**Knowledge of Good and Evil**
Gen 3:8-23
SS Lesson for 09/15/2013

**Devotional Scripture:** Heb 5:14

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Introduction

Overview and Approach to Lesson

The lesson reviews how the Knowledge of Good and Evil lead to man's fall. The study's aim is to discover the origin of sin and evil in the world and to find how God views sin and establishes its consequences. The study's application is to develop in ourselves a proper evaluation of our own sin and to know what we should do about it.

Key Verse: Gen 3:22-23

22 And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." 23 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

Adam’s faith and God’s provision are noted in these verses. God would save them and ensure that they would not live forever in this state. Adam’s faith is seen in his naming his wife Eve (lit., “living”). Thus Adam was looking to the future and not primarily to death. Eve’s faith is seen later (4:1) when she named her firstborn Cain because he was from the Lord. All God’s dealings with people as sinners can be traced back to this act of disobedience by Adam and Eve. God is a saving God, however, and the fact that He clothed... Adam and Eve testifies to that. An animal was sacrificed to provide garments of skin, and later all Israel’s animal sacrifices would be part of God’s provision to remedy the curse—a life for a life. The sinner shall die! (Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 6:23) Yet he will live if he places his faith in the Lord, who has provided a Substitute. The skin with which God clothed Adam and Eve perpetually reminded them of God’s provision. Similarly in the fullness of time God accepted the sacrifice of Christ, and on the basis of that atonement He clothes believers in righteousness (Rom. 3:21-26).

Commentary from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Perhaps this verse offers one reason why the Lord has clothed the couple: to prepare them for life away from the Garden of Eden, from which they are now expelled. In verse 22 (not in today's text), God gives the reason for their eviction—so that they, in their fallen condition, will not eat of the tree of life and live forever. This is an act of discipline, but it is also one of grace. Sin-cursed humanity must be protected from itself. Unchecked sin would be catastrophic. The Hebrew word translated work is the same one used in Genesis 2:15. The man will continue to do the work he was doing, only now he will do so with the grim awareness that the ground from which he has been made is cursed (3:17). He has no one to blame for this sad outcome but himself.

