



The Covenants of
Works & Grace

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The Covenants *of* Works *and* Grace

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The Covenant of Works *and* *The Covenant of Grace*

I. The Creation Ordinances

In this lesson we're going to be looking at *the Covenant of Works* and *the Covenant of Grace* in more detail. Some take the Covenant of Works to refer exclusively to the command God gave to Adam in the garden. But though this command was an extremely important part of the Covenant of Works (as we will see), there was more to God's covenant with Adam than just this single command. The command was given in the context of a covenant relationship that God had entered into with Adam. So, before we look at the command, we're going to take some time to look at the context in which that command was given.¹

In particular, God's covenant with Adam included what some have called the “creation ordinances.” After God had created the world, and before man had fallen into sin, there were *three ordinances* (foundational life-principles) that God established for man. These three ordinances are vital for us to understand because they are laws that God has built into the very structure of the world as He created it. They are as essential to the well-being of man as the law of gravity—and just as essential for us as Christians. Each has far-reaching implications for what it looks like to glorify God as believers in Jesus.²

1. THE SABBATH as a creation ordinance:

A) The INAUGURATION of the Sabbath: After God had created the heavens and the earth and everything in them, Scripture tells us that, “He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then *God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it*, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” (Genesis 2:2-3). This was the inauguration of *the Sabbath*.

B) The PERMANENCE of the Sabbath: The Sabbath rest that God initiates here is something that He also has established as a principle for created man, and in particular, for His people. So, when God gave Israel *the 10 Commandments*, the 4th Commandment was, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).³ When the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of breaking the Sabbath,

¹ Robertson describes the Covenant of Works (which he terms the Covenant of Creation) from a two-fold point of view: “The creation bond between God and man may be discussed in terms of its general and its focal aspects. The *general aspect* of the covenant of creation relates to the broader responsibilities of man to his Creator. The *focal aspect* of the covenant of creation relates to the more specific responsibility of man arising from the special point of probation or testing instituted by God.” (p67). He goes on, “The requirement concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must not be conceived of as a somewhat arbitrary stipulation without integral relation to the total life of man. . . All that Adam did had direct bearing on his relation to the covenant God of creation. . . His life as a covenant creature must be viewed as a unified whole.” (p82). Still, it's also true that “the response to the particular prohibition concerning the tree was crucially determinative. The focal point of the covenant rested specifically on this single test. If Adam succeeded in submitting to God at this point, his blessing under the larger provisions of the covenant of creation was assured.” (p83). We need to tread very carefully here, but perhaps an example of this same principle is Judges 2:1-2. God had commanded His people to make no covenants with the Canaanites: And yet, this command in no way *began* their relationship; it was given *in the context of an existing covenant relationship*.

² The great bulk of this section is gratefully taken from O Palmer Robertson's book, *The Christ of the Covenants*, along with his audio lectures on the Covenants. Much was taken also for the section on *Marriage* from Wayne Mack (see below).

³ O Palmer Robertson pointed out a truth that helped me a great deal here. In the initial giving of the 10 Commandments in Exodus 20, the Sabbath is rooted in *God's creation*: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy” (vv8,11). But in the repetition of the 10 Commandments in Deuteronomy 5, the Sabbath is rooted in God's *redemption*: “Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy. . . You shall remember that you were a slave in the land

Jesus' response was: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." (Mark 2:27). Jesus' words were given as a stern rebuke to correct a corrupted view of the Sabbath. But though Jesus rejects the Pharisees' wrong ideas about the Sabbath, Jesus' answer upholds the institution of the Sabbath itself. What was to be rejected wasn't the Sabbath—but the Pharisees' false conception of it.

C) The FUNCTION of the Sabbath: Jesus' words in Mark 2 also teach us about *the purpose* of the Sabbath: "The Sabbath was made for [the sake of] man. . ." Jesus' words here serve as a commentary for why God had created the Sabbath in the beginning. Scripture had told us in Genesis 2:3 that the Lord, "blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." Now here, Jesus' words teach us that *this blessing had to do with mankind*. God made and blessed the Sabbath *for man's sake*—that is—in order that it might be an instrument of blessing to man. It was for man's good that God established the Sabbath.⁴

A lot of Christians today are confused about the Sabbath and what role it should play. But what Scripture wants us to understand is that the Sabbath is a *wonderful* thing. Think about it this way: how would you like it if you began working at a new job where you started every year by getting a month and a half of paid vacation? In essence, this is what the Sabbath is (52 days a year). It's the Lord promising seven days of provision for six days of labor. Too often we look at the Sabbath from a *negative* perspective: "You shall not. . ." But actually, in the 10 Commandments, this is one of the few commandments that is set in *positive* language. It isn't set in "You shall not" language, but rather, "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy." The Sabbath was given to be a *blessing*—not a burden!!

In particular, the Sabbath is a blessing because it is a day to *stop, rest, and delight*.⁵ *First, 1) it's a day to STOP.* The Sabbath is a day to stop all the work we're busy with the rest of the week. This is a pretty significant lesson for us. That God wants us to stop our work on the Sabbath is a) a reminder for us of what God really cares about: not so much *doing*, but *being*; not *producing*, but *abiding*. It's the same lesson Jesus was teaching Martha in Luke 10. Martha was concerned with all her service. Actually, the Greek word used there is the same word for *ministry*.⁶ Martha was too busy with all her ministry to actually stop and listen to Jesus. The Sabbath is a reminder for us of what God really cares about the most. It's also b) an invitation for us to embrace our limits: the Sabbath reminds us that "the world continues working fine when I stop."⁷ God doesn't actually need us. He's in control and taking care of the universe just fine without us. The Sabbath is an invitation to "be still and know" that God is God (Psalm 46:10). The call to stop our work on the Sabbath is also c) an opportunity for us to trust in the God who has promised to supply all our needs (Philippians 4:19).⁸ So the Sabbath is a day to stop. *It's also, 2) a day to REST;* physically, spiritually, emotionally. We're not super-heroes. God made us with bodies, with souls, and minds that need rest.⁹ Lastly, *3) the Sabbath is a day to DELIGHT.* It's worth noting that the Sabbath begins with God looking over all He had made and basking in the reality that "it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).¹⁰ What is God doing?⁹ He's delighting in His creation. So the Sabbath is a day set apart to delight in God, but also to delight in His creation: "we are to slow down. . .and take the time to see the beauty of a tree, a leaf, a flower, the sky. . .to see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. . ." To experience and delight in God's creation.¹¹

of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day" (vv12,15). So the Sabbath principle isn't just rooted in *creation*—it's also rooted in *redemption*. Redemption didn't abolish the Sabbath—it rather gave God's people the best reason to celebrate it.

⁴ It wasn't because God was tired from His work or needed a holiday! We might say that it wasn't *for Him* so much as *for us*.

⁵ These three aspects and many of the implications are from Pete Scazzero, *Four Keys to Experiencing a Biblical Sabbath*.

⁶ Greek *diakonia* (Luke 10:40); cf. Acts 6:4, "the ministry of the Word;" 2 Tim.4:5, "fulfill your ministry."

⁷ From Pete Scazzero article (see above).

⁸ It's been pointed out that we could have imagined God saying at the beginning of Genesis 2: "Okay, Adam, we've still got a lot of work to do! We've got to get you rolling on cultivating the land, taking care of the garden; you've still got to name all the animals; and remember, you need to fill the whole earth with My glory!" So, it's significant that God establishes the principle of Sabbath here even in the midst of having a lot more real work needing to be finished. God wants us to rest, not just when we finish a task, but in the midst of tasks still needing to be finished (insight from Sujoy Roy, *Sermons on Genesis*, Bengali).

⁹ In the words of Trip Lee: "Though God was pleased with the creation of man, We still gotta understand the limitations of man; Many of us stuck in the days of the trance, Man, thinking we can do some things that we can't; You may be thinkin' you a beast but believe me, you still gotta sleep in the evening; yeah you still gotta eat, need heat when it's freezing; you peak for a season but peep what we speakin': This is the way that life will be; limitless You put limits on me; by Your grace help us see. . . This is the way that life will be, Infinite You made finite me; by Your grace help us see this is Your design." (*Limitations*).

¹⁰ This seems to be drawn out by the "behold" preceding it: this word functions as almost an *italics* kind of emphasis.

¹¹ Quote from Pete Scazzero's article. He gives an amazing example of this in his article: never forgetting the day when he

D) The SCOPE of the Sabbath: It's also important to note that the Sabbath wasn't just meant to be a single day—it was (and is) a principle of life for God's people. We see this in passages such as Leviticus 25, where God commanded Israel not only to celebrate a *weekly* Sabbath—but also to celebrate a *Sabbath year* once every seven years (Leviticus 25:1-7). Likewise, every 50th year (Lit. “seven sabbaths of years”) there was to be a *Jubilee year* of Sabbath rest (Leviticus 25:8-12).¹²

These passages speak of having a time of *Sabbath for the land*—a time for *the land* to rest.¹³ On one hand, the land was to have rest because the land belonged to the Lord. On the other hand, God was teaching His people that man wasn't meant to be captive to his creation. God doesn't want us to be workaholics—neglecting our families for the purpose of endless work (even if we call it “ministry”). It doesn't honor God. God wants us to take time to rest in Him and enjoy His blessings. So the Sabbath isn't just about one day in seven. It's a principle that God established for all of life.¹⁴

E) The FULFILLMENT of the Sabbath: When God established the Sabbath, it was on the seventh day of the week. The Sabbath was the last day of the week, which meant that God's people looked forward to it all week. There was some deeper significance to this. All throughout the Old Testament, God's people were looking forward to a lasting, an eternal Sabbath rest. Moses spoke of a future rest that God would give His people in the land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 12:9-10). But even when they entered into the land and took possession of it, Joshua could not give them the kind of rest that Moses anticipated (Hebrews 4:3,8-9). Hundreds of years later, Isaiah used the imagery of the Sabbath rest of Jubilee to speak of the One who would bring true and lasting rest to God's people (Isaiah 61:1-3) — and it was this very passage that Jesus turned to at the inauguration of His earthly ministry, and declared, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:18-21).

There's a reason that we now celebrate the Sabbath on the *first* day of the week instead of the last day of the week: it was the day that Jesus rose from the dead. It was on the first day of the week that the women came to the tomb bringing spices—and found it empty—and heard the angel's words: “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen” (Luke 24:5-6). It was the first day of the week that the Lord appeared for the first time to His disciples (John 20:19ff); then later to Thomas who hadn't been there the week before (21:26ff). It was the first day of the week that the early church began to meet together for worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). Why? Because Jesus' resurrection changed everything about the Sabbath. The true, eternal Sabbath rest that had been anticipated for so long had finally come through Jesus' death and resurrection. And the fact that we now celebrate the Sabbath on the *first* day of the week also carries with it great significance:

“[The Christian] does not only look forward to a redemption yet to come. He does not merely hope for a future Sabbath rest. He looks back on a redemption fully accomplished. He stands confidently on the basis of what the past already has brought. . . The current believer in Christ does not follow the Sabbath pattern of the people of the old covenant. He does not first labor six days, looking hopefully toward rest. Instead, he begins the week by rejoicing in the rest already accomplished by the cosmic event of Christ's resurrection. Then he enters joyfully into his six days of labor, confident of success through the victory which Christ already has won.”¹⁵

2. MARRIAGE as a creation ordinance:

A) The INAUGURATION of marriage: The second ordinance that the Lord established in the early chapters of Genesis was the institution of *marriage*. We see this in Genesis 2:18-25. After God

intentionally really took the time to delight in washing his hands with warm soapy water on the Sabbath (in a public restroom)!

¹² This principle of Sabbath rest is also reflected in the appointed feasts of Israel, where we read that on certain days during the feasts God's people were not to engage in any laborious work. See Leviticus 23:7,8,21,25,35,36; Numbers 28:26; 29:1,7.

¹³ See Leviticus 25:2,4; 26:34,43; Judges 3:11; 2 Chronicles 36:21.

¹⁴ O Palmer Robertson notes here: “By the way, why was it that Israel went into captivity? Well, in 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 we read: “Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon. . . until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept sabbath until seventy years were complete.” Because Israel had neglected the Sabbath principle, God had to take them forcibly into the Sabbath. Even the historical numbering of the captivity is to be understood according to the Sabbath principle, as God's people were in exile in Babylon for seventy seven-year Sabbaths (cf. Daniel 9:24).

¹⁵ From O Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, p73.

had made the woman and brought her to the man, Scripture tells us: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” (v24).

B) The ESSENCE of marriage: This verse (Genesis 2:24) is quoted another *three times* in Scripture (Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7-8; Ephesians 5:31). It is this verse that the Scripture itself constantly refers back to in order to help us understand the essence of marriage. It's also significant that this statement about marriage was first given before man had fallen into sin, and yet it continued to be referred back to as a blue-print for marriage even after Adam's sin in the garden. So, Genesis 2:24 is quite foundational for understanding the meaning of marriage—both for sinless man and for sinful man.¹⁶

So, what is the essence of marriage? There are three things that we can draw out of this passage. *First*, husband and wife are to LEAVE mother and father: “for this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother. . .” In marriage there is a radical change that takes place in ones relationship to their parents. The husband-wife relationship becomes the main priority. This is true for both the woman and the man. The man is to prioritize his wife (her ideas, opinions, wishes) above all other relationships (including those of his parents). The woman is to prioritize her husband (his ideas, opinions, wishes) above all other relationships (including those of her parents). *Second*, husband and wife are to CLEAVE to one another: “. . .and be joined [or cleave] to his wife. . .” Cleaving means that marriage is “a total and irrevocable commitment of two people to each other.”¹⁷ What this means is that marriage isn't to be based on a *feeling of love*—but on *the commitment to love*. *Finally*, in marriage husband and wife BECOME ONE FLESH: “. . .and they shall become one flesh.” Becoming one flesh means complete and total oneness. This oneness includes sexual union but it isn't limited to that (in fact, often the sexual union serves as a gauge for oneness in other areas). As one put it: “Marriage is a total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with another person until death.”¹⁸ So, at the heart of marriage is *leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh*.¹⁹

C) The DIGNITY of marriage: The account of the institution of marriage begins with Genesis 2:18: “Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’” This is actually quite a powerful statement if we put it in context. God had seen that the light was good (1:4), the dry land and the seas were good (1:10), the vegetation on the earth was good (1:12), the sun and moon were good (1:18), the sea creatures and the beasts of the field were good (1:21,25) — in fact, Genesis 1:31 tells us that, “God saw *all* that He had made, and behold, *it was very good*.” But then the Lord saw that Adam was alone, and for the first time He declared: *This is NOT good*. The whole reason marriage exists is that God created it, and the reason God created it is that it was not good for man (*even sinless man!*) to remain alone. So, marriage is very, very good in the sight of the One who created it. This doesn't mean that there's no place for believers remaining single in the Lord (1 Corinthians 7). There's a place of honor for those who remain single in the kingdom of God (Isaiah 56:3-5; Matthew 19:12). But it's vital for us to understand that marriage was *never* a second-class concession for sinful man.²⁰ God himself has created it. He created it because man was not good without it. And He has crowned it with great honor and dignity (Hebrews 13:4).

