

The Anatomy Of Sin: Dissecting Transgression

The purpose of anatomy and its associated practice of dissection is greater understanding of the individual parts of an organism, their interconnectivity, and the processes by which they perform their functions- singly and collectively, through close and specific observation. In seeking to better understand “sin” and its causal culprit “transgression,” it is difficult to utilize personal experience since anatomy and dissection have obvious limitations to their observational benefits when performed on self. So, let’s exhume a cadaver to dissect- let’s resurrect Eve and study the very genesis of sin.

For the specific purposes of this dissection, we’re going to cut away the fatty tissues and observe carefully the bare bones of exactly what Satan said and did, and how Eve reacted to produce transgression and sin. So, from Genesis 3, note:

1. Satan tested her knowledge of God’s word (v. 1). Have you thought about how easy it would have been for Satan to get Eve to sin if she HADN’T known what God said? No doubt the process would have been much shorter and easier for the subtle Serpent if Eve had been ignorant of God’s command. But initially, Eve did well (cp. vv. 2-3; 2:16-17; 2 Timothy 2:15).
2. Satan denied the consequence(s) of sin (v. 4). Having ascertained that Eve indeed knew what God expected of her, Satan took another route. He denied the consequence God had specified for disobedience. When the consequence for sin is denied (or even diminished), it causes us to look differently at the command ... and think differently about disobedience. When the “cost” comes down, or is eliminated altogether, “buyers” are easy to find. Of course it was a lie — that is who Satan is and what he does (John 8:44)!
3. Satan touted the “benefits” of disobedience (v. 5). Having ascertained that Eve actually knew what God expected of her, and then having “removed” the consequence attached to disobedience, the Deceiver then went on the offensive by suggesting that it was actually in Eve’s best interest to do something other than what God commanded. How could this be? He impugned God’s motives, and appealed to Eve’s pride. Again, how so? He suggested that God wanted something other than the best for Eve — that the selfless God of the Universe had selfish motives in issuing this one restriction. In effect, Satan denied God’s love for Eve. Into this vein, the Serpent injected the poison that produced swelling pride and hastened her downfall.
4. Eve decided she knew what was “good” for her better than God did (v. 6). Through her pride, discontentment with God’s gracious and abundant provision led her to believe that she knew better than God what was “good” for her (and her husband, v. 6b). She knew the commandment of God, but with disobedience’s consequence removed, and Satan’s lies about its “benefits” added, Eve decided she knew more about what was “good for food ... a delight to the eyes,” and what it took to “make one wise” than God did (cp. 2:9). So, she decided to disobey God.

This is the dissected anatomy of Eve's fall. But don't we fall in exactly the same way? With Satan's assistance, we are either ignorant of God's will, or deny that our sin has or will have any real consequences. Then, we start considering the supposed "benefits" of disobedience. Finally, through discontentment and selfish pride, we decide we know what is "better" for us than God does, and we fall into sin by transgression. Please understand:

- Ignorance of God's will is always destructive: "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).
- Sin always has consequences: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thessalonians 1:9).
- Sin never has "benefits": "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me" (Romans 7:11).
- We never know more than God about what is "good": "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:7-14).

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