

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF GENESIS

by

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CHAPTER THREE

THIS section of our book sets before us the breaking up of the whole Scene on which we have been dwelling. It abounds in very weighty principles; and has, very justly, been, in all ages, resorted to as a most fruitful theme for those who desired to set forth the truth as to man's ruin and God's remedy.

The serpent enters, with a bold question as to divine revelation, – terrible model and forerunner of all infidel questions since raised by those who have, alas! too faithfully served the serpent's cause in the world, – questions which are only to be met by the supreme authority and divine majesty of Holy Scripture.

“Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

This was Satan's crafty inquiry; and had the Word of God been dwelling richly in Eve's heart, her answer might have been direct, simple, and conclusive. The true way in which to meet Satan's questions and suggestions, is to treat them as his, and repel them by the Word. To let them near the heart for a moment, is to lose the only power by which to answer them.

The devil did not openly present himself and say, “I am the devil, the enemy of God, and I am come to traduce him, and ruin you.” This would not be serpent-like; and, yet, he really did all this, by raising questions in the mind of the creature.

To admit the question, **“hath God said?”** when I know that God has spoken, is positive infidelity; and the very fact of my admitting it, proves my total incapacity to meet it. Hence, in Eve's case, the form of her reply evidenced the fact that she had admitted to her heart the serpent's crafty inquiry. Instead of adhering strictly to the exact words of God, she, in her reply, actually adds thereto.

Now, either to add to, or take from, God's Word proves, very clearly, that his word is not dwelling in my heart, or governing my conscience.

If a man is finding his enjoyment in obedience, if it is his meat and his drink, if he is living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, he will, assuredly, be acquainted with, and fully alive to, His Word. He could not be indifferent to it.

The Lord Jesus, in his conflict with Satan, accurately applied the Word, because he lived upon it, and esteemed it more than his necessary food. He could not misquote or misapply the word, neither could he be indifferent about it. Not so Eve. She added to what God had said.

His command was simple enough, **“Thou shalt not eat of it.”**

To this Eve adds her own words, **“neither shall ye touch it.”**

These were Eve’s words and not God’s. He had said nothing about touching; so that whether her misquotation proceeded from ignorance, or indifference, or a desire to represent God in an arbitrary light, or from all three together, it is plain that she was entirely off the true ground of simple confidence in, and subjection to, God’s holy word.

“By the words of thy mouth, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer” (Psalm 17:4).

Nothing can possess more commanding interest than the way in which the word is everywhere put forward throughout the Sacred Canon, together with the immense importance of strict obedience thereto. Obedience is due from us to God’s word, simply because it is His Word. To raise a question when he has spoken, is blasphemy. We are in the place of the creature. He is the Creator; He may, therefore, justly claim obedience from us.

The infidel may call this “blind obedience;” but the Christian calls it intelligent obedience, inasmuch as it is based upon the knowledge that it is God’s word to which he is obedient. If a man had not God’s word, he might well be said to be in blindness and darkness, for there is not so much as a single ray of divine light. within or around us, but what emanates from God’s pure and eternal Word. All that we want to know is that God has spoken, and then obedience becomes the very highest order of intelligent acting. When the soul gets up to God, it has reached the very highest source of authority.

No man, nor body of men, can claim obedience to their word, because it is theirs; and hence the claims of the Church of Rome are arrogant and impious. In her claiming obedience, she usurp the prerogative of God; and all who yield it, rob God of his right. She presumes to place herself between God and the conscience; and who can do this with impunity? When God speaks, man is bound to obey. Happy is he if he does so. Woe be to him if he does not.

Infidelity may question if God has spoken; superstition may place human authority between my conscience and what God has spoken; by both alike I am effectually robbed of the Word, and, as a consequence, of the deep blessedness of obedience.

There is a blessing in every act of obedience; but the moment the soul hesitates, the enemy has the advantage; and he will assuredly use it to thrust the soul farther and farther from God.

Thus, in the chapter before us, the question, **“Hath God said?”** was followed by, **“Ye shall not surely die.”**

That is to say, there was first the question raised, as to whether God had spoken, and then followed the open contradiction of what God had said.

