

Good goes Bad

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Preacher: Andrew Price

[0 : 00] Gracious Father, we do thank you again for your word, the Bible. We thank you that it helps us to understand who we are, and not only that, but where we live, the world in which we live.

Father, we pray now that you would help us to understand your word so that we can understand our world and look to the solutions that we need. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, again, can I say Happy Mother's Day to all those mums out there? I'm not sure how you did this morning. For one mum last year, her Mother's Day started off quite well.

She got a sleep in, which was a good start. Then the kids made breakfast in bed, and then she got some presents as well. But then her good day started to go bad.

The husband's present came last, and it was an iron. Not quite what she had hoped for. And then when she got to the kitchen, after getting out of bed, the bench was covered in mess.

[0 : 57] The husband had disappeared, and the kids had started fighting. What started off as a good day suddenly went bad. This seems to be our experience, doesn't it? Well, I take another family.

A couple of years ago, went full-wheel driving on Fraser Island. It started off as a great day on the beach. They parked the car, went swimming, and even did some fishing. But when they came back to their car, on the next slide, this is what they found.

The car had sunk in the sand. Oh, even more seriously, some friends of ours, this was about three years ago now, came and visited us here in Melbourne and had a great holiday.

And when they got home, they found out that the 40-year-old mother had breast cancer. She's fine now, but at the time, their good day went bad. Why is it in this life there are so many ups and downs, whether it's our health, our relationships, our experiences?

Why is there such suffering and pain mixed with joy and pleasure? Why can people do such evil and good? Why do good things always seem to go bad at some point?

[2 : 04] Well, the answer to all these questions is our chapter today. If we want to understand the world as we know it, then we need to understand Genesis 3. For it's here that God's good creation goes bad for the very first time in history.

And we feel the effects still today. But we also need to understand Genesis 3 so that we'll look for the right solution to life in this world today. So let's take a look at Genesis 3, and it begins with temptation and sin.

Point 1 on your outlines and verse 1 in your Bibles. Now the serpent 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? Here in verse 1, we are introduced to a new character in the garden, the serpent.

And notice the serpent is an animal, one of the animals made by God. And it is called crafty, but the word crafty is literally shrewd or clever.

[3 : 09] In other words, the serpent is part of God's good creation. Sin has not come into the world yet. And yet this serpent now uses its shrewdness to tempt Eve.

We don't know why, but we do know that this serpent is later identified as Satan. As on the next slide, we read from Revelation chapter 12, that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan who leads the whole world astray.

And it seems he begins here in Genesis 3. For that is what he does to Eve. He leads her astray by firstly questioning God's word. He says, did God really say?

He questioned God's word. And then he twists God's word by saying you must not eat when God said you are free to eat. So have a look at the next slide and let me show you the contrast.

This is what God said in chapter 2 verse 16. You are free to eat from any tree in the garden. He eats at one. But notice how Satan has twisted God's word. You must not eat from any tree in the garden.

[4 : 17] He's put a negative spin on it, you see. And by doing so, he tempts the woman to doubt God's goodness. So verse 2 and 3. The woman said to the serpent, we may not.

Sorry, 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.

And now notice here in verse 2, the woman leaves out the words free and any. Instead of saying, oh, you silly snake. God said we're free to eat from any tree we like except one.

She subtly begins to doubt God's goodness and limits God's generosity saying, oh, we may eat from trees, but not one. She leaves out the words free and any to kind of limit God's generosity. And then in verse 3, she actually twists God's word. She adds to God's word. Did you notice? Eve adds, and we must not touch it or we will die.

[5 : 19] But God never said anything about touching the tree. So instead of highlighting God's goodness and generosity, she doubts it and then actually twists God's word herself.

But you see, this is what Satan does. He causes us to doubt God's goodness by questioning and twisting God's word. And by speaking half-truths as well.

You see verse 4? You will not certainly die, the serpent said to the woman. For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Now remember, while there are hundreds of trees in the garden, there were two special ones. The tree of life from which they could eat and live, have eternal life, effectively live forever.

