

Adam and the Fall – Part 1

Note: This is included in the discussion of Westboro and Calvinist doctrine, as it directly impacts Calvinist/Reformed theology and understanding of the fall of man and the sovereignty of God.

Note – Update: In this article, the tenses shift between past and present as there are some parts that are written as if we are third party observers watching the events of creation; other elements are present tense as they continue unto this day. Where it is possible to shift to the more commonly used (and understood) past tense, I have.

I was asked by a Calvinist about a point in my Statement of Faith that is as follows:

VII. Of the Fall of Man

I believe that man was created in innocence under the law of his Maker. That the LORD God created man in a righteous state. That Adam's righteousness was finite, and thus required the LORD's guidance. However, Adam voluntarily chose to transgress the command of God, and in so doing, fell from his sinless and happy state.

And then the questions were asked:

1) Where in scripture does it say Adam's righteousness was finite?

2) What do you mean by finite righteousness?

3) In order for Adam to voluntarily chose to sin against God, he would need to have the desire to do so. If Adam was born without the desire to sin (sin nature), where did this desire to sin come from?

Now, I thought that it was obvious what I stated, but there again, I stated it and to me it had better be obvious. However, I am not someone coming along and reading it, perhaps for the first time, and having some difficulty grasping the reasons behind it. Thus, the burden is mine to explain what I mean, and answer the questions as they are put. The good thing about this is that it does give a good opportunity to address the fall of man and the nature of the LORD God. It does also bear quite heavily on the sovereignty of God, and what that sovereignty actually consists of.

In beginning, we must look at two verses from Genesis, chapter one, and what they expressly state:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.
(*Genesis 1:26-28*)

And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.
(*Genesis 1:31*)

One of the first things to note is the fact that God made man in His image, and that man was given dominion over the earth. Hence, man is made a prince and the pinnacle of God's creation.

The second thing of note is verse 31, and what it states about man. Man is part of "every thing that he had made" and thus "behold, it was very good." Plainly this means that man was

righteous in his creation – in every aspect of his existence. Upon this, we can categorically state that Adam possessed a “finite righteousness.” To break it down, we can give the following reasons for stating Adam possessed a “finite righteousness.”

Adam is finite for the following reasons:

- Adam was created within an environment that is manifestly finite.
- In the physical, Adam’s limitations are defined by the physical creation within which he exists.
- In the spiritual, because Adam was created a living soul, and that by another, the LORD God.
- Adam is limited by his knowledge. Adam does not know the difference between good and evil, and does not know evil.
- Adam is limited in his ability to act. Adam can only act to the extent of his physical ability.

Adam is righteous for the following reasons:

- Adam was created “very good,” meaning that the condition of Adam before God, as the LORD testifies, is “very good” or righteous.
- Adam can only become unrighteous under one specific condition: disobedience to the single command of God.
- Adam names all the animals, and the LORD God does not disagree, nor chide in any way. In fact, Adam, being given dominion, was given the choice of what he would name all the animals, and did so.
- The LORD actively fellowships with Adam.

By all the above, we can state that Adam is both finite, and righteous. Moreover, we can see that Adam’s righteousness extends to the limit of his knowledge, which knowledge does not extend to knowing the difference between good and evil. This we find clear evidence for in the following passage:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (*Genesis 2:16-17*)

One of the things that is often overlooked in the above passage, that we must be careful about, is the naming of the tree. It is not, as is often referred to, the tree of good and evil, but the tree of *the knowledge of good and evil*. Hence, to eat the fruit of it, does not bring about evil, other than the direct disobedience to God, but brings about an understanding of what constitutes good, and what constitutes evil. Moreover, it is not an analytical kind of understanding. Rather, it is knowing, in which we instinctively recognize when something is good, and some other thing is evil. It is the ability to instantly distinguish the difference between the two.

In returning to the thought at hand, we can see that Adam was created in the image of God, and was given dominion over a realm of existence. This realm of existence was finite, and Adam had full control to operate in the realm as he saw fit, saving he was restricted from one activity only, and that only by instruction or commandment. We find evidence of this authority in the passage that follows:

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. (*Genesis 2:19-20*)

Here now we intersect the sovereignty of God, and what that sovereignty means in relation to Adam and his authority.

If we remember, Adam is made in the image of God. What this means are there are certain attributes that Adam has, which are ((There are those who will dispute the verb tenses here. However, they need to understand that the rules of English, (and most other languages) are not adequate to explain things that are timeless and continue until this day. Much of Adam's attributes that are attributes the LORD has, continue until this day, both in Adam in eternity, and in all his children here on earth. Hence, I am going to "break the rules" in explaining this. After all, even though Adam "was" made in the image of God, Adam still "is" made in the image of God, as Adam still exists. Kindly examine it from the LORD's perspective, before you jump to conclusions.)) very much in keeping with the attributes of God. This is not to say that Adam is a god. Rather, it is to say that some things intrinsic to Adam as he is created, are attributes the LORD God Himself has. One of those attributes is the fact that Adam is a living soul:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (*Genesis 2:7*)

This attribute also belongs to the LORD:

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. (*Isaiah 1:11-14*)

And again:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. (*Isaiah 42:1-3*)

And yet again:

Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? (*Jeremiah 5:9*)

These all plainly show that the LORD God has a soul, and that in making man, he chose to make man with a soul. In making man in His image, the LORD also gave man the ability to choose. We can see this plainly in the command given to Adam:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (*Genesis 2:16-17*)

Here, as we examine this passage again, we see that Adam must have had the ability to choose, and this ability to choose was freely given him by the LORD God. In placing the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden, and then instructing Adam in what his relationship to the tree ought to be, and the consequences of not heeding the instruction to avoid the tree, the LORD God clearly gave Adam the choice, and expressed His will toward Adam and Adam's conduct regarding the gaining of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, the decisions regarding Adam's future were left entirely up to Adam.

