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of
George Whitefield

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THE
W O R K S

OF THE REVEREND

GEORGE WHITEFIELD, M. A.

Late of PEMBROKE-COLLEGE, OXFORD,
And Chaplain to The Rt. Hon. the Countess of HUNTINGDON.

CONTAINING

All his SERMONS and TRACTS
Which have been already published:

WITH

A SELECT COLLECTION of
LETTERS,

Written to his most intimate Friends, and Persons of Distinction,
in *England, Scotland, Ireland, and America*, from the Year 1734 to
1770, including the whole Period of his Ministry.

ALSO

Some other PIECES on IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,
never before printed; prepared by Himself for the Press.

To which is prefixed,

An ACCOUNT of his LIFE,
Compiled from his Original PAPERS and LETTERS.

VOLUME V.

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S E R M O N I .

The Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent

GENESIS 3:15.

And I will put enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy Head thou shalt bruise his Heel.

ON reading to you these words, I may address you in the language of the holy angels to the shepherds, that were watching their flocks by night; “Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy.” For this is the first promise that was made of a Saviour to the apostate race of *Adam*. We generally look for CHRIST only in the New Testament; but Christianity, in one sense, is very near as old as the creation. It is wonderful to observe how gradually GOD revealed his Son to mankind. He began with the promise in the text, and this the elect lived upon, till the time of *Abraham*. To him, GOD made further discoveries of his eternal council concerning man’s redemption. Afterwards, at sundry times, and in divers manners, God spake to the fathers by the prophets, till at length the LORD JESUS himself was manifest in flesh, and came and tabernacled amongst us.

This first promise must certainly be but dark to our first parents, in comparison of that great light which we enjoy: and yet, dark as it was, we may assure ourselves they built upon it their hopes of everlasting salvation, and by that faith were saved.

How they came to stand in need of this promise, and what is the extent and meaning of it, I intend, GOD willing, to make the subject matter of your present meditation.

The fall of man is written in too legible characters not to be understood: Those that deny it, by their denying, prove it. The very heathens confessed, and bewailed it; they could see the streams of corruption running through the whole race of mankind, but could not trace them to the fountain-head. Before God gave a revelation of his Son, man was a riddle to himself. And *Moses* unfolds more, in this one chapter (out of which the text is taken) than all mankind could have been capable of finding out of themselves, though they had studied to all eternity.

In the preceding chapter he had given us a full account how GOD spake the world into being; and especially how he formed man of the dust of the earth, and breathed into him the breath of life, so that he became a living soul. A council of the Trinity was called concerning the formation of this lovely creature. The result of that council was, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. So GOD created man in his own image, in the image of GOD created he him." *Moses* remarkably repeats these words, that we might take particular notice of our divine Original. Never was so much expressed in so few words: None but a man inspired could have done so. But it is remarkable, that though *Moses* mentions our being made in the image of GOD, yet he mentions it but twice, and that in a transient manner; as though he would have said, that "man was made in honour, GOD made him upright, 'in the image of GOD, male and female, created he them.' But man so soon fell, and became like the beasts that perish, nay, like the devil himself, that it is scarce worth mentioning."

How soon man fell after he was created, is not told us; and therefore, to fix any time, is to be wise above what is written. And, I think, they who suppose that man fell the same day in which he was made, have no sufficient ground for their opinion. The many things which are crowded together in the former chapter, such as the formation of *Adam's* wife, his giving names to the beasts, and his being put into the garden which GOD

had planted, I think require a longer space of time than a day, to be transacted in. However, all agree in this, "man stood not long." How long, or how short a while, I will not take upon me to determine. It more concerns us to inquire, how he came to fall from his steadfastness and what was the rise and progress of the temptation which prevailed over him. The account given us in this chapter concerning it, is very full; and it may do us much service, under GOD, to make some remarks upon it.

"Now the serpent (says the sacred historian) was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD GOD had made and he said unto the woman, Yea, hath GOD said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

Though this was a real serpent, yet he that spoke was no other than the devil; from hence, perhaps, called the old serpent, because he took possession of the serpent when he came to beguile our first parents. The devil envied the happiness of man, who was made, as some think, to supply the place of the fallen angels. GOD made man upright, and with full power to stand if he would: He was just, therefore, in suffering him to be tempted. If he fell, he had no one to blame except himself. But how must Satan effect his fall? He cannot do it by his power, he attempts it therefore by policy: he takes possession of a serpent, which was more subtle than all the beasts of the field, which the LORD GOD had made; so that men who are full of subtlety, but have no piety, are only machines for the devil to work upon just as he pleases.

