

The Fall

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[0 : 00] Nice to see you all. We're going to read from Genesis chapter 3. So if you have a Bible, turn to Genesis chapter 3. If you'd like a Bible, you can stick your hand up. I'm sure someone will get a Bible to you.

Dave might hand out a Bible if you'd like a Bible, or Andrew can help as well. As we look along through God's Word, it's helpful to follow along. I'd encourage you to read along with it. Or if as I'm speaking you think, that doesn't sound right, well, look to see what God's Word says. Look to see what Genesis chapter 3 says. Does it really say that? Well, you don't know unless you have the Bible in front of you.

Okay. So Genesis chapter 3. Very easy to find Genesis. It's the first book. Right there, chapter 3. And we'll read from verse 1.

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

[1 : 02] The woman said to the snake, We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 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.

You will not certainly die, the snake said to the woman, for God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil.

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

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. But the Lord God called to the man, Where are you?

[2 : 07] He answered, I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked. So I hid. And he said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?

The man said, The woman you put here with me, she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it. Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done? The woman said, The snake deceived me, and I ate.

So the Lord God said to the snake, Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all livestock and all wild animals. You will crawl on your belly, and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 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. To the woman he said, I will make your pains and childbearing very severe.

Your painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. To Adam he said, Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat from it.

[3 : 18] Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil you will eat from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

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. Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them. And the Lord God said, The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to

reach out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.

So the Lord God banished him from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the garden of Eden, cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

So we'll finish reading just there, and let's pray for a moment, and ask for God's help as we listen. Lord, we thank you for your word. Please help us and teach us as we hear your word explained.

[4 : 35] Be working in all of us by your spirit. Amen. Now, boys and girls, if you were very disappointed that last time you didn't get a prize for answering my questions, today I want you to see if you can remember the four important words from today.

It's only four words. Do you think you can remember four words? Yeah, only four words, but you have to listen because the words don't come all at once. Okay? I'll give you some reminders as we go through to see if we can remember those four words.

Okay? But you might ask, why is life the way it is? It's full of hard things and suffering. We get really tired and weary, and we struggle.

Each of us have experienced many ways in which the world is not as it should be. We experience that it's broken. People we love pass away.

Someone you know might have to go to hospital, or you get sick, or we get hurt. Even this morning, today, I'm sure some of us aren't feeling good.

[5 : 51] Maybe physically, you're not quite right. You're just not quite there. You're unwell. Or mentally, you're just really struggling with worry, anxiety, depression, or just we're tired, or we're weary, or we're burnt out.

Maybe, even today, you've already been shouted at by your kids, or your partner, or your parents, or maybe you're the one who's been doing the shouting.

We get angry, and people get angry with us. People reject us. They're mean to us. We get hurt, and we haven't even started to think about all the bad things that we see happening in the world out there, all the war, and death, and diseases, all the sorts of things that are bad.

The world is broken. So what happened? Only last week, Rob was giving us the amazing news that we were made to flourish in God's world, in our relationship with God, and with each other, and with our surroundings.

So how did it all go so wrong? Well, we don't have to go very far in the story of the Bible to see why it is the way it is.

[7 : 23] Genesis 3, sometimes described as the fall, or as one man put it, the rebellion, where humanity fell at the first hurdle.

So here's our first word, tempted. Can you remember that? Tempted. We are immediately introduced to a new character in the story, the serpent.

Has anyone ever heard of a talking snake before? No? Well, maybe in the movies, I think there's a talking snake in Harry Potter somewhere. But what is this?

We were at an animal farm in Wexford recently, and it was amazing to hear a parrot saying, hello. And it really sounded like he was saying, hello.

And I think he also learned to say, what? I think he only had two words. But is that what's happening here? Animals don't talk, do they? Well, there's something more going on, and something sinister, something bad is happening.

[8 : 36] You see, we have the benefit of the whole Bible to understand more of what's happening. The very end of the Bible in Revelation explains the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

You see, this is the devil at work in the Garden of Eden, God's good garden. And you see, the devil is trying to undermine and deceive, tell lies to the people.

He wants to deceive Adam and Eve. So in slithers the serpent to tempt them. verse 1, the snake was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.

He said to the woman, did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? Right there, the serpent is deceiving.

He's twisting what God has said to undermine his words. He is tempting the woman to not trust God's words.

[9 : 53] Did God really say that? Well now, the woman, she does her best to recall what God says, but she seems a little bit muddled in verse 2 and 3.

She says, God did say you must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden and you must not touch it or you will die. She adds in this thing about not touching the tree.

