GENESIS 3 - THE FALL OF MAN

“This Chapter is the pivot on which the whole Bible turns.”-W. H. Griffith Thomas

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**Hamartiology**

**By Dr. Andy Woods**

Hamartiology is the study of what the Bible reveals about sin. Unless this doctrine is understood, the doctrine of Soteriology, that is salvation by faith alone in Christ alone, remains unappreciated. Because "you have to get a man lost before you can get him saved," the study of the doctrine of sin must necessarily precede a correct comprehension of salvation. No chapter of the Bible better reveals the doctrine of sin than the third chapter of Genesis. According to W. H. Griffith Thomas, “Genesis 3 is the chapter on which the whole Bible turns.” Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the doctrine of sin through a section by section analysis of Genesis 3. This chapter can be divided into five sections: the temptation by the serpent (Gen. 3:1-5), the sin of Adam and Eve (vs. 6), the results of the sin (vv. 7-13), the imposition of divine judgments (vv. 14-19), and God’s provision in spite of sin (vv. 20-24).

**Temptation by the Serpent (Gen. 3:1-5)**

*Identity of the Serpent (Gen. 3:1a)*

Genesis 3 never identifies the serpent. Rather, there are two clear references in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 12:9; 20:2) which identify the serpent as Satan. The Bible is a self-interpreting book of progressive revelation. Thus, it first lays out truths in seed form while the rest of Scripture adds more detail and amplification without changing what was originally said.

According to verse 1a, “the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.” Here, discover that the serpent is cunning, which raises a natural question: "Who is Satan and where did he come from?" Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-17 are the only two chapters of the Bible which really give us any hint. Here, we learn that Satan was originally a high-ranking angelic being. Ezekiel 28:14 calls him the “anointed cherub." In fact, in Jude 9, Michael, who is the archangel, would not take on Satan through his own power, but instead said, “The Lord rebuke you.” This helps us understand how powerful Satan is.

In Genesis 3, Satan either indwelt or took the form of a serpent. Why a serpent? In Genesis 1:26-28, God established the office of Theocratic Administrator. God’s initial design for planet earth was to rule over Adam and Eve. As God ruled over Adam and Eve, they were given the assignment of ruling creation on God’s behalf. This is the very arrangement that Satan sought to overthrow. He took the form of a serpent in order to pervert the original design of God. His goal was to get our forebears to take orders from creation and rebel against God. As a result, this office of Theocratic Administrator was lost and will not be regained upon the earth until the Millennial Kingdom when God the Father will rule over the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, who in turn will rule creation on the Father's behalf (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

*Satan’s Tactics (Gen. 3:1b, 4-5)*

Regarding Satan’s tactics, “there is nothing new under the sun.” Thus, the identical tactics that Satan used in Genesis 3, are the very same tactics that he employs today and throughout history. There are four schemes that Satan employed in Genesis 3.

First, Satan added to the Word of God. Genesis 2:16-17 states the original command God gave to Adam concerning the Tree of Knowledge. “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 of it you will surely die.” Now compare this simple command to the serpent's distortion of it in Genesis 3:1b: “And he said to the woman, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” Satan added something by making it sound as if the command said you shall not eat from any tree of the Garden. In actuality, God said you may eat from any tree of the Garden except the Tree of Knowledge. Thus, Satan’s first great tactic is to take what God has revealed and add something to it. The cults come to the door and they will say, "I know you have your Bible but do you have the additional testament?" The fact of the matter is that the Canon of Scripture is closed. According to Jude 3, truth has been "once for all delivered to the saints."

His second tactic is to challenge God’s goodness. Satan manipulated God's command as follows: “has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” In fact, God never uttered such a restriction. Thus, Satan is making God appear more restrictive than He actually is. One of the great deceptions of Satan is to distort God’s goodness in the eyes of man. In actuality, when you turn your life over to Christ, you discover an abundance of life that you could never experience on your own terms. Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

The third deception of Satan is that he subtracts from God’s Word. Genesis 3:4 says, “The serpent said to the woman, ‘You shall not die!’” Compare this statement to Genesis 2:16-17 where God said to Adam you will die if you eat from the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. Satan now is taking away from the Word of God. This is an old tactic. Coming from Europe over the last century is something that is called higher criticism. The higher critic sits in judgment on the Bible. The end result of higher criticism is a subtraction from God’s Word. Examples of higher criticism abound: Moses did not write the first five books of the Bible. Someone other than Daniel wrote the book of Daniel, under the pen name Daniel, 400 years after the true Daniel lived. There are actually three Isaiah’s with two of them writing under the pen name "Isaiah" long after the death of the true Isaiah. Under higher criticism man constantly sits in judgment on the Bible and rewrites it by attacking the Bible based upon man’s rationality or what man judges as true.

