

# Man Fallen and the Seed of the Woman

## Genesis 3

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon explores the problem of sin, Satan's scheme to produce distrust, and the revelation of the Seed of the Woman, who shall bruise the serpent's head.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:1

**Topics:** "Sin and Redemption", "Trust in God's Promise"

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### Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the reality of sin and its consequences as depicted in Genesis 3, illustrating how Satan's deception led to man's fall and separation from God. He explains that the initial distrust sown by the serpent caused Eve to disobey God's command, resulting in shame and fear of God's presence. Despite the ruin brought by sin, Darby highlights God's promise of redemption through the Seed of the woman, foreshadowing Christ's victory over sin and Satan. He urges believers to place their confidence in God's love and grace, which is fully realized in Jesus, who bore the judgment for our sins. The sermon calls for a recognition of our need for God and the futility of hiding from Him in our shame.

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### Transcript

It is not only Scripture which makes known to us that there is sin and misery in the world. There they are, even if Scripture or a Saviour did not exist. The world is a ruin. Man knows well that iniquity and defilement are in him; and nobody is satisfied with his portion here below, because his heart is ill at ease. The word of God explains, as nothing else can, how Satan entered the world, and reveals the consequence of sin in man's relations with God.

The first thing the old serpent did was to put something between the creature and the Creator, to put himself between God and man. This was subtle, and ruinous if successful, as it was; for the only thing which makes us happy is that there is nothing between - that God loves us.

Satan begins then by producing distrust in God, and so stirring man's will into activity in lust and disobedience. Never does the enemy lead one to think of the goodness of God nor of man's obedience. The woman knew right well that she ought not to eat of the tree, and that mischief must be the result; yet she ate, and gave to her husband with her, and he did eat (v. 1-6). Thus sin is the self-will that sprang from the unbelief which doubted God. By this means Satan made a breach; he persuaded Eve that God kept something for Himself, for fear that His creature should be too happy and too blessed. But Eve was wrong

in listening to Satan; she ought not for a moment to have attended to the voice which insinuated distrust in God.

God has warned man of the consequences of sin, as Adam, "in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." But Satan, who seeks always to deny the righteousness of God, says to the woman, "ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day that ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." Nor was this altogether untrue. The fall has rendered man much more intelligent relatively to good and evil. But Satan hid from man that he should be separated from God and have a bad conscience. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (v. 7). They acquired a knowledge that shewed them their nakedness, which they strove to conceal from the eyes of themselves and each other. All that is brought near us appears to us more important and greater than what is still far off. The forbidden tree being near Eve, and the judgment of God being distant, she took of the fruit, and ate.

2 So the spirit of falsehood tells men at this day that they shall not die, and that the threats of God shall not come to pass. He conceals the warnings of God, and then men do what Satan and their own lusts urge them on to do. If a Christian even is not watchful, his conscience will lose its activity, and, in place of seeing God, he sees his nakedness.

Man, besides, takes leaves to cover his nakedness. He does his utmost to conceal from himself the evil which has happened to him; but when God is revealed, it is quite otherwise. God draws near, as if nothing had occurred; then the nearness to God, which would have been a joy for man without sin, becomes on account of sin a source of immense terror, and insupportable. "Adam and his wife hide themselves from the presence of Jehovah Elohim amongst the trees of the garden." They had succeeded in veiling their nakedness from their own eyes; they were terrified at the voice of God, and strove to hide from Him. What a horrible thing for man to be in such a case as to wish concealment from God! (v. 7, 8).

Adam "was afraid," as he confessed to Him who called him from his hiding-place. Conscience trembles at the presence of God. Every hope of enjoying life is taken away when His voice is heard. Man is self-convicted of departure from God because of sin. God "drove out the man"; but man had himself fled from His presence first. His own conscience told him that he could not stand before God; and God made this evident by the words of His call to Adam, "Where art thou?" (v. 9). He was gone from God, banished by conscience before God drove him out. Is he then the one to complain of unrighteousness, whose own heart condemned him similarly before God's sentence was pronounced? The relations of man were thenceforth broken, and in a manner irreparable, as far as man is concerned. "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (v. 10).

Self-justification is as vain as seeking to hide from God. "And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (v. 11, 12). How is the mighty fallen! The head of creation stooping, in order to excuse himself of his sin, to cast the fault on his wife - yea, on God Himself! How debasing is evil once allowed, and dominant! No slavery more degrading, none so immediate and all-corrupting in its effects. Was man then the weaker vessel? or this the way of natural affection? The hardest thing for a sinner to do is to confess his sin truly and thoroughly; to judge oneself is only the fruit of grace through faith. A bad conscience dreads God and the consequences too much to confess, while it knows its sin too well to deny it.

3 But God will have sin out, and trace it to its source. "And Jehovah Elohim said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And Jehovah Elohim said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (v. 13-19).

If you had full confidence in God, and you were perfectly sure that God loved you, you would be very happy. But Satan is active, and his power consists in producing distrust, and this where there is happiness and intimate relation with God - to darken, and, if possible, destroy all in the heart. He takes advantage of men who trust their own will and their efforts for their happiness, distrusting God, and neither willing nor knowing how to confide the care of their happiness to Him, and to give themselves up to His mighty love in Christ. And this he does now as ever. He persuades men that God is too good to condemn us because we are sinners; and man, spite of his sins and his conscience, hopes and persuades himself that he will not be condemned. It is the voice of the old serpent.

