

## **The Basics of Orthodoxy Class 101**

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### **Topic 6: The Fall of Mankind**

*(The Life, chpt.2; and, The Faith, chpt. 4)*

The fall of man is described in the Genesis chapter 3. This famous story tells us why we don't experience life as God intended for it to be lived.

The central problem with Adam and Eve eating from the *Tree of Knowledge*:

- Adam and Eve tried to become like God without God.

#### **Romans 1:25**

“...man has exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator.”

Man's calling, vocation, and God-designed destiny was to “grow more godlike by growing ever more human”. (*The Faith*, pg.79) This is called **deification** or **theosis** (union with God).

“God created man in His own image so that through the use of his free will, in returning all that God had given him in an offering of love, man might grow ever more like God in an eternal communion of love with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” (*The Faith*, pg.79)

There is nothing wrong with wanting to become like God—to be holy, good, loving, and kind—for this is how God **designed** us. He has **commanded** us: “Be holy for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:44 and 1 Peter 1:16)

Yet we can **only** go about doing this **God's way, with God's help**.

**A) Free will is critical.** A relationship of love means one gives of himself/herself freely to the other.

Orthodox Christianity has always rejected any idea of “double predestination” in which God pre-selects some people to go to heaven, and pre-selects others to go to hell. (That is a bad heresy and it makes God into a terrible arbitrary monster.) Rather, the truth is that **heaven** and **hell** are options open for everybody. All have an **equal** chance.

If man is to truly love God and live in a communion of love with the Holy Trinity, this love, if it is to be like God's love, must be freely given. The Creator **did not** create humanity to be ROBOTS who love God BY FORCE, whether they like it or not. No shotgun marriage.

Free Will was the Great Risk that God took in making mankind in His Image (with a free will which God also has). The risk was that man might use his free will to reject his vocation of theosis/deification and turn away from God.

**The Tree:** free will's test of love. To test Adam's love, God placed him in a Garden and gave him one simple command: Eat whatever you wish from any tree—including a certain tree called the "Tree of Life"—but **do not eat** from the "Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." There were many other good trees to eat from, and only one forbidden tree. Lots of good choices. Lots of right decisions to freely make. The odds were stacked in favor of love and obedience.

One simple command to obey and prove one's love. Christ later requested that same of His followers: "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

The Devil, who had by this time started his own rebellion against God as a fallen angel, in the form of a Serpent, entered the Garden and enticed and tempted Eve to disobey God and eat the forbidden fruit, on the grounds that if she ate the forbidden fruit she would become like God.

**B) The original Sin.** Eve listened to the voice of the Tempter and gave in to his twisted lies. This was the "original sin" – the first sin. Eve partook and also gave it to Adam to eat, and he partook. As a result, they **FELL** into a life of sin—they and their offspring after them: the entire human race. Having disobeyed God and having failed to love Him, they became slaves of their new master, the "god" of this world, the Devil.

As punishment, God barred them—for the time being—from the Garden. This was also a huge **ACT** of **MERCY** on the part of God. He did not want them to quickly eat of another tree—the "Tree of Life"—and so live forever in their sorry fallen state as sinners. So, the **LORD temporarily** doomed man to return to the dust from which he was taken, and God kept man's soul in the "land of the dead" (Hades/Sheol) until help would come in the Person of Jesus Christ the Savior, Who would raise all to a new life.

**C) The FALL** was more than a simple breaking of a command, a one-time disobedience: It had **cosmic effects**: The entire human race was scarred by the act, which has kept growing. Adam and Eve's children invented murder and polygamy, and war and crimes, and so on. The Fall began an avalanche of sin, a snowball of ever-worsening sin.

Orthodoxy believes that the **effects** of the Fall—the marring of the Image of God in man, mortality, disease, corruption of spirit and body—are passed down through the human race—but **not the guilt** of Adam and Eve. We are not guilty for Adam's sin. He is. We are guilty for our own sins.

Analogy: Humanity is like the heroin addict who gave birth to a child with birth defects and also born addicted to heroin. The child is scarred by the mother's act of sin, and because of its addiction, the child needs immediate medical attention in the neonatal detox unit of the hospital, yet the child is not guilty for the mother's sin.