And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from which they were forbidden to eat. So they didn't die. I'm not sure why people always draw the forbidden tree as the apple tree. Maybe because it's quicker to say apple tree than the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[6 : 20] Either way, if they ate from it, they would die. And yet, Satan says they won't. Now, this is actually a half-truth. Because it is true, they won't physically die straight away.

Will they? After all, in chapter 5, we read that Adam lives to be 930 years old. Imagine that. Yet, God is still right.

They will die. God had simply not said when they would die. Nor had God said how they would die. Whether it was spiritual death cast out of God's presence or physical death from old age.

And so Satan speaks a half-truth here, which of course is really a lie. But you see, half-truths make the best lies, don't they? And that's again how Satan works.

Questioning and twisting God's word and speaking half-truths, which misrepresent God's word. This is how he tempted or tried to tempt Jesus in the wilderness. This is how he tempts us today.

[7 : 25] So that we might doubt God's goodness. End up twisting God's word or rejecting it for ourselves. You see, Satan whispers things like, Oh, God wants our good.

So surely he wants us to be rich in this life. Well, kind of, no. Half-truth. Or, God is a God of love. True. And then Satan whispers, So surely sex before marriage or homosexuality is fine as long as we love each other.

People have used that argument. Or, God loves all people, so surely he won't judge anyone. Here are three half-truths, which are in the end lies.

But there are Christians today who have believed every single one of them. And they've even twisted God's word to defend them. But the Bible says for Christians, we can actually resist the devil's lies.

Indeed, for a Christian, the only power he has over us is the power we give him when we believe his lies. The difficulty about his lies, though, is that they often sound attractive, don't they?

[8 : 31] Eating the forbidden fruit sounded attractive to Adam and Eve. As Satan says in verse 5, it will make them like God. Wow, that's attractive. And in verse 6, the fruit looks pleasing to the eye.

It's attractive. And it is desirable for gaining wisdom. It's attractive. I saw a slightly amusing cartoon on the next slide where Adam says, Why couldn't the forbidden fruit have been broccoli?

Although I suspect even broccoli would have been pleasing to the eye back then. And again, it's the same today, is it not? So those examples I just mentioned, being rich in this life, is attractive.

It is. Expressing our sexuality any way we like sounds attractive. Having everyone go to heaven sounds attractive. You see, Satan speaks half-truths that are attractive to us.

That's what makes them so tempting. And that will cause us to doubt God's goodness and even twist God's word. But as attractive as these sound, to give in to such temptation is to sin and wreak havoc.

[9 : 37] And that's what happens next. Verse 6. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.

She also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate it. And so sin enters the world. Adam and Eve go against God's word and sin.

Sin is to ignore what God says and do what you say as though you are God. It's why the one tree they could not eat from was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Because to eat from this tree was to be like God, who doesn't just know about good and evil, but chooses what is good and evil. To eat from this tree meant that it would be like God and choose for themselves what is right and wrong and how they would live.

This is the essence of sin. It's ignoring God and us playing God. Choosing for ourselves what is right and wrong and how we'll live instead of listening to God.

[10 : 48] It's why I often write the word sin like this on the next slide with a capital I. Because sin is about I for ignoring God and making I myself God.

Where I choose how I will live. In the words of old Blue Eyes Frank Sinatra, I did it my way. And when we do this, it shows that we don't trust God, doesn't it?

And so we doubt God's goodness, that his way is the best way. It's why being a Christian is all about trust. Trust. For trust means we'll let God be God. Trust means we'll let God decide what is good and evil, right and wrong for us.

And not let ourselves or even our culture decide. Trust means we'll say, God, you know better than I do, so I'll live your way. Trusting that you have my good in mind, even if I can't see it.

Even if my culture denies it. Trust. And even if the alternative looks more attractive than it. But Adam and Eve don't trust. And so they don't obey.

[11 : 53] Instead, they doubt. And then they sin. And by doing so, the whole created order is reversed. Remember in chapter 2 last week, we saw that God is the God who creates.

And he created Adam and Eve as equal but different. Where Adam was created first with a servant headship and the responsibility for ruling. And Eve was created second as the indispensable helper.