D) The DESIGN of marriage: Genesis 2:18 also teaches us about God's *design* for marriage. Again, we read in Genesis 2:18, “It is not good for the man to be alone; *I will make him a helper suitable for him*.”²¹ So then, “the woman was created by God to be a helper to the man in the marriage relationship.”²² This is echoed in the New Testament, where Paul says that the man was not created for the woman, but the woman was created for the man (1 Corinthians 11:9). In other words, *the purpose of the wife's existence is to glorify God by being a help to her husband*. This never meant

¹⁶ Much of this section gleaned from Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*.

¹⁷ *Strengthening Your Marriage*, p5.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p6.

¹⁹ To put it simply, *to leave* denotes priority; *to cleave* denotes commitment; and *to become one flesh* denotes unity.

²⁰ Again, the Lord instituted marriage when man was yet in his sinless state.

²¹ In Hebrew, this reads literally, “a helper *corresponding* to him.”

²² Quote from O Palmer Robertson, p76. The key phrase here is “in the marriage relationship.” This is all in the context of a marriage union. The Bible is not teaching that all women should be helpers for all men or submit to the authority of men indiscriminately; but that God designed wives to be helpers for their husbands in the context of their marriage.

the woman is inferior to man in any way.²³ Both male and female were created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). The difference between the man and the woman is *not* in their equality, but in their God-given *roles*.²⁴ “[Woman] is similar to man, yet somewhat different. She is man's complement, not his carbon copy. She is to man what a key is to a lock and what a film is to a camera—indispensable (1 Corinthians 11:11).”²⁵ Without her, man is incomplete. The wife is to be a helper to her husband specifically for the task of filling the earth with the glory of God (Genesis 1:28)²⁶.

E) The DEFINITION of marriage: Jesus' words on the subject of marriage help to correct three corruptions of the institution of marriage. The Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking what conditions were necessary for a man to divorce his wife. We read Jesus' response in Matthew 19:4-6:

“Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave His father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”

First, Jesus is declaring that **DIVORCE** contradicts the creational order of marriage. Elsewhere in Scripture, Jesus clarifies that divorce is permissible (for the offended party) in situations of unchastity (or willful desertion), where the marriage covenant has already been broken (Matthew 5:31-32). But aside from this, divorce is clearly unacceptable: “what God has joined together, let no man separate.”

Second, though the passage is speaking about divorce, we also learn that **POLYGAMY** contradicts the creational order of marriage. Genesis 2:24 is unmistakable: “a man shall. . . be joined to his wife.” Wife is *singular*. When God established marriage, He gave Adam only one wife. And it's clear that this was to be the lasting pattern for marriage: “the two *[and only two]* shall become one flesh.”

Lastly, we learn through Jesus' words that **HOMOSEXUALITY** contradicts the creational order of marriage. In a matter of just one generation, this particular truth has gone from being a view nearly universally accepted in the west to a view nearly universally condemned. This reminds us that though our culture will sway back and forth, only God's Word is unchanging and true. Jesus here recalls that when God created marriage, it was between “male and female” — between *a man* and *his wife*.²⁷

F) The PICTURE of marriage: God not only established the institution of marriage, He also put it forth as a picture of His covenant with us. God's people are likened to the bride of Christ. And in laying down His life for her, Christ has modeled the way in which every husband is to love his bride (Ephesians 5:25ff). A husband is to love his own wife in the way that Christ has loved the church.²⁸ Is

²³ In fact, it's been rightly pointed out that the Hebrew word for “helper” here (*ezer*) is the same word used to refer to the role of God himself acting on behalf of His people; IE, God is our *help* or *helper* (see Psalm 33:20; 70:5; 115:9-11). Where we serve in the SE Asian context, the wife resembles more of a servant. But biblically, if husbands are to love their wives as Christ has loved the Church, it's *the husband* who is the servant. I love how Wayne Mack puts it: “A leader must have a servant's heart. And if he has a servant's heart he will act like a servant and react like a servant when he is treated like a servant.” (p33).

²⁴ Think about the Trinity. The Father and the Son are equal in power and glory, but they have different roles in the process of redemption. The Father planned out redemption. The Son was sent into the world to accomplish it. The Father and the Son share perfect equality in divinity—but they have different particular roles in the work of redemption.

²⁵ Wayne Mack, *Strengthening Your Marriage*, p22.

²⁶ This last aspect is quite significant. The command that God gave in Genesis 1:28 to fill the earth with His glory was never given exclusively to the man; it was clearly given to *both* of them, the man *and* the woman alike. So, it's not just that though man and woman have different roles, they nonetheless *possess equal value*; there's more: though man and woman have different roles, they nonetheless *share equal significance* in extending the kingdom of God and filling the earth with His glory.

²⁷ The three specific applications in this section were gleaned from O Palmer Robertson's, *The Christ of the Covenants*. We might also note that the Matthew 19:4-6 passage has a good bit to say when it comes to modern gender issues.

²⁸ One practical exhortation here: “Leadership means we must take the lead in reconciliation. I don't mean that wives should never say they are sorry. But in the relation between Christ and his church, who took the initiative to make all things new? Who left the comfort and security of his throne of justice to put mercy to work at Calvary? Who came back to Peter first after three denials? Who has returned to you again and again forgiving you and offering his fellowship afresh? So husbands, your headship means: Go ahead. Take the lead. It does not matter if it is her fault. That didn't stop Christ. Who will break the icy silence first? Who will choke out the words, 'I'm sorry, I want it to be better'? . . . Headship is not easy. It is the hardest, most humbling work in the world.” (Gleaned from Jay Sklar's notes; *quote from John Piper*). A few other practical examples of what it means that husbands are to love their brides as Christ has loved the Church: Jesus has voluntarily made himself *her servant* (see above); He is *patient* with her; He *prays* for her; he *forgives* her and *doesn't bear grudges*; He is always *seeking her deepest joy and greatest good* in all that He does. Further, He gave himself up for her *so that* He might sanctify her

it possible? I know I fail every day. But because of the finished work of Christ, there's hope not just for every new day, but for every new *moment*. Christ has covered us, and His Spirit changes us.

3. WORK (LABOR) as a creation ordinance:

A) The INAUGURATION of work: There are two passages in the early chapters of Genesis that speak of the institution of work as a third ordinance God established at creation. In Genesis 1:28, the Lord said to the man and the woman: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it. . .” Later, Genesis 2:15 tells us, “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” These two passages establish work as a third creation ordinance.

B) The BLESSING of work: Just like the Sabbath and marriage, God created work to be a blessing for man. Though the Lord did curse the ground on account of Adam's sin (Genesis 3:17-19), *labor itself* is not a bad thing, but a good thing for man; it's the way God designed us. It's important to note that *labor was established before the fall of man*. So, labor is a good thing. God made us to work.

Labor is good for man—and in the same way—*not* laboring is bad for man. It was when king David began to be slothful and slack in his kingly work that he fell into that great sin with Bathsheba: “Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel. . .But David stayed at Jerusalem” (2 Samuel 11:1). In the New Testament, when Paul heard about some Christians who didn't want to work anymore, he had stern words for them (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). This is because God created us to be a people who work.

So again, labor is a good thing for man. We can see this also in the way that labor is intimately related to the Sabbath principle: “Six days you shall labor. . .” (Exodus 20:9). Just as man is commanded *to rest* once every seven days, he's also commanded *to work* the other six. It's only in the context of six days of work that man enters into meaningful rest.²⁹ As Ecclesiastes 5:12 says, “The sleep of the working man is pleasant.” So again, labor is not a curse, but a blessing for man.

C) The GOAL of work: We also learn here in the earliest verses of Genesis about God's single overarching purpose for us in and through our daily work. After the Lord created man, He said to them in Genesis 1:28, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” God is telling man here that his purpose in life is to fill the whole earth with the glory of God, and to bring all things into subjection to His rule. *And it's the same for us:* “We are *re-made* in God's image in order to bring the whole of God's creation in subjection to the Creator.”³⁰ Whatever specific vocation God has called you to, He's given you the same overarching task that He gave to Adam: to fill the earth with His glory. The Great Commission wasn't anything new—the call to fill the whole earth with the glory of God and bring all things into subjection to Him began in Genesis 1:28.

D) The LOCALITY of work: The purpose of our existence is to fill the earth with God's glory. But if Genesis 1:28 teaches us about our purpose, Genesis 2:15 teaches us about our *locality*: “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” Having instructed Adam in the great purpose of his existence (1:28), the Lord then gives him a particular vocation and a local place in which to live out that calling: he is to serve God in a place called Eden. Adam was to live out God's great global mission in the context of a local place. This teaches us something pretty important: “The great work to be done is right in front of you with the persons and

(Eph.5:25-26), which means that we aren't to marry our wife *because* she is beautiful, but *in order to make her beautiful*.

²⁹ John Murray put it this way: “The stress laid upon the six days of labour needs to be duly appreciated. The divine ordinance is not simply that of labour; it is labour with a certain constancy. There is indeed respite from labour, the respite of one whole day every recurring seventh day. The cycle of respite is provided for, but there is also the cycle of labour. And the cycle of labour is as irreversible as the cycle of rest. The law of God cannot be violated with impunity. We can be quite certain that a great many of our physical and economic ills proceed from failure to observe the weekly day of rest. But we can also be quite sure that a great many of our economic ills arise from our failure to recognize the sanctity of six days of labour. Labour is not only a duty; it is a blessing.” (From his *Principles of Conduct*, p83).

³⁰ Taken from O Palmer Robertson audio lectures on the covenants. See 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:22; Hebrews 2:8.

places that [God's] providence has granted you.”³¹ When we think of glorifying God we can tend to think in terms of climbing some high mountain far away. But the way God is calling us to fill the earth with His glory is by doing the work He's given us to do in the place He's called us to be.³²

E) The DIGNITY of work: There are a lot of people who think that to really glorify God, you have to become a preacher, a pastor, or a missionary. Though they may not admit it, many Christians believe that having a job in “full-time ministry” glorifies God more than having a “normal job.” But look with me again at Genesis 2:15: “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” What was Adam's job? Adam was a *gardener*. He wasn't a preacher, a pastor, or a missionary. Adam brought great glory to God by being a gardener. And think about the rest of Genesis. Noah was a *farmer*. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were *herdsmen*. And Jesus brought as much glory to God being a carpenter as He did an itinerant preacher. In other words, you don't have to be involved in “full-time ministry” to be significant or bring glory to God. This is so important (and so freeing). You don't have to be a pastor or missionary to live a life of significance for God. You glorify God by loving and worshiping Him in the context of whatever it is that He's called you to do. God isn't asking us, “What's your job?” He looking into our hearts.³³

4. SUMMARY:

If the God who *created* us is the same as the God who has *redeemed* us, then we ought to give a lot of thought to the three institutions that He established at creation. *Work, marriage, and the Sabbath* are the most fundamental principles that God has given to define how He has designed us to live in this world. This was true for Adam and Eve—but *it's just as true for us as new creatures in Christ*.

These things sound so basic and ordinary to us: *work, marriage, and the Sabbath*. We want to ask, When do we get to the deeper stuff? But there's an important lesson here. For many of us, when we think of living a life that glorifies God, we can tend to think about *doing extraordinary things* for God. But what *extraordinary things* did Adam and Eve *do for God* in Eden (while still sinless, remember)? “They ate food. They cared for animals. They planted seeds. . . They needn't be anything other than who they were, nowhere other than where they were, and possessing nothing more than what they had for God to be glorified by their lives. God was enough. . . Nothing more was needed. . . Holding hands, mowing the lawn, resisting foul temptations, and learning to love the one who created them was enough for a significant life.”³⁴ Let that sink in. For Adam and Eve, God was glorified in the midst of the *ordinary*. This might be hard for us: “We have trouble seeing how it is glorifying to God to eat food, learn to love, go to bed, and get up the next day for work.”³⁵ But one of the things we learn in Genesis 1-2 is that living a life of significance, living a life that glorifies God *doesn't mean doing extraordinary things*. What we learn from Adam and Eve is that the way we live a life of significance and glorify God is rather *by walking intimately with our God in the midst of the ordinary*.

II. The First Created Being: *Who was Adam?*

1. Adam was a HISTORICAL FIGURE:

It has become a popular trend recently to deny the fact that Adam was a true historical figure. Many people assume that the theory of evolution has shown the creation narrative to be nothing but a *mythical account* of how the world came into being (myth rather than history). Others claim that the early chapters of Genesis are meant to be read as a *poetic account* of how the world came into being (poetry rather than history). As a result, there are even some professing Christians that believe the

³¹ Zack Eswine, *Sensing Jesus*, p52.

³² This may be convicting for some of us but it can also be quite freeing: Even when Adam was sinless, he was limited. God didn't expect or ask Adam to cultivate the entire known world. The plan was to fill the earth with God's glory, yes; but Adam's unique role in that grand mission was to be responsible for one place, the garden of Eden. God knows we are limited. He isn't calling us to be everywhere and do everything. He's just calling us to be faithful in the place where He's put us.

³³ This truth gratefully gleaned from Jay Sklar's course on the *Old Testament History Books* at Covenant Seminary.

³⁴ Insight from Zack Eswine, *Sensing Jesus*, pp34-35.

³⁵ Ibid, p49.

Scriptural account of Adam and Eve to be a mythical or poetical story rather than a historical reality. *They claim that the story of Adam and Eve contains theological truths, but not historical facts.* They say that we can affirm the spiritual truths of the creation and fall of man, without needing to affirm their historical reality. In other words, they claim that we don't need to affirm the fact that Adam and Eve were two literal human beings who did, indeed, violate God's command in the garden of Eden.

This viewpoint, however, directly contradicts what Scripture itself teaches about Adam and Eve. The Scriptures clearly portray Adam and Eve as literal, historical figures. We see this in several ways:³⁶

A) The GENEALOGIES of the Scriptures: There are *three* genealogies in Scripture that trace back to Adam: Genesis chapter 5 is a record of the genealogy of the human race from Adam until Noah. 1 Chronicles 1-6 traces the genealogies of David back to Abraham, Abraham back to Noah, and Noah back to Adam. Then the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3 traces back to Adam, showing that Jesus was the direct physical descendant of a literal Adam (*Genesis 5:3; 1 Chronicles 1:1; Luke 3:38*).

B) The TEACHING of Jesus: Jesus clearly understood Adam and Eve to be a literal historical figures as He taught on marriage in Matthew 19: "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (*Matthew 19:4-6*).

C) The PREACHING of Paul: As he preached in Athens, Paul affirmed that God had made every nation on earth "from one man" (Acts 17:26). Paul believed in and preached a historical Adam.

D) The DOCTRINE of Justification: The basis of our justification in Christ is fundamentally rooted in the existence of a literal historical Adam. Paul parallels Adam and Christ in Romans 5, showing how through one man life and justification came into the world, in exactly the same way as through one man death and condemnation had come into the world (Romans 5:12-19). So, in Paul's mind, the historicity of Adam is not only just as real—but also just as important—as the historicity of Christ.

So then, the Scriptures are quite clear on this point: Adam and Eve are not to be understood as figurative or mythical characters. The Scriptures put them forth as literal, concrete, historical figures.

