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Point 2: The Fall—Things Are Not As They Once Were

RESPONSIBLE TO SOMEONE FOR DEEDS DONE

Before their act of rebellion, God placed the man and woman under a prohibition: they were specifically told not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:17). Why did He command this? Because apart from offending God if they ate, the fact was they would die. It was because God cared for them that He forbade them.

If we ask exactly what it was God did not want to happen, the answer is: the act of eating. Here we learn something about rebellion: it is a decision expressed by the doing of a deed. When God calls the man and woman to account, it is a matter of asking whether they have performed the deed: ‘Have you eaten from the tree...?’ (Gen 3:11); ‘What is this you have done?’ (Gen 3:13).

This is a simple but important thing to know about God. He calls us to be responsible for what we have *done*, whether it is in thought (‘Because you listened...’ Gen 3:17), word (the serpent deceived with words, Gen 3:13–14) or deed (they ate, Gen 3:6,12,17).

ACTION

1 Study Romans 2:1–16 and notice this same theme: that God calls people to account on the basis of their works. Paul makes clear that God’s judgement of us is on the basis of what we have done.

2 Be quite clear in your mind about this matter, particularly when you come to confess your sins to God. It is imperative that you:

- Acknowledge before God what you have done. Be specific.
- Confess the deed as a sin, even if the deed is an omission (that is, agree with God about its nature, that it offends Him).
- Ask for God’s forgiveness on the basis of Jesus’ blood having been shed for you—and then claim that forgiveness, because He promises it (1 John 1:9).
- Trust God’s Word that you are forgiven.
- Forgive others—including yourself. (To be able to forgive yourself is strong proof that you have received God’s forgiveness.)
- Renounce your sinful deeds and resolve not to do them again.
- Trust Him, through the Holy Spirit, to give you the power to live as you have decided.

3 In these ‘Action’ sections I will often suggest a way to deal with a matter. This is because it is unwise to think on the affairs of God and not change one’s life in accordance with them. This both dishonours Him and deceives oneself.

The seven points I have listed under (2) above are a pattern for confession and asking forgiveness which I would commend. You may like to use them at the appropriate places in the ‘Action’ sections throughout the rest of the book. Do not be either put off or manipulated by the direct nature of these

sections. My sense is that we can be quite direct with one another as long as we then step back and leave each other free to choose our own action. In a book, with a reader, that is really possible and it is my prayer for these sections.

THE ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE AND HIDE

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. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'

He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'

And he said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?'

The man said, 'The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.'

Then the Lord God said to the woman, 'What is this you have done?'

The woman said, 'The serpent deceived me, and I ate' (Gen 3:8–13).

God calls the man and the woman individually to account for what they have done. Notice they do not fight with Him about their accountability. Instead, they each attempt to blame another (vv 10,12)—the man accuses the woman and the woman accuses the serpent. God, however, does not let them pass the buck. He singles out the specific deeds for which each of them is individually responsible and for which each will bear a punishment (vv 14–19).

The punishment each one receives is appropriate to the relations in which he has been set in God's creation. The man bears punishment in relation to the ground, the area of his work (vv 17–19); the woman in relation to bearing children

and the style of her relationship with her husband (v 16). This is important, for it tells us that God does not deal with the sexes *equally* here, in the sense of meting out the same kind of punishment, but *appropriately*, in the light of the original relation in which He set them. In this difference of treatment, the original relation is echoed and sustained, even though the way of relating is marred and changed.

It is the man who is first called to account. He is the spiritual head of his wife (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:23) and God calls him to answer to the charge of disobedience. Significantly, he already bears the mark of the knowledge of good and evil: he does not accept solidarity with the woman but attempts to defend himself from God's inquiry by blaming her for what took place. There is also an implied anger at God: she is the woman 'you put here with me'. The man points to the woman, not to say that she ate *for* him, but to accuse her of being the agent of temptation. She 'gave' him the fruit. In this the man claims he is an *affected object*—he takes refuge in the idea that he is a victim.

