

Three Expository Discourses on Genesis¹

Andrew Fuller

Andrew Fuller (1754-1815) was a Baptist pastor and served churches in Soham and Kettering, England. Historically, he is perhaps best known as a friend and supporter of William Carey. Among his many works, "The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation" (1785) is most familiar to modern readers. The Expository Discourses included here are taken from volume three of *The Complete Works of Andrew Fuller*, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications.

DISCOURSE IV. THE FALL OF MAN Genesis 3:1-7

We have hitherto seen man as God created him, upright and happy. But here we behold a sad reverse; the introduction of moral evil into our world, the source of all our misery.

There can be no doubt but that the serpent was used as an instrument of Satan, who hence is called "that old serpent, the devil." The subtlety of this creature might answer his purposes. The account of the serpent *speaking* to the woman might lead us to a number of curious questions, on which, after all, we might be unable to obtain satisfaction. Whether we are to understand this, or the temptations of our Lord in the wilderness, as spoken in an audible voice, or not, I shall not take upon me to decide. Whatever may be said of either case, it is certain, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that evil spirits have, by the Divine permission, access to human minds; not indeed so as to be able to impel us to sin without our consent; but it may be in some such manner as men influence each other's minds to evil. Such seems to be the proper idea of a tempter. We are conscious of *what we choose*; but are scarcely at all acquainted with the things that *induce* choice. We are exposed to innumerable influences; and have therefore reason to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!"

With respect to the temptation itself, it begins by calling in question the *truth* of

God.—Is it true that God has prohibited any tree?—Can it be? For what was it created?—Such are the inquiries of wicked men to this day. "For what are the objects of pleasure made," say they, "But to be enjoyed? Why did God create meats and drinks, and dogs and horses? What are appetites for, but to be indulged?" We might answer, among other things, to try them who dwell on earth.

It seems also to contain an insinuation that if man must not eat of *every tree*, he might as well eat of none. And thus discontent continues to overlook the good, and pores upon the one thing wanting. "All this availeth me nothing, so long as Mordecai is at the gate."

Ver. 2, 3. The answer of Eve seems to be very good at the outset. She very properly repels the insinuation against the goodness of God, as though, because he had withheld one tree, he had withheld, or might as well have withheld, all. "No," says she, "we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: there is only one withheld." She also, with equal propriety and decision, repelled the doubt which the tempter had raised respecting the prohibition of that one. The terms by which she expresses it show how clearly she understood the mind of God, and what an impression his command had made upon her mind: "Of the fruit of this tree, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it; neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die!" We do not read that they were forbidden to *touch* it; but she understood a prohibition of eating to contain a prohibition of *touching*.

And this exposition of the woman, while upright, affords a good rule to us. If we would shun evil, we must shun the *appearance* of it, and all the avenues which lead to it. To parley with temptation is to play with fire. In all this Eve sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

Ver. 4, 5. The wily serpent now proceeds to a second attack. Mark the progress of the temptation. At the outset he only suggested his doubts; but now he deals in positive assertion. In this manner the most important errors creep into the mind. He who sets off with apparently modest doubts will often be seen to end in downright infidelity.

The positivity of the tempter might be designed to oppose that of the woman. She is peremptory; he also is peremptory; opposing assertion to assertion. This artifice of Satan is often seen in his ministers. Nothing is more common than for the most false and pernicious doctrines to be advanced with a boldness that stuns the minds of the simple, and induces a doubt: "Surely I must be in the wrong, and they in the right, or they could not be so confident."

