harm that can result from a single sin. Consider, if you will, the Garden of Eden prior to sin entering into the world. *“And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.”* (Genesis 1:31) At the conclusion of the first week, God looked at everything He had made and said it was very good. All of creation was in perfect harmony with the Creator at this time.

Prior to sin entering into the world, God’s creation was a virtual paradise. Within the first two chapters of Genesis we get a small glimpse of how wonderful the world was at this time. It was a world in which man did not have to toil and labor in order to have food. The relationship between the man and woman was without strife, envy, jealousy, or any such sinful behaviors. Man, at this time, did not know the pain of disease or death because man did not die prior to sin entering into the world. Finally, man lived in close contact with the creator.

After Adam and Eve sinned, this all changed.

“¹⁶Unto 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.

¹⁷And to 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: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; ¹⁸Thorns also and thistles shall it

bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; ¹⁹In 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.” (Genesis 3:16-19)

In these verses God lets the man and woman know all of the consequences that would result from their single act of disobedience. As a result of sin, the woman would have greater pains in child birth. Her relationship with her husband would also be more difficult because of sinful attitudes by both the woman and the man. Now every relationship is tarnished by anger, malice, strife, jealousy, and such like. The man would now have to work the ground as a result of sin. Prior to sin, the ground brought forth food for the man. Now, he would have to struggle with thorns and thistles. Also, man would now know death. With sin came decay, and man’s physical body would grow old and die.

The Bible teaches that each person is only held accountable for the sins that he commits. *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.”* (Ezekiel 18:20) Thankfully, I will not have to answer to God for a sin committed by someone else. Neither will anyone have to answer to God for a sin that I commit. Each person will only bear the guilt of the things that he has done. There are, however, consequences to sin that have a far reaching affect.

As we have already pointed out, a single act of disobedience on the part of Adam and Eve lead to great consequences for the entire world. Today, we still find that the same is true. People often try and rationalize sinful behavior today by saying that it is their life, and they can do as they please. They often claim that they are not hurting anyone.

The drunkard often convinces himself that his sin will bring no harm to anyone. He can consume his alcohol and drown his sorrows without any harm to anyone. However, it is often not long until he decides to drive while in a drunken state. Ask any law enforcement officer, or broken hearted parent if there are consequences to other people’s sin. Many a life has been cut short because of the actions of others. Consider also the wife or child that may be beaten when the man goes into a drunken rage. Sin is never pretty, and its consequences are always harmful. This can be seen in Eden, and throughout the rest of the Bible as well.

Second, sin is contagious. *“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, and gave also unto her husband with her: and he did eat.”* (Genesis 3:6) Once Eve gave into temptation and sinned, we find that Adam did so as well. Yes, Adam was responsible for his own actions, but we do notice how someone can be influenced to sin.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus reprimanded the Scribes and Pharisees for the wicked influence that they had on people. *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites: for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more*

the child of hell than yourselves." (Matthew 23:15) By their hypocrisies and false doctrines they were encouraging people to be sinners, not followers of God.

Throughout the Bible, verse after verse can be found that points to the harm of evil influences. *"Be not deceived: evil communication corrupt good manners."* (1 Corinthians 15:33) As a result of this truth, we find that the Bible warns us to be careful about the places we go and the company we keep. If we allow ourselves to constantly be around immorality, it will only be a matter of time before we find ourselves engaging in that same immoral behavior.

Sin like a dreaded disease can spread through a congregation if left unattended. *"⁶Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? ⁷Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."* (1 Corinthians 5:6, 7) The apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthians because they had allowed a brother to openly live in sin. The apostle warns them that this influence would spread and more people would begin to live in sin. For the sake of the congregation they were to withdraw fellowship from this man in order to prevent the spread of sin.

Young people are extremely susceptible to the contagious nature of sin. I have known many people who did not drink, use drugs, or engage in premarital sex. They sought to follow the Bible and knew that such activities were wrong. Yet, over the course of time they wanted to be with the in crowd. This meant going to parties and other places. They started out as the designated drivers for their friends because they knew it was wrong to drink, but that changed over time. It wasn't long before the evil influence had won and they began to drink, use drugs, and engage in premarital sex just like the rest of their friends.

