

Understanding what went wrong

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[0 : 00] Genesis chapter 3. Please join with me. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

And 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's 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'll be like God, knowing good and evil.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and 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.

[1 : 10] 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.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord, from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.

But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, Where are you? And he said, I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked and I hid myself.

He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?

And the man said, The woman you gave me to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate. And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done?

[2 : 27] And the woman said, The serpent deceived me and I ate. The Lord God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, curse to you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field.

On your belly you shall go and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

And he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel. To the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing.

In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband. But he shall rule over you. And to Adam he said, Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, you shall not eat of it.

Cursed is the ground because of you. In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. And you shall eat the plants of the field.

[3 : 43] By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground. For out of it you were taken. For you are dust.

And to dust you shall return. The man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living.

And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, Behold, Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil.

Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also the tree of life and eat and live forever. Therefore, the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken.

He drove out the man and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree.

[4 : 56] Well, good morning, everyone. Why don't we pray as we come to God's word. Lord God, we always need your help to hear you speak through your word.

We need your help to understand. We need your help to trust that your way is the way of life. So I ask that you would be helping each one of us to listen to what you say here in Genesis 3 and help me to be true and clear and give all the glory to Christ.

In his name we pray. Amen. Well, it's a bit of a negative question to start with, but what do you covet? We don't really use that word much, do we?

What does someone else have that you just long to have to possess yourself? Let me ask another question.

what is it that you are willing to hurt for? To work hard and struggle to make happen? You're willing to have pain to get it.

[6 : 21] I'm asking these questions because I'm hoping they start to bring some things to mind and help you to work out what you believe is the best thing about paradise, the paradise we've heard in Genesis 1 and 2.

Is it the place? Is it a body that is in order? Imagine that. Relationships and family thriving. Just abundance. The safety, the purpose, the significance in your work. So is it the place?

Is that the best thing about paradise? Is it the flourishing of human relationships? Is that the best thing? Or is the very best thing that the Lord is there?

What we think is the very best thing about paradise is what we will be spending our entire lives, body and soul, striving to get. life so it's pretty important that we work out what the very best thing is.

[7 : 36] Otherwise we'll be spending our whole lives chasing something that isn't the best. We're about to hear what our greatest problem is that's getting in the road of having the best thing.

We're going to hear about why life now is more like a wilderness than a garden. and we're going to get a glimpse of the solution, a picture of the hope that we have.

So how did chaos and darkness and death become the new normal in God's very good world? How did that happen in a word the Bible's word for it is sin?

Here we get in Genesis 3 the beginning of sin. But it's not only where sin began, this is the best case study you'll find on what sin actually is because you can't blame what happened here on the environment.

You can't. You can't blame it on family upbringing. We get the best case study for understanding what sin is here.

[8 : 47] So to understand how awful and foolish sin actually is, we need to just remember what we've seen so far in Genesis 1 and 2 and I want to describe it from Adam and Eve's perspective.

I think, see if you agree with me here, but I think it would have felt a lot like play. I don't mean a theatrical play like they're pretending.

I mean like, I reckon it probably felt something like a father play wrestling their child in the backyard in the grass. purpose. I'm not trying to say that Adam and Eve's purpose wasn't important.

They were representing God in everything they were doing. They must have felt hugely significant. And I'm not even saying that their work wasn't difficult. It could have been very strenuous, but it would have been full of purpose.

It would have been without any sense of fear. They would have been full of confidence. confidence. It would have been done in community. The results would have been fruitful. I think, have you found, like, even if you're scrubbing a dirty pot in the sink, washing it up, sometimes if you're just so busy talking and laughing with the person next to you, it feels like play.

[10 : 07] It doesn't feel like work. There they were with the Lord in everything they're doing. there they were speaking and walking with the Lord, hearing his words to them, knowing that his words were the same source, the same words that put the sun in the sky to warm their face.

Those were the words that formed the rivers to create this garden that commanded the rain to fall so that everything they ate was from him. When they were hearing his words, they knew that they were the ones who put the stars in place that declare his glory.

This is the one we're talking to right now, the one who made all this. All the animals and plants, beautiful to the eye.

