

# Gravity and the Fall

Dr. Chuck McGowen

When we think of an association between the words 'fall' and 'gravity,' and if we have a scientific mindset, we might well imagine an apple falling from a tree while Isaac Newton is standing under and observing it. It was that brilliant man of fervent Christian faith who was the first to describe the law of universal gravitation as follows: "Every point mass attracts every other point mass by a force pointing along the line intersecting both points. The force is proportional to the product of the two masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between the point masses." Simply put, the gravitational pull exerted by one object upon another (i.e. the earth upon the moon) is directly related to the size of the larger object, and inversely related to the distance between the two.

For Newton the world of science was by no means the whole of life; he had a patently Christian worldview. He spent more time writing on theology than he did on science; in fact, he wrote approximately 1.3 million words on biblical subjects. Interestingly, his word association regarding the terms 'fall' and 'gravity' would have reversed the association as depicted in Genesis 2 and 3. The apple fell because of gravity while the Fall of man in the Garden of Eden produced a punishment that can only be appreciated by the gravity of the nature of those consequences: the universal death of all mankind (both spiritual and physical), a universal law of gravitation of an entirely different sort.

## **The Paradigm of Paradise**

Adam and Eve had been created with perfect bodies, a perfect genetic blueprint that could be passed on to their prodigy, an intimate, spiritual relationship with the triune Creator, a freedom to enjoy the entire biosphere which God had created for their benefit, a non-hostile environment and a promise of eternal life. The only caveat required by God for maintaining all of those blessings regarded a single commandment, audibly spoken to Adam, but directed to all mankind: *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die"* (Genesis 2:15-17).

When God warned Adam concerning death, mankind was programmed to live eternally on Planet Earth.

First, we note that work was not a curse imposed upon mankind as a result of the Fall. Adam was to reside in *Eden to work it and take care of it*. Work is a form of stewardship and it is redemptive. Work is to be fulfilling and enjoyable if we are doing the work that God intended and equipped us to do. Paul has told us to *Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody* (1 Thessalonians 4: 10-12). Work, besides being a command of God, will afford us both respect and independence.

Next, we note that God chose a man, not a woman, through whom He would proclaim the only commandment to which He demanded utter obedience. The penalty for disobedience was grave, and it would lead to the grave; the penalty was death. Following the revelation of His will for all mankind, God created Eve because *the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone"* (Genesis 2:18). Obviously Adam was not entirely alone for he not only had the company of God but many animals as well. What he lacked was someone of his own kind. Thus, *the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man* (Genesis 2:21-22). Then, germane to the purpose of this study, we are told that *the man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame* (Genesis 2:25).

### **The Purpose and Ploy of Satan**

In Genesis chapter three we read of an ominous event of cosmic proportions that would forever change the perfect world into which Adam had been created. It was an event he could have prevented had he been obedient to the only command imposed upon him by his Creator. One day while the two humans were walking through Eden, a serpent (some say a snake) appeared to Eve. This was no ordinary reptile for it spoke. It was an incarnation of Satan himself, that fallen angel of whom we read in Isaiah chapter 14 and Ezekiel chapter 28. The devil had influenced millions of angels to follow him (one third of those whom God had created) and now he was set on influencing God's pinnacle of creation: mankind. *Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"*

The very first words out of that sneaky old rascal's mouth questioned the truth of God's Word. "Did God really say?" That demonic tactic continues to this day. If Satan lacks anything it's originality. He uses the same schemes over and over again; but why not, they seem to work. Satan knows that God's Word is true; inerrant, infallible and inspired. David wrote in Psalm 119:165, *All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.* Jesus confirmed that in John 17:17 when He said to the Father in prayer, *Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.* Because the enemy knows the veracity of God's Word, his main ploy is to discredit it. He knows that those of us who have learned and practiced the truths put forth in the Bible have the spiritual strength to stand up against Satan as he prowls the earth seeking to ruin lives and influence souls to fulfill his purpose. The apostle Peter has issued this caveat, *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour* (I Peter 5:8).

