

Genesis 3:8-24

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. Good morning. It's really nice to see you all. If you are new with us this morning or new in the last month, my name is Aaron.
- I'm one of the ministers on staff here. We're just going to crack on. We're going to get straight into it. So Genesis 3, 8 to 24, you've heard it read. Nice to have something uncontroversial to preach on this week.
- You can break up the passage into three sections. You break it up into three sections. The conversation, the consequences, and the consolation.
- The conversation, the consequences, and the consolation. Did you see what I did there? See how they all start with the letter C?
- Yeah, all right. I just wanted to point that out because it took me seven hours to come up with that. Onwards, the conversation.
- [1 : 0 7] Verses 8 to 13. So God created these amazing people and put them in a place full with abundance, and they did the one thing God said don't do.
- And so in verse 8, the man and the woman are hiding from God amongst the trees. All the vulnerability and harmony and honesty is lost, and it's been replaced with fear and shame and guilt.
- And it's deeply ironic. I think that they run for the trees, isn't it? Because the trees were the good gifts of God, and that's where they hide.
- And I think our strategy is to hide from God amongst the good gifts he has given us. You know, we can give ourselves over completely to our career or sexual freedom or any number of things, hoping to block out or hide from the nagging belief that there is a God we are accountable to.
- So Adam and Eve ironically hide amongst God's gifts. Now before we hear about the hiding, though, we learn that God is walking in the garden, and we shouldn't move too quickly past that, because this is an astonishing act of grace.
- [2 : 3 1] Because it means that God has not abandoned the garden. He's walking in it. He knows what has happened. He enters into the situation knowing full well it's a mess.
- And do you notice he's not going into it raging? He's not stomping around like some grumpy, shouty parent. Like if you walked into my house at any point during the weekend, about 30% of the time you will hear me or my wife going, Who stole my phone?
- Which one of you kids took my phone? No, God walks about the garden. He's seeking out humanity. In full knowledge of the situation, the first thing he says, Well, he asks a question, doesn't he?
- He asks a question to draw them out with undeserved grace. Where are you? God says, where are you? And how do they respond?
- Verse 10, Adam, I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. And God said, Who told you you were naked?

- [3 : 47] Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you not to eat? Okay, what do we learn from this? Well, first, this little interaction, what does it do?
- It defines sin for us. It defines sin. And 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, friends, is an affront. It is an offense to God personally.
- Adam doesn't see this. What's his big worry? Why was he afraid? Because he was naked. His big concern is about how the sin has affected him. I'm afraid because I'm naked. That's his big worry.
- When we get a speeding ticket, what are we worried about? What's our great disappointment? The fact that we broke the law? A thing set to sort of try and keep us safe and protect us? No! We're not angry.
- [4 : 49] We're angry because we have to pay a \$300 fine. We're angry about the results of breaking the law. This is what Adam is concerned about.
- Not the offense against God. Our grief over sin should be primarily about the damage done to our relationship with God. We have offended God.
- This is really important we understand this. And the liturgy is very helpful to us. It doesn't let us get away with just saying, you know, I've sinned and I'm sad.
- I'm sad about that. It nails down exactly what sin is. Now, for those of you who are new to the Anglican thing, you might think some of the things like the confession are a bit overwrought.
- A bit too much. You know, a bit too dramatic. And some pieces of the liturgy are long and they are dense, but they are not written like that just to sound fancy.
- [5 : 53] They are trying to communicate. They're trying to be accurate about what they're trying to communicate. For example, later in the service, we're going to say this during the confession.
- We grieve over our sins and wickedness, which we have committed by thought, word, and deed. And listen to this. Against your divine majesty.
- Provoking most justly your righteous anger against us. That's the big issue with our sin. It's against God's divine majesty.
- Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you not to eat? Sin is an offense against God directly and personally. It says to God, I don't trust you.
- More specifically, in this case, I don't trust your vision for human flourishing. As disciples of Jesus, we have all his teachings on sex and marriage and singleness and love and possessions and all manner of things.
- [6 : 54] When we sin, we're saying, I don't trust you on these things. Sin is not just being naughty. It's a posture of a distrusting heart. And it's hurting the relationship you have with your creator.
- And I know you feel like I'm harping on about this. But Tozer, who was a 20th century theologian, he said, Christianity has been watered down to a solution so weak that if it was a poison, it would not hurt anyone.
- And if it was a medicine, it would not cure anyone. So I'm going on about the sin business because one of the main ways we water down our faith is through the redefining of sin.
- Sin is an offense against God. This is a theological beachhead. We must hold the line on this. Otherwise, the gospel does not make any sense. Let's keep going.

Now, look at what Adam and Eve say next. So this is excuses time, right? This is excuses time. We're still within the first section of the conversation. God says, you did the thing I said not to do.

[8 : 05] Verse 12, the man said, the woman whom 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 gold, isn't it? It's just great stuff. Neither of them can take responsibility. Listen to what Adam sort of explicitly implies.

The man said, the woman that, by the way, you, that you put here with me, God, it's all her fault. And therefore, it's your fault because she's yours, God.

