

CHAPTER III
The Temptation and Fall
Gen. 3:1-24

Agnes M. Lawson
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This chapter is the answer to that persistent inquiry, "How did evil come into the heart of man if he was created perfect?" The answer is that it came from outside of man and not from within him, hence his hope of victory. The sin that approaches us from without cannot be a native product of the heart of man. To choose the serpent as the tempter is another evidence of the artistry of the Hebrew. Its stealthy movements, its deadly venom, and the instinctive feeling of repulsion it provokes in us all go to make it an excellent symbol for sin. These are all suggestions of the insidious approaches of temptation.

It is the woman consciousness that the serpent approaches. The instinctive and intuitional consciousness is always the adventurer. Regardless of cost will she embark on the trial of her own prowess. "Deep, deep to the heart of life, and high to heaven" must the woman soar. Man's cautious reason weighs the consequences and therefore never ventures into unexplored fields. Herein is the essential difference in the characteristics of the sexes; the woman listens and sees, the man thinks and reasons.

"The serpent is more subtle;" it is to this subtlety that the woman yields. Our great security from sin is to see it as it is and reject it. The woman stopped to parley with the serpent and therefore fell under its seductive guile. I once heard Sam Jones, the evangelist, say: "The devil is a gentleman; turn your back upon him, and he will leave you." Sound advice that, for as long as we entertain evil it stays with us with all its arguments as to why it should remain.

Eve makes the mistake of listening to the voice outside of herself and not waiting for that guidance within to which she could so absolutely trust. The "still small voice" never errs, but alas! the loud strong one does, for it is the race belief in materiality. The lesson to be learned by us is discrimination. Wisdom lies at the root of our being. We all know the way and the great lesson of life is to go to the depth of our being for guidance.

The serpent said to the woman: "Yea hath God said, ye shall eat of every tree of the garden." She replies that man's own safety is the object of the prohibition. As Eve has stopped to entertain him so the serpent grows bolder. The serpent now denies the truth of the divine warning and places upon the mandate another construction than a desire for man's safety, arguing that God desires to keep man in ignorance and that the real motive for making the prohibition is his jealousy lest the rise of men into knowledge

should place him on terms of equality with his Creator. The serpent first makes an assertion, next a contradiction, last a promise.

Woman falls because she separates herself from God. She identifies herself with an appearance rather than with reality. She interrupts her intercourse with God, from whom her life emanates, by this belief in separation. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband; and he did eat."

The man's and woman's eyes are now opened, and they know that they are naked. The serpent's promise is fulfilled, but how differently from their expectations! The act of sin is immediately followed by a sense of guilty shame. To the pure all things are pure. The nude is never the naked. Innocence and Purity alike are better expressed without clothing, but no sense of nakedness can be in the mind of either of them. There is neither impurity nor immodesty in the nude in art, a high sense of chastity and the noblest sentiments of life are thus fitly portrayed. Nakedness is different, however, for purity is gone when this sense is there. To purity in its undisturbed communion with God, every natural thing is good and pure. As soon as sensuous guilt enters the consciousness the sense of nakedness which is weakness and impotence enters with it.

"In every temptation there is the serpent, the exciting cause without and the answering inclination within." To follow any voice in the external world is to fail, for all Wisdom is of the Spiritual world. The worst thing about sin is the sense of being lost; we have no model for work; we have no guide for advancement. All progress is stopped and we are going around in a circle.

Sin warps our judgment and decisions. The clothing of the soul is the purity, wisdom and power of the Spirit, and we divest ourselves of them when we are beguiled by the serpent. Then God comes to us in the evening, always in the evening (to blend). Man and woman who had enjoyed the freedom of the garden and the confidence and friendship of their maker now hide themselves from Him. Is not this in itself hell enough? We have lost the companionship of God, and must go out of the divine presence, and while the dark pall is upon us we must remain out.

But God never ceases to call, "Where art thou?" This is a pertinent question. When we are not in God's presence, WHERE ARE WE? The man justly blames the woman, and the woman justly blames the serpent, for temptation comes to us from the outside, but when we resist it strength and power come from within. The Adam man never rises to this dignity. The difference between the Adam man and the Christ man is the difference in his judgments. Truth's eternal command is: "Judge not according to appearances but judge righteous judgment." Man cannot fall when his judgments are true, never can he be in sin, sickness or sorrow if his judgment is righteous, for truth is the exterminator of all error. We are always whiners, shirkers and cowards when

under the delusion of sin. "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all." The Adam man always blames the outward excitement instead of the inner inclination when he yields to temptation.

The judgment falls on the serpent first. The serpent stands for the state of consciousness which is surface judgment, judging according to appearances. This is man in his most ignorant state. "Thou art cursed above all cattle, and upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shall thou eat all the days of thy life."

This curse is upon man as long as this state of ignorance lasts. He is the prodigal in that far country (materiality) and dust and husks of swine is all that this country yields for soul food. As man learns more and more to form righteous judgments he becomes more and more "upright."

Woman, the first to listen to the serpent, must be the first to repudiate him. "It shall bruise thy heel but thou shalt bruise its head." As it had affected her judgment she must take all power from it by crushing its head. But as long as woman is capable of being beguiled by the serpent, she must in sorrow bring forth her children, and be in wrong relationship to her husband. Intuition must lead reason, we never come into right relationship with God until it does. Reason follows and verifies intuition.

And unto the man God says: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife and eaten of the tree* * *cursed is the ground, and in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." "Thorns and thistles it will bear, and in the sweat of thy face eat thy bread." Reason is that faculty that must hold us true, it must not yield under persuasion. Reason cannot travel one step forward. It is not the steering gear but the anchor, and as such should hold us true. There is nothing dynamic in it and it lacks initiative. So it is not profitable to work under it. The curse is the loss of the spiritual sense and woman's desire is to her husband; they are governed by reason.

And Adam called his wife's name Eve (life) because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made coats of skin for their protection. Man is clothed upon, his ideas do not emanate from himself; they descend upon him from infinite Mind. All truth clothes us, and to accept an untruth leaves us naked and ashamed.

Man is driven out of Eden when he is disobedient to the voice of truth. The Angel with the flaming sword guards the entrance, to keep the Way of Life, and we can enter it only as we rise above the errors of sense. We are happy in the garden in our child innocence, we must re-enter it in conscious power and purity.