

## Chapter Four

# In the Beginning

Sin is a vastly misunderstood subject. If we should ask a hundred people at random what sin is and what it does, we would get a hodgepodge of answers. Most of the answers would probably revolve around the idea that sin describes everything I like to do, and everything I like to do turns out to be illegal, immoral, or fattening. Many have the idea God is "that old killjoy" who makes me feel guilty any time I'm having fun. Nothing could be further from the truth. God *loves us* and *hates* sin because it hurts us.

### Who Started It?

To gain initial perspective on the problems sin has imposed on the race, we need to see how it all began and where it led. Wouldn't it be interesting to hear from the original problem pair on the subject? Their explanation of the matter might be something like this:

I AM EVE

(A short, short story with a long ending.)

"I am Eve. And I'd like to explain what happened .

"We were really very happy, Adam and I. He was a wonderful man--my man, with a grace and glow about him that called forth the love and devotion of my heart. And Eden was something else! Everything anyone could want, we thought, including God himself, who filled our lives with his presence and gave us everything we needed to make life full and happy.

"But then something happened...

"One of God's most beautiful creatures (I found later it was a disguise; he is really very ugly) came to me with a suggestion. He said, 'Is it true that God told you not to eat from every tree in the garden?'

"You know, until he brought it up I never thought much about it, but now I saw that God was really holding out on us! There was this *one* tree in the middle of the garden from which God had said we were not to eat.

"So I replied, 'You're right, there's that one tree whose fruit God told us not to eat, or even to touch. He said we would die if we ate it.'

"'But you won't die,' he said. 'God knows when you eat it you'll learn something and you'll be like God.'

"Now that made sense. I'd already noticed that the fruit looked good to eat. It was beautiful to see. I could almost taste it. Such luscious beauty was bound to taste great. And besides, didn't God want us to discover and explore the garden? After all, it was our domain!

"So I tasted it! I even shared it with my husband; I shared everything with him because God had made us one.

"But then I had some second thoughts because suddenly I felt insecure and naked. And Adam had somehow faded. He had lost that glow of manhood I loved so much.

"So we went and hid--and I learned to sew fig leaves.

"We learned something all right--at least the shining beast spoke the truth about that. But what we learned we could have done without! That beautiful, deceitful creature did us no favor. Before, we were perfectly at ease with each other and with God. We had nothing to feel ashamed about,

*In the Beginning* no insecurity. Now we were haunted with that vague uneasiness we both hate.

"But why should we be uncomfortable before God? He's the one who loved us and made the garden so great for us to live in!

"Want to know how I got out of line?"

"Well, I hate to admit it, but I'm an emotional creature, and I just indulged in a bit of emotional rationalization. I knew God had said, 'Don't eat of that fruit,' but I let my own senses convince me that I knew better than God, and of course, I had some help from that lying, insinuating beast!

"Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with being emotional. After all, God made me that way. But to make judgments *against* what God says is more than a simple emotional hang-up--it's spiritual suicide.

"And you know what? I never once checked with Adam. I just assumed he would do what I wanted and caught him in the same web of deceit.

"What have I learned?"

"Well, first, God wasn't fooling--we died! He means what he says and has the sovereign right to make it stick. And I guess, since he made us, he has a right to make the rules.

"Oh, in case you wondered, we didn't die physically that day, but we sure found out we were uncomfortable about God, both emotionally and spiritually. We sensed our separation from him. We died that way. We began to feel out of step, frustrated, and exposed. More than that, we began to inherit aches and pains in bodies that were now exposed to all sorts of ills. We knew evil all right--in bodies that began to die, and in souls and spirits that *were* dead, cut off from the life of God!

"What else did I learn? We became the slaves of the one we obeyed--that lying beast! And we were sent out of that perfect place, our home, to taste the futility of messed-up lives in a mixed-up world.

"I was fooled. And what a fool I was!"

I AM ADAM...

"I am Adam, and I'd like to add a word here.

"It wasn't really Eve's fault. Eve was fooled, but I wasn't. I just stood there and let her get taken. Why did I do it? I was just plain willful! God had explained about the tree, but I just flat-out rebelled! And talk about a fool--I knew the score and *still* fell for that lying insinuation, because I *wanted* to.