You made him and I just went all over. I just went to sleep. I just went to sleep. I woke up. She was there. She gave me the fruit. And the Eve is like, it's the serpent.

You know, like it's such, it's a very modern defense of individual wrongdoing, isn't it? It's a defense built on the idea that I'm good and the problem is out there somewhere acting on me from the outside.

[9 : 13] That's what caused the bad decision. So therefore, it's not really my fault. Such a modern concept, isn't it? The rejection of personal responsibility.

And society says to you, you're good. You're innocent. The evil is out there. And that evil is religion. Or that evil is a lack of education.

So what we need is we just need the right programs. We just need the right system of government. We just need the right whatever. We need the right urban planning. We need the right socioeconomic makeup of our neighborhoods and everything would be okay.

Now, all of those things I've just mentioned, yeah, let's get them all sorted. They are problems. But there are problems out there because there are problems in here. And the Bible is so refreshing, isn't it?

It says the problem is you. It's you. In your heart, there is rot. And again, the confession is so very helpful to us.

[10 : 15] Honestly, it's like one of my favorite parts of the liturgy. Because it feels like it's the most truthful thing I say all week. 500 years ago, Thomas Cramner wrote this line, There is no health in us.

He wrote that into the confession for morning prayer. There's no health in us. Now, that does not mean you are as bad as you can be in every area of your life.

But here's what it means. It means that sin touches every area of your life. And that is the root of every problem in the world. And there will be no healing until you recognize that.

So, this is how the conversation goes with God in this first section. God says, You did the thing I said not to do. Cue the excuses.

But before moving on, I want to remind you of the grace here again. God knows that what Adam and Eve have done. He knows their excuses will be weak.

[11 : 27] They will be defiant. But God still turns up. He still seeks them out in undeserved grace. And whatever sin and rot you bring to church this morning, God is seeking you out.

In undeserved grace. That's the first section. The conversation. The second section. The consequences. You see in verses 14 to 19, God addresses the serpent, the woman, and the man separately.

And outlines the consequences of their actions. And these are, maybe a good way of describing them, is these are declarations of what life will be like for them from now on.

So, let's start with the serpent. The snake. As an aside, did you know there are no snakes in New Zealand? You know that?

That's interesting, isn't it? Isn't that interesting? Australia. On the other hand.

[12 : 41] There's 140 varieties of snake. A hundred of those are poisonous. I'm just putting that out there for you to think about.

That is all I'm doing. These are just facts. It's just information. I'm going to leave it with you. I just find that interesting. So, what does God say to the snake?

You'll see the consequences sort of fit the crime in each case there. What does God say to the snake? He says, On your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat, all the days of your life.

All right. So, what does this mean? The snake wanted to be higher, but he's going to be on the ground, in the dust. It's important to say that this is not one of those just-so stories.

You know, these, Ridyard Coupling had these stories where it's, like, how the camel got its hump, or how the cheetah got its spots. This is not a, how the snake lost its legs story.

[13 : 53] All right. There's no reason to think the snake had legs before this, and then they disappeared. I don't think that's in the story. It, it, this functions, this functions like the rainbow story in Genesis 9.

So, you remember, in the ark, the ark found land, the people came out, there was a rainbow, and God says, this represents my promise not to flood the earth again. I, I, I'm not, I don't think that that was the first time there was ever a rainbow.

It's more like when you see a rainbow, remember this promise. And here, God is saying, when you see a snake in the dust, it's a picture of defeat.

It's a picture of humiliation. God says, when you see a snake, remember this, I have overcome evil. Remember that.

When you see a snake, I've overcome evil. Isn't that, isn't that lovely? Isn't that wonderful? But that's not all God says to the snake. Verse 15, God says, I'll put enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and her offspring.

[14 : 58] So this is not saying, here's why people hate snakes. It's saying, there will be strife between the descendants of the woman, and between the descendants of the serpent. In other words, there'll be drama between those who follow God and those who don't.

Now, there's, there's lots more we could say about that, but I'm going to keep going. Yeah. What, what, what, what consequences does God announce for Eve?

So that's the consequences for the snake. What about the consequences for Eve? To the woman, God says, I will multiply your pain and childbearing. In pain, you shall bring forth children.

Your desire will be contrary to your husband, but he will rule over you. So God, here, says, your rebellion, the consequences of that, to the woman, he says, will affect two key relationships in your life.

Your relationship with your children, and your relationship with your husband. In pain, you shall bring forth children. Now, this is not just saying, you know, all of a sudden childbirth is going to hurt.

[16 : 04] It's, it's much more than that. It's saying the whole process of child rearing, beginning with conception, there's going to be a drama. There's going to be a battle. Woman and your children are going to battle, not just the physical pain of birth.

The whole process of conceiving and raising kids, it's going to be hard. And this is 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.

This is a perversion of the harmony God intended. Instead of submitting to one another, we'll see each other as a threat.

We all want to master each other. And you don't have to look far for examples. Oh, I feel more comfortable giving a man example here, so that's what I'll do.