ACTION

This same method of escape from God's call to be accountable manifests itself today. Whenever we see a person taking refuge in the supposed fact that he is not to be blamed as an acting subject (that is, someone who decided to do what he did) on the grounds that he is an affected object (that is, a victim of someone else's actions), then we see the style of flight which Adam's approach typifies. It often takes the form, 'I'm not to blame, it's really my environment, my parents, my teachers, my role models, etc.'

Now, of course, it is true that we are in solidarity with those around us, and if they decide for what is not true, this affects us. But it is also true that we are responsible for our reactions and responses to their choices.

If you have ever sought refuge from the enquiry of God in

this way, repent. Change your mind and stop arguing with God about what He calls your sinful acts.

When God turns to the woman He asks, 'What is this you have done?' This question can be read in two ways—either it is asking, 'What are you doing with the fruit of this tree in your hand at all?'; or, 'Why did you give it to the man?' Perhaps it is best to understand it as including both these, in which case it is effectively asking, 'Account for yourself. What is your part in this whole affair?' The woman's reply suggests she understands the question in this fuller sense. She deals with both the circumstances of her deception by the serpent and her sin of eating.

In the ensuing consequences which God announces (vv 14–19), the serpent, the woman and the man are each blamed for their respective parts. The serpent is blamed for his deception, the woman because she ate, and the man because he listened and ate.

Notice that God accepts the woman's statement that she was deceived by the serpent, but does not accept the man's statement that he was not responsible because the woman gave the fruit to him. God tells the man that he 'listened' and that he 'ate' (v 17). God implies the man rebelled when he began to listen to the woman and thereby acceded in his mind to the idea of eating. Only then did he go on to eat.

Now this text does not teach the principle that a man should not listen to his wife! What it means is that when someone accedes in his will to ideas which call for action contrary to God's revealed Word, he has already sinned 'in his mind'.

This does not mean it is a sin to be tempted, but that when temptation comes a person needs to be alert. Why? Because if he willingly decides to listen to the temptation and accepts the ideas presented to his mind, then he has mentally capitulated. The battle is lost there; the action will follow.

This is true in every area of life. Sin is first accepted in the

mind before it is translated into acts, and temptation takes root when the mind makes a decision to hear more.

Contrary to Adam's rationalization, Genesis presents Man in his fallen state as a productive subject—that is, as the active producer of his own sin. He is the doer, the actor. Man is called to account by God for what he has done; that means we must think of him (and of course ourselves) as being asked, 'Why are you a rebel?' Genesis 3 teaches that God requires me to see myself not as an affected object but as a productive subject, the active source of my own rebellion. I do what I myself want.

ACTION

1 Be very careful of any tendency in yourself to escape blame, either before God or others. Have a realistic view of yourself as a person who, like Adam and Eve, is a rebel. This does not mean you give in to your fallen nature; on the contrary, you fight it. But you are wise to understand your bias since the Fall.

2 If you are ever angry with God, search yourself for the reason. Recall where that anger began and deal with the problem which started it. If it is a difficult problem to solve, begin by confessing to God your sin of anger against Him and ask His forgiveness. For if you continue to blame God and hold resentment (wilful unforgiveness) against Him, you have lost the spiritual battle before you start, to say nothing of the offence your anger causes Him. If you are blaming God, you are surely deceived by the enemy. Remember, you can be puzzled and yet not sin (study Job 1:1–22, especially verse 22, and 2:9–10).

3 Distinguish the situation you are in from the sin you have done. In your thinking about life you need to pay attention to the situation you are in at any given moment; but once you have sinned, do not take refuge in the complexity of the situation. The deed stands against you, and, in calling you to

account, it is the deed—not your motive—which God wants to deal with.

It is vital to understand, even in complex and ethically difficult places, that the Holy Spirit will often call you to account for your specific deeds. When this occurs, confess your sins and bring them to the blood of Christ, trusting God's promise that it atones for them. Rationalization is not a way out when we are under the conviction of sin. Repentance and asking forgiveness is what is required.