And they were in total oneness of soul and body as man and woman, never competing, never threatened, but reflecting the love of God and loving God together, worshipping him together.

They were in such close relationship with God and with such dignity, representing him, being image bearers in the world, they were so close to being God himself that God put one limit in place, a limit for them to enjoy so that they can remember the Lord is God and I am your people, we are your people.

[11 : 44] To quote the theologian Colin Buchanan, you can tell what we've got playing over and over in our car, that birds were made for flying, flip, flap, flippity flap, fish were made to swim, splish, splash, splish, splash, you and me were made by God to love and treasure him.

They knew that the Lord deserved their heart, soul, mind and strength and they were totally fulfilled giving it to him. I'm suggesting that must have felt a lot like play.

joy, or if you want a biblical word, joy, just pure joy. Enter the serpent.

Verse 1. Scripture later identifies this ancient serpent as the adversary of God, Satan. We're not told where he came from, how he fell, we want to know all that, but we're not told.

We don't need to know. It's possible that verse 1 isn't just a description but part of the deception. That coming in the form of a serpent, clearly underneath the authority as a creature to Adam and Eve.

[13 : 22] So maybe that was part of the deception. The main lesson here isn't in the action of taking and eating because that is very quickly dealt with in verse 5.

The focus is it slows down and concentrates on the conversation. This is where we need to learn the lesson of sin in the conversation that takes place. Don't be ignorant of Satan's schemes.

Learn them here. Understand the anatomy of temptation and what sin is. He doesn't outright suggest disobedience. That's obvious.

The best truths, as we all know, are half-truths. He invites Eve to question God's word. Notice from verse 1 to verse 2 that it goes from the name the Lord God back to just God.

Now maybe, maybe that's suggesting that Satan wants Eve, just forget God's personal covenant relational nature. Just forget that for a moment.

[14 : 32] Let's have a conversation here. Maybe that's what's going on. Now this should have been a very short conversation if Eve knew clearly and trusted what God had said.

But Satan is more precise with God's word, the actual word in here, than Eve was. First she minimises the provision of God.

She says we may eat of the fruit of the trees. But the Lord said you may surely eat of every tree. Maybe we shouldn't read into it too much but it sounds like she's already minimising the abundance that God has given, even the tree of life.

And then she adds to the prohibition. The Lord said you shall not eat the tree. She adds neither shall you touch it. She makes the Lord's limits sound more strict than he actually says.

And then she weakens the penalty, lest you die. When the Lord said you shall surely die. Literally it says in dying you shall die. So she minimises the provision, she makes God sound more strict and the penalty she reduces slightly.

[15 : 51] And having followed Satan into a position of placing herself in judgment over what God says she's ready for the outright lie. You shall not surely die.

There is no punishment for sin. There are no negative consequences. Or as many believe today, there is no judgment day.

There is no such thing as hell. There is no condemnation. Satan offers a different motive for this prohibition. It's not that the Lord is like a loving mother who says don't go in the pool and swim by yourself.

Don't do it. It's not a loving warning. It's he's holding back from you. He's holding the best life back from you.

He knows you can elevate yourself. You can choose what is good and bad for yourself. You don't have to be under his rule. You can be God. God is short-changing you.

[17 : 00] And if that's the case, disobedience doesn't feel so wrong. You're just chasing what is the best life. So we're getting to the essence of what sin is.

Whose word will you believe? God is holding back from you. Whose word?

The Lord who gives us life, who says that being under his rule brings life and peace and relationship, which is what we're made for.

Being under his rule is life. Or Satan's word, God is holding back from you. you can decide where life can be found.

You can make it happen yourself. You'll surely die. No, you will not die. There's no consequences.

[18 : 01] Someone is lying. Someone. the essence of sin is internal before she ever reaches.

It's completed by the act of disobedience, but the sin is internal. It's unbelief in what God says. It's believing a lie, not the truth, of where the good life is found, of where paradise is found.

But we've all swallowed this lie. Eve was deceived into believing it, but where was Adam? Verse 5 tells us he was with her.

He wasn't deceived. Why didn't he step in and speak up? Get stuffed, Satan. You say you are offering a better path to life, but you want to murder us.

