

THE



“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

September 2020

No. 417

THE FALL

When Eve, and subsequently Adam, were convinced by the serpent to eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden, what was so special about the serpent’s sales pitch? Having the benefit of hindsight and history, today we can look back and shake our heads at Adam and Eve in what is commonly known as the “Fall of Man” in Genesis 3:1-15. They had one rule to follow in the garden; they broke it. An ongoing battle between temptation and ourselves has persisted since “*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed;*” resulting ultimately in Satan’s defeat but a perpetual thorn in our sides; “*it shall bruise thy head,*

THE HARVESTER

141 County Road 474

Woodland, AL 36280

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). A bruise to the head of a serpent is mortal, whereas the bruise to the heel is a nagging, yet recoverable injury (i.e., repentance and forgiveness). So how did the serpent seal the deal to convince Eve to break the one rule? Examining this closely, the serpent offered only one new, unique sales pitch among the “usual suspects” of temptation. This sales pitch continues to “bruise our heel” to this day, often at the center of our bad decisions and sin.

Using the noteworthy subtlety and craftiness, the serpent told Eve that despite her clear understanding of God’s desires for how the fruit of the tree in the midst was to be considered, it would not cause her to die...at least, not right now (Gen. 3:1-4). It is in the following verses where the deal was sealed:

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. 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. (Gen. 3:5-6)

Now, the questions here are 1) how did Eve know what evil was, and 2) what does “your eyes shall be opened” mean? This is the first mention of evil. Of course, we are not aware of every possible conversation among God and Adam and/or Eve, but to the best of our knowledge, Eve has never seen or heard evil. In fact, all we have seen in Genesis up to this point is a description of God’s creation. However, we can find definitions of “good” in God’s creation.

THE HARVESTER is a monthly publication intended to encourage all men everywhere to become laborers into God’s harvest (Luke 10:2). This paper is mailed free of charge to anyone who wishes to receive it. Please submit name, address, address changes and all correspondence to:

The Harvester

141 County Road 474 * Woodland, AL 36280

Phone: (256) 449-9221 * Email: theharvesteronline@gmail.com

Web Page: www.churches-of-christ.org

In Genesis 1 God created light and its division from darkness and saw that it was good (Gen. 1:4). God created the earth and seas, and He saw that it was good (1:10). God created vegetation and saw that it was good (1:12). God created celestial bodies and light and saw that it was good (1:18). God created the animals of the water and air and saw that it was good (1:21). God created the animals of the earth along with man and saw that it was good (1:25). Finally, seeing everything He made, God saw that it was very good (1:31). So what made all of this good?

God's creation was good not because it was morally right as opposed to morally wrong. For example, it would not have been morally wrong had God created a different division of land and water in the way that it is morally wrong to murder. So it is not the specific way in which God created the universe and everything therein that made it good. God's creation and design was good because of this very important factor: it suited God's purpose. God had a purpose in mind and His creation, division, and design completely fulfilled His purpose. Now we have a definition of what "good" means leading up to the serpent's sales pitch to Eve - serving God's purpose. This also tells us what "evil" means; it is the opposite of good - not serving God's purpose.

This similarly answers what the serpent meant when it told Eve in verse 5 "*...your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods.*" Never before had any other purpose or design been considered but God's. Every decision and action within God's creation by Adam and Eve had all been within God's purpose. Eve noted what the rules were regarding the tree in the midst of the Garden and there was no consideration to there being any other option. When the serpent said Adam and Eve's eyes could be opened and be as gods, the serpent meant their eyes could be open to their own desires, their own intentions, and their own purposes - not God's. The Fall of Man did not bring temptation into the world; it was already there. Eve fully recognized the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden looked

pleasing and would probably taste good. What the Fall of Man brought in was mankind beginning to serve our own desires instead of God's. For the first time, it was no longer exclusively "what does God want me to do?" Now, we began to consider "what do I want to do" and "what do I think is right for me?" This is why God rhetorically asks Adam exactly who decided he and Eve were naked (Gen. 3:11).

The "option" of serving our purposes instead of God's has truly bruised our heel and plagued us in the years since. It is following our desires over God's that leads us to sin:

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. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. (Jas. 1:13-15).

First and foremost in our lives has to be our love and service to God rather than our desires. When asked by the lawyer what God really wants from us in Matthew 22:37-28:

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

Of course, we know Jesus served as a living example of this. Even when great physical pain was awaiting Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane Jesus ultimately wanted God's will done (Mat. 26:39). Across all dispensations and regardless of any enumerated list of laws, our duty is to serve God and God's purposes. Is that our mindset?

