

The Fall

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Genesis 3

I. **A Starting Point**

- a. If you have heard much about Christian worldview formation, you have heard there are four basic stages of God's grand plan:
 - i. Creation – Fall – Redemption – and New Creation
- b. When I preached here last, I preached on the first stage, Creation
- c. I tried to excite your thinking to the wonder and glory of creation in its original form, as well as how we experience it now
 - i. Following those two sermons, I was really blessed by some texts from Betsy Kobayashi as she expressed wonder at some of the aspects of creation manifest to her in the places outdoors where she was going
 - ii. I will just say that outdoors is the place you need to be to have a more full orbbed experience of God's creation
- d. At the same time, some questions should have arisen, or perhaps some dissonance in your thinking as you considered such things
 - i. You might have wondered at some point, If creation was so glorious, then why do I now experience hardship and brokenness?
 - ii. Or, Why do people harm one another?
 - iii. Or, Why do so many things go wrong?
- e. Though it is often difficult to give a specific answer as to why any particular trial happens, we are given some insight into these questions in the Scriptures
- f. Shortly after Adam and Eve were created, and when they were the entire human race, there was a cosmic rebellion that would be felt through the rest of history even down to today, and would be the reason for the hardship, brokenness, harm, and wrong

II. **The Fall – Genesis 3**

- a. In Genesis chapter 3 we read of this rebellion and the immediate consequences, as well as indications of what would follow
- b. In verse 1 we are introduced to the serpent which was more crafty than any beast of the field, and he speaks to the woman

- i. Now this serpent is not just any old snake or dragon that happens to talk
- ii. In Revelation 12:9 we read, “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world...”
 - 1. This language in the last book of the Bible points back to the very beginning of the Bible to reveal what has been going on throughout history
- iii. The devil appeared as or inhabited a serpent and thus is known as such through the rest of time
- iv. As we are told there in Revelation, he is the one who deceives the whole world; and as we are told in John 8:44, he is the father of lies
- v. The first words out of his mouth here are deceitful as he overstates God’s establishment of proper boundaries by asking, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”
- c. Now Eve does try to correct the serpent in verses 2 and 3, but then adds just a little bit to what God actually said
- d. In verse 4 the devil steps up his attack by flatly contradicting what God has said
- e. He speaks a lie to Eve who has never before heard a lie and so does not know how to deal with a lie
 - i. As a side note, as children develop at a young age, they will tend to take what you say at face value, and so it is especially egregious if the first lie they hear is from their own parents, or even someone else they have learned to trust
- f. Then in verse 5 the devil lays a trap by offering Eve something desirable and casting God as the mean one for withholding what should be considered good, in some sense accusing God of mere self-interest – an obvious projection by the devil
 - i. As another side note, God actually does have self-interest in the sense that He is good and the source of all good
 - ii. So self-interest for God means He is interested in Himself because that is what results in the greatest good both for Himself and for all mankind

- iii. Self-interest by any other creature directs its attention away from God, and thus away from the source of all good
- g. In verse 6 we read how Eve then considered the supposed benefits of eating the fruit while completely ignoring what the all-wise God has already said
 - i. Have you ever convinced yourself of benefits from actions God has already said are wrong? You must be descended from Eve.
 - ii. And then she gave some fruit to Adam, who was with her (so it was not from deceit), and he ate as well
 - iii. Have you ever gone along with the crowd, even though you knew or suspected that what they were doing was wrong? You must be descended from Adam.
- h. The law they were given -- you shall not eat from that tree -- was the whole law which God had commanded them, so they broke the whole law of God
 - i. We read of that act in Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."
 - 1. James reiterates this spread in James 2:10 where he writes, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."
 - 2. So even with more laws, the transgression of one is not minimized, but rather the point is that a transgression of any of God's laws is rebellion against the lawgiver, namely God
 - ii. Thus that one act of rebellion was not "a stumble," or "a fall," but we call it "The Fall" because it affected the entire human race descending from Adam and Eve
 - iii. The Fall plunged the whole human race into a perpetual pattern and proclivity to sin, which effects we call "Original Sin."
- i. But the effects were not limited to people
 - i. Because Adam and Eve were God's image bearers and had been given dominion over creation, it was then that the whole of creation was subjected to disorder and brokenness on account of their sin