God didn't say that. She seems to have been confused by the serpent coming in and questioning God's words. She's being tempted to not trust what God says.

The serpent is undermining the good and loving command he'd put in place in the garden and wants the woman to question what God had said, to not trust his words and be confused about his words.

Are you good at knowing when someone's words are trustworthy? Maybe you absolutely trust your mom or dad or your husband or wife and you know that what they say is true.

[11 : 04] You can trust it. Well that's really good. And maybe you know when not to trust someone's words. Maybe your neighbor says yep I'm going to cut that tree that's overhanging your garden next week.

I'm going to do it. The guys I have them booked. Or a colleague who says at work I'm definitely going to give you all the credit for the help you gave me on this project.

Or maybe you're looking for a house and the estate agent report says it's a lovely bright and spacious three bedroom house with great potential. We know what to trust and well God's word is absolutely trustworthy.

God cannot lie and what he says is true. Are we tempted to mistrust God's word? Or do we get confused about them?

did God really say that we are supposed to love our neighbors as ourselves? Surely not all the time.

[12 : 13] Did God really say that we're to consider other people's needs more than my own? Surely that's only when my needs are sorted first.

Or did God really say that Jesus is alive? Isn't that just another story? God's word can be absolutely trusted.

What he says is true and it's for our good. So if we're confused about what he says or if Eve wasn't sure it's all here for us.

All she needed to do was remember what did God say? And for us we have his word that we can look to his message to us his story that he invites us to read and understand.

So let's read it. Let's understand it. Let's get to know it more and not fall for the same temptation to not trust what God says.

[13 : 16] God's So the serpent also tempts him to not trust God's character. He calls God's goodness into question.

It seems the serpent is suggesting that God is withholding some good thing from them and God's jealously saying you can't have it. In verse 5 God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you'll be like God knowing good and evil.

He's tempting them to think that God is not good and he's withholding good things from them. Isn't that at the heart of all our temptations that God isn't good?

That his ways are not good ways? That we know better? If I get angry and frustrated then I'll finally get my way.

Or if I can just have that thing that I want I'll be satisfied. Or if I can just do what all my friends and my family are doing well finally I'll have some real fun.

[14 : 30] God is keeping all the good things from me. He's not good at all. Nothing could be further from the truth.

God is good and his ways are perfect. Remember he made this perfect garden. As I was preparing for this talk I came across a phrase that one man used.

He says if God was good then dot dot dot. Finish that sentence. are we tempted to think if God was good then this would happen or that wouldn't happen.

Are you tempted to think that same sentence if God was good. Well the lie right there is that God is good. All that he does is good but we see the man and the woman forgetting it and setting aside that truth and going their own way.

Okay so that was tempted. The next word is very short so you have to listen. Ashamed. Remember tempted ashamed.

[15 : 53] So the woman takes the fruit that God had told them not to eat. She eats some and she shares it with her husband and he eats as well. and here is the rebellion.

The fall makes it sound a little bit like they were walking in the garden and they fell into a big hole. That's not what was happening. This was a rebellion.

A willful disobedience against God. And this is where it all went wrong. God's good creation was now broken into pieces.

Sin is ignoring God. Putting ourselves at the center of everything and doing our own thing. Sin was taking root in God's perfect world.

And no sooner had they done it, their eyes were opened and they were ashamed. They were now suddenly aware of their nakedness and they made coverings out of leaves for themselves and they hide from God.

[17 : 08] They experienced guilt and shame for the first time. They had ignored God and done their own thing. Have you ever experienced guilt or shame?

Times when we do something and we know that what we've done is wrong, we're ashamed when we act in ways we know we shouldn't, when we go against God's good ways.

Sin maybe isn't a common word today, except maybe when it's used to sell some nice new ice creams. I remember when Magnum released a range of ice creams marketed as the seven deadly sins.

But sin is simply a refusal to put God first and instead put ourselves or something else in his place. And we feel shame.

So what are our two words? Tempted, ashamed. We're already on to the third word. Cursed.

[18 : 17] Okay? The third word is cursed. Christ. Well, you see, now God comes to find his friends in the garden. These new human beings who are hiding.

Look again at verse eight. 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.

They hid among the trees from the Lord, and the Lord called to them, where are you? Have you eaten from the tree?

What have you done? And we see in what follows that God was not just pretending. When he said, don't eat from the tree because you'll surely die, he wasn't making it up, but now his judgment was coming.

Judgment on the serpent, cursed above all livestock. He would crawl on his belly and be associated with death. We see in that judgment that his dust will be in his mouth.

