

# Genesis 3:1–7

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[ 0 : 00 ] Genesis 3 verses 1 to 7. Please stand if you're able for the reading of God's word. 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 the word of the Lord.

[ 1 : 19 ] Thanks be to God. Well, good morning, and a special welcome to those of you who are online with us today.

We're so glad you're here, and we look forward to seeing what God would have to say to us, even from this text. You know, two weeks ago, we put a banner over part one of Genesis.

And I don't know if you remember, does anybody remember what it was? Simply from wonder to ruin. And what we've seen from chapter two, which we left last week, certainly didn't disappoint in terms of wonder.

The first man and the first woman created. The man formed first, and then in succession, the woman made.

And it was almost as though we could hear in that chapter their respective radiances, and these resplendent, divinely given glories in full song.

[ 2 : 34 ] I think of chapter two now as this divine duet, the man and the woman. In fact, just this last week, I went back and was listening to Joseph Haydn's creation oratorio, and it's the third part that Adam and Eve are found singing to one another.

And it beautifully captures the rapture and the wonder that they would have felt in song. Listen to this line that Adam sings to Eve.

Now in our duty, well fulfilled our maker, and praise to him. Now follow me, compassion of my life, he sings to her.

Thy guide I'll be, and every step wakes new delight within my breast, shows wonders everywhere. Then surely thou shalt know how boundless release there is of joy that the Lord hath given us.

Him prays we evermore. Him serve with heart and mind. Come, follow me, thy guide I'll be. And that really kind of captures where you're at at the end of chapter 2.

[ 3 : 55 ] In fact, when you look at the last closing line of the text before today, chapter 2, verses 24 to 25, you have that sense.

The man and the woman holding fast to one another, the man and his wife naked and not ashamed. Oh, for the world as it was.

Oh, for that wonder. For, take a look at your text. I hope you have it open to you. The mirroring, concluding verse of our text is meant to pull you back to that concluding verse of last week's text.

Chapter 2, verse 25, And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed, but by the time the sermon ends today, the eyes of both were open, they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

And so, all of a sudden, you begin to sense that where we are today is chapter 3, verses 1 to 7 in the Bible are the verses that move us from wonder to ruin.

[ 5 : 10 ] It's the descent of the human soul and our universal condition. It's not complete here.

We've got to walk all the way through chapter 4 for that. But the movement, the irretrievable, tragic movement from wonder to ruin is underway in our text.

In other words, we've moved from God creating all things to be celebrated by all people. We've moved from God sustaining all things in His Son, by His Spirit, through His Word.

We've moved from God securing an everlasting goodness for His Son to our first parents subverting God's Word and casting us into catastrophic ruin if it would not be for God's Son.

And so here we are. And I really just want to look at the text through the lens of two simple questions. How did it come about? And what are you to come away with?

[ 6 : 27 ] I want us to look at the text through the lens of how did this take place? And what are we to take away from it?

How did our ruin come about? I just want to say it's going to be in three simple movements that almost appear in the verses as though we're watching some cinematic expression of this descent into humanity's ruin.

Three movements. And the first is there's a question about God's Word that will give way to an accusation concerning God's goodness.

And that will give way to a capturing of our own heart. a question about God's Word.

Look at 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?

[ 7 : 33 ] And with that verse we are introduced to the serpent and we are told something of that serpent's character character by way of its cleverness or craftiness.

We don't have the advantage most of us of what that would have brought forward to the mind of the first readers the Israelites who a generation before were delivered from Egypt and in Egypt one of their national emblems of significance was the cobra itself and there would have been this resonant memory of God's people needing to be delivered from those who are like this.

We also don't have the advantage not many of us here today or under the sound of my voice of already knowing what the Bible will do with this serpent. By the time you come to the end of the Bible Revelation chapter 12 verse 8 or so there will be a story of the great serpent which is likened to the dragon and then named as Satan himself who comes to make war on the woman and her offspring.

None of that fullness that associates this serpent with the spiritual forces that are embodied in one in our universe named Satan are expressed.

All we get is simply this quick introduction and a direct movement to the question. It's a question about God's word. It's the first question in the Bible.

[ 9 : 10 ] Did God actually say? Well let's just sit on this then for a moment. This is how the ruin of humanity comes in its first movement.

