

You will not certainly die

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Date: 12 January 2020

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[0 : 00] Today's passage comes with a health warning. So being a Christian is fantastic. If you are not a Christian here today, just become a Christian. Just do it.

You'll have your sins forgiven. You'll live with Jesus forever and ever. Just become a Christian. It's great. But sometimes being a Christian stings a little bit.

And today is one of those times. This passage will sting a little bit or actually quite a lot. But I'm going to start on a different note. And here it is. Let me ask you a question.

Would your family and friends describe you as gullible? Would your family and friends describe you as gullible? Would you give your details to anyone who claimed to be from the tax office or Telstra or one of the banks?

How gullible are you? Would you fall for a con trick? My uncle, he was in the Forest Hill Chase car park. And he was approached by a man in a van.

[1 : 00] The van was full of expensive designer leather jackets. And the man told my uncle this convincing story about needing to get rid of them. And he was willing to sell them to my uncle for just a few hundred dollars.

My uncle bought some. And he gave me one. And I looked, you know the inside tag? I checked on the inside tag. And it says 100% vinyl. And I haven't got the heart to tell my uncle that he was conned.

How could someone I'd always known to be so tight with his cash and savvy be so gullible? We might not meet con men in car parks, but we do meet them online.

The most famous one, of course, is the Nigerian Prince email. Do you know that email from the African prince? The script is always the same. You get an email from someone claiming to be an African prince.

There's a story about a fortune trapped in a government bank account. But because of civil wars, they can't access the money. If you pay a small fee and let them transfer the money to your accounts, you too can share in the loot.

[2 : 08] There's a story. It sounds true and convincing. A huge prize is on offer. You just have to pay a small fee. The script is always the same.

In Genesis 3, we see a series of con tricks played out on two gullible victims. And normally when people are conned, we scratch our heads and we laugh.

How could you be so gullible? But today the joke is on us. Because Adam and Eve are our representatives before God.

As we see them being tempted, it will be a look into our own hearts as well. You see, last week, God and his people were living together in paradise.

Surely no way to mess that up. But just five small words in verse 5. Have a look at verse 5. For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God.

[3 : 12] Just five small words. You see, no matter the situation, whether it's Adam and Eve in a garden or in our own lives today, the central temptation is always you will be like God.

Are we content to serve and follow God? Or are we gullible enough to think we can be like him? Are you content to belong to God?

Or do you need to be God? And so we're going to do point one now. Please keep your handouts there and your Bibles open. This is point one.

Verse one. Now, the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God has made. Obviously, this is Satan disguised as a serpent. But he doesn't seem very crafty.

Crafty. Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden? Doesn't seem very clever. The answer, of course, is no, he didn't say that. Eve.

[4 : 13] She doesn't seem to take the bait. Verse two. 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.

She answers correctly. But she answers badly. Compare what she said with what God actually said. Look over the column to two verse 16.

God said you are free to eat from any tree in the garden. God is much more generous in his language than Eve gives him credit for.

You see, it's not as though God has kept the best fruit for himself. This one tree is linked to evil. It's an altogether different tree. It is dangerous.

The command here is to keep them safe. It is for their good. I have a rule with my kids. My kids are very, you know, my kids are very young. I have a rule with them, a strict rule.

[5 : 13] They are not allowed to cross the road without holding a hand, my hand. A strict rule, yes. But that is so obviously out of love and care and for their good.

The serpent wants Eve to think that God is some sort of angry dictator. That he wants to limit her freedom and her fun. And even though she passes the test, she says, no, well done.

She begins to buy into the con. Because instead of telling the serpent how crazy he was and how generous God is, she says, God said we must not touch the tree.

But he never said anything about touching. You see, she's beginning to think of him as a strict rule maker. And when for us, when we face temptation, you know, we grit our teeth and we just say no. But is that because we believe the same thing? That if we transgress, God is going to smite us like some angry dictator just waiting to punish us?

[6 : 18] I think this con best explains the social revolution of the 1960s. God just loves to limit our fun and freedom. Break free.

He's just an angry dictator. Do we forget that God's boundaries are there for our good? That he's a loving father? Or do we doubt his goodness?

Did God really say you can't do that? How gullible are you? Eve, she barely passes the first con. And so here comes the serpent with more.

Verse 4. You will not certainly die. The serpent said to the woman, there are no consequences. God is a liar. You will not certainly die. Do you know anyone who's died?

And I've called this talk today, you will not certainly die. Because I think this con best explains our culture at the moment. There are no consequences.