Adam could not rule without her. So both are equal in worth. And they were to rule together in complementary ways over creation, over animals. And so the next slide is a kind of picture of the created order.

But do you notice here in Genesis 3, that order is now flipped. So on the next slide, it actually looks like this. Suddenly the animal is calling the shots, the serpent, and tempting the woman.

And then the woman calls the shots by giving to the husband. And then the man calls the shots by ignoring God. As one commentator said, the woman listens to the serpent, the man listens to the woman, and no one listens to God.

[12 : 53] But this temptation and sin not only reverses the created order, it leads to all sorts of problems like shame and blame.

I point to verse 7. Then, after sin, then the eyes of both of them were open, and they realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

See, after sinning, they then realized they were naked and covered themselves. Why? Because they are now ashamed. Do you remember the last verse of chapter 2? Last verse of chapter 2?

There we read they were naked and felt no shame. Why? Because there was complete innocence before God and openness with each other.

It's like when kids are really little and, you know, you're brothers and sisters and they have a bath together. I don't know if this ever happened to you or you've done it with your kids. It happened to me when I was younger. There was four of us, and they just, mum and dad throw us all in kind of thing.

[13 : 54] And there's no, we're naked, but there's no shame, right? Because there's this innocence of youth. And then your parents take a photo and bring it out at your 21st, and then there's shame.

But Adam and Eve were innocent, not an innocence of youth, but an innocence of sin. And so they could be naked and have no shame.

But now that they have sinned, there is shame. That's why they cover up. And this shame not only signals guilt instead of innocence, it also signals brokenness instead of openness.

You see, they cover themselves before even God arrives. They cover themselves in each other's presence as though it's no longer openness between each other.

There's brokenness. And as we'll see, they blame each other. Or at least the man blames the woman. And this covering up in shame not only means guilt and brokenness between them, it also means guilt and brokenness between God.

[14:55] Have a look at verse 8. And 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?

He answered, I heard you in the garden and I was afraid. Why? Because I was naked. So I hid. And God said, Who told you that you were naked?

Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from? When they hear God walking in the garden, Do they get excited about catching up with their creator?

Going from a bushwalk or an elephant ride or the hundred other things they could have done? No. They hide. Why? Because they were naked and now shamed.

And that shame meant they were afraid. You see, again, there is shame like a little child who knows they've done the wrong thing and so hides from a parent. Adam and Eve hide now from God out of shame and fear.

[16:01] And to hide from God instead of enjoying God's company? Well, surely that's a sign that your relationship is now different. It's broken. They've become spiritually dead.

And by the end of the chapter, they are banished from God's presence in the garden. Unable to come back. And is this not true of people today? People would rather hide or ignore God out of shame rather than face God?

I mean, why is it when a Christian is entangled in sin that they don't like to come to church or meet with other Christians? Why is that? Is it because their guilt and shame means it's easier to hide from God than face God?

And why do non-Christians react so aggressively to any talk of God? Well, could it be that the darkness does not like the light? To admit there is a God is to admit that we are guilty of not following him.

And that means shame. And so it's easier just to not to think about it. To cover it all up and hide from the truth. Adam and Eve's sin means they're now ashamed.

[17:08] And so they cover up and hide from God. And because we don't like to be ashamed, then we tend to blame others for our actions, don't we? That's what they do.

Verse 12. Adam blames the woman.

Typical bloke. It's the woman's fault. But notice he also blames God. He says, the woman you put here with me. I mean, that's astonishing, is it not?

God, it's your fault for giving me all this goodness. But of course, it's Adam's fault. It was his responsibility to rule under God.

Which is why God addresses Adam first, before Eve, in verse 9 and again in verse 11. And it's why in our second reading, Paul says sin came into the world, not through Eve, but through the one man, Adam.

[18:11] But Adam blames Eve and then he blames God. And Eve blames the serpent. And the serpent, well, the serpent says nothing because he was not given the responsibility to rule like the man or to help rule like the woman.

And again, this blaming rings true today, does it not? We all suffer from what I call Genesis 3 syndrome, where it's never our fault, but it's someone else's. Kids often blame their brother or sister.

