

Genesis 3:8-24 (PM)

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[0 : 00] Nice to have something uncontroversial this week, isn't it? The best way to break up this passage, I think, is into three sections. Three sections.

First section is the conversation. Next section, the consequences. Third section, the consolation. So, the conversation, the consequences, and the consolation.

And did you see what I did there? Yeah, okay, good. They all start with the letter C. Just want to point that out to you. It took me seven hours to come up with those three words there, but that's all right.

Here we go. Let's crack on. The conversation, 8 to 13. So, God created these amazing people, and he filled the place with abundance, and they did the thing.

They did the one thing God said, don't do. So, in verse 8, the man and the woman are hiding from God amongst the trees. And all the vulnerability and honesty and harmony is lost, and it's been replaced with fear and shame and guilt.

[1 : 08] And it's deeply ironic, I think, that they run for the trees. Because the trees, you know, they were the good gifts from God, and that's where they hide.

And our strategy, I think, is to often to hide from God amongst the good gifts he has given us. Gifts of sexuality, gifts of career.

Sometimes we throw ourselves into these things, giving ourselves completely over to them, hoping to block out or hide from that nagging belief that there is a God we are accountable to.

So, Adam and Eve ironically hide amongst the gifts from God. But before we hear about the hiding, we learn that God is walking in the garden. And we shouldn't move too quickly past this, because this is an astonishing act of grace.

It means that God has not abandoned the garden. He's walking in it. He knows exactly what's happened. And he enters into that situation knowing full well, it's a mess.

[2 : 12] And do you notice he walks in the garden not raging like some shouty, grumpy parent? Like, if you walked into my home at any point during the day on a weekend, you would almost certainly, well, let's say 50% of the time, you'll hear myself and my wife shouting something like, You know, which one of you kids stole my phone?

Come on, man. So, God walks about the garden seeking out humanity with full knowledge of the situation. And the first thing he says, well, it's a question, isn't it?

He asks them a question to draw them out in undeserved grace. Where are you? Where are you, God says. So, how do the people respond?

Verse 10, Adam says, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, and I hid myself. Then God says, Who told you you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?

Now, what do we learn from this? Well, first, that little interaction. What does it do? It defines sin. It defines sin for us.

[3 : 28] It tells us when we sin, we sin against God first and foremost. Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you not to eat?

Sin is an affront. It's an offense to God personally. And Adam doesn't see this. His big worry is he's naked. His big concern is how the sin affects him.

He says, I was afraid because I was naked. That's his big worry. When we get a speeding ticket, what are we angry about? What's our great disappointment? Are we angry because we broke the law?

A law that's put in place to protect us? No, we're angry because we get a \$300 fine. We're angry about the results of breaking the law. And this was Adam's great concern.

Not that he offended God. So our grief over sin should be primarily about the damage we have done to our relationship with God.

[4 : 29] And it's really important we understand this. And the liturgy is really helpful to us. Because it doesn't let us get away with just saying, I have sinned and I am sad about that.

It nails down exactly what sin is. For some of you folks who are new to the Anglican thing, you might think that some of the pieces of the liturgy like the Confession are a bit overwrought.

A bit too much. A bit dramatic. And some pieces of the liturgy are long and dense. But they're not written like that to sound fancy.

They're trying to communicate something with theological accuracy. So in the service this morning, in the Confession from the 1662 prayer book, here's what we say.

We say this. We grieve over all our sins and wickedness which we have committed by thought, word and deed against your divine majesty. Provoking most justly your righteous anger against us.

[5 : 38] That's what the big issue of sin is. In the Confession tonight, we said we have sinned against you. Sin is primarily an offense against God directly and personally.

And it says, God, I don't trust you. More specifically, it says, God, I don't trust your vision for human flourishing.

As a disciple of Jesus. You know, we have all of Christ's teachings on sex and marriage and singleness and love and money and possessions and all manner of things.

When we sin, we're saying, I don't trust you on those things. So sin is not just, you know, doing something naughty. It's a posture of a distrusting heart. But it hurts a relationship we have with our creator.

And I know, I'm not trying to harp on about this. It's just like, right? It's just really important. Tozer, who was this 20th century theologian, he said, Christianity has become so watered down, so weak, that if it were a poison, it wouldn't kill anyone.

[6 : 47] And if it was a medicine, it wouldn't cure anyone. So I'm going on about the sin business here because one of the main ways our faith is watered down is through the redefining of sin.

Sin is primarily an offense against God. That's a theological beachhead. We must hold the line on this. Otherwise, the gospel does not make sense. Let's keep going.

So look at what Adam and Eve say next. This is excuses time, all right? So we're still in the first section. So God says, you did the thing I said don't do. And verse 12, the man says, the woman who you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate.

Verse 13, the woman said, the serpent deceived me and I ate. It's just, it's brilliant, isn't it? It's fantastic, isn't it? It's just, it's so great. Neither of them can take responsibility for what happened. Listen to Adam, just what he explicitly implies. He says, the man said, the woman that, by the way, you gave me, God, it's her fault.

