

The Fall and the need for salvation * Genesis 3
October 3, 2021 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

How it started How it's going

Genesis 1-12

Do you remember where you were when 9/11 happened?

I remember it very clearly. I had just flown back from France, exactly one week earlier, and I was at the house that I shared with a bunch of guys for university. One of them called me into his room to say 'look what's happening on tv!' That was the first time that I heard that a plane had flown into the World Trade Centre. And I thought 'how on earth could a plane fly into the world trade centre?' It just didn't make any sense.

But a plane DID hit the World Trade Centre. And then another one. And then the Pentagon. And everything changed. All of a sudden, flying changed, international relations changed and we all became aware of the fact that the world was more dangerous than we thought. It was a tragic, game-changing day.

Genesis 3 is the Bible's 9/11 moment – the moment when tragedy struck and when everything changed. In an instant, paradise gave way to chaos. The innocence of the Garden gave way to the 'realities of the world.'

And the repercussions of that day's events are still being felt today. Genesis 3 explains why stuff like 9/11 happens, why rape on campuses happens, why people hack into your Facebook account to try to steal money from you. Genesis 3 explains how sin entered the world and so if we're going to talk about 'how it started,' we need to talk about Genesis 3.

Join me in Genesis 3, Genesis 3, and we'll look at what's known in theological circles as 'the Fall.'

Now as Genesis 3 begins, all's well in Paradise. Adam and Eve are getting along famously. They're working and keeping the garden, taking care of God's creation and God Himself is giving them everything they need. Life is truly good – they are living in abundance and luxury (remember, that's what 'Eden' means). Life is good in paradise.

But then along comes a serpent. And according to verse 1, '...the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made.' So note, this is not an alien presence in the garden; he hasn't just appeared. God made this snake and so the snake is accountable to Him. And...

He said to the woman "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Now it is a little weird that the snake talks – when was the last time that you saw a snake talking? – but when we read ahead into Revelation, where Satan is called 'that old serpent,' then you realize that this is Satan speaking through this snake. And Satan is trying to disrupt the perfect relationship between God and man. And so he calls into question God's goodness.

"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Well, let's check. Flip back a page – Genesis 2:16 - 16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden."

That's the exact opposite of what the snake has said. The people in the Garden are free to eat from any tree they want, just not the fruit of the tree of good and evil.

But the snake wants to sow doubt in their minds about God's goodness and so he implies that God's being stingy in His provision. He wants to get these people thinking – 'wait, what DID God say?' and 'what's He holding back from us?' and ultimately, 'why should I listen to Him?'

Eve doesn't quite take the bait – she responds -

~~2 The woman said to the serpent,~~ "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,
3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' "

4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. (Spoken with the cocky confidence of someone opposed 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."

Now at this point, Eve has a choice. She and Adam are there in the Garden to work it and to keep it – literally to work it and GUARD it – and so first thing they should have done when they heard a snake whispering temptation was to toss that snake out of the Garden. Remember, they have authority over all the animals in the world and so at the first hint of insurrection, that snake should have been sent out. I mean, we talk about the tree of good and evil, but frankly, Adam and Eve already knew what was good and what was evil. God was good and anything opposed to Him was not – and so they should have sent that snake packing right away.

But Eve let the serpent's lure undermine her commitment to God. She listened to a fellow creature instead of listening to her Creator. Instead of focusing on everything God has done, all He was providing, the fellowship they enjoyed together as they spent time in the Garden; instead of focusing on that, she began to entertain doubts about the goodness of God. She started to think that maybe she knew better than God what a really 'good' and so she took a second look at the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And, verse 6, When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

And in that instant, the relationship between God and man was forever changed. You know sometimes in TV shows or movies, the action pauses and then a voice-over tells us what's happening? Romans 5:12 is the voiceover. In that moment – "sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." This is where it all began.

Sin and death and suffering and pain are all a part of life because Adam and Eve put their own will before God's. Not because they ate a piece of fruit, but because they rejected the will of their Creator. Eating the fruit was just the outward expression of the inner disposition of their hearts and their heart's disposition was away from God. They decided that they knew better than God, that they could define

'good' and 'evil' for themselves. They chose to rely on themselves instead of God, and as a result, they fell. Sin entered the world and everything changed.