2. Adam was an UNIQUE CREATURE:

A) Adam was set apart from ALL OTHER ANIMALS: In Genesis 1:26 we read: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. . .'" This was much different than all the other creatures God had made, because Scripture says that God made them "after their kind." It was only man who was made in God's very image and likeness. But what exactly does that mean?³⁷

When Scripture says that God made Adam in His image, it's referencing both Adam's *rationality* on the one hand: his reason, intellect, conscience and will—the things that set him apart from the beasts; and his possession of *true holiness and righteousness* on the other: he wasn't just in a state of spiritual neutrality—he knew and loved and walked with God.³⁸ Adam was both set apart from unreasoning

³⁶ Most of the following section and Scripture proofs taken from John Stott's commentary on *Romans*, p163.

³⁷ Many early theologians saw a distinction between man being made in God's *image* on the one hand and in His *likeness* on the other. Some believed that image referred to man's body, while likeness referred to man's rationality and morality. Others (such as Augustine) claimed that image related to man's rationality, while likeness related to man's morality. But the best understanding of Scripture here, which is now the majority view, is that *likeness* simply is a further explanation of *image*.

³⁸ Berkhof puts it: "We are told that God made man 'very good,' Gen. 1:31, and 'upright,' Eccl. 7:29. The New Testament indicates very specifically the nature of man's original condition where it speaks of man as being renewed in Christ, that is, as being brought back to a former condition. The condition to which he is restored in Christ is clearly not one of neutrality, neither good nor bad, in which the will is in a state of perfect equilibrium, but one of true knowledge, Col. 3:10, righteousness and holiness, Eph. 4:24. These three elements constitute the original righteousness, which was lost by sin, but is regained in Christ. . . Man's creation in this moral image implies that the original condition of man was one of positive holiness, and not a state of innocence or moral neutrality." Robert Peterson puts it thus: "Since the restoration of man in Christ which accords with God involves righteousness and true holiness, the original *imago dei* must have included the same." (*Class Notes*, p37).

beasts *and* set apart in holiness to God.³⁹ As made in God's image, Adam was also created as a *spiritual* and *immortal* being, for he was endowed with an immortal soul that would never perish.⁴⁰

We could think of man being created in the image of God as a person standing in front of a mirror; as he does so, we can say two things: 1) the person is not the same as the image (man is not God); yet, 2) the image in the mirror is the exact representation of the person (man bears the image of God). In the same way, there are, on the one hand, some characteristics that man does *not* share with God: He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable; we are not. *We are not God*. Man was never meant to be everywhere (omnipresent), know everything (omniscient), or do everything (omnipotent).⁴¹ That man was made in God's image never meant that man *was* God. On the other hand, when God created Adam, He endowed him with attributes such as wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.⁴² It's in these ways that man shows himself as having been created in the image of God.⁴³

An important question arises here: Has humanity lost God's image because of Adam's fall into sin? The short answer is no.⁴⁴ But though God's image has not been completely lost through the fall, it has been greatly corrupted and defiled.⁴⁵ Fallen man is now a mix of great dignity on the one hand *but also* profound depravity. As one put it, fallen man is like a glorious ruin.⁴⁶ A ruined castle tells the story of both great glory and great decay. But Scripture tells us that *in Christ*, God is transforming us even now into His image day by day, and He will conform us completely to His image at glory.⁴⁷

B) Adam was set apart from ALL OTHER MEN: Adam was also completely unique from other men in that he was the only human being (besides the Savior) to come into the world without the poison of sin already running through his veins. As Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, “God made man upright.”

Now, above all, we need to understand that we are not born into an “upright” state. We are *not* born in the same state in which Adam was created. Because of the fall (we're getting to this soon), we are born as sinners. And understand this: we're not sinners because we sin—rather—*we sin because we're sinners*. We sin because we're born with a nature that loves sin. But it wasn't this way with Adam. The chart below may help us think about man's nature as created, fallen, redeemed and perfected:⁴⁸

³⁹ Some limit the image of God in man to his *reason and intellect*: God's image is evidenced in the ways he differs from the beasts that perish (*IE, the Greek theologians*). Others limit the image of God in man to his *true holiness and righteousness*: God's image is evidenced by what was lost by the fall and which is restored in Christ (*IE, Lutheran theologians*). According to this second view, man lost God's image entirely through the fall. But Reformed theologians argue that Scripture speaks of *both*. On the one hand, Colossians 3:10 tells us that believers are being renewed after the image of God. Ephesians 4:24 adds that God's image in man included true righteousness and holiness. So, being renewed after the image of God is equated to being conformed to Christ. But, the image of God *also* includes man's reason and intellect—the things that set him apart from the beasts. After all, even after the fall, in Genesis 9:6, God affirmed that man was yet in the image of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9). In light of these passages, we cannot say that man has lost God's image *completely* through the fall.

⁴⁰ So to summarize: the image of God includes 1) rationality and 2) righteousness; as well as 3) spirituality and 4) immortality.

⁴¹ Theologians call these attributes “non-communicable” or “incommunicable” attributes. This insight was gleaned from Zack Eswine's, *Sensing Jesus*, and has profound implications for how we do ministry as a human being made in God's image.

⁴² Theologians call these attributes “communicable” attributes.

⁴³ These insights were gleaned from G.I. Williamson's explanation of *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, p18.

⁴⁴ The simple observation of one English writer speaks volumes: “Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be.” (William Hazlitt, *On Wit and Humor*). For Scripture references on this subject see the last footnote in the second paragraph under section A.

⁴⁵ Calvin put it this way: “Therefore, even though we grant that God's image was not totally annihilated and destroyed in him, yet it was so corrupted that whatever remains is frightful deformity. . . Now God's image is the perfect excellence of human nature which shone in Adam before his defection, but was subsequently so vitiated and almost blotted out that nothing remains after the ruin except what is confused, mutilated, and disease-ridden. Therefore in some part it now is manifest in the elect, in so far as they have been reborn in the spirit; but it will attain its full splendor in heaven.” (*Institutes*, 1.15.4).

⁴⁶ C.S. Lewis. Thomas Boston, many years before, put it this way: “Here was a stately building, man carved like a fair palace, but now lying in ashes: let us stand and look on the ruins, and drop a tear.” (*Human Nature in its Fourfold State*, p27).

⁴⁷ See Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:9-10; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 3:20-21. All this summed up so well in the *Reformation Heritage Study Bible*: “When man fell into sin, knowledge gave way to ignorance, righteousness to iniquity, and holiness to ungodliness. The Creator had made man 'a little lower than the angels' and had crowned him 'with glory and honor' (Ps.8:5), but man by his own act cast himself down into sin, guilt, misery, and shame and cast away his glorious, honorable crown. The good news of the gospel is that fallen man can be cleansed from sin, renewed by grace, and restored to honor.” (p1733). An important application here that Zack Eswine draws out in *Sensing Jesus* is that recovering a resemblance to God in our humanity is actually what it means for us to grow in grace: We could say, “The goal of life and ministry is for his grace to recover us to our intended humanity in Him.” (p24).

⁴⁸ The bottom row is my own explanation; as it seems to me we need further clarity between *Pre-fall* man and *Reborn* man:

THE FOUR STATES OF MAN (AUGUSTINE)

PRE-FALL MAN	POST-FALL MAN	REBORN MAN	GLORIFIED MAN
Able not to sin/ Able to sin	Not able not to sin/ Able to sin	Able (prone) to sin/ Able not to sin	Not able to sin/ Able not to sin
<i>Temporally free from sin</i>	<i>Enslaved to sin</i>	<i>At war with sin</i>	<i>Eternally free from sin</i>

So then, Adam wasn't created in a just a morally *neutral* state. We can tend to think this way sometimes. But God didn't just make Adam “not bad” — He made him “upright.” God didn't make Adam “neutral” — He made him “very good” (Genesis 1:31).⁴⁹ This doesn't just mean the absence of evil, but the embodiment of true righteousness: Adam loved the Lord his God with all of his heart.⁵⁰

It might be asked, “If God made Adam and Eve upright, how did they fall into sin?” This is where we have to acknowledge that some things we will only know “in part.” What we do know is that God “made them after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; having the law of God written in their hearts, and power to fulfill it, and dominion over the creatures; yet subject to fall.”⁵¹ And this should make our own salvation all the more precious. Our condition in Christ is infinitely better than Adam's condition, because though we struggle with sin, our position is secure.⁵² Our security doesn't rest upon us not sinning (as with Adam)—but upon the merit and blood of our Savior.

3. Adam was a COVENANT REPRESENTATIVE:

This is something we're going to be spending a lot of time looking at as we move forward in our study of Genesis 2-3 and the corollary passage in Romans 5:12-19. We're going to see that when Adam was given the test in the garden, he wasn't just acting as a single individual but as the representative for all humankind. What this means is that Adam's obedience or disobedience to God's command would have profound lasting consequences—not just for himself—but for the entire human race.

III. The Covenant of Works

1. The ESSENTIAL NATURE of the Covenant of Works:

When God created Adam, he entered into a covenant relationship with him.⁵³ It was in the context of this covenant relationship that God gave Adam the blessings of work, sabbath rest, and marriage. Adam and Eve enjoyed the blessing and favor of their covenant God (Genesis 1:28). His smile

Pre-fall man had no sin to speak of; *Reborn* man possesses radically new desires but continues to struggle with remaining sin. Further, though it is true that reborn man is at war with his sin, and thus *able (or prone) to sin*, I believe it is incorrect to affirm that he is *able not to sin* as a Christian. Paul address this very issue in Romans 7, and if Paul was never able to rise completely above his indwelling corruptions, neither can we. Indeed, to grow in Christ is to see more and more of our hidden corruptions! If it is not so, we are deceiving ourselves. For this was Paul's own testimony in his letters: from “least of the apostles” (1 Corinthians 15:9; written in 53-55 A.D.), to “least of all saints” (Ephesians 3:8; written in 62 A.D.) to finally “chief of sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15; written in the mid-60's A.D.). As Edward Fisher put it in the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*: “Yea, indeed, it is impossible for any mere man in the time of this life to keep [the law] perfectly; yea, though he be a regenerate man; for the law requireth of man that he love the Lord with all his heart, soul, and might; and there is not the holiest man that lives, but he is flesh as well as spirit in all parts and faculties of his soul, and therefore cannot love the Lord perfectly.”

⁴⁹ The Scriptures would later testify of *fallen* man that, “There is none righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:11), but before man fell, Adam was upright. Of fallen man the Scriptures testify that “there is none who does good, there is not even one” (Romans 3:12), but before man fell, Genesis 1:31 tells us that after God had created man, what He had made was “very good.”

⁵⁰ Thomas Boston put it this way: “Now the spirit may be willing, but the flesh is weak. But there was no such thing with Adam; there was no mixture of corruption in his soul, and nothing from the body to hinder his course of obedience” (From Boston's, *A View of the Covenant of Works*).

⁵¹ Westminster Larger Catechism #17.

⁵² Thomas Watson put it this way: “If we once get to be heirs of the covenant of grace, we are in a better state than before. Adam stood on his own legs, and therefore he fell; we stand in the strength of Christ. Under the first covenant, the justice of God, as an avenger of blood, pursues us; but if we get into the second covenant we are in the city of refuge, we are safe, and the justice of God is pacified towards us.” (From his *Body of Divinity*).

⁵³ See the footnote at the very beginning of this lesson. As Herman Hoeksema put it: “From the very first moment of his existence, and by virtue of his being created after the image of God, Adam stood in covenant relation to God and was conscious of the living fellowship and friendship which is essential to that relationship.” (*Reformed Dogmatics*, p315).

rested upon them. It was in the context of this covenant relationship that God gave Adam one specific command.⁵⁴ We read in *Genesis 2:16-17*, “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’” Adam and Eve enjoyed the blessing and favor of God in Eden; but that would all change if Adam disobeyed God’s command.⁵⁵

It’s for this reason that this covenant with Adam is called *The Covenant of Works*.⁵⁶ The continued blessing and favor of God rested upon Adam’s obedience (upon his *works*). His position was not secure. He could be thrust out of life into death, and he indeed would be if he did not continue to live before God a life of personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience.⁵⁷ Adam’s standing before God hinged upon his obedience. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism summarizes it: “When God had

⁵⁴ As O Palmer Robertson says: “In considering the prohibition of Genesis 2:17, it is essential to appreciate the organic unity between this commandment and the total responsibility of man as created. The requirement concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil must not be conceived as a somewhat arbitrary stipulation without integral relation to the total life of man. . . All that Adam did had direct bearing on his relation to the covenant God of creation. . . His life as a covenant creature must be viewed as a unified whole. . . If the covenant of creation is thought not to exceed Adam’s probation-test, a curious brand of Christianity ultimately emerges. It is a brand of Christianity greatly at odds with that in which the probation-test is understood as the focal point of a total life-embracing covenantal relationship.” (*The Christ of the Covenants*, pp81-82).

⁵⁵ We say Adam because the command was given to Adam alone: the Hebrew second person pronoun is *singular* in Genesis 2:16-17; 3:17. It was Adam alone who was the covenant representative for the entire human race. Witsius says: “Though Eve had the first hand in this crime, yet it is usually in scripture ascribed to Adam: by one man sin entered into the world (Romans 5:12)...Adam was the head of the covenant, with whom, even before the creation of Eve, God seems to have transacted...nor was the covenant judged to be entirely broken, till Adam also added his own crime to that of his wife’s.” (*Economy*, pp135-36).