Yet the tempter, it is observable, does not positively deny that God might have *said*, so and so; for this would have been calling in question the veracity of Eve, or denying what she knew to be true; which must have defeated his end. But he insinuates that, whatever God might have said, which he would not now dispute, *it would not in the end prove so*. Satan will not be so unpolite as to call in question either the honour or the understanding of Eve, but scruples not to make God a liar; yea, and has the impudence to say that *God knew* that, instead of proving an evil, it would be a benefit. Alas, how often has man been flattered by the ministers of

Satan at God's expense! Surely we need not be at a loss in judging whence those doctrines proceed which invalidate the Divine threatenings, and teach sinners going on still in their trespasses, "*Ye shall not surely die.*" Nor those which lead men to consider the Divine prohibitions as aimed to diminish their happiness; or, which is the same thing, to think it rigid or hard that we should be obliged to comply with them. And those doctrines which flatter our pride, or provoke a vain curiosity to pry into things unseen, proceed from the same quarter. By aspiring to be a god, man became too much like a devil; and where human reason takes upon itself to set aside revelation, the effects will continue to be much the same.

Ver. 6. This poison had effects ... the woman paused ... looked at the fruit ... it began to appear desirable ... she felt a wish to be *wise* ... in short, she took of the fruit ... and did eat! But was she not alarmed when she had eaten? It seems not; and feeling no such consequences follow as she perhaps expected, ventured even to persuade her husband to do as she had done; and with her persuasion he complied. The connexion between sin and misery is *certain*, but not always *immediate*: its immediate effects are deception and stupefaction, which commonly induct the party to draw others into the same condition.

It does not appear that Adam was deceived; but the woman only, 1 Timothy 2:14. He seems to have sinned with his eyes open, and perhaps from love to his wife. It was the first time, but not the last, in which Satan has made use of the nearest and tenderest parts of ourselves, to draw our hearts from God. Lawful affection may become a snare. If the nearest relation or friend tempt us to depart from

God, we must not hearken. When the woman had sinned against God, it was the duty of her husband to have disowned her for ever, and to have left it to his Creator to provide for his social comfort; but a fond attachment to the creature overcame him. He *hearkened to her voice*, and plunged headlong into her sin.

Ver. 7. And now, having both sinned, they began to be sensible of its effects. Conscious innocence has forsaken them. Conscious guilt, remorse, and shame possess them. Their eyes are now opened indeed, as the tempter had said they would be; but it is to sights of woe. Their naked bodies, for the first time, excite shame; and are emblems of their souls; which, stripped of their original righteousness, are also stripped of their honour, security, and happiness.

To hide their outward nakedness, they betake themselves to the *leaves of the garden*. This, as a great writer observes, was “to cover, not to cure.” And to what else is all the labour of sinner directed? Is it not to *conceal* the bad, and to *appear* what they are not, that they are continually studying and contriving? And being enabled to impose upon one another, they with little difficulty impose upon themselves, “trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others.” But all is mere show, and when God comes to summon them to his bar will prove of no account.

**DISCOURSE V.
THE TRIAL OF THE
TRANSGRESSORS
Genesis 3:8-14**

Ver. 8. We have seen the original transgression of our first parents; and now we

see them called to account and judged. The Lord God is represented as “walking in the garden in the cool of the day;” that is, in the evening. This seems to denote the ordinary and intimate communion which man enjoyed with his Maker, while he kept his first estate. We may be at a loss how to hold communion with them that loved him. To accommodate it to our weak capacities, it is represented under the form of the owner of a garden taking his evening walk in it, to see, as we should say, “whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded;” to see and converse with those whom he had placed over it.

The cool of the day, which to God was the season for visiting his creatures, may, as it respects man, denote a season of *reflection*. We may sin in the daytime; but God will call us to account at night. Many a one has done that in the *heat* and bustle of the day which has afforded bitter reflection in the *cool* of the evening; and such, in many instance, has proved the evening of life.