This solemn fact is abundantly sufficient to show how dangerous it is to admit near the heart a question as to divine revelation, in its fulness and integrity. A refined rationalism is very near akin to bold infidelity; and the infidelity that dares to judge God's Word is not far from the atheism that denies his existence.

Eve would never have stood by to hear God contradicted, if she had not previously fallen into looseness and indifference as to His Word.

She, too, had her "Phases of Faith," or, to speak more correctly, her phases of infidelity: she suffered God to be contradicted by a creature, simply because His Word had lost its proper authority over her heart, her conscience, and her understanding.

This furnishes a most solemn warning to all who are in danger of being ensnared by an unhallowed rationalism.

There is no true security, save in a profound faith in the plenary inspiration and supreme authority of "**ALL SCRIPTURES**". The soul that is endowed with this has a triumphant answer to every objector, whether he issue from Rome or Germany.

"**There is nothing new under the sun.**" The self-same evil which is now corrupting the very springs of religious thought and feeling, throughout the fairest portion of the continent of Europe, was that which laid Eve's heart in ruins, in the garden of Eden.

The first step in her downward course was her hearkening to the question, "**Hath God said?**" And then, onward she went, from stage to stage, until, at length, she bowed before the serpent and owned him as her god, and the fountain of truth.

Yes, my reader, the serpent displaced God, and the serpent's lie God's truth. Thus it was with fallen man and thus it is with fallen man's posterity.

God's word has no place in the heart of the unregenerated man; but the lie of the serpent has.

Let the formation of man's heart be examined, and it will be found that there is a place therein for Satan's lie, but none whatever for the truth of God. Hence the force of the word to Nicodemus, "**Ye must be born again.**"

But, it is important to observe the mode in which the serpent sought to shake Eve's confidence in God's truth, and thus bring her under the power of infidel "*reason*." It was by shaking her confidence in God's love. He sought to shake her confidence in what God had said by showing that the testimony was not founded in love.

"**For,**" said he, "**God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil.**" (Ver. 5).

In other words, “There is positive advantage connected with the eating of that fruit of which God is seeking to deprive you; why, therefore, should you believe God’s testimony? you cannot place confidence in one who, manifestly, does not love you; for, if he loved you, why should he prohibit your enjoying a positive privilege?”

Eve’s security against the influence of all this reasoning, would have been simple repose in the infinite goodness of God. She should have said to the serpent, “I have the fullest confidence in God’s goodness, and, therefore, I deem it impossible that he could withhold any real good from me. If that fruit were good for me, I should surely have it; but the fact of its being forbidden by God proves that I would be no better, but much worse off by the eating of it. I am convinced of God’s love, and I am convinced of God’s truth, and I believe, too, that you are an evil one come to draw my heart away from the fountain of goodness and truth. Get thee behind me, Satan.”

This would have been a noble reply. But it was not given.

Her confidence in truth and love gave way, and all was lost; and so we find that there is just as little place in the heart of fallen man for God’s love, as there is for God’s truth. The heart of man is a stranger to both the one and the other, until renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Now, it is deeply interesting to turn from Satan’s lie in reference to the truth and love of God, to the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ, who came from the bosom of the Father in order to reveal His “**Grace and truth**,” – the very things which man lost, in his fall, – “**came by Jesus Christ**” (John 1:1).

He was “**the faithful witness**” of what God was. (Revelation 1:5).

Truth reveals God as He is; but this truth is connected with the revelation of perfect grace; and thus the sinner finds, to his unspeakable joy, that the revelation of what God is, instead of being his destruction, becomes the basis of his eternal salvation. “**This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.**” (John 17:3).