THE MEANING OF APRONS: NAKEDNESS AND SHAME

Associated with the guilt of knowing they have done wrong, the man and his wife suddenly become aware of their nakedness. This awareness is accompanied by shame (v 7, cf 2:25). They conceal themselves from God because they fear to meet Him now their relationship is broken. The man hides himself, he says, because he is 'afraid', and he is afraid because he is 'naked' (v 10).

Before the Fall, man was 'open' to God, both in the sense of being totally known about by God, and in the sense of relating with openness to Him—desiring to have free access to God and God to have free access to himself. After the Fall, that openness has gone. Notice Genesis does not direct us to some *thing* which the man wants to hide; rather, he hides himself. Here we see the profound connection between a man's deeds and the man himself. This connection is primarily relational—his disobedience damages his relationship with God. Guilt is always to be understood against the backdrop of a violated relationship ('against you, you only, have I sinned', Psalm 51:4).

This relational insight will be important for us when we consider the Law in the next chapter. When a law is broken, why is it that guilt arises? Because behind the Law is a relation between the Lawgiver and His subjects, and breaking His Law violates that relationship. The Law must never be

thought of as being independent of the One who gave it and our love for Him.

ACTION

Be careful to see the connection between Scripture and the God who gave it. Resolve to see the Law's commands as God's commands. Always view your transgressions as acts of personal offence to God.

Coinciding with the realization of their nakedness, the man and woman feel shame. Shame involves regret and sadness at the loss of their original position.

Nakedness is not of itself disturbing to a creature (Gen 2:25). It signifies a place of open access to others without fear or guilt. Yet although Genesis 2:25 says the man and the woman were naked before the Fall, now they 'know' they are naked (Gen 3:7). What is the difference? It is that this lovely, open sharing, so beautiful to experience, has become a problem to them. Before, it was unnoticed and spontaneously enjoyed; now it becomes the focus of their attention, because suddenly there are matters they do not want to share, either with each other or with God. They become egocentrically preoccupied with defending themselves and shielding themselves from others' gaze. Shame induces people to hide for fear they will be found relating, as it were, 'out of position'.

As we would expect, the dynamic change in their primary relation with God brings a corresponding change in practical living between the man and the woman. Finding they are unable to hide from one another because they have been made for each other, together they hide from God (v 8). Yet when they are singled out for individual accounting, each accuses the other, attempting by transferring blame, to hide themselves even within the relation they cannot escape. Physically, if they cannot hide from each other in a total way, they can at least cover their loins (v 7)—those genital parts which typify their union and open access to one another. Their making of

aprons does not change God's knowledge of them; the Creator knows them through and through. The aprons are for one another. They affect the relationship of the man and the woman—the relation between neighbours.

Later in Genesis 3 we read how God 'made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them' (v 21). This is God's provision for them in their fallen state. The relation between them is still the original God-given one, yet with this difference: it is now lived on the defensive basis of being partly open and partly hidden. And with respect to God, they desire to hide themselves completely.

ACTION

Do not attempt to hide from God. You cannot, and you are foolish if you think you can. Embrace with great joy the fact that with God you can live openly and face your sins squarely. Confess them and claim His forgiveness.

CONCEALMENT AND DISCLOSURE

In commenting on this text, Dietrich Bonhoeffer observes that people are always found oscillating between the need to expose themselves to their neighbour and the need to conceal themselves.

The drive to expose ourselves to others comes from the basic openness between people which God first established. It speaks of our original condition as we were made by Him. Concealment, on the other hand, arises from the Fall. In this way, the pre-Fall relation continues, yet the marks of the Fall are always on it. To be open to one another is what it is to be *human*, by God's design. To conceal ourselves from one another is what it is to act as a *fallen* human, marred in our relationship to God. This swinging between concealment and disclosure needs to be understood when we are dealing with fallen men and women.

Much serious-minded nudist thought makes a fundamental error here. It is mistaken when it believes that the shedding of

clothes will make for greater openness between people and so bring about increased freedom in personal relationships. This diagnosis is too shallow. It does not deal with the biblical seriousness of basic matters, such as guilt before a holy God, shame at knowing the true position which one has rebelled from, and fear of being found 'out of position'—to say nothing of the way these realities affect the relation between men and women.

