

a serpent to blight the creation of the good God, and which finally brought about the man's death. A Babylonian tablet gives the story of Adapa, the son of Ea, by whom he was endowed with wisdom but not with everlasting life. He lived in Eridu and cared for the sanctuary of the god. Offended at the overturning of his boat by a sudden squall when fishing on a calm sea,

he fought with the god of the south wind and broke one of his wings. He was summoned before the god of heaven, who placed before him the bread and water of life. But as his father had warned him against eating or drinking, he declined the proffered courtesy, and thus lost his chance of eternal life. Yet he put on a garment which was provided for him by the god of heaven.

### THE LESSON APPLIED

We shall miss the pith of the Lesson if we read it as the historical record of a primitive event that has splashed its dark colors over all succeeding generations, and brought us all our woe. It is far more than that; it is an allegory of human life. In it we hear the voice of the inspired preacher laboring to make us see with his eyes the nature of sin, and understand as he does its bitter and endless effects. What light then does this ancient prophet fling on the dark, sorrowful and sinful facts about us?

(1) *The essence of sin is in the heart of the man who reaches out for what God forbides.* Sometimes, it may be, we have been tempted to blame God for allowing the possibility of man's fall. But God's purpose was to develop a character in man, and if a character was to be developed in man, there simply had to be the possibility of failure. "She took the fruit"—the forbidden fruit. That is the vivid way in which this poet-preacher portrays the rebellion of the human heart against the divine. Up to that tragic moment, man was innocent, with the unconscious innocence of a child. He walked in the sunlight of God's presence. He thought no evil, planned no revolt. Suddenly temptation confronted him. It insinuated, flattered, promised the rich rewards of knowledge, and finally won.

With what unerring accuracy the writer depicts the fall of man before the tempter! He does not fall after a severe conflict with a repulsive and powerful Appolyon. No, he is simply seduced by fair words. Bunyan seized the inner truth of the narrative, when he represented the assault against Mansoul as successful because it was conducted "with pretended fairness, flatteries and delusive words." Though we range

far and wide, is it possible to discover a more appropriate symbol of temptation than the serpent,—noiseless, subtle, brilliant, irresistible?

Do we not feel that here is recorded, not the story of the first sin only, but the sad story of our own sin and the sins of all men?

(2) *Think now of the frightful entail of sin:* Shame, fear, cowardice, exile from the garden of happy innocence, dread of God's face and voice—What a list of dark results! It is true that with the first sin came also knowledge, but what kind of knowledge? "The eyes of them both were opened, and they knew—that they were naked." A young man says, "I want to see life." It may be that he ventures on forbidden paths, gloats over the pages of an unwholesome book; or he hardens his heart, becomes close-fisted, sordid, selfish. Some day his eyes will be opened—to what? To his own shame and spiritual poverty. That is a part of sin's programme, to hold up before our astonished eyes the havoc it has wrought with our lives. It exclaims with mocking glee, "See the trail of my presence in your ruined character."

Instinctively we wish to hide our meanness and unholiness from God. Rev. R. J. Campbell tells the story of a young fellow who robbed his adopted parents and fled from home. When he was brought back, he refused to enter the house. "Why? Are you afraid to face them?" But his answer was, "I cannot look them in the eye." Do you recall the piercing story of Guinevere? She had ruined the vast and beneficent designs of Arthur by her unfaithfulness. Before the king went to the great last battle he visited the convent where the stricken queen was, for his doom