I cannot know God and not have life. The loss of the knowledge of God was death; but the knowledge of God is life. This, necessarily, makes life a thing entirely outside of ourselves, and dependent upon what God is. Let me arrive at what amount of self-knowledge I may, it is not said that “this is life eternal, to know themselves;” though, no doubt, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self will go very much together; still, “**eternal life**” is connected with the former, and not with the latter. To know God as he is, is life; and “**all who know not God**” shall be “**punished with everlasting destruction from his presence.**”

It is of the utmost importance to see that what really stamps man’s character and condition is his ignorance or knowledge of God. This it is that marks his character here, and fixes his destiny hereafter. Is he evil in his thoughts, evil in his words, evil in his actions? It is all the result of his being ignorant of God. On the other hand, is he pure in thought, holy in conversation, gracious in action? It is but the practical result of his knowledge of God.

So also as to the future. To know God is the solid ground of endless bliss, – everlasting glory. To know him not is “**everlasting destruction.**” Thus the knowledge of God is everything. It quickens the soul, purifies the heart, tranquillizes the conscience, elevates the affections, sanctifies the entire character and conduct.

Need we wonder, therefore, that Satan’s grand design was to rob the creature of the true knowledge of the only true God? He misrepresented the blessed God! he said he was not kind. This was the secret spring of all the mischief.

It matters not what shape sin has since taken, – it matters not through what channel it has flowed, under what head it has ranged itself, or in what garb it has clothed itself, – it is all to be traced to this one thing, namely, ignorance of God.

The most refined and cultivated moralist, the most devout religionist, the most benevolent philanthropist, if ignorant of God, is as far from life and true holiness, as the publican and the harlot. The prodigal was just as much a sinner, and as positively away from the Father, when he had crossed the threshold, as when he was feeding swine in the far country. (Luke 15:13-15). So in Eve’s case. The moment she took herself out of the hands of God, out of the position of absolute dependence upon, and subjection to, His Word, – she abandoned herself to the government of sense, as used of Satan for her entire overthrow.

The sixth verse presents three things, namely: “**the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;**” which three, as the apostle states, comprehend “**all that is in the world.**”

These things necessarily took the lead, when God was shut out. If I do not abide in the happy assurance of God’s love and truth, his grace and faithfulness, I shall surrender myself to the government of someone, or it may be all, of the above principles; and this is only another name for the government of Satan. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as man’s free-will. If man be self-governed, he is really governed by Satan; and if not, he is governed by God.

Now, the three great agencies by which Satan works are “**the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.**”

These were the things presented by Satan to the Lord Jesus, in the temptation. He began by tempting the Second Man to take himself out of the position of absolute dependence upon God – “**Command these stones that they be made bread.**” He asked him to do this, not, as in the case of the first man, to make himself what he was not, but to prove what he was. Then followed the offer of the kingdoms of the world, with all their glory. And, finally, conducting Him to a pinnacle of the temple, he tempted Him to give Himself, suddenly and miraculously, to the admiration of the assembled people below. (Comp. Matthew 4:1-11 with Luke 4:1-13).

The plain design of each temptation was to induce the Blessed One to step from the position of entire dependence upon God, and perfect subjection to his will. But all in vain. “**It is written,**” was the unvarying reply of the only dependent, self-emptied, perfect man. Others might undertake to manage for themselves: none but God should manage for him.

What an example for the faithful, under all their circumstances! Jesus kept close to Scripture, and thus conquered: without any other weapon, save the sword of the Spirit, he stood in the conflict, and gained a glorious triumph. What a contrast with the first Adam! The one had everything to plead for God: the other had everything to plead against him. The garden, with all its delights, in the one case; the wilderness, with all its privations, in the other: confidence in Satan, in the one case; confidence in God in the other: complete defeat in the one case; complete victory in the other. Blessed forever be the God of all grace, who has laid our help on One so mighty to conquer, mighty to save!

Let us now inquire how far Adam and Eve realized the serpent's promised advantage. This inquiry will lead us to a deeply-important point in connection with the fall of man.

The Lord God had so ordered it, that in and by the fall, man should get what previously he had not, and that was a conscience, – a knowledge of both good and evil.

This, man evidently could not have had before. He could not have known aught about evil, inasmuch as evil was not there to be known. He was in a state of innocence, which is a state of ignorance of evil. Man got a conscience in and by the fall; and we find that the very first effect of conscience was to make him a coward.