The *voice* of God was heard, it seems, before any thing was seen: and as he appears to have acted towards man in his usual way, and as though he knew of nothing that had taken place till he had it from his own mouth, we may consider this as the voice of kindness; such, whatever it was, as Adam had used to hear beforetime, and on the first sound of which he and his companion had been used to draw near, as sheep at the voice the shepherd, or as children to the voice of a father. The voice of one whom we love conveys life to our hearts: but, alas, it is not so now! Not only does conscious guilt make them afraid, but contrariety of heart to a holy God renders them unwilling to draw near to him. The kindest lan-

guage, to one who is become an enemy, will work in a wrong way. "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." Instead of coming at his call, as usual, they "hide themselves from his presence among the trees of the garden." Great is the *cowardice* which attaches to guilt. It flies from God, and from all approaches to him in prayer or praise; yea, from the very thoughts of him, and of death and judgment, when they must appear before him. But wherefore flee to the trees of the garden? Can they screen them from the eyes of him with whom they have to do? Alas, they could not hide themselves and their nakedness from their own eyes; how then should they elude discovery before an omniscient God? But we see here to what a stupid and besotted state of mind sin had already reduced them.

Ver. 9. God's general voice of kindness receiving no answer, he is more particular; calling Adam *by name*, and inquiring, "Where art thou?" In vain does the sinner hide himself: the Almighty will find him out. If he answer not to the voice of God in his word, he shall have a special summons served upon him before long. Observe what the summons was, "Where art thou?" It seems to be the language of injured friendship. As if he should say, How is it that I do not meet thee as heretofore? What have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? Have I been a barren wilderness, or a land of drought? How is it that thou hailest not my approach as on former occasions.—It was also language adapted to lead him to reflection: "Where art thou?" Ah, where indeed! God is thus interrogating sinful men. Sinner, where art thou? What is thy

condition? In what way art thou walking, and whither will it lead thee?

Ver. 10. To this trying question man is compelled to answer. See with what ease God can bring the offender to his bar. He has only to speak, and it is done. "He shall call to the heavens and the earth, that he may judge his people." But what answer can be made to him? "I heard thy voice in the garden."—Did you? Then you cannot plead ignorance. No, but something worse:—"I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." Take notice, he says nothing about his *sin*, but merely speaks of its *effects*; such as fear and conscious nakedness, or guilt. The language of a contrite spirit would have been, "I have sinned!" But this is the language of *impenitent misery*. It is of the same nature as that of Cain, "My punishment is heavier than I can bear!" This spirit is often apparent in persons under first convictions, or when brought low by adversity, or drawing near to death; all intent on bewailing their misery, but insensible to the evil of their sin. To what a condition has sin reduced us! Stripped naked to our shame, we are afraid to meet the kindest and best of Beings! O reader! We must now be clothed with a better righteousness than our own, or how shall we stand before him?

Ver. 11. Adam began, as I have said, with the *effects* of his sin; but God directed him to the *cause* of those effects.—Naked! how came such a thought into thy mind? The nakedness of thy body, with which I created thee, was no nakedness; neither fear nor shame attached to that. What meanest thou by being naked?—Still there is no confession. The truth will not come out without a direct inquiry on the subject. Here then it follows: "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee

that thou shouldest not eat?" Thus the sinner stands convicted. Now we might suppose he would have fallen at the feet of his Maker, and have pleaded guilty. But oh the hardening nature of sin!

Ver. 12. Here it is, it is true, a confession of his sin. It comes out at last; "I did eat;" but with what a circuitous, extenuating preamble, a preamble which makes bad worse. The first word is, *The woman*; aye, the woman. It was not my fault, but hers. "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me."—It was not I, it was *thou thyself*! If thou hadst not given this woman to be with me, I should have continued obedient.—Nay, and as if he suspected that the Almighty did not notice his plea sufficiently, he repeats it emphatically; "*She* gave me, and I did eat!" Such a confession was infinitely worse than none. Yet such is the spirit of fallen man to this day: It was not I ... it was my wife, or my husband, or my acquaintance, that persuaded me; or it was my situation in life, in which *thou* didst place me!—Thus "the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord."

It is worthy of notice that God makes *no answer* to these perverse excuses. They were unworthy of an answer. The Lord proceeds, like an aggrieved friend who would not multiply words:—I see how it is: stand aside!

