

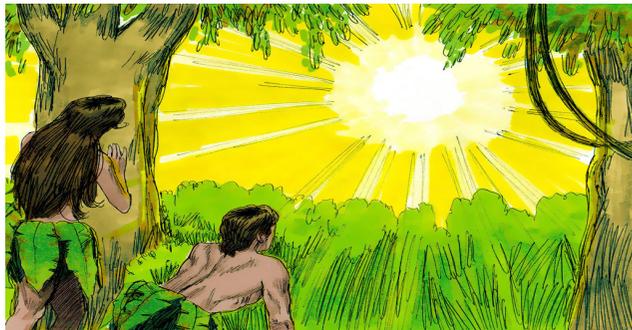
From the beginning, Adam and Eve had a perfect marriage in Eden of innocence and intimacy (Gen. 2:25). There were no disagreements, decay, sickness, pain, sin or death there. Their hearts were perfectly united and they walked in perfect spiritual union. This magnificent couple lived in unparalleled splendour in perfect obedience to their Creator. All of life was a devotion to the glory of God. The Lord God pronounced it all “*very good.*” These were days of family life that were like “*the days of heaven upon the earth.*” (Deut. 11:21:21b) One writer noted,

“Adam and Eve had the dominion, power and authority over all of God’s creation. They stood guilt-free before God, knowing God was Almighty. Adam knew from Whom he came, and so did Eve. There was no struggle for equality, there was divine order.....As long as they lived within the established orderliness, they enjoyed stability and tranquillity. Both Adam and Eve loved God, and knew that God loved them. One can imagine laughter, and exclamations of awe as new tastes were discovered, new sights were seen and new things were discovered. God must have delighted as His children discovered daily the many wonders of His creation. His focus of the universe is still the earth, and His object of affection and love is still mankind, for whom He has given everything necessary to live life abundantly.”

Sadly, such ideal days would not last. One word would change all of that – SIN. It has subsequently destroyed countless lives and relationships down through the ages. It would tear apart the friendship, intimacy, and spiritual fellowship they had at the start. Nothing has been the same since. It is the first pandemic that infected every corner of this universe.

HOW SIN CHANGED EVERYTHING

The moment sin entered the world everything changed. The presence of God made Adam afraid, “*And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*” (Genesis 3:11)



Adam and Eve were suddenly filled with fear, insecurity, and shame. What does happen immediately is that they both died spiritually in their relationship with God. This also had a profound effect on their mental and physical states.

SPIRITUAL EFFECTS – That day in Eden, Adam and Eve effectively declared their independence from God. It was an act of unspeakable rebellion and ingratitude to the One who had blessed them so freely with so much. This brought in a whole new way of depraved thinking when “*the eyes of them both were opened.*” As a consequence, unclean thoughts and desires flood their souls from lusts within that they never experienced before. They are gripped by a fear of judgment and of God by the accompanying guilt and a throbbing conscience. Temptation blinded them to their sin, but guilt will open their eyes to its reality. Their conscience will be their perpetual accuser in their fallen state.

One of the initial consequences of the Fall is man’s sense of shame and guilt. Evil thoughts flood his soul toward God and his fellow man. This leads him to an attempt to cover up his sin by his own efforts by sewing aprons of fig leaves. This sense of shame and guilt invariably leads to alienation from his Creator as “*Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.*” What had been a time of delight previously was now a time of fear. Probably, they ran to meet God in the past, but now they run in the opposite direction. Intuitively, they knew their own fig-leaf covering was completely inadequate. They fear that God will now execute His promised judgment. So, instead of running to God for forgiveness, they are running away from Him.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS - The spiritual death was accompanied by immediate physical decay and, ultimately, physical death upon all of humanity. We all now experience the weight of living in a broken world with a broken body. The home will become a battleground between the husband and the wife and the parents and the children. The workplace will be a place of sorrow and stress (Genesis 3:17b-19).

This physical decay means that until we are resurrected with a body like Christ’s glorified body, we exist in a physical body that does not function as God originally intended. Disease and decay affect our vital physical organs including the brain. Our biochemical balance and electrical impulses will be affected. In some extreme cases, mental disability will be the result. One writer put it well,

My brain, just like every other part of my body, is prone to illness. I would argue that if we truly believe in total depravity, then we *must* accept mental illness as a biblical category. If I believe that sin has affected every part of my body, including my brain, then it shouldn’t surprise me when my brain doesn’t work correctly. I’m not surprised when I get a cold; why should I be surprised if I experience mental illness? To say that depression, anxiety, ADHD, bipolar, and every other disorder, are purely spiritual disorders is to ignore the fact that we are both body and soul. Mental illness is not something invented by secular psychiatrists. Rather, it is part and parcel with living in fallen, sinful world.”