A fourth tactic of Satan is to offer wisdom without submission to God. “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). In other words, Satan says, “Do you want wisdom, enlightenment, and truth? You do not have to submit to the Creator to attain these things. You can get them independently of God. You can become enlightened or self-actualized without submitting to God. By contrast, Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” Wisdom starts with submission to the Creator and living life on God’s terms rather than my terms. In fact, Ps. 14:1 says, “the fool has said in his heart there is no God.” From the divine perspective the fool is the person who is trying to develop wisdom on his own terms, living without God. Satan here is trying to subvert the natural order of things by saying you can have wisdom without submitting to God.

*Adam and Eve’s Mistakes (Gen. 3:2-3)*

Adam and Eve’s four mistakes are found in verses 2 and 3. Adam and Eve were now involved in spiritual warfare. We are also in a state of spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10-20). Thus, we can learn from the errors of our forebears, and hopefully not repeat these same mistakes.

The first mistake Eve made is in verse 2. She subtracted from God’s Word. Notice, verse 2 says, “The woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat.” When we compare this statement to the original command, we see that Eve left out something: the words “freely” and “any.” When our Lord was engaged in spiritual warfare with Satan, in Matthew 4, Christ responded to every temptation with the Word of God. Three times He said, “It is written.” He had the Scripture memorized perfectly. These three citations are from the book of Deuteronomy and they are all verbatim citations. While Jesus won His contest with Satan in the wilderness, Eve lost her contest. One of the reasons for this loss was Eve’s mishandling of God’s Word. Although she had a general understanding of the Word of God, she missed a word here or there.

Secondly, Eve added to the Word of God. Genesis 3:3 says, “but from the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’” By comparing that statement to Genesis 2:16-17 we discover that God never said anything about touching the tree. God simply said you cannot eat from it, but He never said you cannot touch it. Eve added something to the Word of God which was not there. How does the Bible end? It concludes with warnings against adding or taking away from what God has revealed (Rev. 22:18-19). How does the Bible conclude? With Eve adding and taking away from divine truth. It is almost as if God brackets the entire Canon of Scripture with the reminder not to add or take away from what God has revealed. Because adding and taking away is what plummeted the human race into the mess we are presently in, the warning against adding and subtracting brackets the entire Canon of Scripture. Apparently, God does not approve when people chip and chisel away at or add to what He has written.

The third mistake of Eve is that she began to doubt God's goodness. By taking away the terms, “freely” or “any,” and by adding the phrase, “do not touch,” she made it seem as if God is more restrictive than He actually is. We can see that in her mind she began to buy into the deception that the Creator God is not loving. He is not merciful. He is not after your best interest. What He is interested in is restricting your life. He is interested in making you unhappy. This, of course, is a tremendous deception since Christ has come into the world not to ruin the lives of people but rather to give people abundant life (John 10:10).

The fourth mistake of Adam and Eve involved an initial breakdown in male headship. In Genesis 2, Adam was created in verses 5-15. The command concerning the Tree of Knowledge was given in verses 16-17. Then Eve was created in verses 18-25. Eve, then, was not present when God gave the original command. The only way she could have had knowledge of the original command is if Adam disseminated this information to his wife. Because God gave Adam these instructions prior to the creation of Eve, the only way Eve could have learned of these commands regarding the Tree of Knowledge was from her husband. Therefore, Eve’s misquoting of the original command may mean that Adam inadequately disseminated these truths to Eve. Satan, sensing this weakness of a lack of male headship, assumed the role of the serpent to unseat this office of Theocratic Administrator. As far as God is concerned, the husband and father in the family is responsible as the leader of the family to disseminate spiritual truth to those that are under his supervision: his wife and children. To the extent that he does not do so is the extent to which he is held accountable before God. This notion of male headship has come under attack today. The average man is so busy working, that he has no time for spiritual pursuits, to teach his family, or even assume a leadership role in the church. Negligence in this area is what plummeted the human race into sin.

**The Sin of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:6)**

Genesis 3:6 reveals the actual sin of Adam and Eve: “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, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”

*Three Avenues of Temptation (Gen. 3:6a)*

There are only three avenues through which temptation comes. According to 1 John 2:16, they are called “lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” “Lust of the flesh” is the use of one's body to rebel against God. “Lust of the eye” is essentially covetousness or looking at something that does not belong to you and desiring it for yourself. “Pride of life” is arrogance or living life on one’s own terms independent of God.

In Gen. 3:6a, we see all three of these temptations: “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food,” is an appeal to the taste buds or “lust of the flesh.” The temptation here is to eat or use her body to rebel against God. “Delight to the eyes” is appeal to the eyes or covetousness. “Desirable to make one wise” involves the “pride of life” or the enticement to live life on your own terms. Every sin or temptation that we will face in life is going to fit into at least one of these three categories.

