

BaptistWay Bible Series for April 11: Adam and Eve: All about â€œIâ€œ

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The story of “the fall” is a template for the decisions we all make. We all have a choice.

Yes, as humans, we will fail. No one is righteous; no, not one (Psalm 14:3; Psalm 53:1; Romans 3:10). All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

To say sin is inevitable, however, is not tantamount to saying we are off the hook. We are responsible for each individual choice made. No temptation comes to us that our faithful God has not provided a way to escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). At any given moment, as we face the decision between Choice A (God’s will) and Choice B (sin), we have the freedom and the ability to choose A. Adam and Eve’s choice in Genesis 3 follows the same pattern all of us have followed time and again. They do not have to eat the fruit. They can be faithful to God. So can we.

Paul says, “As in Adam, all die” (1 Corinthians 15:22). Just as Adam and Eve made a choice with deadly consequences, so do we all.

Faithfulness to God is a matter of obedience, not of reason.

This is not to suggest either that God is unreasonable or that we disciples are required to disengage our brains; of course, both are untrue. The point is not that reason is irrelevant but rather that reason is secondary to obedience. God’s initial word regarding the tree gives no reason; rather, God provides a command and a consequence: Do not eat of this certain

tree; if you do, you will die (Genesis 2:16-17).

God provides no explanation of why the tree is bad, why eating from it will cause death, or what “death” even means to the first humans who have no context for the word. God’s command excludes one tree’s fruit from the multitude of gifts. God has simply said, “No.”

Conversely, it is the serpent, the tempter, who enters the scene making arguments designed to appeal to human reason. “You will not die. Your eyes will be opened” (vv. 4-5). Note that the serpent never suggests to Eve that she and Adam had misunderstood God. Never does the serpent say it would be OK with God for them to eat the forbidden fruit. Instead, the serpent leads them to think of themselves and their own desires instead of thinking about God.

Once she allows herself to listen to the serpent, however briefly, Eve’s own natural desires for self take over. It is not the serpent who tells Eve how lovely the tree looks. She notices that for herself (v. 6).

Eve’s (and Adam’s) decision, then, becomes a choice between trusting God and satisfying self. God’s command seems unnatural. It is the arrogance of the human to decide that God must not know best or that God must not have our best interest in mind. After all, the tree is pretty, and it offers the chance for our eyes to be opened. If we even think about God, we decide God’s word was wrong and unloving.

The results of sin are disastrous and surprising.

Immediately, their eyes are indeed opened, and the humans first experience shame (v. 7). Immediately, they experience unease at being in the presence of the God who walks with them (v. 8). Their choice leads to pain (v. 16), curses (v. 17) and poor return for their sweat (vv. 18-19). They are banished from paradise (v. 23).

God had promised death, and indeed, Adam and Eve now are destined to die. They, newly created in paradise where God walks and is heard, cannot foresee a world where thorns and thistles are the fruit of their labor. God has foreseen it, and loving them, God gives them an easy way to avoid it. Bowing instead to their own reason (which they were too shortsighted to realize was limited) and their own desires (which could easily have been met by the rest of the wonders that Eden offered), they, like we, choose not to be faithful to the Lord's instruction.

God does not abandon the unfaithful sinner. Grace comes even in the midst of punishment.

The Scripture's focus on nakedness cannot be ignored. As faithful children, Adam and Eve's nakedness is not shameful (Genesis 2:25). When their eyes are opened, the first consequence is to feel shame (v. 7).

But there is a lesson here of grace.

Genesis 3 is indeed the story of the Fall, the first temptation, the first sin and the first punishment for sin. But buried (to those who are not looking for it) in there is also the first act of grace. Verse 7 tells us Adam and Eve, having sinned, suddenly realize their nakedness. Verse 21, which comes before the banishment from the garden, tells us God "made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them."

Do you see it? Because sin has made them ashamed of being naked, God gives them clothes. Our loving God always is on the move to repair the damage sin has done, usually before we are even aware of it. Where sin makes us naked, God makes us clothes.

Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more (Romans 5:20). Paul said it, but he learned it from Genesis.