⁵⁶ Kevan helps us understand the history of the concept in covenantal thought. He says: “The concept of a Covenant of Works was relatively new [for the Puritans], being no part of the theological formulation of Calvin and those who labored with him. The Reformers never went beyond the belief in one covenant, namely, the Covenant of Grace. The idea of the Covenant of Works was introduced into British theology by William Perkins and others at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and was intended to serve as a kind of bridge linking revealed theology to natural theology.” (*The Grace of Law*, p111). As we mentioned earlier, there are also other names for the Covenant of Works. It has been called the *Covenant of Nature* because nature hadn’t been infected yet with sin at the time the Lord established the covenant with Adam. It has also been called a *Covenant of Life* because it held out the promise of life in the tree of life in the garden. More recently it’s also been called the *Covenant of Creation* (O Palmer Robertson prefers this designation). Some object to the name *Covenant of Works* for especially two reasons. *First*, it is said that there was also grace in the Covenant of Works with Adam. *Second*, it is said that this terminology narrows all attention in God’s dealings with Adam to the single command given to him in Genesis 2:16-17, to the neglect of the whole of the covenant relationship between God and Adam. In response, I would tentatively agree with the reasoning of the second objection. It is true that God’s covenant with Adam was not exclusively limited to the command of Genesis 2:16-17. The command was there and the command carried massive implications; but the command was not the entirety of the covenant relationship between God and Adam. As to the first objection, along with others, I would draw a very distinct line between the goodness and kindness of God on the one hand, and the grace of God on the other. Grace in Scripture is always in the context and against the background of sin. True biblical grace cannot be properly understood apart from sin. So the fact that Adam had yet no sin to speak of before the fall renders it impossible, in my understanding, to speak of the presence of God’s grace towards Adam in the garden in Genesis 1-2. There is another *third* issue that can be mentioned in respect of the phrase Covenant of Works. It is not necessarily in the phrase itself, but in the phrase as it relates to its counterpart, the Covenant of Grace. From Adam’s perspective alone, these two phrases very accurately describe God’s two great covenants. For Adam was the covenant head for the first, the Covenant of Works; and after that covenant had been broken, he was then a recipient (but not the covenant head) of the Covenant of Grace. And from Adam’s perspective, these two terms would describe God’s dealings with him, with Adam the man, perfectly. For his own righteousness (IE, works) was the basis and foundation of the Covenant of Works; but it was the grace of God and God’s own righteousness that was the basis and foundation of the Covenant of Grace. So, from Adam’s perspective, the terms fit perfectly. But there is a lack of preciseness when it comes to the two phrases being used in general. For the *Covenant of Works* is named so as it relates to God’s relationship with *the covenant head* (Adam); but the *Covenant of Grace* is named so as it relates—not to the covenant head (Christ Jesus) — but to *the recipients and beneficiaries* of the covenant head (believers in Jesus). Louis Berkhof explains it this way: “Basically, the Covenant of Grace is simply the execution of the original agreement by Christ as our surety. He undertook freely to carry out the will of God. He placed Himself under the law, that He might redeem them that were under the law, and were no more in a position to obtain life by their own fulfillment of the law. He came to do what Adam failed to do, and did it in virtue of a covenant agreement. And if this is so, and the covenant of grace is, *as far as Christ is concerned*, simply the carrying out of the original agreement, it follows that the latter must also have been of the nature of a covenant.” Thomas Boston reflects thus: “But that time being so expired, he [Adam] would have been confirmed in goodness, so that he could no more fall away, as a part of the life promised. And the covenant of works would have forever remained as man’s eternal security for, and ground of his eternal life; but no longer as a rule of his obedience, for that would have been to reduce him to the state of trial he was in before, and to have set him anew to work as a title to what he already possessed, by virtue of his supposed keeping of that covenant. . . *after Adam’s standing out the set time, all mankind then standing with him, would have been confirmed; and those who should afterwards have come into the world, would not only have had original righteousness conveyed to them from him, but have been confirmed too in holiness and happiness, so*

created man He entered into a covenant of life with him upon the condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil upon the pain of death.”⁵⁸

Now, it's important to understand that though God required perfect obedience from him, Adam's relationship with God wasn't based on fear. Adam was the friend of God. Adam shared intimate communion with God. God didn't just command Adam not to eat of the one forbidden tree; He invited him to *eat freely* of any of the other trees of the garden.⁵⁹ “In all his life and work Adam was to be busy as the friend-servant of God, not as a slave who works from the motive of fear for the whip, nor as a wage earner who puts in his hours merely for his wages, but freely from the love of God. . .”⁶⁰ Still, in the Covenant of Works, it was absolutely essential for Adam to obey in order to enjoy God's favor. Continuing in the Lord's blessing was wholly contingent upon Adam's obedience.

2. The SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION for the Covenant of Works:

It's important to note that the word “covenant” is never used in Genesis 2-3. Still, this relationship between God and Adam in the garden is considered to be a covenant for the following reasons:

A) Scripture doesn't always use the word for covenant when a covenant takes place. We have one example of this in *the Davidic Covenant*: Psalm 89 makes clear that what was happening in 2 Samuel 7 was a covenant—God was confirming His covenant with David. But there is actually no mention of a covenant in 2 Samuel 7 itself. Another example is with *the Patriarchs*: Psalm 105:8-10 tells us that the covenant God made with Abraham was also confirmed (as a covenant) to Isaac and then to Jacob—but the word covenant isn't actually used in Genesis as it relates to God's dealings with Jacob. Maybe *the best example* of this is right in Genesis 2-3: Genesis 2:18-25 describes Adam and Eve coming together in marriage. Biblically, marriage is a covenant. Scripture elsewhere refers to marriage as a covenant relationship (Malachi 2:14). But the word covenant wasn't used in Genesis 2.

B) It is called a covenant in Hosea 6:7. Hosea 6:7 seems to tell us quite explicitly that God made a covenant with Adam. It says this: “like Adam they have transgressed the covenant.” This is the most

that they could not have fallen.” (A View to the Covenant of Works). Edward Fisher, in his famous *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, puts it this way: “*And thus did our Lord Jesus Christ enter into the same covenant of works that Adam did to deliver believers from it: Our Lord Jesus Christ became surety for the elect in the second covenant. Heb. 8:22; and in virtue of that suretyship, whereby he put himself in the room of the principal debtors, he came under the same covenant of works that Adam did; in so far as the fulfilling of that covenant in their stead was the very condition required of him, as the second Adam in the second covenant. . . How then is the second covenant a covenant of grace? In respect of Christ, it was most properly and strictly a covenant of works, in that he made a proper, real, and full satisfaction in behalf of the elect; but in respect of them, it is purely a covenant of richest grace, in as much as God accepted the satisfaction from a surety, which he might have demanded of them; provided the surety himself and gives all to them freely for his sake.*” (p43). Vos says: “The covenant of grace is nothing other than a covenant of works accomplished in Christ, the fulfillment of which is given to us by grace. . . The covenant of grace is the implementation of the covenant of works in the surety for us.” (*Dogmatics*, V2, pp33,36). And again: “When we say that it is a covenant of *grace*, then we must consider specifically the relationship of guilty man before God in this covenant. When one considers the Mediator of the covenant, then naturally no grace is shown to Him. Considered in Christ, everything is a matter of carrying out the demands of the covenant of works according to God's strict justice, though in another form. . . God shows grace to us when He demands from Christ what He can demand from us. Considered in Christ, everything is strict justice; considered in us, everything is free grace.” (p120). Because of this, it seems to me that there might be a better designation for these two great covenants than Covenant of Works and Covenant of Grace (though I have used these terms myself here). Perhaps it is best to distinguish them (as the Westminster Confession at times) as the first covenant being the *Covenant of Life*, the second as the *Covenant of Grace*. Or, as O Palmer Robertson, the first the *Covenant of Creation*, the second the *Covenant of Redemption*. Or perhaps simply *the Covenant in Adam* and *the Covenant in Christ*. I don't object to the present terminology (again, I've used it myself here), but do think it to be helpful and necessary to understand the things written above. I've also included a simple chart on all this after Section III, Point 5, Sub-point D.

⁵⁷ The language of *personal, perfect, and perpetual obedience* is the language of the Westminster Larger Catechism #20.

⁵⁸ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 12.

⁵⁹ This phrase is literally in Hebrew, “eating you shall eat. . .” Henry Ainsworth explains the Hebrew phrase, “That is, ‘mayest (or shalt) freely eat.’ Thus God first sheweth his love and liberality before he makes any restraint. The doubling of words is often used in Scripture for more earnestness and assurance. . .” (From his *Annotations on the Pentateuch*, pp14-15). John Gill describes the Hebrew phrase the same way: *of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat*: “a very generous, large, and liberal allowance this; or ‘in eating thou mayest eat’; which was giving full power, and leaving them without any doubt and uncertainty about their food; which they might freely take, and freely eat of, wherever they found it, or were inclined to, even of any, and every tree in the garden, excepting one, next forbidden.”

⁶⁰ Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, p316.

straightforward reading of the passage.⁶¹ Just as Adam transgressed the covenant that God had made with him, so Israel transgressed the covenant that God made with them at Mount Sinai. In other words, God must have made a covenant with Adam. It is true that the verse can also be translated, “like man” (cf. Psalm 82:7), since the Hebrew word for *Adam* can refer either to mankind or to the person Adam. But even if “man” was the right translation, it would attest to the fact that mankind in general is in some way bound in covenant relation to God. And so: “In either case, Hosea 6:7 would appear to apply covenantal terminology to the relation of God to man established by creation.”⁶²

C) It is a necessary implication from Paul's words in Romans 5:12-19. In this passage, Paul parallels Adam and Christ as two covenant heads.⁶³ Here he argues that life and justification come to all⁶⁴ through one man (Christ) in the same way that death and condemnation had come to all through Adam. So, Adam was just as much a covenant representative as Christ. The difference is that Adam brought death and condemnation to all those he represented (through his disobedience), whereas Christ brought life and justification to all those He represented (through His obedience). Since a covenant representative is by definition the representative of a covenant, it seems strange to say that Adam was a covenant representative while at the same time claiming there was in fact no covenant.

D) Summary and Significance: Because of the reasons we've mentioned, we take God's relationship with Adam in the garden to be a *covenant relationship*. It's true that there are some who disagree, and it's also true that we can't claim this was indeed the case with absolute certainty; there are some things we need to hold more tightly than other things. But at the same time, we believe the biblical evidence does indeed point to the fact that God's relation to Adam *was* a covenantal relationship.

Why does it matter? Because it helps us to understand the nature of the relationship between God and Adam. The command to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil wasn't just a random stipulation. It was a command given in the context of an intimate covenant relationship between God and Adam. There was a living, covenant bond between them. God's dealings with Adam were so much more than: “I created you so don't do this.” As a marriage covenant is deeply personal as well as legal, so it was with God and Adam in the garden. The requirement was given in the context of covenant intimacy. It's one thing for someone to tell a stranger, “Don't eat my lunch.” It's another thing for a man to tell his wife, “Don't be unfaithful to me.” When Adam disobeyed, it wasn't just the transgression of a random command, it was the shattering of a covenant relationship.

3. The BINDING REQUIREMENT of the Covenant of Works:

So again, in the context of the covenant, God required of Adam simple and perfect obedience to His command: In *Genesis 2:16-17* we read, “The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”⁶⁵ God's clear command was that Adam was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now, it doesn't seem that there was anything intrinsically evil about this tree: “There was in itself nothing sinful in eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. . . Only God's forbidding word made it wrong for Adam to eat of the tree.”⁶⁶ The command that God gave Adam was a simple test of obedience that focused on whether or not he would obey the Lord.⁶⁷ Would he submit to the Word of God? Would he obey simply because God told him to? Would he acknowledge that he is the creature and not the Creator?⁶⁸

⁶¹ O Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, p23.

⁶² Ibid, p24.

⁶³ See also 1 Corinthians 15:21-22.

⁶⁴ IE, all those whom Christ represented, who are safe in Christ; not all indiscriminately.

⁶⁵ Ligon Duncan notes here that Adam *was already in* a state of blessing. It wasn't that Adam would be transferred from a state of non-blessing to a state of blessing if he obeyed God's command; it was whether he would *continue* in that state of blessing (and receive even greater blessing), or *fall* from that state of blessing, that was at stake in his obedience.

⁶⁶ Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, pp320-21.

⁶⁷ Berkhof says that in this one command, “the demands of the law were, so to say, concentrated on a single point.” Edward Fisher (*Marrow of Modern Divinity*) says: “That one commandment was in effect a summary of the whole duty of man. . .”

⁶⁸ Reformed theologians have been decisively split over the question: *Had Adam obeyed, would he have merited life through his obedience?* The emphasis is on *merit*. On the one side of the debate is *Charles Hodge*, who affirms that Adam would

4. The UNIVERSAL SCOPE of the Covenant of Works:

Once again, though it is not immediately apparent in Genesis chapters 2-3, Scripture later makes it very clear that Adam was acting as a covenant representative for the entire human race. It's as if every single person who has ever lived was loaded together into one massive *airplane*, and Adam was the pilot. Or all humankind was together on one enormous *ship*, and Adam was the captain. If the pilot takes the plane down, everyone perishes; if the captain sinks the boat, all those aboard are lost. Romans 5:12-19 makes it clear that the fate of the entire human race was at stake in Adam's obedience or disobedience to the command God had given him (we'll talk about this more later).⁶⁹

5. The PRESENT SIGNIFICANCE of the Covenant of Works:

A) The Covenant of Works has been completely shattered: It's been shattered in so far as it relates to Adam and all those whom he represented.⁷⁰ Remember, it wasn't just Adam's personal destiny

indeed have merited life had he obeyed: "The word 'condition,' however, is used in two senses. Sometimes it means the meritorious consideration on the ground of which certain benefits are bestowed. In this sense perfect obedience was the condition of the covenant originally made with Adam. Had he retained his integrity he would have merited the promised blessing. For to him that worketh the reward is not of grace but of debt. In the same sense the work of Christ is the condition of the covenant of redemption. It was the meritorious ground, laying a foundation in justice for the fulfillment of the promises made to Him by the Father." On the other side of the debate is *Louis Berkhof*, who denies Adam would have merited anything from God had he obeyed: "And while transgression of the law would render him liable to punishment, the keeping of it would not constitute an inherent claim to a reward. Even if he did all that was required of him, he would still have to say, I am but an unprofitable servant, for I have merely done that which it was my duty to do. Under this purely natural relationship man could not have merited anything." These are the two lines of thinking. They are both compelling. On the one hand, it is compelling to say that even Adam would have to say he was merely an unprofitable servant doing the will of his heavenly Master. The other side is also compelling, especially if one considers the parallels between Adam and Christ in Romans 5:12-21 and its logical ramifications for Adam's obedience. Under this line of thinking *Herman Witsius* is also very compelling, when having established the fact that God had made promises to Adam upon his obedience, he observes two things from Scripture. *First, Witsius observes:* "It is universally allowed, that Paul, in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, where he treats on justification, does under that name comprise the adjudging to eternal life; he in many places proves that a sinner cannot be justified, that is, lay claim to eternal life, by the works of the law; but never by this argument, because the law had no promises of eternal life. . . On the contrary, the apostle teaches, that the commandment, considered in itself, was ordained to life, Romans 7:10; that is, was such as by the observance thereof life might have once been obtained; which if the law could still bestow on the sinner, 'verily righteousness should have been by the law.' Galatians 3:21. . . If Adam therefore had persevered in obedience, the law would have brought him to that same inheritance, which now in Christ is allotted not to him that worketh, but to him that believeth." *Second, Witsius observes:* "We are above all to observe how the apostle distinguishes the righteousness, which is of the law, from the evangelical. Of the first he thus speaks, Romans 10:5, 'Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law; that the man which doth those things shall live by them.' Of the second, he writes as follows, Romans 1:17, 'The just shall live by faith.' On both sides, the promise of life is the same, and proposed in the very same words. Nor does the apostle in the least hint that one kind of life is promised by the law, another by the gospel. . . But to what man, thus working, were the promises made? Was it to the sinner? Was it not to the man in a state of innocence? And was it not then, when it might truly be said if thou continuest to do well, thou shalt be heir of that life upon that condition? And this could be said to none but to innocent Adam. Was it not then, when the promise was actually made? For after sin, there is not so much a promise as a denunciation of wrath, and an intimation of a curse, proposing that as the condition of obtaining life, which is now evidently impossible to be performed. I therefore conclude, that to Adam, in the covenant of works, was promised the same eternal life, to be obtained by the righteousness which is of the law, of which believers are made partakers through Christ." So Witsius concludes (see *Economy of the Covenants*, V1, pp73-75). I tend to side with his arguments. However, I wonder if much of this is purely speculative, especially in light of the fact that so many good Reformed theologians disagree. It is our portion now to know *in part*. The fact is, Adam *didn't* obey. So maybe instead of wondering what *would have* happened if he had, we ought to simply glory in what *has* happened. What we do know for sure is that sin, condemnation and death were imputed to us in Adam. But now, in Jesus, *the Lord is our righteousness*.

⁶⁹ "The very truth is, Adam by his fall threw down our whole nature headlong into the same destruction, and drowned his whole offspring in the same gulf of misery, and the reason is, because, by God's appointment, he was not to stand or fall as a single person only, but as a common public person, representing all mankind to come of him." (Fisher, *Marrow of Divinity*).

