



JOURNEY BASICS: THE FALL OF MAN

WHAT DOES PLUM CREEK BELIEVE ABOUT THE FALL OF MAN?

Man was created in the image of God (Gen. 2:26). However, by a voluntary act of the will, Adam and Eve disobeyed God (Gen. 3:6). That first sin had several repercussions. Man was excommunicated from the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:23), a curse was pronounced (Gen. 3:14-19), the process of physical death began (Gen. 2:17), and man died spiritually (Rom. 5:12-19). Sin separated humankind from God (Eph. 2:11-18) and left man in a fallen or sinful condition (Rom. 3:23).

-From PCCC Statement of Faith

DEFEATER BELIEF

“Humanity is a mere accident. We crept out of the goo. My life has no purpose.”

Read and reflect on the following brief response:

‘God uniquely created man and woman in His image and likeness that they might enjoy fellowship with Him. When He had finished creating all things He declared that everything He had made was good! In fact, it is not until the creation of humanity that God declares his handiwork very good.’

Have you heard something similar to this response before? Do you believe it?

“People are generally good. There is some good in people...if we could just improve upon it!”

Read and reflect on the following brief response:

‘Tempted by Satan, the first man and woman disobeyed their Creator, falling from a state of innocence into sin. Their sin brought upon mankind the complete loss of communion with God, incurring His wrath and curse. Subsequently, the nature of all humanity has been hopelessly and thoroughly corrupted by the contagion of sin: we are dead in our transgressions.’

- Are you challenged by the above exchange? There are basically two views of humanity: the world’s view and God’s view.

The Bible is clear about the subject of human nature and sin. Sin is a subject about which we already know more than we would like. When is the last time you heard a sermon on sin? The scarcity of discussion is telling.

St. Augustine describes sin as that which we both love and loathe, that which gratifies for the moment yet leaves us empty and defiled.

It destroys our relationship with the God of life, with ourselves, and with one another. Think about it, sin is the subject of nearly all of human artistic expression. Describe the story line of the last TV show or movie you remember watching... How are we to answer these questions:

Journal: Is man inherently good? Is man born with the capacity to choose good or evil? How am I guilty for another’s choice? Does God hold me accountable for someone else’s sin? Did we lose the Creator’s entire image in us at the Fall? What’s the point anyway? What’s at stake?

What’s at Stake?

“The importance of the doctrine of original sin cannot be overstated. Doctrinally speaking, this subject has split the church in two for centuries. It is the starting point for one’s view of salvation. How one views the condition of humanity will affect how they view the necessity of the grace of God. A denial of the corruption brought by original sin would, in effect, deny the inherent need for man’s redemption. On the other hand, a denial of man’s responsibility before God would, in effect, deny the justice in condemning a person since they would be blamed for something they did not actually do.”

- Rhone Dyck & Michael Patton

The stakes are high. Our understanding of the biblical doctrine of sin affects: the depth to which we believe we need a Savior, how salvation is accomplished, and how truly dependent we are on the grace of God.

Journal: Explain how our understanding of the effects of original sin might affect the depth to which we believe we need a Savior? Reflect on your current view of original sin. How does it affect how much you believe you need and how much you depend on a Savior?

Is the story in the Garden to be taken literally?

Read Genesis 1-3.

Now that you have reacquainted yourself with the biblical account of creation and humanities fall, ask yourself this question: How literal is that account?

We can argue over creation theories, whether the earth was created in 7, 24-hour periods, or we can hold to an “old-age” theory. The literal point being made by the author is that God literally created the world and everything in it. Likewise, God literally created man and woman. They were real people who really chose to go against God’s plan for blessing them. We hold then that Genesis chapters 1 - 3 establishes the religio-philosophic categories that give meaning to the rest of the Christian faith, particularly in the assertions that an infinite, personal God created a perfect world and a sinless human couple, who then rebelled against him bringing catastrophic consequences to all earthly creation. To negate the historicity of these chapters is to destroy the greater framework in which salvation through Jesus Christ has significance and all the rest of biblical revelation makes sense.

