

Genesis 3:1-7 (PM)

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[0 : 00] Well, Genesis deals with the biggest questions of life. Who is God? And why did he create this universe?

Who are we? And how are we supposed to live? How should I relate to God, to you, and to this creation? Today we reach Genesis 3, which answers one of our biggest questions. What is wrong? With the world? What's wrong with me? Why is life so painful and complicated and frail and frustrating?

Our text begins, Genesis 3, verse 1. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord had made.

This verse is very vague. It tells us about a new character in the story, the serpent, who has inexplicably entered God's good creation.

[1 : 13] And this creature is crafty, shrewd, cunning, conniving. And that's all we're told. Not told how it got into the garden.

Not told what its motives are. Not told why God didn't intervene. But we quickly see this is no ordinary garden snake. For one, most obviously, it can talk.

Garden snakes don't talk. They don't reason. They don't question God. But this serpent does. And what the snake says reveals that it has an agenda.

And this scheme, masked in the lure of liberation and progress, is a trap that will enslave humanity and ruin God's entire creation.

In Genesis 3, we are told that we have an enemy. God has an enemy. And so created in his image to represent him and rest in him, we are now under threat.

[2 : 23] We have an enemy. The enemy here is a speaking serpent. Later in scripture, he's named Satan, which literally means the adversary.

And the serpent's scheme, we will see, is to enslave us to sin. To separate us from the love and life of God.

Thereby condemning us to death. And in so doing, destroying God's good creation. The serpent is not equal to God.

The Bible does not teach us a yin and yang worldview. With two equal, opposite forces of good and evil. That's a Star Wars theology.

It's not a biblical one. Good and evil are not equal. If you don't believe me, shine a flashlight in a dark space. The Lord is almighty.

[3 : 21] Satan is not. The light shines in the darkness. And the darkness cannot overcome it. So the serpent knows it can't corrupt or overpower God.

So instead, he prays upon the creatures made in God's image. The snake has a strategy to suffocate the goodness of God's creation. To sow a seed that will sprout sin and suffering at a cosmic scale.

And his scheme is to attack us. The serpent's strategy has three parts. And Satan's schemes have not changed.

The devil continues today to employ this same strategy with great success. First, the serpent isolates his prey.

Then, he interrogates God by questioning him and his goodness. And finally, he perverts, he twists God's words to make them sound like a burden and not a blessing.

[4 : 28] This is the serpent's strategy to ensnare us to sin and to ruin God's creation. So first, the serpent isolates its prey. It comes to the woman when she is alone.

Temptation comes to those who are isolated. When we are away from our family or a significant other. When we leave home to live someplace else.

When we go away for university or a trip. Temptation comes for us when we're staring alone at our screens. When we feel like we have no one to talk to.

No peer or pastor to support us. That is when Satan swoops in and speaks. For Christians, temptation comes when we are isolated from other Christians.

It's when we stop coming to church. Or we don't allow deep relationships to develop with other followers of Jesus. So if you don't join a community group. Or you don't come on Sundays.

[5 : 28] Or if you do come, you sit at the very back. And you leave the first moment you get. It's when we isolate ourselves that we are the most vulnerable to the serpent schemes and temptation.

And if I may, I want to speak for a moment to the people at home. There are many good reasons why people are currently watching our services online.

You may be sick. You may be vulnerable. You may live overseas. You may be a visitor just checking us out. These are all good reasons to watch our services from home.

We miss you. But we understand. But there are bad reasons to watch our services from home too.

There's a danger that watching a church service can turn you into a spectator and not a participant. It can turn church into a show rather than a worshipping community of faith of which you are a part.

There's a reality that if you watch church online, you are isolated in your faith.

[6 : 34] And it's when we're isolated that Satan strikes. So be aware if you watch. There is a danger. There is an enemy. And he prowls like a lion looking for isolated prey.

If you're an isolated Christian, for whatever reason, you need to ensure that you are connecting with other believers. We have more tools for connection today than ever before in history.

Let's use them to ensure we are supported and not isolated. Scripture tells us to not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but to encourage one another, stirring one another up to love and good works.