- ii. We read in Romans 8:20-21, “For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”
 - iii. So we are told that the creation itself was enslaved to corruption from the Fall, which explains why so many things go wrong – but there is hope which we will get to in time
- j. Then in verse 7 we read that “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.”
 - i. Adam and Eve, with their newfound knowledge of good and evil, realized they were physically naked, but there was also the nakedness of their sin which was evident
 - ii. And not only were their eyes opened, but the eyes of all of their descendants through the ages such that each of us has an inherent sense, to some degree, of right and wrong
 - 1. Romans 2:14-15 speaks to this knowledge whereby we read that the Gentiles “...show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them...”
 - 2. And so our nice, unbelieving neighbors, as well as peoples of lands far distant all understand at least some of the times they have done wrong, and so are without excuse before God
 - iii. Now the first reaction Adam and Eve have to their eyes being opened to their sin is to cover their shame
 - iv. And so through the ages, the common reaction to wrongdoing is for people to cover or hide their sin
 - 1. Such is the imagery we are given of people doing wickedness in the dark
 - 2. However, more recently, since the spiritual darkness has spread in our land, people are acting more and more wickedly thinking they are under the cover of that spiritual darkness

- v. So the Fall leads to shame and a desire to hide ourselves from others in the sense of not letting them know our deeper selves
 - 1. We are shocked, and rightly so, when we hear of domestic abuse that has gone long unnoticed
 - 2. But the reason it was not noticed earlier is because it was being hidden
- vi. Reflecting back, the false promise of benefits from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil has collapsed into a pit of desperation
- vii. That is a constant pattern for sin – it promises much, but its fruit is destruction
- viii. In Isaiah 55:8-9 God tells His people, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Neither are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”
- ix. That truth applies here as an encouragement to obey God, even when it seems more advantageous to do otherwise
- x. It is also notable that in the context in which it was given, God is pointing out the way back to Him after the people have sinned
- k. Now coming to verse 8 we read of Adam and Eve hiding themselves from God, with whom they had had sweet fellowship until that time
 - i. The One in whom they had delighted, now strikes fear in their hearts because they have rebelled against Him
 - ii. So it is with the adulterer when the spouse shows up unexpectedly
 - iii. The Fall has broken the relationship of man with God
- l. In verse 9 we read of God calling out to Adam, “Where are you?”
 - i. We are not to think that God did not know where he was, but rather that God was pushing Adam to confess why his behavior had changed
 - ii. There are times when God does the same with us
 - 1. He may prompt you by His Spirit when you are about to do wrong, or perhaps after you have done wrong
 - 2. Either way that prompt is for you to confess to Him what you are about to do or what you have done and turn

from it in repentance that you may walk in peace and joy with Him

- m. In verse 10 we read of Adam's description of his current state without regard to why it was now the case that his nakedness was cause for fearing God
- n. So God probes deeper in verse 11 asking, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"
 - i. Considering their former state of innocence, either someone told them they were naked and so should be ashamed, or they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and now understood that they were naked and should be ashamed
 - ii. From verse 7 we know that the knowledge came from their eyes being opened because of their eating from the tree
 - 1. Now I will say that for us, after having done wrong and understood it, the devil loves to keep coming back to remind us of that wrong and why it was so wrong
 - iii. The interrogation by God is much like a parent asking his child why the vase is broken
 - 1. How did the vase break? Did the cat knock it over, or were you playing with the ball inside like I told you not to?
 - 2. The parent already knows, but wants the child to confess to the truth without being evasive
 - 3. Without confessing the truth of the matter there cannot be a healing of the relationship
- o. Now in verse 12 we come first to Adam's confession
 - i. He said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."
 - ii. Though true, it has blame-shifting written all over it
 - 1. Adam tries to deflect the blame to the woman, but then ultimately to God for giving him the woman
 - 2. The one he once cherished he is now blaming for his own wrongdoing
 - iii. One of the consistent fruits of the Fall is blame-shifting