Commentary from Barnes Notes

Verse 22. [As one of us.] This is another indication of the plurality in unity which is evidently inherent in the Eternal Spirit. It is still more significant than the expression of concert in the creation of man, as it cannot be explained by anything short of a personal distinction. [Behold, the man is become as one of us to know good and evil.] We are now prepared to understand the nature of the two trees which were in the midst of the garden. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil effected a change, not in the physical constitution of man, but in his mental experience—in his knowledge of good and evil. There do not appear to have been any seeds of death—any poisonous or malignant power in the tree. "The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and likely to the eyes," as well as a tree to be desired to make one wise. Neither does it appear that the virtue of making wise on the particular point of moral distinctions lay in the digestion of its fruit when received into the stomach. The natural effect of food is on the body, not on the understanding. The moral effect lay rather in the conduct of man in regard to the tree, as a thing prohibited. The result of his conduct, whether in the way of obedience or disobedience to the divine command, was to be the knowledge of good and evil. If man had obeyed, he
would have come to this knowledge in a legitimate way. For he would have perceived that distrust of God and disobedience to his will, as they were externally presented to his view in the suggestions of the tempter, were evil; and that confidence and obedience, internally experienced in himself in defiance of such suggestions, were good. And this was the germ of the knowledge of good and evil. But, by disregarding the express injunction of his Maker with respect to this tree, he attained to the knowledge of good and evil in an unlawful and fatal way. He learned immediately that he himself was the guilty party, whereas, before, he was free from guilt; and thus became aware, in his own person and to his own condemnation, of good and evil, as distinct and opposite qualities. This view of the tree is in accordance with all the intimations of Scripture. First. The terms in which it is prohibited are, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat; for in the day thou eatest of it, die surely shalt thou." Here it is important to mark the consequence which is pointed out as flowing from the eating of it. It is not, Thou shalt know good and evil by any physical virtue of the tree, a process by which knowledge comes not at all; but, "Thou shalt surely die." Now, this is not any physical result of the fruit being received into the system, since man did not die for centuries after, but a penal result, in fact, the awful sanction of that divine command by which man's probation was to be accomplished. Second. The points brought out by the serpent are to the same effect. He suggests that God had not given permission to eat of every tree of the garden. There was some reserve. This reserve is an injury to man, which he makes out by denying that death is the consequence of eating of the tree reserved, and asserting that special benefits, such as the opening of the eyes, and being as God in knowing good and evil, would follow. In both of these statements there is equivocation. Death is not indeed the natural, but it is the legal consequence of disobedience. The eyes of them both were opened, and they became like God in knowing good and evil: but, in both instances, to their own shame and confusion, instead of their glory and honor. They saw that they were "naked," and they were "ashamed" and "afraid." They knew good and evil; but they knew the evil to be present with them, and the good to have departed from them. Third. The interview of God with the serpent is also in keeping with the same view. The question to the man is, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee not to eat?" Mark the tenor of this question. It is not, Hast thou eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? but, "of which I commanded thee not to eat;" by which it is indicated that, not the physical character of the tree, but the moral character of the action, is the point of the interrogatory. The tree, then, was the ordained occasion of man's becoming as God in knowing good and evil. He had now reached the second, or experimental lesson in morals. When God gave him the theoretical lesson in the command, he expected that the practical one would follow. He now says, "Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil." In the style of his word he notes the result, without marking the disobedience of man as the means. This is understood from the circumstances. Man is therefore guilty, and the law must be vindicated. Hence, it is added, "Lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever." This sentence is completed by an act, not a word, as we shall see in the next verse. Measures must be taken to prevent his access to this tree, now that he has incurred the penalty of death. From this sentence it follows that the tree of life must have had some virtue by which the human frame was to be kept free from the decrepitude of age, or the decay that terminates in death. Its name, the tree of life, accords with this conclusion. Only on such a ground could exclusion from it be made the penalty of disobedience, and the occasion of death. Thus, also may we meet and answer all the difficulties which physiology presents to the immortality of unfallen man. We have it on record that there was an herbal virtue in paradise capable of counteracting the effects of the wear and tear of the animal frame. This confirms our account of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Death, which, it is to be remembered, is, to a moral and responsible being, in a comprehensive sense, exclusion from the blessings of conscious existence, and pre-eminently from that of the divine complacence, was not the physical effect of its fruit being eaten, but the penal consequence of a forbidden act. And this consequence is brought about by a special judicial process, recorded in the next verse: The two trees stand related to one another in a way that touches the very center of man's moral being. "Do this and live" is the fundamental dictum of the moral law. Its implied counterpart is, "If thou do it not, thou shalt die." The act of disobedience is evidently decisive for the whole conduct, character, and relation to God. It therefore necessarily forfeits that life which consists in the favor of God and all consequent blessings. The two trees correspond with the condition and the benefit in this essential covenant of law. The one is the test of man's obedience, or disobedience; the other, the benefit which is retained by obedience and lost by disobedience. Man fails in obedience, and loses the blessing. Henceforth
both the legal and the beneficial parts of the covenant must come from a higher source to all that are saved. Christ bestows both the one and the other by his obedience and by his Spirit. In the old form of the covenant of grace, the Passover typifies the one, and circumcision the other; in the new, the Lord's Supper and baptism have a similar import. These all, from first to last, betoken the two essential parts of salvation, redemption, and regeneration. This is a clear example of the unity and constancy which prevail in the works of God. It is evident that the idea of immortality is familiar to the early chapters of Genesis. The primeval command itself implies it. Mortality, moreover, applies to the organic living body; not to the particles of matter in that body nor to the "breath of life" which came from God. It means not annihilation, but dissolution. Still further, the first part of death is exclusion from the tree of life, which takes place on the very day of disobedience. This indicates its nature. It is not annihilation of the spiritual essence, which does not in fact take place, but the withdrawal from it of the blessings and enjoyments in communion with God of which it is capable. And, lastly, the whole tenor of the narrative is, that death is a penalty for transgression; whereas annihilation is not a penalty, but a release from the doom of perdition. Accordingly, the tempter is not annihilated, but left to bear his doom; and so man's existence is perpetuated under partial privation—the emblem and earnest of that death which consists in the total privation of life. Death is, no doubt, in its primary meaning, the dissolution of the living body. But even in the execution of the primeval sentence it begins to expand into that compass of meaning which all the great primitives of the scriptural language sooner or later express. Earth, sky, good, evil, life, and death are striking specimens of this elasticity of signification. Hence, we perceive that the germs of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul lie even in these primeval documents. And more we could not expect, unless we were to concentrate the whole fulness of revelation on this subject into its opening pages.

