

FTBC

GROWTH TRACKS


*Dr Peter Ng*

Welcome to Growth Tracks which is FBC's program designed to set the disciple on the firm foundation spiritual maturity.


*In 2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) Paul writes "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ".*

The key to growth in our spiritual lives is encountering the glory of God through the person of His Son who is His perfect image. The more our hearts are filled with the knowledge of Him the more our characters are moulded, the more our hearts are filled with His love and more our lives will be directed towards the purpose for which we were created....to glorify Him. Each chapter is designed to provide a progressive track to show the face of Christ through selected but key passages in the Bible laying down the bed rock foundations of faith that will form the basis for a life -long learning and growing in to the likeness of Christ. Prayerfully follow these chapters and His Spirit will propel you into a trajectory of robust growth and spiritual transformation. Learn how to read the bible by tackling whole passages of Scripture rather than piece meal verses. See how principles from the passages will be translated to everyday life. For those disciples going into the Gamma program these presentations will help bridge the gap between the Alpha Beta programs and the more in- depth Gamma discipleship program.

For those who prefer to listen and see the contents of this book you can go to our website at [www.fbc.com .my](http://www.fbc.com.my) and each chapter will be presented in a series of slides at the resources section of our site under the title "Growth Tracks"



MODULE 3



**THE FALL OF MAN - SIN**

In this study, we will be looking at the topic of sin by studying the third chapter of the Book of Genesis.

*Genesis 3:1-7 (ESV) 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So 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 to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths*

In Genesis chapter 3:

- There is a clear source of evil in the world. It is the serpent.
- We are not told where the serpent comes from.
- The serpent will subtly and directly challenges the man and woman's loyalty and love of God

Let's look at the passage a little bit closer.

*He said to the woman, "Did God actually say,*

Here you have Satan casting doubt on God's word, you shall not eat of any tree in the garden. Now this is the direct opposite. He casts God as a stingy God as if God had deprived Eve of any tree in the garden which is the direct opposite of what God had actually said.

*2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*

Here we have Eve accusing God of saying that she was not even supposed to touch it which is a gross exaggeration perhaps a subconscious betrayal of the fact that the woman is beginning to feel that God may not have had her best interest in mind by depriving her of this fruit. This becomes the most important fruit of all the entire garden, no other fruit is as important, may be God was a little harsh? Satan now senses a chink in her armor. She has shown weakness, so now emboldened he quickly exploits his weakness and jumps in with a direct contradiction of God.

*Genesis 3:4-5 (ESV) But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die.*

This is a bold faced direct attack on her fidelity to God.

*5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

Not satisfied in merely casting doubt upon God's care for her Satan presses on by dangling in front of her, the exciting prospect that if she strikes out on her own and disbelieves God she could in effect usurp His prerogative would be in effect be like God. She would be as independent as God, making up her own decisions knowing and determining what is good and what is evil. No longer would she be chaffing under the thumb of a God who for all his outward benevolence to her was actually keeping the best for Himself and depriving her and her mate Adam.

Here the woman is confronted with a decision. She either believes God and trusts God that He has the best interest of mind, or she gives in and she decides to believe Satan's lies and decide that maybe God doesn't have her best interest in mind. So therefore she needs to make her own independent decisions.

### **Now how does she makeup her mind, how does she makeup her decision?**

*Genesis 3:6 (ESV) So 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 to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.*

Her decision was made independent of what God had promised. She now abandons the idea that God could be trusted as the doubt Satan had sown in her heart had started to grow. She instead turned to her own sense of sight and smell, relied on her own sense of what was good for her in terms of food. She relied on what she saw over what God had said. That is always the beginning of sin when we rely on our own devices on what we can see or feel over the promise God gives. Finally, she based her decision on the fact that taking the fruit would make her wise like God. She instead of, God would now be able to call the shots and decide what was right and what was wrong in her life, she chose independence. In doing so she chose to not trust and have faith in God any more.

This is the anatomy of sin. This is how sin comes about. Sin always comes when you have a choice, to decide to obey God or to give in and doubt God and believe Satan. Satan provides temptations that are alternative truths and facts to us and how do we decide?. Her decision is based on three things:

1. That the food has the knowledge of good and evil and delight to the eyes and looked good to her in her opinion.
2. She has probably smelled it and thought this was good for food, her stomach was involved in this decision making process.
3. Lastly, her pride was involved because this was desired to make one wise, that she could make up her own mind and run her own life.

So therefore instead of relying upon God's word and God's promises, what she did in this looking at only these three factors, was that she adopts her own standard. She makes up her own mind based on the fact of what she can see, what she can feel and what she can desire to make herself wise. So she adopts her own standard and therefore she becomes her own God and this is the beginning of idolatry.