[7 : 19] Judgment and hell? They're just mechanisms to scare you into submission. Sophisticated people like us, we can see through all the religious dogma. Actually, many churches have stopped believing in God's consequences.

You know, judgment and hell. They have fallen for the second oldest lie in the book. How gullible are you?

Here is the final con. Verse 5. The main one. Verse 5. For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

As always with any con, there was a nugget of truth in there. You will be like God, knowing good and evil. In verse 22 over the page, God says himself, the man has now become like one of us.

It is true. It is true. Knowing good and evil. There is nothing special about the tree per se. But it was there to underline the idea that only God gets to decide what is good from what is evil.

[8 : 28] Being like God. That means deciding good and evil for ourselves. And when we're facing temptation, isn't this precisely what is going on in our hearts?

To rule over our little patch. To decide between right and wrong for ourselves. These are the three lies at work in our culture and in our hearts as well.

God is too strict. There are no consequences. You can be like him. The script is always the same. It's a con. They're the oldest lies in the book.

You see, maybe, maybe we feel that our temptations are unique. That they're exciting and especially difficult. That no one else could possibly understand.

But there's a script that's been running from the beginning of time. God is too strict. There are no consequences. You can be like him. You see, a con only works on the gullible.

[9 : 33] The con man's strategy is to switch out the person you trust for a liar. Satan's strategy is to switch your trust from God to belief in a lie. And as you see the script for what it is, my aim is that you will be less gullible.

That you will be able to face temptation seeing the script for what it is. Everything the serpent says about God is a lie. He's not strict.

Genesis 1 and 2 show how kind and abundant and generous he is. God is not a liar. Satan is the father of lies.

And most of all, you will be like God. But we're no good at deciding right and wrong without him. As you see the script for what it is, my aim is that you will be less gullible.

More able to face temptation to say no for the right reasons. But Eve isn't listening. And when it comes, it is so quick.

[10:39] There isn't even any speech. Have a look at 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. We said, every week we've been saying this. The order of the universe is God on top.

And then us. And then the creatures underneath. That is the good order. But when they try to be like God. They flip that good order on its head. And everything that comes now.

Is an opposite to the good. So this is point 2. Verse 7. 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. There used to be perfect intimacy in their marriage. But now they hide from one another. There was some truth to the lie.

[11:39] As all lies. As a nugget of truth. Their eyes would be open. They did gain wisdom. They did realize. But all they knew. Was their sin and shame.

It's about to get worse. Because the boss is on his way. Verse 8. 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? I heard you in the garden. And I was afraid. Because I was naked. So I hid.

It's a terrible thing to hide from God. Much worse. If you used to walk with him in paradise. Verse 10 says they were afraid of God.

They used to fear God rightly. But now they're afraid of God. Which shows they bought into the lie. That he was just some angry dictator. Waiting to smite them.

[12:38] Notice how sin fractures and warps relationships with God. And one another. The man says verse 12. The woman you put here with me. She gave me some fruit from the tree.

And I ate it. Then the Lord God said to the woman. What is this you have done? The serpent deceived me. And I ate. Just to lighten the mood a little bit.

Here's a dad joke for you. God blames Adam. Adam blames Eve. Eve blames the serpent. But he didn't have a leg to stand on. It's no good is it?

Sorry. You see they were meant to. Husband and wife. Adam and Eve were meant to help one another. Weren't they? But now there's blame. Actually Adam blames God.

The woman you put here with me. Adam was created in the image of God. They both were. He was meant to be a ruler. But now shirking responsibility.

[13:36] Pointing fingers of blame. Not a very good ruler. Verse 16. To the woman he said. I will make your pains in childbearing very severe. With painful labor you will give birth to children.

Eve was created to help Adam be fruitful and multiply. But now there's pain in her childbearing. It says your desire will be for your husband.

Which doesn't sound very bad does it? But actually the word desire means to rule over. The next line gives it a context. Your desire will be for your husband. And he will rule over you.

See instead of helping her husband. The wife wants to rule over him instead. You will not certainly die. That was the second con. But in verse 19 God says.

You will now return to the ground. Adam came from the dust. And now to the dust he will return. Adam will be de-created. It's an opposite to the good.

[14:37] All of these curses are the result of a good and ordered universe. Being flipped on their head. As people tried to be like God. And these ancient chapters make more sense of our world.