Verse 23. In consequence of man's disobedience the tree of life is withdrawn from the reach of man as a forfeited boon, and the dissolution of the present life allowed to take place according to the laws of nature, still remaining in force in regard to other animated beings; aided, indeed, and accelerated in their operation, by the sinful abuse of human passions. And thus the expression, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die," receives its simple application. It is a conditional sentence, pronounced antecedently as a warning to the responsible party. On the very day of transgression it becomes legally valid against him, and the first step toward its regular execution in the ordinary course of things is taken. This step is his exclusion from the tree of life. This is effected by sending man out of the garden into the common, to until the soil whence he was taken.

Approach to the Major Outlines in Lesson

The concept of the outline of the lesson was adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary and from the points revealed by the study of the Scriptural text.

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Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

May 30, 2011, was an unusually hot Memorial Day in the Bronx section of New York City. From the fifth floor of an apartment, 14-month-old Xania Angel Samuels tumbled out of an open window to the ground below. She survived the plunge and was rushed to the hospital with head trauma. Xania had been wearing her favorite pink winter coat when she fell, and the heavy coat—which she insisted on wearing on what was the hottest day of the year to that point—probably cushioned the impact and saved her life. Today's lesson text from Genesis 3 includes the consequences of what is often termed “the fall” of Adam and Eve, caused by their disobedience to God. Clothing did not protect them from those consequences, but clothing was provided as a part of God's care for them after their fall. Today's text will also show how God looked ahead and foretold a special plan to "cover" all of humanity and shield it from the effects of the fall by administering his own "head trauma" to the serpent. Last week we studied God's creation of woman as an appropriate helper for man. A situation that God had previously called "not good" was then made good and complete. But the happy ending of chapter 2 is quickly countered by the opening of chapter 3. The first three words are ominous: "Now the serpent ..." Nowhere does the record in Genesis associate the serpent with Satan (the devil). But we know from other Scriptures that the serpent is the instrument of Satan to carry out his hideous designs against the man and the woman, to ruin the perfection that God the Creator established in Eden (2 Corinthians 11:3; Revelation 12:9). The serpent’s first words were intended to cast doubt on the authority of God's word: "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?” (Genesis 3:1). In a blatant denial of the Creator’s established consequences for disobedience, the serpent brazenly assured the woman, "You will not certainly die” (v. 4). Such a lie is in keeping with the devil’s tactics (John 8:44). Tragically, the woman fell into the devil’s trap as did the man (Genesis 3:6). Thus far our consideration of "First Days" in this unit of studies has been positive. It now takes a tragic turn in the opposite direction as we see unfolding before us the chaos that the first sin brings upon the human race and, indeed, all creation. Genesis 3:7 tells us that after the man and the woman had eaten from the forbidden tree, “The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked.” Thus the consequences of sin are apparent even before the Lord confronts the guilty parties. The innocence and lack of shame that had characterized the man and woman’s relationship (2:25) were gone, and they covered themselves with garments made of fig leaves (3:7). Then they had to face the one whose command they had disobeyed.

From the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

Henry M. Morris, writing on Genesis 3, said, "The next few verses are among the most important in the Bible, recording as they do the great tragedy of man’s fall from his created state of innocence and fellowship with God to his present state of sinfulness and alienation. Man was not created as an automaton, but as a free being with the moral ability to love God or reject God as he should choose. There was not the slightest reason why he should sin, but he could if he so desired” (The Genesis Record, Baker). While there was no reason for Adam and Eve to sin, the fact is that they did. And in doing so, they established the pattern of passing the sinful nature on to all succeeding generations. We all have a natural propensity to sin. In fact, we can do nothing else until we are God's children, with the Holy Spirit dwelling in us to give us the power to resist and be victorious over those natural inclinations. The good news for mankind is that Jesus’ coming to earth provided salvation and the resultant Christian life of victory. The first couple knew no sin until the day Eve listened to the serpent and then Adam listened to Eve. We are living in a day when it is not politically correct to say that anyone is guilty of wrongdoing. Some psychologists feel that guilt is a destructive concept and therefore should be eliminated from our thought process. Feeling guilty for your wrongdoing can be compared to the pain of touching a hot stove. The sensation is supposed to make you aware of the harm that is coming to you and should cause you to seek a remedy. It is self-deceptive to forgive yourself. That idea is spiritually destructive. Only God can forgive sin, and that is on the basis of the shed blood of His Son. We do not have the authority or the ability to forgive ourselves. Of course, we can and should forgive those who have wronged us. In this lesson we see God handling mankind’s first sin. Philosophers have struggled to explain the presence of evil in the world. Older people can remember a time when people were expected to be honest and others were to be honest with them. We have seen a strong shift to the philosophy that neither sin nor guilt nor evil exist except in the minds of some (whom they think to be deluded) religious people. We may hear on TV the
assertion that "everybody lies." We see dishonesty and immorality among our leaders in many areas and at all levels. A popular concept is that the freedom of the individual is the ultimate good. This has spawned widespread, if not nearly universal, rejection of the morals and ethics taught in the Word of God. Where did all this come from? Where did this bent to sin originate?