Let’s start first from the beginning, before the image of man was distorted and his heart thoroughly corrupted. In the Old Testament Genesis 3:20 identify Adam and Eve as the true historical parents of “all the living”. In the New Testament, Adam is mentioned 8 times and Eve 2 times as real persons.

Journal: You’ll find the Biblical evidence by familiarizing yourself with the following scriptures: Matthew 19:4-5, Mark 10:6-7, Luke 3:38, 1 Corinthians 11:7-9; 15:21-22,45-49, 2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:13-14, and Jude 14. Take a minute and read two of them.

Why did God create us anyway?

Was God lacking something? Did he have some need to fill? Did he create us because he was lonely? The Bible asserts that God existed before the things that he created.

Read Psalm 90:2.

Yet before God created anything, he was completely self-sufficient in Himself (this known as the doctrine of ASEITY). First, because God is Three Persons in relationship, it seems there is infinite fullness, satisfaction, and joy in God. Different from the Jehovah of Jehovah Witnesses, different from the One-Person MODALISM (the errant belief that the ONE God appears to us in three different forms or “Modes”) of “Jesus Only” Pentecostalism, different from the Allah of Islam, different from modern Judaism, the God of the Bible exists as eternally, completely personal, indeed Tri-personal as learned in our first Journey Basics class. Everything that pertains to the completeness of personhood (although we surely have our limits of understanding!) is already present in God before any creation. Therefore, we confess that God is utterly self-sufficient.

Trinity and Creation. It stands to reason then that God does not create angels or the heavens or the earth out of need, out of loneliness, or some lapse in the Divine satisfaction. The universe and everything ever created is created, not because of necessity, but by GRACE (grace is the unconditional love of God freely given to one who does not deserve it). The universe, this earth, this time in history, you and I—all of created existence is the expression of God’s grace, the overflow of the infinite generosity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Read John 17:5, 24. God has always ENJOYED perfect love and FELLOWSHIP within Himself. Let’s read Acts 17:24-25. Here we see that God doesn’t NEED ANYTHING from mankind. Now read Job 41:11. No one CONTRIBUTES ANYTHING to God.

God created us to worship Him. That simply means that God created us to value, esteem, treasure, love, and pursue Him above anything else in this life. He can demand that because there is nothing greater that deserves to be valued, esteemed, treasured, loved or pursued more than Him. He expects us to value what is supremely valuable and love most what is most lovely. This brings Him honor, but it also will bring us happiness. We cannot have full and satisfied lives when we give our hearts to infinitely smaller “gods.” It is for His own glory and our joy that God calls for our worship and allegiance. Read Exodus 20:3. We exist to EXCLUSIVELY WORSHIP the one true God. Next, read 1 Corinthians 8:6. We exist FOR God. Now, read Matthew 22:37. We are to have TOTAL ALLEGIANCE to God. Finally, God created us for His own glory!

Man’s chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever. -The Westminster Catechism (1648)

Read Romans 11:36.

Journal: Reflect upon and honestly answer this question: are you glorifying God in ALL areas of your life? If not, in what area are you not? Since we were created to do this, why is the expression of glorifying God being hindered in this aspect of your life?

What does it mean to be created in the Image of God (the IMAGO DEI)?

The Belgic Confession (1561) confesses that we 'believe that God created man out of the dust of the earth and made and formed him after His own image and likeness, good, righteous, and holy'.

Being made in the image of God is usually understood to point to the sense in which we are like God. Though He is the Creator and we are creatures, and though God transcends us in being, power, and glory, nevertheless there is some analogy between God and us. God is an intelligent and moral being. We are also moral agents equipped with a mind, a heart, and a will. These faculties make it possible for us to mirror God's holiness, which was our original vocation (Sproul).

Journal: In what ways do you see unbelievers reflect the image of God more than believers?

In some sense, every human being is created to be a person reflective of God as personal—whether the AIDS orphan in Botswana, the rice-paddy worker in China, or the Muslim woman with her head covered beside you at the supermarket. We think, we communicate, we choose, we create, we exercise dominion, we have some knowledge of right and wrong, we have emotions.