So if you're here tonight, don't leave before you've encouraged the person next to you. Stirred them up. Because we're isolated without one another. Eve is alone.

And the serpent jumps on the chance. Satan's strategy first is to isolate his prey. He attacks those who are alone. And now notice what he does next. Quite innocently, or so it seems, Satan says to Eve in verse 1, Did God actually say, You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?

[7 : 52] Satan's second strategy is to question God. And it seems innocent enough. It's just a question of clarification. But it isn't. The serpent is interrogating God's goodness.

Satan presents God not as the good creator who longs for relationship with us, but as this distant deity who is out to limit our freedom and to prevent our progress.

God, according to the snake, is a tyrant, not a loving heavenly father. Satan focuses not on God's unimaginably gracious provision, but on his one prohibition.

And you see this by what Satan calls God. You have a Bible open. You can check this. If you don't, you're just going to have to believe me. But in Genesis 2, the chapter right before our text, God is always referred to by his personal name, the Lord God.

It's 11 times. Now, Lord there in the English Bibles is a shorthand for God's personal name that he used to reveal himself to his people.

[9 : 00] It's the name Yahweh. But the people who copied this out felt, oh, that's too holy to write, so I'm going to write LORD in all caps instead, and everyone will know exactly what I'm talking about. So wherever you see LORD in Scripture, in the Old Testament, it's referring to Yahweh.

What's the personal name of a personal God who longs for a personal relationship with his people? It's like if the queen walked into the room right now and she said, please, call me Liz.

God wants us to know him by his personal name. He's made a covenant to be our relational God.

Jesus, the Son of God, tells us to address him, our Father in heaven.

And so Genesis 2, Yahweh God is repeated 11 times to make that point explicitly obvious. But now Satan slithers into the scene, and he does not call God Yahweh, God's personal relational name.

Satan has no relationship with God, so he calls God by his role. Did God actually say? Satan's subtle subtext is to assert that God is not relational.

[10 : 20] He doesn't love you. He's a brutal, overbearing tyrant who rules ruthlessly over you. And our society has swallowed this poisonous lie. Satan interrogates God's goodness.

He makes us forget that God longs for relationship and instead suggests that we should see Yahweh in the same light as any of the brutal and barbaric pagan deities. He is ruthless, tyrannical, and oppressive.

This impersonal, prohibitive God rather than the relational covenant faithful creator, Yahweh. So Satan isolates his prey.

He interrogates God's goodness. And now his third strategy is to pervert God's word. And this is scary. Because Satan's strategy to enslave us to sin is to become a Bible teacher, to twist God's word so that it's no longer good news.

Look at how he does it. Still in verse 1. A serpent says, Did God actually say, You may not eat of any tree in the garden? Answer, No.

[11 : 33] That's not at all what God said. Look at Genesis 2, verse 16. When God says, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

For the day you eat of that tree, you will surely die. The serpent perverts God's word to suggest that God has demanded something impossible and unreasonable. If God actually said what the serpent suggests, then nothing in Eden is edible.

Everything's forbidden. And therefore, obeying God would lead to starvation and death. The serpent turns God into the bad guy, a mean, ruthless oppressor, and Satan, therefore, becomes the liberator of humanity.

Brilliant. It's crafty and cunning and so evil. Change a couple words and the serpent has completely inverted the creator's character.

It's so subtle. I bet you didn't even notice it when Linda read it to us. Satan turns the focus away from God's provision to now center our thoughts only on God's prohibition.

[12 : 46] So it's eat from any tree versus don't eat from this one because it's poisonous. It'll kill you. The serpent isolates his prey.

He then interrogates God's goodness by perverting his word to be oppressive. Does this sound familiar? We see Satan's strategy everywhere today. So what happens next?

The woman responds to the serpent in verse 2. She says, Eve corrects Satan.

Go Eve. But in so doing, she also misquotes God. She doesn't know God's word well enough. So when challenged, she doesn't know what to say.

And she also forgets what God is like. Did you notice that Eve does what the serpent did? She also neglects to use God's relational name, Yahweh.