You want us to see us dead. Why didn't he step in and say something? Where is he? He wasn't deceived. He ate willingly. He saw a clear line and he transgressed that line.

[19 : 21] Why so when you hear in scripture that Eve was deceived, Adam takes the full, he takes the primary responsibility there.

He transgressed a clear line in obedience to his wife rather than the Lord. In the history of mankind, every hero in the Bible, inverted commas hero, we see succumbing to these lies.

we need a champion, someone who will come and fight Satan's lies for us, a stronger man. And we do see that when we get to the New Testament.

Satan again twists God's word, worship me, don't go the path of the cross, bow down to me, I'll give you the whole world. But this stronger man trusts his father even to the point of death.

That stronger man has come, that champion has come. Well, whatever the tree of the knowledge of good and evil means, what is clear is that it's taking in one's own hands as a creature what only belongs to God.

[20 : 40] It's trying to invert God's order and be in charge without God. Satan was telling a half truth.

In their current state of innocence their eyes would be open. Their eyes were opened. There was a half truth there. But that gaining of knowledge of evil actually robbed them of innocence.

That grasp at a supposed better glory actually lowered them into shame. Immediately they no longer feel innocence but guilt and shame and they tried to cover it up.

They try and deal with it themselves. And here's where we see them dying this day.

Physically they die later but spiritually speaking they die. Verse 8 They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day and the man and his wife rejoiced.

[21 : 47] No not anymore. They hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Joy has been turned to fear. Seeing the face of God is turned into fear because of our guilt and shame.

But you can't hide. what you cannot hide from the Lord. Your sin will be exposed.

Every one of us will come face to face with our maker one day to give an account. Whatever pathetic attempts we are trying to remove our shame they're like fig leaves.

They don't work. The Lord will not accept them. The obvious ones just to name a few is we we try and win the approval of others with our beauty, with our power, with our wisdom.

We try and present well, putting on a front, putting on a mask from other people but it doesn't deal with the shame. The guilt and shame is still there and the Lord sees who we are and he sees what we've done.

[23 : 06] and like a prosecuting barrister the Lord asks questions that expose what they've done. They keep trying to hide. They shift the blame. It's the woman's fault.

Actually, Lord, it's your fault. You put her here. They're still trying to hide. And then she shifts the blame as well. It's the servant's fault.

None of them are taking ownership for their sin. They're still trying to hide it. But the Lord will have none of it. Eventually they confess, I did eat, yes.

You can't hide. We can't hide. Fear now replaces joy at the prospect of coming face to face with the Lord.

And then in verses 14 to 19, after seeing that fear separates us from God, we see the effects of sin on God's perfectly ordered world.

[24 : 14] Sin has thrown it all into chaos and darkness. We don't have time to go into all the detail, but I'm hoping to give you a framework to think about these verses, which you can go away and do some more study.

What this section is about is this is the new normal. It's not saying that if you sin in a particular way, then these will be the particular consequences for that sin.

It's saying, more or less, this is where we all live. Some of us will experience these things to a greater or lesser degree, but this is where we live, isn't it? the key word in here is toil.

It's just life is toil. It is a striving because we live amidst conflict and pain and death.

It's just toil. instead of a state of innocence before God, there is now a perpetual struggle between good and evil, between the serpent seed and mankind seed.

[25 : 26] Good and evil is a constant struggle. Each person is no longer in harmony within themselves, within their own body.

long before psychologists and Freud talked about fear, here it is in scripture, here's where our fear has come from. So even within our own body, between the Lord, there is no peace anymore.

Within ourselves, there is no peace anymore. Within the family and social relationships, that order has been broken. The woman's glory in bringing image bearers into the world is now tainted by pain.

pain. And that can be both emotional and physical. And between men and women, it's no longer harmonious worship of God and partnership, it is battling for control.

And then the relationship between mankind and nature is frustrated. Instead of abundance, it's barely making a living.

[26 : 35] And nature can even be the cause of pain and death, as we've seen on a large scale again this week with those earthquakes. And as warned, all people, without exception, have all these relationships, God and people, within themselves, man and man, people to people and people to nature.

All these relationships will come to an end when finally we turn to dust. God's love. While all people still bear the image of God, every person bears the image of God, I think it's Schaeffer who calls us majestic ruins.

