



CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

We live in a society where conflict seems to be growing. Whether online, in the local paper, or on the daily news stations: thefts, assaults, and homicides are a common topic of interest.

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Conflict!

Conflicts arise when two or more individuals, and/or entities have “competitive or opposing actions of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons),” or a “mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands” (Webster’s Dictionary).

As a result of these Conflicts, there exists a need to find a Resolution, i.e., “the act of finding an answer or solution to a conflict, problem...an answer or solution to something” (ibid), in order to establish peace among those involved.

That there is conflict in life is understood by all. Conflicts arise in most every aspect of life: as citizens, family members, or as a result of social or religious ideologies. Not only do conflicts arise between people, but, there are days when an individual will struggle with their own mental and internal demands.

As unsavory as conflict is, there is a positive side. The apostle Peter said, “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, ye have been put to grief in manifold trials” (1 Peter 1:6). Rejoice when “put to grief in manifold trials”? How can such be the case? The apostle Peter proceeds to explain a frame of mind that allows one to rejoice under conflict, saying, “that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold that perisheth though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). The prophet James put it this way, “Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2-4). The term perfect, as is evident in the text, i.e., “lacking in nothing,” identifies a condition of being complete. Peter and James identify a process of growth and endurance resulting from conflict. Although conflict is unsavory, when properly handled it will bring out the gold in character as it is “proved by fire.” Overcoming great conflict, when approached with wisdom, will build character; when approached foolishly, it will result in bitterness of soul.

Conflict is a fact of life. Solomon, king of Israel understood conflict: the cause, “A perverse man scattereth abroad strife; And a whisperer separateth chief friends” (Proverbs 16:28), and the solution, “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; But he that harpeth on a matter separateth chief friends” (Proverbs 17:9).

As we consider various conflicts let us also bear in mind our responsibility when we encounter such. Solomon said, “Death and life are in the power of the tongue; And they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof” (Proverbs 18:21). However, “Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles” (Proverbs 21:23). In like manner, David, king of Israel, said, “What man is he that desireth life, And loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, And thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it” (Psalms 34:12-14).

The term “conflict” is not specifically used in the Law and the Prophets, and only three times in the New Testament, but the presence of conflict is abundant.

Conflict may be viewed from several standpoints. The task set before us will be to consider Conflict Resolution with its positives and negatives, peaceful and destructive ends.

Throughout our study, we intend to have embedded in each segment topics that will relate to:

- I. Biblical Conflicts
- II. The result of Conflict (Negative and Positive)
- III. How Different People React to Conflict
- IV. Different mechanisms in coping with conflicts
- V. Examples of Biblical events or people for positive ways to deal with, or go through conflicts
- VI. Examples of inter-personal conflicts between specific people
- VII. Large scale conflicts among peoples, and/or cultures
- VIII. And to note the various Resolutions utilized to reconcile offenses between God and man, man and man, and individuals to society.

Adam and Eve



Our first conflict, and its impending resolution began between Adam and Eve, Satan, and the righteous judgment of man's Creator. We begin...at the Beginning!

Genesis reveals the origin of mankind, and concerning our topic, there are four factors that precede the conflict of our consideration:

1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."ⁱ (Genesis 1:1)
2. "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."ⁱⁱ (Genesis 1:26)
3. "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good."ⁱⁱⁱ And, in this vein, Solomon said, "Behold, this only have I found; that God made man upright..."^{iv} (Genesis 1:31) (Ecclesiastes 7:29)
4. Concerning the conflict of our consideration: "Jehovah 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."^v (Genesis 2:16-17)
5. The principals involved in the conflict:
 - a. Jehovah God - "God commanded"
 - b. The serpent - Of whom the apostle John identifies as "the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan."^{vi} (Genesis 3:1; Rev. 20:2).
 - c. The woman - f to whom, the serpent said, "Yea, hath God said...?"^{vii}
 - d. And, the man - To whom, "Jehovah God called..." (Genesis 3:9)

Due to the nature of our first consideration serving as an introduction, as well as the extensive background required to fully understand the magnitude of the conflict, we will be dividing this first into a number of segments. We trust you will bear with us in this.

A principle for man to understand is that Laws are an essential part of man's existence. The truth of this is seen in the statements made by Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, saying, "But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully, as knowing this, that law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and unruly, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for abusers of themselves with men, for menstealers, for liars, for false swearers, and if there be any other thing contrary to the sound doctrine; according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God..." (1 Timothy 1:8-11)

From the beginning, God had established law to regulate man's involvement in those things that were beneficial, as well as detrimental to him. In addition to that which is innate, or in-born, the apostle Paul said, "(for when Gentiles that have not the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are the law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing *them*);" (Romans 2:14-15)

The commandment that drew our interest was verbal. It involved a specific act that would go beyond the innate, or natural laws. This command, "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), was two-fold: 1. The commandment authorized the man and the woman as to what they could eat, and 2. The commandment instructed them in what they could not eat. One gave them the right, liberty, and freedom as to what to eat, the other as to what not to eat.

Now the conflict, i.e., a. "competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) b: mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands."

God had the right to command, and that for the benefit of mankind. The principle of ownership is not difficult for man to understand. In reference to the era of Noah, Jehovah said, "every living thing that I have made will I destroy" (Genesis 7:4). God made man, and by that very act, has the right to command and expect obedience. Therefore, Jehovah said to man, regarding 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."