Ver. 13. Next the woman is called, and examined: "What is this that thou hast done?" The question implies that it was no trifling thing; and the effects which have followed, and will follow, confirm it. But let us hear the woman's answer. Did she plead guilty? The circumstance of her being first in the transgression, and the tempter of her husband, one should have thought, would have shut her mouth at least; and being also of the

weaker sex, it might have been expected that she would not have gone on to provoke the vengeance of her Creator. But, lo! She also shifts the blame: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."—I was deceived. I did not mean evil; but was drawn into it through the wiles of an evil being.—Such is the excuse which multitudes make to this day, when they can find no better:—The devil tempted me to it!—Still God continues his forbearance; makes no answer; but orders her, as it were, to stand aside.

Ver. 14. And now the serpent is addressed: but mark the difference. Here is no question put to him, but merely a doom pronounced. Wherefore? Because no mercy was designed to be shown him. He is treated as an avowed and sworn enemy. There was no doubt *wherefore* he had done it, and therefore no *reason* is asked of his conduct.

The workings of conviction in the minds of men are called *the strivings of the Spirit*, and afford a hope of mercy. Though they are no certain sign of grace received, (as there was nothing good at present in our first parents,) yet they are the working of a merciful God, and prove that he has not given over the sinner to hopeless ruin. But the serpent has nothing to expect but a fearful looking for of judgment.

The form under which Satan is cursed is that of *the serpent*. To a superficial reader it might appear that the vengeance of Heaven was directed against the animal, distinguishing him from all cattle, subjecting him to a most abject life, condemning him to creep upon his belly, and of course to have his food besmeared with dust. But was God angry with the serpent? No: but as under that form Satan had tempted the woman, so that shall be the form under

which he shall receive his doom. The spirit of the sentence appears to be this—Cursed art thou above all creatures, and above every thing that God hath made. Miserable shalt thou be to an endless duration!—Some have thought, and the passage gives some countenance to the idea, that the state of fallen angels was not hopeless till now. If it had, the curse could only have added a greater degree of misery.

DISCOURSE VI.
THE CURSE OF SATAN,
INCLUDING A BLESSING TO
MAN—EFFECTS OF THE FALL
Genesis 3:15-24

Ver. 15. By all that had hitherto been said and done, God appears to have concealed from man who was his tempter; and for this reason, among others, to have pronounced the doom on Satan under the form of a curse upon the serpent. By this we may learn that it is of no account, as to the criminality of sin, whence it comes, or by whom or what we are tempted to it. If we choose it, it is *ours*, and we must be accountable for it.

But mark the wisdom and goodness of God: as under the form of cursing the serpent he had pronounced a most tremendous doom on the tempter, so under the form of this doom is covertly intimated a design of mercy the most transcendent to the tempted! If man had been in a suitable state of mind, the promise might have been *direct*, and addressed to him: but he was not; for his heart, whatever it might be afterwards, was as yet hardened against God. It was fit, therefore, that whatever designs of mercy were entertained concerning him, or his posterity,

they should not be given in the form of a promise to *him*, but of threatening to Satan. The situation of Adam and Even at this time was like that of sinners under the preaching of the gospel. The intimation concerning the woman's Seed would indeed imply that she and her husband should live in the world, that she would bring forth children, and that God would carry on an opposition to the cause of evil: but it does not ascertain *their salvation*; and if there appear nothing more in their favour in the following party of the history than what has hitherto appeared, we shall have no good ground to conclude that either of them is gone to heaven. The Messiah might come as the Saviour of sinners, and might descend from them after the flesh, and yet they might have no portion of him.

