

OF THE FIRST SIN IN PARTICULAR.

GEN. iii. 6, 7.—*And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

IN these words we are distinctly informed how the covenant of works was broken, and our first parents stripped of their primitive innocence and integrity. Eve seduced by the devil, first ate of the forbidden fruit, and Adam followed her example. The act being completed by both, they immediately discovered, to their shame and dishonour, the miserable state they were reduced to.

The words sufficiently found the following doctrine.

Doctr. 'Our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created, by eating the forbidden fruit.'

I have already shewn why the forbidden tree was called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as also of what use it was in the covenant of works. It remains that we shew,

I. How the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell.

II. Why this fruit was forbidden.

III. The aggravations of it.

IV. Deduce some inferences.

I. I am to shew how the eating of the forbidden fruit was the first sin of our first parents, by which they fell. It is not to be thought, that they were wholly innocent till they had the forbidden fruit in their mouths; for their coveting it in their hearts behoved of necessity to go before that; but the eating of it was that whereby their sin and apostacy from their Creator was completed. The first step of their sin seems then to be doubting and unbelief of the threatening, Gen. iii. 4, 6. Their faith as to the truth of the threatening being first foundered, their heart plied to the temptation; and then succeeded a lust after the forbidden fruit; and then the sin was completed by their actually eating it, as in the words of the text.

Satan, the old serpent, very artfully laid his train for enticing our first parents to eat this forbidden fruit. For he attacked the woman when alone, at a distance from her husband; he endeavoured to make her doubt of the truth of the divine threatening;

he presented the fatal object, as fruit pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise: he pretended a higher regard for them than their sovereign Creator, who, he tacitly insinuated, grudged their happiness: and he used means to persuade them, that they should be like God, in the vast extent of their knowledge, upon their eating the delectable morsel. Thus the eyes of their mind were first blemished by a mist from hell; which being admitted, gradually darkened their understanding, so that first doubting, and then disbelief of the threatening, ensued. Their will was easily conquered to a compliance with the temptation; then a corrupt affection to the tree seized them, discovering itself in a lustful looking at it: then the hand took it, and the mouth ate it, and the fatal morsel was swallowed.

II. I am next to shew why this fruit was forbidden.

1. It was not because God grudged the happiness of our first parents, as the devil blasphemously alleged, whom the event proved a liar, John viii. 44. Nor yet,

2. Because there was any evil in the fruit itself; for that could not be; for we are told, Gen. i. ult. that, at the close of the creation *every thing was very good*. This fruit was not forbidden because it was evil, but it was evil because it was forbidden. It was forbidden for the trial of man's obedience. Not that God knew not what was in man, and what he would be, but to discover the creature's weakness to himself without God, and that he might thence take occasion of advancing his own glory impaired by the sin of man, in a more illustrious manner than if innocent Adam had continued in his primitive state. But it may be asked, Why did God make choice of this for the trial of man? I answer, God did so most reasonably. For,

(1.) This being a thing in itself indifferent, was most meet for the trial of his obedience. For hereby his obedience was to turn upon the precise point of the will of God, which would have been the plainest evidence of obedience. Had it been to love God or his neighbour, nature itself taught him to do so, and by the natural make of his soul he was inclined to this. What trial would that have been to a man newly created, and loaded with benefits from God, not to take another God, worship images, or take his name in vain, when he saw all to be God's creatures or servants; to keep the sabbath, which was to return once a-week only? He had no father or mother to honour, none to kill but her that was his own flesh, none to commit adultery with, none to steal from, none to bear false witness against, none to covet their goods. Thus the prohibition of a thing in itself indifferent was a proper test, and the only proper test for the trial of man.

(2.) Thus man's obedience or disobedience would be most clear and conspicuous, being in an external thing whereof his very senses might be judge; which could not be in the internal acts of obedience.

(3.) This was most proper for asserting the sovereign dominion of God, who had set him down in a beautiful paradise, and made him lord of the world. Was it not very reasonable that God should keep one single tree from him, as a testimony of his holding God as his great Landlord?

(4.) This was most useful and necessary to man, as a memorandum of the state wherein he was created. For man was created with a free will to good, whereof the tree of life was an evidence: but also to evil, whereof the tree of knowledge of good and evil was an evidence. So that in effect it was a continual watchword to him, and a beacon set up before him to beware of dashing on the rock of sin.