The depraved sin nature affects every part of our being including mind, body and soul. As a consequence, all of us have mental struggles or one degree or another. This can positively or negatively affect our mental state at any moment in time. The Apostle Paul on his missionary journeys described this negative state of mind, “*For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.*” (2 Cor 7:5; cf. 2 Cor. 4:8)

It is not true that every mental illness or mental disability is directly related to a particular sin that the individual has committed. It may be simply as a result of the fall - like that of the man born blind (John 9:3). Of course, a sinful action can exacerbate some mental illness, or stir up

depression, disturbed conscience or cause anxiety. King Saul was chastised by such mental problems because of his sin (1 Samuel 16:14; cf. Deut. 28:28). After he fell into deep sin, King David cried for spiritual and mental healing before God,

Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. (Psalm 51: 8-12)

But when a person is suffering from mental illnesses we should not automatically deduce that this is directly caused by some particular sin in their lives. It may be, but equally it may not be.

RELATIONSHIP EFFECTS - It is part of fallen nature to hide from God, cover up our sin by our own efforts, and seek to shift the blame to others. This sense of shame and guilt also leads to alienation between mankind. Now the world and the home are unfriendly places. Before the Fall, this couple had the only perfect marriage this world has ever seen. But the fig leaves represent now a physical barrier between this first couple, “*they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*” Some commentators believe that they were clothed with the light of God’s presence before the Fall. That is why they never noted their nakedness before. Notwithstanding, the end result is that shame rises in their hearts towards one another and the innocence of Eden has gone forever. Adam and Eve’s marriage relationship will never be the same again.

This leads quickly in the words used by Adam in v12 to a sense of estrangement between them, “*And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*” Adam should have taken this opportunity to fully confess his sin. Now cornered, he is forced to finally admit, “*and I did eat.*” However, even this confession is laced with excuses and deflections of the blame from his sinful action by shifting the blame to God and Eve. Adam’s shifting the blame to Eve is also worth noting, “*she gave me of the tree.*” In other words, he is arguing that if she had not eaten first, he would not have done so. Previously, when God brought Eve to him, Adam was full of joy (Gen. 2:23). Now, the marital bliss of this intimate union is under threat because of sin. Divisions, arguments, and tensions in the home are the consequence of sin. That is equally true today. Human relationships divide because of sin. Sin separates us from God and then from our fellow man. However, being reconciled to God allows us then to be reconciled to our fellow man.

It is bad enough to blame Eve for his sin, but Adam also drags God into his depraved thinking. He begins by implicitly accusing God, “*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me.*” These are the words of a spiritually dead man. His blasphemous words imply that a better God would not have given him Eve. He is painting himself as the victim, who was forced by God from his pleasant bachelor life to be led astray. The path of sin is not static, but progressively downhill. 24 hours previously he was praising God and rejoicing in His goodness, but now he is blaming God for his sin. Depravity makes a man deceptive, self-justifying, and looking to blame others. Blame is the classic human way to deal with guilt. Sinners do the same today. It doesn’t have to be taught to us. Sinners blame their circumstances or dispositions for their sin. Indeed, they point the finger at God and claim “I was born in this circumstance” or “I was born with these desires” so they accusingly conclude that “it is God’s fault.” However, the Bible makes it clear that all attempts to

“pass the buck” to God for personal sin is wrong, “*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*” (James 1:13-14)

God cursed the sphere where the woman served in the home. Now, He does the same for the man, “*cursed is the ground for thy sake.*” Both these curses are indirect, as they affect this couple through the areas in which they labour. That is why the home and the workplace are battlefields between mankind. Now there will be grace in this corrective penalty, as this will reduce the time and energy they have to imagine and indulge in sin conceived in the fallen mind. Previously, the man’s ordained work would have been a delight (Gen. 2:15) but now “*in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life*” and “*In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.*” The ground is going to be a kind of constant enemy in opposing man’s efforts, “*Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field.*” A man’s provision for his family will now require a life of strenuous effort. The earth will still yield an abundant harvest, but it will only do so at a cost. Few find any real satisfaction in this. The grace of Christ through salvation can help to mitigate some of the effects of this curse but life will always be hard until we finish our race on earth.

The freedom and independence that the serpent promised Eve and that she craved will be illusory. For the woman will find that she cannot usurp her husband’s authority, “*and he shall rule over thee.*” In the non-Christian home, the fallen man will often take advantage over the woman and dominate her. She is treated many times with no compassion, indifference, and no better than a slave. This degradation has led to tremendous unhappiness and pain for women down the centuries. As the woman has sought to rebel against this supremacy, so the man has fought back with despotism. This in a nutshell summarises the long history of the “battle of the sexes.” No longer will the man rule easily. Gone is the honeymoon of harmony in Eden. The rule of love that governed their relationship previously has been shattered. However, in the Christian home the grace of God in Christ offers a door of hope for redemption and happiness.