Satan had utterly deceived the woman. He had said, “**your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.**” But he had left out a material part of the truth namely, that they should know good, without the power to do it, and that they should know evil, without the power to avoid it.

Their very attempt to elevate themselves in the scale of moral existence involved the loss of true elevation. They became degraded, powerless Satan-enlaved, conscience-smitten, terrified creatures.

“**The eyes of them both were opened,**” no doubt; but alas! to what a sight!

It was only to discover their own nakedness. They opened their eyes upon their own condition, which was “**wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.**”

“**They knew that they were naked,**” – sad fruit of the tree of knowledge! It was not any fresh knowledge of divine excellency they had attained, – no fresh beam of divine light from the pure and eternal fountain thereof, – alas! no: the very earliest result of their disobedient effort after knowledge was the discovery that they were naked.

Now, it is well to understand this; well, too, to know how conscience works, – to see that it can only make cowards of us, as being the consciousness of what we are. Many are astray as to this: they think that conscience will bring us to God. Did it operate thus: in the case of Adam and Eve? Assuredly not. Nor will it, in the case of any sinner. How could it? How could the sense of what I am ever bring me to God, if not accompanied by the faith of what *God is*? Impossible: it will produce shame, self-reproach, remorse, anguish.

It may, also, give birth to certain efforts, on my part, to remedy the condition which it discloses; but these very efforts, so far from drawing us to God, rather act as a blind to hide him from our view. Thus, in the case of Adam and Eve, the discovery – their nakedness was followed by an effort of their own to cover it.

“They sewed fig-leaves together and made themselves aprons.”

This is the first record we have of man’s attempt to remedy, by his own device his condition; and the attentive consideration thereof will afford us not a little instruction as to the real character of human religiousness in all ages.

In the first place we see, not only in Adam’s case, but in every case, that man’s effort to remedy his condition is based upon the sense of his nakedness. He is, confessedly, naked, and all his works are the result of his being so. This can never avail. I must know that I am clothed, before I can do anything acceptable in the sight of God.

And this, be it observed, is the difference between true Christianity and human religiousness.

- The former is founded upon the fact of a man’s being clothed: the latter, upon the fact of his being naked.
- The former has for its starting-post what the latter has for its goal.

All that a true Christian does, is because he is clothed, – perfectly clothed; all that a mere religionist does, is in order that he may be clothed.

This makes a vast difference.

The more we examine the genius of man’s religion, in all its phases, the more we shall see its thorough insufficiency to remedy his state, or even to meet his own sense thereof. It may do very well for a time. It may avail so long as death, judgment, and the wrath of God are looked at from a distance, if looked at all; but when a man comes to look these terrible realities straight in the face, *he will find, in good truth, that his religion is a bed too short for him to stretch himself upon, and a covering too narrow for him to wrap himself in.*

The moment Adam heard the voice of the Lord God, in Eden, **“he was afraid,”** because, as he himself confessed, **“I was naked.”**

Yes, naked, although he had his apron on him. But it is plain that that covering did not even satisfy his own conscience. Had his conscience been divinely satisfied, he would not have been afraid. **“If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”** (I John 3:20, 21). But if even the human conscience cannot find repose in man’s religious efforts, how much less can the holiness of God.

Adam’s apron could not screen him from the eye of God; and he could not stand in his presence naked: therefore he fled to hide himself.

This is what conscience will do at all times. It will cause man to hide himself from God; and, moreover, all that his own religiousness offers him is a hiding-place from God.

This is a miserable provision, inasmuch as he must meet God, some time or other; and if he has naught save the sad conscience of what he is, he must be afraid, – yea, he must be wretched. Indeed, nothing is needed, save hell itself, to complete the misery of one who feels he has to meet God, and knows only his own unfitness to meet him.

Had Adam known God's perfect love, he would not have been afraid. **“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”** (I John 4:17, 18). But Adam knew not this, because he had believed the serpent's lie. He thought that God was anything but love; and, therefore, the very last thought of his heart would have been to venture into his presence. He could not do it. Sin was there, and God and sin can never meet: so long as there is sin on the conscience, there must be the sense of distance from God. **“He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity.”** (Habakkuk 1:13). Holiness and sin cannot dwell together. Sin, wherever it is found, can only be met by the wrath of God. But, blessed be God, there is something beside *the conscience of what I am*. There is *the revelation of what He is*; and this latter the fall of man really brought out.