Major Theme Analysis
(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Conviction of Sin (Gen 3:8-13)

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.
9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"
10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."
11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"
12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."
13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Trying to hide the sin (8)

No need to hide sin because nothing can be hidden from God (Heb 4:13)
13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

No need to hide sin because even whispered things are known to God (Luke 12:2-3)
2 There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 3 What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

No need to hide sin because God will judge man's secret things (Rom 2:14-16)
14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) 16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

No need to hide sin because God will bring everything into judgment (Eccl 12:14)
14 For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.

God's conviction (9-11)

God convicts through visions (Acts 10:11-15)
11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. 12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. 13 Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." 14 "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." 15 The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."
God convicts through steadfastness to obedience (Daniel 1:3-8)

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility—4 young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king’s palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. 5 The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king’s table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king’s service. 6 Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. 8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

God convicts to make one aware of sin (John 16:7-11)

7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; 10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

God convicts to make one ashamed (Ezek 16:63)

63 Then, when I make atonement for you for all you have done, you will remember and be ashamed and never again open your mouth because of your humiliation, declares the Sovereign Lord."

God convicts to make one repent (Rev 2:5)

5 Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

God convict so that we will not sin (Ps 119:11)

11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Excuses for sin (12-13)

Moses gave the excuse that he couldn't talk (Exodus 4:10-12)

10 Moses said to the Lord, "O Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." 11 The Lord said to him, "Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord? 12 Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say."

Aaron gave the excuse of peer pressure (Ex 32:21-24)

21 He said to Aaron, "What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?" 22 "Do not be angry, my lord," Aaron answered. "You know how prone these people are to evil. 23 They said to me, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' 24 So I told them, 'Whoever has any gold jewelry, take it off.' Then they gave me the gold, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!"

Excuses make one unfit for service (Luke 9:59-62)

59 He said to another man, "Follow me." But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." 60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." 61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family." 62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."
**Excuses for not doing what is right (Rom 1:20)**

20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

**Consequences of Sin (Gen 3:14-19)**

14 So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.  
15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."  
16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."  
17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.  
18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.  
19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

**Satan's punishment (14-15)**

- **Punishment of the lake of burning sulfur (Rev 20:10)**
  10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

- **Punishment of being bound for a thousand years (Rev 20:2-3)**
  2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

- **Punishment of hell (2 Peter 2:4)**
  4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment;

- **Punishment of eternal fire (Matt 25:41)**
  41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

**Eve's punishment (16)**

- **Pain in child birth (John 16:21)**
  21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.

- **Punishment but grace through faith (1 Tim 2:15)**
  15 But women will be saved through childbearing — if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.
Man is the head over her and the family (1 Cor 11:3)
3 Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Adam's punishment (17-19)

Man must always work hard (Eccl 2:22-23)
22 What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? 23 All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest.

The ground is under a curse (Jer 12:13)
13 They will sow wheat but reap thorns; they will wear themselves out but gain nothing. So bear the shame of your harvest because of the Lord's fierce anger."

The earth is being defiled by man (Isa 24:5-6)
5 The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. 6 Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt.

Man shall die and return to dust (Eccl 12:7)
7 and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Demonstration of God's Grace (Gen 3:20-23)

20 Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.
21 The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.
22 And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."
23 So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

God's merciful covering of sin (20-21)

Covered us with garments of salvation (Isa 61:10)
10 I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Covered us with our heavenly dwelling (2 Cor 5:2-4)
2 Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, 3 because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. 4 For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Covered our sin by becoming sin for us (2 Cor 5:21)
21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
God's limitation of sin's influence (22-23)

*Sin is limited by grace (Rom 5:20)*

20 The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more,

*Sin is limited by God's love (Eph 2:4-5)*

4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.