Verse 8 tells us what happened next -

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" (Of course God knows where he is; He's just calling the man to account for himself).

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

'You've never hid from me before, Adam. That's a weird thing for you to do. To hide from your Creator?' 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

What would you say in that moment? Fess up? Own it? Admit you were wrong? First sin in the history of the world – and Adam tries to pass the buck.

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." 'It's not my fault, it's the woman's fault. And You made that woman, so I guess it's your fault.' Already, you see the harmony of the Garden, of the relationship of God and man, husband and wife falling apart. Adam's willing to blame everyone but himself.

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." At least she has the guts to admit she was wrong.

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

Now historically, that's been called the protoevangelion, because we get the very first hints here of what God is going to do about this mess, but for now, just put that on the back burner.

16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

Before the Fall, husband and wife got along fine; they thought of each other as equals and did what they could to help each other. But now, that unity is broken. The wife will try to manipulate the husband and get him to do what she wants, while he'll seek his own benefit and treat her like a tyrant. That's not the way it SHOULD be, but sin has created this rift that makes it possible.

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

You know in 'Joy to the world,' the third verse? No more let sin and sorrow grow, nor thorns infest the ground/He comes to make His blessings flow/far as the curse is found. That's this. This is the curse. Because Adam put his own will and the will of his wife before God's, he and the ground he was made to keep were cursed, so that work went from a meaningful act in the likeness of God to a tiresome chore. No more would the ground freely give up crops; he would have to earn his keep now. Goodbye paradise, hello elbow grease.

This is about as low as it gets for humankind.

But even in the midst of this self-made tragedy, there is hope. There are hints here that even though His people have turned their backs on Him, God is far more gracious than could be imagined, and that He is already working to redeem His people and save them from their sin.

I mean, verse 7, Adam and Eve cloth themselves in sewn up fig leaves; even as He prepares to send them out, in verse 21, God says 'That's never going to do' and gives them leather clothing for warmth and protection as they go out into the world.

And then there's the protoevangelion. In the heat of judgment, God says to the snake (verse 15) 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Gen 3:15 NIV).

Genesis 3:15 means that this snake is more than just a snake. It is the eternal personification (snake-ification?) of evil and all that opposes God, and in the end, he's going to lose. Even though they have disobeyed Him, God is not going to destroy His wayward people. Instead, He is going to save them through the offspring of the woman and then crush the head of the serpent, even though it costs Him dearly. This 'protoevangelion' promises that God will send a Saviour who will overcome evil and rescue God's fallen people.

And Adam and Eve needed that salvation. The best they could do is make fig leaves for themselves and hide from God; God though would cover their sin and their shame and bring them back into relationship with Him.

And that's how it all began. Sin entered the world and corrupted human kind and the relationship between God and His people was broken. Even so, there was the hope that God would redeem His fallen people.

That's how it started. How's it going?

Well, none of us was in the Garden, but we sure act like we were. Remember Romans 5:12, the Fall of man voice-over? "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12 NIV).

Sin entered the world through Adam and Eve and each of us has followed in their footsteps. We have all sinned. We have all turned from God and gone our own way. Which means that Adam and Eve are you and me and we need the Lord's salvation.

Adam and Eve are you and me. We weren't there in the Garden and we're not accountable for what THEY did, but we ARE accountable for what WE do and we've all pulled an Adam and Eve. We've all put our will before God's. We've all asked ourselves 'Is God really good and trustworthy and do I really need to listen to Him when He says that this thing is or isn't morally good?' And even if we haven't consciously thought it, we've all acted as if we know better than God. We're so good at justifying ourselves and papering over the tension in our consciences.

But that puts us under the same curse that fell on Adam and Eve. According to Romans 5:19, because of Adam's disobedience, we have all become sinners. And back just one verse, Romans 5:18, Adam's sin means condemnation for all, because we've all followed in those first sinners' footsteps. We've all been, separated from God, just as Adam and Eve were, with eternal consequences.

Adam and Eve are you and me and we need the Lord's salvation.

We can try all we want to cover up our sin and shame but fig leaves aren't going to last forever. If we want the blessing of life instead of the curse of death, we need the Lord's salvation.

