

The Fall Into Sin



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Gen. 1–3, Rom. 3:9–18, 5:10–21, 6:16, 2 Pet. 2:19.*

Memory Text: “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (*Romans 7:24, NASB*).

Key Thought: To look at the Fall and the horrible results it brought to humanity.

When used to designate the loss of human freedom caused by Adam’s and Eve’s sin, the word *fall* implies that sin lowered us from one level to another—in this case from a high moral and spiritual condition to one of corruption, oppression, and enslavement.

Though much is not revealed about the Fall in Eden, we have enough biblical information to understand that something happened that damaged not only human nature but even the planet itself. The result of that Fall is not encouraging. In fact, it would be all but hopeless were it not for the promise of the atonement in our behalf through Christ. Yet, we still need to see what has happened to us, because only when we see ourselves as we really are will the glory of the Cross reach us in its saving beauty and power.

**Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, October 18.*

Rebellion in the Garden

What biblical evidence can you find in Genesis 1–3 to support the view that Adam and Eve rebelled against God? (See, for instance, Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:2, 3, 6.)

The word *rebellion* is not used in Genesis 1–3 to describe the sin of Adam and Eve, but the idea is nevertheless present. Not only did they openly violate a divine command, but in the process of disobedience, they shifted loyalties. Eve listened to the reasoning of the enemy and thought it more reliable than the explicit word of God. She concluded that the divine command was too restrictive and that in order to achieve her highest potential she had to claim independence from her Creator. This was rebellion. Adam listened to the voice of his wife instead of the voice of God and joined her in the rebellion.

What are some of the immediate results of sin, especially when understood as rebellion against God? *Isa. 59:2; compare to Gen. 3:23, 24.*

Adam's and Eve's rebellion brought an end to the kind of intimate relationship that they had first enjoyed with God. The nature of their rebellion was such that it disrupted how they related not only to God but to each other. Instead of mutual love and commitment, their rebellion against God resulted in mutual shame (*Gen. 3:7*). Their interpersonal relationship was no longer harmonious (*vs. 12*). This rebellion resulted, above all, in their separation from God and the perception that God was someone to fear, someone from whom they needed to hide (*vss. 8–10*). God and humans were no longer united in love and harmony. *What was needed was an act of reconciliation.*

What has been your own experience with sin and how it impacts your relationship with God and with others? In what ways can you see the same principles in your own experience as seen here in Genesis?

The Lesson in Brief

▶ **Key Text:** *Romans 7:24*

▶ **The Student Will:**

Know: We had no choice of Adam's sin being passed on to us.

Feel: We have the choice of accepting Christ's life and death.

Do: Claim victory over sin, and then live as though you believe it.

▶ **Learning Outline:**

I. A Barrier Is Erected (*Genesis 1–3*)

A God gave one request to Adam and Eve: avoid the tree (*Gen. 2:15–17*). How did their disobedience erect a barrier between humans and God?

B God didn't angrily accuse Adam and Eve of their wrongdoing (*Gen. 3:8–13*). How would you use this example in your life when explaining God's love versus His wrath to someone outside the Christian faith?

II. Darkness Descends

Sin damages our minds and perceptions (*Rom. 8:7*). When we live in sin, it is like being in a pit without light. Compare this with the idea that Jesus is the Light of the world. How does sin affect our perception of Christ's free gift of salvation? Why must we as sinners grasp this gift by faith?

III. Rebellion Versus Allegiance

List three biblical characters that chose rebellion over obedience. Compare these with three who chose obedience. Examine characteristics of the obedient and how they were led closer to God. Why is obedience so important?

▶ **Summary:** Even though things look grim in the Garden, God gives us opportunity to choose allegiance to Him over allegiance to the enemy of souls.

Slaves of Sin

According to 2 Peter 2:19 and Romans 6:16, what does sin do to sinners?

In order to illustrate the devastating power of sin, Paul sometimes personifies it as a tyrant. It “entered the world through one man” (*Rom. 5:12, NIV*), reigns over humans in death (*Rom. 5:21, 6:12*), deceives (*Rom. 7:11*), dwells in humans (*vs. 17*), enslaves (*Rom. 6:20*), and produces death (*Rom. 7:13*). The sin of Adam and Eve was unique in that it resulted in the subjection of everything to its corrupting power. Satan became the prince of this world (*John 12:31, 14:30*). In their search for autonomy, Adam and Eve exchanged the Lordship of God for the enslaving and corrupting lordship of Satan. Sin became a universal power from which human beings have not been able to escape by themselves (*Rom. 5:12*).

According to Romans 3:9–18, what has been the situation of the human race under the reign of sin?