God's God's God's God's goodness. This is probably feeling pretty heavy by this point. The effects of sin are bitter and just reality.

But don't miss God's goodness in here. There is so much grace and goodness in these verses. We'll come to the next section which we have a picture of hope, but even here, don't miss God's goodness.

God's love. Let me first ask, what tone are you imagining? It's very hard to work out tone in a written text, but what tone are you imagining?

[27 : 59] Are you imagining just harsh, critical, full of rage? Now, anger is very appropriate. Like, we've told the Lord to get stuffed, basically.

Anger is appropriate. But could it possibly, mixed without anger is a father weeping, longing for peace?

He wouldn't have wanted to turn his good world into this chaos. Now, again, it's hard to know tone, but I just, I want to raise the question.

Other ways to see God's goodness here, he warned. He had a loving warning. It's Satan who wants us to walk blindly into death. The Lord warns us again and again, don't go there.

He warns. He's patient. He could have just wiped out humanity. It's what they deserved. But he wants us to confess and turn back.

[29 : 02] He's patient. The punishment is righteous. It's just. He hands us over to the disorder that we craved. We wanted to break God's order and be God without him.

It's like Romans 1 says, a lot of God's judgment is just giving us what we want. Okay? You want to break the order? That is not going to go well.

And all the, all, everything is affected. And the Lord is righteous. He's not indifferent to evil.

It would be awful if God didn't care about evil. He punishes it. He will get rid of it. Another mercy here is that this state of things is not going to last forever.

He kicks Adam and Eve out of the garden so that they can't eat from the tree of life and live forever. That leaves the door open for redemption.

[30 : 02] another way is that he still graciously gives us food and there's still so many gifts of family and marriage and work.

Like, food is delicious, isn't it? We still get those moments of joy in relationships. It should astound us that we receive so many good things.

I know life is toil, it is toil, but we still get incredible gifts. Now in verse 15, he is gracious in that he gives a promise.

The struggle between good and evil will end one day. Satan will be crushed. He, a descendant of Eve, shall bruise your head. He's going to stand on your head and crush you.

And you shall bruise his heel. He will be wounded. He didn't, God didn't need to give that promise, but he did. From this point on, we're looking for that serpent head crusher.

[31 : 23] Is it going to be Cain? No, he crushes his brother instead. Succumbing to those lies again. And from this point on, we're looking and we're getting our hopes up.

Is it Noah? No. Is it Abraham? No. Is it Moses? No. Is it King David? No. And then finally, he does arrive.

The seventh way I think we see God's grace here is if we just step back from this section and ask, what's the purpose of telling us all this?

Like, why tell us that everything in chaos now is the result of sin? Why tell us this? I think the purpose here is that our daily toil, our daily struggle, should be a constant reminder that the root cause, the biggest problem, is our sin.

we've actually got a daily reminder. This is not how it should be. He wants us to remember that sin is the problem so that we confess and look to him to save us.

[32 : 50] So paradise is lost. And then in verses 20 to 24, even while man is being driven out of God's presence, out of the garden, there's hope in these verses.

We've already heard the promise of the serpent crusher. Some think in verse 20 that this is, so the man called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living.

Some see in that that that is an expression of faith. That life will continue and life will get the victory in the end.

Maybe. It seemed to be hopeful trusting in God to bring that about. And although the cherubim are put in place to guard the way back to the garden and the tree of life, that doesn't mean that it's permanently cut off.

We see the cherubim again in the tabernacle and temple. I think it's more saying if you are going to come back to the tree of life, it's got to be God's way. You can't come in any other way. God will prescribe a way.

[34 : 11] And then we get a picture of God's grace and the solution in verse 21. And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, animal skins and clothed them.

The Lord won't accept our pathetic efforts at covering our shame. He won't accept that. But in confessing, he graciously covers us.

This clothing is very different from the sinful attempt to hide your guilt because this clothing required death. It required a sacrifice.

It required blood. So by wearing this clothing, you're not hiding, you're confessing that animal should have been me. But not only is your guilt and shame dealt with, you're covered.

That innocence is restored. If you are to enter God's presence, having your relationship with him back in order, the Lord must clothe you.