"And he said unto the woman." Here is an instance of his subtlety. He says unto the woman, the weaker vessel, and when she was alone from her husband, and therefore was more liable to be overcome; "Yea, hath GOD said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" These words are certainly spoken in answer to something which the devil either saw or heard. In all probability, the woman was now near the tree of knowledge of good and evil; (for we shall find her, by and by, plucking an apple from it) perhaps she might be looking at, and wondering what there was in that tree more than the others, that she and her husband should be forbidden to taste of it. Satan seeing this, and coveting

to draw her into a parley with him, (for if the devil can persuade us not to resist, but to commune with him, he hath gained a great point) he says, "Yea, hath GOD said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?" The first thing he does is to persuade her, if possible, to entertain hard thoughts of GOD: this is his general way of dealing with GOD's children: "Yea, hath GOD said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? What! hath GOD planted a garden, and placed you in the midst of it, only to tease and perplex you? Hath he planted a garden, and yet forbid you making use of any of the fruits of it at all?" It was impossible for him to ask a more ensnaring question, in order to gain his end; for *Eve* was here seemingly obliged to answer, and vindicate GOD's goodness. And therefore,—

Verse 2,3. The woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, GOD hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

The former part of the answer was good, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; GOD has not forbid us eating of every tree of the garden. No; we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, (and, it should seem, even of the tree of life, which was as a sacrament to man in a state of innocence) there is only one tree in the midst of the garden, of which GOD hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Here she begins to warp; and sin begins to conceive in her heart. Already she has contracted some of the serpent's poison, by talking with him, which she ought not to have done at all. For she might easily suppose, that it could be no good being, that could put such a question unto her, and insinuate such dishonourable thoughts of GOD. She should therefore have fled from him, and not stood to have parleyed with him at all. Immediately the ill effects of it appear, she begins to soften the divine threatening. GOD had said, "The day thou eatest thereof, *thou shalt surely die;*" or, dying thou shalt die. But *Eve* says, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, *lest ye die.*" We may be assured we are fallen into, and begin to fall by temptation, when we begin to think GOD will not be as good

as his word, in respect to the execution of his threatenings denounced against sin. Satan knew this, and therefore artfully

“Said unto the woman, (verse 4.) Ye shall not surely die,” in an insinuating manner, “Ye shall not surely die. Surely, GOD will not be so cruel as to damn you only for eating an apple; it cannot be.” Alas! how many does Satan lead captive at his will, by flattering them, that they shall not surely die; that hell-torments will not be eternal; that GOD is all mercy; that he therefore will not punish a few years’ sin with an eternity of misery? But *Eve* found GOD as good as his word; and so will all they who go on in sin, under a false hope that they shall not surely die.

We may also understand the words spoken positively, and this is agreeable to what follows; You shall not surely die; “It is all a delusion, a mere bugbear, to keep you in a servile subjection.”

For (verse 5) “GOD doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then shall your eyes be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”

What child of GOD can expect to escape slander, when GOD himself was thus slandered even in paradise? Surely the understanding of *Eve* must have been, in some measure, blinded, or she would not have suffered the tempter to speak such perverse things. In what odious colours is GOD here represented! “GOD doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, ye shall be as gods,” (equal with GOD.) So that the grand temptation was, that they should be hereafter under no control, equal, if not superior, to GOD that made them, knowing good and evil. *Eve* could not tell what Satan meant by this; but, to be sure, she understood it of some great privilege which they were to enjoy. And thus Satan now points out a way which seems right to sinners, but does not tell them the end of that way is death.

To give strength and force to this temptation, in all probability, Satan, or the serpent at this time plucked an apple from the tree, and ate it before *Eve*; by which *Eve* might be induced to think, that the sagacity and power of speech, which the serpent had above the other beasts, must be owing, in a great measure, to his eating that fruit; and therefore, if he received so much

improvement, she might also expect a like benefit from it. All this, I think, is clear; for, otherwise, I do not see with what propriety it could be said, "When the woman saw that it was good for food." How could she know it was good for food, unless she had seen the serpent feed upon it.