Because of these conflicting needs for disclosure and concealment, we require much sensitivity when dealing with one another. We all share in the Fall and bear its marks. There is a great desire today for openness in relationships, and that is right; yet we need to be realistic. People are fallen; and although we do not want to accommodate to the Fall as if it were the only reality under which we live, we must understand that moving from our closed, defensive and guilty position can be accomplished only by the miracle of God's grace.

We also need to be careful to respect the freedom God gives each of us. As a person accepts the grace of God into his life, he increasingly takes His gracious statements on trust. In this way, his growth in faith increases his openness. However, each person's place of faith is different, and we need to be sensitive to this so we do not violate his freedom. Fundamentally, openness can be established, without violation of the other person, only within the care of God and His people.

Much damage is done today in the name of 'therapy' because people fail to understand, along the lines of Genesis, the reasons *why* people repress things and hide themselves. Sometimes the only thing a therapy group gives a person is the sympathy and acceptance of being a fellow sufferer—and often this is no more than the hollow comfort which comes from rebels celebrating their solidarity as sinners. If such therapy does not press through to bringing the message of real acceptance by the Person who alone can give it, people are left spiritually undressed and violated. If we are going to help people open their wounds and expose their hurts, we must go

on to take them to the One who can close those wounds decisively and heal them.

The tension between our longing for openness and our need for concealment is really a powerful statement to us that things are not as they once were. Without the insight of the Fall clearly in our mind, we will apply sticking-plasters to people who need the major surgery of God's reconciliation.

ACTION

1 Understand where people are—perceive the spiritual nature of their difficulty. Do not look on people who are repressed, fearful, guilty or ashamed without understanding their basic problem. Make certain they have experienced God's acceptance of them before you ask them to express more freedom in their life and relationships. The freedom people can express is proportional to their faith in what God says about them in Christ. Take them unashamedly to the Saviour. To do less is irresponsible.

2 Critically evaluate every procedure used to 'help' people. Firmly resist any attempt to deal with their guilt before God by rationalization. Deal with this guilt (both your own and others') through the blood of Jesus Christ. All other approaches are counterfeits and will leave the person in a worse mess.

MAN THE SELF-CENTRED REBEL

From the Fall onwards, all knowledge for Man becomes self-knowledge—not in the sense of 'knowledge about oneself' (strangely, the rebel is the most deluded of all about his true position), but in the sense of 'knowledge which takes its orientation from oneself', that is, which treats oneself as the centre. Man is now not only self-centred in his desires; his perception of reality also changes because of his altered position.

Now he will try to fix the basis for his relationship to both

God and his neighbour on his own terms. Now he will speak of himself as 'having' certain things, as if he may have that which he has not first been given. Now he will talk about the need to maintain his 'integrity'—but by 'integrity' he will mean anything consistent with his rebellious pride. This is the exact opposite of his real integrity, which was a wholeness he enjoyed as a creature by virtue of his relation with his Creator. Now he will even hear the gospel and 'assess' God on the basis of his own rebellious integrity. This is the measure of the deep-rooted change in him.

ACTION

1 Be clear about this matter of integrity. It is valid for someone to wish to maintain his 'wholeness'—that is a worthy aim in accord with God's best desires for him. However, when the fallen man says he desires integrity, he is really expressing a longing concerning a *loss* of wholeness. He believes he needs to hang on to what 'integrity' he has, but he fails to understand that what he 'has' is already a very far cry from how God made him. Further, he desires to have wholeness on his own terms—but until he surrenders those terms to God, he cannot have what he desires.

2 It is important to realize that in the fallen world we can legislate to protect people from exploitation by others. We can govern ourselves by law so that the integrity people do have, such as it is, is protected as far as possible. This is preventative care, exercised because we love people and do not wish to see them hurt.

3 When you present the gospel of the Lord's saving work to a person, remember he will assess its 'reasonableness' on the grounds of his own rebellious, self-centred pride. This means that if we present the gospel purely on the basis of rational argument, relying solely on our apologetic defence of the faith, we will make intellectual converts only—people who accept the reasonableness of coming to Jesus because they

have assessed Him and found Him good on the basis of their own fallen perceptions. This can lead to a mental acceptance of Jesus purely because one judges Him to be acceptable to oneself. This is the reverse of the reality that it is we who must be made acceptable to God.

