

# Beginning of Sin and Redemption

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**T**HERE was a time when the man who dared say openly that he did not believe the whole Bible was called an infidel; in these days it is a rare thing to find a minister of the Gospel who dares say that he believes the Bible account of the creation and the fall of man.

Even the most “orthodox,” men who vigorously combat the “higher criticism,” do not hesitate to declare the Mosaic record “a beautiful allegory.” So far have those who are set to be leaders in the church departed from the old paths, that if a man professes to believe even a little of the Bible he is not classed among the infidels.

But a man does not have to tell falsehoods continually in order to be a liar; if he occasionally lies, so that you are not always sure whether he is telling the truth or not, he cannot be considered a truthful man.

In like manner, if certain portions of the Bible are untrustworthy, it could no more stand as “the Scriptures of truth.” Therefore whoever impeaches any of its testimony brings a charge against the whole of it; and he who disbelieves a portion of it is most certainly an infidel, no matter what his profession.

## **The Beginning of the Word is True**

The first three chapters of *Genesis* are the basis upon which the entire Bible is built. With that portion torn away, there would be no foundation for the Gospel,—no proof that the Gospel is needed, no evidence of its power to save. If the first chapters of *Genesis* were an allegory, all the rest of the Bible would be only a myth.

All the Scripture writers accepted the first part of the Bible as the literal Word of God. Their references to it show this. The Apostle Paul speaks thus of the event which forms our lesson this week:

### **2 Corinthians 11**

<sup>3</sup> I fear lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity which is in Christ.

The Gospel which Paul preached was based upon the story of the fall and the redemption then made known; therefore that account is as true the writings of the Apostle Paul.

### **Psalm 119**

<sup>160</sup> Your Word is true from the beginning.

An exact word-for-word rendering of the Hebrew of that verse, however, is this:

“The beginning of your Word is truth.”

Thus the Holy Spirit has anticipated the attacks that have been made on the beginning of the Bible, and has linked all together. Of some things it is said,

“It all stands or falls together.”

But of the Bible we say,

“It all stands together.”

For:

### **2 Timothy 2**

<sup>19</sup> ...the foundation of God stands sure.

### **Psalm 119**

<sup>160</sup> Every one of your righteous judgments endures for ever.

## The Subtlety of Satan

### Genesis 3

<sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast in the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Yea, has God said, You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

The extreme subtlety of “that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan” is not in this text made as apparent by our version as it might be. The words of the serpent contain a sneer, a covert insinuation against the justice of God, which was made all the more effective in that the thought that God had dealt arbitrarily was suggested to Eve by a question which feigned a doubt that it was possible that He had done so monstrous a thing. It is difficult to translate into English all that, is conveyed by the Hebrew word here rendered “Yes.” It is a sniff of scorn or incredulity.

Gesenius, in his *Hebrew Lexicon*, cites this very verse, in illustrating the meaning of the word, and renders the passage thus:

“Is it even so, that God has said, You shall not eat?” etc.

Read this with that forcible breathing through the nose,—humph,—which indicates surprise, incredulity, or contempt, or all combined, and you will see how subtly doubt of God was insinuated into the mind of Eve.

## Lifted Up

### Habakkuk 2

<sup>4</sup> Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.

The beginning of sin was the lifting up of self. Before the foundation of the world, Lucifer, the light-bearer in heaven, who, because of his pride, fell so low as to become only a crawling serpent, said in his heart:

### Isaiah 14

<sup>13</sup> I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit upon the mount of the congregation, in the

sides of the north [literally, “the uttermost north”]; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.

Now it is perfectly right to be like the Lord, if one sets about it in the right way; for He says,

**1 Peter 1**

<sup>16</sup> Be you holy, for I am holy.

And Christ says,

**Matthew 5**

<sup>48</sup> Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

But perfection is not found in self-exaltation. Although God dwells in “the high and holy place”, and is himself “the lofty One”, He dwells “with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.” *Isaiah 57:15.*

Christ, who is the revelation of God, says:

**Matthew 11**

<sup>29</sup> I am meek and lowly in heart.

It is evident, therefore, that whoever thinks to become like God by lifting himself up, deceives himself, and is drawing himself away from God.

**Micah 6** [margin]

<sup>8</sup> He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, love mercy, and to humble yourself to walk with God?

**Isaiah 2**

<sup>12</sup> The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low.

It was by instilling his spirit—the same spirit that caused his fall from heaven—into man, that Satan compassed his fall. When Eve, in reply to the serpent’s insinuation, repeated the prohibition

against eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and the penalty for disobedience, the Deceiver said:

**Genesis 3 [RV]**

<sup>4</sup> You shall not surely die;

<sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as God, knowing good and evil.