In Luke 4:1-13, Jesus faced temptation in the wilderness. The first temptation, “command the stones to become bread” is an appeal to “lust of the flesh.” Here, the temptation was for Christ to eat or use His body to rebel against God. In the second temptation, the devil took Him and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and said, "you can possess all of these kingdoms if you fulfill a simple condition of worshipping me." This second temptation represented the “lust of the eye” since Satan "showed" Him all the kingdoms of the world. In the third temptation, Satan said, “throw yourself from the temple and the angels will catch you.” This temptation is an appeal to the pride of life. Do you want a Messianic following? You can have it right now. All you have to do is throw yourself from the temple, and the angels will catch you. When the masses see you suspended in mid-air, you will have a Messianic following instantly.

Hebrews 4:15 indicates that Jesus was tempted in all ways, yet without sin. How was He tempted in all ways? Does that mean that if I am tempted to embezzle money at work, Jesus faced that exact same temptation? No. Rather, what it means is sin or temptation comes through three avenues only: lust of the flesh, lust of the eye and the pride of life. All temptations are going to fit into those categories. Christ in the wilderness was pushed to the furthest degree that a human being has ever been pushed in each of these three areas. He experienced lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life to the maximum degree.

Thus, Hebrews says that He is qualified to be our sympathetic and merciful high priest because temptation is going to come to me in one of three areas. He has already experienced temptation in each of these three realms to the furthest degree possible, and, yet, He endured them. When I experience my minor temptations in comparison, He is qualified, as someone who has stood in my shoes, to minister to me in the midst of my trials and difficulties. This reality explains why Jesus is called the “last Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45). He succeeded under every temptation whereas Adam and Eve failed. He stepped into history to succeed in lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and the pride of life. These are the very areas where our forebears failed. Thus, here, at the very beginning of human history, we see the early development of the doctrine of Christ as our great high priest.

*Perversion of Male Headship (Gen. 3:6b)*

Genesis 3:6b says, “she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.” Such behavior represents a complete breakdown of male headship. Evangelical feminism is the idea that there are no role distinctions between men and women. It seeks to say men and women are completely equal. What the evangelical feminist attempts to argue is that God never designed the man to be head of the marriage. Male headship came about only as a result of the curse or as a result of the Fall. However, the concept that the man is the head of the marriage is part of God’s design. It was part of the design of the Creator even before the Fall. First of all, Adam was created before Eve. This is significant. In 1 Timothy 2:13, when Paul lays out male headship within the church he refers to the fact that Adam was created before Eve. Secondly, in Genesis 2:23, Adam named Eve. When God named different things (Gen. 1:10), it is a sign of His authority over that which He has named. Thus, Adam’s naming of Eve implies his authority over her as well. Thirdly, although Eve sinned initially, God held Adam ultimately accountable. Genesis 3:9 says “Then the LORD God called to the man.” Romans 5:12 confirms, “Through one man, sin entered into the world.” God held Adam accountable despite the fact that Eve sinned first. Adam was the head of the home and the leader is the one who bears ultimate accountability. Thus, male headship was part of the original design of God even before sin.

On the other hand, the man has no right to trample down the woman just because of his leadership role. In Genesis 1:26-28, both Adam and Eve together are made in God's image. Thus, they both have equal value and worth before their Creator. Interestingly, in Genesis 1:26-28, both Adam and Eve are appointed co-rulers. Together they were to co-rule creation. Genesis 1:28 says, "God blessed *them*; and God said to *them*, '...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'" (italics added). Also, the woman was not created from man’s foot, implying her inferiority to Adam, but rather from Adam's side implying her equality. Thus, the teaching that the man has the role of leadership within the marriage in no way implies that the woman is less valuable or less important than the man. The doctrine of the Trinity serves as a similar example. The one God has expressed Himself in three personages: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God the Son submits Himself to the will of God the Father. Jesus said many times, “Not My will be done but Thy will be done.” When the Son submits Himself to the Father, the Son does not lose His essence as Deity. He retains the same status as the Father, although He is in functional subordination to the Father. It is the same with this issue with male headship. Although it is true that God has given the role of authority and leadership to the man, this in no way implies that the woman is somehow less important or less valuable to God. She does not lose her dignity or her worth through her submission to her husband any more than God the Son loses His dignity or His Deity when He submits Himself to the Father. In other words, her subordination is in role only, but not essence.

At this point, the office of male headship had now been completely subverted. The design of God, as given at the beginning of human history, had now been corrupted. Adam, instead of spiritually leading his wife, had now followed his wife into sin against God. Satan had now taken a relationship that God had established and ordained and corrupted and perverted it. Male headship had broken down.