Paul also teaches that the fall of Adam and Eve brought the natural world under the power of sin: “For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it” (*Rom. 8:20, NIV*). The damaging and corrupting power of sin reached God’s creation on this planet. The verb *subjected* indicates that nature is under the authority of some power that has robbed it of its true beauty and meaningfulness. This was the result not of its own doing but of something else: the entrance of sin (*Rom. 5:12*). Nature is now “subjected to frustration.” The word *frustration* designates here purposelessness and emptiness. *Futility* is used in Ephesians 4:17 to describe not nature but individuals who outside of Christ live “in the *futility* of their thinking” (*NIV*).

The point is that nature, as well as human beings, exists in a corrupted condition because of sin. What was needed was a manifestation of power from outside the sphere of human existence and outside of nature itself that could redeem the fallen world. This would happen through Christ.

Try to imagine what this world would be like were it not fallen. How different would it be? How different would our lives be? What should the difference tell you about just how devastating the power of sin really is?

Learning Cycle

► **STEP 1**—Motivate

In choosing to reject God’s way, Adam sentenced the whole of creation, of which he had been prince, to hopeless, abysmal darkness. The entrance of sin turned Paradise upside down. Instead of intimacy, harmony, happiness, and abundant, joyful life, now there is separation, dissension, shame, fear, misery, and death. We cannot save ourselves, and this sentence would have been eternal, except that God has promised a way out—the only way out—by taking our sentence upon Himself. Discuss evidence of the hopelessness of sin and our only hope in Christ our Savior.

Alternative: Smash an egg into a pan and display the result. This is what sin has done to our world—utterly destroyed it. Can anyone in the room make the egg whole again? Discuss what it would take to restore the egg to its original condition. What do we need to be restored to wholeness?

► **STEP 2**—Explore

Bible Commentary

I. Rebellion in Paradise (*Review Genesis 3:23, 24.*)

Satan tempted Eve with the same position he coveted: “You will be like God” (*Gen. 3:5, NKJV*). What could be harmful about wanting something as beautiful and delicious as the fruit on the tree God had made or wanting to be like God? Yet, just to contemplate reaching for something that God had not offered was the first step toward transgression, and the thought was quickly followed by the act.

Consider This: List the results of Adam’s and Eve’s sin, as outlined in Genesis 3:23, 24. The initial list seems slight, as does the initial sin. Yet, what were the real results of our first parents’ sin?

II. The Prince Becomes the Slave (*Review Romans 5:12.*)

By choosing to listen to Satan rather than God, Adam abdicated his king-

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Spiritual Death

Sin damaged the inner life of human beings. The moral and spiritual values that ruled over God's universe no longer rule over the natural human heart. Humans know that there is something wrong with them, and they wish for something better. At times they try to do what is good and right only to discover that "the mind of sinful man is death. . . . The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so" (*Rom. 8:6, 7, NIV*).

Human nature is morally and spiritually weak. Humans cannot resist the power of sin and, consequently, wherever there is a human being, there is sin and wickedness. The phenomenon is so universal that "there is no one righteous, not even one" (*Rom. 3:10, NIV*). Sin is a condition of the human nature in its alienation from God. Because of the Fall, the human "heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (*Jer. 17:9, NIV*). The "heart," considered in the Bible to be the volitional and intellectual center of a human being, is now defined as essentially deceitful, insidious, and in itself unreliable.

Humans are almost incapable of fully comprehending the intricacies of their inner being and are unable by themselves to live a dignified life (*Eccles. 9:3*). They live in conflict with the depth of their beings in fear and loneliness, struggling in themselves to do what is right but often finding that they can't (*Gal. 5:17*). They are unable to fully comprehend themselves and the world in which they exist; thus, they live in darkness with respect to God (*Rom. 1:21–25*). This inner corruption and stupefaction expresses itself in sinful acts against oneself, against others, and against God (*Matt. 15:19*).

The corrupting power of sin knows no boundaries. Only God can set limits to its corrupting influence and ultimately eradicate it from the universe. If, after the Fall, there was something good left on the planet, it was because God did not allow Satan to take full control. He said to the woman, representing the human race, and to the serpent, the expression of evil powers, "I will put enmity between you and the woman" (*Gen. 3:15, NIV*). They were not to coexist peacefully, one totally controlling the other. An element of freedom was preserved for humans that would allow them, if they so wished, to hate evil and choose life. God's decision to intervene in the human predicament made it possible for Him to limit the corrupting power of sin.

Humans need a way out of the terrible situation brought about by sin.

