

META | Fall

Introduction

Grab your Bibles and turn with me to Genesis 3. Last week we started to tell the story of the Bible, God's story, and we started, in the beginning, Genesis 1. This was Act 1 of our 5 act story...before moving on to Act 2, I want to briefly retell the first part as a story.

Act 1

There was nothing but God, and then all of a sudden, He spoke. By the sound of His voice the earth was formed, the stars were lit, and the world was covered with every manner of great thing we know of. Then God created man and woman and gave them dominion over His creation.

This creature was different than all of the others. This was in God's image...in His likeness. We are image bearers of the Creator. But this doesn't mean that we look like Him as a son looks like a Father. It means we are like Him. God gave human beings His personality. We were created good, as He is good. God created the world in a specific way, with a specific rhythm. And He gave to man an understanding of that rhythm, an inherent sense to live at peace with the world.

We see that God had an intimate relationship with Adam and Eve, so much so, that He would stroll through the garden (Gen.3.8). We also see righteousness in the purity of relationship between Adam and Eve, they were naked and unashamed (Gen. 2.25). It was good. Everything was good. Man was the perfect image bearer of a God who was holy, loving, and true.

Once created, God defines the rules of this relationship. He makes a covenant with Adam. The stipulations are pretty simple. Everything that God has created is for the enjoyment of Adam, save one tree. That one tree represented the Law. It was the thing that God commanded of Adam. The covenant was not about the fruit, it was about obedience. Abstaining from the tree was the one act of worship that Adam had. He could refrain from that tree in submission to God, choosing God's way over another. In return, he would have the rest of creation and life.

This was the covenant, and Adam had no choice in the conditions of the covenant. This is what they were, established by a God who is holy, loving, and the author of Truth. Adam simply had a choice to follow the rule that God had set, to trust in His character, or to choose his own way.

The Offense

We ended last week with this tension set. Let's see where the story goes; we pick up the narrative in Genesis 3.1:

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'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 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.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 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. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

This is where it all falls apart. What was it that was so much more desirable than God? There are three things that lead to the decision that there is something more satisfying than following God. As you will see, they are not all that different than the things that draw us away from God today.

1. Satan questions God. In what might seem like an innocent question, Satan asks, *Did God actually say...?* Sometimes the beginnings of sin are questioning things that need not be questioned. As we said last week, as relativists, people who believe that truth is relative to our specific story, we want to be the filter that truth is judged by. We want to have the answers to all of the questions. The problem is, sometimes we are not satisfied by THE answers, we want to have OUR own answers. I'll give you an example:

Now, I am not saying that we should not have questions. WE ALL HAVE QUESTIONS. As a matter of fact, I believe that the moment that you have an answer to all of the questions is the moment that you stop growing in God. Let's ask questions. But let's make sure that we are asking them because we actually want to hear God's answers. Let's not ask questions just to fill the air with the sound of our own voice as we do what we want. Anyone can ask questions, and can seem brilliant because they do nothing but create confusion and doubt. You can create a philosophical argument with lots of what ifs to make almost anything seem okay; to justify your unwillingness to simply submit to God.

If you are questioning God for the purpose of knowing Him more completely, it is good. If you are challenging God to submit Himself to you and your way of thinking, it is bad. Which is exactly where Satan goes in his conversation with Eve.

2. Satan describes God as a tyrant. Once Satan has Eve free thinking, he goes for the jugular. He says to Eve:

You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

The tricky part of this is that it is not a complete lie. It is a half truth. It is like when I ask my son if he just hit his brother and he says no, then I find out he kicked him. Not a lie, not really the truth. A half truth is a truth where a good part of the important information has been left out.

So their eyes would be opened as we see in verse 7. And it did bring them to the knowledge of good and evil. We know this because in verse 22, God says, *Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.*

If humans were created good, and at the Fall, they know both good and evil, then what entered into human understanding at this point was evil. Up to this point, Adam and Eve had been fully shielded from evil. They didn't know what it was because they were fully protected from any and all evil by God. So while it was true that they would now have a new knowledge, what Satan leaves out is how horribly destructive this knowledge would be. That this knowledge would destroy the relationship between man and God, would fracture the very nature, the image of God, and would taint the whole of creation. Everything is now covered in a blanket of evil. And for what?