Unfortunately, Eve fell into the trap which the devil had set for her. First she attempted to correct Satan, who was much wiser than she knew. *The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "* Like so many people who try to defend God's Word, and who are less familiar with it than they should be, Eve misquoted God. When Yahweh spoke to Adam prior to Eve's creation, He never said *you must not touch it.* The earthly couple could have picked the fruit from the tree and handled it in any manner they chose. They could have tossed it back and forth like a ball, kicked it or juggled it. The command had to do with eating it, taking its substance into their perfect being. God's Words are to be eaten (metaphorically) but not things with an evil content, for they taint our souls. The Bible treats God's Word as spiritual food. Moses reminded the Israelites that *He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with **manna**, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that **man does not live on bread alone** but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD* (Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus reiterated that truth when he addressed Satan and said, *"It is written: '**Man does not live on bread alone**, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' "* (Matthew 4:4). When castigating the believers for their lack of knowledge concerning the Word of God, the author of Hebrews wrote these harsh words in which he analogized milk with elementary truths and meat with the more difficult truths found in the Bible. *In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food!* (Hebrews 5:12)

We have been aptly warned never to misquote, add to or detract from that which God has revealed to His people. Some things remain a mystery and are thus not issues he chooses to explain. Moses informs us that *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law* (Deuteronomy 29:29). John Calvin commented on that passage of scripture by saying, "It is unreasonable that man should scrutinize with impunity those things which the Lord has determined to be hidden in Himself. As soon as the Lord closes His sacred mouth we should also desist from further inquiry."

David tells us *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul* (Psalm 19:7). God warns us not to edit His perfect Word. *Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you* (Deuteronomy 4:2). *See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it* (Deuteronomy 12:32). *Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar* (Proverbs 30:6). *And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.* Knowing the gravity of Eve's error we should all be careful how we handle this Word of truth (Revelation 22:19).

Next, instead of merely placing doubt into Eve's mind, the Devil directly and patently contradicts God's Word. *"You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.* Satan knew very well that what he had just uttered was an outright lie. Jesus knew him well and warned us about his habit of lying. *He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies* (John 8:44). Then he goes further and questions God's motives and His integrity, the latter of which being infinitely holy is utterly, unshakable. *For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*

Satan himself had wanted to *be like God*. That is a haughty, arrogant attitude which resulted in his expulsion from heaven. Take note of his words as recorded by the prophet Isaiah, *I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High* (Isaiah 14:13-14). Everything is about his will, not God's will. Contrast that with the prayer of Jesus in another garden called Gethsemane, *Father, if you are willing, take this*

*cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done* (Luke 22:42). It was the will to power, a mindset championed by the infamous atheist Friedrich Nietzsche. He was a German philosopher of the late 19th century who challenged the foundations of Christianity and traditional morality, just as Satan had in the Garden of Eden. A series of quotes, aphorisms and excerpts have been organized under concepts for which Nietzsche has become famous, such as "Will to Power." It was that very mindset which put Adolph Hitler on the road to his treacherous dictatorship, and further fueled by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, he set about to purify the German race.

Finally, Satan accomplishes that which he had entered the garden to do for we read, *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.* The methods of the Devil have never changed. In 1 John 2:16 we find that his ability to tempt us is founded on the same ploy and principles he used on Eve. *For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world.* The lust of the eyes was manifest as Eve *saw that the fruit of the tree was...pleasing to the eye.* Having been made by God, it was undoubtedly extremely beautiful. The cravings (hungers) of sinful man desire fulfillment and Eve *saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food* . Our hungers may be physical or emotional, sexual or related to the will to power. Last of all, pride is one of the major downfalls of man and that was Satan's downfall from the beginning. If we truly gain wisdom from God's word and not from an evil source we realize that there is no basis for a person's *boasting of what he has and does*. But the tree contained fruit that provided Eve a means of *gaining wisdom*, and she really thought she could be like God.

*This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD...(Jeremiah 9:23-24).* The word 'boast' here means "call attention to." Unfortunately, Eve did not know God the way one might have expected her to have known Him. You and I can because He has revealed Himself to us in His word and in his creation.