God had not revealed himself, fully, in creation: he had shown **“his eternal power and Godhead,”** but he had not told out all the deep secrets of his nature and character. Wherefore Satan made a grand mistake in coming to meddle with God's creation. He only proved to be the instrument of his own eternal defeat and confusion, and **“his violent dealing”** shall forever **“come down upon his own pate.”**

His lie only gave occasion for the display of the full truth in reference to God. Creation never could have brought out what God was. There was infinitely more in Him than power and wisdom. There was love, mercy, holiness, righteousness, goodness, tenderness, long-suffering. Where could all these be displayed, but in a world of sinners?

God, at the first, came down to create; and, then, when the serpent presumed to meddle with creation, God came down to save. This is brought out in the first words uttered by the Lord God, after man's fall. **“And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?”**

This question proved two things.

- It proved that man was lost, and that God had come to seek.
- It proved man's sin, and God's grace.

“Where art thou?” Amazing faithfulness! Amazing grace!

- Faithfulness, to disclose, in the very question itself, the truth as to man's condition:
- grace, to bring out, in the very fact of God's asking such a question, the truth as to his character and attitude, in reference to fallen man.

Man was lost, but God had come down to look for him – to bring him out of his hiding-place, behind the trees of the garden in order that, in the happy confidence of faith, he might find a hiding-place in himself.

This was grace.

To create man out of the dust of the ground was power, but to seek man in his lost estate was grace.

But who can utter all that is wrapped up in the idea of God's being a seeker? God seeking a sinner? What could the Blessed One have seen in man, to lead him to seek for him? Just what the shepherd saw in the lost sheep; or what the woman saw in the lost piece of silver; or what the father saw in the lost son.

The sinner is valuable to God; but why he should be so eternity alone will unfold.

How, then, did the sinner reply to the faithful and gracious inquiry of the Blessed God? Alas! the reply only reveals the awful depth of evil into which he had fallen. **“And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”**

Here, we find him actually laying the blame of his shameful fall on the circumstances in which God had placed him, and thus, indirectly, upon God himself.

This has ever been the way with fallen man. Everyone and everything is blamed but self.

In the case of true conviction, the very reverse is exhibited. “Is it not I that have sinned?” is the inquiry of a truly humbled soul.

Had Adam known himself, how different would have been his style! But he neither knew himself nor God, and, therefore, instead of throwing the blame entirely upon himself, he threw it upon God.

Here, then, was man's terrible position.

He had lost all. His dominion – his dignity – his happiness – his innocence – his purity – his peace – all was gone from him; and, what was still worse, he accused God of being the cause of it. *

*** Man not only accuses God of being the author of his fall, but also blames Him for his non-recovery. How often do we hear persons say that they cannot believe unless God give them the power to believe; and, further, that unless they are the subjects of God's eternal decree, they cannot be saved.**

Now, it is perfectly true, that no man can believe the Gospel, except by the power of the Holy Ghost; and it is also true, that all who so believe the Gospel are the happy subjects of God's eternal counsels. But does all this set aside man's responsibility to believe a plain testimony set before him in God's Word? It most certainly does no such thing. But it does reveal the sad evil of man's heart, which leads him to reject God's testimony which is plainly revealed, and to give as a reason for so doing God's decree, which is a profound secret, known only to himself. However, it will not avail, for we read in I Thessalonians 1:8, 11, that those "who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, shall be punished with everlasting destruction."

Men are responsible to believe the Gospel, and they will be punished for not believing it. They are not responsible to know anything about God's counsels, inasmuch as they are not revealed, and, therefore, there can be no guilt attached to ignorance concerning them. The apostle could say to the Thessalonians, "knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How did he know it? Was it by having access to the page of God's secret and eternal decrees? By no means. How then? "Because our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power." (I Thessalonians 1:4, 5). This is the way to know the election of any. When the Gospel comes in power, it is a plain proof of God's election.