But think about the men who, because of sin, carry such insecurities in their hearts, who idolize power, and will try and feel better about themselves by pushing women around.

[17 : 19] I grew up in a household with domestic violence, with violence, and I see the sin of my father in me when I try and overly control things in my home.

And there is this unreasonable anger that sits just below the surface, that bursts out when I don't get my way.

for you men and women here this morning, you will experience this.

You know this. You know this consequence of the fall. You see it play out in your marriage. You see it play out in your friendships. You see it play out in your workplace.

Friends, Jesus is the only hope. It's the only hope we have here to overcome the sin and all the relational consequences. He's our only hope. Jesus says, you are not the Lord of your life.

[18 : 37] And when you come out from under being your own Lord, that's when you begin to heal. As you start to submit your life to Jesus' way, socially, spiritually, you begin to heal.

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

Is everyone okay? Okay. The consequences of sin, they're devastating. God has spoken to the snake. He has spoken to the woman.

And now God speaks to the man. God says, here is what life is going to look like for you. 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. You shall eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your face. You shall eat bread till you return to the ground.

[19 : 35] For out of it you are taken. For you are dust. And to dust you shall return. What does that all mean? Again, it's the punishment fits the crime. You've sinned by eating Adam.

And now you will suffer to eat. And God says, big summary is, somehow our sin has become baked into creation so that you're going to have to really toil to get it to produce for you.

You're going to have to really work for it now. Now, this is important. It's not saying that work is the curse. Work is not a curse. Work is a good thing.

But rather that the work now is cursed. God says, there will always be weeds and the weeds will always win and then Adam, you will die. Life will be a hard slog and the earth will take you back.

So, those are the first two sections. Conversation. The consequence. Devastating consequences.

[20 : 38] But before moving on, do you see the grace here as well? They certainly didn't get all they deserved, did they? They didn't get what they deserved. There is still life.

There is still fruit. You still get to eat bread and have families. God does not shut down the creation. Within these consequences, there is just undeserved restraint from God.

Okay, last section. Verse 21. The consolation. Verse 21. The Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins and clothed them.

So, again, it's just such a beautiful story here. You know, like the New Testament gives us propositions, often just sort of propositions. The Old Testament speaks to us in pictures, right?

This is such a beautiful picture. God doesn't throw up his hands and say, you know, walk away. He covers them. He protects them with these skins. God takes the initiative.

[21 : 40] He does something they can't do for themselves. The best they can do is grab a few leaves and try and cover themselves up. But it's, I mean, that's a picture of futility, isn't it?

And it's futile for us to think we can cover our own shame. It's futile for us to think we can deal with our own guilt on our own.

All our attempts to deal with shame are just vanity. They're useless. No amount of telling yourself, I'm good, I'm good, I'm good, will work.

Only God has a solution for the shame that you feel. Now, there are a number of layers to this idea of God covering Adam and Eve. One layer is this, in the ancient Near East, if you were to sin against the master of a house, he would take away your clothing.

That was a way of disinheriting you, to kick you out of the family. If the master of the house were to give you clothing, that 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.

[22 : 45] And you remember this from the story of the prodigal son with Jesus, right? The prodigal son returns and the father clothes him in his own cloak after he repents.

By giving clothes, God is saying, you're still my people, I'm still for you. That's one layer, but there's another layer. Think about this, if God supplied them with clothes made of animal skins, the question implied is, where did these skins come from?

Where did they come from? Well, the answer is, something died to provide this covering. God sacrificed something to cover their shame.

There was a cost to dealing with their shame. This is what the second part of verse 15 is about. Do you remember in Cursing the Serpent, God says, he will bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel.

Another translation says, he will crush your head in another version, right? Meaning, the descendant of Eve will stamp out evil once and for all in the future.

[23 : 57] But you, the snake, will strike his heel. Meaning, so, the descendant of Eve in overcoming evil will be hurt. There will be a cost to that descendant of Eve and defeating evil.

It will come at a high price. And this is the first picture in the Bible that 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. Okay, I'm going to finish up here. What have we learned? Sin is an affront to God.

A direct affront to God. The consequences are horrific. But God does not give up on us. He seeks us out.

He seeks you out with tenacity, with grace. Remember this, the first thing God did after cursing the snake was to promise us Jesus. God doesn't just seek us out.

[24 : 59] He covers us. He says, you're naked. Here are some clothes. And those clothes come at a great cost.

Folks, that's Genesis 3. It's an amazing story. And it explains so much of the problems of our world and our inability to deal with those problems.

I'll finish by saying this. There's some things I didn't get to. For example, why did God have to kick them out of the garden? Why did they have to leave?

Why were there different consequences for Adam and for Eve? These are good questions. I'd encourage you to ask those in the Q&R session at the end. I'll be with the newcomers. David and Dan will be here ready to answer those questions.

Folks, I hope that it's been long for me, I know, but I hope that's been an encouragement to you.

[25 : 58] Caitlin's going to pray for us now. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.