For knowledge? So we could be God? The truth of the matter is we make real bad gods. But we keep trying. You would hope that seeing this whole episode; watching God's great creation crumbling in rebellion would fill us with fear; a fear that while we have a clear idea of what evil is, we lost sight of good at that tree. That through this, we might not have so much confidence in our own knowledge in compared with the wisdom that God gives us in Scripture. That even those things that look really true might just be half truths and that the most important details might be the ones that we don't know. We would trust that God really does want what is best for us, even when it looks like He is holding out on us. The unspoken lie of Satan here is that God's love is not sufficient. That we could never be happy with what He is offering. That we need to add to His love, or redefine it in our terms, in order to make it worthy.

The first doubts of God had been set, the attack on God's goodness had been launched, now it was up to human beings to simply follow their own desires.

3. Adam and Eve pursued their own desire. Satan laid the trap, but it is Adam and Eve who choose willingly to sin.

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.

We see here that sin is not something that Satan brought into the garden and passed to Adam and Eve like the common cold. They did not catch sin. As well, the fruit was not evil or sinful. So where did this sin come from? Sin came from within them. This is echoed in James 1, where it says:

Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death. (12-15)

So how was God's good creation tainted with sin? Did God then create sin? NO. God is holy, in Him there is no sin at all. If we understand sin as acting contrary to God's nature, then sin is not a thing to be created like water, sin is a choice. Sin is choosing something else over God. When we sin, we are not just doing something bad, we are saying to God that something else is more true and worthy than He is. Human beings then, are the only things that can sin, the only part of God's creation given the option of worshipping God, or in turn worshipping something else. Mankind was given the choice and chose earthly desire over God. So why did God do it this way? Why put the tree in the garden? Why make a covenant with such lasting implications? Why make the fruit a delight to the eyes?

I don't know. The reason why God chose to use this means to reveal Himself is a mystery to us.

What we do know is that God permitted humanity to fall. He set up a system in which man could choose. God did not force Adam and Eve to eat the fruit. As a matter of fact, he gave them every reason not to, and warned them what would happen if they did. Man brought sin into the world and is alone responsible for it, but it was never outside of the power of God. He could have snapped the neck of the serpent. He could have consumed the tree in fire. But He didn't. His plan was to use this horrible evil perpetuated by us for His glory. To use it to reveal to us who He is. He is God, worthy of all praise, and His justice shows us the offense of sin and the magnitude of His holiness.

Sin separates us from God. He is holy, so we can no longer be in His presence. And holiness is not something you can earn. You can't fix it. It is done. The moment that Adam, the representative for mankind, disobeyed, we were forever alienated from God as sinners. All of us. Not just a step away. Infinitely separated, forever. No hope. No chance. Game Over. DONE. And so as we try to recreate the world, from the wisdom of our broken selves, apart from God, it is no wonder it's all jacked up.

The Result

The results of the fall are all around us today. When we break the relationship with God, it leads to the breakdown of every other relationship. This is the death that God told Adam would follow his sin. Stopping of the heart is not the worst thing that could happen to us. True death is living separated from God, which is the results we see in Genesis 3.

The first thing that happens upon consumption of the fruit is shame. It says: *Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.* Now this is not going to be a call for a new kind of church sans clothes, because as we see later, God makes clothes for them. But what this represents is a loss of innocence. If you remember, the way that the Bible describes the perfection of the marriage relationship is: *they were naked and unashamed.* They are no longer unashamed...this leads them to turn on one another.

When God approaches Adam to ask, *What have you done?* Adam's says, *The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.* There is animosity between them. Adam refuses to own up to the part he has played in this. He wants to cast the blame elsewhere. The helper that God had created for Adam to have dominion over this earth, the greatest gift he had ever received, was now looked as the reason for his problems.

Adam and Eve have relational issues keeping them from what God has called them to, we also see that the be fruitful and multiply part is no longer going to be easy, as childbirth is now painful. Adam's work of cultivating is made more difficult because the land now creates things that are not good: thorns and thistles. The work of image bearing for God's kingdom on this earth just got hard.

But in all of this there is a promise. In Genesis 3.15, God promises that from the seed of the woman will come a savior who will crush the head of the snake, reversing the destructive results of sin and once again establish God's kingdom on this earth. This is a glimpse, a foreshadowing what is to come in the story.

But the relational disunity continues. Adam and Eve have children, Cain and Abel. Their character development leaves much to the imagination, but we do know that Cain is a farmer and Abel a shepherd. They both bring their offerings to God and he accepts the offering of Abel, but not Cain. Cain is furious and his jealousy leads him to kill his brother. The reaction of Cain is described as the natural response of sinful human beings. James 4.1-2a describes the source of all conflict in this world as the passions at war within us:

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

This actually makes sense of the senseless violence we experience. In one way, it is easy to look at Cain and think, what an unthinkable act. But from the perspective of relativism, what is stopping you from doing the same thing? What keeps any one of us from going on a shooting spree? Or robbing a bank? Is it just the fear of punishment? What if you knew you could get away with it? Is it the inherent belief in the sanctity of life? What if life is redefined to be nothing more than protoplasm in ideal conditions?