DEEP CHANGES IN RELATIONAL LIVING

We are already familiar with the relational ideas Genesis constantly uses, so we are not surprised to find that the changes which occur after the Fall are changes in ways of relating. Genesis does not describe any changes *in* people; rather, it tells us what *action between them* will now be like in the light of the Rebellion.

Pause to read Genesis 3:14–24 now. There are some important things to learn there.

First, the Fall brings drastic changes in how the man and the woman relate. The man will now ‘rule over’ the woman and her natural desire will be for him (v 16). The question is no longer: How will the woman be a person who answers to and complements the man? Now it is: Which one will triumph over the other; who will be the ruler? This is the situation which now prevails in the world.

In God’s original creation there was no rank whatever between the man and the woman. From the Fall onwards, however, there most certainly will be, as the words ‘he will rule over you’ make clear. This ranking is not a commandment which reflects how God wants His world to be. Rather, it is a statement by God in which He reveals the consequences that will flow from a changed relationship to Himself. Their disobedience to Him has automatic implications for the relationship between themselves. It is not that God is saying, ‘I will now make your husband rule over you.’ Rather, He is describing how their rebellion will work itself out in their relationship. We may even be right to think this is said with considerable sadness by the Lord, for He understands what it will mean for them. This is seen in other expressions in the

text: 'with pain you will give birth to children' (v 16); 'it [the ground] will produce thorns and thistles for you' (v 18); 'by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food' (v 19).

It is vital to take these statements of God about the results of human rebellion seriously. They enable us to be realistic about the state of the world in which we live. Any attempt to understand the relation of men and women to one another must approach the situation now in the light of what we learn from Genesis 3. This is particularly true when we think of those outside God's family, who are not experiencing the restoration He brings. As Christians partake of the liberation and potential to which they have been set free in Christ, a difference will emerge between their understanding of the practice of man-woman relationships and that of non-Christians. Even with this freedom, however, Christians recognize that in the world the sexes are under God's 'maintenancing structures' and the perspective of Point 2 therefore prevails. And in practice, Christians—to the extent they are still living in the old age—will find the fallen style of living still very much part of them.

This perspective is very helpful and full of comfort. First, it helps us come to grips with the reality of fallen sexuality by enabling us to identify elements of the man-woman relationship which have come subsequent to God's creation. Second, it assists us in understanding why we see the rebellious posture of the world reflected even in the closest of all relationships granted to two creatures on God's earth. It also keeps us 'relational' in our understanding of the image of God—here, at Point 2, we discover it is not some property of man and woman which falls and is lost; rather, a relationship is altered when man and woman 'act' on each other. Fourth, we understand that this fallen state is not the way God wanted His creation to be in the first place; nonetheless, given that the man and woman have rebelled, we have His Word as to how the world will now be.

The second thing we learn from Genesis 3:16 is that the

woman will now have pain in 'childbearing'; giving birth will be accompanied by sorrow. Again, this describes an action (giving birth); Genesis all the time directs us to things *done*. The difference between the pre-Fall and post-Fall worlds is expressed in terms of how certain actions will now be done and what results will accompany them. In this case, the result is an effect on the woman.

Notice the pain which now accompanies childbirth in no way diminishes the woman's sexual drive and desire for her husband. It is as if God has made a clear break here. Although He states there will be pain, He provides for the maintenance of desire and hence the conception of children. In this way, God's original plan for the man and woman to 'be fruitful and increase in number' (Gen 1:28) is not lost, even though there is a relational change between them.

There is also a relational change between them and the earth (vv 17–19). The man who tilled and kept the garden before the Fall (Gen 2:15–16) now discovers he must toil for a lesser return. In the beginning, God gave Man dominion over the earth (Gen 1:26ff), and that position of rule is sustained after the Fall; but, as with the relation between the man and the woman, it is altered. The ground will still provide food as the man works it, but now his work will involve toil. He must deal with hindrances—weeds and thistles—and will have to sweat hard to obtain a result, which will frustrate him considerably.