*Sin is limited by God cutting our earthly time short (Matt 24:22)*

22 If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

**Conclusion and Other Thoughts**

**Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary**

Even before Adam and Eve ate of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17), there was a sense in which they knew the distinction between good and evil. They knew that eating from the forbidden tree was evil, or wrong. But the serpent implied that something was lacking in their knowledge, and that the Lord was holding out on them. The serpent promised that eating of the tree would open their eyes so they would be "knowing good and evil" (3:5). After the two had eaten from the tree, the serpent's words partly came true: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened" (Genesis 3:7). But what did they then "know"? That they were naked. What was their response? "So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves." Consider the irony: the man and the woman, who were then "wise" (moderns might call them "sophisticated") in the realization of their nakedness, proceeded to exercise utter foolishness by trying to cover it up on their own! So whatever "knowledge" they gained was obtained at the price of their ability to think in a spiritually pleasing, God-honoring fashion. Theirs was not the heavenly outcome that the serpent promised; it was hellish, with the loss far, far outweighing whatever gain was achieved. So it is with any attempt to obtain knowledge apart from our Creator's desires. The irony of Adam and Eve's disobedience and "cover-up" is exemplified by modern humanity's sad plight: we have access to more knowledge than any previous generation, yet spiritually and morally many are woefully ignorant.

**Concluding Thought From Bob Deffinbaugh**

*From the series: Genesis: From Paradise to Patriarchs*

I cannot help but think of Paul's words when I read this chapter, "Behold then the kindness and severity of God" (Romans 11:22). There is sin, and there is judgment. But the chapter is interlaced with grace. God sought out the sinners. He sentenced them as well, but with a promise of salvation to come. And keeping them from hell on earth, He provides them with a covering for the time and full redemption in time. What a Savior! Before we focus our attention on the application of this chapter to our own lives, consider for a moment what this Passage would mean to the people of Moses' day. They had already been delivered out of Egypt and had been given the Law. They had not yet entered into the promised land. The purpose of the books of Moses (which includes Genesis) is given in Deuteronomy chapter 31:

> And it came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, 'Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the Lord; how much more, then, after my death?
In many respects Eden was a type of the promised land and Canaan was the antitype. Canaan, like Paradise, was a place of beauty and plenty, a ‘land of milk and honey’ (cf. Deut 31:20). Israel would experience blessing and prosperity so long as they were obedient to the Word of God (Deut 28:1-14). If God’s laws were set aside, they would experience hardship, defeat, poverty, and be cast out of the land (28:15-68). In effect, Canaan was an opportunity for Israel to experience, to a limited degree, the blessings of Eden. Here, as in Eden, God’s people were faced with a decision to make: “See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity” (Deut 30:15). Genesis chapter three is far from academic or mere history. It was a word of warning. What happened in Eden would again occur in Canaan (cf. Deuteronomy 31:16ff.). They would be tempted to disobey, just as Adam and Eve were. Serious consideration of this chapter and its implications were essential to Israel’s future. The chapter is distinctly prophetic as well, for Israel disobeyed and chose the way of death, just as the first couple in the garden. As Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden, Israel was put out of the land. But there is hope as well, for God promised a Redeemer, Who would be born of woman (Gen 3:15). God would chasten Israel and bring her back to the land (Deut 30:1ff.). Even then Israel would not be faithful to her God. She must look to the Messiah of Genesis 3:15 to bring her final and permanent restoration. Israel’s history, then, is summarized in Genesis 3. For us there are many applications. We must not be ignorant of Satan’s devices (II Corinthians 2:11). The manner of his temptation is repeated in the testimony of our Lord in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-12). And so he will continue to tempt us today.