[13 : 51] Instead, now, she just uses the impersonal title, God. Eve's forgotten that God is relational. Forgotten that his desire is to be in relationship with her and bless her.

And instead, now, she echoes the serpent's speech. And then she ends, God said, you shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden.

Neither shall you touch it, lest you die. Eve's answer places the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil right in the middle of the garden.

As if God is trying to make her life miserable by placing this prohibition front and center and rubbing the restriction in her face. If you have young children, it's like putting candy in the middle of their bedroom and saying, you can't eat it.

But if you look again at chapter 2, verse 16, we are not told that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is in the middle of the garden. Eve has made that up.

[14 : 51] Satan's scheme has put the tree in the middle of Eve's reality. Her world is now centered upon what God prohibits rather than on what he provides.

Do you know what tree actually is in the middle of the garden? It's the tree of life. The tree whose fruit gives eternal life, that's what's in the middle of the garden.

The poisonous tree that gives death is not in the center. The tree that gives life is. There's no restriction on Adam and Eve eating from that glorious tree. The central reality of existence is not prohibition.

It's provision. At the center of the Creator's creation is life, not death. Blessing, not cursing. But Eve listens to the serpent.

She forgets what God is like. She forgets his words. And she now sees the temptation as the central thing in her life. The only thing she is not allowed is the only thing she wants.

[15 : 55] What her world is centered upon. Not eternal life as God intended. Not a loving, personal relationship with God. But this fruit.

Eve desires the fruit. And we're told she desires it because she desires to be like God. Equal to God. Independent of God.

Free to be her own God. She desires wisdom. She is now skeptical of God's motives. She's forgotten his loving presence. And now the serpent knows he has her.

Satan first prays on the isolated. He interrogates God. He twists God's word to make them unclear and questionable. And now his coil tightens around her throat.

And he shows his fangs. Verse 4. You will not surely die. You will become like God. What started with a seemingly innocent clarification is now an explicit affront on God's character and his word.

[17:00] God cannot be trusted, the serpent suggests. God is the deceiver. He is lying to you. He has misled you. He's threatened by you. He's trying to repress you from your full potential.

Eve eats up all of Satan's words. and she succumbs to his temptations. She eats. Satan succeeds. This passage has been used constantly to vilify womankind as evil or weak or both. Men, it's been argued, would not be so easily tempted as the woman.

If it weren't for Eve, the arguments go, then surely Adam would have never eaten the fruit. And so, women, in Christian cultures past and present, have been repressed.

abused and treated as second class or less because of Eve in Genesis 3. Are any guys feeling smug right now?

[18:10] Look at the end of verse 6. Eve eats and she also gave some to her husband who was with her and he ate.

Adam was with her. We're not told how long he was with her. The whole time? Just at the tree? Did he see the serpent? Was he there listening to the entire conversation doing nothing?

We aren't told. But what we should notice is that Adam puts up absolutely no resistance. At least Eve has a confrontation with the serpent and puts up some resistance.

Adam just gives in. Seemingly instantly. The second Eve offers him what he knows God has forbidden without putting up even a whisper of protest.

Adam silently, suddenly submits to sin. So you cannot read this passage as anti-woman and pro-man.

[19:14] Adam is at least as complicit in the crime. He is a spineless, speechless, pathetic, passive participant. Adam makes me madder than Eve in this story.

Satan's strategy is to ruin the order and stability of God's good creation. And it seems to have worked. He isolates Eve, he questions God, and then he perverts God's word to sound repressive and tyrannical rather than life-giving and good.

And once ensnared by the devil's deceptions, you unwittingly now become a participant in his plan to enslave others to sin. Eve eats, and so does Adam.

This is Satan's strategy, and the result is humanity's sin. The woman and man are now not free as the serpent promised them.

They are enslaved to sin, isolated from God, the source of all life. They are now alone and vulnerable and naked and full of shame.

[20:24] They are terrified knowing they will die. And so are we. Humanity has rebelled against God.

We have all submitted to Satan, enslaving ourselves to sin and depriving ourselves of fellowship with God. God. We have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

All, like Adam, have fallen away. All of us would have done what even Adam did, because all of us have been tempted like they were.

