

King's Highway

Chapter 2 Sections 3-4

Similarly, the development of the race of man, in knowledge and in the exercise of his powers, might have come to pass without sin. But, in fact, this was not so. The intellectual rising of the race was accomplished by a moral fall. Knowledge of evil was gained by consent to it and rebellion against God, not by resisting it in obedience to God. Like the devils, men changed and

Free-Will
= Accountability
became bad, deliberately using their will in opposition to God's will, under the first stress of temptation. It was not altogether their fault: they were tempted by Satan. But for all that they were guilty, because they were responsible for their own acts, being free agents. They had the power, if they would, of refusing Satan's temptation; but they chose to consent to him. The citadel was captured through consent of the garrison. Nor might they cast the blame of their sin upon God, as if he were responsible for all that happened because all was present to his mind from the beginning. God's foreknowledge does not take away man's responsibility.

The Fall of Man means that the first step in the development of the race was marked, without any need, by a misdirecting of human will, and a turning away from the true purpose of life. The development of mankind was begun; but already man, intended for God, had turned against God.

This is set forth for us, in a parable, in the third chapter of Genesis. There we see man's happiness in innocence, the image of God in him unstained, his enjoyment of God's presence—man living for God.

The temptation came through Satan, who is portrayed as a serpent. It was allowed by God, since temptation (but not sin) was necessary for man's education and probation. He could not reach his perfection unless he felt the power of sin in temptation and conquered. *Thus Jesus was tempted in all things yet w/out sin!!*

The temptation came, as all temptation comes, through natural desires not wrong in themselves: the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, a tree to be desired to make one wise. There is no sin in such desires. Sin can come only by the act of our will consenting to our desires contrary to the known will of God.

Then we see the gradual yielding to temptation. It is caressed in the mind: I wish it were not wrong. The mind is obscured through the desire: Yea, hath God said . . .? Perhaps it is not really wrong. Perhaps sin is not so very dreadful after all: Ye shall not surely die. Pride and self-will are aroused: Ye shall be as gods. I will do what I like, I will be a god unto myself. I will not submit to constraint or limitation, I will turn to my own way.

The effects of sin follow immediately upon the sinful act. The development of the mind is accompanied by the loss of innocence: they knew that they were naked. The sense of guilt: they heard the voice of God saying, Where art thou? The slavish fear: they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God. The cowardice, blaming others: the woman gave me of the tree . . . ; blaming the devil: the serpent beguiled me; blaming God: the woman whom thou gavest to be with me. . .

And the final scene is of mankind being driven from the presence of God, by God's command, which yet was no arbitrary command, but the necessary consequence of their own act. They cannot remain in the presence of God, because they are no longer fit for it. They cannot remain with God, because they have turned against him. They are separated from him, because by their own choice and act they have separated themselves.

That is how Holy Scripture tells the story; and we can each of us test the truth of the parable by our own personal experience, when first we passed from the happy innocence of undeveloped childhood to the consciousness of our awakening powers, but in doing so took the road of sin.

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And so ends the third chapter of the history of evil. Man is spoilt and lowered through turning away from the true purpose of life. God is outraged, and his will set at naught; and the devil, though convicted by God, has for the time got his own way and worked his will on mankind. Man cannot undo his act himself and return to God. What remedy, then, can there be, unless God, who is almighty, provide a means whereby Satan can be overcome, and the outrage against God compensated by an obedience on the part of man greater than his disobedience, and man endued with a strength and righteousness which he has not in himself?

present time.

Sin is a universal and perpetual disease, and it shows itself in thoughts and words and deeds which are the symptoms of the deep-seated evil within. *As Jesus says: "From the heart of man"*

And sin is an inherited disease. As the seeds of bodily disease are sometimes transmitted from the parent to the unborn child, so the evil inheritance of sin was handed on from generation to generation. In every generation the offspring of men have been born, having already from their parents the infection of sin in their souls. From birth, and even before birth, men have a disposition to sin within them, and are by nature inclined towards self rather than towards God. Selfishness is natural in a fallen race. How little it surprises us, when we note the first signs of naughtiness or selfishness in the unfolding life of a little child. We see our own history, and indeed the history of the whole race, being repeated in him. Our first parents misused their free will, choosing what they knew was wrong; and their children continue in the same path, seeing the higher road, but following the lower. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way (Isa. 53:6).

And we may not put the blame of our sins upon those who have gone before us. It is true that we are part and parcel of the race, and inherit its evil tendencies. But mankind, even apart from Christ, is not totally depraved through the fall; and mankind in Christ has been enabled to attain too much that is very good. The good as well as the evil has been transmitted to us. We inherit myriad influences both good and bad; and our will is enabled by God to turn from the evil, and to allow the good to be developed in us. No man is fated to reproduce in himself a degenerate father. And again, if it is true that the natural will is always prone to choose the evil, it is still more true that the grace of Christ, which is given to us Christians, is stronger than nature: it is supernatural; and through it our own weak and faulty will can be strengthened and corrected. I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me (Phil 4:13).

Gospel Truth!

And similarly, no Christian can ever rightly ascribe the blame of his sins to his companions, his education, or his surroundings. Though often there are adverse influences in a man's circumstances, yet still he can make choice to yield or to resist. Nobody's circumstances are entirely favorable, and God, who knows the difficulties and hindrances of each one, provides the necessary aid for those who seek it (1 Cor. 10:13).

We have said that the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil are common to all men.

- **1 Corinthians 10:13**
- No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.
- **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**
- Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

→ We can see the effects of the fall most clearly in the state of the heathen, who have not been brought within reach of God's remedy for sin. Although made in the image of God, they know not God who made them, nor the meaning of life, having no hope, and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12). But indeed we can see the evidences of man's spiritual separation from God in everything around us, and even in our own hearts, Christians though we be. Unless God had implanted in a higher nature than that which we received from our parents, we should be unable to know God or to please him (Rom. 8:7-8). And, even with that higher nature, there still remains in us Christians the faulty disposition which we have inherited, so that we are not able to turn away from sin and Satan except by the continual help of God.

And as men were separated from God by sin, so also they became separated from one another. The natural brotherhood of man with man is broken, for the children of God have no real bond of union with each other, if they are alienated from the one Father of all. From the first root of sin sprang all malice and dissension, all strife and wars, and all that is evil and cruel in modern civilization. Men are at enmity with one another because they are at enmity with God (Rom. 1:28). Men sin, not only against God, but also against their fellowmen. They harm and spoil one another, by deliberate malice, or by the evil effects of their sins, or by the unintended influence of their sinful characters and example. The disease of sin is contagious; the infection passes from one to another like a plague. No man can sin unto himself alone. Sin ever tends to spread, and to spoil, and to separate.