**Results of the Sin (Gen. 3:7-13)**

And as a result, we now move into verses 7-13, the third major section in the chapter. Here, we see the results of the sin. The sin has taken place but what are its repercussions and consequences? These are the same consequences that are prevalent today. Genesis 3:7-13 says: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.' And He said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?' The man said, ‘The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.’ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’ And the woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me and I ate.’” The sin has taken place and there are now four consequences that follow.

*Religion (Gen. 3:7)*

The first consequence is found in verse 7, “then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made for themselves loin coverings.” The first consequence is that man became religious. Verse 7 represents the first act of religion in human history. Religion is man’s attempt to cover his sin and shame before God through his own efforts and works. Mankind senses guilt because of sin. Thus, the human race is on a perpetual quest to do something, anything, to cover their nakedness and their shame before God.

How can you be so sure Christianity is true since there are so many religions in the world? There are really not so many religions in the world. There are just two. Every single belief in the world besides Christianity teaches that man can do something to merit favor with God. It matters little what sign is out in front of the door, what denomination it is, what sect it is, or what country it is in. If a person believes that they can do something through their own strength, energy, merit, or worth, to cover their nakedness before God they are a religious person. However, Isaiah 64:6 tells us that God, when He looks at our righteous works, looks at them as filthy rags. There is absolutely nothing we can do to merit favor with God. Religious acts will not guarantee us one iota of favor before God.

*Broken Fellowship (Gen. 3:8-10)*

The second consequence that followed was that the relationship between man and God was broken. When we study verses 8-10 we learn that Adam and Eve were hiding. Why are they hiding? In verses 8-10 you get the idea that Adam and Eve, prior to sin, used to stroll with God in the cool of the Garden. Now something has been altered or changed. Now that sin has taken place Adam and Eve cannot wait to get away from God. They are running from God. Why are they running? God is holy. When the cherubim and the seraphim and the angels and the four living creatures, in Revelation 4 and Isaiah 6, stand around the throne of God, what are they saying? “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty.” They do not say, “Mercy, mercy, mercy, is the Lord God Almighty.” “Compassion, compassion, compassion, is the Lord God Almighty.” “Grace, grace, grace is the Lord God Almighty.” While compassion, grace, love, mercy, are all aspects of God, God's nature is holiness or uprightness. Thus, God, when He comes into the presence of sin, He must destroy sin. This explains why Adam and Eve are now afraid of God. Prior to the fall Adam and Eve were sinless beings standing in the presence of a holy God. Now they are sinful beings standing in the presence of a holy God. The relationship has now been altered, thereby explaining why Adam and Eve were hiding from God.

In the Bible, whenever a sinful man comes into the presence of the holy God, the reaction is always fear. John, on the isle of Patmos, saw a vision of the glorified Christ. Revelation 1:17 says that John fell down as though dead. Keep in mind that this is John, the writer of five New Testament books, the disciple whom the Lord loved, and the apostle who leaned against the breast of Christ in the Upper Room (John 13:23). Even John the beloved was scared of God upon seeing the glorified Christ on Patmos. In the calling section of Isaiah (Isa. 6), Isaiah comes into the presence of the Lord and he says, "woe to me, I am undone, I am unclean," and he was shaken to the absolute core of his being. He says, "even my lips are unclean." Isaiah was a prophet of God, a major prophet. He wrote a 66-chapter book that bears his name. What is the most important part of a prophet’s body? It is his mouth, which is the holiest part of his anatomy since it gave him the capacity to declare God's truth. Yet, even Isaiah the prophet and his mouth is unclean in the presence of God. Jesus spoke to this in John 3:19-21, which says, “This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But he who practices the truth comes to the light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.” The natural reaction of human beings to God is fear. Sinful people want to get away from God as fast as they possibly can. When you go into your garage, and all the bugs are in the garage and they have not seen light in quite a while. Suddenly, when they see the light, they flee. This is what sinful human beings do with God (Rom. 3:11). They are afraid, they are running, they are fearful. The issue has to do with the sinfulness of man and the holiness of God. If a police officer walks into this room, and I have not committed a crime, I am comfortable in the presence of the police officer. But what if I just committed a crime? What if I just embezzled at work? What if I just evaded in paying my taxes? In that case, when the police officer comes into the room, I am uncomfortable with him being there. I do not like him being there and I am bothered by his presence. This is how human beings now feel in the presence of God. They are fearful.

