June 17, 2017

Prison Ministry

**Story of Redemption** (1947) Chapter **4:** **The Temptation and Fall**

Satan assumes the form of a serpent and enters Eden. The serpent was a beautiful creature with wings, and while flying through the air his appearance was bright, resembling burnished gold. He did not go upon the ground but went from place to place through the air and ate fruit like man. Satan entered into the serpent and took his position in the tree of knowledge and commenced leisurely eating of the fruit.

 Eve, unconsciously at first, separated from her husband in her employment. When she became aware of the fact she felt that there might be danger, but again she thought herself secure, even if she did not remain close by the side of her husband. She had wisdom and strength to know if evil came, and to meet it. This the angels had cautioned her not to do. Eve found herself gazing with mingled curiosity and admiration upon the fruit of the forbidden tree. She saw it was very lovely, and was reasoning with herself why God had so decidedly prohibited their eating or touching it. Now was Satan's opportunity. He addressed her as though he was able to divine her thought: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" Thus, with soft and pleasant words, and with musical voice, he addressed the wondering Eve. She was startled to hear a serpent speak. He extolled her beauty and exceeding loveliness, which was not displeasing to Eve. But she was amazed, for she knew that to the serpent God had not given the power of speech.

 Eve's curiosity was aroused. Instead of fleeing from the spot, she listened to hear a serpent talk. It did not occur to her mind that it might be that fallen foe, using the serpent as a medium. It was Satan that spoke, not the serpent. Eve was beguiled, flattered, infatuated. Had she met a commanding personage, possessing a form like the angels and resembling them, she would have been upon her guard. But that strange voice should have driven her to her husband's side to inquire of him why another should thus freely address her. But she entered into a controversy with the serpent. She answered his question, "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 serpent answered, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

 Satan would convey the idea that by eating of the forbidden tree they would receive a new and more noble kind of knowledge than they had hitherto attained. This has been his special work, with great success, ever since his fall--to lead men to pry into the secrets of the Almighty and not to be satisfied with what God has revealed, and not careful to obey that which He has commanded. He would lead them to disobey God's commands, and then make them believe that they are entering a wonderful field of knowledge. This is purely supposition, and a miserable deception. They fail to understand what God has revealed, and disregard His explicit commandments and aspire after wisdom, independent of God, and seek to understand that which He has been pleased to withhold from mortals. They are elated with their ideas of progression and charmed with their own vain philosophy, but grope in midnight darkness relative to true knowledge. They are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

 It was not the will of God that this sinless pair should have any knowledge of evil. He had freely given them the good but withheld the evil. Eve thought the words of the serpent wise, and she received the broad assertion, "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil"--making God a liar. Satan boldly insinuated that God had deceived them to keep them from being exalted in knowledge equal with Himself. God said: If ye eat ye shall surely die. The serpent said, If ye eat, "ye shall not surely die."

 The tempter assured Eve that as soon as she ate of the fruit she would receive a new and superior knowledge that would make her equal with God. He called her attention to himself. He ate freely of the tree and found it not only perfectly harmless but delicious and exhilarating, and told her that it was because of its wonderful properties to impart wisdom and power that God had prohibited them from tasting or even touching it, for He knew its wonderful qualities. He stated that his eating of the fruit of the tree forbidden to them was the reason he had attained the power of speech. He intimated that God would not carry out His word. It was merely a threat to intimidate them and keep them from great good. He further told them that they could not die. Had they not eaten of the tree of life which perpetuates immortality? He said that God was deceiving them to keep them from a higher state of felicity and more exalted happiness. The tempter plucked the fruit and passed it to Eve. She took it in her hand. Now, said the tempter, you were prohibited from even touching it lest you die. He told her that she would realize no more sense of evil and death in eating than in touching or handling the fruit. Eve was emboldened because she felt not the immediate signs of God's displeasure. She thought the words of the tempter all wise and correct. She ate, and was delighted with the fruit. It seemed delicious to her taste, and she imagined that she realized in herself the wonderful effects of the fruit.

**Eve Becomes a Tempter**

 She then plucked for herself of the fruit and ate, and imagined she felt the quickening power of a new and elevated existence as the result of the exhilarating influence of the forbidden fruit. She was in a strange and unnatural excitement as she sought her husband with her hands filled with the forbidden fruit. She related to him the wise discourse of the serpent and wished to conduct him at once to the tree of knowledge. She told him she had eaten of the fruit, and instead of her feeling any sense of death, she realized a pleasing, exhilarating influence. As soon as Eve had disobeyed she became a powerful medium through which to occasion the fall of her husband.

 I saw a sadness come over the countenance of Adam. He appeared afraid and astonished. A struggle appeared to be going on in his mind. He told Eve he was quite certain that this was the foe that they had been warned against, and if so, that she must die. She assured him she felt no ill effects but rather a very pleasant influence, and entreated him to eat.

 Adam quite well understood that his companion had transgressed the only prohibition laid upon them as a test of their fidelity and love. Eve reasoned that the serpent said they should not surely die, and his words must be true, for she felt no signs of God's displeasure, but a pleasant influence, as she imagined the angels felt.

 Adam regretted that Eve had left his side, but now the deed was done. He must be separated from her whose society he had loved so well. How could he have it thus? His love for Eve was strong. And in utter discouragement he resolved to share her fate. He reasoned that Eve was a part of himself, and if she must die, he would die with her, for he could not bear the thought of separation from her. He lacked faith in his merciful and benevolent Creator. He did not think that God, who had formed him out of the dust of the ground into a living, beautiful form, and had created Eve to be his companion, could supply her place. After all, might not the words of this wise serpent be correct? Eve was before him, just as lovely and beautiful, and apparently as innocent, as before this act of disobedience. She expressed greater, higher love for him than before her disobedience, as the effects of the fruit she had eaten. He saw in her no signs of death. She had told him of the happy influence of the fruit, of her ardent love for him, and he decided to brave the consequences. He seized the fruit and quickly ate it, and like Eve, felt not immediately its ill effects.