It was not with an indefinite promise of being “like gods,” that the serpent seduced Eve, but with the assurance that she should be like God himself. Alas! her ambition was not to be like Him in goodness, but to equal Him in knowledge and power; and this is impossible.

**The Spirit that Now Works**

The same spirit works in the children of disobedience today. Satan still makes thousands believe that God is unkind, and arbitrary, sitting in solitary grandeur, unmindful of the needs of man. The spirit that caused the fail of Eve is in the words so often uttered,

“If God is just and all-powerful, why does He not put an end to all the misery on the earth?”

Or in these words,

“God doesn’t care anything about me.”

And so, in their impatient and unbelieving pride, they set about righting things themselves, and succeed only in making everything worse.

In the lie that the serpent uttered there was the germ of all wickedness and every form of unbelief. In accepting it, Eve turned away from God, repudiating Him utterly. Casting off all allegiance to Him, she put herself in His place. For the lie which she believed was to the intent that she was already equal to God, and needed only to assert her right, and take of the prohibited fruit, to assume her real position.

Heathenism in all its forms was in that falsehood, and there is not a phase of error that cannot be traced to it. The fall was complete, and but for the mercy of God there never again would have been in the heart of man the slightest desire for God and His goodness.

## **What the Woman Saw**

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>6</sup> 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.

But she saw what was not so. She saw through the glass that the serpent held before her eyes. The fruit of that forbidden tree was not good for food. Its...

“...mortal taste  
Brought death into our world, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden.”

- Milton, *Paradise Lost*

But the same deception that made Eve “see” that the fruit of the tree was good for food still blinds the judgment of men. Although God...

### **1 Timothy 6**

<sup>16</sup> ...gives us richly all things to enjoy...

-showing no partiality, but giving...

### **Acts 17**

<sup>25</sup> ...to all life, and breath, and all things,

–men count it all as nothing, compared with something that is forbidden on account of its harmful nature. A table may be loaded with the bounties of the earth, yet a tea-toper will consider that she has nothing if there is no tea; or the one who eats to tickle his palate will complain of “starvation diet” if his particular dainty is not present. To many the world is all out of joint unless they have

had their dram, or their pipe; their whole happiness depends upon something which makes slaves of them, and gives them only wretchedness.

### **A Too Hasty Decision**

One thing that people ever since the days of Eve have overlooked is that one can never get the complete taste of anything the moment it is placed in one's mouth. The Bible tells of things that are sweet in the mouth and bitter in the belly.

A person takes a cup of tea or a glass of spirits, and fancies that it is exceedingly pleasant to the taste, and to be desired to make one wise. Some hours afterwards that same person has a headache, and wonders what is the cause, not knowing that the headache is part of the taste of the drink.

One partakes of rich viands, and thinks that he has had a delicious dinner. Later on he is terribly sick, and suffering from gripping pains; he does not know that all that is part of the taste of big dinner.

If all the effects of the things that are so pleasing to the perverted appetite, but which lay a heavy tax on the system, were concentrated into the moment of putting the things into the mouth, so that the eater could not fail to recognize the connection, there would be very little intemperance in eating and drinking. But

#### **Ecclesiastes 8**

<sup>11</sup> Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

There are thousands of people suffering from cancer, consumption, gout, and many other common diseases, which are yearly becoming more common, who will never know until the Judgment day that their diseases were simply the "mortal taste" of their delicate meat.

Yet they might know. God has given the warning; let all who know the danger labour by word and example to sound the warning to others.

### **The Things that Enslave Men**

Another thing that should be understood is that what is wrong always enslaves its devotees, and what is good always leaves a man free. No person ever becomes a slave to anything that is really good to eat or drink.

For example: A person who is accustomed to drinking tea or spirits, or to using tobacco in any form, is utterly lost and in a maze without it. Such ones become nervous and even very irritable, and sometimes are unable to go on with any work that is in hand, if they are deprived of their favorite beverage or weed beyond the usual time.

How many there are who admit that they are “good for nothing” in the morning until they have had their accustomed stimulant, ranging from coffee to whiskey. The writer has heard dozens of people say that they “couldn’t live without eating meat!” Their food and drink was their master, not their servant.

Now it is not so with the man who lives of the simple, yet delicious and nourishing food that the Creator gave to man in Eden. It is good for a man to have regular hours for big meals. But if a truly healthful liver is compelled to delay a meal for some hours, or is deprived of it altogether, or when he gets it does not find the food that he expected, but some other equally good, he is not discommoded in the least. One thing, provided it is really good, suits him just as well as another. He is never the slave of any article of food or drink, so that he cannot eat if he does not have it.