⁷⁰ I want to be really clear about this. When we say that Adam represented all his posterity, we mean that he represented every single person who would ever live—*except one*—Christ Jesus. For every single one of them, the Covenant of Works has been shattered beyond recognition. It's not some standing invitation for anyone who wants to give it a try. Adam represented us all when he sinned and fell. The test was given, Adam failed, and the sentence was pronounced: death and condemnation for Adam and all his posterity. Christ, however, was never included in Adam's posterity. It is for this reason that he could redeem His people by means of himself perfectly fulfilling the Covenant of Works (Section D below). So when Adam sinned, the Covenant of Works was shattered as it respected Adam and all his posterity. For them the door of the Covenant of Works has been slammed shut forever. But those ancient doors might be opened by Another. For Him alone was it written: "Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in" (Psalm 24:7, 9).

that was on the line—it was all humanity with him. He didn't just represent himself; he represented all of us. So when Adam disobeyed—that was it—the covenant was shattered, and there was no going back.⁷¹ It's vital for us to understand that “no one can stand in Adam's place to try to merit favor with God.”⁷² Adam already stood in your place (and mine), and he failed and fell, and we fell with him. So there's no longer any hope for us to attain eternal life this way. When Adam disobeyed, the Covenant of Works was shattered in such a way that it could never be put back together again.⁷³

B) The Covenant of Works carries with it lasting effects: When Adam disobeyed, the Covenant of Works itself was completely shattered—but *its effects* continue to this day. All humanity fell with Adam into condemnation and death. Because of his transgression, every single one of us is born with hearts that are both *unable* and *unwilling* to love and obey God: we're both *enslaved* to our sin (unable) and *in love* with our sin (unwilling). Because of Adam's sin, every one of us is born as a guilty sinner under God's wrath and condemnation. So, Adam's sin absolutely carried lasting effects.

C) The Covenant of Works represents what man still owes to God: When Adam disobeyed, the Covenant of Works was shattered. And because of that, we are wholly unable to live before God the way that He commands. *But this in no way lets us off the hook.*⁷⁴ God still demands perfect obedience to His Law. Jesus tells us that we are to be perfect, as our heavenly father is perfect. All men are still commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. The standard hasn't changed just because we can't attain to it anymore. God still demands our perfect obedience.

D) The Covenant of Works prepares the way for redemption: It does this in two ways. *First*, the Covenant of Works exposes our **NEED** for redemption: Without an understanding of what happened in Genesis 3, we will never understand why it is that we so desperately need a Savior. The only reason anyone comes to Christ is that they have first been confronted with the reality of their condition: that we stand presently and personally under God's eternal wrath and condemnation. So, the Covenant of Works exposes our *need* for redemption. *Secondly*, the Covenant of Works provides the **HOPE** of our redemption: Christ came as the second Adam to do exactly what Adam

⁷¹ As Charles Hodge puts it: “If Adam acted not only for himself but also for his posterity, that fact determines the question, whether the covenant of works be still in force. In the obvious sense of the terms, to say that men are still under that covenant, is to say that they are still on probation; that the race did not fall when Adam fell. But if Adam acted as the head of the whole race, then all men stood their probation in him, and fell with him in his first transgression. We are by nature, *i. e.*, as we were born, the children of wrath. This fact is assumed in all the provisions of the gospel and in all the institutions of our religion. Children are required to be baptized for the remission of sin. But while the Pelagian doctrine is to be rejected, which teaches that each man comes into the world free from sin and free from condemnation, and stands his probation in his own person, it is nevertheless true that where there is no sin there is no condemnation. Hence our Lord said to the young man, ‘This do and thou shalt live.’ And hence the Apostle in the second chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, says that God will reward every man according to his works. To those who are good, He will give eternal life; to those who are evil, indignation and wrath. This is only saying that the eternal principles of justice are still in force. If any man can present himself before the bar of God and prove that he is free from sin, either imputed or personal, either original or actual, he will not be condemned. But the fact is that the whole world lies in wickedness. Man is an apostate race. Men are all involved in the penal and natural consequences of Adam's transgression. They stood their probation in him, and do not stand each man for himself.” (V2, p122).

⁷² Julian Zugg from his *Covenant Theology* course (From the MINTS website).

⁷³ Again, as Edward Fisher puts it: “The very truth is, our father Adam falling from God, did, by his fall, so dash him and us all in pieces, that there was no whole part left, either in him or us, fit to ground such a covenant upon.” (*Marrow*).

⁷⁴ Witsius says: “It is indeed a most destructive heresy to maintain, that man, sinful and obnoxious to punishment, is not bound to obedience. . . man, even after the violation of the covenant, continues bound, not only to obedience, but to a perfect performance of duty. . . The law therefore remains as the rule of our duty; but abrogated as to its federal nature; nor can it be the condition by the performance of which man may acquire a right to the reward (*Economy of the Covenants*, V2, pp151-59). As William Strong explains: “to all those who are in the first Adam, the first Covenant stands in force to this day. . . Every unregenerate man is under the Law as a Covenant of Works.” (*The Two Covenants*, pp2,38). Fisher says: “though strength to obey be lost, yet man having lost it by his own default, the obligation to obedience remains still; so that Adam and his offspring are no more discharged of their duties, because they have no strength to do them, than a debtor is quitted of his bond, because he wants [IE, lacks] money to pay it.” (*The Marrow*, p39). And Colquhoun says: “In consequence of God's having proposed the law in its covenant form, to Adam, [who stood] as the representative of all his natural descendants. . . all the children of men, while they continue in their natural state, remain firmly, in the sight of God, under the whole original obligation of it; even those of them, who, as members of the visible church, are under an external dispensation of the covenant of grace, remain under all its obligation. For though the law in its covenant form, is broken; yet, it is far from being repealed, or set aside. The obligation of this covenant, continues in all its force, in time and through eternity, upon every sinner who is not released from it, by God the other Party. The awful consequence is, that every unregenerate sinner is bound, at once to perform perfect obedience, and also to endure the full execution of the penal sanction.” (*Treatise of Law and Gospel*, p19).

had failed to do: “Jesus Christ enter[ed] into the same covenant of works that Adam did to deliver believers from it. . . He came under the same covenant of works that Adam did; in so far as the fulfilling of that covenant in their stead was the very condition required of him, as the second Adam in the second covenant.”⁷⁵ So, the Covenant of Works also provides the *hope* of our redemption. *Jesus* is our righteousness. It's His obedience—and not ours—that is the only basis of our salvation and security. So then: “The covenant of works is the basis of our *need* of redemption (because we have violated it) and our *hope* of redemption (because Christ has fulfilled its terms for us).”⁷⁶

EXCURSUS: COMPARING THE COVENANT OF WORKS AND THE COVENANT OF GRACE

	COVT.	REPRESENTED	REQUIRED	ACTION	RESULT	FOCUS
ADAM	Cov. of Works	All those from Adam	PERFECT OBEDIENCE	Disobedience	Death for all from Adam	The term “works” used with respect to the requirement of the covenant head
CHRIST	Cov. of Grace	All those in Christ		Obedience	Life for all in Christ	The term “grace” used with respect to the benefits for the covenant members

IV. The Fall of Adam

Let's turn together now to Genesis 3. As we turn there we can note that since Satan is present here in the garden, that lets us know that the fall in the angelic world must have already taken place. There couldn't have been a tempter if Satan and his angels hadn't already fallen. This is also a stark reminder for us, that what God is about to do for Adam and Eve something that *He didn't have to do*. He didn't give the fallen angels a second chance. But God would put into motion a plan of redemption for fallen humanity.

But before we can talk about what God would do to redeem fallen humanity, we have to understand why it is that fallen humanity needs to be redeemed. The passage that we're going to be looking at together is absolutely essential, because without a true understanding of our sin, we can never really understand or embrace God's grace. And we can learn a few things in particular about sin in Genesis 3:1-13. . .⁷⁷

1. The ENTRANCE of sin: *How Satan Tempts*

A) He questions God's CHARACTER (v1): Here in verse 1, Satan begins with insinuation rather with an argument: “Has God really said. . . ?” What's He doing? He's questioning God's character. How? By making God's command seem much harsher than it really was. What was God's command? To eat of any tree in the garden except one. But what did Satan insinuate? “Eve, did God really say you couldn't eat *any* of the fruit trees in this whole garden?? Gosh, that seems pretty stern and unreasonable, doesn't it. . . ?” Satan is insinuating that God is a harsh and domineering God. He's calling into question God's *character*. He's insinuating that God isn't really, truly, *good*.

And Satan hasn't changed. Isn't it true that one of his favorite ways to draw our hearts away from Christ is still to call into question God's goodness to us?⁷⁸ Just like Absalom drew away the hearts of the people by whispering lies about the King (remember that?).⁷⁹ The snake's still whispering lies to us about our God.⁸⁰ One pastor put it really simply: “In time of temptation, believe Christ rather than the devil. Believe truth from truth itself. Harken not to a liar, an enemy, and a murderer.”⁸¹

⁷⁵ Fisher, *Marrow*, p43. Witsius says: “The covenant of grace is not the abolition, but rather the confirmation of the covenant of works, in so far as the Mediator has fulfilled at the conditions of that covenant, so that all believers may be justified and saved, according to the covenant of works, to which satisfaction was made by the Mediator.” (*Economy*, VI, p160).

⁷⁶ R.C. Sproul, *Essential Truths of the Christian Life*, p77.

⁷⁷ The outline of this section gleaned from Ligon Duncan's course on *Covenant Theology*.

⁷⁸ Octavius Winslow applies this particularly to difficult seasons in the Christian life: “Hard and harsh thoughts of God will be the effect of wrong interpretations of his dealings. If for one moment we remove the eye from off the heart of God. . . we are prepared to give heed to every dark suggestion of the adversary; that moment we look at the dispensation with a different mind. . . we view. . . the covenant God. . . as unkind, unloving, and severe.” (*Personal Declension and Revival*, p58).

⁷⁹ See 2 Samuel 15:1-6. Absalom here serves as a picture of how Satan whispers lies to us about the King.

⁸⁰ And still so subtly; not now coming to us in the form of a snake, but doesn't he often come to us in the form of *a thought*?

⁸¹ Richard Sibbes, *The Bruised Reed*, p61.

B) He contradicts God's WORD (v4): Now in verse 4, Satan *directly* contradicts what God had said. In particular, Satan lies about what God had said concerning the *consequences of sin*. In verse 4, Satan lies to Eve about what will happen if she eats the fruit: “You surely will not die!” Satan is telling Eve that there won't be any consequences for doing this—there won't be any consequences for sin.

That sounds familiar too, doesn't it. The whole world seems to be captivated by the lie that the only kind of sin that would endanger anyone eternally is reserved for people like Hitler or Stalin or ISIS' “Jihadi John.” The world recklessly affirms just like the snake: “You surely will not surely die!” God tells us different: “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). The smallest sin merits God's wrath.

C) He perverts God's WAYS (v5): In verse 4, Satan lied to Eve about *sins' consequences*. Now in verse 5 he lies to her about *sins' pleasures*: “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” What's Satan doing? He's whispering to Eve the lie that sin will make her happy. He's telling her that sin is something desirable and good. He's feeding her the lie that happiness isn't found in following God—but in defying Him.

Has he ever whispered that lie into your ears? Did you believe it? If you believed it and took and ate that poisonous fruit (whether it was lust or unforgiveness or anything else), did it really make you happy? Satan always feeds us this lie that sin will make us happy—but we only end up miserable.

In particular, Satan tells Eve that she and Adam⁸² would “be like God.” It's ironic that Satan uses this lie in particular for at least two reasons. *First*, Adam and Eve were created in the image of God and embodied that image in the fullest sense possible. It was only when they disobeyed God's command that that image was frightfully corrupted. So, never was humanity more “like God” than Adam and Eve *before* their fall into sin. *Secondly*, Satan's lie here is ironic because it was exactly the desire to be like God that caused Satan himself to fall from heaven.⁸³ Satan here implants into Eve's heart the same deadly covetousness that had led him to rebel against the Lord and fall from Him forever.⁸⁴

So, here we see Satan luring Eve by declaring that she (and Adam) would be like God. We saw that it was a lie (sin would make man profoundly *unlike* God). But why was it that this sounded so good to Eve? To be like God? How sobering that Eve began to think that *knowing God* wasn't enough—that it was a more preferable thing to actually *be God*. Eve was willing to trade in *knowing God* for *being God*. What about us? What ways are we tempted like Eve to try to be like God (be God)?⁸⁵

We all know what happened.⁸⁶ We read in Genesis 3:6, “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise,

⁸² The Hebrew second person pronouns here are plural.

⁸³ This is alluded to in Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:11-17. See also 1 Timothy 3:6 and Jude 6.

⁸⁴ So, though Satan pretended to have Eve's best interest in mind, his real motivation was to make her just as miserable as he was. A good thing for us to remember: Satan doesn't have your best interest in mind; he just wants to make you miserable.

⁸⁵ Let's get really practical for those who are called to the ministry in particular: Ambition comes straight from the pit of hell. But it can so often appear in sheep's clothing: being remarkable, exceptional, extraordinary, noteworthy, set apart from others. These can be attractive, alluring qualities for a minister of the gospel. And they can flow from pure desires: IE, “I don't want my life to be ordinary: I want to really make a difference for Jesus.” But when our goal in life and ministry begins to transition from simply knowing God and walking with Him to being radical or extraordinary, something has gone terribly wrong. Amidst the *ooh-ing* and *ahh-ing* of the religious crowd of his day, John the Baptist took his stand and said, “I am not the Christ.” It's a truth we ought to engrave on our hearts. Much of these applications are taken from Zack Eswine's *Sensing Jesus*, pp21-25. Let me quote one more section here at length: “Whatever he once was—earnest, or zealous, or genuine—Jesus teaches us that a breach within the being of this teacher has grown. But what's scary is that the teacher does not know this. He believes that what he sees in the mirror accurately reflects his true and not his false self. . . So he says the awful thing with conviction and, of all places, in prayer: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men’ (Luke 18:11). And there it is: the deadly air; the poisoned belief that in comparison to other men we can become exceptional in God's eyes. This Pharisee doesn't have to surrender to the same human reality that others do. So somewhere along the line this man of God began to say to himself statements such as, ‘For God's sake, I will not be ordinary.’ ‘Mine will be no usual life and no routine ministry.’ ‘I will do what no others can for God.’ ‘God will treat me more favorably than he does others.’ ‘I will preach, pray, and serve in a way that sets me apart from my neighbors and colleagues.’ ‘I do not sin like other men do.’” (From *Sensing Jesus*, p21).

⁸⁶ We know Adam fell. But why? Vos makes the following clarification: “One may not say that Adam fell because the grace of God left him, but through his fall, one must say, Adam fell in an incomprehensible way from the grace of God.” (p53).

she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”⁸⁷ Some scholars⁸⁸ have compared the description of Eve's fall into sin to what Scripture says in 1 John 2:16:

GENESIS 3:6	1 JOHN 2:16
The woman saw that the tree was good for food. . .	Sin as the lust of the <i>flesh</i>
. . .and that it was a delight to the eyes. . .	Sin as the lust of the <i>eyes</i>
. . .and that [it] was desirable to make one wise. . .	Sin as the <i>pride of life</i>

We might well ask, where was Adam when all this was happening? Even Eve's falling into sin was ultimately Adam's fault. It was Adam's duty to protect his wife. And by the way, if you are a husband, this is exactly what *your* duty is. But Adam was silent. So, we read in Genesis 3:6 that Eve ate of the fruit and Adam ate with her. And death was unleashed. But before we judge Adam and Eve, let's remember that we are just as foolish and fickle. We fall prey to the lies of sin every day.

