

CONFESSIONS OF A SEMINARIAN

NOTES ON SIN AND ITS NATURE: GENESIS 2-3

MIKE TOLLIVER

True the account of the first sin is told in Genesis 3, but the roots of this first sin are sewn in Genesis 2. Anyone having grown up in Sunday School heard this story recounted, and undoubtedly the culprit was clearly identified as Eve. The serpent went to her and tempted her to eat from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and she ate it and sin entered the world. While this certainly happened according to the Genesis 3 account, this rendition omits a huge number of details that the author is careful to include.

Consider Eve's conversation with the serpent in light of Genesis 2. Eve recounts in Genesis 3:2-3 the command that God gave to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17. This is significant because Eve had not been created yet. That means she was either told the same command (by God) at a later time, or her husband repeated the command to her. Regardless of who told her, Eve misquotes God by including the little bit about "nor shall you touch it." This gives the serpent the ability to sew doubt in Eve's mind, and she takes from the tree to eat of it, and then hands some to her husband *who was with her* (3:6). The author leaves out the detail about who informed Eve originally because the emphasis is on Adam being told directly from God and doing nothing when his wife misquotes that command and eats from the tree, all while he is standing by her side. His passivity allows the whole scenario to play out.

In Genesis 2:15, God's purpose for placing Adam in the Garden was to work and keep it. The word for keep carries the same meaning as the "keep" or "tower" of a castle. It means to protect. Here in Genesis 2 we might be tempted to ask what Adam is protecting the Garden from, but in Genesis 3 we learn that he is to protect it from the serpent. God gave Adam all the warning and ability he would have needed to crush the

serpent's head on his own. But Adam was silent. He avoided his responsibility, and so Eve took Control of the situation when she never should have had to. The story doesn't stop there.

God walks through the Garden, and who does he call after? The man. Adam. The Sunday School answer that blames Eve for the first sin doesn't seem to pay very good attention to the text. God goes to Adam first. What does Adam do? He blames his wife and God in the very same breath. He Abuses the ones he loves. God then turns to Eve for her account. Accused and exposed by her husband, Adam, she turns to hide behind the serpent.

These principles I have seen echoed throughout the lives of the men and women I encounter. Sons of Adam (men) are abusers and avoiders, and I find this sin pertains to an attack on their strength. Adam was given the strength and purpose to protect the Garden as well as his wife, but he acted like he didn't. Then in an act of extraordinary overcompensation he places all the blame on his wife and God. This resonates with us today, doesn't it? Dead-beat dads, alcoholics, workaholics, murderers, pleasure seekers, responsibility avoiders, etc. Our prisons are filled with men. Wars are started and ended by men. This world is afraid of men. And it is our fault.

Men aren't the only ones who have voluntarily marred the way they were created. Daughters of Eve (women) are controllers and hiders, and I find this sin pertains to an attack on their beauty. See, Eve believed the lie that she wasn't already made in the image of God. She believed that she had to do something to make herself more beautiful. We see this today with women who climb the corporate ladder so that all can see just how capable they really are. Models are often anorexic so that men will continue to gawk at them. Many women who think they can make men love them by sleeping with them. Some women date men as projects. We see this every bit as much as we see the sin inherent in men.

There is no doubt that man contributes to a woman's sin, but then, that is exactly the tale that Genesis tells us, isn't it? It is only because of Adam's passivity that Eve was presented with a lie she never should have had to give ear to. Ultimately though, we are all culpable. Adam's sin was one of omission, and Eve's commission. Equally guilty even though the method of disobedience varied. This is where we find ourselves today.

We are motivated in all things from a need to be strong and beautiful, but ultimately we are unable on our own efforts because we have alienated ourselves from the source of true strength and beauty. It is my contention that Genesis 3 says every one of us, down to the last man and woman, is affected by the fall. All of our actions carry with them some mix of these two pitfalls (depending on gender). And as Genesis 3 would tell us, our sin will affect those we love the most.

This is important to grasp and process, because I have heard it said that if we don't get sin, we won't get the rest. Even if you disagree with me on my interpretation, or you choose to reject the authority of this passage for x,y,z reasons, at the very least you have to admit that you see these principles at work in our world. Even if you play them off on other people, you see this. The question that this text means to leave us with is "What do I do with that?" The video this paper goes along with seeks to look at Genesis 3 with that question as the main focus.