Another consideration is for us as parents. *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."* (Proverbs 22:6) As parents we have the obligation and responsibility to train our children in the ways of God. As we consider this task, I believe that there is something very important that we must consider. Very rarely does the righteousness of the child exceed that of his parents. As you look through the Old Testament there is a progression that can be seen. One generation is often more immoral than the one before it. Each generation has a tendency to lower the standards set by the previous generation.

With that being the case, where do you want your standard of living to be? Do you want to set it as close as you can to the teachings of God's word, or are you content to settle for something less? *"⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; ¹⁰That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."* (Philippians 1:9, 10) In this passage, Christians are encouraged not only to do those things that are good, but those that are best. Do we as parents want to strive for that which is best and teach our children to do the same, or will we set our standards lower knowing that theirs will more than likely be lower than ours.

Third, in Eden we can see the impossibility of hiding our sins from God. *“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 in the garden.”* (Genesis 3:8) Adam and Eve instantly became ashamed of their sinful behavior. Before sin they eagerly awaited the arrival of God in the garden, now they desperately sought a place to hide their shame but there was none to be found.

Like Adam and Eve, we often try and hide our sin. Somehow we convince ourselves that the things done in private are ok. As long as no one knows it will all be alright. Nothing, however, can be hid from God.

“⁷Wither shall I go from thy spirit? Or wither shall I flee from thy presence. ⁸If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. ⁹If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. ¹¹If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. ¹²Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee: but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.” (Psalm 139:7-12)

In this passage the psalmist makes it clear that God knows and sees all. Nothing escapes His sight, nor can anything be hid from Him.

In the New Testament, we read of Ananias and Sapphira. They had pledged to sell some land and give what they received to the Lord. Yet, when they sold the land they decided to keep a portion of what they received. *“But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back a part of the price of the land?”* (Acts 5:3) There is no doubt that this couple fully expected to get away with their deceit. How could anyone know of their dishonesty? In their calculations they forgot to account for the Lord.

Every man will stand before the Lord and give an account of his actions one day. *“Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.”* (1 Timothy 5:24) It may appear at times in this life that the bad guy does get away with the wrong that he has done, but that will not be the case at the final judgment. All of the things that were done in secret will be known. Each actions will be judged by God.

With this being the case, it is far better to flee to God when we sin than to try to run from Him. When we sin we should seek to go to God and confess our faults to Him. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9) Confession is the shortest road to forgiveness for a Christian. If you would be free from the burden of sin, confess your faults unto God and ask for his forgiveness.

Finally, Eden teaches us that the essential principal of sin is selfishness. *“⁴And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵For 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.”*

(Genesis 3:4, 5) The choice made by Adam and Eve was the choice of their own way of doing things above God's way of doing things. It was the choice of worldliness over godliness, of worldly wisdom over godly wisdom, of pride over humility, of rebelliousness over obedience to authority. This is a choice that we must all make sooner or later.

We cannot have two masters in our life. *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."* (Matthew 6:24) There can only be one Lord of our life and we must decide whether or not we are going to allow God to be our master or if we are going to seek to serve ourselves.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus made it very clear what discipleship to Him would cost. *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me.*" (Matthew 16:24) Disobedience led man away from God, and it is only through obedience to His word that man can be led back to God. Every act of sin is a choice of self over God, and every act of obedience is a choice of God over self. Which one will you chose?

In closing, despite the fact that the events of Eden took place some 6,000 years ago, its lessons are still applicable for us today. *⁹The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. ¹⁰Is there anything whereof it may be said, see, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.*" (Ecclesiastes 1:9, 10) The Genesis account of Eden portrays vividly the way that sin gains entrance into a person's life, and the consequences that follow. It shows us the need to avoid exposing ourselves to needless temptations due to the tendency of man to give into the subtle pleading of the tempter. It shows us the need to feast daily upon the word of God knowing that it is the only source of true wisdom.