Now, it is essential to understand some other points concerning Adam's existence and how he is ((Again, I make the point: the word "is" is entirely appropriate here as Adam,

whithersoever he is, is still governed by the sovereignty of God, even if he is in Hell. No one ever leaves the LORD God's dominion. Hence, "was" can never be used in relation to the sovereignty of God. To do so is every bit as egregious an error as saying "Jesus Christ was," in relation to Christ's existence. Jesus Christ is, as He is the I AM.)) governed by the sovereignty of God. It is held by those who believe Calvinist/Reformed theology that the LORD God willed that Adam should fall. ((For what purpose they never say, nor can they say what Adam's fall accomplishes for the LORD God. In fact, Calvin in his Commentary on Genesis completely skips over this question and avoids it. Neither does Calvin adequately explain the reason for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.)) However, that flies in the face of the plain testimony of the LORD God Himself, who commanded and instructed that this tree was off-limits, and to touch it is to die. To believe that God previously willed that Adam should fall, albeit for some unknown reason (a mystery of God), and then plainly instruct him that he should not transgress and fall, is to believe a contradiction that is incomprehensible, verging on insanity.

Hence, to understand the relationship of Adam's ability to choose to the sovereignty of God, we must understand the context of Adam's existence and the meaning of "free will." As has been described, Adam's existence is within a finite creation, and Adam's understanding is itself finite (necessarily so, since Adam could not yet distinguish between good and evil) we may say that Adam exists within a set of bounds, or parameters which, if we are so inclined, we can readily describe as a "box." This "box" has a Creator, who is the LORD God, and he placed Adam within it, and gave Adam dominion of a significant portion of it (the earth and all creatures therein). Within this "box" it is plainly apparent that Adam could do whatsoever he pleased, so long as he did nothing to violate the condition of the "box," which was to not partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The rule here, then, was that violation of the single rule brought

about a condition known as “death,” which at this point was yet unspecified as to what that consisted of.

So then, Adam before the fall did have a free will that was consistent with Adam’s existence. Adam could act in whatsoever fashion he desired, could think whatsoever he wished to think, and was entirely free to do so. In fact, Adam could even partake of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, so long as he was willing to bear the consequence, which was death, a yet unspecified condition.

This, in principle, is no different than the free will the LORD God exercises. How so, one may ask? It is indeed legitimate to ask, but easily understandable if we understand that all things act in accordance with their nature. It is undisputable in Scripture that the LORD God is holy and righteous in and of Himself. This is so plain that for the sake of space, I will only cite two examples:

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (*Psalms 45:6-7*)

. . . In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; . . . (*Titus 1:2*)

Thus, the LORD God acts in accordance with His nature – He can only do that which is righteous and holy. Therefore, free will is defined by either the nature, or the environment of the individual exercising that will. We cannot, nor are we free to define free will in absolute terms. To do so creates several problems, not the least of which is a major impact on doctrine. In explaining, allow me to borrow from a letter I wrote to a brother in Christ some time ago. In this letter, I discussed why there exists no such thing as absolute free will, but that all actions of the will are conditional, based upon the nature and/or environment of the individual.

Why? Because there is no such thing as absolute free will. Absolute free will is defined as being able to do anything at all. Thus for God to have free will, He could do both righteously and wickedly and continuously pick and choose whichever He wanted to do. This cannot be as God is bound by His nature to do only righteously. Moreover, since righteousness is an absolute quality, as soon as God did unrighteously, He would no longer be righteous. Free will then, can only be defined in the context of the existence of the being.

Therefore, we find that before the fall, Adam had a free will which was granted him by the LORD God to do whatsoever he pleased, even to partake of that which is forbidden, only he (Adam) must bear the full consequences of his actions. At no time in the exercise of his free will can Adam ever leave the confines of his existence (the "box"). Adam cannot go beyond the parameters of his existence, as it is not granted to him to do that, and he has no inherent ability to do so. Moreover, since the LORD God created the confines of Adam's existence (the "box"), the LORD retains sovereignty over the "box," and holds all within the "box" accountable. As the LORD plainly told Adam he was free to act and think within his existence, at no time do we find that the LORD loses control of the "box" or of events in the "box."

Now, it is not reasonable for the LORD God to then predetermine for Adam to make the choice to fall, as all the LORD has to do is hold Adam accountable for the violation of the instruction given. This the LORD God has stated in His word repeatedly:

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:14)

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the

books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. (*Revelation 20:12-13*)

According to the above two passages, the sovereignty of God is not affected at all by the free will of Adam, nor could it be, as that free will was granted by the LORD God Himself. So then, upon these things we stand at this point:

- 1. Adam was formed in the image of God, with certain attributes and characteristics that reflect the glory of God.*
- 2. Adam is given dominion over all the earth, and all things on the earth.*
- 3. Adam is righteous within the parameters of his existence (the "box").*

To be continued . . .