We adults blame others too. I remember I forgot to pick up the children from school. I think it was last year. And my automatic response was, Michelle, you didn't remind me. All the while, the school pickup roster was on the fridge behind me with my name in bold.

We are all great at blaming others and even blaming God. I mean, even non-Christians will use this one. I've heard people say, I can't believe in a God who would allow suffering in this world.

And what they're really saying is, it's God's fault, I don't believe, because he didn't make this world perfect. But he did make it perfect. Suffering in this world is our fault because of sin.

[19 : 19] But the worst part about Genesis 3 syndrome is that it all leads to judgment and death, point three. And here God addresses each character as they appeared in the first part of the chapter. And he addresses them as he does so.

He puts them back in his created order, but this time with pain. See verse 14? So the Lord God said to the serpent, 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 hostility or enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers.

He will crush your head and you will strike his heel. Here the serpent is put back in his created place as one of the animals. But now with a curse.

That curse includes humiliation. He is below all other animals represented by crawling on his belly and figuratively eating dust. And with humiliation comes hostility or enmity between the serpent and the woman.

[20 : 23] Between the serpent's child and her child. Now this could refer to the fact that most people don't like snakes. Although there's very nice people in our 1030 congregation who have a pet snake. Not my cup of tea, but they think it's great.

But I wonder if there's something more than that going on here. Remember the serpent represents Satan. And the word for offspring here refers to a single child. So when it says the woman's child will crush this serpent's head, Satan's head.

I wonder if it points to a descendant of Eve. Who will crush Satan's head after Satan strikes his heel. And so as we go on in Genesis, we look for this child of Eve who will crush Satan's head. Which is partly why Genesis has so much genealogy in it. Looking for this descendant. Because the writer is tracing the family line of the one who will be the head crusher.

Of course, we know that one becomes the Lord Jesus. But either way, the serpent is put back and it's created in order. But now with humiliation, hostility and the promise of having its head crushed one day.

[21 : 32] And the woman, well, verse 16. And to the woman God said, I will make your pains in childbearing very severe. With painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.

The woman was created as the indispensable helper for Adam. And the unique way in which she helped rule. And not the only way, but one of the unique ways that only women can do.

Was to have children to fill the earth. We saw in Genesis 1 that ruling meant also other things. Like seducing the world and working the ground and caring for it.

So women can do all those things as well. It's not as though you have to have children to be a woman. No, that's not what God's saying. But God singles out this unique way, it seems, to remind Eve of her unique role as the indispensable helper.

And notice it now comes with pain. Having children was meant to be a joy, but now it's a pain. Giving birth is a pain. But actually raising them is joy and pain.

[22 : 36] And what's more in marriage, there is now pain too. To love and to cherish is replaced in verse 16 with to desire and to dominate. It's hard to know exactly what the picture is here.

But either way, there is now tension and pain in marriage. And it expresses itself, most sadly of course, in domestic violence. You see, this still rings true today, does it not?

God is putting back his created order, but now because of sin, it comes with pain. And the man, well, verse 17, A man's created role was to rule.

By working the ground and caring for it. And now God puts him back in this order. And yet again, it comes with pain. For now the ground is cursed, which means it produces painful things like thorns and thistles.

And much worse, like natural disasters and diseases. And so the man's work will be hard and painful. And again, it's true today, is it not? Work is not always easy and enjoyable.

[24 : 08] That's why we have Monday-itis. We don't always look forward to going to work.

Sometimes we get sick, which makes work even harder. And after working and toiling by the sweat of our brow, what will happen to us?

Well, we'll return to the ground. And very few of us and our work will ever be remembered. You see, God puts back his created order. But now because of sin, it comes with pain.

What's more, our sin means banishment from God's presence and from life eternal. See verse 20 to 24. Adam named his wife Eve because she became 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.

And 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.

[25 : 17] Now, here I need to point out there are still signs of grace. I mean, God clothes them, which is an act of grace. He also curses the serpent and the ground.

He does not curse people. He still loves them. There's a bit of a little sign of grace. There's the promise back in verse 15 that someone will crush the serpent's head, which is a sign of grace. And even the fact that he won't let humanity live forever in one level is a sign of grace. I mean, can you imagine Hitler living forever or Mugabe living forever?