1. Too often we are guilty of hurting another, or not keeping our word, or being harsh, or not controlling our tongue, or not caring
 2. If we are confronted with the wrongness of such behavior, the fleshly reaction is to shift the blame somewhere else – whether to another person, or circumstances, or something else
 3. Rather than take responsibility for our actions, we try to salvage our reputation at the expense of others
 4. Such behavior exposes another fruit of the Fall which is the breaking of human relationships
- p. Next, in verse 13 the Lord confronts Eve
- i. She too told what was true, and frankly had a better reason than Adam, mentioning deceit being used against her
 - ii. Nevertheless, she knew God had commanded not to eat the fruit, and she did
 - iii. So Eve is blame-shifting as well rather than taking responsibility for her actions
- q. Notice now that God does not even ask the serpent what he did or why he did it
- i. The devil was not made in the image of God, and he is evil without remorse or repentance
- r. In verses 14 and 15 we read of the curse of the serpent sending him on his belly and giving him dust to eat
- i. But it is in these verses that there is a glimmer of hope
 - ii. For there shall be enmity between the woman and the serpent, and between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent
 - iii. That seed of the woman that will crush the serpent's head is the earliest promise of a Savior
- s. In verse 16 God pronounces the judgement on the woman which is rightly understood to extend to the female descendants of Eve
- i. Her pains in childbirth will greatly increase
 - ii. And the desire for her husband here mentioned is not a romantic desire, but rather a desire for usurpation and domination in the same way that we read of sin's desire for Cain in Genesis 4:7

- iii. Connected to that idea is God’s proclamation that her husband will rule over her
- iv. The tension created in the husband wife relationship is especially acute when the woman is convinced, rightly or wrongly, that her way is better and the husband disagrees
- t. Finally, God pronounces judgement on Adam in verses 17 through 19
 - i. In verse 17 God nullifies Adam’s blame-shifting
 - 1. God sets in opposition Adam’s wife’s invitation to sin against His own command not to eat of that tree
 - a. You are to obey God even if it is your closest companion that invites you to sin
 - i. Paul picks up this same theme in Galatians 1:9 where he writes, “...If any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.”
 - ii. God then goes on to curse the ground by which Adam must work to gain food
 - 1. Prior to his sin, Adam had so many fruit trees from which he could eat freely and easily as they must have grown vigorously and abundantly
 - 2. His work would have been efficient and prosperous
 - 3. After the Fall, he would lose access to those trees, and by labor and toil would he work the ground to sow and reap, all the while dealing with thorns and thistles crowding out the edible crops
 - 4. So another effect of the Fall is that our work is difficult and often not straightforward
 - 5. I know I am constantly called on to fix computers and systems that are not working as they are supposed to
 - 6. I hear farmers tell me they were haying and the equipment broke down
 - 7. I have a friend who needs his vehicle for work and it will no longer pass inspection
 - 8. These are follow on effects of the Fall
 - 9. You might even find it a helpful exercise to ponder some of the things that would be unnecessary if the Fall had never happened

- a. Law enforcement
 - b. Many types of lawyers
 - c. Jails
 - d. Doctors
 - e. The entire military
 - f. Computer security including passwords
 - iii. Now it is here in verse 19 that Adam is reminded that he is not God, and apart from God he is mere dust and to that he shall return
- u. And so at the end of the chapter we read how Adam and Eve are evicted from the easy and pleasant life in the Garden of Eden and now must toil the rest of their days
 - i. Yet there is another sign of hope in these last verses
 - ii. In verse 21 we are told that God clothed Adam and Eve with garments of skin
 - iii. That is an indication that the animals supplying the skin died in the stead of Adam and Eve
 - iv. Nevertheless, there was still a spiritual death which occurred and could not be remedied by the death of animals

III. **Subsequent Evidence**

- a. In the late 300's and early 400's A.D. there arose a man named Pelagius
 - i. He denied Original Sin, that is he denied that there was any effect passed down from Adam and Eve because of their sin
- b. We might ask ourselves then if there was subsequent evidence that the Fall affected following generations
 - i. In the very generation following Adam and Eve, Cain decides to kill his very brother out of uncontrolled anger and envy
 - 1. Such envy, strife, and murder continues as evidence of the Fall to this day
 - ii. Also, after a number of generations, the earth had become so incredibly wicked that God decided to wipe out the entire population of people and land animals except for eight people and representative pairs of animal kinds
 - 1. Such a high degree of wickedness did not come from people being born good or even neutral, but rather those born with the effects of the Fall

- iii. Even after Noah's flood we read of wickedness in many various forms
- iv. And with all of the people but for a couple who were taken up by God, we see generations die off, which death is a reminder that death came with the Fall
- c. In case you were wondering, Pelagius was condemned as a heretic