"It wasn't enough to have 'all this and heaven, too.' I had to defy authority. So I'm the one to blame for the fix we're in. You can lay it on me for all the blood, sweat, and tears. I messed it up. I introduced all the evil--the hatred and inequity and pollution--the nature of sin in the race. Before, we only knew good and knew nothing of evil. Now we've got the whole bag, and who needs it?"

"By the way, in case you think it's big of me to admit it; it wasn't always that way. When God first asked me about it, I blamed him! I said, 'This woman you *gave me*, gave me the fruit.' And Eve said, 'The beast beguiled me.' This was the original buck-passing act.

"I'm telling you this so you can be more of a man than I was. At least, don't blame your wife. *And don't*

*blame God!*

"Can you imagine? God came looking for me! I clearly remember him saying, 'Where are you, Adam?'

"Not that he didn't know where I was, but he wanted *me* to find out where I was--with him.

"Know what I found?

*"He still loved me!"*

### **But God, Who Is Great in Mercy**

God showed his love to Adam and Eve, even while he was declaring what the consequences of their sin would be. (Sin *always* has consequences, as we will see in some detail in the next chapter.) God gave them hope, as they cowered ashamedly before him, telling them of the "seed of the woman," who would bruise the serpent's head. He was referring to the coming Savior who would defeat the adversary, Satan.

When God had finished questioning the guilty pair (not accusing them), he made garments for them out of skins to replace their self-made coverings. The skin clothing provided by God pictures the righteousness God supplies through the shedding of blood, given to take the place of man's self righteous attempts at cover-up.

### **The Long Ending**

The rest of the story is the subject of the whole biblical record and is summarized in passages like this one from Romans 8:

This, then, is what has happened. Sin made its entry into the world through one man, and through sin, death. The entail of sin and death passed on to the whole human race, and no one could break it for no one was himself free from sin....

Adam, the first man, corresponds in some degree to the man who was to come. But the gift of God through Christ is a very different matter from the "account rendered" through the sin of Adam. For while as a result of one man's sin death by natural consequence became the common lot of men, it was by the generosity of God, the free giving of the grace of the one man Jesus Christ, that the love of God overflowed for the benefit of all men...

For if one man's offense meant that men should be slaves to death all their lives, it is a far greater thing that through another man, Jesus Christ, men by their acceptance of his more than sufficient grace and righteousness should live all their lives like kings!

We see, then, that as one act of sin exposed the whole race of men to God's judgment and condemnation, so one act of perfect righteousness presents all men freely acquitted in the sight of God. (Commentary on man's fall from Romans 5:12-19 by the Apostle Paul, Phillips New Testament.)

This description of the antidote to sin's problems provided in Jesus Christ, when added to the verses just before these in Romans 5, tells the wonderful story of God's remedy for sin's devastation in the redemptive grace of the Lord Jesus:

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man-- though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we are now justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to

God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Romans 5:1-2, 6-10).

We are *reconciled* (restored to harmony again) to God by Christ's *death* --and *saved* (rescued from present and future futility) by his *resurrection life!* That's what God has done about sin! We are *restored* in our relationship to God as we receive Christ and the value of his death and *rehabilitated* as we keep drawing by faith on his indwelling life! This is a program secular counselors cannot offer, for they neither understand it nor believe it. Only a Christian counselor can offer these redemptive values to a world in trouble.

It is possible to list the redemptive answer to every human problem, and the verses of Scripture which explain it, if we will just do our homework and seek to know the Word of God. This is the Christian counselor's task. In order to make a beginning on what is really a lifetime pursuit, we endeavored to do this in regard to some of the basic problems we frequently encounter, like fear, guilt, anxiety, and so on. Several listings, with applicable Scriptures, were prepared by one of our adult elective classes on counseling and are included in the [Appendix A](#)

# See Appendix A, "Spiritual Principles of Counseling," and Appendix B, sins and Solutions," two excellent analyses of some of the counseling problems we encounter, with their biblical solutions, by Paul Leavenworth and Charlotte Mersereau, two keen students in one of our counselor training classes.

Now, for additional perspective about sin, let's examine the meaning of the words for sin in biblical Greek and Hebrew. In this way we can regain some of the original sense God intends for us to understand in his Word about sin, the problems it creates, and God's means for solving those problems.

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