[7 : 57] Therefore, it's your fault. I was just asleep and I woke up and there she was. And then she gave me the fruit. You know, it's nothing. How can you blame me for that?

The woman's serpent, totally the serpent. Nothing to do with me. The serpent. It's a very modern defense for individual wrongdoing, isn't it? It's a defense built on the idea that I am essentially good and the problem is out there acting on me and that's what caused the bad decision.

It's therefore not really my fault, right? It's a very modern concept, I think. It's this rejection of personal responsibility. See, society says you are good, you are innocent and evil is out there.

And the evil is religion or it's a lack of education. And what we need is just the right programs. We need the right system of government. We need the right urban planning. We need the right socioeconomic makeup of our neighborhoods and everything would be okay.

Now, we need to get all of those things sorted. We need to address all of those things. Those are problems that need to be addressed. But the problem is out there because there's a problem in here.

[9 : 06] And the Bible is so refreshing, isn't it? It says the problem is actually you. It says your heart, there is rot. There is rot in it.

Again, the confession is very helpful. Honestly, it's one of my favorite parts of the liturgy. Because it feels like the most truthful thing I say all week.

Now, 500 years ago, Thomas Cramner, when he was writing the confession for morning prayer, he wrote the line, There is no health in us in the confession. It's part of the confession. There is no health in us.

And that does not mean, you know, we're as bad as we can be in every area of our life. It doesn't mean that. It means that every area of our life is touched by sin.

And that there is the root of every problem in the world. And there will be no healing until we recognize that. So, that's how the conversation with God goes in this first section.

[10:11] God says, And before moving on, I want to remind you of the grace here again.

God knows what Adam and Eve have done. He knows their excuses. He knows their excuses will be weak and defiant. But God still turns up.

He still seeks them out with undeserved grace. No matter what you have brought to this service today, God is seeking you out with undeserved grace.

Okay, so that's the first section, all right? The first section, the conversation. The next section is called the consequences. This is verses 14 to 19.

And what happens here? Slide your eyes over it. You'd see that God addresses the serpent, the man, and the woman.

[11:10] Addresses them separately and outlines the consequences for their actions. They are, you call them, they're like declarations on how life will be for them from now on.

So, let's start with the serpent, the snake. Just as an aside, did you know there are no snakes in New Zealand? I just think that's interesting.

I just think that's interesting. Australia, on the other hand, I don't know if you know this, there's 140 varieties of snake in Australia.

A hundred of those are poisonous. I just, you know, I'm just putting it out there. That's just information. I'm just going to leave that with you. So, what does God say to the snake?

And you'll see here, the consequence fits the crime. On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life.

[12:17] I mean, what do we do with it? What does this mean? What do we do with it? The snake wanted to be higher, but it's going to be on the ground in the dust. Now, this is not some just-so story.

Do you know those stories? Ridyard Kipling, how the camel got its hump, how the cheetah got its spots. This is not one of those stories, how the snake lost its legs. There's no reason to think the snake had legs before this, and then they disappeared.

The story functions more like the story of the rainbow in Genesis 9. You remember when the ark finds land, and all the people come out, and there's a rainbow, and God says, this represents my promise not to flood the earth again.

And God, I don't think God invented the rainbow at that moment. I think it was more like, when you see a rainbow, remember this promise, which is wonderful. Here, God is saying, when you see a snake in the dust, that's a picture of humiliation and defeat.

When you see a snake, remember, I have overcome evil. Isn't that wonderful that God would do that? Now, that's not all God says to the serpent.

[13:32] Verse 15, So this is not, again, this is not talking about, this is why people hate snakes.

No, it's saying, there will be strife between the descendants of the woman and the spiritual descendants of the serpent. In other words, there will be drama between those who follow God and those who don't.

We could say more about that, but I've got to keep going here. So let's look at the, those are the consequences of the snake. Let's look at the consequences for Eve. Verse 16. To the woman, God said, I will surely multiply your pain and childbearing.

In pain, you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. Okay, that word desire, that means to dominate.

So here God says, your rebellion, Eve, is going to affect the two key relationships in your life. The relationship between your children and the relationship between you and your husband.

[14:37] Okay, the children. In pain, you shall bring forth children. This is not saying, it's not saying, you know, the consequences that childbirth will be painful.

That's, that's not what it's saying. It's saying the whole process of childrearing, beginning with conception, will be a battle. So it's not just the physical pain of birth.

The whole process of conceiving and raising kids is going to be hard. It's not going to be easy. It's a consequence of sin in our hearts. And the second part, your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.

Again, desire means dominate. Both, both ways, there's domination trying to happen. This is the perversion of the harmony that God intended in this kind of relationship.

So instead of submitting to one another, like Ephesians 5 says, we'll see each other as a threat. We'll want to master one another. And you don't have to look far for examples of this.