Than any philosophy you will find. This is our final point. We're going to go through some areas of life. We'll see how they make sense because of this chapter. So this chapter makes sense of why work and employment and career are always a struggle.

Even the most fulfilling jobs can be made redundant. The easiest tasks. Verse 17. Will reap thorns and thistles. Imagine planting a garden.

Instead of fruit trees you get thorns and thistles instead. The nicest bosses. The friendliest colleagues. Can be a painful toil. Work is broken.

Same goes for marriage and relationships. Once innocent but now hiding from one another. This passage makes sense of the battle of the sexes. There's a power struggle in marriage.

[15:44] Husbands not leading. Shirking their responsibility. Wives trying to take control over them. And this is not so we can point, you know, elbow the other one and go, it's about you.

This is to make sense. This is to make sense of how we each contribute to the problem. Adam and Eve, they were everlasting and immortal, weren't they?

But now they will return to the ground. And doesn't that explain sickness and disease? Never ending doctors. And of course death. Verse 17.

God said to Adam, cursed is the ground because of you. That makes sense of earthquakes and floods. And hurricanes. And of course bushfires.

There is a deeper problem in our earth than just climate change. I'm speaking of the environment. Do you remember a few weeks ago there was the Extinction Rebellion protests in the city?

[16:42] Do you remember those? If you work in the city, you probably couldn't miss it. The Extinction Rebellion, their website, it says this. It says, Life on earth is in crisis.

We're in the midst of a mass extinction of our own making. And they are correct. Life on earth is in crisis. Because all of us tried to be like God.

And so now we're facing his just and measured judgment. These ancient chapters make more sense of our world than any philosophy you can find.

I put this on the handout. The central choice for every temptation. This passage makes sense of our inner struggles too. The central choice in every temptation.

Do you want to be gods or be gods? Notice the spelling there. Do you want to be gods? Do you want to decide right and wrong for yourself to be fully autonomous?

[17:44] Or do you want to be gods? Apostrophe S. Do you want to belong to him? You see, the tragedy of Genesis 3 isn't necessarily the curses.

But that they sold out God for something they already had. You will be like God. That's the con. But they already were. Made in his image.

Genesis 1 and 2. Relating, ruling, ordered and good. They were already as like God as they could be. But they were conned into giving him up for a lie.

Romans 1, which Graham read for us. Romans 1 comes right out of Genesis 3. Romans 1 says this. Verse 22. And our culture is so gullible.

It has fallen for the con. We try to be like God. You see, in Melbourne, the key to well-being is more of you.

[18:58] More of me. More of us. Something is wrong. You need more self-assertion. Self-love. Achievement in life. You need more self-belief. You want happiness.

You need more autonomy. No one will tell me what to do. I will grow up and decide for myself. But Genesis 1 and 2 say this. The key to happiness and significance and dignity and fulfillment is more of God.

He is where self-worth and identity and all of these virtues are to be found. We are not God. We are God-ward, not inward.

We are God-made, not self-made. We are God-commanded, not self-determined. In love, he wanted to save Adam and Eve from the pretense that they could be like him.

And so he put a command around the tree like any good father. In this passage, he's always called the Lord God. What sort of God is the Lord?

[20:02] He's a loving father. He put a boundary around the tree to protect them like any good father would. And in every temptation, we are choosing to either be our own little gods or to belong to God.

The serpent conned them into thinking he was a crazy dictator and a liar. And so they exchanged him away and tried to be God themselves. The script is always the same.

The question is, how gullible are you? Genesis 3, it's tough love this morning. I understand that. It's tough love today. We're in a mess.

But the rest of the Bible is a rescue story. These are foundational chapters. We had it great and then we fell. The rest of the Bible is a rescue story because eventually you get to a passage like Luke chapter 3.

Where you meet an offspring of Eve who was conned with the exact same lies by the exact same con man, but had an opposite outcome. An offspring called Jesus who crushes the serpent's head when he dies on the cross for our sin and our shame and the judgment we deserved.

[21 : 20] I'm going to pray now. And then we're going to say, we've confessed already today, but we're going to do it again. There's a confession on the screen. And then we're going to sing about the only thing that can save us.

So I'm going to pray and then we'll confess. Father God, we thank you that you tell us the truth, even though it's tough, that you are loving.

Father, help us to see you as kind and loving and generous, that you're our good father. Please help us to see the script for what it is, to see the lies and the cons.

Help us not to be gullible. Please help us to withstand temptation. Please keep us in the battle with sin. Please would you lead us not into temptation.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.