St. John of Damascus, in his classic catechism, “An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith,” which has been the most famous Orthodox catechism for centuries, clearly states that the children of Adam only inherit the consequences of their first parents’ sinful decision: mortality and the ability of the passions to corrupt. There is NO mention of Adam’s guilt being passed down through sexual activity.

In Western Christianity, the term “the original sin” became a foundational theological misunderstanding known as “Original Sin”...as it was expanded to **include** the guilt of Adam. The concept is that all children of Adam and Eve are guilty of Adam’s thievery, at the moment of their conception, simply by being his offspring. This was NOT an early church concept, but came about later, as a result of a mistranslation of Romans 5:12, by St. Jerome, when he was translating the Greek New Testament into Latin, creating the Latin Vulgate version in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century. He mistakenly substituted the words “in quo” (“in whom, in which”) for the Greek words “for that”/“because”. The result changed the entire understanding of the verse for all Latin Bible readers, affecting theology in the West for the rest of time.

Romans 5:12 **WRONG TRANSLATION**: “Wherefore, as by one man [*Adam*] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, IN WHOM (or, IN WHICH) all have sinned”

It sounds like everybody has **already** sinned IN ADAM, since he is the obvious subject of the sentence.

Romans 5:12 **RIGHT TRANSLATION**: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”

Here death spreads, and because of death, all men sin. We fear death. Thus, we sin. And thereby we become guilty of our OWN sins.

Hebrews 2:14-15 “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them **who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**”

Fear of death makes us all slaves of the Devil, and subject to bondage.

The FALL is a **multi-faceted and complicated crash**. It was not simply an act of disobedience.

- 1) “Man’s act was ultimately a refusal to love.” (The Faith, pg.79)  
If Adam really loved God, he would have obeyed God’s commandment.
- 2) So, therefore, the FALL is really a rebellion against love.

- 3) It is rebellion against the God of Love.
- 4) It is refusal to commune with God. Love is by nature personal. Love communes and unites one with others—so therefore, a refusal to love is a refusal to enter into communion with the God of love Who had created him.
- 5) The FALL turned the world into the object of man's desires, instead of being an object of communion uniting God and man. The whole world was supposed to be used by man as a sacrament of communion with God. (i.e. Food was to be received as if it were God's divine love made edible. When one receives the food with thanks and offers back that gratitude in prayer to God for the food which He gave him, this lunch thereby becomes one's vehicle in which to draw closer to God.)

God, since He is not selfish, wishes to share all that He is by Nature with mankind through gifts of Grace. This sharing of His Divine Energies in a sweet communion of love will bless man—it will **deify** him—it will unite him with God (**theosis**); it will make him more like God.

All of creation—except for the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—was to be used by God and man as offering and thanksgiving to unite God and man.

Remember: **man's purpose** for which he was created: **was to become like God**.

This transfiguration is possible only through communion with God.

Note: there was only one Tree whose fruit was **not** blessed by God and **not** given as a sacrament for union with God.

Rather, if you would eat of it, you would **die**.

The Serpent lied to Eve and told her that she would not die, but would become like God, knowing good from evil. There are several lies here.

**First lie:** “You will not surely die.”

**Result:** By rebelling against love, mankind **unplugged** from God Who is the source of love and light and life. Thus, Adam and Eve became spiritually “dead” (rather, they became “deadened” but not totally depraved). They lost their full-body halos, their glory, their garments of light, and thus for the first time they saw that they were naked. So, by unplugging from God and by trying to deify themselves WITHOUT God's help, they were fooled. They spiritually died. And then, being cut off from God Who was their source of life, their earthly bodies began to grow old and eventually physically died. And then, their souls, having parted from their bodies in death, were put into the underworld prison—Sheol, Hades—where they continued to exist, but they were NOT in Heaven, NOT in the Kingdom of God. Being guilty, they no right to exit Hades. Being weak slaves of the Devil, they had not enough power to “bind the strong man”—to conquer the Devil and to run out of Hades into Heaven. They were in a real predicament.

**Second lie:** “Your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

**Result:** But this is a very sneaky lie too—since God does not know evil by an experience of sin. God does not know sin in the same way that a thief (or the Devil) knows sin. The thief knows sin by doing it...as a sinner. God only knows sin “academically”, as the All-knowing Judge Who is sinless.