As a result of this ploy of Satan, Eve not only *took some and ate it*, but she turned around and *gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.* (Emphasis added) Did you just see what I

saw? Adam was with her. Adam could have stopped this decline of the human race at five separate periods of opportunity but he stood by and watched the entire deplorable scene. For too long Christians have blamed Eve for the Fall. It was Adam who was culpable and it was Adam whom God held accountable for the Fall and the gravity of its consequences: death. *Therefore, just as sin entered the world through **one man**, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned* (Romans 5:12). *For if, by the trespass of the **one man**, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ* (Romans 5:17). The reader will note that "one man" was held responsible for the fall of mankind from the grace of God.

God had chosen to reveal His perfect and sovereign will to Adam, not Eve. Eve had learned the truth vicariously from Adam. Adam was the spiritual head of his home. That is an axiom that has never changed in God's perspective. Paul tells us this: *Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God* (1 Corinthians 11:3). In another place, he reiterates the point: wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. *For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior* (Ephesians 5:22-23). Adam abdicated his headship in the home.

When Adam saw the serpent embark on a questioning of the truth of God's Word he should have pulled Eve aside and warned her of the danger she was facing. He knew directly from the mouth of God what He had said, but she had gotten it second-hand from Adam. He missed opportunity number one. It could have nipped the Fall in the bud at that point, but he failed to act. Scripture tells us, *Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity* (Colossians 4:5). Satan was definitely an outsider, but Adam failed to take the wiser course and he missed a golden opportunity to alter the situation. Next, when Eve misquoted God, Adam should have stepped in and corrected her. "That's not what I told you, Eve. That is not what God said. He did not forbid us to touch the fruit, He only forbade its consumption." As servants of God, we are expected to *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth* (2 Timothy 2:15). Adam failed in that task and allowed Eve to mishandle the Truth of God. Opportunity number three was lost when Adam saw the lustful look in Eve's eyes as she gazed longingly at the forbidden fruit. Then when she began to reach for and draw the fruit to her mouth for that ultimately fatal bite, he could have gently reached out to pull down her

hand and discard the deadly food. He did not and as a result of that failed opportunity he allowed the love of his life to commit suicide. Opportunity number four went unaccomplished. Last of all, when Eve handed Adam the fruit he could have refused to die with her, but his last and final opportunity to escape certain death was lost, and along with it, his home in Paradise.

### **The Particular Perspectives of the Fall**

The Fall of mankind occurred from four particular perspectives: spiritual, psychological, sociological and ecological. Those aberrations caused mankind to become abnormal in body and soul. The body that had been designed to live eternally would undergo an aging process (a slow death) and the soul, which is the seat of intellect, emotion, personality and will, would be devoid of a spiritual aspect that had enabled man to connect with God in a meaningful relationship.

Following their willful act of disobedience by their consumption of the forbidden fruit, we read that *The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.* What a contrast from those words that we read in Genesis 2:25, *The man and his wife were both naked, and **they felt no shame**.* That couple, realizing that they were naked, became ashamed of their appearance and futilely attempted to cover their shame, their lowly self esteem, with fig leaves, a temporary solution at best. The perspective embodied in that part of the Fall was one of psychological proportions. To this day, folks attempt to cover their sin and guilt by performing good works, and those good works are referred to as “fig leaves” because they do not placate God or produce any permanent resolution to our sense of shame and/or guilt. When fig leaves fail, as they predictably will, the shame leads to depression and the guilt to anxiety. It is for that reason that our nation’s number one pharmaceutical sales involve the therapeutic categories of anti-depressants and anti-anxiety drugs (aka tranquilizers).

*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.* The result of sin is a fear of God. People still hide from Him. None seek Him. Like rabbits attempting to escape the bloodhounds, we all set foot on this earth running away from God. David made this fact quite clear in Psalm 14:2-3, *The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.* In Francis Thompson’ classic poem entitled *The Hound of*

*Heaven* we read these first lines, "I fled Him, down the nights and down the days; I fled Him, down the arches of the years; I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind; and in the mist of tears I hid from Him, and under running laughter. Up vista's hopes I sped." This was Adam and Eve's fall from a spiritual perspective. They had lost their contact of grace with their Creator and instead of desiring fellowship with Him, they feared Him. *But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"* God didn't posit that question because of ignorance. God is omniscient; He knows everything. He asked the question so that Adam would consider where he was spiritually. He had disobeyed God and had fallen from grace. Then Adam *answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."* Adam admitted that he was hiding from God. That is an exercise in futility. In Psalm 139 David wisely informs us of the impossibility of any attempt to run or hide from an omnipresent, ubiquitous God. *Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.* We might as well try running away from the air we breathe.