[15 : 44] I want to give you a man example. I feel more comfortable doing that. Give you a man example. Think about the men who, because of sin, carry all this insecurity in their heart.

Who idolize power. And who try to feel good about themselves by pushing women around. I saw this firsthand growing up.

So I grew up in a family where there was domestic violence. I've seen my father beat my mother. And I see the sin of my father in me. In me trying to overly control things.

In my family. There is, I have this unreasonable anger that sits just below the surface. And it bursts out when I don't get my way.

That's an example from a family. But we don't just see it in families, do we? For us men and for women, this drive to dominate one another. You see it play out in marriages.

[16 : 47] But you see it play out in friendships. You see it play out in school. You see it play out in the workplace. And friends, Jesus is the only hope you have to overcome the consequences of sin.

The only hope you have to overcome these relational outcomes. Jesus says you are not the Lord of your life.

And it's thinking that you're Lord of your life. Drives you to want to dominate others. And it's when you come out from under your own lordship, you begin to heal. As you start to submit your life to Jesus' ways, socially and spiritually, you begin to heal.

And as a church community, we're supposed to show this. We're supposed to be this living demonstration of this. Let's move on.

Is everyone okay? Yeah? The consequences of sin are devastating. God spoke to the snake. God spoke to the woman.

[17 : 53] And now he speaks to the man. God says, here's what life is going to look like for you. Verse 17. To Adam he said, cursed is the ground because of you.

In pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you. And you shall eat the plants of the fields. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground.

For out of it you were taken. For you are dust. And to dust you shall return. What does all that mean? Again, I think it's a punishment fits the crime here, right?

You sinned by eating. And now you will suffer to eat. Somehow, our sin has become baked into creation. So you're going to have to really toil at him now to get the land to produce for you.

You're going to have to work hard to get it to produce. To look after it. Now it's not saying that work is the curse. Hard work is not the curse.

[18 : 54] Hard work is a good thing. But rather, the work is cursed. God says, there will always be weeds. The weeds will always win. And Adam, when you die, you will return to the earth.

So, those are the first two sections of the passage. The conversation, the consequence, and the devastating consequences.

But before moving on, do you see the grace here as well? They certainly did not get all they deserved, did they? Because there is still life. There is still fruit. You still get to eat bread and have families.

God doesn't shut down creation. Within these consequences, there is undeserved restraint. Okay, the last section. Verse 21, the consolation.

The Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them. This is the great consolation. You know how the New Testament sort of often deals with, if you especially read the epistles, it deals with propositions, right?

[20 : 05] Sort of just makes statements. Where the New Testament does that, the Old Testament gives us pictures and stories. And this is such a beautiful picture of grace. God doesn't throw his hands up in the air.

He doesn't walk out on these folks. He covers them. He protects them with these skins. God takes the initiative to do something they can't do for themselves.

The best they could do for themselves was grab some leaves. What a picture of futility that is. I mean, we carry so much shame in our culture.

We carry so much shame. They had so much shame. And these leaves are this wonderful picture representing all our attempts to deal with our own shame.

And they just don't work. And no amount of you looking yourself in the mirror and saying, I'm good, I'm good, I'm good, will work.

[21 : 05] Only God has a solution to the shame you feel. Now, there's a number of other layers to this idea of God providing clothes for Adam and Eve.

Let me give you two more. Another layer is this. In the ancient Near East, when you sinned against the master of a house, the master would take away your clothing. It was a way of disinheriting you, kicking you out of the family.

If the master was to give you clothing, it was a way of saying, listen, no matter what you've done, you're still my son. You're still my daughter. You're still in the family.

You remember the story of the prodigal son that Jesus told. The prodigal son returns. He gets the father's coat. Giving clothes. Saying, you're still my people. I'm still for you.

That's one layer. But there's another layer here. I want you to think about this. If God supplied them with clothes made of animal skins, the question implied is, where did those animal skins come from?

[22 : 08] Something died, didn't it? I mean, something died to provide that covering. God sacrificed something. There was a cost to dealing with their shame.

And this is what the second part of verse 15 is about. This is under the section where we talked about the consequences for the snake. When God is talking about the descendants of the woman, the descendants of the snake, God says, He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.

A version says, He will crush your head. Meaning, the descendants of Eve will stamp out evil once and for all in the future. But, you, the snake, will strike his heel.

So, Eve's descendant in overcoming evil will be hurt. There will be a cost to the descendant of Eve in defeating evil.

And this is the first picture in the Bible. It points us to Jesus' death on the cross. So, God covers the shame of Adam and Eve in undeserved grace, but there's a price.

[23 : 22] Let's finish up. What have we learnt? Sin is an affront to God directly. The consequences of sin are horrific.

But God does not just give up on us. He seeks us out with tenacity and grace. And remember, we just said this, right?

The first thing God does after cursing the snake is to promise us Jesus. And God doesn't just seek us out. He covers us. He says, you're naked.

Here are some clothes. They have come to you at a great cost. Amen. Amen.