God calls out to Adam and Eve and He says, "where are you?" Now is He asking “where are you?” because He doesn’t understand where they are geographically? Of course not. Rather, He is saying “where are you?” to try to get them to understand that their relationship with Him has now been altered. “Where ARE you?” is a question for their benefit, not for God’s benefit. God's question is designed to get them to understand that "you used to stroll with Me in the cool of the garden and now you are hiding from Me." The fellowship between us has now been broken. It is similar to when I walk into my house and my wife politely asks, "did you leave the door open?" She’s not asking the question because she does not know that I left the door open. The question is designed for my benefit. It is a polite way of saying get up and close the door. Similarly, God is asking a question, not for God’s benefit, but rather for the benefit of Adam and Eve. “Where ARE you?” The relationship that you once had with Me has now been altered. You are now fleeing from Me and running from Me rather than strolling with Me in the cool of the Garden.

*Denial of Responsibility (Gen. 3:11-13)*

The third consequence that materializes in verses 11-13, is the buck starts to get passed. Harry Truman once said, “The buck stops here.” However, in verses 11-13 the buck does not stop anywhere. It passes right over everyone’s head because no one wants to take responsibility for their sin. Adam blames God when he says it is the woman that you gave me. It is not my fault God. Rather it is your fault for giving me the woman. Moreover, it is the woman’s fault. Then God says to the woman, “What is this you have done?,” and she blames the serpent. There is something now deeply ingrained within human sinful nature that denies responsibility for any sinful action.

When I was a substitute teacher we were on a field trip near a lake. One of the kids took a Frisbee and he threw it into the lake. I confronted this young man. I said, "where is the Frisbee?" He answered, “the lake took it.” This is the very thing that human beings frequently do in their fallen state. They will do anything they can to wiggle their way out of responsibility. This also is the key component in the thinking of most secular sociologists and psychologists. Their logic is that people do wrong not because they have made a choice. Rather, it is their environment that causes them to do wrong. When I was in law school they used to say if we could give everybody an income of $30,000 a year and if we could guarantee an education of K-12, crime would disappear. It is not people's choices that are the problem. Rather, it is their environment. If we can fix their environment, crime will disappear. Is a lack of education the problem? Hardly! If you educate a blue collar criminal, you are only enhancing his capacity to steal by transforming him into a white collar criminal. Look at Nazi Germany, one of the most educated and literate societies of all time. Look at the level of evil produced by that society. Furthermore, economics and poverty is not the root problem with man. During the Great Depression people were out of work and yet the crime rate was very low. Thus, there is not necessarily a correlation between the environment and evil. We also have, for example, Hollywood celebrities that commit terrible murders. Take the O. J. Simpson case as an example. If the environment were his primary problem, then that crime should never have occurred. He had all the wealth and all of the popularity that the world system has to offer. Yet, the crime occurred. So man’s environment is not necessarily the problem. Man and his sinful choices are the problem. However, man does not want to acknowledge this fact, and so he instead devises philosophies which shift the blame away from his own sinful choices.

*Reversal of the Creation Hierarchy (Gen. 3:11-13)*

The fourth consequence that transpired is that we now have the reversal of the creation hierarchy. Earlier, we referred to how God set up the office of Theocratic Administrator. God was to rule Adam and Eve and together they would rule creation for God. Under this arrangement, man was given the place of headship within marriage. Satan took the form of a serpent in order to pervert this divine design. Instead of leading his wife into spiritual truth, Adam were being influenced by his wife to sin against God. Instead of governing creation for God, now Adam and Eve are being negatively influenced by a member of the animal kingdom to rebel against God. Thus, what we see here is a complete unraveling of the office of Theocratic Administrator. Consequently, this office has been lost to the human race, and it will not be regained until the Millennial reign of Christ. Then God the Father will rule over God the Son, and God the Son will rule creation on God the Father’s behalf. The glorious 1000 year reign of Christ represents the time when the office of Theocratic Administrator is restored. The goal of human history is how this office of Theocratic Administrator, that was lost in Genesis 3, is retrieved. This restoration, in essence, is what the Bible, to a large extent, is about.

**Imposition of Divine Judgments (Gen. 3:14-19)**

God begins to impose judgments in verses 14-19: “The LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life. 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.’ To the woman He said, 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. Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; 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 brow you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, because from it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

God now speaks judgment to the three entities involved in the Fall, and to each entity He says two things. These judgments are catastrophic and are following us today. Because the serpent rebelled first, God deals with the serpent first. Because the woman rebelled second, God deals with the woman second. Because the man rebelled third, God deals with the man third.