We should distinguish here between 'work' and 'toil'. Work appears before the Fall. In the garden, the man tills the soil and it yields what he requires. Work, therefore, is not a product of the Fall. Rather, the *way* of working changes as a result of the changed relation with the earth. Work is now toil; it is harder and there are frustrations and hindrances. The earth now does not produce for Man the way it once did.

The final thing to notice is actually the first word God delivers: His judgement on the tempter (vv 14–15). Although the serpent is addressed as the serpent, behind it God recog-

nizes the presence and activity of Satan. Verse 15 actually addresses Satan:

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.

This distinction between the serpent and Satan is important. The serpent has to carry responsibility for its dealings with the woman—the implication is that it was a willing accomplice. It will not move only on its belly and eat dust; we understand it will continue to do so even in the new heaven and the new earth (Isaiah 65:17,25).

But there is much more in view here than the fate of the serpent. The hatred between Satan and the offspring (or ‘seed’, RSV) of the woman (Christ) is declared (cf Revelation 12:7). The great conflict between God’s covenant people and those who follow Satan is prefigured. Warfare is declared straight after the Fall, and it will go on until the final end of the enemy.

Here again we see God’s graciousness. Before all the hard things He says to the man and woman, He promises the defeat of the enemy who caused their temptation. Indeed, it will be One who comes forth from a woman who will deal the mortal blow to Satan. At the very moment when the whole world is watching darkness secure its own rule over men and women, the gospel is preached.

A WORD TO REBELS

We have already noted that the fallen state is not the way God wanted His creation to be in the first place. This is very important. Many people take God’s post-Fall statements as revealing His *preferred* way for the world, and insist the only thing we need to notice about this state of affairs is that God commanded it. They make the mistake of ignoring the context in which God is speaking.

Consider this analogy. A teacher, trusting her class to behave the way she has taught them, leaves them alone for a while, but returns to find the classroom in uproar. She immediately imposes some changes—such a privilege will not be extended again and everyone must stay in for an hour after school. If we were sitting in the classroom and asked the serious child at the back, ‘Does she mean it? Do you really have to stay in?’, he would reply, ‘Of course. She’s absolutely serious!’

However, if we asked the teacher half-way through the detention, ‘Is this how you *like* your class to be?’, she would reply, ‘Not at all!’ It is true the detention has come about at her word; but keeping everyone back is very far from the way she wants things to be. The detention is how she now says things will be because of her students’ misbehaviour.

It is similar with God and His world. He is absolutely serious in what He says about the results of the Fall, just as the teacher is serious about her detention; but the post-Fall situation is a far cry from what He desires. So we must ask not only, ‘Did God say these things?’ but also, ‘What situation was He addressing when He said them?’ Only when we have carefully pondered the second question can we assert, on the one hand, that the changed relations of Genesis 3 are the prevailing Word of God for a rebellious world and, on the other, that these changed relations are not the way God wanted things in the first place.

This helps us to be serious about what God says, and we must be if we are to find the right starting point for our thinking about man and woman, pain, the presence of satanic warfare, work, ecology—in fact, any question in life. The alternative is to start with the prevailing situation in the world; but that means starting with the disunity which has disturbed the harmony of God’s creation. This is not appropriate. We need to return to Point 1 to discover how God first meant the world to be, then consider Point 2 to discover how He says it will be after the Fall. Doing this also gives us a

'relational' perspective, which ultimately is the only adequate basis on which to consider all life questions.

Later, we will see how God's further dealings with His people (Points 4 to 6 in our diagram) bring new light to these statements. After Point 4 (the coming of Jesus), we will discover a new perspective with which to approach them.

The line at the base of our diagram will be with us from now until its termination at Point 6. It is a continual expression of what we have learned in this chapter: that the status quo under which we now live does not represent things as they originally came from God's hand. We are no longer in mint condition. The line reminds us that we are always dealing with a 'messed up' world. The mess presents itself in the form of disturbed and changed relations.