

Good goes Bad

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[0 : 00] Well, again, can I say happy Mother's Day to the mums out there? I'm not sure how you've done today, but for one mum last year, her Mother's Day started off quite good. She was given a sleep in, then her kids made her breakfast in bed, and then she got some presents.

It was a good day, and then it actually started to go bad because the husband's present came last, and it was an iron. It's not what she was hoping for.

And then when she made it into the kitchen, the mess was still all over the kitchen. The husband had disappeared, and the kids had started fighting. What started off as a good day suddenly went bad.

I'll take another family. Some years ago, they went forward driving on Fraser Island. It started off a great day on the beach. They parked their car, went swimming, and even did some fishing. But when they came back to their car in the afternoon, this is what they returned to on the next slide. Sunk in the sand. Even more seriously, I think it was three years ago, four years ago, some friends of ours visited us in Melbourne, had a great holiday, and when they got home, the mother, 40-year-old mother, had some results come back which confirmed she had serious breast cancer.

[1 : 13] She is still alive today, thanks be to God. But why is it that good things always go bad? Why is it that in life there are so many ups and downs, whether it's our relationships, our health, or our experiences?

Why is there such suffering and pain mixed with joy and pleasure? Why do people do so many good things, and yet at the same time are capable of so many bad things?

Why do good things always seem to go bad at some point? The answer to all those questions, of course, is our chapter today. If we want to understand the world as we know it, then we need to understand Genesis chapter 3.

For it's here that God's good creation goes bad for the very first time in history. And so we feel the effects of it 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.

In other words, we need the correct diagnosis, so that we can get the correct treatment. So let's begin looking at Genesis chapter 3, which begins with the temptation and sin, point 1 on your outline and verse 1 in your Bible.

[2 : 29] And 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 we're introduced to a new character in the garden, the serpent. And notice the serpent is an animal made by God. It is called crafty, but the word crafty is literally shrewd or clever.

In other words, the serpent seems to be part of God's good creation. And yet this serpent now uses its shrewdness to tempt Eve. We don't know why.

We don't know the mechanics behind that and why this happened. But we do know that this serpent is later identified as Satan. So on the next slide in Revelation chapter 12, we read that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

And that's what he does here. He begins to leave Eve astray by questioning and twisting God's word. So he questions God's word by saying, Did God really say?

[3 : 36] You know, planting seeds of doubt. And then he twists God's word by saying, Did God really say you must not eat of any tree in the garden? And when in fact, God had said, You are free to eat from any tree in the garden.

So on the next slide is the contrast between what God actually said and what Satan says. And you notice how he twists God's word around and puts a negative spin on it.

You see, he questions and twists God's word. And by doing so, he tempts Eve to doubt God's goodness. See verse two. The woman said to the serpent, We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden.

But God did say we 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. So you notice in verse two, how the woman leaves out the words free to eat any tree.

It misses the words free and any. You know, Eve could have said, Oh, you silly snake. God said we're free to eat from any tree we like in the garden except one. But she doesn't say that.

[4 : 43] It seems like she's starting to doubt because she just simply says, Oh, we may eat trees in the garden, but not that one. And this doubt from doubt of God's generosity and goodness leads her to twist God's word herself.

So in verse three, she actually adds to God's word. Did you notice that? Eve actually adds and we must not touch it. God never said anything about that, about touching the tree.

So instead of highlighting God's goodness and generosity, Eve starts to doubt it and twist God's word herself. But you see, this is what Satan does.

He calls us to doubt God's goodness by questioning and twisting God's word. And by speaking half truths. So look at verse four and five. You will not certainly die.

The serpent said to the woman, For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be open and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. Now, remember, while there were hundreds of trees in the garden, there was two special ones.

[5 : 49] The tree of life from which they could eat and live forever, have eternal life effectively. And the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from which they were forbidden to eat, unless they die.

I'm not sure why people always draw the forbidden tree as the apple tree. Maybe it's just quicker to say apple tree than the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. I'm not sure. Either way, if they ate from it, they would die.

And yet Satan says they won't. Now, this is, you know, a kind of half truth, because it is true they won't physically die straight away, will they?

In fact, chapter five tells us that Adam lived to be 930 years old. Imagine that. And yet, it's not true that they will never die, because they will.

God has simply said, not when. It's not said when they would die, nor has God said how they would die, whether it was a spiritual death, you know, cast out of God's presence, or a physical death, dying from old age.

