

The Very First Sin

by Roland Foster

[Disclaimer: I am not a professional theologian. I'm an amateur; a layman who loves to dabble in Christian theology. I don't present my ideas as "the truth," but rather as "this works for me." Use at your own risk.]

I believe Eve got a bum rap.

In the minds of many people, including many Christians, her sin was responsible for "The Fall" — the entry of sin into the world and into human nature.

Let's look at the relevant passage from Genesis 3:1-7 *.

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Notice that I have underlined one phrase. According to Eve, to eat the fruit of the tree, or even to touch it, was to incur a death sentence. But what did God actually say? Here it is, from Genesis 2:16-17.

And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Now these two passages are rendered in English, rather than Hebrew, but I believe that the meaning of them is crystal-clear. God said, "Do not eat." Eve said that God said, "Do not eat, and do not touch."

Question: where did "Do not touch" come from? The answer is obvious, at least to me. The command was given by God to Adam, Adam then passed it on to Eve. But I sincerely believe that, in order to add emphasis and boost his authority over Eve a bit, Adam added that little, innocent-sounding, extra command: "Do not even touch it!"

Enter the crafty serpent. "Did God say ...?" And Eve, in all innocence, repeats what she was told by Adam. But the serpent already knew what God had said.

Now I'm making this part up, but I would be absolutely astonished if it didn't happen something like this. The serpent takes one of the fruit and touches Eve with it. "See there, Eve, you didn't die! God was lying to you." And Eve, since she did not die, immediately sees

that what Adam told her was not true — so, obviously, the serpent is right. God, for whatever reason, wanted to keep this good thing from them. She takes a bite, and it's delicious.

Adam shows up, and she tells him, "It's all right, Adam, Dear. This fruit is good, it's delicious! Here, have some." And he also thinks that God lied or was mistaken. He eats the fruit.

Things go downhill rapidly after that. Adam and Eve look at each other and realize that they are naked. That never bothered them before, but now it's a problem. Quick, sew some leaves together and make a couple of aprons. Then, a while later, God comes walking in the Garden, and they hide from Him. When God calls them to account, they play the blame game. Adam blames both Eve and God: "That woman that you made, she gave me the fruit, so I ate some." Eve blames everything on the serpent.

So let's suppose that the thing happened as I have pictured it. Adam saw himself as the boss, the man in charge of the Garden. In his pride, he took what God had said and embellished it by adding his own little injunction: "Don't even touch it!" That, I believe, was the very first sin. Not that it really matters a lot. I just think it's not fair to blame Eve without realizing that Adam was probably at least as guilty.

*Bible passages are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®),
Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
All rights reserved.*