Many of our greatest struggles and doubts in life come from when we are in situations that we often don't think we "deserve." We hear it around us, and we may be guilty of it too; people questioning God and His grand design, because we decide it's not fair, it's not what we want, and it's not what we deserve. This, and exactly this, is the Fall of Man. Having defined the evil leading to this fall as *not* serving God's pur-

poses, good is still defined as what serves God's purposes. What this means for us is something that we are reluctant to accept at times: God designed something for us and decided that it was good; it suited His purpose.

Ultimately, this means many situations and hardships we endure serve a purpose for God. We bring many hardships on ourselves as a result of our own poor decisions and actions (Jas. 1:13-15), but there are also situations out of our control that we just don't understand. We have personal struggles with health, family, finances, work, or loss, and we see the similar struggles of those close to us. However, just as God separated day and night and saw it good, God put us in certain situations and saw that it was good; it suited His purpose and it is not ours to doubt. God had us be born to this family, and God saw that it was good. God gave us this health condition, and God saw that it was good. These situations suited God's purpose, and our purpose is to live for His. If we attempt to elevate ourselves to "be as gods" and decide right/wrong for ourselves, we will undoubtedly fall and be evicted from the garden. No matter what we think we deserve, we must serve God in all circumstances and situations in which He has given us. Why? Because God saw that it was good.

BEN

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month's questions?

1. Who is the first mother mentioned in the Bible? EVE (Gen. 4:1)
2. For how many days and nights did it rain in the story of the flood? FORTY (Gen. 7:12)
3. Which book of the Bible records many of the hymns David wrote? PSALMS (Psa. 1:1-150:6)
4. Where did Jesus meet the woman of Samaria?
BY A WELL (John 4:6-7)
5. On what day did the apostles receive the Holy Spirit?
DAY OF PENTECOST (Acts 2:1-4)

PASS IT ON

During Jesus' ministry, he sent out seventy disciples to prepare the way for Him.

After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come. Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest. (Luke 10:1-2)

The potential harvest indeed is great for those who would obey the gospel. But there are few laborers to bring them in.

Of all His disciples, He then chose twelve.

And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor. (Luke 6:13-16)

These twelve, Jesus named as apostles. The word *apostle* means "sent". To these eleven (less Judas), He gave the great commission and sent them to the world.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Mat. 28:18-20)

During His ministry, Jesus concentrated on the twelve apostles and taught them the things he wanted them to learn and teach the world. However, there were times when He went with just Peter, James, and John. These three went with Him upon the mountain of transfiguration (Mat. 17:1), when He

healed the synagogue ruler's daughter (Luke 8:51), and when He was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). It appears that He concentrated His special training upon these three.

Jesus taught His message to a select few men who were then instructed to pass the message on to others. The apostle Paul used this same method in spreading the gospel. We know he trained Timothy and Titus; we have Paul's instruction to these two in his letters to them that we call the Bible books of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus. Perhaps there were others that Paul trained. He wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*" This seems to be the example for us - to train a few who in turn will be able to train others. I encourage you to find those in your life whom you can train who will pass the word on to those who follow them.

The family is one good place to put this plan to work. "*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:4). Some parents take the position that they don't want to pass their faith on to their children, but they want their children to develop their own faith; I think this is a foolish path for parents to take. It is contrary to what the scriptures teach. The fathers are given the responsibility to bring up their children in the training and admonition of the Lord. Mothers are also very instrumental in the spiritual training of the children. In my personal situation, I had godly parents who trained me. But my grandmother was especially instrumental in my early spiritual training. There was a time in my childhood where I had a special time every day with my grandmother for spiritual training. Hopefully my story can serve as an encouragement to you as a parent or grandparent to guide your children in the training and admonition of the Lord. In time, your children can pass the word on to their children or others that they know.

GOSPEL MEETINGS

| DATES | PLACE | SPEAKER |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| September 30 - October 4 | Rich Hill Liberty, KY Note: Masks are recommended. | Timothy Lewis, Thaddeus Eubank, James McDonald, Jerry Burton, & TBA |

Gospel Meeting information may be subject to change. Please check the website calendar for the latest updates.

The local church should provide training for those who in time will pass it on to others. Some congregations have one man who does the majority of the speaking and serving. I believe it is God's plan that multiple men participate in the edification of the church. *"For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted"* (1 Cor. 14:31). In our congregation, we had an elder who made it his mission to train the youth of the congregation. The boys received training in public speaking, music and song leading. As a result of those efforts of the past, today we have a good group of men who provide excellent edification of the congregation through public speaking and song. These, in turn, now provide training to the youth of the congregation.

You can also share the gospel with a friend or acquaintance. When the early church faced persecution, they scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. *"Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4). There are likely many of your neighbors who do not know the word. You can share with them and when they are converted, they can share with others what they know.

The laborers in God's vineyard are few. My encouragement to you is to find opportunities to pass your faith and spiritual knowledge on to others. Instruct faithful individuals who will be able to teach others also.

ED ANDERSON
Sierra Vista, AZ