Satan now begins to get ground apace. Lust had conceived in *Eve's* heart; shortly it will bring forth sin. Sin being conceived, brings forth death. Verse 6. "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 of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband, and he did eat."

Our senses are the landing ports of our spiritual enemies. How needful is that resolution of holy *Job*, "I have made a covenant with mine eyes!" When *Eve* began to gaze on the forbidden fruit with her eyes, she soon began to long after it with her heart. When she saw that it was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, (here was the lust of the flesh, and lust of the eye) but, above all, a tree to be desired to make one wise, wiser than GOD should have her be, nay, as wise as GOD himself; she took of the fruit thereof, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. As soon as ever she sinned herself, she turned tempter to her husband. It is dreadful, when those, who should be help-meets for each other in the great work of their salvation, are only promoters of each other's damnation: but thus it is. If we ourselves are good, we shall excite others to goodness; if we do evil, we shall entice others to do evil also. There is a close connection between doing and teaching. How needful then is it for us all to take heed that we do not sin any way ourselves, lest we should become factors for the devil, and ensnare, perhaps, our nearest and dearest relatives? "she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat."

Alas! what a complication of crimes was there in this one single act of sin! Here is an utter disbelief of GOD's threatening; the utmost ingratitude to their Maker, who had so lately planted this garden, and placed them in it, with such a glorious and comprehensive charter. And the utmost neglect of their posterity,

who they knew were to stand or fall with them. Here was the utmost pride of heart: they wanted to be equal with GOD. Here is the utmost contempt put upon his threatening and his law: the devil is credited and obeyed before him, and all this only to satisfy their sensual appetite. Never was a crime of such a complicated nature committed by any here below: nothing but the devil's apostasy and rebellion could equal it.

And what are the consequences of their disobedience? Are their eyes opened? Yes, their eyes are opened; but, alas! it is only to see their own nakedness. For we are told (verse 7) "That the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked." Naked of GOD, naked of every thing that was holy and good, and destitute of the divine image, which they before enjoyed. They might rightly now be termed *Ichabod*; for the glory of the LORD had departed from them. O how low did these sons of the morning then fall! out of GOD, into themselves; from being partakers of the divine nature, into the nature of the devil and the beast. Well, therefore, might they know that they were naked, not only in body, but in soul.

And how do they behave, now they are naked? Do they flee to GOD for pardon? Do they seek to GOD for a robe to cover their nakedness? No, they were now dead to GOD, and became earthly, sensual, devilish: therefore, instead of applying to GOD for mercy, "they sewed or platted fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons," or things to gird about them. This is a lively representation of all natural men: we see that we are naked; we, in some measure, confess it; but instead of looking up to GOD for succour, we patch up a righteousness of our own, (as our first parents plaited fig-leaves together) hoping to cover our nakedness by that. But our righteousness will not stand the severity of GOD's judgement; it will do us no more service than the fig-leaves did *Adam* and *Eve*, that is, none at all.

For (verse 8) "They heard the voice of the LORD GOD walking in the trees of the garden in the cool of the day; and *Adam* and his wife (notwithstanding their fig-leaves) hid themselves from the presence of the LORD GOD, among the trees of the garden."

They heard the voice of the LORD GOD, or the Word of the LORD GOD, even the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who is “the word that was with GOD, and the word that was GOD.” They heard him walking in the trees of the garden, in the cool of the day. A season, perhaps, when *Adam* and *Eve* used to go, in an especial manner, and offer up an evening-sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The cool of the day. Perhaps the sin was committed early in the morning, or at noon; but GOD would not come upon them immediately, he stayed till the cool of the day. And if we would effectually reprove others, we should not do it when they are warmed with passion, but wait till the cool of the day.

But what an alteration is here! Instead of rejoicing at the voice of their beloved, instead of meeting him with open arms and enlarged hearts, as before, they now hide themselves in the trees of the garden. Alas! what a foolish attempt was this? Surely they must be naked, otherwise how could they think of hiding themselves from GOD? Whither could they flee from his presence? But, by their fall, they had contracted an enmity against GOD: they now hated, and were afraid to converse with GOD their Maker. And is not this our case by nature? Assuredly it is. We labour to cover our nakedness with the fig-leaves of our own righteousness: we hide ourselves from GOD as long as we can, and will not come, and never should come, did not the Father prevent, draw, and sweetly constrain us by his grace, as he here prevented *Adam*.