 Eve had thought herself capable of deciding between right and wrong. The flattering hope of entering a higher state of knowledge had led her to think that the serpent was her especial friend, possessing a great interest in her welfare. Had she sought her husband, and they had related to their Maker the words of the serpent, they would have been delivered at once from his artful temptation. The Lord would not have them investigate the fruit of the tree of knowledge, for then they would be exposed to Satan masked. He knew that they would be perfectly safe if they touched not the fruit.

**Man's Freedom of Choice**

 God instructed our first parents in regard to the tree of knowledge, and they were fully informed relative to the fall of Satan, and the danger of listening to his suggestions. He did not deprive them of the power of eating the forbidden fruit. He left them as free moral agents to believe His word, obey His commandments, and live, or believe the tempter, disobey, and perish. They both ate, and the great wisdom they obtained was the knowledge of sin and a sense of guilt. The covering of light about them soon disappeared, and under a sense of guilt and loss of their divine covering, a shivering seized them, and they tried to cover their exposed forms.

 Our first parents chose to believe the words, as they thought, of a serpent; yet he had given them no tokens of his love. He had done nothing for their happiness and benefit, while God had given them everything that was good for food and pleasant to the sight. Everywhere the eye might rest was abundance and beauty; yet Eve was deceived by the serpent, to think that there was something withheld which would make them wise, even as God. Instead of believing and confiding in God, she basely distrusted His goodness and cherished the words of Satan.

 After Adam's transgression he at first imagined that he felt the rising to a new and higher existence. But soon the thought of his transgression terrified him. The air, that had been of a mild and even temperature, seemed to chill them. The guilty pair had a sense of sin. They felt a dread of the future, a sense of want, a nakedness of soul. The sweet love and peace and happy contented bliss seemed removed from them, and in its place a want of something came over them that they had never experienced before. They then for the first time turned their attention to the external. They had not been clothed but were draped in light as were the heavenly angels. This light which had enshrouded them had departed. To relieve their sense of lack and nakedness which they realized, their attention was directed to seek a covering for their forms, for how could they meet the eye of God and angels unclothed?

 Their crime is now before them in its true light. Their transgression of God's express command assumes a clearer character. Adam censured Eve's folly in leaving his side and being deceived by the serpent. They both flattered themselves that God, who had given them everything to make them happy, might yet excuse their disobedience because of His great love to them and that their punishment would not be so dreadful after all.

 Satan exulted in his success. He had now tempted the woman to distrust God, to question His wisdom, and to seek to penetrate His all-wise plans. And through her he had also caused the overthrow of Adam, who, in consequence of his love for Eve, disobeyed the command of God and fell with her.

 The news of man's fall spread through heaven--every harp was hushed. The angels cast their crowns from their heads in sorrow. All heaven was in agitation. The angels were grieved at the base ingratitude of man in return for the rich bounties God had provided. A council was held to decide what must be done with the guilty pair. The angels feared that they would put forth the hand and eat of the tree of life, and thus perpetuate a life of sin.

 The Lord visited Adam and Eve, and made known to them the consequence of their disobedience. As they heard God's majestic approach they sought to hide themselves from His inspection, whom they delighted, while in their innocence and holiness, to meet. "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And He said, Who told Thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" This question was asked by the Lord, not because He needed information, but for the conviction of the guilty pair. How didst thou become ashamed and fearful? Adam acknowledged his transgression, not because he was penitent for his great disobedience, but to cast reflection upon God. "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." The woman was then addressed: "What is this that thou hast done?" Eve answered, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."

**The Curse**

 The Lord then addressed the serpent: "Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." As the serpent had been exalted above the beasts of the field, he should be degraded beneath them all, and be detested by man, inasmuch as he was the medium through which Satan acted. "And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground."

 God cursed the ground because of their sin in eating of the tree of knowledge, and declared, "In sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." He had apportioned them the good, but withheld the evil. Now He declares that they shall eat of it, that is, they should be acquainted with evil all the days of their life.

 The race from that time forward was to be afflicted by Satan's temptations. A life of perpetual toil and anxiety was appointed unto Adam, instead of the happy, cheerful labor he had hitherto enjoyed. They should be subject to disappointment, grief, and pain, and finally come to dissolution. They were made of the dust of the earth, and unto dust should they return.

 They were informed that they would have to lose their Eden home. They had yielded to Satan's deception and believed the word of Satan, that God would lie. By their transgression they had opened a way for Satan to gain access to them more readily, and it was not safe for them to remain in the Garden of Eden, lest in their state of sin they gain access to the tree of life and perpetuate a life of sin. They entreated to be permitted to remain, although they acknowledged that they had forfeited all right to blissful Eden. They promised that they would in the future yield to God implicit obedience. They were informed that in their fall from innocence to guilt they gained no strength but great weakness. They had not preserved their integrity while they were in a state of holy, happy innocence, and they would have far less strength to remain true and loyal in a state of conscious guilt. They were filled with keenest anguish and remorse. They now realized that the penalty of sin was death.

 Angels were commissioned to immediately guard the way of the tree of life. It was Satan's studied plan that Adam and Eve should disobey God, receive His frown, and then partake of the tree of life, that they might perpetuate a life of sin. But holy angels were sent to debar their way to the tree of life. Around these angels flashed beams of light on every side, which had the appearance of glittering swords. {SR 41.1}

Next Mailing: Story of Redemption Chapter **5: The Plan of Salvation**