But, I doubt not, the people who draw a plea from the divine counsels for rejecting the divine testimony, only want some flimsy excuse to continue in sin. They really do not want God; and it would be far more honest in them to say so, plainly, than to put forward a plea which is not merely flimsy, but positively blasphemous. Such a plea will not avail them much amid the terrors of the Day of Judgment, now fast approaching.

There he stood, a lost, ruined, guilty, and yet, self-vindicating, and, therefore, *God-accusing* sinner.

But, just at this point, God began to reveal himself, and his purposes of redeeming love; and herein lay the true basis of man's peace and blessedness.

When man has come to the end of himself, God can show what He is; but not until then. The scene must be entirely cleared of man, and all his vain pretensions, empty boastings, and blasphemous reasonings, ere God can or will reveal Himself.

Thus it was when man was hidden behind the trees of the garden, that God unfolded his wondrous plan of redemption through the instrumentality of the bruised seed of the woman.

Here we are taught a valuable principle of truth as to what it is which alone will bring a man, peacefully and confidently, into the presence of God.

It has been already remarked that conscience will never effect this. Conscience drove Adam behind the trees of the garden; revelation brought him forth into the presence of God. The consciousness of what he was terrified him; the revelation of what God was tranquillized him. This is truly consolatory for a poor sin-burdened heart. The reality of what I am is met by the reality of what God is; and this is salvation.

There is a point where God and man must meet, whether in grace or judgment, and that point is where both are revealed as *they are*.

Happy are they who reach that point in grace! Woe be to them who will have to reach it in judgment! It is with what we are that God deals; and it is as He is that He deals with us.

In the Cross, I see God descending in grace to the lowest depths, not merely of my negative, but my positive condition, as a sinner. This gives perfect peace.

If God has met me, in my actual condition, and himself provided an adequate remedy, all is eternally settled. But all who do not thus, by faith, see God, in the Cross will have to meet him, by and by, in judgment, when he will have to deal, according to what he is, with what they are.

The moment a man is brought to know his real state, he can find no rest until he has found God, in the Cross, and then he rests in God himself. He, blessed be his Name, is the Rest and Hiding-place of the believing soul. This, at once, puts human works and human righteousness in their proper place. We can say, with truth, that those who rest in such things cannot possibly have arrived at the true knowledge of themselves.

It is quite impossible that a divinely quickened conscience can rest in aught save the perfect sacrifice of the Son of God.

All effort to establish one's own righteousness must proceed from ignorance of the righteousness of God.

Adam might learn, in the light of the divine testimony about "**the seed of the woman**," the worthlessness of his fig-leaf apron. The magnitude of that which had to be done, proved the sinner's total inability to do it.

- Sin had to be put away. Could man do that? Nay, it was by him it had come in.
- The serpent's head had to be bruised. Could man do that? Nay, he had become the serpent's slave.
- God's claims had to be met. Could man do that? Nay, he had already trampled them under foot.
- Death had to be abolished. Could man do that? Nay, he had, by sin, introduced it, and imparted to it its terrible sting.

Thus, in whatever way we view the matter, we see the sinner's complete impotency, and, as a consequence, the presumptuous folly of all who attempt to assist God in the stupendous work of redemption, as all assuredly do who think to be saved in any other way but "**by grace, through faith**."

However, though Adam might, and, through grace, did, see and feel that he could never accomplish all that had to be done, yet God revealed himself as about to achieve every jot and tittle thereof, by the seed of the woman.

In short, we see that he graciously took the entire matter into his own hands.

He made it, altogether, a question between himself and the serpent: for although the man and the woman were called upon, individually, to reap, in various ways, the bitter fruits of their sin, yet it was to the serpent that the Lord God said, **“Because thou hast done this.”**

The serpent was the source of the ruin; and the seed of the woman was to be the source of the redemption.

Adam heard all this, and believed it; and, in the power of that belief, **“he called his wife’s name the mother of all living.”** This was a precious fruit of faith in God’s revelation.