Genesis chapter three is vital to Christians today because it alone explains things as they are. Our world is a blend of both beauty and beastliness, of loveliness and that which is ugly. The beauty which remains is evidence of the goodness and greatness of the God Who created all things (cf. Romans 1:18ff). The ugliness is the evidence of man’s sinfulness (Romans 8:18-25). From what I can tell, the present state of God’s creation was one of the crucial elements in Darwin’s move from orthodoxy to doubt and denial. He did not behold the orderliness of creation and say to himself, “Oh, this must have occurred by chance.” Instead, he looked at the cruelty and ugliness and concluded, “How could a loving, all-powerful God be responsible for this?” The answer, of course, is found in this text in Genesis chapter three: man’s sin has turned God’s creation inside-out. The only solution is for God to do something to bring about redemption and restoration. This has been accomplished in Jesus Christ. The penalty for man’s sins have been borne by Him. The consequences for Adam’s sins need not destroy us. The choice which confronts us is this: Do we wish to be united with the first Adam or the last? In the first Adam we are constituted sinners and are subject to physical and spiritual death. In the last we become new creatures, with eternal life (physical and spiritual). God has not placed two trees before us, but two men: Adam and Christ. We must decide with whom we will identify. In one of these two our eternal future rests. There is much to be learned here about sin. Essentially sin is disobedience. Notice that the initial sin did not seem very serious. It might be thought of as a trivial thing. The seriousness of sin can be seen in two significant facts, which are clear from our text. First, sin is serious because of its roots. The eating of the forbidden fruit was not the essence of the sin, but merely its expression. It is not the source of sin, but its symbol. The partaking of that fruit is similar to the sharing of the elements, the bread and the wine, of the Lord’s table, that is, the act expresses something much more deep and profound. So the root of the sin of Adam and Eve was rebellion, unbelief, and ingratitude. Their act was a deliberate choice to disobey a clear instruction from God. It refused to gratefully accept the good things as from God and the one prohibition as for their good as well. Worst of all, they viewed God as being evil, miserly and threatened, as Satan had portrayed Him. Secondly, sin is serious because of its fruits. Adam and Eve did not experience a higher form of existence, but shame and guilt. It did not provide them with more to enjoy, but spoiled what they previously experienced without shame. Worse yet, it brought about the downfall of the entire race. The beginnings of the effects of the fall are seen in the rest of the Bible. We see the results of that sin today, in our lives and in society. The result of sin is judgment. That judgment is both present and future (cf. Romans 1: 26-27).

Let me tell you, my friend, that Satan always emphasizes the present pleasures of sin while keeping our minds from their consequences. Sin is never worth the price. It is like the rides at the State Fair: the ride is short and
the price is high—incredibly high. But let us not concentrate upon the sins of Adam and Eve. We should not be shocked to learn that the temptations are the same for men today as in the garden. And the sins are the same as well. Madison Avenue has taken up the cause of the evil one. Advertising urges us to forget the many blessings we have and to concentrate upon what we do not possess. They suggest that life cannot be experienced fully without some product. For example, we are told, “Coke adds life.” No, it doesn’t; it simply rots your teeth. And then we are urged not to consider the cost or the consequences of indulging ourselves with this one more thing which we need. We can ‘charge it to MasterCard.’ I suspect that there is a bit of a smile forming on your face. You may suppose that I am really getting far afield. Consider what the Apostle Paul tells us about the meaning of Old Testament truths to our present experience:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved (I Corinthians 10:1-6).

What kept Adam and Eve from everlasting blessing was their desire to have pleasure at the cost of unbelief and disobedience. Such, Paul writes, was also the case with Israel (I Cor 10:1-5). The same temptations face us, but God has given us sufficient means to have victory. What are these means?

1. We are to understand that denials (doing without, prohibitions) come from the hand of a good and loving God: No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11).
2. We must realize that denials are a test of our faith and obedience: And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son (Deuteronomy 8:2-5). Doing without is not God’s keeping us from blessing, but preparing us for it: By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward (Heb 11:24-26; cf. Deut 8:6ff)
3. When we are kept from those things which we think we want we must be careful not to meditate upon what is denied, but upon what is graciously given, and by Whom. Then we must do what we know to be God’s will. (Deut 20:17-18; (Philippians 4:6-9).

Almost daily we find ourselves repeating the sins of Adam and Eve. We ponder what we are forbidden to have. We begin to distrust the goodness of God and His graciousness to us. We worry about things that are really inconsequential. And often, in unbelief, we take matters into our own hands. Many times I find Christians seriously contemplating sin, knowing it is wrong, and realizing that there will be consequences, but foolishly supposing that the pleasure of sin is greater than its price. How wrong! That was the error of Adam and Eve. May God enable us to praise Him for those things which He forbids and to trust Him for those things which we need and He promises to provide.

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Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Sin usually drives us to hide from the only one who can truly help us (Gen. 3:8)
2. God questions us not to receive information but to make us stop and think (vss. 9-11)
3. Blaming others for our sin only increases our own guilt (vss. 12-13)
4. Satan’s desire to thwart the purpose and plan of God will ultimately fail (vss. 14-15)
5. Beware: one's actions may have a more far-reaching impact than ever imagined (vss. 16-17)
6. Sin, though forgivable, always negatively impacts our relationship with God and with others (vss. 22-23)