And we, too, have listened to Satan's voice and our selfish desires, rather than heeding the warning words of our good God and turning to him. Sin is rejecting that God is the source of wisdom, that it is he who instructs us and makes us wise and leads us to life and blessing.

Sin, very simply, is trying to replace God with yourself, choosing for yourself what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil.

[21:32] It's saying, it's time for me to see what I can do, to test the limits and break through. No right, no wrong, no rules for me, I'm free.

And yes, if that sounded familiar, it's because it's the lyrics of Let It Go from Disney's Frozen. Satan slithers in and he sneaks and speaks everywhere.

Sin is disregarding God and disregarding the order that he has established in creation. And this rebellion against God has ruined our relationship with him.

has ruined our relationship with creation. It's ruined our relationship with one another. And as next week's text will lay out in terrible detail.

So that's what's gone wrong. That's why the world is broken. That's why you and me are broken. That's why we don't do the things we should do.

[22 : 34] And instead, we do the things we shouldn't. Because there's no health in us. We are enslaved to sin. And all our woe flows now from this terrible reality.

And that's where our passage ended tonight. I mean, are you kidding me? She said, thanks be to God. Or all of us did. Were you listening? It's terrible. It's the lowest point of scripture.

Satan's schemes have seemed to triumph over God's good plan. humanity's sin seems to have done all of God's blessing. And we still experience the result of our rebellion today in our own hearts and in our own world.

Maybe this articulates how you feel right now. No hope. No light. No joy. All darkness. Except the Bible, which is God's story of bringing life and blessing to the earth, does not end at Genesis 3, verse 8.

My Bible is not two pages long. If it were, we would have every reason to be absolutely devastated and without hope. But this is not the end of the story.

[23 : 54] There's a lot more to go. It doesn't end here. In my Bible, there are now over a thousand pages of what God does to restore us and redeem and remake and recreate this fallen creation.

The story doesn't end Satan's schemes and humanity's sin, even if that's where our text ends tonight. The original sin starts now the rest of the story of Scripture.

The good news of great joy that's for all people. The gospel whereby Yahweh will go to unimaginable depths to defeat Satan, to save us from our enslavement to sin, to forgive us, to restore his creation, to bring heaven to earth, and ultimately, finally, to rest with us forever in an unending, perfected, recreation reality.

because one greater man is coming, greater than Adam, greater than Adam's sin, greater than Satan's schemes.

One greater man who brings with him the kingdom of heaven to reclaim this fallen, conquered creation. One greater man who will forgive our sin, who will undo our death, who will replace our darkness with his glorious light.

[25 : 24] Today's text is dark and bleak and sad. It's bad news. But we need it to understand our diagnosis of depravity if we are to now understand how God will save us.

Without Genesis 3, we wouldn't appreciate the majesty and glory and goodness of God, who sent for us his one and only son to die so that our death may be undone.

Without Genesis 3, we don't understand why Jesus would sacrifice himself, that our sins may be put away and remembered no more against us. The bad news of Genesis 3 is eclipsed by unimaginably good news that brings great joy and that is for everybody.

For unto us is born a savior, a rescuer, a redeemer, who is our king and our lord, who is God's only son.

And this second Adam, Jesus Christ, has prevailed where Adam fell. Jesus took upon himself all of our sin and all of God's righteous judgment, submitting to death on a cross that his righteousness now may be made available to all of us through faith in him.

[26 : 47] Jesus has atoned for our sin. He's died the death that we deserve and he's risen from the dead to show us that it worked, that eternal life is now available to all who believe in him.

He's done for us everything that needs to be done to undo Satan's schemes. It is finished. And so all we need to do is now receive him, to turn away from our life of rebellion and sin and to turn instead to Christ through faith.

God's creation by the end of the story will be perfected by all who trust in his son, Jesus Christ. And we will reign with him forever in glorious, unending light where there will be no more tears, no more death, no more crying, no more pain, where God's word has silenced Satan and his schemes.

So hang tight. Genesis 3 is not the end of the story. It's only the beginning. And for that, we can say thanks be to God.

Amen.