[6 : 50] And so Satan speaks a half truth, which, of course, is really, in the end, a lie. But you see, half truths make the best lies, don't they? And that's, again, how Satan works.

You know, questioning and twisting God's word and speaking half truths which misrepresent God's word. And this is how he tried to tempt Jesus to sin in the wilderness.

And this is how he tempts us today, that we might doubt God's goodness and end up twisting or even rejecting God's word ourselves. Satan whispers things like, you know, half truths, like, God wants our good, so surely he wants us to be rich in this life.

It's a half truth. Or, more controversially, God is a God of love, so surely sex before marriage or homosexuality is fine as long as we love each other.

Or, God loves all people, so surely he won't judge anyone. Here are half truths, aren't they? Which, in the end, are, of course, lies.

[7 : 59] But there are Christians today who have believed every single one of them and even twisted God's word themselves to defend them. But the Bible says, for Christians, we can resist the devil. Indeed, for Christians, the only power he has over us are lies.

The difficulty about his lies, of course, is that they always sound attractive. 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 verse 6, the fruit itself is pleasing to the eye. It looks attractive and desirable for gaining wisdom. Sounds 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? Those examples I just mentioned about being rich in life, that's attractive. Expressing our sexuality any way we like sounds attractive.

[9 : 02] Having everyone go to heaven, that's attractive. And yet, Satan speaks half-truths that are attractive to us so that we will cause us to doubt God's goodness and reject God's word, that we give in to temptation and sin.

And that's what happens in 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 she ate it. Here, Adam and Eve go against God's word and sin. Sin enters the world.

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 one tree was to be like God, who not just knows about what is good and evil, but determines what is good and evil. To eat from this tree meant they would be acting like God and choosing for themselves what is right and wrong and how to live.

[10 : 13] That's the essence of sin. It's ignoring God and playing God. It's choosing for ourselves what is right and wrong and how we'll live instead of listening to God.

That's why I often write the word sin like this on the next slide with a capital I. Because sin is about ignoring. I for ignoring God and making I myself God.

You know, 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 we don't trust, doesn't it? We doubt God's goodness instead, that his way is the best way. It's why being a Christian is all about trust.

For trust means we'll let God be God, even if we don't fully understand. A trust means we'll let God decide what is good and evil, right and wrong, and not let ourselves decide or even our culture decide.

[11 : 16] A trust means we'll say, look, God, you know better than me, so I'll live your way. Trusting you have my good in mind, even if I can't see it, even if my culture denies it, and even if the alternative is more attractive than it.

But Adam and Eve don't trust, and so they don't obey. Instead, they doubt, and so they sin. And by doing so, the whole created order is reversed.

Chapter 2, we saw that God is the God who creates. And so on the next slide, there's this created order. He created Adam and Eve as equal but different, where Adam was created first with this servant headship and the responsibility of ruling, and Eve was created second as the indispensable helper.

Adam could not rule without her. And so both are equal in worth, and they were to rule together in complementary ways over animals. I know there's different views about this, but it seems pretty clear to me from these chapters.

And so this seems to be the order, but here in Genesis 3, on the next slide, the order is reversed.

The serpent, the animal, seems to be calling all the shots, doesn't he? And then the woman gives to the man, and then the man ignores God.

[12 : 29] As one commentator notes, the woman listens to the serpent, the man listens to the woman, and no one listens to God. But this temptation of sin not only reverses the created order, it also leads to shame and blame.

Point two, verse seven. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, 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 so they cover themselves up. Why?

Well, because there is now shame. Remember the end of chapter two last week?

There we read at the end of chapter two, they were naked and felt no shame. Why? Well, because there was this complete innocence before God, and openness with each other.

It's kind of like when you're kids, and you're really little kids, and your parents all throw you in the bath with your brothers and sisters together. And my parents did this, there was four of us, and they kind of threw us in the bath together. And we were clearly all naked, but there was no shame, because there was this innocence of youth.

[13 : 35] And then your parents took a photo and brought it out at your 21st, and then there was shame. But Adam and Eve, they didn't have an innocence of youth, but they had an innocence of sin.

And so they could be naked, and there was no shame, there's no guilt. But now that they have sinned, there is guilt. There is shame. And so 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 in each other's presence before God even arrives on the scene.

And so they're kind of ashamed of each other now. Their relationship has changed. And in fact, as we'll see, Adam then blames Eve later on. There's brokenness.

And not just brokenness between each other, but also brokenness with God. You see 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.

