

Scripture = Genesis 3:1-24

Psalter Selection = 27A; 27B; 27C; 27D

Introduction [David Feddes, "A Sneaky Snake," www.btgh.org, Nov. 5, 2000]

The speaker was persuasive. He was no dummy; he was known for his clever insight. He wasn't negative or threatening; he offered an upbeat message of new freedom and a new frontier. He wasn't sour or unfriendly; he sent a clear message that he wanted only what was in people's best interest, and he suggested an exciting, enjoyable action plan for them to reach their full potential.

They took his advice, and the results were fatal. They ruined their lives, their surroundings, and their offspring. They brought trouble, pain, and death to everything connected with them. They followed a voice that seemed sensible and sweet, positive and promising, but it was the voice of a vicious liar. It was the voice of Satan. He cleverly convinced our first parents, Adam and Eve, to go against God.

Satan didn't come to Adam and Eve and introduce himself, "Hello there, hated humans. I am the prince of darkness. I am the arch-enemy of God and of everything God cares about. I am a liar and a destroyer. I hate you more than you can imagine. I hate you because I hate God, and you are God's image. I hate anything that resembles God. I want to ruin you and ruin God's image in you."

Satan didn't explain, "I was once among the most brilliant angels in heaven, until I decided that I should be able to follow my own wishes and not have to obey anyone else, not even God. I decided to knock God off his throne and rule everything myself, and I convinced a lot of angels to join me. But the majority of angels stayed loyal to God, and God wasn't as easy to topple as I thought. Before my revolution, he seemed so gentle, even when he was giving an order, so I figured he was weak. But when I and the angels with me tried to take over, God unleashed power and wrath such I had never imagined. We were utterly defeated."

Satan didn't grumble to Adam and Eve, "I have been angry, miserable, and rotten ever since that defeat, and I want to make you humans angry, miserable, and rotten too. I was among the top angels in heaven, but God threw me out. You humans are the top creatures in God's earthly paradise, but if I have my way, you'll be thrown out of Eden like I was thrown out of heaven."

Satan didn't snarl, "I found out the hard way that I can't overpower God or drag him from his throne. I can't hurt the one I hate most, but I'll do my best to hurt what's precious to him. So, Adam and Eve, I'm here to harm you and your world. I can't do it directly, because you and your world were created very good, and the world will remain immune to pain and death as long as you, the rulers God appointed over the earth, remain sinless. But if I can convince you to disobey God and join my rebellion, you and your world will fall into my clutches. I want your spirits to be dead in sin, like mine, and I want your bodies to die."

1. The battle in heaven is educational. It is between Almighty God and the rebellious angels. It starts us off on seeing the perversity of sin and the indispensable necessity of our union with Christ. It is the background against which we begin to grasp the treason of sin.
2. The battle in Eden is personal. It is between Almighty God and rebellious persons. It is instigated by Satan's attack against perfect man not yet in union with God incarnate. It is the background against which we begin to understand the wickedness of sin.

3. Our first parents were created good in holiness, righteousness, and truth, with dominion over the animals. They had the ...
 - a. Personal incentive to be obedient by the gracious promise, “this do and you shall live,”
 - b. Solemn warning, “In the day you eat of it [the forbidden fruit], you shall surely die.”
4. The fall was complete moral revolt against the sovereignty, supremacy, authority and will of God. [John Murray, Collected Writings, Vol. 2:70]
 - a. The command given to Adam epitomizes the sovereignty, authority, wisdom, justice, goodness, and truth of God.
 - b. Disobedience to God’s directives ...
 - 1) Assaults God’s divine majesty
 - 2) Repudiates God’s sovereignty and authority
 - 3) Doubts God’s goodness
 - 4) Disputes God’s wisdom
 - 5) Contradicts God’s veracity or truthfulness
 - 6) Disregards God’s Word and God’s law
 - c. Sin is transgression of law, and law is the expression of all that God is in relation to man, as absolute and sovereign Creator and ruler and righteous judge.
 - d. Sin is a contradiction of divine perfection.
5. When we meditate on the entrance of sin into the human race three problems are present: (1) THE CAUSE OF SIN; (2) THE ATTRACTION OF SIN; and (3) THE PURPOSE OF SIN.

A. THE PROBLEM OF THE CAUSE OF SIN

1. **Viewed from God’s Perspective** -- There are two positions that must be maintained in order to conserve the balance of truth and the proportion of emphasis.
 - a. God predetermined and foreordained the entrance of sin. The first sin was committed within the realm of God’s all-sustaining, directing, and governing power.
 - b. God is not the author of sin.
 - 1) Creatures alone are responsible for sin, not God. God did not work in the heart and mind of man so as to constrain or induce apostasy. He did not cause the act of eating the forbidden fruit. Adam and Eve ate the fruit; they were the agents of the sinful act and of the movement of defection and apostasy of heart and of mind that lay back of and came to expression in the overt act of transgression. The responsibility for the act of sin and its guilt rests with Adam.
 - 2) It was God alone who foreordained the act; it was in God’s providence and in His alone, that it was accomplished. The foreordination determined the act; it was accomplished in God’s providence; but neither these acted so as to deprive man of his freedom, responsibility and agency.
 - 3) God decretively wills what He perceptively forbids, decretively ordains what is contrary to His perceptively ordinance. The decree said: This will certainly come to pass. The Precept said: This you shall not bring to pass.