SALVATION BEGINS TO RESTORES PEACE TO THE MIND

Sin is departing from God; salvation is returning to God, “*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*” (1 John 1:3) Everything that Adam lost we may regain in Jesus Christ. In the Fall, we see that God first moved to begin the process of redemption and restoration. For God stepped in, “*And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?*” (Genesis 3:9) Now, God knew even before the Fall of man the fact of it. However, the language used here and the rhetorical question, “*Where art thou?*” is to reveal God’s personal and gracious concern with man’s transgression. God is not trying to acquire information, as He is omniscient.

Before any sinner can find forgiveness and peace in his heart and mind he or she must honestly answer this question, “*Where art thou?*” For without a true understanding of sin and our culpability we cannot understand or embrace saving grace. In other words, we need to know we are lost before we will cry for a Saviour to save us. Confession always precedes forgiveness, “*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*” (1 John 1:9). In this confrontation with Adam, we see God’s confrontation with our sin today. The “unholy trinity” of fear, shame, and flight are now an integral part of the depravity of fallen man. This is not only true of the worst of men, but it is true of the best of men. This is because “*the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom. 8:7).

It is one of the great blessings of salvation is the restoration of that fellowship between the Creator and His creation. The Lord Jesus Christ declared that His disciples were more than just servant, but also are His friends, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends...” (John 15:5a) Abraham walked in close communion with God and was called God’s friend (James 2:23). Enoch found the answer and walked in fellowship with God, “*And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.*” (Genesis 5:24) Enoch was a man who the Holy Spirit records “*walked with God*” and whose life “*pleased God.*” This speaks of his close relationship with the Lord and Enoch’s submission to God’s word, “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*” (Amos 3:3). Where God’s word pointed, this man walked on in obedience. He did not deviate to the right or to the left. This is the best and most satisfying life. Matthew Henry said on his deathbed, “A life spent in communion with God, is the pleasantest life in the world.”



This spiritual restoration between God and man will open the door to a restoration in our relationships with others. Broken relationships can sometimes be mended with meekness, repentance, and humility. The Christian home can rise above the disharmony of the ungodly home. The Christian man exercises his authority with the *agape* love of Christ flowing through him by the power of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). By contrast, Christian woman must be alert to the fallen tendency of desiring to dominate their husbands (Eph. 5:22-24) and must overcome this fleshy desire by the power of the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; cf. Titus 2:4). The workplace can become a place of joy and fruitful service for the spiritual believer who learns to serve for a higher motivation, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*” (Col. 3:17)

There are clearly spiritual solutions to many problems of the mind. We must carefully audit our lives in self-examination to determine whether that is applicable in our circumstances. That does not rule out medical assistance or physical interventions, like a change of diet or exercise, in some cases. Fritz Chery points out,

“We often overlook what the Scriptures teach us. We are “body” and “soul.” For someone who is struggling with a mental illness, this means not only are there spiritual solutions to issues, there are also physical solutions. We don’t have to be afraid of taking advantage of what God has given us. As we look to Christ as the Ultimate Healer we can take advantage of Christian mental health professionals and counsellors and the help that they provide.

With that said, should we overlook spiritual solutions? Absolutely not. We are not only body, but we are also soul. Someone’s mental health condition could be a result of feeling the effects of living contrary to God’s Word. Not in the slightest am I saying that this is the primary reason that Christians struggle with mental illnesses. We should seek outside help, but we should also be growing in our spiritual devotion, remain connected to the body, etc. In more severe cases, sometimes medication is needed. In this case we should take advantage of it. However, when we do take mental health medication, we should do so while trusting in the Lord as the Great Physician and Healer, in hopes of coming off the medication.”

Salvation and sanctification do not remove in this life all the consequences of sin away. If that were the case, you would never sin again. You’d never have another mental battle. But life is a struggle until we get to glory. This world is not heaven. All Christians must battle continuously the world, the flesh, and the devil, “*and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*” (Acts 14:22)

That said, no student of philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and theology can avoid the problem of temptation, sin, and evil. They are scars on creation that cannot be healed by man’s efforts. Sin must be dealt with and many of its consequences can be avoided. We need to understand these things so we can avoid their power. To be forewarned is to be wisely forearmed. The proven path to our soundest mental health is a robust, complete trust of mind, body and soul, in everything and every circumstance, in God, “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*” (Matthew 22:37) It is the Saviour’s desire to have close friendship with us. That is why James urges us, “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.*” (James 4:8) This is one of those great commandments that comes with the inbuilt promise of God’s fellowship if it is obeyed. King David noted, “*But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.*” (Psalm 73:28)