But let us view this famous passage more particularly, and that in the light in which it is here represented, as a *threatening to the serpent*. This threatening does not so much respect the *person* of the grand adversary of God and man as his *cause* and *kingdom* in the world. He will be punished in his person at the time appointed; but this respects the manifestation of the Son of God to destroy his *works*. There are four things here intimated, each of which is worthy of notice. 1. The ruin of Satan's cause was to be accomplished by *one in human nature*. This must have been not a little mortifying to his pride. If he must fall, and could have had his choice as to the mode, he might rather have wished to have been crushed by the immediate hand of God; for however terrible that hand might be, it would be less humiliating than to be subdued by one of a nature inferior to his own. The human nature especially appears to have become odious to his eyes. It is possible that the

rejoinings of eternal wisdom over man were known in heaven, and first excited his envy; and that his attempt to ruin the human race was an act of revenge. If so, there was a peculiar fitness that from *man* should proceed his overthrow. **2.** It was to accomplished by the Seed of the *woman*. This would be more humiliating still. Satan had made use of her to accomplish his purposes, and God would defeat his schemes through the same medium; and by how much he had despised and abused her, in making her the instrument of drawing her husband aside, by so much would he be mortified in being overcome by one of her descendants. **3.** The victory should be obtained, not only by the Messiah himself, but by all his adherents. The Seed of the woman, though it primarily referred to him, yet, being opposed to "the seed of the serpent," includes all that believe in him. And there is little or not doubt that the account in Revelation 7:17, has allusion to this passage: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Now if it were mortifying for Satan to be overcome by the Messiah himself, considered as the Seed of the woman, how much more when, in addition to this, every individual believer shall be made to come near, and as it were set his feet upon the neck of his enemy! Finally, though it should be a long war, and the cause of the serpent would often be successful, yet in the end it should be utterly ruined. The *head* is the *seat of life*, which the *heel* is not: by this language, therefore, it is intimated that the life of Christ's cause should not be affected by any part of Satan's opposition; but that the life of Satan's cause should by that of Christ. For

this purpose is he manifested in human nature, that he may *destroy* the works of the devil; and he will never desist till he have utterly crushed his power.

Now as the threatenings against Babylon conveyed good news to the church, so this threatening against the old serpent is full of mercy to men. But for this enmity which God would put into the woman's seed against him, he would have had every thing his own way, and every child of man would have had his portion with him and his angels.

From the whole, we see that Christ is the foundation and substance of all true religion since the fall of man, and, therefore, that the only way to salvation is by faith in him. We see also the importance of a decided attachment to him and his interest. There are two great armies in the world, Michael and his angels warring against the dragon and his angels; and, according to the side we take, such will be our end.

Ver. 16-19. The sentence of the woman, and of the man, which follows, like the rest, is under a veil. Nothing but temporal evils are mentioned; but these are not the whole. Paul teaches us that, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to *condemnation*; and such a condemnation as stands opposed to *justification of life*, Romans 5:18. The woman's load in this life was *sorrow in bearing children*, and *subjection to her husband*. The command to be fruitful and multiply might originally, for aught I know, include some degree of pain; but now it should be "greatly multiplied:" and there was doubtless a natural subordination in innocency; but through sin woman becomes comparatively a slave. This is especially the case where sin reigns uncontrolled, as in heathen and Mahomedan countries.

Christianity, however, so far as it operates, counteracts it; restoring woman to her original state, that of a friend and companion. The sentence on *man* points out to him wherein consisted his sin; namely, in hearkening to the voice of his wife, rather than to God. What a solemn lesson does this teach us against loving the creature more than the Creator, and hearkening to any counsel to the rejection of his! And, with respect to his punishment, it is worthy of notice, that as that of Eve was common to her daughters, so that of Adam extends to the whole human race. The *ground* is cursed for his sake—cursed with barrenness. God would, as it were, take no delight in blessing it; as well he might not, for all would be perverted and become the food of rebellion. The more he should bless the earth, the more wicked would be its inhabitants. Man also himself is doomed to wretchedness upon it; he should drag on the few years that he might live in sorrow and misery, of which the *thorns and thistles* which it should spontaneously produce were but emblems. God had given him before to eat of *the fruit of the trees of the garden*; but now he must be expelled thence, and take his portion with the brutes, and live upon *the herb of the field*. He was allowed *bread*, but it should be by the *sweat of his face*; and this is the lot of the great body of mankind. The end of this miserable state of existence was that he should return to his native *dust*. Here the sentence leaves him. A veil is, at present, drawn over a future world; but we elsewhere learn that at what time “the flesh returns to dust, the spirit returns to God who gave it,” and that the same sentence which appointed man “once to die” added, “but after this the judgement.”