We're no better than our fathers. But the time would come in which God himself would mend everything that happened on that day. A second Adam would come into the world. In the wilderness, Jesus was likewise tempted by the serpent in three ways to give into sin (Luke 4:1-13).⁸⁹ But where Adam fell, Jesus stood. And because He stood, we stand in and through Him. Death had come into the world through one tree; but life would come into the world through another. In one garden, it was death that was unleashed; but later—in another garden—it would be resurrection.⁹⁰

2. The NATURE of sin: *What Sin Is*

From this account of man's fall in Genesis 3, we also learn about *what sin is*. What are Adam and Eve doing when they start to listen to Satan's lies? They are setting themselves up as judges to decide for themselves what's right and wrong. And in doing so, they're rebelling against God's rightful authority over them. This is the essence of what sin is: it's *rebellion* against God's authority (vv4-6).⁹¹

Psalm 8 is a psalm that David wrote reflecting on creation and man's place in creation. David asks in the psalm, “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; what is man that You take thought of him. . . ?” In other words, David's asking, “*Who are we*, O God? *Who are we* that You should take thought of us?” It's a good question. But when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden it was because they went from asking, “Who are *we*?” — to asking “Who is *He*?” They went from asking “*Who are we* that God should do anything for us?” — to asking, “*Who is He* that He should tell us what to do or how to live?” Wow. That's what sin is.⁹²

It was this issue of authority that was the major theme of the book of Judges: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 21:25). This is the essence of sin—making ourselves the judge of right and wrong instead of submitting to God's authority. And, if you remember, this is precisely the opposite of what the Savior did. Jesus submitted himself in every way to the Father, “becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:8).

Maybe we need to let God search us here. Are there any ways we're refusing to surrender ourselves to Him and His Word? Are we submitting our heart and life fully to the scrutiny of the Bible?⁹³

⁸⁷ We could note here that these same three Hebrew verbs (*saw, coveted, took*) are used to describe Achan's sin in Joshua 7:21. Achan's sin seems to serve as a picture for us of this first sin in the garden, for his whole family is put to death with him on account of the sin which only he himself committed (stealing the bar of gold during the conquest of Jericho).

⁸⁸ For example, Henry Ainsworth (*Annotations on the Pentateuch*); Herman Hoeksema (*Reformed Dogmatics*).

⁸⁹ Some believe these temptations can also be described as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

⁹⁰ John 19:41 says, “Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and *in the garden a new tomb* in which no one had yet been laid. Therefore because of the Jewish day of preparation, since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”

⁹¹ Berkhof: “Starting from the pre-supposition that he had certain rights as over against God, man allowed the new center, which he found in himself, to operate against his Maker.” Hoeksema: “Here sin is revealed in its deepest principle: to negate God, to deny his sovereignty, and to be our own God, determining for ourselves what shall be good and what shall be evil.”

⁹² Insight gleaned gratefully from Tim Cain, pastor of *Kaleo Church* in San Diego.

⁹³ This question convicted me. Taken from *The Reformation Heritage Study Bible*, pXII (Reading the Bible Experientially).

3. The EFFECTS of sin: *What Sin Does*

Satan had told the woman that eating the forbidden fruit would bring enlightenment and happiness. Instead, sin brought nothing but shame and estrangement. Satan had told them that their eyes would be opened (3:5). The father of lies is an expert at telling *half-truths*. It's true, when Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit, Scripture tells us that, indeed, at that moment, "the eyes of both of them were opened" (3:7). Their eyes *were* opened. But not in the way that they had thought or wanted. Instead of stepping into a dreamworld, they found that they had woken up into a living nightmare.

A) Sin created DIVINE discord: It brought SHAME and DEFILEMENT: In Genesis 2:25 we read, "the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." But after eating the fruit the Lord had forbidden, the two of them realize they're naked and begin to sew fig leaves together to cover themselves (3:7). They were once naked and unashamed. But now they find themselves defiled and shame-filled. Sewing together the fig leaves was a feeble attempt to cover over the shame they were newly experiencing.⁹⁴ And this is what sin continues to do: it promises life but in the end it only leaves us dirty and ashamed. Sin also resulted in GUILT and FEAR: When the Lord comes into the garden, Adam and Eve hide themselves (3:8-10). Before, they had enjoyed sweet fellowship with their Creator, but now they run from Him. Sin had created a massive chasm between God and man.

B) Sin created HUMAN discord: Sin didn't only create estrangement between God and man. It also created estrangement between the man and his wife. As the Lord speaks with them, they now begin to blame each other. Adam admits to eating the fruit, but puts the blame directly on Eve—and not only on Eve—but even on the Lord himself when he says: "*The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate*" (3:12). It may have been that Adam himself couldn't believe the words as they were coming out of his mouth. Up until now he had only defended Eve with his words. Now he's using words to attack and condemn her. Adam blames Eve, then Eve in turn blames the snake (3:13). In effect, she says, "Satan made me do it." Making excuses for sin would be a characteristic of mankind from that day onward: "Yes, I did it—but it wasn't my fault. . ."

V. The Fall of Mankind

1. The REALITY of Adam's Covenant Headship: *Adam was the covenant representative for us all*

Adam was representing the entire human race when he sinned in the garden. We see this most clearly in Romans 5:12-21, where Paul shows us that when Adam sinned, he acted on behalf of all men in such a way that his actions had direct consequences for us all. Paul declares in this passage:

Verse 12: "through one man sin entered into the world. . . and so death spread to all men,"

Verse 15: "by the transgression of the one the many died,"

Verse 16: "the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation,"

Verse 17: "by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one,"

Verse 18: "through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men,"

Verse 19: "through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners,"

In other words, Adam wasn't just a single individual acting for himself in the test God gave him. It wasn't just his own destiny that was at stake in obeying God's command or disobeying it—the destiny of the entire human race was at stake. When Adam sinned, he brought condemnation and death not just to himself—but to the entire human race. When Adam fell, all of humanity fell with him: "The very truth is, Adam by his fall threw down our whole nature headlong into the same destruction, and drowned his whole offspring in the same gulf of misery, and the reason is, because, by God's appointment, he was not to stand or fall as a single person only, but as a common public person,

⁹⁴ As Herman Hoeksema puts it: "The first result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve was that their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked (v7). This does not mean that they now passed from a state of childish innocence or naivete into a state of moral self-consciousness, but that they realized their sinful condition; they knew and were conscious that their bodies had become the instruments of sin." (*Reformed Dogmatics*, pp364-65).

representing all mankind to come of him...and as that covenant which was made with him, was made with the whole of mankind; even so he by breaking covenant lost all, as well for us as for himself.”⁹⁵

We see this in the following ways in particular. . .

A) Adam's CORRUPTION was IMPARTED to us all when he sinned:

Adam was created “upright” (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Before Adam fell in the garden, he had no sin. He loved God with all his heart, mind, soul, and strength. But when Adam disobeyed God, a radical change took place—he became morally corrupt. And ever since Adam's fall, every single one of us has been infected with this moral corruption from birth. We are *not* born more or less innocent until we, like Adam, make the decision to sin against God. No—ever since the fall of Adam, every single one of us is born with moral corruption. Every single one of us is born with a heart that is deeply infected with the poison of sin. This is what we call *original* or *inherent sin*.⁹⁶

This is what Scripture is describing when we read in Genesis 6:5, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” That wasn't just talking about the days of Noah—it's a synopsis of the human race. This is why Jesus taught that men “love the darkness rather than the Light” (John 3:19). The truth is, every single one of us is born with a heart that loves sin rather than God.⁹⁷

Again: we're not sinners because we sin; rather, *we sin because we are sinners*. We aren't sinners because we have all sinned against God; rather, we sin against God because it's our nature to sin. Sinfulness isn't a condition we contracted the first time we sinned, rather sinfulness is a disease we were born with; our particular sins are just the symptoms of that disease. Scripture teaches that because Adam fell, every single one of us has been born with the poison of inherent corruption.

B) Adam's GUILT was IMPUTED to us all when he sinned:

When Adam fell into sin, the whole world fell with him into moral corruption. But much more than *just that* happened in the fall. We looked briefly at Romans 5 earlier. But it's important for us to know that while Adam's fall into sin infected the entire human race with moral corruption, that is actually not what Paul is focusing on in Romans 5. In Romans 5:12-19, Paul is not talking about how we are *inherently corrupt* because of Adam's sin. He's rather talking about how we are *judicially guilty* because of Adam's sin. *In Romans 5, Paul is not talking about how Adam's corruption was imparted to us. He's actually talking about how Adam's guilt was imputed to us.*

In this passage in Romans, Paul's saying that the entire human race was condemned when Adam sinned. Not just corrupted—but *condemned*. In other words, Adam's sin was judicially reckoned to all men when he disobeyed God's command. As the covenant head of the human race, Adam represented all men in such a way, that through his sin, all humanity has been plunged along with him into guilt and condemnation. When he was condemned, we were condemned with him. His sin is reckoned to every one of us; his transgression is legally charged to our account. He sinned, but we are guilty with him; he transgressed, but we are condemned with him. What Paul is saying here is that before you and I ever sin personally, we stand condemned before God solely

⁹⁵ Edward Fisher, *The Marrow of Divinity*, p34. As also A.W. Pink put it: “God did not act with mankind as with a field of corn, where each stalk stands on its own individual root. Rather He has dealt with our race as with a tree—all the branches of which have one common root. While the root of a tree remains healthy and unharmed, the whole of it flourishes. But if an ax strikes and severs the root, then the whole of the tree suffers and falls—not only the trunk but all the branches—and even its smallest twigs wither and die. Thus it was with the Eden tragedy.” (Pink, *The Total Depravity of Man*).

⁹⁶ Vos puts it this way: “And here the rule holds that originally in Adam the *actus* [act] determined the *status*, but that subsequently for all his posterity *status* has determined *actus*.” (*Dogmatics*, V2, p25). And again, “With us, the disposition determines the deed, both in the natural state and in regeneration; with Adam, the deed determined the disposition.” (p53).

⁹⁷ This is what we call *Total Depravity*. Total Depravity means that there is no spiritual good in us. It means that all of us are by nature both *enslaved* to our sin and *in love* with our sin; both *unable* and *unwilling* to love and follow God. “By it is *not* meant: 1) “That everyone is as bad as he can be or become.” 2) “Nor does it mean that the sinner carries about no knowledge of the will of God in his conscience.” 3) “Nor thereby is it meant that the one man cannot be more selfish than [an]other.” 4) “Sin has different forms in which it can manifest itself. No one ever has displayed all these forms in himself.” (Vos, pp57-58).

on account of Adam's sin. We are *inherently corrupt* because the nature of Adam was imparted to us. But we are *judicially condemned* because the transgression of Adam was imputed to us.

C) Adam's PUNISHMENT was DEALT OUT to us all when he sinned:

Actually, these two truths of *inherent corruption* and *imputed guilt* fit closely together. Think back to what God had said to the man before the fall in Genesis chapter 2. The Lord had told Adam that, “from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, *for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die*” (Genesis 2:17). And despite what the serpent had told Eve, that's exactly what happened. And, as it turned out, death didn't just come to Adam; it came to us all.

Now, part of this was PHYSICAL DEATH. Adam would now die physically, and all humanity with him. This is emphasized in Genesis 5, where we read the constant refrain: “and he died. . . and he died. . .and he died. . .” So yes, Adam's sin brought physical death—not just to himself—but to every one of us.⁹⁸ Physical death has come upon the world as punishment for Adam's sin.

But when God said this to Adam, *He wasn't just talking about physical death*. He was talking about SPIRITUAL DEATH.⁹⁹ Adam would die *spiritually*. And do you know what inherent corruption is? It's spiritual death: The inherent corruption that came upon Adam when he fell into sin was *spiritual death*. The punishment for Adam's sin wasn't just physical death, it was *spiritual* death. And so it is for us in Adam. In other words, Adam's corruption was imparted to us *because* Adam's guilt was imputed to us. Moral corruption is the penalty for imputed sin:¹⁰⁰

INTRODUCING THE TWO VIEWS OF WHY WE ARE PUNISHED FOR ADAM'S SIN

SOME SAY	Adam sinned → Adam's nature corrupted → we inherit this corrupt nature → we are thus punished
WE SAY	Adam sinned → Adam's sin reckoned to us → we are punished with Adam → we are thus corrupted

2. Some ILLUSTRATIONS of Adam's Covenant Headship: *How to understand covenant headship*

The fact that Adam was a covenant representative for the entire human race may sound like a foreign or strange concept to our ears. But it's really not something that ought to sound foreign or strange to us at all. There are actually a lot of parallels to help us understand the idea of covenant headship:

A) From OUR WORLD . . .

*Your NATIONALITY: We do not determine our nationality. We personally have nothing to do with whether we are born Indian or Bangladeshi or American or Mexican; it's just the way it is.

*Your GOVERNMENT: The congress or parliament represent the people, and it is their decisions that determine what happens to everyone who lives under them. When your leaders decide to go to war against another country, you are part of it whether you like it or not.

*Your HOUSEHOLD: The father, as head of the house, makes decisions that will dramatically affect—not just himself—but the entire family. He is the “covenant head” for the whole family.

⁹⁸ “But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die’ (Gen. 2:17). . . That death which now seizes fallen man is no mere natural calamity, but a penal infliction. It is not a ‘debt’ which he owes to ‘nature,’ but a judicial sentence which is passed upon him by the divine judge. Death has come in because our first parent, our federal head and representative, took of the forbidden fruit, and for no other reason.” (Pink).

⁹⁹ Actually, it seems that the Lord was talking mostly or primarily about spiritual death. As Dr. S. Lewis Johnson points out: “Now God said, Adam, on the day that you eat of that fruit you will die. . . But he was just the same person physically afterwards as before apparently, but he had died. God said he died. ‘In the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.’ It is clear he didn't die physically, so, he must have died spiritually.” (Sermon: *The Imputation of Adam's Sin*).

¹⁰⁰ Vos puts it this way: “Original pollution, inherent corruption, was both for Adam and for us a *punishment* for the first sin. For Adam it appeared immediately; for us it can only appear when our persons come into being.” (*Reformed Dogmatics*, V2, p34). Don't panic if this doesn't make perfect sense yet. We'll see the following chart again in Lesson 3 and will study this more in detail then: the names of the two views are *mediate* (top) and *immediate* (bottom) imputation.

B) From *THE SCRIPTURES* . . .

*Ham, Canaan, and the Canaanites (*Genesis 9:20-27*): It was Ham who sinned against his father Noah in Genesis 9. But instead of cursing Ham, Noah curses his son Canaan—and not only him—but the nation that would come forth from him (the Canaanites; cf. chapter 10). Though Ham was the one who was guilty, Canaan is the one who is cursed. In the biblical narrative, Canaan himself is presented as innocent—but he finds himself cursed on account of the sin of his father.