[14:37] But when the Lord God called to the man, where are you? 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 that I commanded you not to eat from? You see, they hear God walking, and what do they do? Do they get excited about catching up with their creator, having a bit of a chat, going for a bushwalk together, perhaps an elephant ride, or the hundreds of other things they could have done in the garden?

No. They do none of that. Instead, they hide. Why? Because they are naked. And so they're ashamed and afraid. They're ashamed now.

Like a child who knows they've done the wrong thing, and so hides from a parent. So also, Adam and Eve hide from God out of shame and fear. And to hide from God instead of enjoying God's company, well, that's surely got a signal that there's a change in the relationship, doesn't it?

It's broken. They become spiritually dead. And by the end of the chapter, they are removed or banished from God's presence in the garden, unable to come back. And is this not true of people today?

[15:49] Are people who would rather hide or ignore God than face God? I mean, if a Christian is caught in sin, then often, and not always, but often they won't come to church because they're ashamed and it's easier to hide from God and fellow Christians than to face God and fellow Christians.

And why do some non-Christians, not all, but why do some non-Christians react so aggressively to any talk about God? Well, because the darkness does not like the light. To admit there is a God is to admit that we are guilty of not following God.

And that means shame. And no one likes that. So it's just easier to hide from all that, to not think about it, to cover it all up. Hide from the truth.

Adam and Eve's sin means they're now ashamed and so cover up and hide from God. And because we don't like to be ashamed, we tend to blame others instead. Do you see verse 12? 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 it that you have done? And the woman said, The serpent deceived me and I ate it. Like a typical bloke, Adam blames the woman, it's her fault.

[17:03] But notice, he also blames God, doesn't he? He says, The woman you put here with me did this. I mean, it's astonishing when you think about it. It's your fault, God, for giving me all this goodness.

It's a perverse kind of logic, isn't it? But of course, it's Adam's fault. It was his responsibility to rule under God, which is why God addresses Adam first in verse 9 and verse 11.

That's why in our second reading, Paul says that sin came through the world, not through one woman, but one man, Adam. But Adam, instead of taking responsibility, blames Eve and then 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 man or help rule like the woman. And again, this blaming rings true today, does it not?

This is a description of our world, is it not? We all suffer from what I call Genesis 3 syndrome when it's never our fault, it's always someone else's. Our kids often blame their brother or sister.

[18:12] Not in my household, of course. And we adults do as well. I remember I forgot to pick up the girls from school one day and my automatic response to Michelle was, you didn't remind me.

And behind me on the fridge was the roster of the car pickup and my name in bold. We're all great at blaming others. And we're even great at blaming God.

You know, Christians, how can life be like this? How did God, it's God's fault we're in this position? Even non-Christians will use this blame. I've heard people say, I can't believe in a God who would allow suffering in the world when what they're really saying is it's God's fault I don't believe because he didn't make a perfect world.

But he did. Suffering in this world is not God's fault, it's our fault because of sin. And the worst part about Genesis 3 syndrome is that it all leads to judgment and death.

Point three. 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 now with pain.

[19:19] Have a look at 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, with pain.

This curse includes humiliation. He's below all the animals represented by crawling on his belly and figuratively eating dust. And this humiliation comes with hostility between the serpent and the woman, between the serpent's offspring and the woman's offspring.

Now this could refer to the fact that most people don't like snakes although we have a lovely couple in our service today who have a pet snake but I wonder therefore if something else is going on here. Remember the serpent is 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 I wonder if it points us to a descendant of Eve who will crush Satan's head after Satan strikes his heel.

[20:39] And so as we go on in Genesis we look for this child of Eve who will crush the serpent's head which is partly why Genesis has so many genealogies because the writer is tracing the family line of the one who will be the head crusher.

But either way the serpent is put back in his created place but with humiliation and with hostility and with the promise of having his head crushed.

And the woman well verse 16 to the woman he said I will make your pains in childbearing very severe with painful labour you will give birth to children your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.

Remember the woman was created as the indispensable helper for Adam and the unique way in which as she helped not the only way but the unique way to women in which she could help rule was through children.

Only women can do this. Of course women can do lots of other things as well. After all we saw ruling involved not just filling the earth with people but also subduing it working it and caring for it.

[21:47] Women can do all those things. It's not as though you have to have children to be a woman but God singles out this unique way it seems to remind Eve of her unique role as the helper.

But notice it now comes with pain. Having kids was meant to be a joy but now it's a pain or giving birth that is is a pain. Raising them is well actually it's a mixture of joy and pain isn't it?

