

God's Story, Our Story

Lesson 9: The Fall and Original Sin

(Gen 3, CCC 385-421)



By sinning, man preferred himself to God and that very act scorned him. (CCC 398)

CCC 386, 387

CCC 390

"[God] invited them to intimate communion with himself and clothed them with resplendent grace and justice" (CCC 54); CCC 357

CCC 374-377

Gen 2:16-17

Isa 14:12-15; CCC 391-393

"We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him" (Rom 8:28); Rom 5:20

Gen 3:1-11; Rom 5:19; CCC 397

CCC 398; Cf. Gen 3:5

Rom 3:23; CCC 399
Gen 3:5-17, 19
CCC 400

1. The reality of sin:
 - a. The profound relationship of man with God reveals the evilness and treachery of sin
 - b. Sin is manifest throughout salvation history
 - c. Sin is an abuse of the freedom God has given to man.
2. The account of the fall uses figurative language, but affirms a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man.
3. God made a covenant with man in creation: a sacred kinship bond having blessings and curses, rights and responsibilities.
4. Adam and Eve were created in a "state of holiness and justice":
 - a. They shared God's divine life
 - b. They were free from suffering and death
 - c. They enjoyed a harmony between their bodies and souls, between one another and with all of creation
5. All of creation was God's temple, the Garden of Eden was the sanctuary and Adam was the priest.
6. The commandment: Thou shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
7. The sin of Satan and his angels is a total rejection of God.
8. Satan's power to bring about evil in the world is not infinite. God permits evil so that He may bring about a greater good.
9. The serpent's temptation of Adam and Eve weakened their trust in God and led them to disobey His commandment.
10. Pride is the exaltation of oneself over God. This was the root of Adam's sin: he wanted to "be like God," but "without God, before God, and not in accordance with God."
11. Consequences of Adam and Eves' sin:
 - a. They lost God's divine life – spiritual death
 - b. They became afraid of God, their Creator
 - c. Disharmony enters their relationship with each other, with creation and in their ability to control their own faculties

Gen 3:16-19
Gal 5:16, 17, 24; Eph 2:3
Gen 3:19, 2:17
Gen 3:23-24

Gen 4:8, 6:5; Ps 14:2-3; Ps
51:5; Eccl 7:20; Jer 17:9;
CCC 401

CCC 405; 2 Pet 1:3-4; Jn 3:5;
1 Cor 6:11; CCC 1263-1264

CCC 1264; Gal 5:16, 17, 24;
Eph 2:3

"Be sober, be watchful. Your
adversary the devil prowls
around like a roaring lion,
seeking someone to devour"
(1 Pet 5:8); 1 Jn 2:16, 5:19;
CCC 405, 407-409

CCC 406

Gen 3:15; CCC 410-412

"Even when he disobeyed you
and lost your friendship you
did not abandon him to the
power of death...Again and
again you offered a covenant
to man" (Eucharistic Prayer
IV)

1 Cor 15:21-22, 45; Phil 2:8;
Rom 5:19-20; Heb 2:14-15
Gen 3:3-5; Lk 22:42

Gen 2:21-25; Jn 19:34

"Being obedient [Mary]
became the cause of salvation
for herself and for the whole
human race" (CCC 494); Lk
1:38

"Where sin increased, grace
abounded all the more"(Rom
5:20); CCC 412

- d. They are wounded with ignorance, malice, concupiscence and hardship (e.g. pain in childbirth and toil in work)
- e. They are subject to suffering and death
- f. They are cast out of Paradise

12. Sin spreads through the world because Adam's offspring inherit a fallen human nature that is inclined to sin. Original sin is *contracted* not *committed* by Adam's descendants.
13. Fallen human nature is wounded, not intrinsically corrupted. Baptism "washes" away original sin, imparts God's divine life and begins to heal the wounds of original sin.
14. Concupiscence is a wound of original sin which remains even after Baptism. It is a temporal disordering of man's desires which, although it is not sin itself, does incline man to sin.
15. Spiritual battle is inescapable. Under original sin we are subject to the dominion of Satan. After Baptism, and with the help of God's grace, we must battle against our concupiscence and the temptations of the world, the flesh and the Devil.
16. Two common errors:
 - a. Man can lead a morally good life with his natural powers and without God's help (Pelagianism).
 - b. Original sin totally corrupts human nature and destroys man's freedom (Protestantism).
17. God did not abandon man after his fall, but promised a Redeemer. The serpent will be defeated by the "seed of the Woman".
18. Jesus Christ is the second Adam. Mary is the second Eve.
 - a. Adam's disobedience is undone by Jesus' obedience
 - b. Adam was tested in the Garden of Eden; Jesus was tested in the Garden of Gethsemane
 - c. Eve came forth from the side of sleeping Adam; the Church, Christ's bride, came forth from the side of the "sleeping" Christ on the Cross
 - d. Adam ate from the forbidden tree; Christ took from the bitter "tree" of the Cross
19. "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith." (St Irenaeus)
20. Prayer at the Easter Vigil Mass: "O Happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!"

Original Sin in a Nutshell

1. God created man in his image and likeness: Adam and Eve possessed a share in God's inner life (grace).
2. Adam and Eve were free from suffering and death.
3. Sin is an abuse of human freedom as it distorts our relationship with our loving Creator.
4. God gave Adam a commandment and told him the consequence of disobedience was death.
5. Being tempted by the serpent, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and lost the wonderful gifts God had given them.
6. The consequences of Adam's sin were loss of God's grace and hence ignorance, suffering, dominion of death and concupiscence.
7. God promised a Redeemer – Jesus Christ – who would save mankind from this *fallen* state.
8. Original sin is contracted, not committed, by us. Baptism washes it away and begins to heal the wounds of original sin.

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think was the most important of Adam's gifts?
2. Why did the sin of our first parents affect us as well? Do you think it's unfair that we are deprived of Adam and Eve's original holiness and justice?
3. Do I personally sense that there is something "broken" in my nature, or that I want to do good but end up sinning?
4. Can you explain the difference between original sin in Adam and original sin in us?
5. What are the effects of original sin on the original harmony between man and woman?
6. Where can I see the effects of original sin in society (and perhaps in my life)?
7. How can we say that God is good when there is so much evil and suffering in the world, where the innocent suffer?
8. What would we lose if God eliminated all evil? How is our freedom put to the test?
9. How does God offer his healing grace to us? How can we make the most of these opportunities?
10. If Baptism renews us, why do we still have a wounded nature, inclined to sin?
11. What is concupiscence? What is the difference between concupiscence and sin?