*Pharaoh and the Egyptians (*Exodus 1-11*): It was Pharaoh who sinned by hardening his heart against the Lord—but all the people of Egypt suffered because of *his* sin—both through the devastation the plagues wreaked on the land and the final plague of the loss of the firstborn.¹⁰¹

*Achan and his family (*Joshua 7:22-26; 22:20*): Though it was Achan alone who stole the bar of gold during the conquest of the land in the days of Joshua, it was the entire nation that was reckoned guilty: “Did not Achan the son of Zerah act unfaithfully in the things under the ban, and wrath fall on all the congregation of Israel?” Further, it’s not just Achan, but his whole family—his sons and daughters along with him—who were punished for the sin he alone had committed.¹⁰²

*The Amalekites in the days of Samuel (*1 Samuel 15:1-3*): Here we see that these Amalekites were to be held fully responsible and slaughtered—men and women, children and infants—not for their own sin—but for the sin of their forefathers hundreds of years earlier (1 Samuel 15:1-3).

*Seven descendants of Saul in the days of David (*2 Samuel 21*): Israel had made a covenant with the Gibeonites in the days of Joshua, but when Saul was king he violated the covenant by seeking to kill them. To satisfy justice, seven of Saul’s descendants are given over to the Gibeonites to be hanged—not for crimes they themselves had committed—but for the crime of Saul their forefather.

*The disobedient kings of Israel (*1 Kings 14:7-10*): God tells Jeroboam, king of Israel, that because of his sin, his entire line would be wiped out (14:7-10). Jeroboam alone sinned, but his descendants would be punished together with him. The Lord then proceeds to declare the same truth to Baasha, king of Israel (1 Kings 16:1-4), and to Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kings 21:20-22).

*The leprosy of Naaman (*2 Kings 5:27*): After the Lord had healed Naaman’s leprosy through Elisha, and refused to take any money in return, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, went after Naaman trying to get the gold his master had refused. When he returns home, Elisha tells him that the leprosy of Naaman would now cling not only to Gehazi but also to his descendants forever.

*The gallows of Haman (*Esther 7:10; 9:13-14*): Haman was the enemy of God’s people during the days of Esther who had constructed a gallows in order to hang righteous Mordecai. But his plan backfires. And when justice comes for Haman, it is not only Haman himself who is hanged, but his ten sons are hung with him—again, not for their own sin—but for the sin of their father.

*Daniel’s accusers and the lions’ den (*Daniel 6:24*): After the Lord preserves Daniel in the lions’ den and he is drawn out, it is not only those who had maliciously accused him that are thrown into the den, but also their wives and children. Again, they were not being punished for their own personal sin—but rather for the sin of their covenant representatives (their husbands and fathers).

3. Answering **OBJECTIONS** about Adam’s Covenant Headship: “*Is it fair?*”

It’s often objected that the human race being punished for Adam’s sin isn’t fair. It simply wouldn’t be fair of God to punish all of us for the sin of one man. To this objection we may say the following:¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ See also 2 Samuel 24:15-17 and Israel suffering because of the sin of king David.

¹⁰² This whole passage (Joshua 7) contains imagery of Adam’s sin in the garden. Besides what was mentioned above, we could note that the Lord speaks of Achan’s sin as transgression of His covenant (vv11,15), reminding us of Hosea 6:7 which almost certainly refers back to Adam. Further, the way Achan later confesses his sin sends us back to the first sin in the garden, in that the 3 verbs Achan uses (*saw, coveted, took*; Joshua 7:21) are the same 3 Hebrew verbs used to describe Eve’s falling prey to the serpents lies in Genesis 3:6. Further, as a result of *his* one sin *all* the people become “accursed” (vv11-12; cf. Gal.3:10).

¹⁰³ Much of this is gleaned from Ligon Duncan’s course on *Covenant Theology*.

A) We had the absolute best chance possible in Adam: Adam was the greatest human chance we had—much greater than anyone else. He was better equipped to come out victorious for all those he represented than any other person that has ever lived. You and I had a much, much, much better chance of keeping the Covenant of Works with Adam representing us than anyone else in our present condition. So God was gracious in even giving us the representative that He gave us.¹⁰⁴

B) We're in no place to argue about sin: We're not innocent victims in the matter. Our sin is not just *original*, but it is quite *actual*. Yes, it's true that Adam's sin was imputed to us. But the guilt of sin was not just *passively imputed* to us. Every time you and I sin, we do so *willingly, freely, actively* taking part in it ourselves. So then, we're not innocent victims of Adam's sin; we are just as guilty.

C) We're in no place to argue about fairness: If we are going to talk about what's fair and what's not fair, the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ to sinners is the most unfair thing that has ever happened in the universe. What wasn't fair wasn't the imputation of sin—it was the imputation of Christ's righteousness. That's what isn't fair; because with Adam God operated exclusively on justice; but with us, in Christ, He operates upon sheer grace. If you are a believer in Jesus, Christ received the justice that you deserved, and you received grace that you had no business receiving. So, if we're going to allow God to operate that way in imputing righteousness to us in Christ, is it right to say He can't operate that way in imputing sin to the world? If we happily allow Him to do it in the Covenant of Grace, is it right for us to object that He did it the same way in context of the Covenant of Works?

D) We're in no place to argue with God: It's not wise to question God in an accusing way. Who are we to question God? Job tried this once, if you remember, and when God finally answered him, his response was to shut his mouth and lie in the ashes. Remember again, Paul imagines people having this same objection (IE, that's not fair) in his discussion about election in Romans 9. He imagines people objecting that it's not fair that God chooses some and doesn't choose others, and Paul's words there are simply: “who are you, O man, who answers back to God? . . . does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?” In other words, God does what He pleases; and it's right, whether we like it or not.¹⁰⁵

E) We can trust in the character of God: Our duty is to submit to God with reverence and worship. And we can do this all the more knowing God's character. We're not submitting to a cruel tyrant the way a wife submits to an abusive husband or the way that poor women and children are being forced to submit to ISIS in Iraq. We are not even submitting to a good earthly father the way a child does to his father who is seeking his best interests in love. We are submitting to our heavenly Father, who *always* does what is right, who *always* does what is good; who is “righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds” (Psalm 145:17). Whenever we approach mysteries like this, we have to ground ourselves in the character of God. We may never fully, in this life, know *why* God has done something, but we can rest in *who* we know God to be. And this is what we have to do here.

VI. The Lord's Words to the Serpent, the Woman, and the Man

1. An Introduction:

God doesn't leave man alone after his fall into sin. God knew what Adam had done, but He still comes to him in the midst of his fallen condition. It's not Adam and Eve that seek after God, it's God who draws near to them in grace.¹⁰⁶ The Lord begins with searching questions (3:9,11,13), not because he doesn't know the answers, but in order to help Adam and Eve understand what they had done, in order to woo them back to Himself. The Lord comes to fallen man—not to curse him, but

¹⁰⁴ Perhaps a comparable modern illustration would be Messi, Neymar or Ronaldo taking a penalty kick on your behalf.

¹⁰⁵ Ligon Duncan says it this way: “you're not in a position to judge. You are standing in the dock. You are standing before the bar of God's justice. You're not here to judge the judge. You can't extract yourself from this situation. But let me say this. He is so sovereign that even if it were unfair, there would be nothing that you could do about it. Because He's the judge, He's in charge, that's just the way it is.” (From his *Covenant Theology* course).

¹⁰⁶ *The Runaway Bunny* may be a fitting illustration here: God pursues us as the mother bunny pursues her “runaway bunny.”

to restore and redeem him. Through His questions, the Lord is showing Adam and Eve their sin and the severity of their fallen condition—and He's doing it because that's the only way to real healing.

Then the Lord begins to address each party in order—first *the serpent* who deceived the woman; next *the woman* who was deceived; and finally *Adam* himself who disobeyed God's command.

One of the main things we learn here in Genesis 3:14-19 is that Adam's fall into sin would have massive consequences—not just moral and spiritual and eternal consequences (we've talked about those)—but *physical* consequences as well. Adam's fall would affect child-bearing; it would affect the marriage relationship between a man and his wife; and his fall into sin would even affect creation itself—Scripture teaches that from now on the earth itself would be cursed (3:17; cf. Romans 8:18-25).

But even though sin would have devastating physical consequences that would affect all of creation, we also see the Lord reaffirming the creational ordinances here in Genesis 3:14-19. Adam's fall into sin would have lasting effects on marriage, procreation, and work. But here in this passage the Lord, in His goodness, reaffirms the continuance of these original institutions. We see the creational ordinance of *marriage and procreation* reinforced in Genesis 3:16, and the creational ordinance of *labor* reinforced in verses 17-19. Man was now like a ruined castle—a tragic reminder of what he once was. But though the fall had greatly marred the image of God in man, the foundational pillars that God had established at creation (marriage, procreation, and labor) were still firmly in place.

2. God's Word to THE SERPENT (Genesis 3:14-15):

“Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life. . .” (3:14).

What is especially significant here is that the Lord *curses* the serpent: “cursed are you. . .” but the Lord does *not curse* Adam and Eve. Only Satan is cursed. Neither Adam nor Eve were cursed, though the land is cursed because of Adam's sin. God comes to fallen man and woman—but He doesn't come to curse them—rather He comes to curse the serpent. There would be consequences, massive consequences, for their sin. But the Lord didn't come to them to curse them—He came to them to redeem them. Sin merits the curse of God. But *they* were not cursed—why? Because a Redeemer would come to fallen man who would take their curse upon himself (Galatians 3:13-14).

So, the Lord begins by cursing the serpent, and this curse symbolizes the ultimate fate of Satan himself. What is Satan's fate? Banishment to the lake of fire. But know that the devil will not *rule* over the lake of fire¹⁰⁷ (as many seem to think); rather, he himself will be thrown into the lake of fire: Jesus says in *Matthew 25:41*: “Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for *the devil* and his angels.'” Again, *Revelation 20:10* says: “And *the devil* who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

We will come back later to look at verse 15 in depth.

3. God's Word to THE WOMAN (Genesis 3:16):

The Lord then said to the woman, *“I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”* (3:16).

There are two aspects to the Lord's words here to the woman:

A) *First*, there will be a great increase of pain in childbirth. The woman will still have children, but now it will be with great travail. Now, we have to understand that child-bearing and child-rearing are not the curse being spoken of here. We know this because Psalm 127:3-5, which was written well after the fall, says, “Behold, children are a *gift* of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a *reward*. Like

¹⁰⁷ It is actually the Lamb that rules over the lake of fire according to Revelation 14:10-11.

arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. How *blessed* is the man whose quiver is full of them. . .” Having children is a blessing (and raising children is a blessing). Children are a blessing. But because of the fall, there will now be pain and grief—both physical and emotional—in having (and raising) children that was not there before. Our children are conceived in sin, born with pain into a fallen world, and begin their march to death the minute they take their first breath; perhaps worst of all, some of them may in the end reject the Savior we've raised them to embrace.¹⁰⁸

B) Second, the Lord tells the woman that her desire will be for her husband, yet he will rule over her. What is the desire spoken of here? The Hebrew word is the same word used in Genesis 4:7, where the Lord told Cain that sins' *desire* was for him, but he must master it. So the desire meant here is the desire of a woman to dominate her husband. In turn, he would “rule” over her. In other words, the wife will now desire to dominate her husband, and in return, he will behave harshly towards her, lording it over her. What we have here is the exact opposite of God's intended design for marriage. Ephesians 5 talks about wives wholeheartedly submitting to their husbands, and husbands unconditionally loving their wives. This is God's design for marriage. But because of the fall, our automatic sinful response is now to do the exact opposite. And so as believers we are called to fight against the sinful tendencies of our flesh in the context of our marital relationship. *Wives* are called to fight against their sinful tendencies and by the Spirit submit to their husbands as Christ submitted himself to His Father; and *husbands* are called to fight against their sinful tendencies and by the Spirit's power to love their wives sacrificially and unconditionally, just as Christ did the church.

4. God's Word to THE MAN (Genesis 3:17-19):

After addressing the woman, the Lord then says to Adam, “*Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return*” (3:17-19).

Notice again that Adam himself is not cursed, but the ground is now cursed on account of Adam's sin (v17). We've seen that work itself isn't a curse—it was instituted by God before the fall. It's rather the toil and pain that go along with work that the Lord is speaking of here. Adam had listened to the voice of his wife instead of the voice of the Lord (v17). And as a result, there will now be three ways in particular in which man's work will be radically affected: *its nature, its result, and its duration*.¹⁰⁹

A) The NATURE of work: There will now be toil in work: “in toil you will eat of it. . .by the sweat of your face you will eat bread. . .” The word for *toil* is the same Hebrew word used for the woman's *pain*. Just as the woman would have pain in bringing forth *fruit from the womb*; so too the man would now have pain in bringing forth *fruit from the earth*. Work will now be painful; it will be hard.

B) The RESULT of work: From now on, work wouldn't just be strenuous and toilsome for man, but “thorns and thistles” would be the result of his strenuous labor. In other words, man's work will now be impaired; there won't be the incredible fertility that there had been in Eden before the fall. As one writer put it: Before the fall, Adam ate to work; but from now on, he would work to eat.¹¹⁰

C) The DURATION of work: Man will labor until he returns to the ground (v19). In other words, there will be no earthly rest from the burden of work. It's the same truth we read of in Ecclesiastes 2:23, which says: “all his days his task is painful and grievous; even at night his mind does not rest.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Insights gleaned from O Palmer Robertson audio lectures and Ligon Duncan's course on *Covenant Theology*. Matthew Henry says it this way: “The sorrows of childbearing are multiplied, for they include not only the travailing throws, but the indisposition before and the nursing toils and vexations afterwards. And after all if the children prove wicked and foolish, they are more than ever heaviness to her that bore them.”

¹⁰⁹ These insights gleaned from Ligon Duncan's course on *Covenant Theology*.

¹¹⁰ Insight gleaned from Herman Hoeksema, *Reformed Dogmatics*, VI, p374.

¹¹¹ We might wonder, why the need for the temporal judgments of Genesis 3:14-19 as well as the eternal judgment of death? Perhaps one reason is to teach us the truth that sin carries temporal consequences as well as eternal. God would save Adam and Eve from their sin. But the temporal, physical consequences wouldn't just go away; they would have to live with them. It's the same with us: God is able to completely forgive our sin; but that doesn't mean our sin won't carry very real consequences.

5. God's Blessing IN CHRIST:

Jesus said in Revelation 21:5, “Behold, I am making all things new.” How does this relate to the judgments that came upon the world because of the fall? Well, *first, it gives gospel HOPE to our marriages*: It means that now, in Christ, believing husbands and wives don't have to give in to their inherent sinful tendencies—they can strive, through the power of the Spirit, to live out their marriages according to God's original design (Ephesians 5:22-33). *And it gives gospel MEANING to our work*: In Christ, we can find satisfaction and fulfillment in our work as we do it to the glory of God (Colossians 3:23-24). God commanded Adam to subdue the earth (the “creation mandate,” Genesis 1:28), and Christ has likewise commanded us to subdue the earth—to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations (the “missionary mandate”). Whatever our vocation may be, as believers, our work has now taken on eternal significance as we do it unto the Lord. So in Christ, even these curses that were pronounced after the fall are being redeemed and made new. Believers in Jesus are remade in God's image in order to bring the whole of God's creation in subjection to the Creator.¹¹²

But, there's also a sense in which we are living in a fallen world that won't fully be set free until Christ comes again and establishes the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness reigns. This is what Paul was talking about in Romans 8:18-25, when he wrote: “For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.” (Romans 8:22-25; cf. 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4).