Different from all atheism and all PANTHEISM (the idea that the whole universe is god or part of God), our Christian understanding of what is human is directly related to God himself. Just as God the Father says "I am," and God the Son says "I am," and as the Spirit manifests all that is personal, each individual human being has self-consciousness. We too say "I am." And we fit in the universe because the Creator himself is infinitely personal.

Read Genesis 1:26, Ecclesiastes 7:29, and Ephesians 4:24. From these passages of scripture we affirm the following truths. We are:

- Created to be reflective of a personal God
- Created to be in community
- Created to be indwelt by God
- Created to enjoy fellowship with God
- Created with purpose

Journal: Do you really believe that all people have dignity as image bearers of God? What often makes you question whether this is true?

What went wrong?

"What a long way between knowing God and loving Him."

- Blaise Pascal

Adam and Eve knew God. Adam talked with God; walked with Him. The man and the woman had been created to enjoy perfect communion with Him in the garden. Yet they did not obey Him. The first man and woman freely chose to disobey God thus frustrating the world and, subsequently, humanity's relationship with their Creator. Let's reacquaint ourselves with what exactly happened:

The Prohibition. Read Genesis 2:5-9. Yahweh God formed mankind from the earth's dust, to be a living being to inhabit the earth that He furnished with every kind of tree pleasing to the eye and good for food, among them the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Read Genesis 2:15-17. The covenantal God placed mankind in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and keep it, commanding him to eat the fruit of the trees freely, but promising death if he should eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge.

The Violation. Read Genesis 3:1b. The serpent posed to the woman a question of God's goodness in restricting the food He allowed mankind to eat. Continue reading Genesis 3:2-3. The woman failed to recognize the essential goodness of God

and rationality of His commandment, thinking only of His bare permission, His mere gift, His unreasoning commandment, His stinginess, and His threat, leaving herself open and vulnerable. Read Genesis 3:4-5. The serpent openly denied God's word, claiming that He withheld from mankind the chief means of their development, the fruit of the tree of knowledge, so that they might become like God. Finishing reading Genesis 3:6. The woman, now believing the serpent's word and not God's, ate the fruit to achieve godlikeness, giving some to the man.

CAUTION: Let's not be too hard on Eve! Read Genesis 3:6-7 again. Adam may have been there as well.

Though Paul writes that 'Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor' (1 Tim 2:14), we can rightly appropriate the first deception to Eve, but we must hold humanity (man in his passivity and woman in her deception) responsible for transgressing God's plan. And, true to God's created order, the man is ultimately responsible. 'Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men' (Romans 5:12) as the penalty for humanity's rebellion.

The Penalty. Mankind experienced guilt, becoming conscious of their vulnerability to each other, trying to hide from each other with fig leaves (Gen. 3:7). Mankind lost fellowship with God, "hiding themselves" from him (Gen 3:8). The first sin brought death upon all humanity- both physical and spiritual (Eph 2:3; Romans 5:12).

Corruption Inherited. Read the following statement and seriously consider whether you agree or disagree with it: Man is inherently corrupt. The fall brought condemnation and guilt upon all men. As well, the disposition of the will is totally corrupted and inclined toward evil. Man has free will, but that will is governed by his sinful nature. Man sins, therefore, because he is a sinner. The historic confessions of the Christian faith articulate this well. From the Westminster Catechism: 'From the original corruption (Adam's sin), whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.' Let's look at what scripture says. Read Romans 5:15-19. We have inherited the penalty of sin from our first parents. Read Psalm 51:5, (see also, Jeremiah 17:9, John 3:3, Ephesians 2:1-3, and Romans 5:19). Our corrupt nature is also inherited, in that all people are sinners from birth. Read Romans 3:23.

Journal: Consider this question: If the disposition of the human will is unaffected by original sin, and if there is equal opportunity to choose good as well as evil, why is it that all people have sinned?

The Bible clearly supports the idea that we have all inherited Adam's guilt and are condemned before we ever commit a personal sin.

Read Romans 5:12-18.