But everybody knows, most of us from experience, that this *is* the case with all who eat to gratify their appetite, rather than simply to live.

### **The Life is More than Meat**

People often say,



“One might as well not live at all, as to deprive oneself of all the good things of life.”

That is what Eve thought. What was the use of living, if she could not have the forbidden fruit? There are not many of us that can throw stones at our common mother. But those same persons are often heard saying,

“What is the use of living in this misery?”

And too often they put a summary end to their lives.

“Is not the life more than meat?”

Would it not be far better to deny the appetite, and even to eat food not quite so pleasing to the palate, and always be full of life and vigor, able to enjoy everything to the full, than to have pleasure at the table, and misery everywhere else? But this is an extreme statement of the case.

The fact is that the man who is content with the things that God gave to man in Eden, as his bill of fare, gets more positive enjoyment out of the hours that he spends at the table than anybody else in the world possibly can. He alone knows the meaning of the word “delicious.” Every morsel of food is a delight to him, for he alone has the “good things” of life. As he eats he thanks God, “who daily loads us with benefits” (*Psalms* 68:19). And not by any means the least of the enjoyments of the clean table is the knowledge that there will be no bad taste afterwards.

## What They Learned

### Genesis 3

<sup>7</sup> And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.

It is most significant that the words “subtle” and “naked” are only two forms of the same word in the Hebrew. “Subtlety” is not at all a bad thing, if obtained from the right source. The *Proverbs* of Solomon are

## **Proverbs 1**

<sup>4</sup> ...to give subtlety to the simple; to the young man knowledge and discretion.

And the word “subtlety” in this place is the same as the word used of the serpent; but the subtlety that the Word of God gives is something entirely different from that which comes from listening to the serpent.

The wisdom of the serpent is a desirable thing, if it be combined with the harmlessness of the dove. God is wise, and He “gives wisdom” (*Proverbs* 2:6); the Serpent is wise, but whoever learns of him gains only the knowledge that he is naked. It is a poor school; Christ’s is far better. He says,

## **Matthew 11**

<sup>29</sup> Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls.

It is better to know a few things that are so, than to learn much that is only emptiness and nakedness.

## **The Knowledge of Good and Evil**

God never designed that man should know anything but good. Why should anybody wish to know anything else? Is one better off for knowing how a nauseous thing tastes? How many people are there who think that there is a lack in their lives because they do not know how it feels to be bitten by a mad dog? Who is pining to know what it is to have small-pox or the plague?

It is far better to know only that which is good; and in spite of what some “moralists” teach, it is not necessary to know evil in order to attain to real virtue. The strongest character ever known on earth,

## **2 Corinthians 5**

<sup>21</sup> ...knew no sin.

But He knew everything good, and there is enough of that to keep us all well employed throughout eternity.

Many who are set to be teachers of the Gospel imagine that they have to be acquainted with every form of heresy, in order to guard the flock against error. But the shepherd that leads the flock only in the green pastures that the Chief Shepherd provides, has no need to study noxious weeds. He who obeys the injunction to “preach the Word,” will never feel the lack of the knowledge of unbelief.

The missionary to heathen lands has no need to study the so-called “sacred books” of those who know not God. To be well acquainted with “Jesus Christ, and Him crucified,” is a whole university education.

### **Vice No Aid to Virtue**

Neither is it necessary that a man should have become acquainted by experience, with all sorts of vice, in order to be able to deal effectively with souls.

It is true that God, who makes the wrath of man to praise Him, can turn even a man’s lost life to account, but be sure that good never comes from evil. No one can bring a clean thing out of unclean.

#### **John 7**

<sup>46</sup> Never man spoke like this Man,

—it was said of Christ; and it was because His life had always been the perfection of purity.

### **Losing the Knowledge of Evil**

#### **Galatians 3**

<sup>13</sup> Christ has redeemed us from the curse.

#### **Romans 3**

<sup>24</sup> Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

—we are delivered from every vestige of the fall. Therefore in Christ there is deliverance from the mixed knowledge of good and evil. The sin is “put away,” and only the good remains, and that is multiplied.

Who has not wished that he had never heard some things, and had never learned some forms of evil? And who has not longed to be able to forget at least some of his past life? Well, the Gospel makes provision for that. God says of the people who enter into His covenant,

### **Hebrews 8**

<sup>12</sup> Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

Now God cannot forget anything that exists, and when He forgets our iniquities it is because there is no trace of them in the universe, least of all in us. Just as the haters of God at the last day

### **Obadiah**

<sup>16</sup> ...shall be as though they had not been,

so will it be with the sins of those who have become the friends of God. Even so is it now; for God casts their sins behind His back, and buries them in the depths of the sea.