Ephesians 1:11 = ... being predestinated according to ... the counsel of his own will:

2. Viewed from Man's Perspective

- a. Satan's temptation did not cause sin. It was the occasion, but not the cause of the fall.
- b. Man's physical condition did not cause sin, nor his moral nature, or his environmental surrounding.
- c. But Adam's inclination, disposition, or character changed from holy to unholy
James 1:13-14 = Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

B. THE PROBLEM OF THE ATTRACTION OF SIN

1. How could a perfect man in a perfect environment SIN?
 - a. How was it possible for our first parents to have sinned? Augustine said that **Adam was able to sin or able not to sin.**
 - b. WCF 9:2 = Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom, and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet, mutably, so that he might fall from it.
 - b. A most difficult part of the problem is how Adam was able to sin? He had no natural inclination toward sin. He would not have found vice attractive. He enjoyed sweet communion with God in the garden.
2. How could a perfect man in a perfect environment NOT sin?
 - a. Yet a more difficult problem is how was it possible for Adam not to have sinned?
 - b. Adam, under ideal circumstances did sin. He was unable to resist the temptation of Satan. If he was to remain in righteousness, how could he stand?
3. How can we understand human nature and the presence of sin? Listen to what honorable church fathers expressed.
 - a. **Augustine of Hippo** (5th century) said: *Adam's ordeal in the garden was whether or not he would call on God's special aid, which if he did call upon, he would have been able not to sin.*
 - b. **Francis Turretin** (17th century) said: *Adam had sufficient grace to preserve in holiness, but needed efficient grace. To stand Adam would have had to use sufficient grace to call on efficient grace.*
 - c. **Jonathan Edwards** (18th century) said: *Adam was established in holiness, but he needed the preserving grace of the Holy Spirit of which he had the power to request, but he did not.*
 - d. **Robert Dabney** (19th century) said: *A finite creature can only be indefectible through the perpetual indwelling and superintendence of infinite wisdom and grace, guarding the finite and fallible attention of the soul against sin. This was righteously withheld from Satan and Adam.*

4. There must be something more than a mere created goodness.
 - a. Man even in his perfect state, because he was not united to the God-man, was unable to endure.
 - b. Robert Dabney wrote -- “Now, while the positive requires a positive cause, it is not therefore inferable that the negative equally demands a positive cause. To make a candle burn, it must be lighted; to make it go out, it need only be let alone.” [Dabney, Lectures, p. 311]

C. THE PROBLEM OF THE **PURPOSE** OF SIN

1. Initial question -- Why did God decree sin?
 - a. The ultimate end of all that God decrees, great and small, good and evil, is the manifestation of His glory.
Proverbs 16:4 = The LORD has made all for Himself, Yes, even the wicked for the day of doom.
Ephesians 1:11 = ... being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,
Romans 11:33-36 = Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! ... For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.
 - b. Why God chose this particular way of showing forth the glory of His perfections is hid in the counsels of His own good pleasure and will.
 - 1) We are to bow in humble adoration and say, “Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25).
 - 2) If you want to say, “Why have you made me thus?”, remember the inspired reply, “Who are you O man, that replies against God: Shall the thing formed say unto Him that formed its, why have you make me thus?” (Rom. 9:20-21).
2. Searching question -- If God has to answer all our questions and satisfy all our demands -- who then is God?
3. Reflective question -- What has sin revealed about God? The consequences of sin:
 - a. He is the Almighty who created and sustains the universe. Predestination
 - b. He is the Holy One who satisfies His justice by Himself. Salvation
 - c. He is the All-Merciful who redeems His elect by His Son. Incarnation
 - d. He is the all-Glorious who completes all His holy will. Mediation
Philippians 1:6 = being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; (NKJV)

Conclusion

1. The battlefields reveal ...
 - a. The selection of God the Father in the battle in heaven.
 - b. The sin of humanity in the battle in Eden.
 - c. The salvation of God the Son in the battle in Palestine.
 - d. The sanctification of God the Spirit in the battle in the heart.
2. We are related to God primarily by a representative, and secondarily as individuals.
 - a. By mankind's representative, Adam, we are defiled by sin. Man willfully and maliciously broke communion with God.
 - b. By God's representative, Jesus, believers are restored to communion. God willfully and sacrificially made communion with man.
3. The first battle in heaven may have been staged by Satan in objection to the declaration that God was going to become incarnate for man's redemption. Satan was destroyed in the attempt and if he was not confined to hell at least hell was in him. Satan made his onslaught against man who was able to stand against him in his perfect state, able to call upon the aid of Almighty God, who would have given Adam the conquest over this seductive spirit, and established him graciously in life for ever, with his progeny as well -- but Adam did not do so.
4. Until we are in union with God-incarnate, Jesus Christ, our security, our establishment in righteousness, will never be certain. Our fall will be certain. The whole drama of divine revelation is to show the indispensable necessity of union with the God-man if we are ever to persevere in holiness.
5. God is glorified by revealing the treason and tyranny of sin in the battle in Eden.

Resource: James M. Boice, Editor, *Our Savior God: Studies on Man, Christ, and the Atonement*, Baker Book House, 1980. Addresses presented to the Philadelphia Conference on Reformed Theology, 1977-1979.