VII. The Promise of Redemption: *The Inauguration of the Covenant of Grace*

We've been looking at Genesis 3:14-19 and considering the judgments that God pronounces upon the serpent, the woman, and the man, because of their respective roles in disobeying the command God had given to Adam. But here we want to focus in on what is one of the most beautiful texts in all the Bible. It is the first promise Scripture records of the coming of the Messiah and the redemption He would accomplish for His people. And it is the inauguration of what we call the Covenant of Grace. It is the seed of the gospel, because from this seed promise spoken in Genesis 3:15 would sprout and grow all the promises that Scripture would make about Christ and the redemption He would accomplish for His people. They would all grow out of and be traced back to this first promise, recorded in Genesis 3:15.

So, let's read together Genesis 3:15. God said: “*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.*”

1. The SUBSTANCE of the promise:

A) *Enmity Between the Serpent and the Woman*:

The Lord said to the serpent: “*And I will put enmity between you and the woman. . .*” What do we make of this? Well, Romans 8:7 says that, “the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God.” Every single person, since the fall of man, was born into this condition—hostility toward God—enmity toward God. And the reason every single one of us is born into this condition, is because when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, it was into this condition that they plunged themselves (and all humanity along with them). Adam and Eve's sin brought them into a state of being at enmity with God. But here the Lord is telling the serpent that *now He will put enmity between the serpent and the woman*. In other words, the Lord is promising here to reverse what Satan

¹¹² Insight gleaned from the O Palmer Robertson audio lectures on *Covenant Theology*. We will see this again in our study of Noah, where the Lord reaffirms the creation mandate to him (Genesis 9:1). The creation mandate, given originally to man in his unfallen state—is there repeated to those who have become inheritors of a new world. It had been given to those He had created in His image—now it is given to those who are being recreated in His image.

had done: “Adam and Eve had aligned themselves with Satan. But now the Lord would put enmity between the woman and the serpent.”¹¹³ Eve had been at war with *God*—now she would be at war with *Satan*.¹¹⁴ She had fallen into sin, but that would not be the end of the story. Eve had known the Lord as her *Creator*—now she would come to experience Him as her *Redeemer*.

This is what God does when He saves us. He doesn't just forgive our sins—He gives us a new heart with new desires. The sin that we used to love, we now hate. Our sin used to be like an old friend—now it's our worst enemy. Why? Because we made a decision to follow Jesus? No. Because God made a promise: “*I will put enmity between you and the woman. . .*” Scripture is making it crystal clear here in Genesis 3:15 that “salvation is God's initiative.”¹¹⁵ *It is God alone* that would do this work in the woman and in us: “This is what God promises to man. . .that, by the insurmountable efficacy of his power *he* would perform and bring [this] about.”¹¹⁶ So if you have a new heart with new desires; if you find that you hate the sin you used to love—it's not because you made a decision to choose God. It's because God made a promise to redeem you.

Another quick word of application here: Don't be discouraged because of your struggle with sin. Your struggle with sin isn't a sign of spiritual death or even decay. Quite the contrary: It's actually a vital and necessary sign of spiritual life. There *ought* to be enmity between you and your sin if you belong to Jesus. If you're at peace with your sin there's something wrong: “It is when I am trying to deny that I have sin to deal with that I am in trouble, not when I am grieving over the continual fight against sin. . .This kind of warfare is the very evidence of life and grace.”¹¹⁷

B) Enmity Between the Seed of the Serpent and the Seed of the Woman:

The Lord continues, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, *and between your seed and her seed. . .*” What's God saying? Who is the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman?

I) The Seed of the SERPENT: Here the Lord is not referring to the serpent itself, but to the seed of the serpent: “I will put enmity. . .between *your seed* and her seed. . .” Who is the seed of the serpent? The seed of the serpent are the children of the serpent—the children of the devil—all those who are at peace with Satan (though they might never say that—or even think that). In 1 Samuel 2:12 we read a description of Eli's sons: “Now the sons of Eli were *worthless men*; they did not know the Lord;” but the literal Hebrew reads, “sons of Belial” (another name for the devil). John the Baptist called the Pharisees a “generation of vipers” (Matthew 3:7). Christ himself spoke of them in John 8:44, saying, “You are of your father the devil, and do the works of your father” (cf. John 8:38,41). So who are the seed of the serpent? The children of the devil.

II) The Seed of the WOMAN: Who is the seed of the woman? It wouldn't make sense to say the woman's seed is everyone who would come forth from the woman, as many of them are of the seed of the serpent. Even the woman's very first child, Cain, was said to be of the evil one (1 John 3:12). Cain was physically the offspring of Eve—but spiritually the offspring of the serpent.

In one sense, the seed of the woman is referring to *believers*—those whom God has chosen among the woman's seed who, by God's grace, would be turned from enmity with God to enmity with Satan.¹¹⁸ We have an analogy of this in Revelation 12, where we read of a woman and a

¹¹³ From the O Palmer Robertson audio lectures on *Covenant Theology*.

¹¹⁴ Herman Hoeksema: “The positive meaning of the enmity against Satan, which was announced by God, is the covenant fellowship of the Most High. As the friendship of the world is enmity against God (James 4:4), so also the enmity against the serpent and his seed is friendship of God. . .The promise of God in the protevangel is that God will put enmity in the heart of man against Satan and his seed. This implies regeneration.” (*Reformed Dogmatics*, pp369-70). Vos: “Enmity between the woman and her seed, on the one hand, and the serpent and its seed, on the other, points to a relationship of friendship with God. After all, man had renounced friendship with God and had allied himself with Satan. Where friendship with Satan has now turned into enmity, this can mean nothing other than that friendship with God has been restored.” (p125). Walke: “In sovereign grace God converts the depraved woman's affections for Satan to righteous desire for himself.” (*Genesis*, p93).

¹¹⁵ Julian Zugg from his *Covenant Theology* course (From the MINTS website).

¹¹⁶ From Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*.

¹¹⁷ Application and quote taken from Ligon Duncan's course, *Covenant Theology*.

¹¹⁸ Witsius explains this double meaning of “seed” in this way: “Just as the seed of Abraham is sometimes to be understood

great red dragon who hated her. The woman was about to give birth to a unique child (representing Christ), and the dragon wanted to devour that child. But when he couldn't, we read: "So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war *with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*" (12:17).

So, there are two seeds¹¹⁹ — and there's *only* two — the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. And this is exactly what we see played out in Genesis 4-5: two lines; two seeds. The seed of *Cain*—who was of the seed of the serpent, and the seed of *Abel*—who was of the seed of the woman (and after Abel was murdered by his brother,¹²⁰ the seed of Seth). Then in Genesis 4 we have a record of the genealogy of the unbelieving seed of Cain; and in Genesis 5 we have a record of the genealogy of the believing line of Seth, from whom eventually Noah would come.

Why is it that some men receive the offer of the gospel, while others sitting right next to them reject that offer? The ultimate answer is found in Genesis—some are of the seed of the woman; but others are of the seed of the serpent. This is the reason our Savior gave for why some responded to His preaching and others didn't. Jesus said to the Jews, "you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish. . ." (John 10:26-28). Only those who are regenerated through the power of the Holy Spirit will respond to the call of the gospel.¹²¹

So, in one sense, the seed of the woman is referring to believers. *But in the truest and most proper sense, the seed of the woman is Christ.* We know this because the last clause in verse 15 understands the seed of the woman to be referring to a *singular* individual: "*He shall bruise you on the head. . .*"¹²² So, in the most proper sense, the seed of the woman is *Christ*. And enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman is the enmity of the sons of the devil against Jesus Christ. The children of the serpent will ever be at war with Jesus (see Psalm 2).

C) Enmity Between the Seed of the Woman and the Serpent:

Returning once again to our text, we read in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; *He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.*" How are we to understand the last clause here in this verse?

It's speaking of the one particular seed of the woman who would defeat Satan: Jesus, the unique seed of the woman, would come to destroy the serpent—He would crush the devil—but in doing so, He would be bitten on the heel. This is a reference to the cross. Christ would accomplish victory, but He would suffer a blow from Satan in the process. Christ would accomplish redemption for His people, but it would come at a great cost. Satan would "bruise" the promised Messiah, even as He dealt the crushing blow to Satan through His atoning death and resurrection.

more largely, at others more strictly. . . sometimes more especially believers of his posterity, who walk in the steps of the faith of their father Abraham. . . *Romans 4:12-13*; sometimes most especially that eminent one in the seed of Abraham, who was to be the spring of every blessing. . . which is Christ, *Galatians 3:16*. . . Thus also [it is] here."

¹¹⁹ Two—but not three—I used to want to put myself in a middle *third* category (believer in Jesus but not His follower).

¹²⁰ Which was actually a fulfillment of this very prophecy—the enmity between the ungodly seed of the serpent and the godly seed of the woman.

¹²¹ Application gleaned from O Palmer Robertson.

¹²² Jack Collins draws this out beautifully in his article in the Tyndale Bulletin (48.1: 1997), *A Syntactical Note (Genesis 3:15): Is the Woman's Seed Singular or Plural?* Like English, the Hebrew word for seed (*zera*) can refer to either a singular seed in particular or to a collective group (IE, posterity). Collins first notes that the Hebrew pronouns referring back to the seed in Genesis 3:15 (*he* will bruise you. . . you will bruise *him*. . .) are singular. He then goes on to show that in Scripture, when the Hebrew word *seed* denotes a collective posterity (a plural understanding), the corollary pronouns are always *plural* (cf. Genesis 15:13; 17:7-10; Exodus 30:21; Leviticus 21:17; Deuteronomy 10:15; 2 Kings 17:20; Isaiah 61:9b; 65:23; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:10; 33:26; Ezekiel 20:5; Psalm 106:27; Ezra 2:59), whereas when the Hebrew word *seed* in Scripture is referring to a particular individual, it appears with *singular* pronouns, adjectives, and verb inflections (cf. Genesis 4:25; 22:17c; 2 Samuel 7:12-15). Further, from what we can tell (in some cases there is some overlap between Greek masculine and neuter tenses), the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Septuagint) marked this distinction in its translation by rendering *seed* in a masculine (rather than a neuter) tense when referring to a particular individual (even though the Greek word for seed itself is neuter). Thus, the nature of the singular pronouns in Genesis 3:15 takes on all the more significance. The seed is referring to *Christ*.

There's an allusion to this verse in Romans 16:20: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." In Genesis 3:15 the seed is referring explicitly to a single individual, but the victory that Christ accomplishes in crushing the head of the serpent is on behalf of a great multitude of the seed of the woman. Christ triumphs, but we reap the benefits of His victory.

So, we see how this promise in Genesis 3:15 is the seed of the gospel. As another put it: "This promise of Christ, the woman's seed (verse 15), was the gospel; and the only comfort [of the Old Testament people of God]."¹²³ Old Testament believers weren't saved because they had a faith in God in just a general sense. Adam and Eve, and Abel, and Seth and Enoch, Noah, and the patriarchs, and all who would come after them were saved just as we are: By grace alone through faith alone in the Messiah—the Messiah whom God had promised to send them in Genesis 3:15.

2. The BREADTH of the promise:

So, we can learn at least this much from Genesis 3:15: "In this promise was revealed, [that]: 1) Man's restoration [un]to the favor of God, and his salvation; [was] not to be effected by man himself, and his own works, but by another. . . 2) That this Savior was to be incarnate, to become man, *'the seed of the woman'*. . . 3) That he [would have] to suffer; his heel, namely his humanity, to be *bruised* to death. . . 4) [and] that by his death he should make a full conquest over the devil. . . and so recover the captives out of his hand, *'he shall bruise thy head'*. . . This encounter was on the cross; there Christ treading on the serpent, it bruised his heel, but he bruised its head. . ."¹²⁴ Praise be to God.

3. The RESPONSE to the promise:

We read in Genesis 3:20, "*Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living.*" What's the significance of what we read here in Genesis 3:20? Well, it could be that Adam's merely making the statement that all humankind would come forth from Eve. Now, even if this is all that is meant here, that alone is something of massive significance. Why? Think about all the things he *could have* named his wife after what had just happened. He could have named her "Gullible," or "Susceptible," or "Conspirator." But he doesn't. He names her "Eve," which means "living," or "life." In the name he gives her, Adam is dealing kindly with her; he is looking past her part in the offense; he is showing her respect and honoring her (cf. 1 Peter 3:7).¹²⁵ Even if he was merely referencing life in the physical sense, he could have taken that honor upon himself—after all, he was the father of all the living as much as she was the mother of all the living—but he gives the honor to her. And in that, I believe, we see the first evidences of God's grace at work in Adam.

But it's very possible that in this new name, Adam's referring to more than just physical life. He had already given her the name "woman" in Genesis 2:23; why give her another name now? And why would Adam name her "Eve" — what significance would the meaning have now that it didn't before?

It's likely that Adam is referring back to the promise God had made in Genesis 3:15 when he names his wife Eve. Because of their sin, Adam and his wife expected (and deserved) nothing but death. But instead of giving them over to death, God gave them a promise of life. And so, it seems that Adam "called his wife Eve, from his faith in God's promise, believing, according to the word of God, that no man should have true life, but what would be derived from her."¹²⁶ Eve would be the mother of all the living, because from her would come forth the One who would bring life to all the world.

4. The SIGN of the promise:

Finally, we read in Genesis 3:21, "*The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.*" After Adam and Eve had sinned, they sewed fig leaves to cover themselves. But the coverings they tried to make for themselves wouldn't do. Like them, we sense our guilt and feel the

¹²³ From the *Marrow of Modern Divinity*, p45.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Especially so in light of the fact that it was truly Eve's sin that began to plunge the whole world into *death* (rather than life).

¹²⁶ From Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*.

shame of sin; and though we try to fix things ourselves, we can't. Only God can truly and completely cover the guilt and shame we carry because of our sin. And so here in Genesis 3:21, God himself makes coverings for Adam and Eve to replace the ones they had tried to make for themselves.

God deals with our first parents in *grace*. Instead of leaving them in their guilt and shame, the Lord covers them with garments that He himself provided. It's significant what God is doing here. In Genesis 3:15, God had made a *promise* to send a Savior; here in Genesis 3:21 God is giving a *picture* of how that Savior would accomplish redemption. Hebrews tells us, "Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness" (9:22). And so, when the Lord clothes Adam and Eve, it came at a cost. Scripture tells us that God clothed them with animal skins. This means that an innocent animal was slain in order to clothe Adam and Eve. Innocent blood was shed on behalf of the guilty.

The *blood* of the animal signified that God was atoning for the *guilt* of their sin; the *skin* of the animal signified that God was covering them from the *shame* of their sin. This is what God does for us in justification; He clothes us with the garments of His righteousness: Isaiah 61:10 says, "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness." In Genesis 3:15, God had promised to put enmity between the woman and Satan; God would perform a radical, inward change. But the Lord wouldn't just do a work of grace *in* Adam and Eve—He would do a work of grace *for* them.

A Savior would come. He would save His people from their sin. He would cover us from the *shame* of our sin. He would atone for the *guilt* of our sin. He would be pierced through for our transgressions, He would be crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace would be upon Him, and by His scourging we would be healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord would cause the iniquity of us all to fall upon Him.