*Judgment Upon the Serpent (Gen. 3:14-15)*

**Physical Alteration (Gen. 3:14)**

Verse 14, “The LORD God said to the serpent, ‘Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life. First, the serpent’s body was altered. Thus, what happened in Eden brought a physical consequence." We think of sin in terms of just spiritual consequences, but there was a physical consequence as well. Romans 8:20-22 says, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.” Thus, the whole created order is now in a state of travail. Our massive universe is here personified as groaning due to the consequences of sin. The damage done to this world due to sin explains why God will one day do away with this present world and replace it with a completely new earth (2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1). The serpent’s body was changed so that he would perpetually crawl in the dust. In Micah 7:17, the notion of crawling in the dust is analogized to humiliation. Thus, the alteration of the serpent's body serves as a physical reminder of what happened in Eden.

**Protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15)**

The second item that God declared to the serpent is in verse 15: “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.” This is the most important verse in the whole Bible. What you have in verse 15 is a microcosm of what the rest of the Scripture is about. Theologians call this verse the protoevangelium, which means "the first gospel." This verse encapsulates the first formal gospel presentation in Scripture. It is a prophecy that through the seed of the woman a descendant of Eve would come to crush the serpent’s head. At this point in history, Satan is put on notice that there is coming One who will defeat him.

The rest of the prophecy tells us that the serpent will be able to bruise Him on the heel. In other words, the serpent will be allowed to inflict some temporary casualties along the way. However, at the same time, the serpent's head would ultimately be crushed. Now if you had your choice would you rather have you heel bruised or your head crushed? I think most of us would take the heel bruise because when your head is crushed you are totally defeated.

What is the bruising of the heel? Satan works preemptively. Satan knows that this coming One is going to crush his head, and so he works to stop the line leading to the Messiah. Have you ever wondered why the Old Testament is tracing these genealogies so carefully? Have you ever wondered why that Messianic line is threatened over and over again in the pages of the Old Testament? This is Satan working preemptively to stop this Messiah from being born so his head will not be crushed. Satan, in his darkened mind, believes he can stop God’s prophecies. Consequently, we have many examples in the Old Testament of Satan trying to thwart this Messianic line. In the very next chapter (Gen. 4), Cain murders Abel. First John 3:12 tells us that Satan was involved in motivating this murder, which was his first attempt to stop the Messianic line. In Exodus 1, Pharaoh murders all of those Hebrew male infants. Athaliah, in 2 Chronicles 22, murders all but one of the royal offspring of the house of Judah. Haman, in the book of Esther devises a plot to wipe out the Jewish race. Herod, in Matthew 2, kills all of the Bethlehem innocent children. Revelation 12:4 explains that Satan was motivating Herod. All of these instances represent Satanic attempts to destroy the Messianic line in an attempt to prevent the birth of Christ. This battle continues into the life of Christ. Satan tempts Christ to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple. This was another premature attempt to kill the Son of God, before He could accomplish His goal by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. All of these things represent the progressive bruising of the heel.

However, as this is happening, the head of the serpent is being progressively crushed. Satan’s defeat comes in stages. First, he was cast out of heaven in eternity past (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-17). Secondly, the prophecy of the protoevangelium was given, which told him that his days are limited (Gen. 3:15). Third, he was defeated in the pre-Flood world (Gen. 6:1-4). Here Satan was seeking to contaminate the lineage leading to Christ by creating a half-race, half-breed type of people. The Nephilim, who were the products of this unholy union, were part angel and part human. This was a great attempt by Satan to prevent the birth of the Messiah, who must be fully God and fully man, by creating a race of people that are not fully human. Thus, this hybrid race could never beget the Messiah who must be fully human. Christ, in between His crucifixion and His resurrection, descended to the lower parts of the earth and preached to that select group of fallen angels that were involved in that rebellion (1 Pet. 3:19-20). The verb here is “preached,” not "evangelized." That is, Christ preached defeat to that select group of fallen angels who were involved in that rebellion. Fourth, Satan was defeated at the cross when his power of death was taken away (Heb. 2:14). Fifth, Satan will be defeated at the midpoint of the Tribulation. It is at this future point that he loses permanent access to the throne room of God. We know from early chapters of Job that Satan still has access to God’s throne. However, according to Revelation 12:9, that privilege is taken away midway through the Tribulation. Sixth, Satan will be bound at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:2-3). Seventh, Satan is thrown into the Lake of Fire at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:10). All of these things happen because it is prophesied in Genesis 3:15. One day the serpent’s head will be crushed. Thus, the whole Bible is laid out for us in germ form in verse 15. This is why I call Genesis 3:15 the most important verse in Scripture.

*Judgment Upon the Woman (Gen. 3:16)*

Next, God speaks to the woman: [16] “To the woman He said, I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire will be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

**Painful Childbirth (Gen. 3:16a)**

Childbirth becomes painful. Childbirth itself is not the curse. Psalm 127 tells us children are a blessing from the Lord. It was always God’s plan for women to have children (Gen. 1:28). The begetting of children is not the curse, but the process of pain now involved in bringing forth children becomes part of the curse. The process has become difficult. We are so blessed here in North America with so many medical advancements. However, when you study world history, you begin to learn that death in childbirth is an ever-present reality.