And thankfully, God was good to His word. He kept the promise of the protoevangelion and came in the person of His Son, born of a woman, to redeem us from the curse. The powers of evil did their best to cut Him down, but the best they could do was kill Him on the Cross. He died on the Cross, bearing our sin, and then He went and rose again, triumphing over death, and rendering evil's best weapon useless. They struck at His heel but He crushed the serpent's head and offered us forgiveness. Instead of forcing us to repay the debt, Jesus simply says 'come, believe in me and receive my grace.'

So far I've been alluding to Romans 5 – that's the voiceover of the Fall – to say when happened at the Fall, but that's not all Romans 5 is about. Romans 5 tells us not only what happened up Adam sinned, but it also tells us what happened when Jesus died to make things right. Just listen to it - Romans 5, starting in verse 15:

15 But the gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died by the trespass of the one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many!

(Adam's sin brought death, but Jesus' death brings grace).

16 Again, the gift of God is not like the result of the one man's sin: The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation, but the gift followed many trespasses and brought justification.

(Adam sinned and brought condemnation; after all our sin, Jesus' gift brings justification – makes us right with God).

17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

(Even though Adam's sin means death for all, Jesus grace means life forever).

18 Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.

19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

What Adam upset, Jesus made right. Disobedience and sin leads to judgment and death, but Jesus is the way to righteousness and salvation. Adam and Eve are you and me; if we continue to walk in our footsteps, it leads only to condemnation and death, but Jesus calls us to leave that way of sinful life behind and to walk with Him, in life, for eternity. We need the Lord's salvation.

As verse 17 says - 17 For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

When we confess our sin and receive God's abundant provision of grace, we are forgiven, renewed, saved and restored to relationship with God. Every sinful thought, every evil deed is wiped out, deleted from our account, paid for and forgiven by the blood of Jesus. Though our sin be great, God's mercy is more. God Himself makes us right with Him.

We are all Adam and Eve and we need to the Lord's salvation.

Now there's a reason that we are celebrating communion today, because communion is a very tangible way of receiving God's abundant provision of grace. When we take the bread and the cup, we are confessing our sin and our need for God and taking hold of the blessings that Jesus secured for us. If you are a committed follower of Jesus, let these elements be to you a fresh reminder of Jesus' free gift of grace to you. The story of your life is no longer Adam and Eve and all your sin; it is the story of Jesus' salvation freely given.

And if you've never really considered whether or not you are accountable to God, let Genesis 3 and Romans 5 shape your thinking. We're all Adam and Eve. We've all lived out their sin in our own lives, defining right and wrong apart from God and telling God to butt out and mind His own business. But He created us and He sustains us and He has come to earth to make things right. Don't hide yourself in the bushes hoping that God won't be able to find you there; come right out into the open, being transparent before God, and receive God's abundant provision of grace.

Let's pray as we prepare our hearts for Communion.

All of this began with a simple question – ‘Does God REALLY care about you? Is He REALLY looking out for your best interests? Are His purposes and commandments really good or is He holding back from you something that you really need?’

Adam and Eve entertained those thoughts and look where it got them.

This though (Communion) should set those questions to rest. Romans 5:8 says - 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

While we were still separated from Him, not interested in Him in the least, He laid down His life for us. That gives lie to the serpent’s questions.

Does God really care about you? You bet, He died to forgive your sin and restore you to Him.

Is He really looking out for your best interests? Yeah! He gave up His life to rescue us for all eternity!

Are His purposes really GOOD; is he holding something back? Romans 8:32 - 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? God is good. His commands are good. His salvation is good. Receive His goodness at the Table today.

Back in 1967, an author named Derek Kidner made an observation about our passage today that’s incredibly profound and especially relevant. Kidner wrote – “She took ... and ate: so simple the act, so hard its undoing. God [would] taste poverty and death before ‘take and eat’ become verbs of salvation.”ⁱ

Do you see what he’s saying?

Eve took the fruit and gave it to Adam and they ate... and sin entered the world.

He took bread and gave it to His disciples, and they ate... and salvation came for those who believe.

Not only did Jesus turn condemnation into redemption and sinners into saints, Jesus even redeemed this simple act. Take what He gives, receive it with thanksgiving and eat, for the forgiveness of sin.

ⁱ Kidner, D. (1967). Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary (Vol. 1, p. 73). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.