The corrupt, sinful nature of all humanity then is the great equalizer. We are all sinners. We all need a Savior. In Adam, humanity is united in sin. In Christ, humanity is united in life!

Image Distorted. What happened to the image of God in man? Did we fully retain the image and now only misrepresent it through personal sin? Or, did we fully lose the image where it is only restored in Christ? Did we retain the image though it is marred by sin, only to be fully restored in Christ? Let's read Genesis 9:6. Scripture clearly answers that the image of God in man has been retained to some degree in all people! Why is it significant that humanity didn't completely lose the identity of their creator when they rebelled against him?

Where do we see the separations caused by the Fall?

D. J. Clines comments, "From Eden to Babel ... there is an ever growing 'avalanche' of sin ... a movement from disobedience to murder, to reckless killing, to titanic lust, to total corruption and violence, to the full disruption of humanity".

One notes that the punishment for sin increases, most powerfully with the flood ("a step back in creation") but with Babel as well. Thus the human predicament is fully placed at the feet of human rebellion against God.

Read Genesis 3:8-11 see if you can find the following separations, which occur due to the Fall.

Journal specific examples for each separation below of how you or someone else may have experienced this:

- Man Is Separated from God.
- Man Is Separated from Himself.
- Man Is Separated from Fellow Man.
- Man Is Separated from Nature.

- Nature Is Separated from Nature.

In quite a real way, because of sin at the beginning of the human race, the great project of the human race has been- in its own strength- to remedy the staggering consequences of the Fall. In fact, the great portion of all human energy in nearly every discipline and science has in some sense sought to heal these separations. But the story doesn't end here... God in His mercy did not leave humanity condemned to eternal punishment; He provides a way out for his people. Our sin would not be the end of God's image bearers. At the cross then, God provided and guaranteed the solution to each of the above divisions of the Fall in Genesis 3 which we will study more deeply in Journey Basics: the Gospel of our Salvation.

Bury the following truth in your heart and thank God for his rich mercy:

'And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.' (Ephesians 3:1-10)

THE BIG IDEAS

- God created man in His image not out of necessity, but out of the overflow of his grace.
- Due to the sin of the first parents', humanity is inherently corrupted by sin. Our human will is totally corrupted and inclined toward evil. (Known as the Doctrine of Total Depravity)
- The effects of the fall are far reaching. For man, he no longer enjoys fellowship with his Creator subsequently he experiences physical and spiritual death.

Special Terms

- Aseity** A term used for the attribute of God's independence or self-existence.
- Modalism** The errant belief that the ONE God appears to us in three forms or 'modes'.
- Pantheism** The idea that the whole universe is actually God or part of God.
- Imago Dei** A Latin phrase meaning "Image of God"

Additional Study

- Further Study:** Systematic Theology, Wayne Grudem; Essential Truths of the Christian Faith, RC Sproul.
- Advanced Study:** The Bondage of the Will, Martin Luther; Christian Theology, Alister McGrath; Reformed Confessions Harmonized, J. Beeke & S. Ferguson

Sources: Trinity and Missio Dei, Dr. Horrell, Dallas Theological Seminary; Bible Doctrine Survey, BTCP; The Ryrie Study Bible; Essentials, R.C. Sproul; Survey of Bible Doctrine: God, Biblical Studies Press; Systematic Theology, W. Grudem; Who Needs Theology, Grenz & Olson; Reformed Confessions Harmonized, J Beeke & S Ferguseon.

JOURNEY BASICS: THE FALL OF MAN

What went wrong?

1. God created Adam and Eve- our first parents- in His _____.
2. The first parents were _____ and _____
_____ against their Creator.

How are we personally affected by our first parents' sin?

- a. We experience _____, both _____ and _____.
- b. From birth, our _____ is _____ and _____.

What is sin?

1. Sin is the _____ of God's _____.
2. The essence of sin is a _____ with God by _____ His good and perfect plan.
 - a. Our rejection may be _____ or _____.
 - b. Ultimately we don't _____ Him.
 - c. Ultimately our _____ is in anything but Him.

**Example of 10 Commandments*