It all begins innocently enough. It's almost as though we are in a well it was a one-to-one Bible reading group Adam and Eve but now there's been an empty chair and another person is now attending.

We've come to a community of a small group and the question on the table is what do we know of God's word? It seems innocent.

It seems ordinary. It seems that we are in a conversation on the greatest of things. What does God say? A closer look though and it's obvious that not all is right.

I mean even the way the narrator launched this serpent and his characteristic nature of craftiness in ahead of it. Or if you actually look at the words itself the question he asks is already a distortion of what God has said.

[ 10 : 25 ] Let me read it again. Did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? This distortion is overly restrictive legalistic as it were in regard to what God had actually said.

To see what God had actually said you've got to go back to chapter 2 and verses 15 through 17.

And there just by putting your eyes on it you will see for yourself that God did not restrict them from every tree in the garden but what?

They had access to every tree in the garden save one. And so this question about God's word from the voice of the serpent is a distortion and it's overly restrictive.

And look what Eve does with it. She launches into a corrective on the restriction but by the time she concludes she actually brings religion into play.

Let me explain it. The woman said to the serpent we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden. That's the corrective. But then she goes on but God said you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that's in the midst of the garden so far so good neither shall you touch it there's the addition lest you die.

[ 11 : 58 ] It's not so much a distortion of God's word through the serpent's question it's the addition of rules around that word which if played out would bring religion into the world.

What is religion? Religion is simply telling you and telling me that what mediates our relationship with a creator what stands between you and a God are the rules by which we live that present ourselves acceptable to that God whoever he she or it may be.

It's a rule. It's our rule. And if you look back to chapter 2 verses 15 to 17 there was no restriction on touching. I understand the rule.

If you're not to eat from the tree the touching is a safeguard. It's almost like walking along with your family and there's a precipice nearby and you say nobody goes you're not to go further than this path or you're going to fall and in actual fact there were five or six further feet you could have gone but you make a rule in an effort to safeguard relationship and if Eve is right here if this rule holds what do we have in the world but religion that's what's at stake religion would enter the world if Eve's word in this Bible study were to have the final say so here we are the first time in the Bible we have a question put differently it's the first time in the Bible we need a sermon it's the first time we need someone to stand and articulate that which

God actually said not in ways that would be overly restrictive not in ways that would bring religion into the world it's almost as though we've arrived at that moment in my opening quote where Adam is singing in Haydn's oratorio thy guide I'll be he says to her will serve him with heart and mind come follow me I'll guide thee and we know that Adam has already received the word he was the one in succession of chapter two who received this word before Eve was created and we know both grammatically and in a literary way that he's there with her at this very moment he's not off running around although the serpent is talking to Eve the you's of the text are first or I'm sorry second person plural you all you both and not only that verse 6 will say that her husband was with her so here he is

[ 15 : 05 ] Adam of Haydn's oratorio promising to guide this creation order under God's word and by the end of verse 3 we are convinced that he now needs to stand and to speak we expect him to speak but what do we get while you expect Adam's voice in verse 4 to enter what you get is the second movement of what brought us from wonder to ruin not simply a question about God's word but beginning in verse 4 an accusation from the serpent against God's goodness he's full-throated now verse 4 the serpent said to the woman you will not surely die he's in opposition to word not merely offering a query regarding word and then he goes on verse 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 this is an accusation against the very character of God it's interesting to see it's not an interrogative it's an accusation it's no longer a question it's a direct word of rebellion and and that's how we go from wonder to ruin what does

God say a distortion by way of restriction an addition which would bring in religion or an accusation which here is just outright rebellion those are the things that are in play he is now advocating for a life within humanity that would embrace his word over and against God's word and notice what happens at this moment in the text he's dismissing the threat of judgment you will not certainly die the first thing to be jettisoned in the created order in regard to whose word we're following is over the issue of final judgment does God hold us accountable for not living or living under his word the voice of the serpent is there's no such thing as judgment

God who created you who gave life to you would certainly expect the self actualized fulfillment of you he's not going to judge you he's loving he's kind your very life is a consequence of his love therefore live in accordance with what you love I mean there it is it's subtle but it dismisses the idea of final judgment and notice what it suggests he suggests that God would have Eve and Adam live to their full human potential and this is where he's actually accusing God he's actually saying you're gonna this isn't gonna be bad for you this is actually gonna allow you to live in rooms with higher ceilings this is your path forward you're going to be like