(5.) It was a great mercy to man, in that, beside the natural make of his soul, which was turned towards God as his chief happiness and end, he had this prohibition set to keep it in that posture. For as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hand, Exod. xvii. 12, so man had the fabric of his body looking upward, and this fair tree forbidden him, to teach him that his happiness lay not in the creatures, but in God. So that this tree being forbidden was a sign of emptiness hung before the creature's door, with that inscription, Here is not your rest; the creature's hand pointing man away from themselves to God, as the alone fountain of happiness.

(6.) *Lastly*, This was a compend of the whole law of God, wherein all was summarily comprehended, viz. love to God, and his neighbour, as will afterwards be made appear.

III. I come now to consider the evil of this first sin. Some may be ready to say, Was not the eating of the forbidden fruit a little sin? So it appears indeed in the sight of blind man, whose eye being put out with it, sees not the great majesty of God, and the horrid evil of the action. But indeed it was more horrible if ye consider,

1. The aggravations of it.
2. The nature of it.
3. The effects of it.

First, Let us view the aggravations of this first sin. Consider,

1. The person who did it. I may say it was not a sinner that sinned, but an innocent person, free from all inclination to evil; one whom God made able to stand if he would, and endued with the image of God, without any mixture of sinful ignorance, perverseness of will, or irregularity of affections. No wonder to see a man with

a poor stock soon broken: but that a man who had such a large stock should play the bankrupt, was horrid indeed.

2. What was the thing for which he broke the command. Achan had a wedge of gold to tempt him, and Judas thirty pieces of silver to entice his covetous disposition. But what was the enticing object in Adam's case? The fruit of a tree: a small thing indeed: but the smaller the thing was, the more inexcusable the sinner, whom Satan could draw after him by so slender a thread. What need had he of that, when God had given him abundance of other fruit? But, with David, Adam spares his own flock, and takes his neighbour's one lamb.

3. The persons wronged by this sin. He sinned against God himself, to whom he owed the strictest obedience; against his soul and body, upon which he brought wrath and a curse; against all his posterity, who were then in his loins, upon whom his sin has entailed a scene of evils, under which the human race will groan to the end of time. Never did one sin strike against so many at once.

4. The time of this transgression. Man was scarcely well come out of the hand of his Creator, till he lifted up his heel against him. He stood very short while, till he turned giddy with ambition, and fell into disgrace. It is thought probable, he fell the same day he was created; and such an early revolt from his allegiance was a very high aggravation of his sin.

5. The place where the crime was committed. In paradise, where every plant and flower were proclaiming the glory of God, and where he wanted nothing that was necessary for him. In the presence-chamber, as it were, he struck at his Sovereign Lord and King. So his offence was aggravated like the murder of Zacharias, whom the Jews slew between the temple and the altar, Matt. xxiii. 35.

Secondly, The nature of this sin. It was not one single sin, but a complication of all evils, a violation of the whole law of God, and a total apostacy from him in heart, lip, and life.* This was a sin whereby at one touch both the natural and positive law was trampled under foot; yea, by which all the ten commandments were struck at, at once.

1. Did they not chuse new gods: when, by eating this fruit, they made their belly their god; self their god; nay the devil their god, when they conspired with him against God, being filled with pride and ambition as he to be like God; when they believed the

* A more particular view of the ingredients in the first sin may be seen in the author's *View of the Covenant of Works*, p. 80, 81. published in 1772.

devil and mistrusted God, and shook off the yoke of his dominion, turning rebels to him, and being most unthankful for the divine goodness expressed towards them? Rebel-man set up a trinity, (1.) Of his belly, for sensuality, (2.) Of himself, by ambition; and, (3.) Of the devil, by believing him, and disbelieving his Creator.

2. Though man at first received, yet he did not observe that great ordinance of God about the forbidden fruit. He contemned that ordinance which God had most plainly appointed, and would needs carve out to himself how he would serve the Lord.

He took the name of the Lord his God in vain, despising his attributes, whereby he makes himself known, his justice, truth, power, &c. profaning God's ordinance, that sacramental tree; abusing his word, by not giving credit to it; and abusing his works, that creature which he should not have touched; and violently misconstruing the work of providence, as if God, by that act of forbidding them that tree, had minded to keep them from happiness. And therefore though there was no man to punish them, God suffered them not to escape his righteous judgment.

4. He was so far from remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy, that he put himself out of all case for serving God ere it came, by this means. He kept not that state of rest wherein God had placed him.

5. Adam honoured not his Father in heaven. Both our first parents minded not their relative duties. Eve forgets herself, and acts without advice of her husband, to the ruin of both; and Adam, instead of admonishing her to repent, yields to the temptation too, and so confirms her in her wickedness. They forgot all duty to their posterity. Therefore their days were not long in the land which the Lord their God gave them.