[19 : 39] This is an image that speaks of death, not what you feed snakes if you have a pet snake. snakes associated with death.

And there's judgment on the woman. This process of having children, not just the birth part, but the whole process would just be way harder.

this was part of the calling of Adam and Eve to multiply and fill the earth. And Eve's role in that was to give birth and to have children and to raise them, and that was just going to be much, much harder.

And judgment comes from God on the man. The joy of living and eating and being sustained would become a burden.

No longer would food be found easily and abundantly in the garden, but by hard toil and labor, they'd have to work to find it.

[20 : 45] The ground was cursed. Look at verse 19. Death is coming. It says, By the sweat of your brow you'll 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.

There was this horrible new pattern for life. Pain, suffering, and death. All that there was to life was now going to be much, much harder.

The new pattern was pain, suffering, and death. The joy of bringing a baby into the world, of creating families, raising children, was now way, way harder.

The joy of work and being satisfied and fulfilled and productive has just become way harder. Having children or families and doing work, that didn't come after the fall, that came before the fall, before the rebellion.

These are good things. Work was already there, it was good, we were made to work, but because of sin, it's now really, really hard.

[22 : 14] Remember the new pattern, pain, suffering, and death. That's what we experienced because of this word, cursed.

That's what we see all around us because of the rebellion, the disobedience of our ancient ancestors, and we continue the family trait. We're not blameless. Can anyone hold up their hand and say, the things that I do to upset my family or to steal or lie or cheat, they're not my fault. I can't help it. Can anybody say that? No, we continue the same family trait, we continue the rebellion against God. Okay, so that's three words. Last word, what have we got? Tempted, ashamed, cursed, this is maybe a new one, banished. [23 : 18] Have you heard that word? Banished, taken away completely. We now see the worst of the worst.

Adam and Eve are removed from God's presence and from his perfect garden. listen to verse 20 to 24, sorry, 22.

The Lord God said, the man has now become like one of us. Knowing good and evil, he must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat and live forever. So the Lord God banished him from the garden to work the ground from which he'd been taken. after he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the garden a cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. They're now banished from God's presence and from his good garden. The tree of life is now guarded. A flashing sword is stopping them from going back. [24 : 34] from continuing to be sustained by God forever. And now they're going to die. And they did.

This is what God said to them right at the start. Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. You will surely die. And they did.

They were separated from God's presence and at the end of their lives, they died. This is how seriously God takes sin. He cannot have sinful people in his presence. He is a holy God, a perfect God, and does not tolerate rebellion. And the reality of sin is that all of us, each one of us, deserve to be banished from God's presence, to be totally taken away from his presence.

God's presence. And because we continue the rebellion, we cannot be friends with God. We cannot be part of his family. We cannot enjoy his presence forever. [25 : 48] The garden is gone, and humankind, men and women, boys and girls, have been removed from God's presence. and the results are devastating.

It's what we said at the start. It's why all the bad things are happening. What are our words? Tempted, ashamed, cursed, banished.

God, is there any hope? This is a bleak picture. And we're only three chapters into the Bible. If only the story had been a bit nicer for a bit longer. Only three chapters in. Is there any hope in the midst of this rebellion, this pain and suffering and death? well, there may be a glimmer of hope in verse 15. Look at verse 15. God says to the serpent, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.

[27 : 03] He will crush your head and you will strike his heel. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel.

You see, God was not content with leaving things unravel and leaving humankind to its own devices.

He had a plan. He himself would step into history to crush the power of sin and evil. Jesus Christ came as the mighty warrior to rescue and save us.

He came to crush the ancient serpent. He himself was wounded. He himself was struck a fatal blow.

And he came to rescue not with a sword or a mighty chariot, but on a shameful cross. says in Isaiah 53, he was pierced for our transgressions.

[28 : 13] He was crushed for our iniquities or sin. The punishment that brought us peace was on him and by his wounds we are healed.

There is hope in the cross of Jesus because he died to take the punishment for the rebellion because he rose again to secure eternal life in a wonderful new garden for all those who would simply trust him and what he has done.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you for your word which teaches us and helps us to see why we live in a broken world.

And Lord, it's because of rebellion against you. Forgive us, Lord, in our part in this rebellion, in how we are tempted to not trust you.

We see how the world is ashamed as we reject you, as it's cursed. Lord, as we are banished.

[29 : 29] Lord, help us to see the hope of the cross, that there was a Savior who came to crush sin and death, and that we can have life forever.

Thank you, Lord. Amen. We're going to sing as we finish our time together. Amen.