God you're going to be fully actualized to be the incomplete person that you deem yourself to be I mean that's the premise of the accusation which is a real diatribe against God being good that's the premise that you and I here to reach our full potential and our full potential means that we move forward in the world without any prohibitions because prohibitions hinder us in every single way I am thinking of Helmut Tilica a 20th century theologian who put it this way as he was musing on this passage he envisions the serpent do you think that God is so narrow minded and wrong headed that he would not let you get near these unusually wonderful products of his creation in the midst of the garden is he the kind of

God who does nothing but set up barriers puts on bridles and post prohibitory signs does it take me the serpent to explain to you that God is a God of unlimited abundance himself made be bad and forbidden did God forbid you to live your life to the full to use all your instincts do you really think God would be so prim and pedantic after he created you and your vitality the way it is so that everything you do is covered by the creator God is different from what you think he's not all narrow minded not a moralistic God in your way rather he's the God of life take everything you can get for God is handing it to you I mean that's the way that the word of the serpent is now working on the mind of our first parents how do we get from wonder to ruin there's a question about

[ 21 : 22 ] God's word it gives way to an accusation against God's goodness but then look at verse six it has time to capture our own will that temptation you need to look carefully at verse six it is almost in cinematic slowness that the writer has written in such a way as to force the reader to slow down it's all been moving to this she is suddenly lost in fog her blood has slowed her own desires internal desires concerning a way that might be forward for her in distinction from living under

God's word are being ruminated upon captured in verse six is what I call this heart coagulation let me read it and just notice all the commas 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 I mean this is Ron Howard at his best Ron Howard always likes the slow motion thing on the big screen and the writer of Genesis has slowed everything down so that the reader is aware that a conversation on the meaning of

God's word which escalates to an accusation against God's goodness sits on the human mind with an allure that is at this moment nearly it is irretrievable Bonhoeffer illustrates it with his own experience listen to what he writes with irresistible power desire seizes mastery over the flesh all at once a secret smoldering fire is kindled the flesh burns and is in flames it makes no difference whether it is a sexual desire or ambition or vanity or desire for revenge or love of fame and power or greed for money or finally that strange desire for the beauty of the world of nature joy in

God is in course of being extinguished in us and we seek all our joy in the creature at this moment says Bonhoeffer God is quite unreal to us he loses all reality and only desire for the creature is real the only reality is the devil Satan does not here fill us with hatred of God but with forgetfulness of God it is here that everything within me rises up against the word of God now it's interesting about this if this is true and the Bible is articulating this to us as God's truth in regard to the factors in play in moving us from the wonder of the world to a state of ruin without his son then there is more than simply external forces at work that provide questions to us about

God or conversations that actually begin to diminish the goodness of God there's something within us that is willing to ruminate on a life where our word is what is the ultimate and final arbiter of my truth in distinction from any word that might be prohibitory from me from God's word and so they take it which means that what's wrong with the world as G.K.

[ 26 : 35 ] Chesterton said dear sir I am yours truly G.K. Chesterton our ruin emerges from the recklessness of our own soul James I think puts it squarely or simply when he writes in the New Testament epistle but each person is tempted when he's 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 this is what the scriptures are teaching to us in this text and the question then is if this is the answer to the sermon's sense of how did it take place then

I want to mention two comments in the time that remains in regard to what are we to take away and I want to move then from this question on the word through the accusation of his goodness to the capturing of our will and I want to talk to two kinds of listeners I want to say something to all of you who are not yet Christians under the hearing of my voice because there's something for here for you to take away and it's interesting because there's a sense here that we have to acknowledge

that as it was for our first parents so it is for us I haven't been explaining something to you that is foreign to you you already know that there is in Eve something of the allness of us put differently in language that's not used as often we are sinners of our own accord we like to think we can master everything but we all are quite aware that there are moments that we have been mastered that something can hold us fast just as this desire held them we are sinners and that's actually there in verse 7 when you begin to see then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths

I mean what is going on here the eyes are opened and your eyes are opened your mind has already been enlightened to the fact that you live at times under your own word and not his this internal knowing and then the consequence this external sewing this internal knowing makes us all live with one another in ways where there is external covering we'll get into more of this next week but we now have you and I both of us all of us the allness of Eve in us has an experiential knowledge of an internal self awareness that not everything is right with me and I would prefer that you not see it which is why we cover and so