So the problem with sin is that it destroys the very purpose of man. Man is created in the image of God, we are created to relate to God, to worship and love Him in return. We are created to resemble Him, being made in His image we are to worship him and in worshiping Him we become like him in our own character and actions. We are created to represent Him, only when we are able to resemble God we will be able to adequately represent Him and rule over the whole of creation on His behalf. Sin destroys this purpose because when we sin and declare independence we cannot relate to Him in love and worship, we will no longer resemble Him because we will not be worshipping Him, we will disobey Him and we cannot represent Him because we will not be like Him and so therefore we forfeit our right to rule the whole of creation on His behalf.

The book of Deuteronomy tells us our prime responsibility to our Creator. It says,

*Deuteronomy 6:5 (ESV) You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

That love is reflected in obedience and that is where Adam and Eve had gone wrong. They have disobeyed. So contrary to popular belief, sin is not just being a murderer or rapist or a criminal. We tend to cast sin in just those terms. Sin is described in various ways in the Bible.

- In Hebrew the word is “Hatta”, described as ‘missing the mark’. The mark which God sets for us. It is deviating from the purpose for which He had designed us for.
- Sin is described as lacking conformity to His standard which is the best for us. Sin is disobeying his commandments.
- Sin is rebellion. She is a perversion of disrespect of God.

Sin is failing to measure up to God’s standard. Sin is any action or deed or thought that fails to measure up to God’s standard. So the huge problem with sin is that it destroys God’s purpose for man. We will never be fully what God had created us to be because of sin. Sin is breaking God’s law. It is not much different from breaking the law of gravity. If you break the law of gravity and you will be broken by the law of gravity. If we are not living in reference to God, not obeying God, it is like breaking the law of gravity. You will fall and break yourself. The law does not change for anyone. It is as constant as the God who made it. Breaking God’s law leads to death and our own disintegration. Here we have the consequences of sin for Adam and Eve.

*Genesis 3:7-12 (ESV) Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin cloths.<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup> And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup> He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” <sup>12</sup> The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.”*

The passage tells us of the awful consequences of their sin. They were aware of their sin immediately against God. They looked at each other and for the first time they saw their own imperfections. They saw that they were naked, they felt shame, they hid from God and they hid from each other by stringing together fig leaves. They felt both guilt and shame.

### **"You feel shame when others know what you've done; you feel guilt when only you know,"**

Guilt and shame are deeply embedded in the human psyche. We all feel guilt and shame, because we all sinned. There are consequences of sin for both Adam and Eve, specifically for the woman.

*Genesis 3:16 (ESV) To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”*

So here the woman will have a painful childbirth. There will be conflict in the marriage, as her desire will be contrary to the husband’s and yet he will brutally rule over her. The battle of the sexes had begun. These are the consequences for Adam’s sin,

*Genesis 3:17-19 (ESV) And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;<sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*

So as a result of man's sin, the ground is cursed. It won't be as fertile; it will be difficult for man to earn a living. Here we can see the devastating consequences of sin. Sin is the breaking of relationship between man and God. When that relationship breaks down, automatically relationships between husband and wife, mankind and the ground are also broken. There will be strife between man and his wife, man with fellow man and there also been strife of difficulties between man and his dominion over creation. The relationship is broken. Here is death,

*Genesis 3:22-24 (ESV) Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" 23 therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. 24 He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.*

In the Garden of Eden, was every ingredient for eternal life. There was a relationship with God, that has become broken. He cannot continue to stay in the safety, the beauty and the paradise of Eden and continuing to partake of the fruit of the tree of life and live and eat forever, because then he would have remained in the sinful state forever. So therefore he is cast out of the Garden of Eden. He is cast out from the source of life, which is basically the fruit of the tree of life. So therefore once he is away from that, his life begins to unravel over a period of years culminating in death and he is unable to return to life in Eden. There is a cherubim or angel actually guarding the way back to the Garden of Eden. Our next reference is from the New Testament, from apostle Paul who writes letters and this is a letter to the Roman church. Paul writes,

*Romans 5:12 (ESV) Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned*

So just as Adam and Eve sinned and were cast out of the Garden of Eden, they died and through their sin death spread. The signature sign of sin is death. So every man dies because all man sinned.

*Romans 3:9-11 (ESV) What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, 10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 11 no one understands; no one seeks for God*

*Romans 3:22-23 (ESV) the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

Paul is clear, there is universal spiritual death, which means spiritual separation from God and the surest sign of spiritual death is eventual physical death. Here is another reference in the New Testament. This time it is the letter of Paul to the Ephesian church. In this passage, Paul tells us about the nature of spiritual death or separation from God. He describes,

*Ephesians 2:1-10 (ESV) 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

So the nature of spiritual death and sin is that when we are dead in trespasses of sin, we are actually non-responsive to God and His commands. We don't love God, we don't really care about Him, we are not sensitive to what He wants and so therefore the way we live which is described metaphorically here as walking, the way we live is following ways of the rest of the world. Whatever the world does in its pursuit of greed, materialism and evil, we follow. Ultimately lurking behind our craven behavior is actually demonic powers, following the prince of the power of the air, which is Satan which works in the sons of disobedience. Our disobedience is because we are influenced by Satan, among whom we all lived once in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

We need to define and explain about what the flesh is. The flesh is not our physical flesh. Let me try to explain what spiritual death is?