IV. **Reasons to Consider the Fall**

- a. At this point you may be thoroughly depressed and wonder why in the world would I spend so much time talking about the Fall
- b. The first and primary reason is that when we realize how tragic, how destructive, how pervasive is the Fall and its effects, we can only then begin to realize how great was the work that Jesus did to bring salvation to a people lost in the darkness of sin
 - i. If we think that people are basically good, that we have only done a little wrong, then we will think that we really only need a little help, and thus we would need more of a helper than a Savior
 - ii. Rather, we should understand that our sin follows from a long line of sin going all the way back to Adam and Eve
 - 1. We should realize that it is the most egregious rebellion to disobey Him in the least
 - 2. By disobeying Him we are saying that we know better, and thus that we are our own gods
 - 3. We should then realize we have come into a desperate situation, namely, that to be reconciled to a perfectly holy God, who demands perfection, requires a great and perfect Savior
 - 4. That Savior, of course, is Jesus Christ the righteous
- c. Another reason to consider the Fall is that in our daily walk we are now and again hit with questions from unbelievers
 - i. Some of those unbelievers want to prove God does not exist, and so they will throw out what they consider to be gotcha questions
 - ii. But others honestly want to know who is this God you believe in and what is His nature

- iii. One big question is, “If God exists and is good, and is all powerful, then why does evil exist such as that which happened just days ago in Minnesota?”
1. First, just recognizing there is such a thing as good and evil necessitates the existence of a good God. If God did not exist, then we cannot even say that what happened was evil except that this or that person says it was
 2. As a matter of fact, in the particular case in Minnesota, this person was anti-God in the extreme which extended from the Fall and correlated directly with his evil actions
 3. Right in the midst of the mayhem is a reminder that the further we turn from God, the greater is the presence of evil, which should cause every one of us to run to God seeking Him who is ultimate good
 4. Next, the Bible tells us that God did make everything good, but there was the Fall at which point sin and death entered the world, and so that has become a pattern not an exception
 5. We might ask back, “Why was this event not worse?” Hitler and Stalin, two evil individuals, both rejected God as well and killed tens of millions of people while building their own kingdoms in opposition to God
 6. There is that visceral reminder again that when God is despised, great disaster comes
 7. Yes, God could have stopped any one of those people, but that would also eliminate thousands of testimonies of so many ways God worked during those tragedies and long afterwards
 8. And as God allows time to continue in this fallen world, not only will we see more sin, but we will also see more come to faith until the full number have come that will glorify Him in heaven
 9. God has allowed sin, in part, so that the work of the Savior, Jesus Christ, and His grace might abound and be magnified all the more

- iv. *The Hiding Place* is a book about the life of Corrie ten Boom
1. She and her family lived in Holland during World War II and helped many Jews escape the Holocaust
 2. However, eventually the family was found out by the Nazis and they were sent to prison and then to the concentration camp at Ravensbrück
 3. Corrie's father died in prison, and her sister died while in the concentration camp
 4. Eventually Corrie was released due to a clerical error, and all the women in her age group at that camp were put to death a week later
 5. Now from an account given in Guideposts, not terribly long after the war, in 1947, Corrie came from Holland to Germany to speak to a group of Germans in a church about forgiveness
 6. After her talk, a man made his way to the front towards her and she recognized him as having been one of the guards at Ravensbrück
 7. He extended his hand to shake hers and he confessed that he had been a guard at Ravensbrück, but had since become a Christian
 8. He appreciated her talk on forgiveness and believed he had been forgiven by God, but wanted to be forgiven by her
 9. He asked her to forgive him
 10. She stood there frozen for what seemed like hours with a coldness of heart
 11. She realized Jesus tells us that if we cannot forgive others, we cannot be forgiven
 12. She prayed, "Jesus, help me!" and stuck out her hand
 13. Then a current went down her arm, and then a healing warmth flooded her whole being and she forgave him
 14. Corrie revealed later that she had never known God's love so intensely as she did then
 15. Corrie learned such a tremendous depth of forgiveness in that moment that she could never have learned if she

had not been through such an awful trial, and that was not the last she would learn

16. Her praise of God came from facing the dreadful effects of the Fall and was only increased by the intensity of the trial

- d. Remember that God's ways are indeed higher than our ways
 - i. Had we been in charge, likely we never would have allowed the Fall
 - ii. But God in His infinite wisdom, allowed the Fall so as to bring a far greater glory and praise to His name, and a far greater joy and rejoicing to His people