[35 : 28] So Genesis 1-3 sets up what paradise is, how it's been lost by sin, so that we might not hide from God but confess our sin and look to God's grace to restore all things.

Now I want to finish by suggesting that there's three ways people try to seek paradise. There's three options. If the best thing about paradise is good health and long life and abundance of the place, harmony among people, then the message in Genesis 3 sounds like God is, I think it sounds like a needy bully who's going, I'm going to withhold paradise from you until you submit to me.

And if that's what you hear God saying, which I don't think is what he's saying, but if you think that's what he's saying, I'm going to withhold paradise until you submit to me, then either people are going to have one or two options.

Stuff that. I'm not submitting to God's rules. I don't need Jesus. I can make paradise myself. Working hard and I can do it.

So most of our society in Australia are trying that method. Or the religious among us will go, okay, I'll submit to God's rules and then you're going to keep your end of the bargain and give me that long life, that health, those good relationships, that prosperity, either in this life or in the life to come.

[37 : 19] Both are missing the point of paradise. what the essence of paradise is. One looks very religious, one looks like throwing God out of their lives, but both are equally missing it.

But here comes a third way. If the very best thing about paradise is to play with the Lord, I hope you don't mind that joy with the Lord, not fear, having restored relationship with him because you're designed to love and treasure him.

If he is the essence of paradise, then the message here in Genesis 3 is, look, see how destructive life is without me. confess your sin, stop trying to hide and trust in my goodness and I will deal with the problem.

I will restore things. So there's three ways. Two of them try and cover up the problem ourselves.

Two end in bitterness and despair because paradise feels so far away, it just doesn't work. But the Lord is urging us to a third way, the way of not hiding, trying to create paradise ourselves but confessing our sins, seeing the Lord himself as our treasure.

[38 : 52] If you want paradise in God's presence, let me tell you what you need from what we've heard in Genesis 1 to 3. Here's what you need. You need someone, and maybe it's yourself if you got tickets on yourself.

You need someone strong enough to crush Satan's head, to defeat evil and not believe his lies. You need someone to put the whole cosmos back in order.

Healing the relationship with us and God, healing people to people, healing people to the land healing within our own bodies. You need someone strong enough to put everything back in order.

And you need someone to actually deal with your guilt and shame, not just try and cover it up, but someone trustworthy enough that when you confess your sin, they won't reject you.

Someone who will actually take it for you and bear the curse for you and then give you their innocence so that you can enjoy the father again.

[40 : 11] That's a tall order. If you've lost hope in this life and don't know where to turn, it will not feel like it, but hopelessness in yourself and hopelessness in society in the world is actually the doorway to paradise because you stop looking to yourself and you start to look to God to be the solution.

And the good news is that descendant of Eve, that serpent crusher, has arrived. We're going to look to another tree. Galatians 3, 13 says, Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by the coming a curse for us.

For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree. You need to look to a different tree, someone to take your curse. You need to look to a different Adam.

Romans 5, 19, for as by one man's disobedience, Adam, the many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience, Christ, the many will be made righteous.

You need a different tree, you need a different Adam. And we have that in the Lord Jesus. So there's three ways for us to take, and it depends on what you think the very best part of paradise is, about which one you would try and strive to get.

[41 : 42] Where the third one isn't really striving, it's resting, it's receiving. Let me pray, let's pray. Father, I do pray that whatever circumstances we are in, that we would, no doubt, it is tainted by the curse of sin, and we feel the toil, deep in our bones.

And I pray that each one of us, that you would cause each of us to long for your solution, that you would help us to confess that sin has ruined it all, and that you would help us to see that it is our sin that robs us of the rest that you offer in the Lord Jesus Christ, of being restored in relationship with you.

Lord, I pray for those of us who don't know you, that you would urge them in their hopelessness to turn to Christ, and I pray for those of us who do know the rest we have in Christ, that you would help us to seek you more, and enjoy you more, and enter the struggle, the struggle against sin and the brokenness in this world with a deep sense of peace and the power of your presence and hope that you will restore all things.

Lord, make us a church that sees Jesus as our only solution and our greatest treasure. In his name we pray. Amen.