Christ is the tree of life, and if we feed continually on Him, and drink from the fountain of His life, the evil that comes from the forbidden tree will cease to be. The worshipers once purged shall have no more consciousness of sin (*Hebrews 10:2*). Like their Master, they will “know no sin.” This is the crowning blessedness of the Gospel.

Bear in mind that we are not speaking merely of the specific sorts of sin committed, but of sin as a whole. The blood of Christ cleanses; from all sin, so that no trace of it will remain. The carnal mind, the mind that thinks evil, is to be exchanged for the mind of the Spirit, and it has no trace of evil in it.

Is it not glorious to know that the hardened sinner, whose mind has been filled with evil, is not obliged to be tortured after conversion with temptations from his own mind, but may have the innocence of a child, combined with the prudence of a man?

## Man Hides—God Seeks

### **Luke 19**

<sup>10</sup> The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

This was first demonstrated when:

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>9</sup> The Lord God called to Adam, and said unto him, Where are you?

Sin produces fear.

### **Proverbs 28**

<sup>1</sup> The wicked flee when no man pursues.

So as soon as a man becomes conscious of sin he seeks to hide from the Lord. But that is a useless proceeding, for

### **Proverbs 15**

<sup>3</sup> ...the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.

### **Jeremiah 23**

<sup>23</sup> Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? says the Lord.

So the Lord is sure to find every soul; and if that soul be not saved, it is only because he loves death rather than life.

Jonah thought to hide from the Lord, and he chose as his hiding-place the depths of the sea; but the Lord found him there. Yea, the Lord was there before him, and had a place all prepared for him, and from the pit of destruction He brought the runaway back to safety.

### **Psalms 139**

<sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

<sup>10</sup> Even there shall your hand lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.

<sup>11</sup> If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

<sup>12</sup> Yea, the darkness hides not from You.

Then let no one despair because some loved one who has been the subject of many prayers has run away to escape the restraints of piety. No matter where he runs to, he will run into the arms of the Lord, which are always outstretched even to a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Oh, the height of Jesus' love!  
Higher than the heaven above,  
Deeper than the deepest sea,  
Lasting as eternity;  
Love that found me,—wondrous thought!  
Found me when I sought Him not.<sup>1</sup>

This being the case, who can measure the hope of the one who turns to seek the Lord?

## The Enmity

### Genesis 3

<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed.

Blessed enmity! But for that enmity which God by His grace implanted into the heart of mankind, no human being, provided the race had continued, would ever have had any more desire for righteousness than the devil himself has; for the fall of man was complete; he had sold himself wholly to Satan, and “for nought.” *Isaiah* 52:3.

But we have been “redeemed without money,” even with the incorruptible life, “the precious blood of Christ.” *1 Peter* 1:18-19.

It is because of this enmity against sin, which the life of Christ places in every man, that we are able to “feel after” God when He seeks us in the dark. It is...

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<sup>1</sup> William McComb (1793-1870), Hymn: *Chief of Sinners*.

## **John 1**

<sup>9</sup> ...the true Light, which lights every man that comes into the world.

No matter how tainted an inheritance a child may have, no matter how vicious and depraved its parents are, it has as its birthright from God a spark of the light of life, which may be fanned by the breathing of the Spirit into everlasting glory in the kingdom of God.

## **The Bruising**

### **Genesis 3**

<sup>15</sup> ... it shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

We get some sore wounds from the serpent, and the wound on our heel makes us often stumble; but we can always say,

### **Micah 7**

<sup>8</sup> Rejoice not against me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall arise.

Victory is ours, for the promise is that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, and that means its utter destruction. Christ has been tempted on every point to the utmost of Satan's power; and:

### **2 Peter 1**

<sup>3</sup> His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.

He took part in our flesh and blood, in equal measure with us,

### **Hebrews 2**

<sup>13</sup> ...that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

<sup>14</sup> And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Everyone involuntarily names Christ as the seed of the woman, who is spoken of in *Genesis* 3:15. But many overlook the obvious fact that we are the seed of the woman, as well as He. Think of the wonder of it!

The ordinary idea is reversed: instead of saying that Christ is Man, as well as we are, we learn from this verse to say that we are men, as well as He is; and therefore all the promises to the Son of man belong to us. So we have the promise renewed in these words,

**Romans 16**

<sup>20</sup> The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.

**1 Corinthians 15**

<sup>57</sup> Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.