Suppose we see a person lying in bed in the ICU unit of the hospital. The availability of technology most probably suggests that there are only three conditions in which he can be in:

1. He can be **awake and aware**, which means he is like you and me. So he is alive.
2. He is **awake but unaware**, which means he is unaware of his surroundings. He cannot respond, but he is awake and we actually call this a persistent vegetative state.
3. **Not awake and he is not aware** and basically he is dead.

Now in the third condition he can be dead and yet his heart can continue to beat. This is a situation called brain death. A person can be dead in his brain and yet his heart can still be beating. However, he is not aware, nor is he awake. He is not responsive. There are no responses at all on stimulating him if we were to pinch him or call out to him. Lastly, he is not breathing. So therefore he needs to be artificially kept alive by a breathing machine and in this particular state of brain death, he cannot live long. The pacemaker cells can only work for about a week. It cannot work his lungs, it cannot control his blood pressure and hormones and eventually he will physically die as well when his heart finally gives out.

In fact, spiritual death is a little bit like brain death. In brain death while brain is actually dead, we are not aware, we cannot have reflexes, we cannot respond and within about a week, the heart will stop and we will die. In spiritual death, it takes a little bit longer. As far as God is concerned, we are spiritually dead. We are cut off from him, we are nonresponsive to Him, we don't respond to him. We are not aware of him, we don't really care about him, we have no idea about him. This situation continues not a week but for 70 years and then finally we physically die as well and face eternal death.

### **What is spiritual death?**

Spiritual death is being nonresponsive to spiritual values, having no ability to do so and no insight over the fact that we are actually spiritually dead.

So spiritually dead person could be attending church and concepts of heaven and hell, grace, the cross, the knowledge of God and forgiveness would only be abstractions. They are not real to him even though he may pay lip service out of politeness to his wife who had insisted he attend church with her but squiring in his uncomfortable church pew he finds it difficult to keep awake. It is like having the most beautiful woman in the world standing in front of a blind man and no matter how good she looks, he is nonresponsive.



So let's get back to that letter of Paul to Ephesians,

*Ephesians 2:1-10 (ESV) 1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins*

They are spiritually unresponsive because they are living following the course of the world. They live in a world that follow the ways of the world, the fashions of the world, the preoccupations of the world, the never ending pursuit money, fame and power. So therefore they can't respond to the things of God given their current preoccupation.

*They are following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—*

Behind materialistic behavior, behind immoral behavior is a demonic influence causing disobedience

*3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind*

So this last part of why are we spiritually death, is because we are actually carrying out the desires of our flesh. The word "flesh" in biblical terms is used equivocally which means it can have more than one meaning and this is determined by the context of the passage. In this context flesh is not physical flesh. Flesh is actually that aspect of our life that wants to be God. It is like Eve looking at the delicious fruit of the knowledge of good and evil and she wants to eat that because it looks good for food, it is a delight to the eyes. It looked good for food and it is desired to make her wise. She is carrying out the desires of her body and mind.

Every human being has natural desires for food, for comfort, for sex, to be useful, to be competent, to have love and affection and power. These are natural desires. In the Garden of Eden, man is created to have dominion in the image of God and this is power. He is created to work in the garden, for food, for comfort, and he has competency, he is created to relate to one another and this is love and affection. These are all natural.

But when one is spiritually dead, one follows the desires of flesh, which means these are the normal desires that we have. God created us with natural desires for food, for comfort, for sex, for competency, for love and affection and for power. These normal desires but instead of being utilized to glorify God, it is now hijacked to a strategies of a life lived without God.

So we live every day, we work, we advance our careers, we prosper our businesses, we improve our own performances, we carry out our responsibilities, we look after our health and our life, we look after our families and friends, we pursue happiness, all these things so fill and occupy us that we actually never have to think about God. We use these things to preoccupy ourselves, so that we will be independent of God. We will fill our hours, so that we never have to think about God or respond to him. That is the situation of spiritual death. We fight over them. We are obsessed about them because we are spiritually dead.

## Questions on the passage

1. Why did Eve sin ?
2. What is sin?
3. What is spiritual death?
4. What were the physical consequences of sin for Adam and Eve?
5. Is it possible for men and women to do enough good works to please God and earn their way into God's favour again given the nature of spiritual death as explained the Paul's writings in Romans and Ephesians?

## Application Questions

1. Why is it that very often we have to really struggle to find time or the interest to read the bible?
2. Why is it that there are many areas in our lives where we really find it hard to obey God?
3. How can we practically use our God given desires and lives to glorify God and reflect His image instead of living a life independent of Him?
4. Sexual desire is a natural desire given by God, how can we abuse this gift and utilize it instead to fuel our rebellion.