I hope you see what I did there, asking a string of unanswerable questions after commenting on how you could use questions to confuse rather than clarify. But I ask these questions to show you that the characters of Cain and Abel are not just here to show us that we better be more like Abel than like Cain. It is here to reveal to us that because of the death that sin has brought we are ALL naturally Cain. God warns Cain before any murder happens that it is lurking. In v.7 of Genesis 4, He says:

sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.

Cain has the opportunity to turn away from his passions to God. God warns him of the result. Just like us, and just like his parents before him, he thinks he knows better. He acts on from his own wisdom, and he receives the punishment that he deserves.

But once again the end of the chapter offers grace. Adam and Eve assumed that the promised seed was Cain...maybe Abe. But now Abel is dead and Cain is sent away. So God provides them with a new son, Seth, whose name means anointed.

The story moves on to a man named Noah. Most of you know his story. He lived in a time where the death and corruption of sin reached a point that reveals for us how utterly distraught God is about sin. Too much time is taken trying to compare our sins with those at the time of Noah, or of Sodom and Gomorrah, while what we should be focused on is how grievous our sin is to God. We have already seen this in God's response to Adam and Eve, and now God once again shows what the deserved punishment is for not relating to Him as God: death. Everything deserves to be destroyed: you, me, and all of creation.

Once again, as God shows us what we deserve, He also shows us grace. All of creation deserves destruction, but God chooses Noah to be the person through whom he renews His creation. After the flood subsides and the water is once again separated from the land (reference to Genesis 1), God comes to Noah and repeats the cultural mandate given to Adam and Eve, to have dominion and multiply and fill the earth.

The other aspect of God's grace is seen in the Covenant He makes with Noah at the end of chapter 8. It says this, v.21b:

I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

God makes a promise here that He will never again punish the sin of the earth as He does in the flood. This is not because we don't deserve to be destroyed in the same way, but because God wants us to understand that while the works of Adam infected the world for generations to come, the works of the promised savior, was powerful enough to send redemptive shockwaves backwards all the way to Genesis. What we see in the flood is that if humanity God exactly what it deserved it would have ceased to exist a long time ago. But because of the plan of God, the great work of redemption that He is unfolding, he allows people to continue in their created role of dominion, though marred by sin. He allows us to enjoy creation, though it is not as good as it once was. He continues to work to bring about the details of the plan He is unfolding.

In the next few chapters we see how God continues to work through broken people and how He will use their good and use their bad to fulfill His promise. Genesis 10 gives us the descendants of Noah's sons, and we see them being fruitful and multiplying as whole nations of people come from them. Then in Genesis 11 we see the Tower of Babel. The great structure created by people given the ability to cultivate and have dominion by God, now working entirely for their own glory. These builders, like Adam and Eve, are asking God to answer to them. They want God to support their kingdom and they want to be the definers of the covenant. They want to be God, not simply image bearers of God. So God shows His grace and power in one great move, He confuses their language to stop them from building (which distracts them from themselves so that they can come back to Him) and God uses this confusion to spread them throughout the earth (to fill the earth).

So what we see in Act 2 of our story is that Adam and Eve second guess God's goodness and trust in themselves. They go against God's one stated command, and in this, bring sin into the world. They break the relationship with God and in turn pollute all relationships: the relationship of each person with themselves, with other people, and with creation. God reveals in Cain and Abel the

results of sin. He shows in Noah and the flood, the deserved punishment for sin. He shows in the Tower of Babel that He intends to use the sin of His creation to bring about the restoration of His creation. But at this point in the story this hope is still undefined. At this point in the story, things are still fuzzy. The one thing we can confidently celebrate is that this is not the end. Though creation deserves for it all to be over, God's grace is greater still.

I end with a quote from another pastor, J Gresham Machen, summed up **Genesis 3** this way:

*[Adam] sought to attain knowledge, and lost the knowledge of good;
He sought to attain power, and lost his own soul;
He sought to become as God, and when God came to him in the garden he hid himself in shameful fear.*

It is a sad story indeed. But it is the beginning and not the end of the Bible. The first chapters of the Bible tell us of the sin of man. The guilt of that sin has rested upon every single one of us, its guilt and its terrible results; but that is not the last of the Bible. The Bible tells us not only of man's sin; it also tells us of something greater still; it tells us of the grace of the offended God.