6) So Adam and Eve were tricked into an empty “self-help” agenda. They reached for the fruit in an effort to better themselves by themselves, without the help of God. They tried to deify themselves and become like God without God. This was all in vain. Jesus taught that “Without Me, you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Example: like the vacuum cleaner trying to operate without the help of electricity, trying to plug itself into itself instead of into the wall.

Man tried to become like God without God! Man tried to find life in himself and in his own actions. Isn't this what the world perpetually is still doing? Think of the efforts of so-called “progress”.

We used to hear slogans such as “Better living through chemistry”, but now the world is polluted by all the chemicals and plastics that our factories have produced.

Worse yet, think of the contemporary concepts of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Transhumanism, or Humanity+, which are trying to merge humans and computers in an effort to create a form of man-made eternal “life”...to try to “evolve” humanity into a “higher” life form...without the help of God.

Or, think of the various economic and political attempts to create earthly utopias in which capitalistic greed has been replaced with Marxist communist collective socially-engineered “brotherhood” and “love”. Millions and millions have gone to the concentration camps, the Gulag, and their early deaths as a result of this failed attempt to force humans to “love” one another. You simply **cannot** fix the human race without God. You need to address the deeper spiritual issues, which are the passions of sin in the heart of man, fear of death, and slavery to the Devil, and idolatry of the world.

7) Adam and Even loved the world—and its fruits--for itself. They began to live life “as an end in itself”, no longer as a means of communion with God. Life without God began. **Idolatry** and worship of the creature **replaced** true love for the Creator.

Instead of eating the fruits of the Garden as objects of communion and union with blessing and thanksgiving (an eating which draws you closer in love to your Creator Who gave you the fruit), Adam and Eve started loving the world and its fruits as ends in themselves, with no reference to God. Creation for them stopped being an object of communion with God, and became objects to be selfishly consumed. Creation became the object of our selfish desires.

(example: sexual union for the sake of love was turned into lust for sake of myself;  
“I love you” became “I love me and want your body.”)

Secular materialism and humanism still today look at the world and at man without even thinking about the Creator. It is loving the world for the sake of the world and myself.

**Art for the sake of art** vs art as iconography which draws us to God.

**Music for the sake of music** vs music sung for the glory of God.

8) Man’s simple stealing of the forbidden fruit was **cosmic**: it was a big “No, thanks” to God. It was “man’s collective act of **suicide**.” Man has cut God out of the picture and turned the world into a closed circuit.

9) Man tried to find life—not in God, Who is the only existing Source of Life—but in himself, in his actions, in the world, but not in God.

10) The FALL is a huge participation in the Devil’s pride. God and God’s will gets replaced with ME and MY will. (I am my new “god”. I decide reality. I make the rules.)

11) But outside of God—the only Source of Life—is only death. So the RESULT of man’s FALL is death.

Analogy: The auto was designed to run on gasoline. When a teenage driver insists on pouring kerosene in the gas tank and gas into the radiator, the car has no choice. It will break down. When humanity tries to run on its own—without God, but on its own ideas, energy and steam—it will break down.

12) Without God’s Divine Energies in us, humanity will not live very long, and enters the realm of death. At the FALL, Adam and Eve entered spiritual death. Robes of glory and light were lost. No more halos. The biological death followed thereafter.

13) The natural order inside man was turned upside down. God designed man that His Holy Spirit should help our spirit. Our spirit was to inform our mind, which in turn was to control our bodies.

By following their stomach’s desires, Adam and Eve **began the reversal** of God’s design. Now, bodily desires began to dictate to the mind (forgetting God’s command) and overthrew the reign of the spirit. Normal human God-given desires were transformed into evil passions that dominate mankind. (i.e. love became lust)

14) A result of the FALL was **alienation**—from God and from other men. Man became an isolated, self-centered ego, enslaved to its passions, who now views others, not as persons to relate to in love, but as **objects** to be used, abused, or as threat to one’s own self-advancement. Others become one’s personal hell. Self-centeredness, greed, bitterness, hatred reign.

15) Man is spiritually blinded by the Fall. He no longer sees God in the world. He sees only the world **as an end in itself**. The meaning of life—i.e. deification and theosis—are **lost**.

16) Even the physical created order of nature is affected, and bears the marks of man's cosmic Fall away from God. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." (Romans 8:22)

All this Fall is **reversed** by the coming of Jesus Christ, the Savior, the New Adam.