Verse 9. “And the LORD GOD called unto Adam, and said unto him, Adam, where art thou?”

“The LORD GOD called unto *Adam*,” (for otherwise *Adam* would never have called unto the LORD GOD,) and said, “*Adam* where art thou? How is it that thou comest not to pay thy devotions as usual?” Christians, remember the LORD keeps an account when you fail coming to worship. Whenever therefore you are tempted to withhold your attendance, let each of you fancy you hear the LORD GOD calling unto you, and saying, “O man, O woman, where art thou?” It may be understood in another and better sense; “*Adam*, where art thou?” What a condition is thy poor soul in? This is the first thing the LORD

asks and convinces a sinner of; when he prevents and calls him effectually by his grace; he also calls him by name; for unless GOD speaks to us in particular, and we know where we are, how poor, how miserable, how blind, how naked, we shall never value the redemption wrought out for us by the death and obedience of the dear LORD JESUS. “*Adam*, where art thou?”

Verse 10. “And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid.” See what cowards sin makes us. If we knew no sin, we should know no fear. “Because I was naked, and I hid myself.”

Verse 11. “And he said, who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I (thy Maker and Lawgiver) commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat?”

GOD knew very well that *Adam* was naked, and that he had eaten of the forbidden fruit. But GOD would know it from *Adam*’s own mouth. Thus GOD knows all our necessities before we ask, but yet insists upon our asking for his grace, and confessing our sins. For, by such acts, we acknowledge our dependence upon GOD, take shame to ourselves, and thereby give glory to his great name.

Verse 12. “And the man said, the woman which thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”

Never was nature more lively delineated. See what pride *Adam* contracted by the fall! How unwilling he is to lay the blame upon, or take shame to, himself. This answer is full of insolence towards GOD, enmity against his wife, and disingenuity in respect to himself. For herein he tacitly reflects upon GOD. “The woman that *thou* gavest to be with me.” As much as to say, If *thou* hadst not given me *that woman*, I had not eaten the forbidden fruit. Thus, when men sin, they lay the fault upon their passions; then blame and reflect upon GOD for giving them those passions. Their language is, “The appetites that thou gavest us, they deceived us; and therefore we sinned against thee.” But, as GOD, notwithstanding, punished *Adam* for hearkening to the voice of his wife, so he will punish those who hearken to the dictates of their corrupt inclinations: for GOD compels no man to sin. *Adam* might have withstood the solicitations of his wife, if he would. And so, if we look up to GOD, we should

find grace to help in the time of need. The devil and our own hearts tempt, but they cannot force us to consent, without the concurrence of our own will. So that our damnation is of ourselves, as it will evidently appear at the great day, notwithstanding all men's present impudent replies against GOD. As Adam speaks insolently in respect to GOD, so he speaks with enmity against his wife; the woman, or this woman, she gave me. He lays all the fault upon her, and speaks of her with much contempt. He does not say, my wife, my dear wife; but *this woman*. Sin disunites the most united hearts: it is the bane of holy fellowship. Those who have been companions in sin here, if they die without repentance, will both hate and condemn one another hereafter. All damned souls are accusers of their brethren. Thus it is, in some degree, on this side the grave. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." What a disingenuous speech was here! He makes use of no less than fifteen words to excuse himself, and but one or two (in the original) to confess his fault, if it may be called a confession at all. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree;" here are fifteen words; "and I did eat." With what reluctance do these last words come out? How soon are they uttered? "And I did eat." But thus it is with an unhumiliated, unregenerate heart: It will be laying the fault upon the dearest friend in the world, nay, upon GOD himself, rather than take shame to itself. This pride we are all subject to by the fall; and till our hearts are broken, and made contrite by the Spirit of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, we shall be always charging GOD foolishly. "Against thee, and thee only, have I sinned, that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and clear when thou art judged," is the language of none but those, who, like *David*, are willing to confess their faults, and are truly sorry for their sins. This was not the case of *Adam*: his heart was not broken; and therefore he lays the fault of his disobedience upon his wife and GOD, and not upon himself; "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat."

Verse 13. "And the LORD GOD said, What is this that thou hast done?" What a wonderful concern does GOD express in