**Marital Conflict (Gen. 3:16b)**

Secondly, God tells the woman that she is going to have relational conflict. Verse 16b says, “your desire will be for be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” Most commentators interpret the word “desire” in verse 16 based upon its use in the Song of Solomon, which was written by another author centuries later. They try to develop the idea that the woman will be filled with sexual passion for her husband, or will voluntarily submit to him. Rather than going to the Song of Solomon to understand "desire" let us instead go one chapter ahead to Genesis 4:7, and look at how the same author, Moses, interprets this same word “desire.” Speaking to Cain, God says, “If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you.” Here “desire” is not used in terms of sexual passion. Rather, it is used in terms of authority and control. Here, God says to Cain, sin is going to try to control you, but you must master or control it so that it does not control you.

Hebrew scholars say verse 16 of Genesis 3 and Genesis 4:7 are almost identical grammatically. Thus, both verses are teaching the same concept. What God is saying in Genesis 3:16 is that the woman’s natural desire is to master, dominate, and control the man, and the marriage. Conversely, the man, in order to prevent the woman from controlling him, must rule firmly over her, just as Cain had to rule over sin to prevent it from mastering him. What this verse is saying is the woman now is going to try to master the marriage and the man, which is the beginning of Feminism. The man, in order to maintain control of the marriage, now will rule harshly over the woman, which is the beginning of Chauvinism.

Conflict within marriage is a natural repercussion of sin. Sin did not simply affect our vertical relationship with God. Sin also affected our horizontal relationships with each other. There is a natural tension, a natural conflict built into every marriage because of the sin in Genesis 3. Why is marriage sometimes difficult? Because of the Fall, the deck is stacked against you automatically when you enter into a marriage. There is a way of escape. Ephesians 5 says, that the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, which is the answer to man's natural chauvinistic impulses. Conversely, the wife is to submit to her husband as unto the Lord. She is to respect him. This is the answer to the woman's natural feministic impulses. Ephesians 5 and what Paul lays out for the Christian marriage only makes sense if we first understand how the deck is stacked against every marriage based upon Genesis 3:16. Christ came into the world, not just to restore us to God but to bring relationships and marriages into harmony. Thus, Christ offers holistic redemption.

*Judgment Upon the Man (Gen. 3:17-19)*

**Painful Toil (Gen. 3:17-19a)**

God says two things to the man. First, verses 17 through the first part of verse 19 indicates that now man will experience painful toil. In other words, it is now going to be difficult to earn a living. Work itself is not part of the curse. Similarly, the begetting of children or the bearing of children is not part of the curse. However, the process of bearing children became difficult after the Fall. In the same way, work is not part of the curse. Genesis 2:15, which was given before sin, says, “the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” Labor, productivity, or work, is part of God’s original design. What was not part of God’s design is now the process of labor becomes difficult. Now man has to work by the sweat of his brow. Now man has to labor for his very survival. Such arduous labor was never part of the design of God, but work itself was originally part of the design of God.

We are so fortunate in the United States of America with the economic blessings that we have. However, when you travel to other parts of the world you understand that people have to labor and work hard, not necessarily knowing where their next meal is going to come from. Notice the divine sarcasm. God says, "do you want to rebel against me? Then the very ground itself is going to rebel against you." This judgment, of course, carries over into the New Testament where the Apostle Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, “if a man will not work, neither let him eat.”

**Death (Gen. 3:19b)**

The second consequence that God articulates to the man is found in verse 19: “till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken. For dust you are, to dust you shall return.” Here, God tells man, he is going to die. That judgment, of course, goes back to what God originally said in Genesis 2:17: "the day you eat from the forbidden tree is the day you shall surely die." That word for death here is used roughly 800 times in the entire Old Testament, and every single time it refers to physical death. Therefore, physical death came to the human race because of the sin of Adam and Eve. Notice the genealogy in Genesis 5. Verse 5 records, “So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.” Verse 8 says, “So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years and he died.” Verse 11 says, “So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died.” Verse 14 says, “So all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died.” Clearly, death became a reality for humanity.

Hebrews 9:27 tells us that it is appointed for man once to die, and then to face the judgment. We are, as we speak, dying. Our bodies are decaying. For evidence of this, simply take out your high school yearbook and look at your picture and then look in the mirror. When we understand this negative reality, we begin to appreciate the doctrine of the resurrected body, which Paul promises to every believer in 1 Corinthians 15. Why do we need a resurrected body? The body we have is falling apart. It is like our automobile. When you put a certain number of miles on it, the car starts to break down, and we have to take it in for more and more repairs. This is the plight that we are in as human beings. We will go right back to the ground from which we came.