But yet it's all very depressing stuff, isn't it? Happy Mother's Day. But as depressing as it is, this chapter helps us to understand life in this world.

Why good goes bad. And we need to understand why so that we look for the right solution. It's like we need to get the right diagnosis so that we can get the right medical care, if you like.

[26 : 18] You see, people, even some Christians, think we can fix our creation, our pain and death, if we simply reduce carbon emissions enough or boost education enough or advance in medical research enough or reform political structures enough.

They say if we do enough of that, we can make the world better again. Now, please don't mishear me. Those are all good things to do.

And doing good is a big part of being a Christian. We ought to engage in those. But it's not the long-term solution. It doesn't deal with the issue of sin.

Our world is broken and we cannot fix it or stop the suffering and death of people in it. Why? Well, because of sin.

God is the one who has actually rightly cursed the ground. So no matter how hard we try, this creation is never going to be fixed. And because of sin, God is actually the one who brought judgment on people.

[27 : 21] So no matter how hard we try, suffering and pain will never be fixed. And because of sin, God is the one who has justly cast us out from his presence and life eternal.

And so no matter how hard we try, death will never be fixed. Unless, that is, our sin is dealt with. Then the curse and judgment can be lifted and death can be conquered.

You see, the solution to good going bad is not more human achievements, like we hear in the press and the media and even as some Christians say. No, the solution, the real solution, is someone who will deal with sin.

And so lift the judgment. The solution is someone who will crush the serpent's head and so lift the curse. The solution is a new Adam who will bring us back into God's presence and give us life eternal again.

I hope it's not hard for you to see that the real solution is Christ. Are we ready in our second reading this on the next slide? Where Paul contrasts what happens through the one man Adam and the one man Christ.

[28 : 30] I just picked up the second paragraph there. For just as through the disobedience of the one man Adam in the garden, the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man Christ, the many will be made righteous and given life eternal again.

You see, the one act of Christ was his death at the cross. For there Jesus paid for our sins so that God could make us right, bring us back into his presence, give us life eternal again.

New spiritual life now with him. A new physical life later in a new creation. At the cross, Christ paid for sin so that the curse of creation can be lifted when Christ returns.

Romans 8 says when Jesus returns, creation will be freed from its bondage to decay. Creation is not getting better, it's getting worse. Until Christ returns.

At the cross, Jesus paid for our sins so that God could lift the judgment on us that brought us pain and suffering. So that he can raise us again, help us conquer death, and enjoy new creation with no more pain and suffering.

[29 : 41] Genesis 3 reminds us that because of sin, we live in a broken world that we cannot fix, and the only real solution is Christ. Only he is the one who helps us get through the bad days and

gives us hope for the day to come.

It's why we here at HCD, our priority, I think, is rightly the Lord Jesus Christ. Helping people come to him and grow in him. We should still do good in the world, but we are especially to point people to Christ.

For he is the one who removes the curse and judgment of this life, so that we can have new spiritual life now, and new physical life later. And so the first question for us this morning is, have you come to Christ?

Have you put your trust in him? He is the only real solution for life in this broken world. And for us who have, then we are to keep trusting in him and his way to live.

Letting Christ be king, who chooses for us what is right and wrong. How we are to live. Not ourselves, not our culture. We are to keep praying to God through Christ for help to resist temptation and sin.

[30 : 49] And we are to keep coming to Christ for forgiveness when we don't resist. And we'll unpack more of that next week, but for now I need to finish. On the last slide is a storybook called Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day.

I remember reading this to one of our children, who said, at least he doesn't have to share a room, as though her life was worse. And in this world we will all have terrible, no good days, because of this terrible, no good day in Genesis 3, where sin entered our world.

But in Christ we have help and hope during these bad days. And in Christ, all the good that has gone bad will one day come good again.

And so we're to keep clinging to Christ. Let's pray. Our gracious Father, we do thank you for your word to us this morning, which reminds us why we live in the world that we live in, and points us to Christ, the only real solution.

And so far we pray that you would help us to keep clinging to Christ. We ask it in his name. Amen. Let's pray.