It is painful to trace the different parts

of this melancholy sentence, and their fulfillment in the world to this day; yet there is a bright side even to this dark cloud. Through the promised Messiah a great many things pertaining to the curse are not only counteracted, but become blessings. Under his glorious reign “the earth shall yield its increase, and God, our own God, delight in blessing us.” And while its fruitfulness is withheld, this has a merciful tendency to stop the progress of sin; for if the whole earth were like the plains of Sodom in fruitfulness, which are compared to the garden of God, its inhabitants would be as Sodom and Gomorrah in wickedness. The necessity of hard labour, too, in obtaining a subsistence, which is the lot of the far greater part of mankind, tends more than a little, by separating men from each other, and depressing their spirits, to restrain them from the excesses of evil. All the afflictions of the present life contain in them a motive to look upward for a better portion; and death itself is a monitor to warn them to prepare to meet their God. These are things suited to a *sinful* world; and where they are sanctified, as they are to believers in Christ, they become real blessings. To them they are “light afflictions,” and last “but for a moment;” and while they do last, “work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” To them, in short, death itself is introductory to everlasting life.

Ver. 20. Adam’s wife seems hitherto to have been known only by the name of *woman*; but now he calls her *Eve*, that is, *life, living, or the mother of all living*. He might possibly have understood from the beginning that the sentence of death would not prevent the existence of the human race, or if not, what had been said of the woman’s seed would at least sat-

isfy him on the subject.

But it is generally supposed, and there seems to be ground for the supposition, that in calling his wife *life*, or *living*, he intended more than that she would be the mother of all mankind; that it is expressive of his faith in the promise of her victorious Seed destroying, what Satan had succeeded in introducing—*death*, and that thus she should be the means of *immortal life* to all who should live in him. If such was his meaning, we may consider this as the first evidence in favour of his being renewed in the spirit of his mind.

Ver. 21. By the coats of skins wherewith the Lord God clothed them, it seems to be implied that animals were slain, and as they were not at that time slain for food, it is highly probable they were slain for sacrifice, especially as this practice is mentioned in the life of Abel. Sacrifices therefore appear to have been ordained by God to teach man his desert, and the way in which he must be saved. It is remarkable that the clothing of Adam and Eve is ascribed to *the Lord God*, and that it appears to have succeeded the slender covering wherewith they had attempted to cover themselves. Is it not natural to conclude that God only can hide our moral nakedness, and that the way in which he does it is by covering us with the righteousness of our atoning sacrifice?

Ver. 22. This ironical reflection is expressive of both indignation and pity.—Man is becoming wonderfully wise! Unhappy creature! He has forever forfeited my favour, which is life, and having lost the thing signified, let him have no access to the sign. He has broken my covenant: let neither him nor his posterity henceforward expect to regain it by any obedience of theirs.

Ver. 23, 24. God is determined that man

shall not so much as dwell in the garden where the tree of life grows, but be turned out as into the wide world. He shall no longer live upon the delicious fruits of Eden, but be driven to seek his food among the beasts of the field; and, to show the impossibility of his ever regaining that life which he had lost, “cherubim and a flaming sword” are placed to guard it. Let this suffice to impress us with that important truth, “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified;” and to direct us to a tree of life which has no flaming sword to prevent our access! Yet even in this, as in other threatenings, we may perceive a mixture of mercy. Man had rendered his days *evil*, and God determines they shall be but *few*. It is well for us that a life of sin and sorrow is not immortal.

ENDNOTES

¹Except for minor stylistic modifications the original spelling and punctuation have been maintained.