Next, we find Adam adding insult to injury. We read of the consummate act of passing the buck when God questions the man further. *And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"* Once again, the question was not from a lack of knowledge but instead to cause Adam to realize what he had done and the gravity of it all. *The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."* In essence Adam was saying, don't blame me. I am not responsible for the mess we are in. You God gave me the woman and she made me eat the fruit. Imagine the anger that Eve felt when her husband blamed her for the entire episode. A 1697 play by William Congreve includes a line which reads, "Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned / Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned."

Adam had stood by while she committed the fatal sin and he did nothing to stop her, and in fact participated with her. That sounds very much like the situation today of which the apostle Paul wrote, *Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them* (Romans 1:32). Adam knew of the punishment of death and yet he gave approval to Eve's unrighteous act.

*Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."* While Eve did not blame Adam for failing to live up to his responsibility as the spiritual head of their home, she did pass the buck to the serpent. It reminds me of the words often mouthed by the black comedian Flip Wilson, "The devil made me do it." That is the ultimate "cop out." Adam and Eve had free wills to do whatever they really wanted to do at any particular moment in time. They both wanted to disobey God and that is that! No excuses needed. God informs us, *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it* (1 Corinthians 10:13). If we really want to avoid sin He will enable us to do just that. As a result of this failure on Adam's part to offer a *mea culpa*, his relationship with his wife suffered and the first sociological adverse consequence followed: a marriage spat. In chapter four of Genesis, it became greatly and gravely magnified when Cain murdered his brother Abel: the apogee of sociological discord.

Thus mankind experienced a spiritual, psychological and sociological decline. Next we read of mankind's decline from a friendly to a hostile environment, an ecological consequence. *To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."* The earth would ultimately swallow up Adam's physical body, one that had been originally programmed to last forever. That would be the final and consummate unfriendly act by an earth that would frustrate Adam from the day of the Fall until the day he died.

In Christ every consequence of the Fall has been reversed, if we put His power and the truth of His word into practice. Our spiritual problem is solved by Christ our mediator, our defense attorney who stands before the bar of God on our behalf. Job describes it this way, *Even now my witness is in heaven; my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend* (Job 16:19-21). Our relationship with others, spouse, family, extended family, neighbors and fellow believers, is healed if we practice

the love Christ enables us to perform through the Holy Spirit. Our self esteem takes a giant leap when we realize that we were chosen by God to be His children and live with Him forever before He even created the universe. We are told that He gave His only Son to die for our sins so that we could receive forgiveness if we but repented of our sins and asked him to be our Lord and Savior.

Furthermore, by His grace He even gave us the ability to do that when He placed within our soul: the gift of faith. Paul put these absolute truths concerning the method of our salvation in a letter to the church at Ephesus. *For he **chose us** in him **before the creation of the world** to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves (Ephesians 1:4-6). But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **made us alive** with Christ even **when we were dead** in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-6). For it is **by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God** (Ephesians 2:8-emphasis added).*

Our ecological problems remain however, though we can minimize some of them by being sensitive to the prudent care of our environment. *The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God (Romans 8:19-21).* The *bondage to decay* is the natural law of entropy. Everything is wearing out and losing energy. *As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease (Genesis 8:22).* Extremes of temperature, droughts, earthquakes, tornados, tsunamis, hurricanes, cyclones, wild beasts, etc will continue to make our world environmentally unfriendly until God establishes a new heaven and earth as depicted in Revelation 21:1.

While the Fall was truly grave, Jesus has defeated its consequences for us. As a result, *We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:37-19).* AMEN and AMEN!!



