



GRACE IN THE GARDEN

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“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” Genesis 2:7 (NLT)

It is the sixth day of the world’s first week, and God is nearly finished with His work. He has one or two things more to do, and He has saved the best for last. The stage is now set for Creation’s crowning act. Holy angels have watched with wonder from the very first day when the great God of heaven stepped out into the middle of nothing and said to nothing, “Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Genesis 1:3, NKJV). The psalmist says: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth...For He spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:6, 9, NKJV).

But now the Creator employs a different method. God does not speak this time. Instead, God bends down and scoops a handful of earth and with it begins to fashion the man. He sculpts and outlines; He shapes and moulds; He patterns and casts. His arms hug and huge torso. His fingertips tend a tiny capillary. And creative genius forms a glorious organism with interlocking systems – endocrine, muscular, skeletal, neurological, pulmonary, lymphatic, cardiovascular. “Fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14, NKJV)!

At the crown of it all, God creates an organ of reason, covered with a convoluted later of gray matter. Here will reside the seat of intelligence, the center of the powers of reason and understanding, of creativity and language. Then with that construction completed and everything in its place, the Great

Creator, Himself uncreated, pauses and inhales deeply. He bends even lower now, His own face to the ground, and breathes into the nostrils of the earthy shell. And the chest expands as the lungs inflate, the nerves generate, the heart palpitates, the blood circulates, the cells activate, the dust becomes flesh, the brain becomes a mind, and the man becomes a living soul.

And the cosmological question is answered even before we begin our own investigation. It is not by rationality that the truth of creation is known. It is not a scientific conclusion. Science cannot replace God, since science did not create itself. It is a falsehood and a confusion of order to make the derivative original and the Original derivative (Malik, 1982, p. 34). Science is our guide among things as they are. No one has the right to be dogmatic about things that cannot be known except by divine revelation (Chambers, 2000, p. 80).

And it is by revelation, not reason, that we come to know what the Bible never attempts to prove: that the world was created in six literal days of evenings and mornings, in which God was not dependent on pre-existing matter. It is a truth incompatible with the scientific method. It is not a theory; it is a belief, it is a confession. “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3, NKJV). “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1, NKJV).

This is our Father’s world and in Creation as in redemption it is His finished work. God no more left Creation to be completed by natural processes than He left redemption to be completed by religious ones. When the atonement was completed at the cross, Jesus cried, “It is finished!” (John 19:30, NKJV). And when Creation was concluded on the sixth day, “The God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31, NKJV). From earth to sky, from animals to humans, from sea to shining sea, God made them all. This is our Father’s world!



This, then, is the glorious beginning of the human family from the hand of God – full of promise and full of potential. Saving grace is in reserve, not yet needed. Forgiveness has not yet appeared, for there is nothing to forgive. But faith must be tested.

Fatal Curiosity

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate” (Genesis 3:6, NKJV).

The downfall of Eve began when she decided to conduct her own investigation. This was the first departure from the complete trust in God’s word. God never said that the fruit of the tree was not good for food. He only said they were not to eat of it. He even said it with a warning of consequences: “In the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17, NKJV). But what God left unsaid was the reason for His command. He gave a “what”, but He did not give a “why”, it was a test of faith.

The omitted information becomes the seed of the temptation the serpent crafts to appeal to human vanity. Eve must decide, in the face of the serpent’s challenge and the unexplained command of God, whom she believes. She can take God at His word and obey, or she can doubt the divine veracity and disobey. But she must do one or the other.

The nature of sins runs deeper than we first think. It does not begin with the deed; it begins with the thought. Sin first appears at the subconscious level where we make decision, even before we act. The moment we determine to take matters into our own hands, to employ our will at our own discretion – in that hidden moment we depart from faith in God. Choice is the human sovereignty God will never take away, but there are two way in which we may use it – to honour God or ourselves; to obey His loving commands or to follow our own discretion. In other words, by the grace of God we have the freedom

to give up our freedom for the sake of God's love. And through this surrender a new freedom is found, freedom to do the will of God in every situation.

Appearance of the Supernatural

Jesus Christ is the only way out of the death-trap of sin; and He, too, makes His appearance in the beginning. Before the angel drives them away from the tree of life, Adam and Even receive a promise that catches Satan off guard. Turning to the serpent, the Lord God says: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15, NKJV).

Satan does not completely understand, but he knows it is a threat to his kingdom. To bruise a serpent's head is to kill it. God is prophesying the end of Satan's reign, and the Agent of his demise will be the Seed of the woman. Here is the strategy Satan never dreamed of; God was prepared to go further than it was possible for the enemy to conceive. At the very place where humans were at their worst, God was at His best, revealing the depth of a love that is beyond comprehension.

Genesis 3 closes with a ceremony of eternal significance in which God provides a covering for the man and woman. "The Lord God made tunics of skin, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21, NKJV). Note: garments of skin, not garments of wool. This was no shearing of a live animal; for this to happen a creature had to die. And it is significant that the act of redemption takes place before the man and woman are barred from Eden, so they will know that exclusion from the garden does not mean the absence of God (Tonstad, 2009, p. 58). It is from the tree they are cut off, not from the Creator.

And then it appears. Seemingly from nowhere. Something for which human vocabulary must create a new word. It operated on different laws than the laws of nature. Everything else in created order runs on the laws of cause and effect – the sun makes you hot; water makes you wet; the wind blows



and trees bend; trees rise up and shadows are cast – everything fixed, everything predictable.

But suddenly comes a new life principle. Above the laws of natural existence, something supernatural comes into view.

This is not kindness – God’s kindness appears throughout the universe. This is not goodness – God’s goodness and favour are in every solar system. This is something else. This is kindness that is undeserved; this is favour that is unwarranted; blessing where condemnation would belong; forgiveness where judgment should be. As the man and woman turn their backs on the tree of life, never to taste of its fruit again, they are wearing the clothing God provided for them with blood, as a pledge that they will eat from the tree again someday.

When they came before God after sin, the man and woman were already clothed in garments they had made, but this would not do.

We cannot save ourselves or make any contribution to our own justification. So God makes new garments of His own choosing, and He does so by the shedding of blood. For “without shedding of blood there is no remission” of sin (Hebrews 9:22, NIV).

Because of divine intervention the effect of sin is no longer death to the sinner. Instead, through the operation of this new thing which requires a new word, the sinner escapes the effect that should naturally follow cause, and inherits a new result.

This thing is called grace. It was not an afterthought, it was already in reverse. As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour.

This time, however, the Lord God does not speak. Instead, He bends down, scoops a handful of earth and prepares a body through which to enter humanity by the miracle of incarnation (Hebrews 10:5). It is the divine act of

infinite condescension born of enduring love. What would we do without God's grace?

There were two trees planted in the middle of the Garden – the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But at the moment of humanity's fall, God planted a third tree. This is the tree that rescues from eternal destruction all who believe. Jesus died on that third tree, and the victory He won becomes our own. Through His sacrifice we escape the condemnation of sin.

The goal of redemption has always been that we might inherit a death-free incorruptibility, but not as our own achievement. Redemption comes only as a free gift of grace by which the righteousness of Christ is bestowed on us. Jesus Himself is with us by His Spirit and we become more than conquerors through Him; "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27, NKJV).

May we reach up to God for power and grace each day; and by so doing experience new hope as we embrace God's gift of salvation.

References

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