Looking at the matter from nature’s point of view, Eve might be called, *“the mother of all dying.”* But, in the judgment of faith, she was the mother of all living. **“His mother called him Ben-oni; (the son of my sorrow;) but his father called him Benjamin (the son of my right hand).”**

It was through the sustaining energy of faith that Adam was enabled to endure the terrible results of what he had done. It was God’s wondrous mercy to allow him to hear what he said to the serpent, before he was called to listen to what he had to say to himself. Had it not been so, he must have been plunged in despair. It is despair to be called upon to look at myself, without being able to look at God, as revealed in the Cross, for my salvation.

There is no child of fallen Adam who could bear to have his eyes opened to the reality of what he is, and what he has done, without being plunged in despair, unless he could take refuge in the Cross. Hence, in that place to which all who reject Christ must finally be consigned, hope cannot come. There, man’s eyes will be opened to the reality of what they are, and what they have done; but they will not be able to find relief and refuge in God.

What God is, will, then, involve hopeless perdition; as truly as what God is, doth, now, involve eternal salvation.

The holiness of God will, then, be eternally against them; as it is now that in which all who believe are called to rejoice. The more I realize the holiness of God, now, the more I know my security but, in the case of the lost, that very holiness will be but the ratification of their eternal doom. Solemn, unspeakably solemn-reflection!

We shall, now, briefly glance at the truth presented to us in God’s providing coats for Adam and Eve.

“Unto Adam, also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”

We have here, in figure, the great doctrine of divine righteousness set forth.

The robe which God provided was an effectual covering, because he provided it; just as the apron was an ineffectual covering because man had provided it.

Moreover, God's coat was founded upon blood-shedding. Adam's apron was not. So also, now God's righteousness is set forth in the Cross; man's righteousness is set forth in the works, the sin-stained works of his own hands. When Adam stood clothed in the coat of skin he could not say, "**I was naked,**" nor had he any occasion to hide himself. The sinner may feel perfectly at rest, when, by faith, he knows that God has clothed him: but to feel at rest till then, can only be the result of presumption or ignorance. To know that the dress I wear, and in which I appear before God, is of his own providing, must set my heart at perfect rest. There can be no true, permanent rest in aught else.

The closing verses of this chapter are full of instruction. Fallen man, in his fallen state, must not be allowed to eat of the fruit of the tree of life, for that would entail upon him endless wretchedness in this World.

To take of the tree of life, and eat and live forever, in our present condition, would be unmingled misery.

The tree of life can only be tasted in resurrection.

To live forever in a frail tabernacle, in a body of sin and death, would be intolerable.

Wherefore the Lord God "**drove out the man.**" He drove him out into a world which, everywhere, exhibited the lamentable results of his fall.

The Cherubim and the flaming sword, too, forbid fallen man to pluck the fruit of the tree of life; while God's revelation pointed him to the death and resurrection of the seed of the woman, as that wherein life was to be found beyond the power of death.

Thus Adam was a happier, and a safer man, outside the bounds of Paradise, than he had been within, for this reason – that, within, his life depended upon himself; whereas, outside, it depended upon another, even a promised Christ. And as he looked up, and beheld "**the Cherubim and the flaming sword,**" he could bless the hand that had set them there, "**to keep the way of the tree of life,**" inasmuch as the same hand had opened a better, a safer, and a happier way to that tree.

If the Cherubim and flaming sword stopped up the way to Paradise, the Lord Jesus Christ has opened "**a new and living way**" into the holiest of all. "**I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**" (Compare John 14:6; Hebrews 10:20).

In the knowledge of this, the believer now moves onward through a world which is under the curse, – where the traces of sin are visible on all hands. He has found his way, by faith, to the bosom of the Father; and while he can secretly repose there, he is cheered by the blessed assurance that the one who has conducted him thither, is gone to prepare a place in the many mansions of the Father's house, and that he will soon come again and receive him unto himself,

amid the glory of the Father's kingdom.

Thus, in the bosom, the house, and the kingdom of the Father, the believer finds his present portion, his future home and reward.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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