Look up the verses listed in today's lesson. How should these texts help you better understand your need of a Savior?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

dom, Satan became its prince, and all of creation became Satan's slaves. Both Jesus and Satan acknowledged this (*John 12:31 and Matt. 4:8, 9*). However, though Satan is the acknowledged prince of this world, Michael is our Prince who defends us (*Dan. 10:12–14, Jude 9*).

Consider This: How is it evident that God has not abandoned us to a life of hopeless slavery under Satan's rule? (*Gen. 3:15, Eph. 1:4, 1 Pet. 1:20*).

III. Sin Results in Spiritual Death (*Review Romans 3:9–20*)

Sinful nature is not something we must throw off; it is what we are, without a cure. Like a broken egg, only an act of re-creation can save us from what we are.

Consider This: What promises of re-creation give you hope? (*See Ezek. 11:19, 20; Rom. 8:31–39*.)

IV. Sin Results in Physical, Eternal Death (*Review Genesis 2:17*.)

Satan claimed that disobeying God would not result in death (*Gen. 3:4*). Starting with the leaves that Adam and Eve plucked to cover their nakedness and the animal skins God provided, death has stalked this planet through the thousands of years since that time. Every bit of life, whether tree, flower, bird, or baby, is born under the sentence of death.

Consider This: What rays of hope do we have that death will be conquered? (*Examine 1 Corinthians 15:20–27 and 54–56*.)

V. God Meets Sin's Challenge (*Review Isaiah 57:17–21*.)

Consider This: How does God propose to deal with the sin problem? "Peace and healing . . . come only to those who heed the message of sal-

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Physical and Eternal Death

God's words to Adam—" 'When you eat of it you will surely die' " (*Gen. 2:17, NIV*)—indicate that death is the result of rebellion against God. Death and sin cannot be separated. This death is not only spiritual; it also designates the physical and eternal death of sinners. Because of its connection with sin, death is not a simple biological phenomenon but a fearful awareness of our eternal separation from the Source of life—a separation that leads to eternal extinction. In all of its expressions, death is like sin, universal and inevitable (*Rom. 5:12, Heb. 9:27*). With the entrance of sin into the world, the human race was an endangered species about to disappear from the universe. God's creation on planet Earth, human and nonhuman, was on its way to annihilation.

Read Romans 5:10–21. How did death enter? What caused it? What's our only way out?

Death and suffering came together into the world as a result of sin. No one born and raised on this planet escapes pain and suffering. We may not be able to express in words what suffering is, but we have a deep experiential knowledge of it. In the Bible there appears to be a connection between our condition as mortal sinners and pain and suffering. Death is so powerful that even before we die it makes its presence felt among us through the physical, emotional, and psychological pain produced by sickness, uncertainty, and fear. As a result, the quality of life is weakened, and depression sets in.

The phenomenon of sickness, another result of sin, is described as coming "near the grave," as being "counted among those who go down to the pit" (*Ps. 88:3, 4, NIV*). The incursion of death in daily human existence is part of the human predicament directly associated with the phenomenon of sin. *Humans needed Someone who could give them life by dying in their place, freeing them not only from sin but from pain, suffering, and death.*

What have you learned from your own experience with death, either facing your own or seeing others die? What is it about death that should show us our own utter helplessness? How can we use the reality of death to draw ourselves closer to the Lord?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

vation. The wicked find no peace because they reject the only means by which it may be achieved.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 304.


► **STEP 3—Practice****Story Song:**

There is an old folk song called “The Hangman,” with a number of versions (see <http://maxhunter.missouristate.edu/0216/index.html> for samples, a simple score, and audio files). As one version has it, a young girl who owes a bond is going to hang. She asks the hangman to wait awhile, because she sees her father coming. She asks her father if he has any gold to pay the bond, but he doesn’t. He can only watch her hang. She sees her mother, sister, brother, and true love coming, but they have no gold to save her either. They can only watch her hang. Then she sees Jesus. He tells her He has no gold, but He will hang in her place.

Consider This: Try singing this song as a group or arrange for someone to sing it as a special number. This song speaks of how, despite our deepest longings to be of service, we are helpless to save ourselves or our loved ones. We must trust Jesus to do what we cannot. Your class may want to comment on this point.

Life Applications:

- 1 Using three columns on a chalkboard, compare and contrast Eve’s steps into sin and Adam’s fall with Satan’s steps downward. What personal lessons can we draw from these three examples of falling into sin?
- 2 The tree and its fruit were very appealing to Eve, and she longed for more wisdom. “Looking at the tree in this way, with a desire to partake of its fruit, was a concession to Satan’s inducements. She was already guilty in her mind of transgressing the divine command, ‘Thou shalt not covet’ (Ex. 20:17). The act of taking the fruit and eating it was but the natural result of entering thus upon the path of transgression.”—*The SDA Bible*

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God's Reaction to Human Sin

Read Genesis 3:8–13. How did the Lord approach Adam and Eve after they sinned? What was the purpose of the questions He asked them?

