

# Doctrine of Human Behavior and Consequence

## Lesson 3 – The Fall and Sin

Genesis 1:26-27 – Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

The Hebrew term for *image*, תְּצַלֵּם (tselem), means representation, physical likeness, and/or functional role. Humans are made in His likeness, and we are created to behave in harmony with God's rule.

### I. The Reality of the Fall and Its Results Upon All Creation

Humanity began with a clear design: to represent God on earth by ruling, subduing, cultivating, and keeping creation in an orderly, righteous way that mirrored the character of the Creator. That design was shattered by a single act of disobedience.

The account in Genesis 3 is straightforward. The serpent questioned God's word and goodness. Eve listened, took from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, ate, and gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. In that moment, everything changed.

Genesis 3:6-7 – 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 desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

The immediate results were shame, fear, and hiding. When God confronted them, Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, and responsibility dissolved into deflection. God then pronounced specific consequences.

Genesis 3:16-19 – To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.” Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”

These pronouncements touch every sphere of human existence. Childbearing now involves pain. Marriage relationships shift toward struggle and imbalance. Work becomes toil against a resistant ground. Death enters as the final reality: “in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17) begins to unfold physically and spiritually.

Paul summarizes the scope in Romans 5:12 – Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

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The consequences were not limited to Adam and Eve. The entire created order came under the weight of futility.

Romans 8:20-21 – For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

The ideal human behavior of Genesis 1 and 2—ruling with dignity, cultivating with joy, keeping with care—has been replaced by the opposite; self-interest, blame, resistance to authority, and disorder now mark human conduct. What was once harmony between God, man, woman, and creation has fractured into struggle.

### **II. The Propensity to Sin and Rebel as a Human Trait**

From that point forward, every descendant of Adam carries a strong inclination toward rebellion against God. The heart no longer naturally seeks to reflect His rule; it turns inward.

Jeremiah 17:9 – “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?”

This propensity shows up in every area of life: in obvious wrongdoing, in subtle self-justification, in religious efforts that bypass God's requirements.

Here is where we need to be very careful and clear. People who do not know God can still do things that are humanly good. They can be kind to their neighbors, honest in business, generous to the poor, loving to their families, and even try to live morally upright lives. Scripture never says that fallen humans lose all capacity for moral action or civic righteousness. Many unbelievers perform acts of compassion and integrity that put some believers to shame.

Yet none of these actions, no matter how commendable on a human level, can please God or make a person acceptable in His sight.

Hebrews 11:6 – And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.

Paul explains the deeper issue: the mind oriented toward self-rule apart from God is actively hostile to Him.

Romans 8:7-8 – because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Even the best human efforts are evaluated differently in God's presence.

Isaiah 64:6 – For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

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The Greek term for *hostile* in Romans 8:7 is ἐχθρα (echthra), meaning active enmity. The relationship is broken at the root. No amount of outward goodness repairs that breach because the mind remains oriented away from God and toward self.

Early examples illustrate the point. Cain brought an offering, but he did not believe God in what was acceptable, and God did not accept it (Genesis 4:3-5). The rich young ruler kept commandments outwardly but walked away sorrowful when challenged in what he really loved (Mark 10:17-22). Good behavior is real, but it is not the same as righteousness before God.

Romans 3:10-12 – as it is written, “THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE; THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD; ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

The text is not saying no one ever does anything kind or helpful. It is saying that no one meets God's standard of righteousness.

### III. The Results of Sin and Rebellion

The results of sin and rebellion are both immediate and ongoing, touching every aspect of our lives. Scripture presents them in two broad categories that help us understand the seriousness of turning away from God's design.

First, sin brings death and judgment before a holy God. This is not merely a future event but a present reality that began the moment disobedience occurred.

Genesis 2:17 had warned, “but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” The Hebrew phrase *in the day* (b'yom) emphasizes certainty, and the repeated verb form “dying you shall die” (mot tamut) points to a process that begins immediately and culminates in full separation.

Paul explains how this unfolds across humanity:

Romans 5:12, 6:23 – Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This death is multifaceted: spiritual separation from God now, physical death as the body returns to dust, and ultimately, eternal judgment for those who were never reconciled to God. The judgment of God is certain, righteous, and impartial. While we will examine the Law's role in revealing sin and the patriarchal examples of consequence in greater detail in the next lessons, the foundation is laid here: sin earns wages, and those wages are death.

Second, sinful behavior produces natural consequences that flow logically from living contrary to God's created order. These are not the direct divine pronouncements of Genesis 3

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(pain in childbirth, cursed ground, sweat and toil, return to dust), which were specific judgments God imposed as part of the curse. Rather, these natural outcomes are the predictable results of human choices in a fallen world, often described in wisdom literature and throughout the rest of Scripture.

When a person lies, cheats, or acts deceitfully, trust erodes, relationships fracture, and opportunities dry up. Scripture repeatedly shows this pattern.

Proverbs 11:3, 22:8 – The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the perversity of the treacherous will destroy them.... He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, And the rod of his fury will perish.

These are not promises of instant lightning from heaven but of a natural fallout: a reputation ruined, partnerships broken, and isolation that follows deceit. The same holds for unfaithfulness in marriage or family. Betrayal destroys confidence, severs bonds, and often leaves lasting relational wreckage.

Proverbs 6:32-33 – The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; He who would destroy himself does it. Wounds and disgrace he will find, And his reproach will not be blotted out.

The wounds and disgrace here are not only divine judgment but the natural scars that follow broken trust. Ecclesiastes observes the same reality on a broader scale: the pursuit of selfish gain, oppression, and injustice leads to emptiness, instability, and loss.

Ecclesiastes 4:1 – Then I looked again at all the acts of oppression which were being done under the sun. And behold I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors was power, but they had no comforter.

The text does not say God immediately strikes the oppressor, but the natural consequence is a world of tears, isolation, and futility for everyone involved.

These natural consequences are instructive. They reveal that God's moral order is woven into the fabric of reality. When we violate it, things do not hold together the way they were designed to. Families splinter. Communities weaken. Individuals reap what they sow in the here and now.

Galatians 6:7-8 – Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Paul writes this to believers, but the principle applies broadly: actions have consequences that correspond to their nature. Sow selfishness, reap corruption. Sow deceit, reap distrust. Sow unfaithfulness, reap brokenness.

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These natural outcomes do not replace God's righteous judgment; they operate alongside it. They serve as daily reminders that rebellion against the Creator disrupts life itself.

Yet even here God has not abandoned His creation. In the midst of judgment and consequence, He spoke a promise of hope.

Genesis 3:15 – And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.

That promised seed is ultimately Christ, the perfect image-bearer who would defeat sin and death and begin the process of restoring humanity to reflect God's rule once again.

### **Conclusion**

The fall explains why human behavior so often contradicts God's original design. We were made to rule with harmony, righteousness, and self-sacrificial care. Now we default to self-interest, resistance, and disorder. Good deeds, while valuable on a human level, cannot cure the root problem because they flow from a heart that does not seek God.

Guilt remains universal. Consequences remain constant. But grace has entered the picture. For those in Christ, the curse is removed, but sin and rebellion will still have natural consequences as well as missed opportunities.

Our behavior in this fallen world should increasingly reflect what we were created to be, not because we must perform to be accepted, but because we have been accepted by grace. The coming lessons will show how this plays out in history and how human behavior has both divine and natural consequences.