4 But God has proved, even by the death of His Son, that He will not endure sin, and that its wages are death, as it will be judgment after death for all who believe not. The conscience being bad, all the effort of man is to hide from himself his nakedness before God. He would put out of the world gross and outward sin, drunkenness, murder, robbery. He seeks by laws and by philanthropic efforts to blot out the exterior effects of sin which shock the world. But these are but the aprons of fig-leaves, which root out nothing whatever, but serve for the moment to conceal from ourselves our nakedness and misery, and to avoid thinking of the righteousness of the condemnation God has pronounced from that day on our sinful state.

Now that sins have come between our consciences and God, one wishes at least that there should be something to hide us before God; and it is with this view that man employs what he calls innocent things. Thus the trees were innocent enough, but what use did Adam make of them? To hide behind them from God. God had given to man all that is in the world; but man now perverts it all to escape from the presence of God, pretending the while to be innocent in such an application of what is good in itself. When the voice of God awakens the conscience, one wishes still for something to hide us from Him; but this is impossible. "Where art thou?" said God to Adam, who had no means of concealment longer. If God were to say so to each of your souls, would it be your joy to be in His presence? God is really the only resource and refuge when we have sinned. It is only God who, by imputing nothing to the believer, takes away all guile from the spirit; Psalm 32. But if you hide away from God, how do you then stand for your souls? God had not yet driven from His presence Adam, who had fled away from Him. Conscience tell us that, if we have sinned and He is a righteous God, there are no leaves or trees to hide us in His presence. Man is miserable in his conscience, and he cannot be happy in sin, save only that there is no God. All the hope of incredulity is that there is no God, or, what comes to the same thing, that He is not righteous or holy. Adam wished to excuse himself, as if he had lusted after nothing himself - he had only followed the voice of his wife, instead of keeping to the prohibition of God. But if there was no lust in us, no sinful act would result. He

had disobeyed the word of God, for which he was responsible.

5 In the midst of all the goodness of God, who has given His Son for poor sinners, if you have no confidence in God, there is the proof of your sin. No matter how it may be manifested, is not this ingratitude and distrust? Eve listened to and believed Satan, in place of listening to God and believing Him; and this is just what man is ever doing, while he hopes for salvation and eternal life, though he sins. All the efforts you make to be happy prove you are not. The immediate effect of God's presence in your hearts and consciences would be to stop your pleasures: if all your pleasures are thus incompatible with the presence of God, what will they be for you in eternity? Will they carry you to the foot of His throne who is holy and righteous, to shew Him that you have passed many innocent hours far from Him? What is there but disobedience, distrust, falsehood, self-will, unless it be a still worse thing, the state of soul which wishes to divert its thoughts away from the presence of God.

Man may withdraw himself from the presence of God while grace lasts, but he cannot when God will judge him. Satan will help you to hide; your best friends following the world will help you also to keep away from the presence of God, to forget and deny it; but this will certainly not go beyond the time of grace which is granted you. Therefore, while it is called today, if you hear His voice, harden not your hearts.

God knows that you are sinners; He knows that it is the subtle iniquity of Satan, which would make man his prey. But there is to that an answer, of which Satan knew not, any more than poor, guilty, fallen man: the revelation of the Seed of the woman (v. 15). The question is really between the serpent and the second Man - not the first. It is neither a promise to Adam and Eve from God, nor a hope of improvement in their children; but God pronounces judgment on the enemy, and in the midst of it the revelation is made of the Saviour, child of the woman who had ensnared the man to be ruined of the devil. The woman's Seed shall bruise the serpent's head, but He is bruised Himself first. What grace, yet righteousness! What humiliation, yet victory! If Adam exalted himself as a robbery to be as God, He who was God emptied Himself to be a man, and became obedient unto death, as the other was disobedient unto it. To lost Adam, the first man, there was, and could be, no promise. All the promises of God are yea and amen in the second Man; but they become the portion of every believer. Faith finds and enjoys the promise, not sin and unbelief. To Eve and Adam God only speaks of the actual consequences of sin (v. 16-19). It is in judging the serpent (v. 15) that He reveals the coming Seed of the woman, and the way of His victory. Thenceforward the only hope of lost man is in this revealed Saviour; and before he is driven out he hears of what Jesus was to suffer in destroying the power of the devil; yet not a single sign of repentance appears in Adam after his sin. He had shewn terror of God, cowardly selfishness as to his wife, as much dishonesty in his own case as dishonour done to God. But God occupies Himself only with His counsels of grace in the woman's Seed, whose person and work and glory are developed in all the Scriptures.

6 But victory over Satan in the cross of Christ is no longer in any sense a promise; it is accomplished. Had man let into his heart that God did not love him? that He kept back what was good for him, through jealousy or envy of his happiness? It was Satan's lie; for the suffering second Man, the woman's Seed, is Son of God, the true God, and eternal life, who became man to die for sinners and destroy the works of the devil. Yet is the unbelieving heart so perverse as to refuse its confidence to the God who thus gave His Son. Jesus, instead of fleeing from God's judgment, went to meet it when the hour came, and took on Him the burden of our sins, instead of listening to the voice of man or Satan. "The cup which my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" By His death He annulled him that had the power of death, and gives the believer perfect confidence in God, all fear of death being gone. His love puts us in peace and relationship with God, unscared by difficulties, now that we are forgiven our sins, clothed with Himself instead of nakedness

or fig-leaves, with nothing but grace to stand in and God's glory to look forward to, since He bore the judgment for us.

7 Is your confidence then in the God who gave His Son to save the poorest of sinners? This confidence inspires and strengthens obedience. Nothing to the believer is more precious than God's love in Christ, which makes us prefer His will to all Satan can offer.

May God touch your heart, and give you to magnify Him by receiving all that His love has done in Christ!

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