Death is “separation.” Physically: separation of the body and the spirit. Solomon said, concerning this death, “the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.” (Eccl. 12:7) Spiritually: death is a separation of fellowship between man and God and the eternal blessings thereof. The apostle Paul stated, concerning those who “know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, *even* eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” (2 Thess. 1:8-9) The term “destruction” being literally, “driven out:” as Adam was driven out from the garden.

The occasion of the Conflict of our consideration is set forth in this fashion:

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which Jehovah God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil. And 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 the fruit thereof, and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.” (Genesis 3:1-6).

Cause of the Conflict:

What caused this “mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands”? The apostle John described it, saying, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”^{viii} (1 Jn. 2:15-17)

Let’s follow this process, as laid out by the apostle John: the woman “saw that the tree was good for food,” i.e., lust of the flesh; she saw that the tree, “was a delight to the eyes,” i.e., lust of the eyes; she saw that the tree, “was to be desired to make one wise,” i.e., vainglory of life.

What was the Resolution essential to satisfy the legal and moral code violated, thus creating the Conflict?

A time for reckoning follows a conflict, i.e., “the time when actions are judged as good or bad and are rewarded or punished” (Webster’s).

This Resolution of this Conflict involved two elements: Physical and Spiritual.

In our last segment we consider a conflict that arose as the result of man’s disobedience to a specific command. This conflict involved two elements: Physical and Spiritual. Let us consider God’s resolution to the matter.

The first element:

Physically:

1. For the man:
 - a. He was called upon to face his actions: “Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?” (Genesis 3:11)
 - b. Therefore, unto Adam Jehovah said, “Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” ^{ix} (Genesis 3:17-19).
 - c. Ultimately “Jehovah God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken” (Genesis 3:22-23)
2. For the woman:
 - a. “And Jehovah God said unto the woman, What is this thou hast done?”
 - b. “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” ^x (Genesis 3:13, 16).
3. As for the serpent: “Jehovah God said...Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” ^{xi} (Genesis 3:14-15).

Another aspect of the conflict affected man spiritually:

Spiritually:

1. Adam and Eve had succumbed to “the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will”^{xii} (2 Timothy 2:26)
2. Thus, “Jehovah God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life”^{xiii} (Genesis 3:24).
3. The fruit of Adam and Eve’s actions resulted in a condition of spiritual separation: “Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear”^{xiv} (Isaiah 59:1-2).
4. Mankind does not readily perceive the magnitude of sin. King David, once said, “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, There is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, That his iniquity will not be found out and be hated. The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: He hath ceased to be wise and to do good” (Psalm 36:1-4).

However, Jehovah also placed within the resolution a beacon of hope:

Positive Nature of the Judgment:

1. Solomon said, “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; But when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life”^{xv} (Proverbs 13:12).
 - a. The apostle Paul, speaking of the Gentiles, said, “ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world”^{xvi} (Ephesians 2:12) Such a dire condition would indeed make the heart sick.
 - b. Adam and Eve had been driven from the garden, and provisions put in place to prohibit any attempts to return.
2. The Judgment:
 - a. It is without contradiction that laws must be in place for the benefit of man’s existence. Solomon said, “Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint; But he that keepth the law, happy is he”^{xvii} (Proverbs 29:18)
 - b. When restraint is cast off, accountability is essential: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil”^{xviii} (Eccl. 8:11).

- c. Thus, "There is grievous correction for him that forsaketh the way; And he that hateth reproof shall die"^{xix} (Proverbs 15:10).
3. God's Resolution to the Conflict:
 - a. The Law required punishment consistent with the degree of the transgression, but God placed within that punishment a mechanism of hope. To the serpent, Jehovah said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"^{xx} (Genesis 3:15).
 - b. In the fulfillment of this promise, the apostle Paul said, "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned: - for until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come. But not as the trespass, so also is the free gift. For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many. And not as through one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment came of one unto condemnation, but the free gift *came* of many trespasses unto justification. For if, by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one; much more shall they that receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, *even* Jesus Christ. So then as through one trespass *the judgment came* unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous. And the law came in besides, that the trespass might abound; but where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly: that, as sin reigned in death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"^{xxi} (Romans 5:12-21).
 - c. Thus, "when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons"^{xxii} (Galatians 4:4-5).
 - d. Thus, "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."^{xxiii} (Hebrews 2:14).

The attaining of a Resolution to a Conflict requires action, and how the conflict is resolved is not left up to the man that has violated the moral code, but in the hands of those who judge a righteous judgment, and still yet, the seed of conflict that was sown may very well affect generations to come.

ⁱ Genesis 1:1

ⁱⁱ Genesis 1:26

ⁱⁱⁱ Genesis 1:31

^{iv} Eccl. 7:29

^v Genesis 2:16-17

^{vi} Genesis 3:1; Rev. 20:2

^{vii} Genesis 3:1

^{viii} 1 Jn. 2:15-17

^{ix} Genesis 3:17-19

^x Genesis 3:13, 16

^{xi} Genesis 3:14-15

^{xii} 2 Timothy 2:26

^{xiii} Genesis 3:23-24

^{xiv} Isaiah 59:1-2

^{xv} Proverbs 13:12

^{xvi} Ephesians 2:12

^{xvii} Proverbs 29:18

^{xviii} Eccl. 8:11

^{xix} Proverbs 15:10

^{xx} Genesis 3:15

^{xxi} Romans 5:12-21

^{xxii} Galatians 4:4-5

^{xxiii} Hebrews 2:14