I'm just indicating to those of us who are not Christians today listening to this this text will teach you that you are a sinner it will actually teach you why things are the way they are for you and that's the first step home because there is a savior who can be an advocate for you in your sin Matthew 4 and I'm jumping way down the road you'll have to read it later for yourself there's a man named Jesus who arrives on the scene and he doesn't appear in a garden he's led out to a wilderness which is really indicative of the world in which we now live and it says that he was tempted by the devil and he's tempted three times to kind of self actualize himself while in the midst of this earth and three times Jesus answers him with God's word not in a restrictive way not in an additive way not in a rebellious way he simply holds the line on God's word and he actually tells him man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of

God see so Jesus finally is the representative in complete obedience to where Adam and Eve were our federal representatives in our disobedience and so while through Adam and Eve we learn the tragic understanding that we are sinners before God that's not the end of the story Jesus comes and he actually fulfills God's word symbolically for all of Israel he goes out into the wilderness and for 40 days just as they were out in the wilderness for 40 years the representations are direct in the scriptures Jesus accomplishes in perfect obedience what Israel could not do on her own that kept her in the wilderness and so Matthew's gospel moves from Jesus holding the word till you get to chapter 28 and two times used people are now made worshippers of him and that can happen for you if you're not a Christian today under the sound of my voice you can move from a self understanding of why things are the way they are what's wrong with you at the core of your spiritual being the sense that you are a sinner that you need a savior and that in

[ 33 : 19 ] Jesus you have one who fulfills God's word perfectly and makes worshippers of all of those who come to him and say please you do the covering of my sin that my own life cannot quite get done and then a word not only for the non-Christian but for those of you who are Christians or put corporately the members and the Christians within Christ Church Chicago what do you take away from this I want to say that there's a couple of things here for us to take away there is a promise in the scriptures not that you will get back to the garden that game is gone but that you can find both protection and provision in this life which is nothing more than a wilderness the community of

Christ Church Chicago should find herself under the word of Revelation 12 where there's the story of the serpent who attacks the woman and her offspring and in verse 17 it closes that he's doing war the serpent is still doing war against the church but it's a church who has received the testimony of Jesus and who obeys his commands there it is there's what we take if we've already begun to follow Christ what do you take from this message you take that I need to hold fast to the testimony about Jesus I need to keep believing that he does what I can't and I need to keep obeying everything I understand him to say that's it it's holding fast to the word about Christ it's walking in life together in the word of Christ and

John is clear in Revelation as he is in epistles what it means to obey the commands of God it is to love your neighbor as yourself it is to love and that's what we're to do then we are to find our life in Christ and we are to work it out in the love of one another and as we do that as we do that Revelation 12 says you'll be protected in the wilderness God will nourish you in this barren land don't you love how the non-Christian and the Christian are finally brought together to the

non-Christian listening to me today believe in Jesus he can be your savior to the Christian listening to me today continue to believe in the word you know about Jesus and walk together in love finally a word for us to close on not only this protection we'll receive but be watchful our church needs to be watchful the spiritual force in the person of

Satan the spiritual forces in an unseen world that we're not aware of today actually infiltrate into the community of faith primarily through the words of preachers and teachers who lay down for the people what God's word actually says and so be watchful lest there be anything from my lips that is a distortion of the truth be watchful in your community group discussions lest there is any accusation against God's goodness Romans 16 actually uses the very language of our text in regard to being watchful in the world in which we are living and it indicates to us that I appeal to you watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine you've been taught avoid them now listen to the allusions of

Genesis 3 good and evil deception flattery of speech Christ Church Chicago be watchful in your conversations over God's word be obedient in regard to the commandments that you understand from your Lord live with wholehearted ongoing faith in the testimony that you have heard about what the word will do for you you know I'm done but let me be done in this way the image of Adam and Eve at chapter two is holding fast and walking together but by the end of chapter three verse seven the image of the church we've got to be holding fast to him and walking well with one another our heavenly father we thank you for these weeks in genesis and we pray that you would give understanding in our midst thank you for giving us the scriptures where we have a word from you about where it all went wrong and what you did about it and what it now requires of us help us to embrace

[ 39 : 42 ] Christ hold Christ trust Christ and walk out our love to one another in the bonds of Christ in whose name we pray amen to a love to a love a love make a love