6. He was the greatest murderer that ever lived. By this act he was a child-murderer, cutting the throats of all his posterity; and he was a self-murderer too.

7. Our first parents were fain to cover their nakedness with fig-leaves, which their luxury and sensuality had brought them too.

8. Adam committed theft; and was but a thief and a robber in taking that which was not his own, against the will of the great Owner. He was the Achan in the camp.

9. He bare false witness against the Lord, when he ate of the forbidden fruit. It was an avouching, that God's word was not to be believed, that the Lord dealt hardly and scrimpily with him, and grudged his happiness.

10. He was discontented with that happy state wherein God had placed him. He was not content with his lot, and therefore, like

another king of Babylon, he coveted an evil covetousness to his house; which ruined both himself and them.

Thirdly, Consider the effects of this first sin.

1. God was robbed of his glory, that he should have had from the creature's active obedience. He was made and well qualified for glorifying his Creator; but breaking covenant with God, and falling under the curse of the law, he was quite indisposed for that work. He could aim no more at this mark which God set before him.

2. God's image was defaced; the King of Heaven's picture was rent in pieces. What a huge offence would it be to come into a workman's shop, and with one touch dash in pieces a curious piece of work that he had made? Yet thus offensively did Adam behave, spurning at the image of God, and quite defacing it from his soul.

3. Adam and all his posterity were ruined by this fatal transgression. It opened the sluice to all that flood of miseries that has overspread the face of the earth. At this gate sin and death entered into the world, where they will reign till time shall be no more. God is just and holy; and if the first sin had not deserved this punishment, it would not have been inflicted with such a mark of indignation.

I shall conclude with a few inferences.

1. Say not when ye are tempted, it is but a little sin and therefore ye may act it. Consider, that which in the commission is but as the little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, when God comes to judgment, or conscience gets up, will cover the face of the heavens. Little do ye know what a small temptation may be big with. A man may drown in a little rivulet as well as in the deep sea.

2. Then God's will is a sufficient bar to hold us back from any thing if we would be safe. And therefore let us know, that where there is no more to be a hedge to us but the bare command of God, if we leap over it, a serpent will bite us. Ah! how few know what it is to be restrained by a bare command of God! Ah! the generality leap over the hedge of God's will and law, and live as if their were no restraint upon them from the God of heaven, who will severely punish all transgressions of his law.

3. Beware of the pleasure of your senses, and the pride of life. The lust of the eye and the lust of the flesh ruined the world at first, and do so still. The devil shoots his darts by the eye into the soul, which is weaker now than it was in the primitive state, and more liable to deception. Therefore watch your eyes and ears. Have a care of sensuality. Eating ruined Adam and Eve; and

still ruins many, who eat not for God or his glory, but to satisfy their sensual appetite, as they did.

4. *Lastly*, O prize Christ, who to redeem lost man, did hang upon a tree, and drink the cup of wrath as the bitter fruits of sin, and was buried in a garden. The first Adam ate of the forbidden tree, and Christ hung on the cursed tree. Adam's preposterous love to his wife made him sin, and Christ's love to his spouse made him suffer. Our first parents pleased their sensual appetite with the taste of the pleasant fruit of the forbidden tree, and therefore Christ got vinegar mixed with gall to drink upon the cross-tree. Adam sinned in a garden, and in a garden was Christ buried. By eating the forbidden fruit, death came upon all men to condemnation; and by eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, life is brought to the soul. O then, sinners, flee unto the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath restored that which the first Adam took away; and ye shall be reinstated in all that happiness and favour with God which he forfeited by eating the forbidden fruit.

OF OUR FALL IN ADAM.

ROMANS V. 19.—*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

THIS text consists of two propositions. The first is, *By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.* Where consider,

1. Who that one man was. It was Adam. This is plain from ver. 14. and to no other can it agree.

2. What that disobedience of his was. It was his first sin, the eating of the forbidden fruit. This was that sin that first broke into the world, and opened the door to death, ver. 12. This was the transgression of Adam, ver. 14. *that offence* or fall, ver. 15. *the offence of one*, or, as the Greek will bear, *the one offence* 'tou henos paraptomati,' here called *disobedience*, for thereby he hearkened to the devil, not to God.

3. Whom it concerned; *many*. This is in effect the same with the *all* mentioned, ver. 14. But the alteration of the phrase is not without reason: for there is an exception here of the man Christ, of whom he speaks in the next clause. It reached many men, but not all simply; he, and he only, was excepted.

4. How it touched them; they were *made sinners* by it. Now, there are only two ways how men might be made sinners by the