What's more in marriage there's also pain to love and to cherish becomes to desire and dominate. It's hard to know exactly what's going on here but it's certainly going to mean tension in marriage now doesn't it?

From tension in little ways to tension in big ways and sadly even domestic violence that we see today. You see God puts back his created order but because of sin it comes with pain and the man well verse 17 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 cursed is the ground because of you through painful toil you will eat food 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 man's created role was to work by sorry rule the world by working it and caring for it and now God puts him back in this order but now again with pain for now the ground is cursed which means it produces painful things like thorns and thistles and worse like natural disasters and diseases and so the man's work will be hard and painful and again this is true today is it not work is not always easy and enjoyable you know how many of you out there can't wait to get up tomorrow morning and go to work and

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 will turn 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 our banishment from God's presence and from life eternal see verse 20 to 24

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 come after he drove the man out he placed on the east side of the garden of Eden cherubim with a flashing sword sorry flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life now there are signs of grace and God's kindness here I mean God closed them in verse 21 there's the promise of someone who will crush the serpent's head back in verse 15 there's the fact that God only curses the serpent and the ground he doesn't curse people and even the fact that people are not going to live forever is at one level a sign of grace

[25 : 15] I mean can you imagine Hitler or Mugabe living forever that would be horrible so there are signs of grace but the overwhelming tone here is one of judgment and death it's all very depressing 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 can look for the right solution we need the correct diagnosis so that we can get the correct treatment you see people even some Christians think that if we we can fix our creation and pain and death if we reduce carbon emissions enough or if we boost education enough or if we have enough medical research advances in medical research or reform political structures enough they say if we do enough we can make the world better again now please don't mishear me those things are all good things to do and doing good is a big part of being a Christian so we should get involved in those things it's just they're not the long-term solution or even the real solution our world is broken and we cannot fix it no matter how hard we try we cannot stop the suffering and death of people in it why well because of sin

God is actually the one who's cursed the ground so no matter how hard we try this creation is not going to be fixed and because of sin God is the one who justly brought judgment on people 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 from his presence and life eternal and so no matter how hard we try death will never be fixed unless of course sin is dealt with so that 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 it's someone who will deal with sin and lift the curse of judgment and that someone of course is Jesus on the next slide is the verses from Romans chapter 5 that we heard in our second reading today and just look at the second one for just as through the disobedience of one man Adam the many were made sinners so also through the obedience of the one man Jesus the many will be made righteous

Christ's obedience to death on a cross means that our sin can be dealt with that we can be brought back into God's presence and be given life eternal again and what's more Jesus will return to lift the curse of creation completely so that it's no longer in bondage to decay and Jesus will lift the judgment that brought us pain and suffering help us conquer death and enjoy the new creation with no more pain and no more suffering see Genesis 3 that reminds us that because of sin we live in a broken world that we cannot fix and so the only real solution is Jesus Christ he's the one he alone is the one who helps us live each day helps us to resist temptation and sin he alone is the one who gives us hope for the future so that we can keep living each day in this broken world that's why we here at HCD have a priority rightly I think on the Lord

Jesus Christ helping people come to know him and grow in him we are still to do what we can for creation and help one another we're still to be loving and do good but we are especially to point people to Christ he is the one alone who removes the curse and judgment of this life so that we can have new spiritual life now with God in his presence a new physical life in a perfect creation later so the first question for us this morning is have you come to Christ have you put your trust in him for he is the only real solution to life in this broken world the only one who gives real hope and meaning and purpose and help for us who have then we are to keep trusting in him and his way letting him be king letting him determine what is good and evil right and wrong how we'll live and not ourselves

not our culture and we are to keep praying to God through him for help to resist temptation and sin and we are to keep coming to him for forgiveness when we don't we'll see more of that next week but for now

I need to finish the last slide is a story book called Alexander and the Terrible Horrible No Good Very Bad Day I remember reading this to one of our kids 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 very first terrible no good day in Genesis 3 where sin entered the world but in Christ we have help and hope during those days and in Christ all the good that has gone bad will come good again on the last day let's pray our gracious heavenly father we do thank you for this reminder of the world we live in and why it is like the way it is father thank you that it gives us the correct diagnosis for our broken world so that we can find the right treatment that is the lord jesus christ and so father we pray that you would help us to keep clinging to christ to keep finding our rest and refuge in him we ask it in jesus name amen