The Lord approached them in order to evaluate—with them—the crime they had committed and to pass judgment on it. Through a process of judgment, in which questions were asked and answers given, God was leading them to recognize that they were indeed guilty and that their rebellion was unjustified. The result was separation from the Lord, represented by their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

What is God's reaction to sin? *Eph. 5:6*. How are we to understand the idea of God's wrath?

We should keep several things in mind when we talk about God's wrath. First, human anger is not a model for understanding His wrath. Our anger is often irrational and damaging. God's wrath is untouched by sin and is primarily intended for healing (*Heb. 12:6, Rev. 20:15–21:1*). Second, God's wrath against human sin testifies that He takes us seriously, that He does not ignore us—even in our rebellion. Ignoring people can reveal disrespect, even unconcern. He reacts to our sin, and in so doing God tells us that we are important to Him. Third, God's wrath is not a permanent attribute of God but His reaction to the irrational presence of sin and evil. There is always a reason for it; sin provokes it (*Deut. 4:24, 25*). Therefore His wrath is momentary, while His love endures forever (*Isa. 54:8*).

Because of sin, what was needed was Someone who could deliver us from "the coming wrath" (1 Thess. 1:10, NIV).

If you love someone and see him or her hurt, would you not feel anger about what is happening? How can this parallel help us understand the meaning of God's wrath?

Learning Cycle CONTINUED

Commentary, vol. 1, p. 230. Why is it so important to guard our thoughts? Give some examples from everyday life.

③ Addictions are examples of the slavery of sin. What kinds of addictions are you personally familiar with? What critical insights does the Bible have regarding addictive behavior? (*Rom. 7:14–8:4*).

▶ **STEP 4—Apply**

“The working out of Satan’s rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God’s government is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy beings, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its penalty.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 43.

Consider This: Discuss the suggestions below as possible activities for the week ahead.

① John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, published in 1667, is a classic epic poem, full of imagery that explores both Satan’s and Adam and Eve’s fall. If available in your native tongue, read sections of it. To read it in English, you can go to http://dante.ilt.columbia.edu/new/books/parad_los/02.html.

② Take a walk, sketching in a notebook examples of the cost of sin on God’s creation. Beside each sketch, write promises of God to restore what has been ruined, such as Isaiah 55:12, 13.

③ Help out at a local soup kitchen or food distribution center and become more closely acquainted with at least one client who is served there. As you find opportunity, offer hope through Christ.

Further Study: Sin and Separation From God: “Christ knew that Adam in Eden, with his superior advantages, might have withstood the temptations of Satan, and conquered him. He also knew that it was not possible for man, out of Eden, separated from the light and love of God since the Fall, to resist the temptations of Satan in his own strength.”—Ellen G. White, *Maranatha*, p. 224.

Sin and Lack of Harmony: “In transgression Adam became a law to himself. By disobedience he was brought under bondage. Thus a discordant element, born of selfishness, entered man’s life. Man’s will and God’s will no longer harmonized. Adam had united with the disloyal forces, and self-will took the field.”—Ellen G. White, *Signs of the Times*, June 13, 1900.

Sin and Rebellion in Nature: “Among the lower creatures Adam had stood as king . . . ; but when he transgressed, this dominion was forfeited. The spirit of rebellion, to which he himself had given entrance, extended throughout the animal creation. Thus not only the life of man, but the nature of the beasts, the trees of the forest, the grass of the field, the very air he breathed, all told the sad lesson of the knowledge of evil.”—Ellen G. White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 41.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ It’s obvious to almost anyone that things are not right in our world. As Christians, we believe things are this way because of sin and the Fall. Some folk, however, don’t believe in the idea of sin or the Fall. How do they explain the state of the world? What are some other explanations that people give? How, for example, would an evolutionist explain our present condition? What are these other views, and how would you answer them?
- ❷ No doubt, all around you the terrible impact of sin can be seen. Though we can never eradicate sin or its consequences in this world now, what practical steps can we take to try to help alleviate as much of the damage as possible? What are things you can do, both as an individual and as a church, to try to relieve some of the suffering?
- ❸ What is a “spiritual death”? How can someone know if they are spiritually dead? Would someone who is spiritually dead even know it? What can you do to help someone who feels that he or she is, indeed, spiritually dead?

Summary: The Fall was an act of rebellion against God, and it resulted in the spiritual, physical, and eternal death of sinners. Because the results were so bad, something drastic had to be done; otherwise, we would have no hope. As we shall see, the Cross was that drastic answer to the problem caused by the Fall.