Actually, death is completely unnatural. Most religions of the world teach that death is part of God’s design. Not so with Christianity since death is completely unnatural and abnormal. God never designed the world with death in it. When God will ultimately bring in a new and un-cursed creation, death will not be part of it (Rev. 21:4-5). In fact, if you believe in Darwinism, you will also buy into the idea that death is normal, because the strong must dominate the weak. The weak have to die off and be replaced by the strong. Thus, Darwinism says death is the normal way that nature moves forward. The Scripture says the exact opposite. Death is completely unnatural and abnormal. It only came into the world as a consequence of sin and God will one day do away with it entirely

**God's Gracious Provision (Gen. 3:20-24)**

God’s gracious provision in spite of sin and its consequences is described in verses 20-24: “Now the man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'; therefore the LORD God sent him out from the Garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the Garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.” Here, God performs three acts of grace at the conclusion of this chapter.

*Human Preservation (Gen. 3:20)*

First, God preserves the human race. He tells Eve that she would become the mother of all of the living. Verse 19b gives the impression that the human race will be wiped out because of death, but God promises that this will not happen. Instead, God promises to preserve the human race by means of reproduction.

*Atonement (Gen. 3:21)*

Second, God forgives sin. He takes garments of skin and He clothes Adam and Eve. Where did these garments of skin come from? Obviously an innocent animal must have been killed in the place of the guilty so that these animal skins could be used to clothe our forebears. God here is showing us how He forgives sin. God cannot wink at sin or pretend like it never happened. Somebody must pay the price for sin. There is a conflict between God’s natures. On one hand, He desires to extend grace. On the other hand, He must punish sin. How are these divine attributes reconciled? They are resolved through the substitutionary atonement. Let us say I am a judge. I have a reputation for upholding the law. Then one day my son comes into the courtroom as a convicted criminal. I have a problem. Part of me wants to extend mercy. The other part of me wants to uphold my reputation as a law-and-order judge. How do I resolve this internal conflict? I issue the harshest sentence I can possibly issue under the law. I then take off my robes, put down my gavel, and tell the bailiff to take me away in my son’s place. In this way, I have satisfied both sides of my conflicting natures. My righteousness or my desire to uphold the law has been satisfied. Simultaneously, my mercy has been upheld because now I and not my son will bear my son’s penalty.

That is exactly what Jesus did for us some 2000 years ago on the cross. God sees our sin and He must punish it. On the other hand, he does not want to see us fall into condemnation. How does God reconcile this conflict? He punishes Himself. One member of the Trinity, God the Father, pours our His wrath on another member of the Trinity, God the Son. As a result Jesus screams His final words from the cross in John 19:30: *tetelestai,* which means “paid in full.” What we see then in Genesis 3:21 is the atonement of Christ. Verse 7 represents man’s way to forgive his sins. Verse 7 is religion. Man tries to do something. He tries to sew the fig leaves together to cover his nakedness. God, in verse 21, says that this is not how sin is going to be forgiven. I am going to forgive sin My way, through the punishment of My innocent substitutionary sacrifice. As we trust exclusively in this sacrificial act, we are made right with God. People must decide if they follow verse 7 or verse 21. If they are in verse 7, trying to cover themselves, then they are steeped in works and religion and consequently do not have a relationship with God. However, if they instead are trusting in the sacrifice that God provides, then they have experienced the grace of God and consequently are in a right relationship with Him.

*Access Barred to the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:22-24)*

In verses 22-24, the third act of grace occurs as God removes Adam and Eve from the Garden. How is this an act of grace? In verse 22, we get the idea that man could eat from the forbidden Tree of Life and live forever. God did not want man to live forever in his fallen state. Thus, He barred man from reentering the Garden, eating from the Tree of Life and living forever. The fact that we die is actually a token of the grace of God. Could you imagine man living forever in his sinful condition? Could you imagine an Adolf Hitler or a Saddam Hussein living forever? Recall how wicked the human race had become in Genesis 6. Every inclination of man’s thoughts and heart was continually wicked and violence filled the earth. These things took place with man dying. Could you imagine how much worse it would be if sinful man lived forever?

**Conclusion**

Hamartiology is the biblical study of sin. Perhaps no chapter in God’s Word better discloses the subject of sin and its full ramifications than the record of the fall of man as recorded in Genesis 3. Unless the import of this central section of Scripture is understood, then the Soteriological truths of God’s grace and the death and resurrection of the Savior will never be fully appreciated. Thus, we have seen the temptation by the serpent, the sin of Adam and Eve, the terrible consequences of the sin, the imposition of the divine judgments, and then the chapter concludes with God’s marvelous grace.